Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for

helping us move this legislation expeditiously. Of course, I thank

Chairman Hyde for his role in that. I thank the gentleman from

California as well.

Two years ago yesterday, December 13, 2003, Saddam Hussein was

captured and his tortured reign was finally and officially and

completely at an end.

While that was a significant turning point in this war, we all knew

the path to a free and democratic Iraq would not be easy. Yet after

years of oppression and torture, the Iraqi people are growing closer to

having a nation ruled by their people instead of a nation ruled by

fear.

Earlier this year, the passage of the Iraqi constitution marked a

significant milestone in the recovery of the sovereign nation of Iraq.

In excess of 60 percent of the people of Iraq braved the terrorists,

braved the threats of violence to be able to cast their vote.

Indeed, at 9 a.m. Eastern Standard Time tomorrow morning, the polls

will close in Iraq and the Iraqi people will have reached another

historic milestone. Iraqi men and women worldwide are going to the

polls in droves to be able to democratically elect the nation's first

permanent constitutional parliament in decades.

While there will still be hurdles for the Iraqi people to overcome

today, we celebrate with our friends as they continue to take

courageous steps in becoming their own sovereign nation.

Mr. Speaker, a free and democratic Iraq will equal a safer world. And

for the safety of our own Nation, I firmly believe that we must

continue to support the sovereign endeavors of the Iraqi people and

this developing nation. Tonight I rise to speak about an important

House resolution, H. Res. 534, that enables this body to boldly support

the governing efforts in Iraq.

We are all well aware of the current trial of Saddam Hussein; and

while this trial is important, a strong, independent Iraqi judicial

system is of even greater importance.

A crucial component to a free and democratic nation is its judicial

system in which alleged criminals can be indicted; prosecuted; if

convicted, punished in a fair and impartial manner. As Members of

Congress, we have an obligation to uphold and support this principle

especially in a land that has been inflicted with egregious crimes

against humanity.

The Iraqi Special Tribunal has been impaneled to bring swift and

impartial justice to both the victims and the nation of Iraq, and I

call on my colleagues to support H. Res. 534, which recognizes the

importance and credibility of an independent Iraqi judiciary.

The people of Iraq, the people of a sovereign nation, deserve true

justice, which can only be obtained through a recognized and credible

judicial system. The judges, the lawyers involved face daily peril for

their courageous stand. And we have an opportunity to stand firmly with

the Iraqi people and support the ongoing trials and efforts of the

Iraqi Special Tribunal.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity, the privilege, to travel to

Iraq four times during the past 2 years. During every mission, I have

been able to witness firsthand the progress that is being made by our

troops on the ground and by the Iraqi Government. Mr. Speaker, I have a

picture, a picture from my last trip to Iraq in August of this year,

and I want to point out this was a picture, Mr. Speaker, that I took

flying over in a Blackhawk helicopter. These helicopters are menacing

vehicles. They travel low. They travel fast. They have guns sticking

out the side. I stuck my camera out the window to take a picture, and

mostly I wanted to take a picture of the satellite antennae that were

on the rooftops. Of course, satellite television was prohibited under

Saddam's regime, and, in fact, a year in prison was the punishment, as

I understand. I took a picture because there were satellite antennae on

a lot of the rooftops.

But as I looked at this picture when I got home, I noticed that there

were two figures on the rooftop. So I blew this picture up

considerably. And, Mr. Speaker, as we look at this, we can see two

apparently children standing on the rooftop. The larger child, who

appears to be a girl, is waving; and a smaller, more inquisitive child,

which I think is a boy, is sort of leaning over and looking at this

impressive Blackhawk helicopter going over.

And the girl is waving. She has an expression of absolute joy of

seeing the helicopter flying over her city. And why would this be? Why

would she be happy about seeing a menacing Blackhawk helicopter with

guns sticking out the side flying over her city? Well, Mr. Speaker, I

submit the reason for her joy is the small boy at her side. The small

boy at her side is the reason for her joy because this child knows that

3 years ago, 3 years ago, there is probably a crawl space in this house

somewhere where this small boy could be hidden if Saddam's

conscriptionists came down the street trying to find people for his

army. And that is the reason for her joy. That is the reason why this

country should rejoice about what we have been able to do for the

people of this long-suffering nation.

Mr. Speaker, significant progress is being made, and it is imperative

that they have our continued support. And today, tonight, we can

continue to help provide that support through H. Res. 534.

Throughout our efforts in providing continued support to Iraq, I

would be remiss if I did not mention the determination, the skill of

our Armed Forces and their resolution in continuing their mission in

Iraq. It is due to the bravery and the perseverance of the U.S.

military members and their coalition allies that the tyranny of Saddam

is over, over forever. I applaud our troops and our leadership for

their success.