Mr. President, I

thank my colleague from Texas for her

kind comments. I ran into a number of

great troops from Texas, from Ft.

Hood, TX, and individuals from Texas

who are doing a fabulous job, putting

their lives on the line and showing the

definition of courage and honor. Those

guys go right into the face of the fire,

and when the fire fight comes when the

bullets are flying, they are running towards

the fire. It was really a beautiful

modern-day story of courage under fire

and of doing the right thing.

That right thing is now yielding, in

the last week, multiparty elections in

Egypt. Mubarak has not stood for elections

in 25, 30 years. It is going to do

that. With a protest now taking place,

the Lebanese Government has withdrawn

and is asking Syria to withdraw

and to allow democracy to flourish in

Lebanon. Saudi Arabia had flawed local

elections, but they at least had somewhat

of an election.

I met with officials in Iraq who are

now discussing how to maintain a balance

of power and an open society. The

policies in Iraq are yielding enormous

fruit—still difficult, still very fragile,

but those soldiers who have put so

much on the line are really changing

the world. I thank my colleague from

Texas for her support in that effort.

What we are seeing taking place in

that region is amazing.

Our troops are in harm’s way. We

continue to see the number of improvised

explosive devices about the same

as they have in the past, although our

number of wounded troops has gone

down in the last 2 weeks about 40 percent,

which is encouraging. That also

means, apparently, that more of the attacks

are directed at the Iraqis. We saw

yesterday the horrific tragedy, over 100

Iraqis killed in a massive car bomb,

that clearly the insurgency, much of it

commanded and controlled out of other

countries—and Syria has complicity of

allowing some of this operation to take

place—has to be pressured against

that. But we have to get at that command

and control structure of the insurgency

and break that to be able to

stop some of this incredible carnage

that is taking place, people being

killed in a country that just seeks to

be free, seeks to be an open, fair society.

It is difficult. In the early stages

of democracy there will be flaws and

missteps, but it is really changing the

face of the region.

I met with Prime Minister Allawi. I

met with the head of the Kurdish

group, and Shias, Dr. Joffee. Each is

talking about bringing in the Sunnis,

working together, creating an open society.

I am concerned about the issue

of the role of Islam in the constitution.

That is clearly one of the key issues

being negotiated.