

All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.

It is important we be factual. The House has to originate tax bills. The Senate can pass appropriations bills. I have always asserted our right. Because of tradition, the House wants to pass them first, and that is fine; that can be the tradition. But nothing should keep the Senate from passing appropriations bills first if we so desire. There is no point of order against them whatsoever.

A point that was made on the Finance Committee—and I was critical of the Senate for bringing up a prescription drug proposal without it going through the Finance Committee. I did a little homework. Since the creation of Medicare in 1965, 22 of the 23 Medicare expansions passed the Finance Committee—bipartisan, overwhelming. We had a tripartisan bill that had a chance to garner bipartisan support on which many of us were requesting a markup in the Finance Committee, before we got to the floor, so we would have a bipartisan approach when it came to the very important, critical, and expensive extension of prescription drugs to Medicare. We were denied that markup. We are going to have the most expensive expansion of Medicare since its inception, and it will be done on the floor of the Senate without input from committee, without scoring, without the CBO, without expert input.

That is a pretty crummy way to legislate. It makes one think the legislation was done more for political purposes than for substantive and legislative intent to make something happen.

My good friend from Massachusetts discussed minimum wage. Senator NICKLES is opposed. Not all Republicans are. This Republican is opposed to increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.65 in 14 months. That is a \$1.50 increase in 14 months. A lot of people are paying in the neighborhood of \$5.15 or \$5.50. If they have to pay an extra \$1.50 in the next year, many will say, I cannot do that, thank you very much. A small business in Delaware or Oklahoma—maybe it is a McDonald's—cannot always afford to pass the \$1.50 on and some employees will lose a job. Maybe it is pumping gas, sacking groceries, or sweeping floors.

My colleague said this is to help increase people's self-esteem and integrity, people who are sweeping the floors. I used to sweep floors. I used to have a janitor service. I used to work for minimum wage, and so did my wife. It was only about 34 years ago we did that, and the minimum wage at that time, if I remember, was a lot less than it is today. It did not hurt my self-esteem. I wanted to make more money, so I started my own business. It was rather successful.

My point is, I don't think we improve people's self-esteem alone by saying we will have the Federal Government setting higher standards, and if you can-

not make it, we would rather you be unemployed. I would rather have someone working for \$5.50 and climb the economic ladder than put that ladder up so high that they cannot get on and they stay unemployed and continue to draw welfare benefits.

I hear we want to freeze this Bush tax cut for the ultrawealthy, the tax cuts for the millionaires. When President Clinton was elected, the maximum personal income tax rate was 31 percent. He increased that rate to 39.6 percent for personal income tax. President Clinton did that retroactively in 1993. President Bush, over several years, eventually gets that 39.6-percent rate in an incremental phasing down to 35 percent. In other words, it is still several percent more than it was under President Clinton. It is 4 percentage points, but percentage-wise it is about a 13-percent rate higher than when President Clinton was elected.

President Reagan lowered the rate to 28 percent. President Bush, the 41st President, increased it, due to a lot of pressure, from 28 percent to 31 percent. President Clinton took it from 31 percent to 39.6. President Bush, the 43rd President, reduces that rate gradually from 39.6 percent to 35 percent over several years. My colleagues are objecting to that as tax cuts for the wealthy. But that is not nearly as much as the tax increase proposed by the previous administration.

It is very important we be factual. The pension bill has been on the calendar since July. Senator DASCHLE could have brought it up at any point. We have bipartisan support for the Finance Committee bill that was passed in July. The minimum wage has been on the calendar since May. If Senator DASCHLE wants to bring it up, he can. He is the majority leader. He has that right to bring up the issues. Two or three weeks before the election looks as if it is calculated more for political purposes than for trying to change the law of the land.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be terminated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. The two managers are here for the conference report. They originally had 2 hours for the conference report, and I ask unanimous consent that if they need 2 hours, the time be from now until 5:30.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT OF 2002—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of the conference report accompanying H.R. 3295, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3295) to require States and localities to meet uniform and nondiscriminatory election technology and administration requirements applicable to Federal elections, to establish grant programs to provide assistance to States and localities to meet those requirements and to improve election technology and the administration of Federal elections, to establish the Election Administration Commission, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate, and agree to the same with an amendment, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of October 8, 2002.)

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I am very pleased this afternoon to bring to the attention of the Senate the conference report agreement on legislation to reform our Nation's election laws. I anticipate we will not need the full time allocated. I would like to think Members are so interested they would like to come over and share their thoughts with us on this subject. But knowing there are no votes today, that is not likely to occur so we will probably use a lot less time than the 2 hours required.

I note the presence of my friend and colleague, Senator McCONNELL, the ranking member of the Rules Committee.

Before getting to the substance of my remarks, let me begin by thanking him and his staff, and the staff of Senator BOND as well, one of our conferees, and that of my own two conferees on the Democratic side, Senators DURBIN and SCHUMER, and their staffs, not to mention my own staff, Kennie Gill and others, for the tremendous work done on the Senate side of this effort.

It is somewhat ironic. I understand we are going to get this done. It is a quiet afternoon after Columbus Day. Members are still back in their States having spent the weekend with their families before returning tomorrow when we will have some additional votes as we begin to wind up this 107th Congress. It is somewhat ironic in a sense that we are in this sort of quiet stillness of this Chamber with only two of us here to talk, when you consider what gave rise to this legislation—the fact that there was one of the most tumultuous elections in the history of

our country that galvanized the attention, not only of the people of this country but those throughout the world. For more than a month, every single news program, day in and day out, 24 hours a day, was of eyes peering through hanging chads and people bellowing at each other in a voting precinct in Florida, with courtrooms packed, around the corner from here, in the United States Supreme Court.

The irony is all of that turmoil provoked us to step up and find out whether our election laws could do with some changing—not that it all occurred in Florida or in just the 2000 election—but today, as we approach the second anniversary of that election, we find ourselves in a quiet Chamber with a couple of Members talking about something that both of us believe is a rather historic piece of legislation.

When you consider that unlike other matters that come before this body, despite the fact that our colleagues may claim expertise in every subject matter that comes before them, this is truly one in which each Member who serves here is an expert because they would not have arrived here had they not been elected. To that extent, we have an appreciation of elections beyond the awareness of the average citizen in this country. So the fact that we—as Democrats and Republicans, in a time when people question whether or not we can come to terms about some of the major issues of the day, can take a subject matter so rife with partisanship as an election, with all of the scars, the wounds, the admonitions, the rhetoric, the demagoguery, use whatever words you want—were able in this Congress to craft legislation that passed the other body by a substantial margin, and passed this body 99 to 1, and then the conference report passed the House by a vote of 357–48, and we hope a substantial vote will occur here as well, is a tribute to the membership of this body, to the leadership of this body, and the other body as well—that we were able to get this done.

If I may say so, I have been here 21 years. I have had proud moments when I have been involved in other legislative efforts. None exceeds the sense of pride I have over this particular accomplishment. Again, no one can ever claim that they were responsible in a legislative process for the final result. A lot of people can take legitimate credit for helping us achieve what we are asking our colleagues to support tomorrow when we vote before noon.

This agreement, as it said, represents many mouths of effort. That effort took place amid a steady stream of news reports that predicted the demise of election reform. While those reports bewailed the lack of progress in conference negotiations, they overlooked the fact that, instead of a lack of progress, conferees were making progress. Working quietly during early mornings, late nights, and long weekends, we crafted the conference agreement that is before the Senate this afternoon.

It is a bipartisan and bicameral agreement. It is one that, I believe, merits the support of our colleges in the Senate.

It is one that has already been approved by the other body by a vote of 357 to 48. And it is one that the Administration has said the President is prepared to sign.

Twenty-three months ago, our Nation was thrown into turmoil because we learned a painful reality: that our democracy does not work as well as we thought it did, or as it should. More than 100 million citizens went to the polls on election day 2000—November 7. Four to six million of them—for a variety of reasons—never had their votes counted. Some were thwarted by faulty machinery. Some were victims of wrongful and illegal purges from voter lists. Others fell victim to poorly designed ballots. But all of them—all—were denied the right to effectively exercise their most fundamental right as American citizens: the right to vote.

Regardless of which candidate one supported, there is no disagreement that election day 2000 was not a proud day for our democracy.

It was a day of deep embarrassment for a nation rightly viewed by the rest of the world as a beacon light of self-government. But that day was also, in a very real sense, a gift. Had there never been a contested election like the election of 2000, the problems plaguing our Nation's elections would likely never have been addressed. So it was in a sense a gift. If you were to find a silver lining in what occurred that day, what we are producing and asking our colleagues to support may be it.

The legislation we present to the Senate today goes a long way toward fixing those problems and righting those wrongs. It does justice to the American voter. It breaks new ground. It is, I believe, the first civil rights legislation of the 21st century. It is not a perfect bill. But it will make our democracy work better and be stronger.

Two hundred and thirteen years ago at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, the Framers decreed that the administration of federal elections is not the job of just the States, or just the Federal Government, but the job of both.

Until now, that vision of cooperation and partnership has largely been honored in the breach. The Federal Government has for the most part been an observer, not a partner, in the conduct of elections for Federal office.

Starting now, with this legislation, that pattern comes to an end. For the first time—if you exclude the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in which the Federal Government told States what not to do—they must not levy poll taxes, must not set literacy tests—the National Government steps up to more fully meet its constitutional duty to uphold the soundness and sanctity of the ballot. This is the first time the Federal Government is saying what we

must do together to make our elections stronger. With this bill, we move closer to the day when every vote cast will be a vote counted.

