Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, as we meet today, Iraq has begun to conduct a historic

election that will select a national government for the next four

years. Under the Iraqi Constitution approved this past October, the

government that emerges from these important elections will have

tremendous responsibilities. It must fill in the many blanks left in

the Constitution regarding a new social compact for the Iraqi people

and the sharing of oil revenues among all ethnic groups.

The creation of a truly independent judiciary is one of the greatest

and most important challenges that will face the new Iraqi government.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, a political settlement that would create

a stake by all ethnic groups in a unified, peaceful Iraq has to date

eluded the major political factions in Iraq. In fact, Iraqi society is

facing a convulsion of violent sectarian conflict and suffering from

acts of desperate terrorism.

While the elections now underway may lead to a consolidation of the

political gains that were made in October, the establishment of an

independent judiciary is a critical precondition for preserving those

gains.

Without an independent judiciary that all members of Iraqi society

believe will adjudicate disputes fairly, there can be no real peace in

Iraq.

Without an independent judiciary that stands up to the rest of the

national government and defends the new constitution, there can be no

real new social compact in Iraq.

And without an independent judiciary that respects the religious

differences among its people, there can be no real trust of that

compact.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the nascent Iraqi judiciary is trying

Saddam Hussein for the horrors of his regime. Based upon his dramatic

court appearances, Saddam is clearly living under the delusion that he

can orchestrate a triumphal return by manipulating the court for his

own political ends.

This effort will fail and we will see Saddam Hussein for what he is--

a mass murderer guilty of crimes against humanity who never should have

been accorded respect by anyone in the international community.

Let us hope that a successful prosecution of Saddam Hussein with all

reasonable procedural protections will help launch the independent

judiciary for which this resolution calls.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important

resolution.