

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today for the second week in a row the Senate Judiciary Committee's agenda included a proposed amendment to the Constitution, to its fundamental purpose and to our rights as Americans. I understand that Republicans are trying to keep to a political timetable for raising divisive matters in the runup to the November elections.

I know that in election years they love to wave the flag amendment, rather than work on veterans health care or protecting veterans' privacy. We have just witnessed the largest theft of private information from the Government ever, the loss of information on more than 26 million American veterans. Compounding the incompetence was the misguided decision by the Veterans' Administration for secrecy in trying to cover this up for the last 3 weeks. This follows on the heels of last year's debacle of a billion-dollar shortfall in VA's budget for veterans health care, after repeated denials. It all adds up to a "heckuva bad job" for America's veterans.

The President should call Secretary Nicholson into the woodshed for a serious shakeup in how the VA is run. In the meantime, Secretary Nicholson needs to answer why this information was left vulnerable to such a breach, why such a delay in notification was allowed to occur, and what specific steps he is taking to ensure such a breach does not happen again. The Nation's veterans—who have been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country—deserve to have the best tools available to protect themselves and their families from identity theft.

Rather than work on our privacy and identity theft legislation, including the Specter-Leahy Personal Data Privacy and Security Act of 2005, or the Kerry-Salazar legislation to provide credit checks and monitoring to those veterans whose private information was compromised, we are being directed to another divisive debate on a proposed constitutional amendment.

In that regard, I noticed that earlier this week, the White House Press Secretary was asked about this constitutional amendment and had no knowledge of it existing. I would like to include that exchange in the RECORD:

Question. [C]ould you tell us if the President also supports the proposed amendment to protect the United States flag from public desecration?

Mr. SNOW. Do we have a flag desecration—I apologize; this is something that, believe it or not, in the last two weeks has not come up. So I'm afraid—

Question. Flag burning.

Mr. SNOW [continuing]. Flag burning. I'll just have to get back [to you].

The White House Press Secretary has yet to become familiar with the talking points on how much more important this is than national security, the war in Iraq, unprecedented gas prices, the lack of a Federal budget, the pen-

alties on seniors who may now wish to sign up for Medicare drug prescription, comprehensive immigration reform, emergency supplemental appropriations, preparations for the hurricane season, preparations for a possible avian flu pandemic, privacy legislation, and completing our work on reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

FEDERAL HOUSING ENTERPRISE REGULATORY REFORM ACT OF 2005

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, this week Fannie Mae's regulator reported that the company's quarterly reports of profit growth over the past few years were "illusions deliberately and systematically created" by the company's senior management, which resulted in a \$10.6 billion accounting scandal.

The Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight's report goes on to say that Fannie Mae employees deliberately and intentionally manipulated financial reports to hit earnings targets in order to trigger bonuses for senior executives. In the case of Franklin Raines, Fannie Mae's former chief executive officer, OFHEO's report shows that over half of Mr. Raines' compensation for the 6 years through 2003 was directly tied to meeting earnings targets. The report of financial misconduct at Fannie Mae echoes the deeply troubling \$5 billion profit restatement at Freddie Mac.

The OFHEO report also states that Fannie Mae used its political power to lobby Congress in an effort to interfere with the regulator's examination of the company's accounting problems. This report comes some weeks after Freddie Mac paid a record \$3.8 million fine in a settlement with the Federal Election Commission and restated lobbying disclosure reports from 2004 to 2005. These are entities that have demonstrated over and over again that they are deeply in need of reform.

For years I have been concerned about the regulatory structure that governs Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—known as Government-sponsored entities or GSEs—and the sheer magnitude of these companies and the role they play in the housing market. OFHEO's report this week does nothing to ease these concerns. In fact, the report does quite the contrary. OFHEO's report solidifies my view that the GSEs need to be reformed without delay.

I join as a cosponsor of the Federal Housing Enterprise Regulatory Reform Act of 2005, S. 190, to underscore my support for quick passage of GSE regulatory reform legislation. If Congress does not act, American taxpayers will continue to be exposed to the enormous risk that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac pose to the housing market, the overall financial system, and the economy as a whole.

I urge my colleagues to support swift action on this GSE reform legislation.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGIA'S 48TH BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, it is my honor and privilege today to pay tribute to the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade Combat Team. The 48th Brigade is an integral part of Georgia's widely respected National Guard and is comprised of more than 4,000 of Georgia's 9,000 guardsmen. The Georgia National Guard is the thirteenth largest in the Nation, with nearly 60 percent of its forces classified as "high priority units" which would be among the first to deploy during a national crisis.

The 48th Brigade has a long and proud history. The 48th was originally organized on April 23rd, 1825, in Macon, and served in some capacity during the Civil War, WWII, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War. The unit was mobilized into Federal service on November 30th, 1990 at Fort Stewart in order to participate in Desert Storm.

During Desert Storm, the 48th Brigade successfully completed intense combat training at the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA. Upon completion of this training, the 48th received the distinguished honor of being the first and only National Guard combat unit deemed combat-ready for the Gulf War. Later in 2001, the 48th was deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina for a period of 8 months. This deployment established Georgia's 48th as one of the first National Guard units of its size to assume such a large multinational peacekeeping mission.