Our bill achieves this progress in three ways: with new rights, new responsibilities, and new resources.

First, new rights. The conference agreement establishes new voting rights for our citizens. These include:

The right—starting in 2004—to cast a provisional ballot. With this right, no qualified voter can ever again be turned away from the polling place without being able to cast at least a provisional ballot. There are some States that are doing this already and have been for years. Many do not.

The right to check and correct one's ballot if the voter made a mistake. I know this is a radical idea. In this way, voters need never again leave a polling place haunted by the thought that they voted for the wrong candidate, or nullified their own vote by over-voting.

The right of all voters to cast a private and independent ballot. Today, millions of disabled Americans face two options on election day, both of them bad: they either vote with the assistance of a stranger, or they do not vote at all. In the 2000 elections alone, some 20 million of them took the second option—because the barriers to the ballot box were just too daunting.

With this legislation, henceforth—beginning in the year 2006—those days will come to an end. Starting with this bill, a disabled voter will have the same right to cast a private and independent ballot as any other voter.

That provision dealing with providing for accessibility improvements in voting systems may not be required to go into effect until 2006. Obviously, some States may do that before. There is something in this bill that says you cannot do that. But at the very least, by the year 2006.

The bill also creates the right to have, at each polling place, printed, posted information, including a sample ballot and a listing of voter rights and responsibilities. In this way, our bill will sharply reduce the risk of confusion and error on election day.

In addition, our bill requires states to develop “uniform and nondiscriminatory” standards for counting ballots—because whether or not your ballot will count should never depend on the county or precinct where you happen to live and the economic circumstances there.

Second, our bill establishes new responsibilities—for voters, for States, and for the Federal Government.

To address concerns about fraud, voters seeking to vote for the first time in a state will be responsible for producing some form of identification. Senator BOND was particularly instrumental in crafting these provisions. We thank him.

States will be responsible for producing statewide computerized lists of registered voters. Once these lists are up and running, it is our hope and expectation that the risk that individuals

may be voting multiple times in multiple jurisdictions will be minimized if not eliminated altogether.

Let me add, by the way, that when it comes to the computerized statewide lists, a voter may not have to register again. If you live in a State that provides for state-wide registration, or wants to provide for state-wide registration, this requirement will facilitate that so that if you move around in that State from one county to another, or from one community to the next, a statewide voter registration list means you don't have to register again. If you move from one community and one precinct to the other, with the statewide list, you register once. If you stay in that State, you may be registered forever in that State regardless of where you may live or move to under state-wide registration.

That is not an insignificant burden we are lifting for many people in this country who move. If they are renters who can't afford homes and who want to participate in the process, every time they move from one precinct to the next, they have to register to vote. That will be over with, under state law providing for state-wide registration once provisions on the statewide voter registration requirements of this bill become effective.

To ensure that the requirements of the bill are met, States will also be required to establish meaningful enforcement procedures to remedy voters' grievances. And at the federal level, the Department of Justice will be responsible for enforcing the provisions of the act.

Third, this legislation would commit unprecedented new resources to improving and upgrading all aspects of our elections. It authorizes some \$3.9 billion over the next three years to help states replace and renovate voting equipment, train poll workers, educate voters, upgrade voter lists, and make polling places more accessible for the disabled.

I thought it worthwhile to note that since the elections of 2000, only three States—maybe a couple more—have made any effort at all to reform and update their election laws and requirements that voters use in the various States. It is always costly to do this. Frankly, as the Presiding Officer, a former Governor, can attest, when there are budget constraints and a lot of demands are being made, there has not been a great constituency out there advocating spending money to buy new voting equipment, or new voting machinery, or to train poll workers. There are many other demands on a State budget that have much larger constituencies than those who might say we ought to improve the voting systems of the country. The fact of matter is, despite a public outcry about all of this, there has been very little action over the years—even in the wake of the 2000 elections.

So it seems clear to us that if we are truly going to command States, in a

number of provisions, to do things differently, to suggest that they do so without providing the resources would be yet once again an unfunded mandate. We know how States feel about Federal requirements when there are not resources to support meeting those requirements.

This legislation provides \$3.9 billion—some that will flow immediately, and others subject to development of state plans and submission of applications. I will not go into all the details this afternoon. But the idea is that the Federal Government is going to become a real partner financially in the conduct of these elections. It does not mean the conduct of elections is going to be fully supported by the Federal Government. Obviously, States, communities, and municipalities have to allocate resources for every election. But with these changes we are talking about, the costs, by and large, are going to be borne by the Federal Government. This is the first time we will become such an active participant in improving the election systems of our country.

Lastly, this legislation establishes a new commission—the Election Assistance Commission—to assist states and voters. I want to acknowledge Senator MCCONNELL's pivotal role in conceiving of this commission. In coming years, it will serve as an important source of new ideas and support for states as they take steps to improve the caliber of their elections.

It allows us to have an ongoing relationship with election officials at the State and local level day in and day out rather than waiting for some crisis to occur or for some disastrous election result where we then go out and form some ad hoc commission to go back and look at what happened.

For the first time, we are going to have a permanent commission that doesn't have rulemaking authority, except to the extent provided under section 9(a) of "Motor-Voter," but sets voluntary standards and guidelines—a source of information for people to access, as we will, I am sure, in the years to come with technology being what it is, and a demand for efficiencies by the American public to update and to simplify the process to make voting as user friendly as it can possibly be while simultaneously protecting against the abuses in which some may wish to engage.

We will now have a permanent venue where those ideas can be heard and recommendations can be made so that we will be involved on a continuing basis in a seamless way with the conduct of something as fundamental and as important as the elections in this country.

New rights, new responsibilities, new resources. And with them, a new day for our Nation's democracy.

Almost 2 years from the 2000 elections, this legislation will help America move beyond the days of hanging chads, butterfly ballots, and illegal

purges of voters and accusations of voter fraud. It will make the central premise of our democracy—that the people are sovereign—ring even more truly in the years to come.

This legislation has the support of many individuals and organizations that have been critical to its success.

They include former Presidents Ford and Carter. We thank them for their work on the National Commission on Federal Election Reform. They met early on and crafted some recommendations and ideas. They held hearings around the country. Once again, it is a great tribute to President Ford and President Carter for their ongoing commitment to this country and for the allocation of time from their schedules to dedicate efforts to make recommendations on how we might improve the election process. I thank them.

The Congressional Black Caucus—for whom this legislative effort was the number one priority—I thank EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON particularly as the Chair of the Black Caucus; JOHN CONYERS, my coauthor of this bill from the very outset; and every other member of the Black Caucus who has been tremendously helpful in working with us on this legislation and lending support to this final product.

The National Association of Secretaries of State has been tremendously helpful. It is a bipartisan group that deals every day with the election laws in our country. They have to grapple with them. It is critically important. Everything we talked about on which they had some input to let us know whether or not these things will work—obviously, many of them have not been tested yet, and time will only tell. But because they were involved here, we think the likelihood of things not working as well as one might normally expect will be minimized.

I particularly thank my secretary of state, Susan Bysewicz of Connecticut, who has done a remarkable job in our State, has been tremendously creative, and was a source of a lot of good solid information.

Secretary of State Kathy Cox of Georgia—I want to commend Georgia, by the way, one of the three States that made significant changes on their own in the election laws of their own States. They did a tremendous job. And Kathy Cox deserves a lot of credit for stepping up and doing things early on.

I thank Secretary of State Chet Culver of Iowa, the youngest secretary of state in the country and the son of a former colleague of ours who is doing a fantastic job, for his input. Ninety-two percent of the people of Iowa are registered to vote. It is one of the highest in the country. They have 300,000 new registered voters in the last 3½ or 4 years in Iowa. Seventy-two percent of the people of that State voted in the last election. It is really a remarkable result, and a lot of it, again, is the result of the creative work of the secretary of state of Iowa.

The NAACP has been tremendously helpful; the AFL-CIO; the United Auto Workers; the National Federation of the Blind; the United Cerebral Palsy Association; the American Foundation of the Blind; and the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems, which represents persons with disabilities. I thank them for all of their tremendous help.

I ask unanimous consent that letters from these organizations and individuals in support of this legislation be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON
FEDERAL ELECTION REFORM.

October 4, 2002.

Former Presidents Ford and Carter Welcome the Agreement Reached on Election Reform Legislation.

Today, former Presidents Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter, along with Lloyd Cutler and Bob Michel, co-chairs of the National Commission on Federal Election Reform, welcomed the bipartisan agreement struck by the House and Senate Conference Committee on a bill to reform federal elections. "The bill represents a delicate balance of shared responsibilities between levels of government," Ford and Carter said. "This comprehensive bill can ensure that America's electoral system will again be a source of national pride and a model to all the world." Indeed, all four of the co-chairs share the belief of Congressman John Lewis (D-GA) and others that, if passed by both Houses and signed by President Bush, this legislation can provide the most meaningful improvements in voting safeguards since the civil rights laws of the 1960s.

WASHINGTON BUREAU,
NAACP,

Washington, DC, October 8, 2002.

Re Conference Report to H.R. 3295, the Help America Vote Act (election reform)

Members,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots civil rights organization supports the conference report on H.R. 3295, the Help America Vote Act and we urge you to work quickly towards its enactment.

