

that it is about choices. Do people want a way of life built around tyranny, oppression, and terrorism, or do they want to embrace democracy, freedom, and prosperity? Clearly, the people of Iraq have chosen the latter. Yes, they have chosen the more difficult path, but the rewards will be enormous.

I congratulate the people of Iraq for yesterday's historic elections. History will judge these elections to be pivotal, vital to building democracy, and part and parcel of our efforts in the war on terror.

As President Bush has highlighted in several recent statements, in an unbelievably brief period of time, Iraq has made tremendous gains in democracy and freedom. I commend the Iraqi people for these unprecedented strides.

The administration has outlined a clear strategy for going forward: three key tracks—political, economic, and security—with realistic terms that avoid imposing unrealistic expectations and very dangerous time frames.

I want to mention the story of a constituent of mine, a man who saw his son go into the service of his country, who saw his son called to war, and then sadly was here in Washington this week to lay that son to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

Bud Clay of Pensacola shared a letter from his son, SSG Daniel Clay of the U.S. Marine Corps. Dan was one of 10 marines killed in Iraq by a roadside bomb in Fallujah. Knowing the danger he faced, knowing the unpredictability of war, Staff Sergeant Clay wrote a letter to his family to be opened only in the event of his death.

He wrote in part:

What we have done in Iraq is worth any sacrifice. Why? Because it was our duty. That sounds simple. But all of us have a duty. It has been an honor to protect and serve all of you. I faced death with the secure knowledge that you would not have to.

Staff Sergeant Clay writes:

As a marine, this is not the last chapter. I have the privilege of being one who has finished the race. I have been in the company of heroes. I now am counted among them.

He concludes by saying:

My race is over, my time in the war zone is over. My trials are done . . . Semper Fidelis.

SSG Daniel Clay was laid to rest Wednesday at Arlington National Cemetery. He is a hero. We honor his sacrifice, just as we honor the sacrifice of all those who have given so much in this war.

I conclude by again offering congratulations to the people of Iraq. Congratulations for going to the polls, for taking another significant step forward for your own future, and for embracing that glimmer of hope that your country can be as free, peaceful, and prosperous as any other society that rejects tyranny and entrusts its government to its people.

Soldiers such as Staff Sergeant Clay are sustaining the development of Iraqi forces. We owe them our respect, grati-

tude, and undying honor as we demonstrate unwavering determination to complete this mission.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized for 5 minutes.

NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, there is an irony today as we look at Iraq. As democracy is flourishing, the Democratic Party in the United States has tried to contract the democratic process by attempting to mute the New Hampshire primary.

The New Hampshire primary is sort of the last best hope for the dream that anybody can become President in this country. It is the last opportunity in this country for a person who is underfunded and who has not been chosen by the Washington talking heads as a potential candidate of purpose to have the opportunity to go somewhere and actually make an impact. Underfunded, nonrecognized candidates who have legitimacy can succeed in New Hampshire and, therefore, interject themselves into the opportunity to become President. And it has happened time and again.

The argument that New Hampshire is not representative is belied by the facts. Again and again, New Hampshire has reflected an opportunity for people to come to New Hampshire, participate in the process, make a name for themselves, and move forward in the process.

Henry Cabot Lodge upset Nelson Rockefeller and Barry Goldwater there. Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern upset the candidates who were perceived to be the sure-fire winners of their nomination, in fact, in one case, a sitting President. Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton not only came to New Hampshire and made a name for themselves as people not recognized nationally but moved on to become President of the United States. Even Ronald Reagan, arguably, might not have become President of the United States had he not had the opportunity to come to New Hampshire and participate in the national debate where he said:

I paid for this microphone, Mr. Green.

More importantly, New Hampshire gives the people of this country the only opportunity they have to test candidates for President one on one. Without any script, without any prescreening, Presidential candidates have to come to New Hampshire and go into living rooms, they have to go into VFW halls, they have to go to Rotary clubs, and they have to go to union halls. They have to answer questions from everyday American citizens, and those questions are tough. Regrettably, time and again, candidates have not lived up to that test.

So what we have today in the Democratic Party is an attempt by the

kingmakers of that party to try to eliminate the threat of having the American people actually meet their candidates and be tested by those questions as they try to mute the New Hampshire primary process.

