Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding

me this time, and I particularly thank the gentleman from Texas for

bringing and offering this resolution.

I am going to include my prepared remarks, Mr. Speaker, because my

remarks that are here reflect the remarks that have been made by the

other Members here on this floor, and I wish to associate myself with

those remarks, and I appreciate the gentleman from California's support

as well for this resolution.

And I would rather speak a little bit from the heart, then, about

some of the things that I saw there having traveled over to Iraq a

number of times and this last time with Mr. Burgess from Texas. And I

saw some of that perspective from the Blackhawk as well. And as we flew

into Baghdad, that was not a rare circumstance. It was not a unique

circumstance. In fact, I saw numbers of children running out into the

streets in twos and threes and waving. It did not happen in every

block, but it happened in a number of the blocks that we saw as we came

in.

Not only have I seen that in Baghdad but I have seen that also in

Mosul. I have seen it in Kirkuk, and I have seen it also in Fallujah,

Mr. Speaker. And that endorsement of American power and influence and

liberation and coalition power influence and liberation, that comes

from the people. And I have watched those Blackhawk helicopters scatter

their livestock, and the herdsman and women come out and wave with

great joy to see that influence that has provided their freedom.

And an essential component of freedom is to have an independent

judiciary. And I asked for a meeting with the Iraqi Special Tribunal

because I wanted to get a measure of the men that would be sitting in

judgment of Saddam Hussein and the other alleged perpetrators of the

crimes against humanity that we know took place in Iraq over the last

couple of decades. As we sat in that very hot room and looked across

that table and I gazed into the

eyes of these men, there was a deep conviction, a significant amount of

courage, a tremendous amount of patriotism that is there. They know

that their lives are on the line. Since that time from about August 18,

I believe that date was, we have seen this unfold to where we know that

there have been already two attorneys that have been killed in the

process of this trial.

I stand here on the floor of the United States Congress, Mr. Speaker,

standing in support and in solidarity of a free and independent

judiciary for everyone in this world, but particularly those in Iraq

where it will become the second place on the globe where an Arab can

get a fair trial, second to Israel.

And where they sit in judgment now of those alleged perpetrators of

war crimes, we need to stand with them. We need to send a message

across that says free and independent judiciary, rule of law are

essential to freedom, and they have got to be independent of the

politics that rule also in Iraq. The old Baathist Party, the people

that are looking to try to bring leverage for one political reason or

another, we have to hold them separate from that and encourage them to

stand on that rule of law, which they quoted to me on that hot day in

that building in Baghdad back last August.

So I am proud this Congress stands with them, Mr. Speaker, and I

appreciate the opportunity to present my argument in support of this

resolution before this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Texas for bringing this

legislation forward. As you may know, Iraq's march towards democracy

has not been easy. They are just now emerging from 24 years of

oppression and cruel torture under the rule of Saddam Hussein. Now

thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of American and coalition forces,

Saddam has been captured. Ironically, he is now receiving the benefits

of the fair judicial process he denied to so many.

Last night, I spoke to this House about benchmarks in the progress of

the new country. In less than three years, Iraq has gone from a nation

suffering under a ruthless dictator to one with a new constitution and

only hours away from a democratically elected government. As I have

heard from numerous American soldiers in and returning from Iraq, every

day the nation is relying less and less on coalition forces for

support. At the same time, Iraq is becoming increasingly more capable

of providing independent government services.

Mr. Speaker, America stands as a beacon for freedom and justice in

the world. And the promising nation of Iraq is now demonstrating

similar compassion and commitment to the rule of law. As such, the

nation's unbiased judiciary is playing a critical role in its

development as a democracy.

Of course, there are those who would like to see Iraq resist freedom

and return to brutal dictatorship. The terrorists know that the

formation of a strong judiciary threatens their efforts. In turn, some

of these terrorists wreak violence against those working to dispense

justice in Iraq. The judges and other members of the Iraqi judiciary

who carry on in spite of the terrorists' best efforts are incredibly

courageous and need to be recognized for their bravery. Despite threats

to their personal safety, members of the Iraqi judiciary remain

dedicated to their convictions and continue working toward a better

nation for all.

This resolution sends a significant message, recognizing the

importance and credibility of an unbiased Iraqi judiciary for a new and

democratic Iraq. I am a co-sponsor of this legislation which will

encourage our friends abroad who are working so hard to secure a free

and democratic Iraq. I urge your support of this important resolution.