Since its inception over 90 years ago the NAACP has fought, and many of our members have died, to ensure that every American is allowed to cast a free and unfettered vote and to have that vote counted. Thus, election reform has been one of our top legislative priorities for the 107th Congress and we have worked very closely with members from both houses to ensure that the final product is as comprehensive and as non-discriminatory as possible.

Thus we are pleased that the final product contains many of the elements that we saw as essential to addressing several of the flaws in our nation's electoral system. Specifically, the NAACP strongly supports the provisions requiring provisional ballots and statewide voter registration lists, as well as those ensuring that each polling place have at least one voting machine that is accessible to the disabled and ensuring that the voting machines allow voters to verify and correct their votes before casting them.

The NAACP recognizes that the actual effectiveness of the final version of H.R. 3295

will depend upon how the states and the federal government implement the provisions contained in the new law. Thus, the NAACP intends to remain vigilant and review the progress of this new law at the local and state levels and make sure that no provision, especially the voter identification requirements, are being abused to disenfranchise eligible voters.

Again, on behalf of the NAACP and our more than 500,000 members nation-wide, I urge you to support the swift enactment of the conference report on H.R. 3295, the Help America Vote Act. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter; if you have any questions or comments I hope that you will feel free to contact me at (202) 638-2269.

Sincerely,

HILARY O. SHELTON,
Director.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Washington, DC, October 8, 2002.

DEAR SENATOR: The AFL-CIO supports the conference report on H.R. 3295, the Help America Vote Act.

This conference report will help improve our nation's election system in several important ways. It will allow registered individuals to cast provisional ballots even if their names are mistakenly excluded from voter registration lists at their polling places. It will require states to develop centralized, statewide voter registration lists to ensure the accuracy of their voter registration records. It will also require states to provide at least one voting machine per polling place that is accessible to the disabled and ensure that their voting machines allow voters to verify and correct their votes before casting them.

Since the actual number of individuals enfranchised or disenfranchised by the conference report on H.R. 3295 will depend on how the states and the federal government implement its provisions, the AFL-CIO will closely monitor the progress or this new law—especially its voter identification requirements. We will also increase our voter education efforts to ensure that individuals know and understand their new rights and responsibilities.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM SAMUEL,
Director, Department of Legislation.

PARALYZED VETERANS
OF AMERICA,

Washington, DC, October 15, 2002.

Chairman

CHRISTOPHER J. DODD,
Ranking Member MITCH MCCONNELL,
Senate Rules and Administration Committee,
Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS: On behalf of the members of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), I want to congratulate you and your staff on the hard work that was done to bring forth a bipartisan Election Reform conference report. The House of Representatives passed the report overwhelmingly, recognizing the fact that our federal government, since the presidential election of 2000, needed to take steps to ensure the public that their votes do indeed count. This bill, the Help America Vote Act of 2002, does that.

The bill provides funds to states and local jurisdictions to recruit and train poll workers. It will allow for replacement of antiquated mechanisms, like punch card and lever voting machines, with machines that will allow voters to verify their vote before the ballot is cast, including voters with disabilities.

This legislation will charge the Architectural Transportation Barriers Compliance

Board known as the Access Board to develop minimum standards of access at polling places and to consult with other organizations for research and improvements to voting technology.

This legislation will allow the Secretary of the Health and Human Services to make payments to eligible states and local jurisdictions for the purposes of making polling places accessible: including the paths of travel, entrances, exits, and voting areas of each polling facility. It will ensure sites are accessible to individuals with disabilities including those who are blind or visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation including privacy and independence.

In addition the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall provide the Protection and Advocacy Systems of each State grant monies to ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities, including registering to vote, education in casting a vote and accessing polling places.

Again, PVA congratulates you on this legislation which, when implemented and fully funded, will provide tremendous access for PVA members and all people with disabilities in exercising their constitutional right to vote. PVA stands ready to work with you and your staff on implementation of this legislation which ensures confidence in our citizens and our democracy that indeed every ones vote cast will indeed count.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS K. VOLLMER,
Associate Executive Director for Government Relations.

NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND,

Baltimore, MD, October 9, 2002.

Hon. ROBERT NEY, Chairman,
Hon. STENY H. HOYER, Ranking Minority Member,

Committee on House Administration, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN AND CONGRESSMAN HOYER: I am writing to express the strong support of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) for the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Thanks to your efforts and strong bipartisan support, this legislation includes provisions designed to guarantee that all blind persons will have equal access to voting procedures and technology. We particularly endorse the standard set for blind people to be able to vote privately and independently at each polling place throughout the United States.

While the 2000 election demonstrated significant problems with our electoral system, consensus regarding the solution proved to be much more difficult to find. Part of that solution will now include installation of up-to-date technology for voting throughout the United States. This means that voting technology will change, and devices purchased now will set the pattern for decades to come.

With more than 50,000 members representing every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, the NFB is the largest organization of blind people in the United States. As such we know about blindness from our own experience. The right to vote and cast a truly secret ballot is one of our highest priorities, and modern technology can now support this goal. For that reason, we strongly support the Help America Vote Act of 2002, and appreciate your efforts to enact this legislation.

Sincerely,

JAMES GASHIEL,
Director of Governmental Affairs.

UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY

ASSOCIATIONS,

Washington, DC, October 9, 2002.

DEAR SENATOR DODD: United Cerebral Palsy Association and affiliates support the conference report on H.R. 3295, the Help America Vote Act. We also take this opportunity to commend you for the work you did to ensure that all people with disabilities have equal access under this act.

This legislation, while not perfect, will go a long way in improving the ability of people with disabilities to exercise their constitutional right and responsibility to vote. The funding allocated for the multiple provisions of H.R. 3295 is critical, and we pledge to work with Congress to ensure that this funding is made available.

UCP stands ready to assist states' and local entities as they work toward compliance of this very important legislation. The changes outlined in the bill must be adopted swiftly, correctly and fairly, and it will be incumbent upon us all to help in this process.

Finally, UCP applauds you and your colleagues on your dogged determination to pass legislation that will make distinct improvements at the polls and in the lives of voters with disabilities.

Sincerely,

PATRICIA SANDUSKY,
Interim Executive Director.

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE
BLIND, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
GROUP.

Washington, DC, October 9, 2002.

The Hon. CHRISTOPHER DODD,
U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR DODD: The American Foundation for the Blind supports the conference report for S. 565 and H.R. 3295. We are pleased that the conference report contains the disability provisions of the Senate bill.

Already this year, in some jurisdictions, blind and visually impaired voters have, for the first time, been able to cast a secret and independent ballot. We look forward to the day when all voters with visual impairment will have full and independent access to the electoral process.

The mission of the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) is to enable people who are blind or visually impaired to achieve equality of access and opportunity that will ensure freedom of choice in their lives. AFB led the field of blindness in advocating the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Today, AFB continues its work to protect the rights of blind and visually impaired people to equal access to employment, information, and the programs and services of state and local government.

Sincerely,

PAUL W. SCHROEDER,
Vice President, Governmental Relations.

AARP,
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS,

Washington, DC, October 10, 2002.

The Hon. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD,
Chairman, Senate Rules and Administration
Committee,

Senate Russell Office Building, Washington,
DC.

The Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Ranking Member, Senate Rules and Administration
Committee,

Senate Russell Office Building, Washington,
DC.

DEAR SENATORS: We are writing to express our support for the bipartisan election reform conference report on H.R. 3295. AARP recognizes that significant compromise was required by all parties to produce an agree-

ment that would advance the process of effective and fair election reform. The Senate-House conference report contains a mix of provisions that both strengthen and hinder citizen ability to exercise the legal right to vote and have that vote counted. Despite its shortcomings, however, we believe the overall effect of the compromise agreement will be to reform and enhance the nation's voting system.

AARP is pleased that the compromise:

Requires states to develop and maintain centralized polling lists;

Requires polling sites in each jurisdiction to meet accessibility standards and provide user-friendly voting equipment for persons with disabilities;

Makes provisional ballots available to voters whose names may be erroneously absent from registration lists;

Permits voters to verify and correct their voting preferences before casting them;

Provides Federal funds to encourage state & local reforms; and

Provides for training of elections administration staff and polling site workers.

Unfortunately, the H.R. 3295 compromise report weakens some existing voting rights and contains certain provisions that AARP believes will increase the chances of a recurrence of the problems that plagued the 2000 Presidential Elections. The report:

Imposes voter identification requirements that discourage participation by low income, minority and foreign-born citizens;

Encourages purging of voter registration lists without current law assurances to prevent illegal purging of legal voters;

Permits the denial of registration if the registrant possesses either a driver's license or social security number but fails to write it on the registration form; and

Denies legal recourse for improper election administration, while lacking adequate enforcement provisions to ensure that the ballots of all legal voters are counted.

These provisions undermine existing voting protections, and provide technical loopholes that can discourage or intimidate potential legal voters—especially those who are low income, minority and foreign-born.

Ultimately, the success of this legislation in affording all eligible citizens the opportunity to vote and have that vote accurately counted depends on implementation by the states. AARP—through the advocacy and voter education efforts of our national and state offices—will work with states, election officials and other civil rights organizations to ensure that election reform implementation is fair and does not discourage citizen voter participation. We appreciate your leadership in bringing about these critically important advances. And, we look forward to working with you to further our most basic right as citizens—the vote. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me or have your staff contact Larry White of our Federal Affairs staff at (202) 434-3800.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER HANSEN,
Director of Advocacy.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROTECTION
& ADVOCACY SYSTEMS,

October 9, 2002.

