

S. 2120. An act to ensure regulatory equity between and among all dairy farmers and handlers for sales of packaged fluid milk in federally regulated milk marketing areas and into certain non-federally regulated milk marketing areas from federally regulated areas, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate concurred on a House Amendment with an amendment to Senate bill:

S. 467. An act to extend the applicability of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002.

IRAQ ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, we have just witnessed one of the freest elections ever held in the Middle East. It is important to recognize that independent multinational election monitors have confirmed that yesterday's Iraqi elections, in which a remarkably large number of Sunnis turned out to vote, met international standards. It is estimated that 10 to 12 million Iraqis renounced fear and defied those who seek to demoralize them and to undermine U.S. and international support for their noble commitment to rebuilding a civil society.

As we seek to encourage our friends in the Middle East on their journey of self-determination, let us take a moment to recall with an appropriate level of humility that our own democratic journey was neither quick nor easy and no less worthwhile for the difficulties endured.

Mr. Speaker, this historic moment inspires me to highlight an outstanding bipartisan initiative here in the House which is making a significant impact to strengthen fledgling democratic institutions throughout the world.

I want to commend Speaker HASTERT for his foresight in launching the House Democracy Assistance Commission on which I serve along with 15 of my colleagues. I wish to thank my colleague, Congressman DAVID DREIER, for his leadership on this initiative and his dedication to see it through to fruition.

I also wish to acknowledge Representative DAVID PRICE and my predecessor, Congressman Doug Bereuter, for their hard work since 2003 to move this initiative and to make it a reality.

Since the establishment of the commission in March 2005, Members and staff have worked diligently to identify countries and legislative bodies in need of technical assistance. The House Democracy Assistance Commission has established an exemplary framework to help elected legislators develop badly needed parliamentary infrastructures to foster just and thriving civil society based upon democratic principles.

In his second inaugural address, President Bush issued a global call to freedom, the heritage of all mankind.

Through the commission, Members of Congress have answered the President's call to move the principles of democracy around the world. And beginning next year, Democratic and Republican Members alike will join together to support and encourage our counterparts in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country; in East Timor, the world's newest country which hungered for independence and now hungers for working democratic institutions; in Georgia, where the 2003 Rose Revolution ushered in peaceful change; in Macedonia, which emerged from the brink of civil war to a new day of freedom; and also in Kenya, a regional African power in the forefront of the war on terror.

Through technical assistance missions, material assistance and exchange programs that bring legislators to the U.S. and allow our Members to share their knowledge and experiences with members of parliaments in partner countries, the House of Representatives is working directly with legislators around the world to provide expertise and parliamentary best practices. This assistance will emphasize committee operations, budgetary issues, defense oversight, specialized legislation and oversight, legislative procedures, research services, information services, as well as constituent services.

The commission also plans to support emerging legislative institutions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Lebanon, countries where governments had imposed unspeakable hardships on their own people previously. It is staggering to realize that just a few short years ago the brutal Taliban regime held all of Afghanistan hostage.

On December 19, thanks in great measure to the perseverance and dedication of our men and women in uniform, Afghans are inaugurating their first parliament in over 30 years.

Khalid Farooqi, a legislator in Afghanistan's Lower House of Parliament, was recently quoted as saying, "We want to build our country, we do not want to destroy it again."

For the first time since Saddam Hussein began his savage reign, and despite factional tensions and the threats of nihilistic insurgents, an astounding 70 percent of Iraqis courageously rose yesterday to determine their own future and held elections for a new National Assembly and government.

We also look to a new dawn of hope in Lebanon, where, tragically, Gibran Tuani, a publisher and deputy at Lebanon's Parliament, was assassinated this Monday in a bombing by those who fear the freedom that comes from self-determination.

Just as our troops and over 22,000 soldiers from 30 coalitions nations stood strong to help make yesterday's victory possible in Iraq, I am proud of my fellow Democrats and Republicans as we stand together to provide hope, encouragement, and vital technical assistance to the work of the House Democracy Assistance Commission.