This was said extraordinarily well in an article ironically written by a professor in England who is a specialist on the American political process. He looks at New Hampshire as the last best hope to maintain a populist approach to how we pick our Presidents in this country. Rather than having to have lots of money to pay for campaigns in big States or large groups of primary States or have a national name recognition that comes through having cozier up to the national press, a candidate can come to New Hampshire with very little money, without national name recognition, but with ideas, with purpose, with fire in their belly, and they can succeed in putting themselves and injecting themselves into the Presidential process.

It would be a huge detriment to a fundamental element of the American dream, which is that if you have purpose, if you have substance, and if you have a track record of success and have been a producer in our Nation, you can continue that course and pursue the Presidency. It will undermine fundamentally the capacity of the American people to participate in the picking of a President if they don't have one place in this country where people who want to be President have to actually answer questions from everyday Americans.

I certainly hope the Democratic Party will relent in its efforts to try to crush this one element of democracy which is so critical to our entire democratic process.

I ask unanimous consent that the article written by Roddy Keenan, a professor of American studies in England, be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Concord (NH) Monitor, Dec. 16, 2005]

EVEN FROM ACROSS THE POND, PRIMARY'S BEAUTY IS PLAIN TO SEE

(By Roddy Keenan)

Gary Hart had just won New Hampshire. The race for the Democratic nomination had been turned on its head. And it was all because of New Hampshire. To a 14-year-old watching the news in Ireland, this was all unfamiliar to me. But on that night in 1984, a fascination was born for a nation's politics and for a picturesque snow-covered state in New England.

Now, 21 years later, the New Hampshire primary is under attack. Watching from afar, I believe that attempts by Democratic powers-that-be to dilute the primary come with little justification, minimal forethought and an absence of logic.

I can only imagine that those looking to create such mischief have never witnessed the process or are fitted with the blinkers of self-interest.

For these reforming politicians and officials deeming themselves to be redressing an absence of inclusiveness and decrying the unrepresentative nature of the primary, there

can be no greater example of being divorced from reality.

In a nation where voter turnout is a major issue, the New Hampshire primary has no such problem. Those casting aspersions on the democratic relevance of New Hampshire should look at their own states' turnout before denigrating others. Moreover, the state's primary provides for a greater show of grassroots democracy than caucuses do.

The proposals to add more early caucuses will only serve to exacerbate the problem of front loading.

But it is the nature of the primary that I believe will be the greatest loss to the nation's political and democratic culture. In a college here in the United Kingdom, I teach U.S. politics to students who receive their view of the U.S. political system from various media. Big money, stadium rallies and nonstop tarmac campaigns comprise the portrayal they are presented with.

That's until I tell them of New Hampshire—of town hall meetings, coffee klatches and earnest discussion, of living rooms and factory gates in the snow, of genuine democracy in action—the politics of people.

It is deeply ironic that in the week that saw the passing of Eugene McCarthy, the future of the New Hampshire primary is being challenged. His insurgent campaign in 1968 was a key factor in the democratization of the system of presidential selection.

It was only because of the unique character of New Hampshire, its people's desire for serious political dialogue and the democratic character of the state's primary that such a challenge proved to be possible.

Long may it continue. Looking forward to seeing you in '08, '12 and '16.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized for 7 minutes.

Mr. INHOFE. Repeat the time, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Seven minutes.

IRAQ

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I returned 2 days ago from Iraq. There was an article in yesterday's Hill magazine that was erroneous—there will be a correction printed—where they inaccurately stated the number of times I have been over to Iraq. It has actually been 10 times. I have been doing this not because I am a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, but because I believe it is our constitutional responsibility to see firsthand that our guys over there are getting the equipment they need to prosecute the war, and they have been.

I want to share with you what happened the first of this week because even though the vote took place yesterday, on Thursday, the vote for the Iraqi security forces actually took place on Monday and Tuesday. We had a chance to go up there and visit with them.

The interesting point is, we saw this coming. There have been a lot of politicians coming back and talking about how bad things are over there. I can't figure out where they get their information because as we have been approaching these elections over the last few months, we have noticed the IED incidents have been down 30 percent

and suicide bombs have been down 70 percent.