The Hon. CHRIS DODD,
U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR DODD: The Protection and Advocacy System (P&A) and the Client Assistance Programs (CAPs) comprise a federally mandated, nationwide network of disability rights agencies. Each year these agencies provide education, information and referral services to hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities and their families. They also provide individual advocacy and/or

legal representation to tens of thousands of people in all the states and territories. The National Association for Protection and Advocacy Systems (NAPAS) is the membership organization for the P&A network. In that capacity, NAPAS wants to offer its support for the passage of "The Help America Vote Act of 2002" (H.R. 3295).

NAPAS believes that the disability provisions in the bill go far to ensure that people with all types of disabilities—physical, mental, cognitive, or sensory—will have much improved opportunities to exercise their right to vote. Not only does this bill offer individuals with disabilities better access to voting places and voting machines, but it also will help provide election workers and others with the skills to ensure that the voting place is a welcome environment for people with disabilities. NAPAS is very pleased that P&A network will play an active role in helping implement the disability provisions in this bill.

NAPAS is well aware that there are still some concerns with certain provisions of the bill. We hope that these concerns can be worked out, if not immediately, then as the bill is implemented. It would be extremely unfortunate if people continued to face barriers to casting their ballot after this bill is signed into law.

Finally, We want to thank the bill's sponsors, Senators Dodd (D-CT) and McConnell (R-KY) and Representatives Ney (R-OH) and Hoyer (D-MD) for their hard work and perseverance. We look forward to working with each of them to ensure the swift and effective implementation of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

BERNADETTE FRANKS-ONGOY,
President.

[From News Common Cause, Oct. 8, 2002]

COMMON CAUSE PRESIDENT PRAISES ELECTION
REFORM AGREEMENT

Statement by Scott Harshbarger, president and chief executive officer of Common Cause, on the conference agreement on the election reform bill:

"The Help America Vote Act of 2002 is, as Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) has said, the first major piece of civil rights legislation in the 21st century. Nearly two years after we all learned that our system of voting had serious flaws, Congress will pass these unprecedented reforms.

"For the first time, the federal government has set high standards for state election officials to follow, while authorizing grants to help them comply. Billions of dollars will be spent across the country to improve election systems.

"This bill, while not perfect, will make those systems better. Registration lists will be more accurate. Voting machines will be modernized. Provisional ballots will be given to voters who encounter problems at the polling place. Students will be trained as poll workers.

"As Common Cause knows from a seven-year fight to pass campaign finance reform, compromise often comes slowly. We thank the bill's sponsors, Senators Dodd, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Christopher Bond (R-MO), and Representatives Robert Ney (R-OH) and Steny Hoyer (D-MD) for their work. Their persistence—even when negotiations bogged down—brought this bill through.

"After the President signs the bill, states will need to act. Implementing this bill will require state legislators to change laws, election officials to adopt new practices, polling places to alter their procedures, and poll workers to be retrained.

"These far-reaching changes will not come easily. The bill's enforcement provisions are

not as strong as the 1993 Motor Voter law or the 1965 Voter Rights Act. Some states may lag behind and fail to implement these changes properly; some polling places will experience problems like in Florida this year; others may have problems implementing the new identification provisions.

"Common Cause and our state chapters will work with civil rights groups and other to ensure that states fully and fairly implement the new requirements. We will help serve as the voters' watchdogs: citizen vigilance can protect voters from non-compliant states.

"Voters can now look to marked improvements at the polls in the years ahead, thanks to the bipartisan leadership of the bill's sponsors."

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF SECRETARIES OF STATE,
Washington, DC, October 9, 2002.

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
Longworth Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN NEY AND RANKING MEMBER HOYER: The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) congratulates you on the completion of H.R. 3295, the "Help America Vote Act." The bill is a landmark piece of bipartisan legislation, and we want to express our sincere thanks for your leadership during the conference negotiations. We also commend your Senate colleagues: Senators Chris Dodd, Mitch McConnell and Kit Bond.

The nation's secretaries of state, particularly those who serve as chief state election officials, consider this bill an opportunity to reinvigorate the election reform process. The "Help America Vote Act" serves as a federal response that stretches across party lines and provides a substantial infusion of federal money to help purchase new voting equipment and improve the legal, administrative and educational aspects of elections. In fact, our association endorsed the original draft of H.R. 3295 in November 2001.

Specifically, the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) is confident that passage of the final version of H.R. 3295 will authorize significant funding to help states achieve the following reforms:

Upgrades to, or replacement of, voting equipment and related technology;

Creation of statewide voter registration databases to manage and update voter registration rolls;

Improvement of poll worker training programs and new resources to recruit more poll workers throughout the states;

Increases in the quality and scope of voter education programs in the states and localities;

Improvement of ballot procedures, whereby voters would be allowed to review ballots and correct errors before casting their votes;

Improved access for voters with physical disabilities, who will be allowed to vote privately and independently for the first time in many states and localities;

Creation of provisional ballots for voters who are not listed on registration rolls, but claim to be registered and qualified to vote.

We want to make sure the states will get the funding levels they've been promised, and that Congress will provide adequate time to enact the most substantial reforms. Please be assured that the nation's secretaries of state are ready to move forward once Congress passes H.R. 3295 and the President signs it.

If we can be of further assistance to you, your staff members, or your colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives, please contact our office.

Best regards,

DAN GWADOSKY,
NASS President,
Maine Secretary of State.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF STATE LEGISLATURES,
Washington, DC, October 7, 2002.

Hon. ROBERT BYRD,
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BILL YOUNG,
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN BYRD AND YOUNG: On behalf of the nation's state legislators, we urge you to make reform of our nation's election processes a reality by providing sufficient funding to implement H.R. 3295. The conference agreement announced today will provide an effective means for states and counties to update their election processes without federalizing election administration. NCSL worked closely with the conferees in the development of this legislation and is satisfied that it keeps election administration at the state and local level, limits the role of the U.S. Justice Department to enforcement, does not create a federal private right of action, and establishes an advisory commission that will include two state legislators to assist with implementation. NCSL commends the conferees for their work on this landmark legislation and is committed to implementing the provisions of H.R. 3295 to ensure every voter's right to a fair and accurate election.

To ensure proper implementation and avoid imposing expensive unfunded mandates on the states, it is critical that the federal government immediately deliver sufficient funding for states to implement the requirements of this bill. Neither of the existing versions of appropriations legislation provides sufficient funding for election reform. We urge you to fully fund H.R. 3295 at the authorized level of \$2.16 billion for FY 2003.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that it may cost states up to \$3.19 billion in one-time costs to begin implementing the provisions of this legislation. In this current fiscal environment, it will be extraordinarily difficult for states to implement the minimum standards in the bill without immediate federal financial support. States are already facing budget shortfalls for FY 2003 of approximately \$58 billion. Thirteen states have reported budget gaps in excess of 10 percent of their general fund budgets. To satisfy their balanced budget requirements, states are being forced to draw down their reserves, cut budgets, and even raise taxes.

We look forward to working with you to keep the commitment of the states and the federal government to implementing H.R. 3295. If we can be of assistance in this or any other matter, please contact Susan Parnas Frederick (202-624-3566; susan.frederick@ncsl.org) or Alysoun McLaughlin (202-624-8691; alysoun.mclaughlin@ncsl.org) in NCSL's state-federal relations office in Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,

SENATOR ANGELA Z.
MONSON,
Oklahoma, President,
NCSL.

SPEAKER, MARTIN R.
STEPHENS,
Utah, President-elect,
NCSL.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF STATE ELECTION DIRECTORS,
Washington, DC, October 10, 2002.

Hon. BOB NEY,
Hon. STENY HOYER,
House Administration Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMEN NEY AND HOYER: The National Association State Election Direc-

tors (NASED) congratulates you on the successful completion of the final conference report on H.R. 3295. This initiative will significantly affect the manner in which elections are conducted in the United States. On balance, H.R. 3295 represents improvements to the administration of elections. As administrators of elections in each state we express our appreciation to you and your staff for providing us access to the process and reaching out to seek our views and positions on how to efficiently and effectively administer elections.

As with all election legislation, H.R. 3295 is a compromise package, which places new challenges and opportunities before state and local election officials. We stand ready to implement H.R. 3295 once it is passed by Congress and signed into law by the President. Implementation of this bill will be impossible without the full \$3.9 billion appropriation that is authorized. The success of this bold congressional initiative rests in large measure upon the appropriation of sufficient funds to bring the bill's objectives to reality.

We found the bipartisan approach to this legislation refreshing and beneficial. Thank you again for including NASED in the congressional consideration of the bill.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

BROOK THOMPSON,
President, NASED.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES,
Washington, DC, October 9, 2002.

Hon. CHRISTOPHER DODD,
Chairman, Committee on Rules and Administration, U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Rules and Administration, U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN DODD AND SENATOR MCCONNELL: We would like to congratulate you and thank you for your leadership, perseverance and hard work in reaching agreement in the House-Senate conference on the "Help American Vote Act of 2002." We believe the final bill is a balanced approach to reforming election laws and practices and to providing resources to help counties and states in improving and upgrading voting equipment. The National Association of Counties supports H.R. 3295 as it was approved by the House-Senate conference Committee.

We are very concerned about Congress providing the funds to implement the new law. While there is much confusion at this time about the appropriation process for FY2003, we strongly urge the leadership of the House and Senate and President Bush to support inclusion of \$2.16 billion in a continuing resolution. This is the amount authorized for FY2003 by the "Help American Vote Act." We believe that funding and improving voting practices in the United States is an important as our efforts to strengthen homeland security.

