

Ukraine for the first time since its freedom from the Soviet Union.

And the Palestinian territory—Palestinians used to Saddam-type elections, where there was a 99-percent turnout and no choice—had a real choice of who to lead the Palestinian Authority in the wake of Arafat's death. A man got elected who appears to be a reasonable leader, working hard with Prime Minister Sharon to try to achieve a lasting peace.

We wish Secretary of State Rice well as she departs today to go to the Middle East to meet with Sharon and Abu Mazen to see if they can finally get the roadmap back on track at a meeting with Abu Mazen and Ariel Sharon, not to mention last Sunday's inspirational election in Iraq. Many Members of the House of Representatives last night had inkstained index fingers themselves to sort of symbolize our enormous admiration for the extraordinary courage that it took to go out and vote in Iraq last Sunday.

The critics and naysayers will say the turnout was not what it should have been in the Sunni area. But the overall turnout was about what we had last year in this country. I am fairly confident almost nobody in America thought they might get shot if they went to the polls. So there was extraordinary courage, literally under fire, dancing in the streets, the waving of those inkstained index fingers all over the country. The Sunni turnout was not what it will be later, but the people building a democratic Iraq understand and will include an adequate number of Sunnis by appointment in the interim government.

And remember, there are going to be two more elections in Iraq this year. A constitution will be submitted to the voters of Iraq in October. It will not be ratified if only 3 provinces disapprove out of 18. At least four provinces are Sunni majority. That constitution will have to be crafted in such a way that the Sunni population of Iraq is comfortable with it, or it will not be ratified. The leaders of the emerging democracy in Iraq are all acutely aware of the need to respect the rights of minorities and to have proper balance in Iraq in order to have a governing democracy.

If we had any doubts they would make it, we don't have any now. Our friends and colleagues on the other side who have said the signal from the election is to leave have it exactly wrong. The President made it clear last night, and he was absolutely correct, that you never announce to your enemy when you are going to leave. We will leave Iraq one day, even though we are still in Germany and still in Japan some 60 years later; and we are nowhere in the world where we are not wanted. We will leave Iraq some day, when the Iraqi democracy has taken hold and when the Iraqi military and Iraqi police can provide for their own security—and not a day before that.

I had a chance to be in Iraq 2 weeks ago, too, for the second time. There

was some nervousness, candidly, about this election. Nobody knew for sure how successful it would be. Carlos Valenzuela, from the U.N., an elections expert, was there and he said: "This election is going to pass international standards, I am absolutely certain of it." This is a man who has been involved in conducting elections 14 times in difficult places around the world. He was totally confident 2 weeks before the election. He was right and the naysayers were wrong.

Even those who originally were between skeptical and hostile to the Iraq war we had an opportunity to sit down with on that same trip a couple weeks ago. We went back to Brussels with the NATO Ambassadors and a European representative. I think it is not an exaggeration to say that even the Ambassadors from France and Germany to NATO believe at this point that it is in everybody's interest for Iraq to be a success.

Who benefits by a failure in Iraq? No one but the terrorists. I think the President will find on his upcoming trip to Europe more interest in cooperating, in helping to move Iraq further down the road toward democracy.

So last night was indeed a celebration of the march of democratic forces in some of the most unusual places in the world over the last 4 months. The President went a step further, challenging our allies, the Saudis, to begin the march down the democratic path. Even our staunch ally, Egypt—he challenged them to begin a march in the democratic direction. The President deeply believes—and we are increasingly inclined to believe he is correct on a bipartisan basis—that the spread of democracy will make the world indeed safer.

Now, the President was, of course, criticized initially on Iraq for not being very multilateral, in spite of the fact that a majority of NATO countries supported the war and helped us. Nevertheless, he was criticized by some who, I guess, only feel that France and Germany are Europe and no one else counts, saying he was not multilateral enough. The President laid out last night a completely multilateral strategy related to the two most obvious rogue states left in the world, Iran and North Korea. The Germans, the French, and the British are leading the talks with the Iranians; and working with the North Koreans, we have the Russians, the Chinese, the South Koreans, the Japanese, and ourselves. That is the definition of a multilateral approach.

