Madam Speaker, over the weekend an historic day occurred

in Iraq. Millions of Iraqis took another step toward democracy and

turned out to vote for a new constitution.

While the final results will not be known until the end of this week,

the large turnout of voters and the significantly fewer security

incidents are, therefore, a sign that Iraq is on the way to democracy.

Close to 63 percent of the country's 15 million registered voters

cast ballots, which is significantly more than turn out in the U.S.

presidential elections.

Violent incidences were far less this election than in January.

Perhaps contributing to the low levels of violence was the presence of

Iraqi security forces themselves. These forces were up 35 percent since

January to almost 200,000.

Finally, after years of oppression under Saddam Hussein, Iraqis were

able to hold a truly fair, open election. Saturday was indeed an

historic day.