Thank you again for your continuing efforts to fund and implement this new law.

Sincerely,

LARRY E. NAAKE,
Executive Director.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I also would like to mention the tremendous assistance provided by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the League of Women Voters, and People for the American Way.

Before I turn to my colleagues who wish to be heard, I would be remiss if I

did not publicly express my gratitude to my fellow conferees. I already mentioned Senator McCONNELL, Senator BOND, Senator DURBIN, and Senator SCHUMER. I thank their staffs as well.

I want to take a moment as well to thank an individual I had never really met before—I may have met him before, but I did not certainly know him—and that is the chairman of the House Administration Committee, BOB NEY, from the State of Ohio, who serves in a tough job as chairman of that committee. He has been in the Congress, I think, about 8 or 10 years.

He worked very hard on this legislation. And I developed a great deal of respect and affection for BOB NEY. We are of different parties and, obviously, different States, not serving together in the House of Representatives.

But BOB NEY and his staff were tenacious, hard working, and determined to get a bill. I commend them for that. We were not sure we were going to be able to get it done in the end, as it appeared at several points this may not work. And because BOB NEY felt strongly that we had an obligation to try, we are here today with this product on which they had a successful vote in the other body. So I commend BOB NEY for his tremendous efforts and that of his staff.

STENY HOYER is the ranking Democrat on the House Administration Committee. I have known STENY for years. Unlike BOB NEY, STENY and I have been good friends for a long time. STENY HOYER has been as committed to election reform issues as anyone, as well as his commitment to the disabled.

He was one of the prime architects of legislation affecting the disabled. So while we talked about that a lot in this body during the consideration of our bill, we certainly need to extend credit to STENY HOYER for his commitment to those issues as well.

So the team of BOB NEY and STENY HOYER, putting together the product they did, deserves a great deal of credit and recognition for what we hope will be the adoption of this conference report tomorrow and the signing by the President of this, we think, historic piece of legislation.

On more occasions than I can recall, the three of us—STENY HOYER, BOB NEY, and myself—along with staffs, spent a lot of late nights. I am looking around the Chamber at faces who were with me in those rooms in the wee hours of the morning, and long weekends, going back and forth. And I appreciate all of their efforts. We had some tough moments, but in any good piece of legislation there will be tension. And if people are committed to try to work things out, you can produce results such as we have in this legislation. So without their persistence and the patience of all involved, we would not be here. And I thank them.

Last but far from least, I thank JOHN CONYERS, the dean of the Congressional Back Caucus, for his stalwart support.

The day we introduced a bill, that is not unlike what we are asking our colleagues to support here, I stood in a room with two people, in front of a bank of cameras, as we laid out this particular idea. And the two individuals with me in that room were JOHN CONYERS and John Sweeney of the AFL-CIO. And I thank both of them.

But JOHN CONYERS has been tireless. He has never given up on this. He knew that compromises would have to be struck, and he insisted we reach those compromises even though he would prefer, in some instances, that provisions of the bill not be included. But a great legislator, a good legislator, understands that when people gather for a conference, unfortunately, they arrive with their opinions, and you are not going to be able to get your own way all the time. So JOHN CONYERS was tremendously helpful. I began this journey with him a long time ago. And I could not end these remarks without extending my deep sense of appreciation to him and to his staff for their tremendous help.

In closing, I would like to add only this: Of all the many important issues considered by this Senate in this Congress, I do not think any—others may argue this—but I do not think any are going to exceed this one in significance. I know we have had important debates on Iraq and other such questions, but I think what MITCH McCONNELL, KIT BOND, and my other conferees, Senator DURBIN, Senator SCHUMER, and others who were involved in this—what we have achieved certainly ranks in the top echelons of accomplishments, I would say the best thing we have done in this Congress. We have not achieved a lot in this Congress, but I think this is one of the most significant things.

I think this is the kind of legislation you can talk to your grandchildren about or they will read about and say that even if we did not do anything else in this Congress, this is a significant accomplishment for the American people.

Thomas Paine, as I have quoted him over and over again over the last year and a half or so of this discussion, said 207 years ago:

The right to vote . . . is the primary right by which other rights are protected. To take away this right is to reduce a man to slavery, for slavery consists in being subject to the will of another, and he that has not a vote . . . is in this case.

So, Mr. President, I thank again my colleagues; for the bedrock principle in our Republic is simply this: the consent of the governed. We are a nation where the people rule, and they rule not with a bullet but with a ballot. That sacred, central premise of our Republic is given new power by this conference agreement. It can make America a more free and democratic Nation. That kind of opportunity comes our way only rarely, at most maybe once in a generation, on average. It is an opportunity that has emerged out of ad-

verse circumstances—a close and controversial election for the Presidency of the United States.

By seizing that opportunity and passing this conference agreement, we in this body can transform a national moment of adversity into the promise of a future with the right to vote that will have new resonance for every citizen of America. I urge adoption of this conference report.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAYTON). The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, first, let me say to my good friend from Connecticut, this is, indeed, something to celebrate on a bipartisan basis in a Congress that could use a celebration. This may have been the most unproductive and unsuccessful session of the Senate in my 18 years here: no energy bill; no terrorism insurance bill and—until tomorrow, at least—no appropriations bills; no budget; no homeland security bill; only 44 percent of President Bush's U.S. circuit court nominees confirmed.

A couple of items we did pass were—at least in this Senator's judgment—not very good: a flawed campaign finance reform bill and a bloated farm bill.

We could use a celebration. And the Senator from Connecticut and I would like to encourage all of our Senators to feel good about the piece of legislation that will be adopted tomorrow.

This is, indeed, a significant accomplishment, an important piece of legislation. Even if we had a very productive Congress, and a Senate that was passing landmark legislation on virtually a weekly basis—even if that had been the case this year—this legislation would have stood out as something important for the Nation and something well worth doing.

So, Mr. President, I rise today with a tremendous amount of pride and enthusiasm about this landmark legislation. Although the Senate, as I just suggested, has been mired in partisanship and virtually calcified over various pieces of legislation, and the confirmation of judges, the House-Senate conference committee on election reform has achieved an historic bipartisan, bicameral consensus.

Nearly 2 years ago, this Nation had a painful lesson on the complexities and complications State and local election officials face in conducting elections. In response, legislators on both sides of the Hill introduced legislation to address the problems exposed in the 2000 election. The various pieces of legislation ran the gamut in approach and emphasis, but all were unified in their goal of improving our Nation's election systems.

In December of 2000, Senator TORRICELLI and I introduced the first of what was to become four bipartisan compromise bills that I have sponsored or cosponsored. From the beginning, I have been committed to providing not

only financial assistance but also informational assistance to States and localities.

The best way to achieve both of these goals is by establishing an independent, bipartisan election commission. The commission will be a permanent repository for the best, unbiased, and objective election administration information for States and communities across America.

And that is really important because what happens—I used to be a local official early in my political career—is that you are confronted with vendors selling various kinds of election equipment, and there is really no way to make an objective analysis of what your needs are. On the other hand, this new commission will be a repository for expertise and unbiased advice to States and localities across America about what kind of equipment might best suit their situation.

This concept has been one of the cornerstones of each of the bills that I have sponsored. It was recommended by the Ford-Carter Commission, supported by the President, and has been perfected in this conference agreement. The commission will not micromanage the election process, but will instead serve as a tremendous resource for those across America who conduct elections.

This conference report will help make all elections more accurate, more accessible, and more honest, while respecting the primacy of States and localities in the administration of elections. For the first time ever, the Federal Government will invest significant resources to improve the process, roughly \$3.9 billion. Every State will receive funds under this legislation, and the smaller States are guaranteed a share of the pot. The funds will be used by the States in a manner they determine best suits their needs, rather than the Federal Government prescribing a one-size-fits-all system. Whether it is by replacing a punchcard or a lever voting system or educating and training poll workers, States are provided the flexibility to address their specific needs.

The mantra of this legislation, coined by the distinguished senior Senator from Missouri, KIT BOND, has been to “make it easier to vote and harder to cheat.” We have achieved that balance in this conference agreement by setting standards for States to meet, standards which the Federal Government will pay 95 percent of the cost to implement. Voting systems will allow voters to verify their ballots and allow voters a second chance, if they make a mistake, while maintaining the sanctity of a private ballot.

Voting will become more accessible to people with disabilities, an issue admirably and vigorously championed by Senator DODD. Provisional ballots will be provided to all Americans who show up at polling sites only to learn their names are not on the poll books. Such a voter’s eligibility will be verified,

however, prior to the counting of the ballot to ensure that those who are legally entitled to vote are able to do so and do so only once; again, making it easier to vote and harder to cheat.

To protect the integrity of every election, this conference report makes significant advancements in rooting out vote fraud. Congress has acted properly to curtail fraudulent voting and reduce duplicate registrations, both interstate—found to be more than 720,000 nationwide—and intrastate. The provisions of this bill are carefully drafted to address this impediment to fair and honest elections, and we provided the States with the means and the resources to address this problem.

First, States will establish secure, computerized Statewide voter registration databases that contain the name and information of each registered voter. The accuracy of the voter registration list is paramount to a fair and accurate election. The motor voter bill of 1993 has done grievous harm to the integrity of the system by junking up the voter rolls and making it extremely difficult to systematically ensure that only eligible voters are registered.

