Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of my

resolution, H. Res. 873, and ask my colleagues to join me in this both

moral and practical resolution.

A strong relationship with the Kurdish people serves the cause of

peace, stability and democratic government in a region that needs a lot

of bolstering when it comes to peace, stability and democratic

government. It is a strong relationship with the Kurds that will keep

radical Islamic forces in other parts of Iraq in check. It is a strong

relationship with the Kurds that will offset the support that is going

to these radical elements in the rest of Iraq and the region. As we

know, the Kurds over the years have a history of being an oppressed

people. Thus, they are natural allies of the United States, a country,

our country, whose tradition is supporting oppressed peoples and

struggling with them to promote democracy, opportunity and prosperity.

If we can count on the Kurds, we will know that there's an opportunity

for peace and stability in that area that wouldn't exist otherwise. And

if they can count on us, the Kurds, we can count on them. This

legislation will codify that relationship and that friendship by

establishing an American consulate in Erbil, which is in the Kurdish

part of Iraq. Let me note that 20 other countries, including European

nations and other world powers, have diplomatic and consulate

representation in Erbil, which is the capital of the Kurdistan Region

of Iraq.

The Kurds have been willing partners of the United States since that

democratic transition in Iraq began in 2003, and the Kurdish part of

the country has served as a model for Iraq's democratization ever since

Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We should move forward with this. Actually, it really is a sorry

comment that we have to have congressional legislation to force the

State Department to have a consulate in Kurdistan or in the Kurdish

region of Iraq. This makes all the sense in the world. It's good for

them. It's good for us. It's good for the people of Iraq. It creates an

area of stability in which we are officially recognizing that concept

of a peaceful relationship with the Kurds in order to have peace in

Iraq.

So I ask my fellow colleagues to join me today in officially

recognizing this great friendship that serves us all so well by

enabling the State Department to open a consulate in Erbil, Kurdistan,

and, again, underscoring the great friendship between the Kurds and the

American people, a friendship that serves both our countries well.