Madam Speaker, today is a historic day for democracy and

freedom. Iraqis go to the polls to democratically elect the 275 seats

of the new Iraqi Council of Representatives. The newly elected Council

will then select a Prime Minister, a Presidency Council, and a Cabinet

of Ministers.

By any measure, today's elections are remarkable. In just under 3

years, 26 million Iraqis have gone from brutal tyranny to

representative democracy. A ruthless and dangerous dictator has been

removed, and the stabilizing influence of democracy is taking root in a

region desperately in need of it.

This progress is a fitting tribute to the brave men and women in

uniform who have sacrificed so much to see this day realized. There is

more work to be done and there will be more setbacks to overcome, but

this is tremendous progress. I salute them.