Second, every new registrant will be required to provide their driver’s license number, if they have been issued one, or the last four digits of their Social Security number. If they have neither, the State will assign them a unique identifier. This information will be matched with the department of motor vehicles which will in turn match their data with the Social Security Administration. States which use the full nine-digit Social Security number for voter registration are given the option to avail themselves of this important new provision. Contrary to the assertions of some, the only thing this provision impedes is vote fraud.

Third, first-time voters who register by mail will have to confirm their identity at some point in the process by photo identification or other permissible identification. This provision was championed by Senator BOND, and its importance was once again highlighted just this past week in South Dakota where there is an ongoing joint Federal and State investigation of fraudulent voter registrations.

According to press reports in South Dakota, people are registering weeks after they have died, and one eager voter even completed 150 voter registration cards. Is that an enthusiastic voter or what?

The South Dakota Attorney General succinctly summed up the problem:

It’s pretty easy to register under a false name, have the registration confirmation sent back to your home, then send in by mail an absentee ballot request, get it and vote under the false name, send it back and get it counted.

Under this legislation, that is not going to be possible any longer. That is a step in the right direction for our democracy.

These three provisions will ensure that dogs such as Ritzzy Mekler, Holly

Briscoe, and other stars of “Animal Planet” will no longer be able to register and vote. These provisions will ensure that our dearly departed will finally achieve everlasting peace and will not be troubled with exercising their franchise every 2 years. And importantly, the provisions will ensure that voter rolls will be cleansed and protected against fraudulent and duplicate registrations.

This conference report also provides remedial safeguards for every American’s franchise. The Department of Justice will continue its traditional role of enforcing Federal law. In addition, each State will design and establish a grievance procedure available to any voter who believes a violation of law has occurred. States are best equipped to promptly address the concerns of its voters, and I compliment Senator DODD for his foresight on this issue.

This legislation also makes significant improvements to protect the votes of those who have committed themselves to protecting all Americans, and that is our men and women in uniform.

I have touched upon just a few of the highlights of this historic piece of legislation. After nearly 2 years of discussions, negotiations, introductions and reintroductions of election reform bills, we now stand ready to vote on the most important piece of legislation before Congress in many years.

I thank, again, Senator DODD for his steadfast leadership. He committed 110 percent of himself to this issue and worked tirelessly to bring us to this day. I also thank Senator BOND for all of his work to protect the integrity of the election process. I also congratulate my colleagues on the other side of the Hill for their significant achievement: Congressman BOB NEY of Ohio, chairman of the conference, did a superb job; and our good friend STENY HOYER, ranking member, who was outstanding as well.

And to the staff people involved in this, my own staff on the Rules Committee: Tam Somerville; I particularly commend Brian Lewis, who was there from beginning to end in this process—as far as I am concerned, this will be known as the Brian Lewis bill around my office—and his able right hand, Leon Sequeira, and Chris Moore and Hugh Farrish, all of the Rules Committee staff.

For Senator BOND, Julie Dammann and Jack Bartling of Senator BOND’s staff were superb. And for Senator DODD, Kennie Gill, Shawn Maher, Ronnie Gillespie, we enjoyed working with them, and they, too, should feel about good about this. From Congressman NEY’s staff, Paul Vinovich, Chet Kalis, Roman Buhler, Pat Leahy—they have a staffer named Pat Leahy, how about that—and Matt Petersen. And from Congressman HOYER’s staff, Bob Cable, Keith Abouchar and Len Shambon.

This is indeed a happy day, not just for Senator BOND and myself, but for

all Members of the Congress. This is a remarkable achievement we can all feel good about. We look forward to seeing it pass tomorrow by an overwhelming margin. I am sure the President at some point will want to sign this with appropriate flourish down at the White House.

Again, I thank my colleague from Connecticut and yield the floor.

WEEKEND VOTING

• Mr. KOHL. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Rules Committee for clarifying a provision in the bill. As the Senator knows, I am the sponsor of legislation moving Federal elections from the first Tuesday in November to the first weekend in November. It is my hope that moving Federal elections to the weekend will increase voter turnout by giving all voters ample opportunity to get to the polls without creating a national holiday. My proposal would also have the polls open the same hours across the continental United States, addressing the challenge of keeping results on one side of the country, or even a state, from influencing voting in places where polls are still open.

The Senate version of the election reform legislation before us included a provision sponsored by Senator HOLLINGS and myself which directed the Election Administration Commission to study the viability of changing the day for congressional and presidential elections from the first Tuesday in November to a holiday or the weekend, with the possibility of looking at the first weekend in November. Unfortunately, during the conference on this bill, the studies section was refined to direct the Election Administration Commission to study the "feasibility and advisability of conducting elections for Federal office on different days, at different places, and during different hours, including the advisability of establishing a uniform poll closing time" with a legal public holiday mentioned as one option but no mention of weekend voting. Is it correct that there was no specific intent to leave out weekend voting as an option?

Mr. DODD. The Senator from Wisconsin is correct. The conferees intended that the new Election Administration Commission consider all options for election day, including the Senator's interesting proposal to move elections to the weekend. There was also no intent to limit the Election Administration Commission to considering just one day as an election day. It is my hope that the commission will examine all options, including the possibility of holding elections over two days as suggested in Senator KOHL's proposal.

Mr. KOHL. I thank the Senator from Connecticut for this clarification. I hope that the Election Administration Commission will seriously consider moving federal elections to the weekend. I will continue to advocate for weekend voting as a means of increas-

ing voter turnout and addressing the need for uniform poll closing times in federal elections.●

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I yield 15 minutes to my colleague from Oregon, Senator WYDEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, let me join in the extraordinarily important comments that have been made by Senator DODD and Senator MCCONNELL. This has been a huge and arduous task that had to be bipartisan. The fact is, you can't get anything done that really is important without it being bipartisan.

I take a moment to thank Senator DODD. He has been extraordinarily patient with me and with all of the Members of this body who come from States that have pioneered innovative approaches.

It is fair to say right now with millions of Americans essentially being early voters, there have been estimates that something along the lines of 15 percent of the American people are going to vote early.

The legislation that Senator DODD and Senator MCCONNELL brings to us today protects the wave of the future—this early voting—whether it be by absentee ballot or the pioneering vote-by-mail system.

What this legislation does is protect the early voters—the person we are seeing more and more of in the American political process—by, in effect, taking steps to discourage fraud at the front end when people register, and then making sure that people don't face unnecessary barriers and hassles when they actually participate in the fall of even-numbered years. So I commend Senators DODD and MCCONNELL for their work in this area.

Suffice it to say, at various stages in the discussion, I wasn't sure that we were going to make it. Look at how the debate began when this bill first came to the floor of the Senate. It seemed to me and others that millions of Americans would have been turned away from the polls because they didn't have with them a valid photo identification or a copy of a utility bill. It would have disenfranchised millions of Americans. I and others made that point to Chairman DODD and Senator MCCONNELL, and we began a very lengthy set of negotiations that involved Senators DODD, MCCONNELL, BOND, CANTWELL, SCHUMER, and I. Together we were able to work out an agreement with respect to the photo identification provision. It protects fully the vote-by-mail system. In fact, it protects all Americans who want to vote early, as I have mentioned. It is outlined in section 303 of the conference report.

I thought I would take a minute to describe how this provision would work. Beginning in January 2004, anyone who registers to vote for the first time, let's say in Oregon, has the choice of registering by providing a driver's license number, the last four

digits of their Social Security number, a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government document, or a valid photo identification. When they cast their ballot by mail, Oregon's State elections officials will verify the voter's eligibility consistent with State law by signature verification. Under our Oregon election law, an elections official determines voter eligibility by matching the signature on the registration with the signature on the mail-in ballot. Oregon's signature match system would not change.

My primary concern throughout this discussion has, of course, been to support our pioneering vote-by-mail system, which I think is the wave of the future. But as we have seen in recent days it is not just Oregon but a variety of other States are going to see millions of people saying they want to take the time, essentially through the fall when people are considering the candidates, to look at the statements put out and reflect on them in a way that is convenient for them.

We said at the beginning of this discussion that we wanted to discourage fraud and encourage voters. I think that is what the Dodd-McConnell legislation does. I am particularly pleased that it does so in a way that protects Oregon's pioneering system and all of those around this country who are going to be voting by mail.

Senator MCCONNELL just mentioned that this is, in his view, just about as important as it gets for the Senate. I will reaffirm that statement. After all of the problems that we have seen in Florida, after you look at all of the challenges in terms of getting young people excited about politics and excited about the democratic process, what this legislation does is it reaches out and says: We understand those concerns. We understand that the American people feel more strongly about this subject than just about anything else because it is what we are about. It is about our values, our principles; it is what the Senate is all about. So I am very pleased that Senators DODD and MCCONNELL had the patience to work with some of us who, I am sure, were fairly prickly and difficult along the way. I don't know how many hours we had in negotiations just looking at the arcane details of some of the vote-by-mail States. But Senator DODD said we are just not going to give up. We understand that you are doing something very exciting in the Pacific Northwest, and we encourage it.

In effect, what Senator DODD has done is not just protect the Oregon system but allowed this country to build on something that I think is the wave of the future; that is, people voting essentially throughout the fall. We have seen—as reported recently in various States as they innovate with different kinds of systems—a variety of approaches that are being tried. My own sense is that it won't be very long before people start voting online in this country.