So the President develops his approaches depending upon the situation, and every situation is not exactly the same. He knows, and the new Secretary of State knows, we need significant international cooperation in order to achieve our goals in North Korea and in Iran. North Korea and Iran can take a look at Libya and see the rewards for going nonnuclear. To be welcomed into the community of responsible coun-

tries means trade benefits, it means an opportunity for interaction with the rest of the world, and a chance to improve the lives of the citizens through trade. There are a lot of advantages that I hope the leaders of North Korea and Iran will observe that Libya is going to begin to benefit from as a result of making the decision that maybe the Libyan people would be better off being engaged with the rest of the world, rather than having some weapons of mass destruction sitting there. For what purpose?

So enormous progress has been made in the last 4 years. The low point was 9/11. We all remember it well. But extraordinary progress toward a safer world and toward the spread of democracy has occurred under the extraordinary leadership of our President. We had a chance last night to celebrate that and to commend him for a job well done in last night's State of the Union.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

PROVIDING FOR INJURED AND FALLEN SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, we must do everything possible to show our military men and women and their families how much we appreciate and honor their service. Last week I was proud to cosponsor legislation introduced by Senators ALLEN, SESSIONS and LIEBERMAN reaffirming the commitment of this Congress to our military men and women and their families. This effort has received my strongest support, and thanks to the endorsement of the Leadership and the work over the past years by many of my other colleagues, an increase in financial support to the families of men and women killed in combat could soon be a reality.

When a soldier pays the ultimate sacrifice, no amount of money can ease the grief of his or her family, but a significant increase in the benefits paid to our military families sends a strong message of our gratitude and support.

Currently, when a service member is killed in combat, the family receives only \$12,420. This is simply unacceptable. We are a strong, prosperous Nation, a Nation that honors and respects our sons and daughters in the Armed Services. We can and must do better to provide for the families of those who've lost their lives. The current proposal to increase what is called the "death gratuity" to \$100,000 is most certainly a step in the right direction.

This increase, retroactive to October 2001, is critically important not only to the families who lose loved ones, but to soldiers currently serving or those who are considering enlisting. It sends the message that we value their service, and should something happen to them, their families will be generously cared for.

Maxine Crockett of Fayetteville, NC, lost her husband, Staff Sergeant Ricky L. Crockett, to a bomb blast in Baghdad in January of last year. She and

her 15-year-old daughter were left not only grief-stricken but worried about surviving financially with the loss of a provider. Maxine told the Raleigh News & Observer, "When it comes down to just one income, this [increase] would really help by giving you the time to get back on your feet."

When a family does receive the heartbreaking notification that a loved one was killed in action, they are understandably overcome with grief. In the midst of their devastation, they are required to make many decisions. Casualty Assistance Officers play a critical role in helping them through this process. I had the privilege of meeting many of these dedicated, impressive men and women personally at Fort Bragg last year. These officers are there with the families following notification, through funeral preparations, burial and the process of determining benefits and compensation. They assist when any problems arise and literally go above and beyond their job description. And long after, these families know these officers can be contacted as concerns arise. This is the kind of service and compassion these families deserve.

We also have a responsibility to assist those servicemen and women who are seriously injured and their families. With the improvements in body armor and heroic efforts of our military medical teams both in theater and at home, so many more of our soldiers are surviving, but often with debilitating wounds. We must ensure they are taken care of, physically, emotionally and financially.

I am so pleased that the Department of Defense today launched a new operations center for these deserving heroes and their families to provide them with the necessary support as they transition back to active duty or into civilian life. This center will integrate the programs currently sponsored by various military and Government services, making it easier for these individuals to access the medical, counseling, educational, and financial services they need and deserve.

Our injured and fallen heroes and their families must be a top priority. They deserve no less.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, last night we had the occasion on the House floor to hear a speech from the Commander in Chief, the President of the United States of America—a speech that to me was about two overriding themes—one, freedom, and the other, security—and two primary subjects—one, the war in Iraq and its liberation, and the other, the security of the American people and their retirement.

