Madam Speaker, I find it very interesting and probably

somewhat unusual that during morning hour debate three speeches in a

row are on the exact same topic.

I listened to the statement of my friend, the gentleman from Florida

(Mr. Stearns). I just listened to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr.

Frank). And I will state that it is important for us to spend some time

engaged in debate and focusing on the very important elections that are

going to be taking place on October 9 in Afghanistan, and then as was

said earlier, six days later the registration process begins for

elections that are scheduled to do take place in Iraq this coming

January.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. Stearns) earlier referred to an op-ed

piece that actually is what led me to come to take the well this

afternoon and that is a piece by David Brooks in today's New York Times

in which he talked about the challenge that lies ahead as we deal with

the prospect of elections, as I said, on October 9 in Afghanistan and

then elections to take place in Iraq. But he used a historical context

which I think is very important.

That historical context does go back to March of 1982 when we saw the

elections take place in El Salvador. Now, the gentleman from

Massachusetts (Mr. Frank) and I were elected to the House together in

1980. And during that decade we saw great struggles take place, really

throughout the world as we saw nations move from totalitarianism to

self-determination, political pluralism. Of course, we saw that in the

latter part of the 1980s in Eastern and Central Europe. Really

throughout most of that decade we saw the struggle take place in

Central America, in primarily Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In El Salvador it was in large part a civil war, a civil war that was

fueled with resources that came from Communists in the region and from

the Soviet Union, but it still was an upheaval that was taking place.

And yet in 1982, as Mr. Brooks pointed out in his piece today, with

75,000 lives being lost, an attack taking place on the national palace,

people actually bombing those in line standing to vote, elections

proceeded.

There was a statement that he has in this piece in which he says that

one person who was in line said, ``This nation,'' in referring to El

Salvador, ``may be falling apart, but by voting we may help to hold it

together.''

Now, it is true that things have not gone perfectly in the war to

liberate the people of Iraq. Everyone acknowledges that. But this is a

war. There are no guarantees. There are no there is no absolute

certainty. But we do know this: Saddam Hussein is no longer in power;

and if he were still in power, if he were still in power he would be

providing, as the international terrorist that he was, $25,000 to the

families responsible for the bombings of buses that took place in

Israel just a few weeks ago. And he would be involved in the kinds of

repressive policies and the threat to destabilize his region and other

parts of the world that he had been involved in.

We do know that we brought an end to that. There still are terrorist

forces in Iraq. But I will say, Madam Speaker, that as we head to this

election on October 9 in Afghanistan and then in January in Iraq, it is

important to know that it is not going to be a perfect election.

We learned in 2000 that democracy is a work in progress. But as we

begin with these elections in October and January, it is very important

to note that that will be the beginning point as we move down the road

towards the right of people to choose their own leaders, self-

determination, political pluralism, the rule of law, those democratic

institutions which we have a tendency to take for granted here in the

United States.

So I would like to say, let us learn from history. Standing firm to

proceed with some kind of election is the right thing for us to do. And

I am very pleased that this administration and a majority in this

United States Congress are dedicated to doing just that.