So what Senator DODD has done is made it clear that he is going to stand with all of us in the Senate who want to discourage fraud, and we are going to do it at the right time and in the right way, which is essentially at the front end when people come to sign up for the electoral process. But then, after we can ascertain they are who they say they are, they are not going to face innumerable hassles and barriers when they actually show up to vote.

So my thanks to Senator DODD and his staff, Carole Grunberg, who is here. She has championed for us the Oregon vote-by-mail system. But with Senator DODD in the Chamber, I want him to know how much I appreciate what he is doing. It means a tremendous amount to my constituents and also to this country and to the future of American voting.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, before my colleague leaves the floor, I thank him and his staff as well for their tremendous contribution. One of the things we did in this bill—I say to my friend from Oregon that he is in large part responsible for this, I probably should give him more credit for this—we set Federal standards and rights that never have existed before in all Federal elections across the country, and we have enumerated the rights in this bill.

One of the things I fought very hard to preserve is that what constitutes a valid registration of a voter and what constitutes a valid vote is left up to the States. We don't federalize registration and we don't federalize how votes get counted. We have left that to the States. It would be overreaching to go that far.

I must say some of the most creative ideas on how to make this basic franchise accessible to the maximum number of people, the most creative ideas are occurring in our States across the country. There are differences in places, and States ought to have the flexibility of deciding what system works best for them.

I will tell my colleague, I have learned of some fascinating historical stories. Going back, people have said: Where in the Constitution does it say you have to be a citizen to vote? Well, it is the 14th and 15th amendments. The 14th amendment describes what a citizen is, and the 15th amendment says all citizens have the right to vote.

There was a time—and the Presiding Officer may find this interesting—when we discovered as part of our research that in the latter part of the 19th century, in certain areas of the upper Midwest, in efforts to attract immigrant populations to settle in some of the vast farmlands there, they actually said: We will allow you to vote in Federal elections—which they did. I cannot find the lawsuit that stopped it. I think it may have been by tradition, but it provided that the person who signed up made a promise that they would someday become a citizen. That

was the condition that you had to fill out.

There are actually some jurisdictions in this country, by the way, not in Federal elections but local elections, where noncitizens, by municipal law, are allowed to vote.

The State of Oregon is, I think, on the cutting edge. I agree with my colleague on this. Maybe because I have a head of gray hair, but I like the idea of a community gathering at a polling place. There is a sense of community spirit about showing up.

In my town of East Haddam, CT—it is a small place with only a few thousand people and where I have lived for the last two decades—we all gather in the old townhall, literally around the potbellied stove. The folks I have known for the last two decades run the polling operations there. We like it that way. I am not suggesting there is a younger generation coming along who do not like the way they do it in Oregon—I suspect they might, and I suspect there will be States allowing people, in the not-too-distant future, to vote by Internet.

I thank him for bringing forward the Oregon and, we should add, the Washington experience, because they are similar experiences, to this debate. The fact we managed to accommodate the unique voting circumstances in their States gave rise to the idea there actually may be other States that may want to move in this direction. In fact, the provisions authored by my colleague and included in the conference report can be used by every state, and not just by Oregon and Washington. We thank Senator WYDEN for his contribution and for making this a stronger and a better bill, and one that does maintain its sensitivity to the unique requirements and needs of people across this vast country of ours. I thank the distinguished Senator from Oregon for his contribution.

I note as well—it is somewhat an irony—I recall vividly the day Senator MCCONNELL and I had announced we had reached an agreement, at least on the Senate version of this bill, our colleague who is now presiding over the Senate was presiding over the Senate that very day. He would not have known on that day a year and a half ago he would be presiding today as well. I thank him.

Mr. President, I wish to note because there are so many wonderful staff people and they do not get the credit they deserve—we get to stand here and give the speeches and our names go on the bills. There are literally dozens of people who work incredible hours to produce the kind of legislation we are endorsing today.

I mentioned already the Members on the House side, my colleagues, BOB NEY and STENY HOYER, the principal House advocates. There was a long list of conferees, by the way, in the House. A number of committees of jurisdiction touched on matters in this bill, from the Ways and Means Committee to the

Armed Services Committee—I will forget some—a lot of committees. So there were a lot more conferees from the other body on the conference committee. I thank them.

I extend my special appreciation for the invaluable expertise and contributions in negotiating this bill to final passage to Paul Vinovich, one of the principal staff people for BOB NEY, and Chet Kalis, who is a wonderful individual. Both of these men are remarkable people and did a fantastic job, not just for BOB NEY and the Republican side, but they always had the sense they wanted to get a bill done, and that is a big difference when you are in a conference. If you are looking across the table at people and if the negotiating is to stop something or to make something happen, what a difference it is when you talk to people who give you the sense they want something to happen. I thank them.

I thank Roman Buhler, a tough negotiator; Matthew Petersen; and Pat Leahy.

From the office of STENY HOYER: Bill Cable—I have known Bill for all my years in Congress. When I served in the other body, Bill Cable was a terrific staff person then. He has a wonderful institutional memory about the Congress of the United States. STENY HOYER is truly fortunate to have Bill Cable with him. I thank him for the long hours he put in on this legislation.

Keith Abouchar and Lenny Shambon were wonderful. They are knowledgeable people and have been very helpful on this. They understand the laws, and have a wonderful expertise in motor voter registration and how these proposals work.

I further thank JOHN CONYERS. I mentioned already my coauthor of this legislation initially, but I want to also thank his staff. I thank Perry Apfelbaum, Ted Kalo, and Michone Johnson, who were just wonderful and tireless in their efforts. I thank them for their tremendous work. Along with JOHN, they were a great source of information and guidance during some very delicate moments on how we ought to proceed.

TOM DASCHLE, our leader in the Senate, has been tremendously helpful through all of this. He asked me how long the original bill would take on the floor of the Senate when it came up. We had gotten through this, worked out the agreement, and there were a lot of demands for time on the floor. He looked at me and said: How long do you think it will take to debate the election reform bill?

I said: Mr. Leader, I think we can do it in 2 days.

Mr. President, if you look around, you can see the smiles on the faces of some of the floor staff. I think we were on the floor 9 days, had 46 amendments, and there were a hundred more, at least, proposed. I took some very healthy ribbing from the majority leader and others on the staff when they would look at me day after day

and say: How long did you say this bill would take? It took a lot longer than we anticipated.

I thank Andrea LaRue, Jennifer Duck, Michelle Ballantyne, Mark Childress, and Mark Patterson from the majority leader's staff for their patience and assistance.

With regard to Senator McCONNELL's staff, we spent a lot of time with Senator McCONNELL's staff. We spent more time with Senator McCONNELL's staff than with Senator McCONNELL, and he would be the first to say that. Tam Somerville, Brian Lewis, and Leon Sequeira are also very fine and hard-working staff members. Brian Lewis—poor Brian got saddled with more responsibilities. With all of this coming together, committee staff had to deal with campaign finance reform and election reform all at once. There were demands on their time, pulling them in two different directions, as we were trying to get this bill completed in the Senate so we could get to conference because we knew we had a long conference ahead of us. I express my gratitude to Brian. He is knowledgeable, worked hard, and made a significant contribution. I appreciate it very much.

Senator SCHUMER's staff: Polly Trottenberg, Christine Parker, Cindy Bauerly, and Sharon Levin were very helpful. I thank them.

Senator BOND: Julie Dammann and Jack Bartling. We had some real grounds with Senator BOND's staff on some of the provisions in this bill. I thank both of them for a lot of effort. Jack Bartling spent a lot of time during the Senate consideration, going back months and months ago, sitting up late nights in my conference room and going through what we wanted to do and how it might work. I occasionally would run into Jack off the Hill. Even in off hours in restaurants, we would end up being seated next to each other unintentionally by the maitre d'. We spent all day working on this legislation, and when I went out for an evening with my wife and child, who ended up sitting next to me but Jack Bartling, and here we go again carrying on conversations. I thank Jack.

I thank Jennifer Leach and Sara Wills on Senator TORRICELLI's staff. Senator BOB TORRICELLI offered some of the earliest versions of election reform. Early on he thought we ought to do something about election reform and worked with Senator McCONNELL and others to craft legislation. He agreed to work with us on our bill when we developed it. I thank Senator TORRICELLI for working very hard on campaign election reform.

Senator McCain's staff: Ken LaSala. I offer a special appreciation for his invaluable expertise and contributions in negotiating and bringing this bill to final passage.

Senator DUBIN's staff: Bill Weber was tremendously helpful to us. I thank him.

I thank Beth Stein and Caroline Fredrickson from Senator CANTWELL's

staff. I mentioned Oregon, Senator WYDEN and his State, and the Senator from the State of Washington, Ms. CANTWELL, had similar circumstances and were concerned about how the provisions of this bill would work in a State where a significant number of the people vote by mail. They wanted to be sure we were not doing anything here that was going to prohibit them from conducting their elections in the way they have done successfully for some time.

I mentioned Senator WYDEN. I thank Carol Grunberg for her work as well.

The floor staff, again, were tremendously patient with this Member. I tied up the cloakroom for hours one Friday trying to get holds lifted on this bill.

The floor staff was tremendously helpful. Marty Paone, Lula Davis, Gary Myrick, members of the cloakroom staff, were tremendously supportive.

I apologize for going through all of this and mentioning these names. I could just submit them for the RECORD, but I want to say their names because just putting their names in the RECORD does not do justice to the amount of time and effort people have put in. So I beg the indulgence of the Chair and others as I go through this.

