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Baghdad, Iraq

October 26, 2005

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad has congratulated the Iraqi people on the passage of the constitution, which sets the stage for elections December 15 to choose a permanent government.

In a press release October 26, Khalilzad said the large voter turnout in the October 15 referendum was a victory for democracy and a defeat for terrorists.

"Those who voted against the constitution will still have a chance to shape the future of Iraq by again participating in the December 15 elections, which will establish Iraq's new permanent government," the ambassador said.

The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq released the preliminary results of the referendum on the constitution October 25, reporting that more than 78 percent of voters approved the document. President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan have welcomed the announcement from the Iraqi electoral commission that voters have approved Iraq's Constitution. (See [related article](#).)

For additional information, see [Iraq's Political Process](#).

Following is the text of Khalilzad's press release:

(begin text)

Embassy of the United States
Baghdad, Iraq
October 26, 2005

AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD STATEMENT ON THE REFERENDUM RESULTS

I want to congratulate the Iraqi people on the passage of the Constitution in the national referendum on October 15. Yesterday's announcement and confirmation of the results by the Independent Election Commission of Iraq is to be commended. The announcement yesterday that the Constitution has passed creates a solid foundation for the political process in Iraq to continue to advance. The large number of Iraqis who participated in the referendum is a positive step in building a new government that represents and is responsible to the Iraqi people.

I also want to express our appreciation to the IECI and the UN for their efforts to build an election system that Iraqis can be confident in and know that every vote will be counted and accounted for. They restored validity to a process that for so many years under Saddam's dictatorship did not allow for real free and fair elections. The IECI and the United Nations created conditions for all Iraqis to participate in the vote on October 15th. On October 15, 2005, each Iraqi vote was secret and the decision was between them and their maker in the voting booth. We look forward to their continued hard work as Iraq leads up towards the December 15th national election.

The large turn out nationwide was a significant achievement in Iraq's growing democracy. Unlike the January elections, where many decided not to cast their ballot and therefore not allowing their voice to be heard for the

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future of Iraq, the vote on October 15th whether Iraqis voted for or against the Constitution, their participation in the process was important. By casting their vote, they won a victory for democracy in Iraq, there are no losers, except the terrorists who do not want to see the Iraqi people move forward in the democratic process. Those who voted against the Constitution will still have a chance to shape the future of Iraq by again participating in the December 15 elections, which will establish Iraq's new permanent government. The Iraqi people have the power to select leaders who will represent their interests.

The Constitution is a living document. The next elected National Assembly will play a profound role in shaping this document. A special review within the first six months of next year will allow the parliament and the people to amend this document in any way that meets their values and needs. And after that, as Iraq evolves, so, too, will this charter evolve.

(end text)

[back to top ^](#)