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President Visits with Iraqi Out-Of-Country Voters

The Oval Office

 [In Focus: Renewal in Iraq](#)

1:47 P.M. EST



THE PRESIDENT: I've just had the really enjoyable experience of visiting with some Iraqi citizens who voted in the elections today. And you might notice, they've got their -- got the little ink-stained fingers there.

And, first of all, I was struck by how joyous they were to be able to vote for a government -- a permanent government under a new constitution. We take it for granted in America because we tend to -- we vote quite often in this country. These good folks got to vote for the first time for a permanent government.

And there's a lot of -- lot of joy, as far as I'm concerned, in seeing the Iraqi people accomplish this major milestone in the march to democracy. Millions of people voted. And I haven't seen all the tabulations of the vote, but we're certain that the turnout was significant and that the violence was down.

And, first, I want to congratulate the Iraqi citizens for being courageous and in defying the terrorists and refusing to be cowed into not voting. I believe freedom is universal. I believe the Iraqi citizen cares just as much about freedom and living a free life as the American citizen does.



Secondly, I want to thank our embassy for doing such good work there and working with the Iraqi citizens to get this vote off. And I want to thank the international community for participating in these elections. This is a major step forward in achieving our objective, which is an ally -- having a democratic Iraq, a country able to sustain itself and defend itself, a country that will be an ally in the war on terror, and a country which will send such a powerful example to others in the region, whether they live in Iran or Syria, for example.

I've assured these good Iraqi citizens that the United States will stay with them and complete this -- complete this job. They've expressed concern about listening to the commentary that we'll leave before the job is done -- they don't have to worry. We're doing the right thing. And we've got partners in peace with the Iraqi citizens.

This is a crucial part of the war on terror, as is the Patriot Act. The Patriot Act was passed four years ago. It gave our law enforcement the tools necessary to help protect the -- America, the same tools that law enforcement uses, for example, against drug dealers. The Patriot Act is set to expire. The House of Representatives, recognizing the value of the Patriot Act, voted in a bipartisan way to extend the Patriot Act. And now there are senators who are filibustering the Patriot Act. That is a bad decision for the security of the United States. I call upon the Senate to end the filibuster, and to pass this important legislation so that we have the tools necessary to defend the United States of America in a time of war.

I want to thank you all again for coming. May God bless your citizens. May God bless a free Iraq. I appreciate you being here.

END 1:50 P.M. EST

Return to this article at:

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