

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 25, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our appreciation for the recent public statements made by Ambassador Bremer regarding the Iraqi interim constitution, especially his statement that he may exercise his veto power over the temporary constitution if it includes Sharia law as the foundation on which the rights of the Iraqi people would be based. Additionally, we thank the Administration for its efforts to expand the opportunities for Iraqi women by increasing their involvement in all aspects of Iraqi society including the government. With a strong and public commitment by the United States to equality, we can help the Iraqi people establish a new society and government that recognizes the rights of all Iraqi citizens.

While we are pleased with this renewed commitment to the future of Iraqi women, we continue to have serious concerns about the fate of the country once the transition to sovereignty is completed. As you stated in your address to the nation on September 7, 2003, "In Iraq, we are helping the long suffering people of that country to build a decent and democratic society at the center of the Middle East." As you know, the greatest opportunity for the United States to influence the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) is now. The passage of Resolution 137 by the IGC showed that forces exist within the country who want to prevent women from having rights, and in fact, want to reverse the rights that women possessed under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Iraqi women should not have to face a future where they cannot walk outside without their husbands, obtain employment, or gain custody of their children. We should listen to the Iraqi women who have recently voiced their desire to participate in government by holding protests across the country. They also fear what will happen after the United States turns control over to a new Iraqi government.

With the deadline of February 28, 2004, for completion of a draft constitution and the June deadline for the transfer of power, we must act now to provide for the equal rights of all Iraqis. Therefore, we respectfully request answers to the following questions within thirty days:

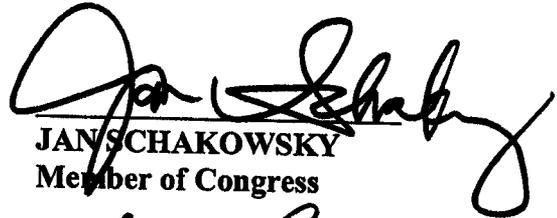
- What is your specific plan for achieving these goals and ensuring that we do not leave Iraqi women worse off than when we committed American troops to ending the reign of Saddam Hussein and bringing freedom to Iraq's people?
- Who in your Administration has the specific responsibility for overseeing the issues that are important to Iraqi women including equality, the right to vote, and the opportunity to participate in all aspects of Iraqi society? Who will hold this responsibility once the transfer of sovereignty occurs?

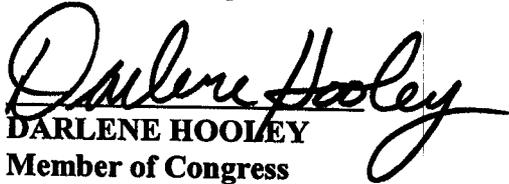
• What can we do to help you accomplish these objectives?

Thank you for your attention in this matter. We look forward to your reply.

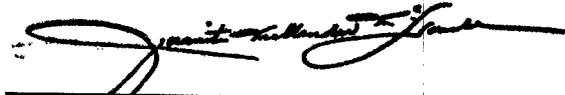
Sincerely,


CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress


JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress


DARLENE HOOLEY
Member of Congress


EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
Member of Congress


JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD
Member of Congress

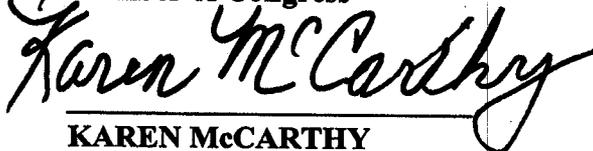

MICHAEL McNULTY
Member of Congress


MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress

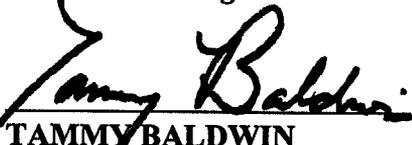

NITA LOWEY
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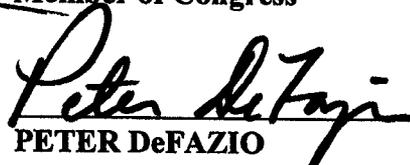

JERROLD NADLER
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