Mr. Speaker, when I am at home and speaking to

groups, I oftentimes ask them, the constituents that I am talking to,

have you heard any good news lately on the radio or heard any good news

on television or have you read any good news in the newspaper? Most

often the silence is deafening.

But we do not have to look far for good news, either here at home or

around the world. Much of that good news is directly related to the

actions of Americans. That certainly has been true with the outpouring

of support and relief for our fellow citizens who have been victims of

recent hurricanes and other natural disasters, and this past Saturday

the world witnessed not just good news but great news. The election in

Iraq this past weekend was a phenomenal event, a remarkable step toward

an independent, sovereign, democratic nation. What good news this is.

This is a momentous event, a huge step forward, and toward the

approaching day when we will be able to bring home our service men and

women.

Did you hear the good news, Mr. Speaker? Listen to some of the

voices.

Lieutenant Colonel Steve Boylan in Baghdad said: ``Nationwide

security was a resounding success, with all of the 13 recorded attacks

aimed at election targets failing.''

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, talking about TV coverage, said:

``I have seen pictures of citizens who are proud to be shown on camera

having voted. There were no such pictures from these places in the last

election. The victory for Iraq is that they are voting.''

Listen to the voices, Mr. Speaker. Abdul Hussein Ahmed emerged from a

polling station in the southern city of Najaf with his purple ink-

stained finger raised aloft and he said: ``Five members of my family

were killed by Saddam and his people but now with this constitution

everyone is equal under the law.''

Listen to the voices, Mr. Speaker. Razifa Hussein Abdullah arrived at

the polling station with tears in her eyes. Her husband, Hussein Salim,

leaned on her for balance as they walked. They had returned several

months ago from exile in Iran where they had fled during the Iran-Iraq

war of the eighties. ``We suffered a lot,'' she said, ``and today I

came to get revenge for all of these years I stayed away from my

country to feel that I am an Iraqi again. It was a dream to get rid of

Saddam and today is another dream come true,'' she said.

There is the quote from this poster, Mr. Speaker. Listen to the

voices. ``I voted then for Saddam, of course, because I was afraid, but

this time I came here by my own choice. I am not afraid anymore. I am a

free man.''

Some editorials have finally recognized the importance of this

occurrence. The New York Post said, ``The referendum results vindicate

U.S. policy and are a giant step toward regional peace.'' The New York

Times, yes, the New York Times, said, ``What we know already and can't

fail to be impressed by is that large numbers of Iraqis of all

persuasions turned out in defiance of terrorist threats to decide their

constitutional future. They have exercised a basic democratic right

that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago.'' Even the New

York Times.

Mr. Speaker, oftentimes we are too close to the happenings of the day

to appreciate their gravity and I think we are just a little too close

now. This past Saturday was a red letter date in the history of the

world, and the naysayers notwithstanding, this is a day and a time to

celebrate and congratulate. I am proud to be an American. I am proud of

and humbled by the selfless acts by so many of our fellow citizens in

Iraq. In the 1800s, de Tocqueville said that America is not good

because it is great, it is great because it is good. It is that

goodness that continues to strive for liberty for all. What a momentous

time we are in as we celebrate and witness that march of liberty around

the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is good news. Let's spread that good news.