Mr. President, I call this body's attention to the recent

developments in Iraq. Last month, Iraqis went to the polls to vote in

the second provincial election since the hand-over of power in 2004.

Elections were conducted peacefully under the watchful eyes of Iraqi

security forces, and the results were quickly certified by the United

Nations.

This peaceful expression of political will is yet another

demonstration of political progress in Iraq. Less than 2 years after

some were declaring the war lost and the surge a failure, violence has

declined, and the world--most importantly the Arab world--saw Iraqis

peacefully voting, their security ensured by an increasingly competent

Iraqi army and police.

Not only was the election process successful, the results also merit

attention. The Iraqi people voted in favor of secular parties competing

with the Iranian-backed religious parties. These results in many ways

represent a remarkable change from the 2005 provincial elections that

strengthened many extremist and foreign-backed parties opposed to the

central government. Sunnis, who largely boycotted the 2005 elections,

participated broadly in January's election. Their involvement should

enhance national reconciliation and bolster a more moderate and diverse

government representative of the Iraqi people.

This progress is reversible. A lot rests on whether the President

listens to his generals in the coming weeks and months or whether he

bows to liberal interest groups and his campaign rhetoric and initiates

a premature retreat. But this is an important sign of what our soldiers

and the Iraqi people have worked so hard to achieve. Again, in 2 years

since the surge began, and now that it has been over for 6 months, we

have seen a constant decrease in violence, increased capabilities by

the Iraqi government and military, and now an election where the Iraqi

people largely chose moderate parties over extremist ones.

Unfortunately, the media devoted little attention to the success of

these peaceful elections, just as they have neglected many of the noble

efforts of our men and women in uniform. I recently received an email

from a constituent whose brother-in-law is currently serving in the

10th Combat Support Hospital at Ibn Sina Hospital, Baghdad. In the

building that used to provide health care to Saddam's family and the

Baathist elite, these servicemen and women provide some of the best

care in the country to all types of patients, from Iraqi children

burned by household kerosene lamps to American soldiers with traumatic

injuries. Their hard work and the self-sacrifice of all who serve in

Iraq has contributed to the dramatic progress made in Iraq.