Mr. President, I support this resolution, and I join in

commending the people of Iraq for the inspiring step they have taken

toward self-government and a democratic future.

We all share the goal of spreading freedom and democracy and ending

tyranny around the globe. There is no disagreement about these goals,

and the importance of these ideals. America has been a beacon of

democracy and freedom for more than two centuries.

When America is at its best, our deeds match our words. But many of

us feel we haven't done that in Iraq. We care about our country.

Stephen Decatur famously said, ``My country, right or wrong.'' But

others through the years have said it better--``our country right or

wrong. When right, to be kept right. When wrong, to be set right.''

We've paid a high price for the invasion of Iraq. Saddam is gone, but

there were no weapons of mass destruction. The cakewalk the

administration predicted became a quagmire instead. We shifted our

focus away from the real threat to our national security--Osama bin

Laden. We shattered our alliances and lost our respect in the world.

More than 1,400 American soldiers have given their lives. 150,000 of

our soldiers are tied down in Iraq. Our military has been stretched to

the breaking point, with other threats ever-present. The families of

our military, and our guard and reserves are suffering. The American

occupation has fueled the insurgency.

We are all moved by the bravery of the Iraqi people who voted in the

recent election, and we honor the courageous men and women of our Armed

Forces who continue to risk their lives for a better future for the

Iraqi people.

The election is an opening, if we are wise enough to seize it, to

demonstrate to the Iraqi people that we have no long-term designs on

their country.

I hope the administration's decision to withdraw 15,000 American

troops from Iraq is a down-payment on a more enlightened policy, and

that the administration will seize this opening.

Our men and women in uniform deserve more. We need to redouble our

efforts to train the Iraqi security forces before the election of a

permanent Iraqi government at the end of the year, so that a stable and

free Iraq will be established and our troops can come home with dignity

and honor.

I congratulate the Iraqi people and the men and women of our Armed

Forces who made this election possible, and I urge my colleagues to

support this resolution.