There is a road that goes from where we get off the C-130s to go into the Green Zone. Mr. President, you have been there. We were averaging about 10 terrorist incidents on that road each week up until June. We haven't had one since June. So we see all these good things are happening, and then the unexpected quality of the training we are getting for the Iraqi security forces. These guys right now—and I think this is significant because people keep asking, What is the exit strategy? I can tell you what I believe. One Senator believes we are going to be out.

Right now there are 214,000 Iraqi soldiers who are trained and equipped. At the end of this month, while we are drawing down—we are drawing down probably 15,000 to 20,000 of ours troops—they are going to increase to 220,000. By the end of 2006, it is anticipated they will be at 300,000. The goal is to get 10 divisions of Iraqi security forces. Ten divisions of Iraqi security forces equal 325,000 troops. That will happen by July of 2007.

In terms of the way we are functioning now, we will be out of there, but there will still be some troops there. We still have troops in Kosovo and in Bosnia, but the heavy lifting will be over. They will be taking care of themselves.

I see the incredible courage of these people. Up in Fallujah 3 nights ago, I had all of the Iraqi security forces that had voted that day come in. They were all rejoicing, and I said to them—this is kind of funny. I said to them, through an interpreter: When is it going to be that you are going to be able to be on your own without our support? Is that going to be in the near future?

And they said: No, no—which broke my heart when I heard this. Then I found out, in the Iraqi language, "yes" means "na'am." So they are saying, "Yes, yes," and when they shake their head this way, it also means "yes." Anyway, a little advice in case that happens to anyone.

These people are ready. They are so proud of the level of training they have had. Keep in mind, this is in the Sunni triangle. These are the Sunnis who are supposed to dislike us.

Several weeks ago, I was there and I met General Mahdi, who is in charge of the Iraqi security forces in Fallujah. He had been in charge—under Saddam Hussein he was a brigade commander. He hated Americans until he started working with the Marines. He said he learned to love the Marines so much that when they rotated them out, they all got together and they cried. That guy right now, General Mahdi, is now over the eastern one-third of the entire city of Baghdad. We do not have our military there. It is all under Iraqi security. We have half of the city under security now. It is going to be up to 75 percent in a very short period of time.

I think, when we see the successes—and even if that were not true, if one

stops and realizes the bloody regime of Saddam Hussein, yes, the targets for the terrorists right now are not Americans, they are Iraqis, and they are killing some of the Iraqis, but when one stops and puts it on a chart, during the 10 years that Saddam Hussein had his bloody regime, on a monthly basis he was torturing to death more people than the terrorists are killing today. When one looks at the way that they have done it, the forms of torture, include gouging out of eyes, severe beatings, electric shocks—there is a testimonial here about a 3-month-old baby girl who was taken, and they gouged her eyes out in front of the father, smashed her head and broke it open against a concrete wall.

There is a lot of talk on the other side of this issue about prisoner abuse. We do not have prisoner abuse. The documentation is right here about what they do with their prisoners. They will put them in shredders. If they are lucky, they will shred their head first. If they are unlucky, they will put their feet in there. This is what has been happening over there, but it is all over now, and they are in charge of their own destiny.

I have enjoyed so much visiting with the members of Parliament who were going to be up for election. This would have been on Wednesday, and they were going to be up the next day. One lady was quite outspoken and quite negative in terms of what her people were saying to her. I said: Did it ever occur to you 5 years ago that there would be an opportunity for a woman to serve in Parliament, let alone to talk the way you are talking? She stopped and said: You know, I think that is right.

So we are seeing such a change now in the attitudes. The polls look so good. The polls are showing that 70 percent of the people in Iraq are appreciative of the Americans being there. They want them to stay and get out when they are able to stand up on their own.

I met with the election commission, and to handle the election the way they did was totally unprecedented. We could never have predicted how smoothly things would go. We talked to the people, and I want to particularly pay tribute to IFES, the International Foundation of Electrical Systems. They have done a great job. They had people on the ground, and they have truly been able to conduct an election that is actually comparable and better than many other mature countries, maturing democracies. It has been a great success. I am rejoicing with all the people of Iraq today and with the people of America.

Lastly, I pay tribute to the brave people of Iraq who for the third time this year have gone to the polls in record number to vote for a brighter and more democratic future in Iraq. The early reports indicate that across the 18 provinces of Iraq, Iraqis again turned out in massive numbers to vote