FEMA TRAILERS, BUT NOBODY'S HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed the gulf coast as a category 4 storm. Due to the massive damage caused by one of the most costly natural disasters in our Nation's history, thousands of Louisiana and Mississippi residents whose homes were destroyed were forced to relocate to areas such as my home State of Arkansas. Many are still there today.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, commonly referred to as FEMA, purchased at least 20,000 brand-new manufactured homes; and thousands of these homes, nearly 4 months later, have not reached those who need them, citizens of this country who lost their homes and everything that they owned on August 29, 2005.

Instead, these homes are being stored by FEMA in five different so-called staging areas, including staging areas in my congressional district near my hometown at the Hope Municipal Airport in Hope, Arkansas, at Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant near Texarkana, all of these staging areas some 450 miles from where the eye of the storm hit the gulf coast.

Due to the inability of FEMA to provide displaced families with manufactured homes in a timely manner, staging areas are overflowing. For instance, at Hope Airport, the inactive runways and tarmacs are overloaded with manufactured homes, forcing the excess homes to be placed in the surrounding fields and pastures. These pastures and fields were not effectively prepared by FEMA for staging or storage, if you will. When the winter rains hit the inadequately prepared sites, many of the trailers carrying the manufactured homes will sink. This will result in even more unnecessary delays and additional work for a system that is badly flawed.

I have written a letter to the acting FEMA director, David Paulson, requesting that he immediately review the apparently ineffective process of distributing the FEMA-purchased manufactured homes to the Hurricane Katrina evacuees who so desperately need them.

As I drive throughout Arkansas's Fourth Congressional District, and in my very hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, I see these manufactured homes sitting empty; and I am appalled at the waste of taxpayer money and the lack of a timely response on behalf of FEMA and the Federal Government for those who desperately need housing for their families, with many residents literally still living in tents on the gulf coast nearly 4 months after the detrimental hurricane hit our gulf coast.

As winter approaches and deadlines for all displaced residents from Louisiana and Mississippi living in hotel rooms to be moved into temporary housing quickly approaching, this process must be streamlined. It is unacceptable for American citizens who lost their homes and everything they owned in the hurricane to still be sleeping in tents when FEMA has thousands of brand-new empty manufactured homes for occupancy.

Take a look here, Mr. Speaker. This is not in Hope, Arkansas. In fact, this is in my hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, some 16 miles away.

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Here is what is going on. They deliver the homes to this staging area in Hope, Arkansas, 450 miles from the gulf coast. And as they deliver them down the interstate, they have got a banner on the back that says, Urgent, FEMA delivery. Urgent for what? To deliver it to a cow pasture?

And a shingle blows off in transit. If one shingle is missing, they will not accept it at the FEMA staging area in Hope, Arkansas. So they turn around, drive back to my home town of Prescott, and they are leasing, literally leasing cow pastures, as you can see here, to store these homes until they can be repaired, while at the same time we have got families, we have got families, as Christmas approaches, as the holidays approach, sleeping in tents in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Dennis Ramsey, the Mayor of Hope, Arkansas, was quoted in the *Texarkana Gazette*, December 15, saying FEMA estimated that 12,000 mobile homes would be staged at the Hope site while FEMA leases the land at \$25,000 a month for the next 2 years.

The Associated Press said a FEMA spokesman said last week that 5,840 mobile homes and 80 travel trailers are at Hope and the Texarkana sites along with more than 4,400 mobile homes and 4,200 travel trailers at the other staging areas.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking this body, I am asking the acting director of FEMA: Please come to my home town, get these mobile homes and get them moved 450 miles down the road to the families who are living in tents and who so desperately need them in Mississippi and Louisiana.

TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, a National Guard unit is coming back to Texas, because tomorrow, Saturday, December 17, the First Battalion, 133rd field artillery will be welcomed back to Beaumont, Texas, after serving the past year in Iraq.