This may sound mundane or boring to those who are watching it, but I am someone who believes very strongly we ought to give more recognition to the people whose names never appear much around this place and yet who make incredible contributions to a product like this.

I want to thank the Office of Legislative Counsel. Let me explain what legislative counsel does. These are the people who actually write these bills. We tell them what we are thinking, these grand ideas of ours. A Senator has a grand idea. The staff tries to put language around the grand idea and then they go to legislative counsel, who then has to write it in a legalistic way so it can actually mean something because words have specific meaning.

So the legislative counsel's office was instrumental—we asked them to work around the clock on a few instances. Literally, they were up all night producing language because we were running up against the clock to get this bill done. So to Jim Scott and Jim Fransen of the Office of Senate Legislative Counsel, and Noah Wofsy, from the House legislative counsel, I want to express my deep sense of gratitude to them for their work. They sat down very objectively. Noah Wofsy is on the House side under the Republican leadership in the House. Jim Scott and Jim Fransen are in the Senate under the Democratic leadership of the Senate, but neither side was partisan in any way. I can honestly say if I sat them in a room and asked them for their views on how this ought to be written, I would never know from which party they had been chosen to do the job. They are that objective and that professional in how they do it.

Sometimes I wish America could watch this when they talk about laws.

They could then see people such as these who are so dedicated and see to it that we can get it right. They did not bring political baggage to that discussion and debate.

I mentioned some history earlier about the upper Midwest and these other places. The Congressional Research Service, CRS, was the organization that provided me with some historical framework and background in the conduct of elections and also provided side-by-side versions of bills along the way. And we thank them: Kevin Coleman, who is an analyst in the American National Government; Eric Fischer, senior specialist in Science and Technology; L. Paige Whitaker, legislative attorney at the Congressional Research Service; David Huckabee, who is a specialist in American National Government; and Judith Fraizer, who is an information research specialist. They did a great job, and we are very grateful to them as well.

I wish to thank my own staff. Obviously, in my own heart and mind they come first, as one might expect, but my mother raised me to be polite so I mentioned other people first. I am particularly grateful to my own staff who worked very hard on this. Through my bellowing and barking, and doing all the things we do and wondering why we could not reach agreements earlier—I hope I was not too impatient with them—I want to thank Shawn Maher, who is my legislative director. He was tremendously patient and did a great job. Kennie Gill, who is the staff director and chief counsel of the Rules Committee, is just one of the most knowledgeable people about this institution I have ever met in my 27 years in Congress. I have met Members who have great respect for the institution, its history, its traditions, what these buildings mean, and what membership means in the other body or this body. I have never met anybody, Member or non-Member, who has as much reverence for this institution as Kennie Gill, and I thank her.

Ronnie Gillespie, who is a terrific individual as well, is our counsel on the Rules Committee. She did a terrific job and I am very grateful to her, as well as my own staff, Sheryl Cohen, Marvin Fast, Alex Swartzel and Tom Lenard. Sheryl Cohen is my staff director, chief of staff of my office, and has to manage all of these things going around. She does a wonderful job, and I am very grateful to her. From the Rules Committee, Carole Blessington, Beth Meagher, Hasan Mansori, and Sue Wright also deserve some very special recognition. Chris Shunk, Jennifer Cusick, and Sam Young are non-designated staff on the Rules Committee staff, who kept the vouchers going during this time and they do wonderful work. There are some former members who were part of this effort who had to leave for various reasons before the completion of this bill, but the fact they are not here does not mean they should not be recognized. Stacy Beck,

Candace Chin, and Laura Roubicek are three people I want to thank.

That is 60 individuals I have mentioned. There may be others I have missed. If I have missed them, I apologize, but I want them to know that all of us, regardless of political persuasion or ideology, thank them, and millions of Americans ought to as well because we never would have achieved this conference report, been able to write this bill, had it not been for these 60 individuals and many more like them.

I have not mentioned the individuals on the outside that worked on this, the NAACP, the National Association of Secretaries of State, the AFL-CIO, the various disability groups. There are literally hundreds of people who are involved in this journey over the last year and a half to produce this conference report. I know normally we do not take as much time to talk about all of this, but I think Senator McCONNELL and I—and not because it is a pride of authorship, but we think we have done something very historically significant. We are changing America. We are changing the way America is going to be choosing its leadership. We want everyone to participate in this country. It is a source of significant embarrassment to me that there are individuals who cannot participate.

I served in the Peace Corps in Latin America back in the 1960s. So I am asked periodically to go and observe elections, particularly in Latin America, because I know the language and have knowledge of the area. I cannot say how moving it is to watch some of these desperately poor countries where the people who lack any formal education, or have very little of it, will literally stand in line all day, walk miles through blistering and difficult weather, intimidation, fear of literally being killed if they show up, and they vote. They look to us as a beacon of what it means as a free people to be able to choose who represents us, from the most insignificant office on the municipal or town level to the Presidency of the United States. The idea that each and every one of us can be a part of making those choices, and the fact that only 50 percent of our eligible population does so, ought to be a source of collective shame. While this bill is not going to eradicate all of that, when we consider how hard some people fight to be free, how blessed we are as a people and how little is asked of us to participate in the process which has historically distinguished us as a people, our sincere hope today, as we vote tomorrow on this bill, is we have made it easier for people to meet that obligation and made it more difficult for those who would like to scam it in some way. But the most important thing this legislation does is to make it easier for people to make that choice.

So all of those who have been involved in this have my profound sense of gratitude, and I am very confident that sense of gratitude is going to be expressed by millions of people for

years to come because of what we have done in the wake of a tragedy in the year 2000, on November 7. We have responded to it with this legislation. Not in every sense, but on some of the core questions, this Congress has stepped up to the plate and responded to those issues. The leadership and Members of the other body, as well as the leadership here, can rightfully claim a proud moment when this bill passes the Senate tomorrow and President Bush signs this legislation as the permanent law of our land.

BUSINESS OF THE CONGRESS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, my friend from Kentucky, in the opening of his remarks, talked about this Congress not being terribly successful. I would take some issue with that. This Senate has been successful, as I look down the list I have of more than three pages of legislation going back to the use of force resolution after September 11, responses to terrorist attacks, the Patriot Act, the airport security, Defense authorizations, homeland defense, antiterrorism bills, terrorism insurance—we are still working on the conference—access to affordable pharmaceuticals, prescription drugs, reimportation, patients' bill of rights. Again, conference reports have not been reached, but this Senate has had extensive debates where all sides have been heard on these matters.

I mentioned in the election reform bill more than 40 amendments were considered on the floor. With all due respect to the other body these days, it is not uncommon for legislation to be considered where only one or two amendments may be offered. It is regrettable we have not been able to reach agreement between the other body and this body on some of these matters, but the Senate over this last Congress has responded to incredible and unprecedented difficulties in this generation. In the wake of September 11, the anthrax attack, and the tremendous pressures that put on this institution, I am as disappointed as anyone that we do not have a prescription drug benefit, that we don't have a Patients' Bill of Rights, that we don't have a minimum wage, that we are not responding to the unemployment requests.

That is not because this Senate has not wanted to step up, time after time. I am proud to be a Daschle Democrat. I hear people suggesting that as a moniker of derision. Many think TOM DASCHLE has done a remarkable job in being the majority leader. It is disappointing we have not been able to do on the other matters what we were able to get done on the election reform, but that is not the fault of the majority leader.

I am proud of the election reform bill. I am proud of a lot of other things done in this Senate over the last number of months before we adjourn. I am disappointed we were not able to reach

agreement on some of the other matters. The fault of that lies elsewhere.

I wanted to not let the afternoon close without this Senator expressing his strong feelings about some of the other matters that the American public desperately need. I did not engage in the debate earlier today about the economic conditions of our country, but it is what people are asking about as I go throughout my State, and other parts of the country. People are very worried about where we are headed economically. They are worried about the quality of education. They are worried about whether jobs will be there. They want to hear us engaging in ideas that will advance how we can improve the quality of education, extend health care benefits to people. They want to get a sense we are on their side. They know we cannot do it all ourselves. It takes cooperation between private and other governmental sectors, but they want to know we care as much about what they struggle with to make ends meet, to provide for families and provide for their future.

I think it is regrettable we will spend the last remaining days with people flying around the country attending fundraising events when we could be working on some of the economic problems afflicting people in this country. We see the deficits mounting again after the great hope the surpluses were going to provide, surpluses from the previous administration. It is sad we have come to this in our country. We ought to get our priorities straight and get back on the economic issues. The American people expect nothing less.

If we wonder why people do not participate as often as we would like in the election process, some has to do with people being too lazy. An awful lot has to do with people wondering whether the things they worry most about are even being considered by the people they elect to public office. People do not think of themselves as Democrats or Republicans every day. They think of themselves as being citizens of the country: Parents, children, neighbors, coworkers. That is how they define themselves. They want to know their elected representatives, regardless of party, are keeping their interests in mind.

This is a republic. They do not get the chance to vote. If 280 million Americans could be packed in the Chambers, the agenda would change. It would be about health care, it would be about prescription drugs, about a minimum wage, and improving the quality of elementary and secondary education. If they could stand here collectively, that is what they would ask us to do—to be leaders on those questions, to become forces in visions for improving the quality of life for people in the country.

That is what Senator DASCHLE has tried to do over the past 2 years in the wake and midst of all the other problems we face. I commend him for it, HARRY REID, BYRON DORGAN, and other