Madam Speaker, a country was looking for free,

democratic elections. Yet, a violent insurgency controlled about one-

third of the nation's territory. Insurgents mined roads to prevent

transportation and potential voters had to dodge sniper fire just to

vote. Yet people by the hundreds of thousands risked their lives to

have the opportunity a chance to vote, a chance for freedom.

For those that may not recognize this piece of history, the year is

1982, and the country is El Salvador, and 2 years later the people of

that country had to risk the same peril to vote. This situation sounds

familiar, does it not.

I doubt many can forget the horrible atrocities committed during the

Civil War in El Salvador that claimed over 75,000 lives. The insurgents

in that day were no less ruthless than those at the interim government

that Afghanistan and Iraq are facing. Violent efforts were increased

before and on the day of election to prevent the people of El Salvador

from choosing their destiny. The reason was simple. Elections, as

pointed out in a recent New York Times article, ``suck the oxygen from

a rebel army.''

Interim Prime Minister Allawi knows this as well as Afghanistan

President Karzai. Prime Minister Allawi was on this floor last week and

stated emphatically that despite the naysayers in the media, and the

supporters of Senator Kerry, Iraq will have free elections next year.

Yet, not a day goes by that some pundit or some strategist talks about

conditions in Iraq and says that the country is not ready for

elections.

However, Madam Speaker, I think it would be worthwhile for those who

say they are experts to listen to the Iraqi people. According to some

Arab news media reports and Iraqi blogs, only a small portion of Iraq

is under control of the insurgents. We are talking about a country that

is roughly the size of California, and only a small portion remains

vulnerable to the insurgencies.

Allawi is right to move forward with the elections. Iraqis are beyond

fed up with these terrorist acts and may surprise many with their

resilience in the face of these attacks.

Look at the Iraqi police and National Guard. Despite being persistent

targets of these extremists, Iraqi citizens continue to risk their

lives to sign up for

the change to help bring peace to their nation.

I think these so-called experts on elections in Iraq and Afghanistan

are in for a rude awakening. Afghanistan's elections are set for

October 9. Also, next month, Iraqis will begin registering to vote with

election scheduled for January of next year. Will it be difficult? Most

definitely. Will the insurgents try to disrupt this process? Yes. We

have already seen that they will increase their attacks.

But the fact is the insurgents are scared. They know that a

legitimately elected leader can put an end to this illegitimate

insurgency. An elected leader can offer his people peace, stability and

prosperity. Insurgents can only offer hate, fear and death.

An elected leader can undermine an insurgency by reaching out and

addressing the perceived ills for which they are supposedly fighting

for, or expose their motives as pure extremism. An elected leader can

transform his country for the better.

Madam Speaker, it will not happen overnight. It took years for El

Salvador but it can happen. It is a task that the United States must

continue to support without hesitation.

Let me refer to two other examples. Violence and unrest were

prevalent in Indonesia. Yet, recently, Indonesia conducted its direct

presidential elections, orderly, peacefully, without disruption to

voters' access.

Finally, I think we can all remember the problems in Serbia with

Milosovic and what happened with his military action. On June 13 and 27

of 2004 this year, Serbia held presidential elections which is a

welcome change in the political direction of Serbia and its

relationship with the international community.

Remember what Prime Minister Tony Blair said when he addressed this

body. Here is his quote which I think rings a very positive note: ``How

hollow would the charges of American imperialism be when these failed

countries are seen to be transformed from states of terror to nations

of prosperity, from governments of dictatorship to examples of

democracy, from sources of instability to beacons of calm.'' He went on

to say, ``Why America? The only answer is because destiny put her in

this place in history at this moment of time and the task is ours to

do.''

We must take these words to heart and stand with a universal

toughness. Democratic institutions continue to spread in the world.

They are our true defense against the illegitimate attempts of Islamic

fanatics to force their own distorted views of the world.