In August 2004, the Texas Army National Guard deployed the 56th Brigade

Combat Team of the 36th Infantry Division to go to Iraq. They trained for 4 months in Ft. Hood, Texas, and got to Iraq in December of 2004. The 133rd Field Artillery has a longstanding history in this country. This was the first and famous Texas Army National Guard that served in France in World War I.

General John J. Pershing, the commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I made this comment about those Texans in World War I: He said, the bearing of the division in this its very first experience in battle showed the mettle of the officers and men and gave promise of what it would become. Members of this division who returned home can be proud of the record of their services.

Mr. Speaker, this was the first American combat unit to land in Europe in World War II. They landed on the beaches of Italy during World War II. They liberated Rome, then they went and landed on the beaches of France, went on to free the hostages of the concentration camps of Dachau, Germany.

Probably the most famous member of the 36th Texas is a person by the name of Audie Murphy. You may remember him, Mr. Speaker; he is from Hunt, Texas. And when he was a youngster, he joined the Army, the Army National Guard of Texas and became the first decorated soldier in the history of the American Army, winning among many other things the Congressional Medal of Honor.

And yet, the Texas 36th has continued that longstanding tradition in Iraq where they conducted offensive operations, deny and destroy operations, combat logistic patrols and civil military affair operations.

They built schools and hospitals and won the hearts of the Iraqi kids that they met along the way. They operated in the Sunni Triangle, Tikrit, Tillal, on the Jordanian border and in Bagdad. It is my pleasure to welcome them back when they come back home tomorrow.

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of the members of the 133rd, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. They honor us with their commitment to Texas and the Nation, and the citizens of America and Iraq owe them a debt of gratitude. They are America's best. They are the sons and daughters of liberty. They are freedom fighters, and they make us proud.

I join the citizens of Texas Congressional District number two in paying the utmost respect for the 1st Battalion, 133rd Field Artillery. Through their service, Iraq has become a free democracy, and America remains the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Mr. Speaker, I had the chance in January of this year to go to Iraq to visit the very first elections, and I, with our military, and saw firsthand the accomplishments in their fight for freedom. You know, Mr. Speaker, freedom does have a price. Our troops are paying

that sacrificial price for the Iraqi people and for world freedom. Unfortunately, the 133rd lost six members during their fight for freedom, and I extend my prayers and our condolences to the family and friends. They were making a difference in the world when they gave their lives.

Their bravery and dedication and patriotism shall not be forgotten. That success is evident with the successful election of a new government in Iraq yesterday. President John Kennedy once said: The cost of freedom is always high. But Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission.

Mr. Speaker, we have chosen the right path. The hard path. The freedom path. We will persevere with the freedom-loving people of Iraq until the journey down this path is successfully completed.

The citizen soldiers of America, the Texas Army National Guard, have been warriors on the long hard sacrificial path of liberty. The world should never underestimate the resolve of America, the resolve and determination and will of the American soldier. Regardless of their mission for freedom, they always get it done. That is just the way it is.

AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, sometime ago, Mr. Speaker, President John F. Kennedy, himself the grandson of Irish immigrants, summed up this blend of the old and the new when he called America a society of immigrants, each of whom had begun life anew on an equal footing.

This is the secret of America, a Nation of people with a fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers. He further said: Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.

And then Franklin Delano Roosevelt reminded us, remember, remember always, that all of us are descended from immigrants. I had hoped as we began our journey on a very important task, as reflected in the work we have done over the last 2 days, on border security and immigration reform, that we would have returned to our values, recognizing that this Nation is a Nation of immigrants as well as a Nation of laws.

I would have hoped that we would have constructed a piece of legislation that garnered the very essence of the instructions of the 9/11 Commission; that we would have taken this time to move from the Ds and Fs of which this Nation was graded some 10 days by the 9/11 Commission and actually incurred the appreciation of the Nation by doing real border security, real border enforcement and real immigration reform.