To the first, I simply say, as eloquent as the President's speech was, as dramatic as his words were, and as many

of them as there were, the most powerful message last night was not words, but a picture. For when Janet Norwood embraced Sofia, the President stopped speaking, the Chamber erupted, tears flowed, but not a word was said. If the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" was ever appropriate, it was on that occasion.

I am very proud of our men and women in the Armed Forces, I am proud of this Congress, I am proud of this President, and I am proud of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, and all freedom-loving people.

The second subject the President addressed was Social Security, which is all about freedom and security, and it is the subject about which I will make my few remarks on this morning.

I would like to begin these remarks by asking you to visualize another picture. Think about how powerful Sofia and Janet were, and think about this picture. Picture the year 2042 or 2052, if you like. Picture you in your living room or your den. Picture you looking at your son or your daughter and their grandchildren squarely in the eye, and picture explaining to them that when you had the chance 37 years earlier, you did nothing to secure their future.

There are those who say Social Security does not have a crisis today, but it has a big crisis tomorrow. When I entered into my campaign for the Senate, I ended every speech by saying "I will soon be 60"—and I am 60 now—"and the rest of my life is about my children and my grandchildren." So it is true about all of us in this room. To do nothing is unacceptable if you visualize that picture 37 years from now, if you look at your daughter or your son or their grandchildren. I want to talk about Elizabeth Sutton Isakson and Jack Hardy Isakson, both born last year, both of whom will be 37 in 2042 when I would have to give them the "good" news—if this Congress did nothing—that America's promise on Social Security is gone, that by law their benefits are lowered and, by absolute practice, their taxes will be raised.

I heard someone in opposition to reform last night criticize the President for saying it is their money. They said it is not their money. They said, "It is my mother's money." That is what is wrong with the system. We have robbed Peter to pay Paul. We are running out of Peters, and we are getting a greater number of Pauls.

Now, personal accounts and a nest egg in the future are a viable decision that should not be criticized and rejected out of hand. In fact, I will tell you an interesting little fact. Had the United States of America 70 years ago invested the surpluses of the payroll tax paid by the American workers throughout that time, we would not have the problem today. But we robbed Peter to pay Paul.

There are those who say personal accounts are a gamble. Arithmetic is a fact, and facts are stubborn. In the 70-year period since the advent of Social

Security, pick any 20 consecutive years that you like and pick any traditional conservative investment model that you like, and in that 20-year period of time, it exceeded the return on Social Security four to five times.

The time value of money is the solution to all problems. Procrastination on the investment of money is a message for disaster. We should not reject this debate out of hand. We should embrace it. We should not reject personal investment; we should encourage it.

Who in this room has not told their children, when we created IRAs, to invest in them because you cannot count on Social Security? Who in this room has not said it? It has been said this morning. I told my children to plan on more because Social Security would not be enough.

The President has said for a modest debt today, we can prohibit a \$26 trillion catastrophe 37 years from now by giving younger Americans a choice to do what we do as Members of Congress in the Thrift Savings Plan. We have the opportunity to empower their future and enhance their security.

Yes, there are disciplines we should apply. Yes, there is math that we should run. But facts are stubborn. Had we done as a country, with the surpluses we received, what the President wants to offer voluntarily to younger Americans, we would not be here today.

Facts are stubborn, and pictures are worth a thousand words.

I hope I am here in 2042, and I pray to God that Elizabeth and Jack will be here, too, and they are going to sit in my den in front of my fireplace, and we are going to talk. I am not going to tell them that 37 years before when I had a chance to make their future brighter I said we really did not have a crisis, we really did not need to do a thing.

George W. Bush is a great President for many reasons but, most importantly, because he is willing to look a problem square in the eye regardless of size and make suggestions and solutions for its correction. We owe the American people no less, and I owe Elizabeth Sutton Isakson and Jack Hardy Isakson no less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I do not know if this is the first time the junior Senator from Georgia has spoken in the Senate, but I am sure it is one of the first times, if not the first time. I just want to tell him I thought what a persuasive argument the junior Senator from Georgia made that we need to not ignore this problem but tackle it for our children and grandchildren.

Mr. ISAKSON. I thank the leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Madam President, first, I would like to say straight out that I thought the President gave a great speech yesterday. I thought it