Mr. President, I rise today to speak of the historic Iraqi

elections and the President's message last night.

This past Sunday, the world watched as millions of Iraqi people

headed to the polls to participate in their first free election in more

than 50 years.

In doing so, the Iraqis defied the terrorists and they risked their

lives for what was, for most, the first exercise of democracy in their

lifetimes.

Not only did the Iraqi people defy the terrorists, but they defied

the skeptics--some of whom could be found in Iraq itself, many others

throughout the international community, and, disappointingly, even here

at home. Many said that the elections were too soon, that the Iraqi

people wouldn't dare come out of their homes to vote, and worse, that

the Iraqi people weren't ready and didn't desire freedom.

Though the votes have yet to be tallied, the millions of Iraqi voters

that turned out on Sunday underscore the truism that people desire to

be free.

And one of the most fundamental political freedoms is the freedom to

choose your government. What we saw on Sunday should not surprise

Americans: When given the opportunity to be in charge of their own

destiny, citizens of all nations will not only turn out in great

numbers, but they are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the

opportunity to live in a free society.

I agree with one of America's most perceptive analysts on the region,

Fouad Ajami, who said that on Sunday we bonded with the Iraqi people,

because they were doing the most American act: voting.

As a strong supporter of our President and his policy in Iraq, I am

always encouraged by my fellow Utahns who believe America should stay

the course, fight on, and finish what we started. Utahns appreciate the

sacrifice and courage of our troops, and those of the Iraqis who deeply

appreciate our commitment.

Earlier this week, I read that the mayor of Baghdad even wants to

erect a statue to President Bush, calling him the ``symbol of

freedom.'' When asked if he was concerned about the many threats on his

life, Mayor Ali Fadel said,

He also said,

We saw this gratitude again last night when the daughter of a man

killed by Saddam Hussein's thugs was hugged by the mother of a Marine

who gave his life in Fallujah.

Some may erroneously dismiss that as crafted drama. For me, that

moment in the State of the Union will forever capture America's mission

of spreading freedom in this world.

I have tears in my eyes because I remember many years ago receiving

notice that my brother had been killed in the Second World War fighting

for the freedom that Sergeant Norwood fought for over in Iraq--fighting

for the freedoms for Europe and the world.

Many of our soldiers risking their lives in Iraq are my fellow

Utahans. I am both proud and impressed with their willingness to serve

their country and help the Iraqi people establish a free and democratic

government.

Just yesterday, a group of 100 Utah National Guard men and women, in

addition to the 500 that left just a week before, were deployed to

bases in the U.S. for training, after which they will move to Iraq,

where they will continue to serve for 1 year.

We have had Utahans over there serving beyond the term they were

supposed to serve.

We have had Utahans over there serving beyond the term they were

supposed to serve. I know they will serve well and, I pray for their

safe return home to their loved ones and families.

We all understand that this election was just one more step on the

path to a free and democratic Iraq. But, it was an enormously important

step.

I commend our President, our brave men and women in uniform, and

especially, the freedom-loving people of Iraq.

President Bush began his speech last night recognizing that he serves

at the privilege of the voters, and that, today,

an Iraqi government is forming based on the voters' selections, as a

new government is in place in the Palestinian Authority, and in

Afghanistan.

One of the President's greatest virtues, in my opinion, is his

humility, and the recognition that we serve at the voters' behest is

the fundamental virtue of leadership in a democracy.

To recognize that humility is to accept the responsibility that

democratic leadership must always be open and transparent and

compelling to the electorate.

Over the past 4 years, President Bush has often spoken directly and

honestly to the American people, about the uncertain threats before us,

and about the responsibilities we need to shoulder to defend our

freedoms.

At the beginning of my remarks I said that one of the most

fundamental political freedoms is the freedom to choose your

government.

An even more basic political freedom is the freedom from tyranny or

terror.

To be secure from the car bombers, from the dreaded knock on the door

in the middle of the night, from the capricious order of the dictator,

are necessary for freedom to be sustained.

Last night the President again stated his vision of how our security

is dependent on expanding the zone of freedom to regions of the world

where for too long threats to our security incubated.

Iraq will never be fully free until the Iraqi people can provide for

their own security, and the President made it plainly clear again last

night that our mission will not be finished until we have trained an

effective Iraqi force to assume their security. To leave before then,

or to announce a departure before we know we have achieved this goal,

is to undermine our mission and devalue our sacrifices.

Those who call for an exit date before knowing we have succeeded care

not for our success nor our security.

We know there remains much work to be done. No one called for an exit

date before we had victory in World War II, a war where America made

enormous sacrifices, including my only brother.

No one called for an exit strategy during the twilight years of the

Cold War.

No one, after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, set an exit date for

our efforts to support democratic transition in central and eastern

Europe. We build our policies on victory, magnanimity, democracy and

freedom

While we will not set an exit date, we do have an exit strategy; that

is, once we have trained enough security people and police people to

take over and to protect and care for their own country, once we have

helped to bring up their structure, witnessing that there is a degree

of security, peace, and freedom in Iraq beyond where it is now, we are

going to pull our young men and women out of there. Let us hope that

happens sooner rather than later.

Listening to President Bush's speech last night, I know he

understands how to protect America's security. Even more, he

understands America's role in a challenging world. President Bush has

charted a course as bold as he is, and it is incumbent upon the

Congress and the American people to support him in this most important

effort.