In recent months, the cause of freedom

has made enormous gains in the broader

Middle East. Millions of people in Afghanistan

and Iraq defied terrorists to cast their

ballots in free elections. Palestinians voted

for a new President who rejects violence and

is working for democratic reform, and the

people of Lebanon reclaimed their sovereignty

and are now voting for new leadership.

Across the Middle East, hopeful change

is taking place. People are claiming their liberty.

And as a tide of freedom sweeps this

region, it will also come eventually to Iran.

The Iranian people are heirs to a great civilization—

and they deserve a Government

that honors their ideals and unleashes their

talent and creativity. Today, Iran is ruled by

men who suppress liberty at home and

spread terror across the world. Power is in

the hands of an unelected few who have retained

power through an electoral process

that ignores the basic requirements of democracy.

The June 17th Presidential elections are

sadly consistent with this oppressive record.

Iran’s rulers denied more than a thousand

people who put themselves forward as candidates,

including popular reformers and

women who have done so much for the cause

of freedom and democracy in Iran.

The Iranian people deserve a genuinely

democratic system in which elections are

honest—and in which their leaders answer

to them instead of the other way around. The

Iranian people deserve a truly free and

democratic society with a vibrant free press

that informs the public and ensures transparency.

They deserve freedom of assembly,

so Iranians can gather and press for reform

and a peaceful, loyal opposition can keep the

Government in check. They deserve a free

economy that delivers opportunity and prosperity

and economic independence from the

state. They deserve an independent judiciary

that will guarantee the rule of law and ensure

equal justice for all Iranians. And they deserve

a system that guarantees religious freedom,

so that they can build a society in which

compassion and tolerance prevail.

Today, the Iranian regime denies all these

rights. It shuts down independent newspapers

and web sites and jails those who dare

to challenge the corrupt system. It brutalizes

its people and denies them their liberty.

America believes in the independence and

territorial integrity of Iran. America believes

in the right of the Iranian people to make

their own decisions and determine their own

future. America believes that freedom is the

birthright and deep desire of every human

soul. And to the Iranian people, I say: As

you stand for your own liberty, the people

of America stand with you.