The 48th Brigade recently joined the 3rd Infantry Division in Iraq, making it the first unit to utilize the Army's new concept of integrating reserve units with active units in order to form a highly effective and efficient active-reserve team. The 48th Brigade was mobilized under the Presidential Selective Reserve Call Up in October 2004 and in January 2005, under the leadership of Brigadier General Stewart Rodeheaver, the 48th was ready to serve our country in Iraq. As a "Combat Ready" force, the 48th was deployed to Iraq on May 22nd, 2005, after undergoing brief training in Kuwait. On June 14, 2005, the 48th Brigade officially took over its assigned area of responsibility in southern Baghdad. They were responsible for conducting full-spectrum counter-insurgency operations in an attempt to defeat anti-Iraqi insurgents. The 48th also played an important role in developing the newly formed Iraqi Security Forces.

During their deployment to Iraq, Georgia's 48th Brigade was known for its bravery, effectiveness, and commitment to getting the job done. During a 12 month deployment, the 48th Brigade completed numerous missions and was responsible for offensive and defensive victories throughout Iraq. The Brigade was involved in a multitude of operations conducted over nearly 1,900 square kilometers throughout southern Baghdad. These missions were in conjunction with 5 larger U.S. operations

including: Operation Safe Skies, Operation Warning Track, Operation Patriot's Call, Operation Dragon's Fire, and Operation Thunder. In total, the 48th Brigade conducted 12,647 combat patrols, 792 cordon and search missions, established 6,219 traffic control points, and conducted 3,782 convoy security missions.

The soldiers of the 48th captured and detained over 500 Anti-Iraqi insurgents, trained over 2,460 Iraqi Soldiers, and established two Iraqi forward operating bases in Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq. The Brigade introduced more than 11 million dollars' worth of new and vital essential services as well as set the conditions to create over 621 new jobs in southern Baghdad. One of the most historical highlights was the Brigade's ability to work with the International Elections Commission of Iraq to establish 22 polling sites across Iraq. Due to the 48th's involvement, nearly 63,000 Iraqi citizens were able to vote on their new Constitution during the "first ever" Iraqi national elections.

On October 2005, the 48th Brigade officially took over security operations for the Logistics Support Area, LSA, Anaconda base. LSA Anaconda is the largest operating base in Iraq and is located in the north-central Iraq province of Salah al Din. The 48th Brigade was simultaneously responsible for convoy security escort missions near Camp Adder, Iraq—located in the southern province of Nasiriyah. The 48th's ability to successfully complete these two missions located in two different areas of the country was instrumental to the success of all Multi-National Forces operating in Iraq. The 48th Brigade Combat Team successfully conducted operations throughout an area of over 1,192 miles while conducting 1,500 patrols and successfully securing the largest military operations base in Iraq.

It is my great honor to commend the 48th Brigade and welcome them home as honorable Soldiers who served our country courageously. The last of the 4,200 members of the 48th Brigade arrived back in Georgia on May 11th, 2006. Following their return, they out-processed at Fort Stewart and were released from active duty to return to their hometowns throughout the State of Georgia. While we welcome the 48th Brigade back from their mission, we need to also honor the 26 soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. My heart goes out to the families of these soldiers. They are true heroes and our Nation will be forever in debt to their sacrifice.

I know I speak on behalf of our Nation, the State of Georgia, and the American people when I thank the 48th Brigade for living up to the calling of our National Guard "Citizen Soldiers" and making everyone in Georgia, and in America, extremely proud and grateful for their contribution.

HONORING IGNACY JAN PADEREWSKI

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am honored to have joined my colleagues Senator HAGEL, Senator DURBIN and Senator MURKOWSKI to submit S. Res. 491 commemorating the 65th anniversary of Ignacy Jan Paderewski's death on June 29, 1941 and recognizing his accomplishments as a musician, composer, statesman, and philanthropist.

I.J. Paderewski was a brilliant pianist who played hundreds of concerts in the United States and Europe. Paderewski always gave back to his society. As a pianist Paderewski donated a bulk of the proceeds from his concerts to charitable causes and helped establish the American Legion's Orphans and Veterans Fund.

When he decided to enter into politics, Paderewski continued to work for the betterment of society. He worked hard to bring independence to Poland, served his country as the first Premier of Poland during World War I and fought against the Nazi dictatorship in WWII.

During his time in politics one of Paderewski's main goals was to build a strong relationship between Poland and the United States. This is why it is so fitting that this resolution acknowledges Poland as an ally a strong partner in the war against global terrorism. The strong relationship that exists today is due in part to the foundations laid by I.J. Paderewski.

Ignacy Jan Paderewski's contributions to music, democracy, and humanity—as a renown pianist, composer, humanitarian and great Polish statesman—make him one of the most deeply valued and appreciated figures in the Polish American community. His close and friendly relationship with his contemporary U.S. social, cultural and political leaders, including many U.S. Presidents, made him a real friend of the American people. That is why it is an exciting opportunity for me, an American of Polish heritage to honor Ignacy Jan Paderewski by acknowledging his work, his accomplishments and all that he contributed to the world with this resolution.

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, as chairman and on behalf of my colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee, I would like to recognize the dedicated public works professionals, engineers, and administrators who represent State and local governments throughout the United States and was pleased to introduce S. Res. 475 proclaiming the week of May 21–May 27, 2006, as National Public Works Week.

As we celebrate the contributions of the tens of thousands of men and women in America who provide and maintain the infrastructure and services that Americans rely on every day, let us not forget these same people are

our first responders too. More often than not, they are on the scene before police, fire, and medical personnel. They can be found clearing roads, restoring water and power as well as critical infrastructure lifelines following disasters. Only in the absence of these dutiful public servants, would we truly recognize how valuable their tireless efforts are in providing and maintaining the basic infrastructure that many Americans often take for granted.

America's public infrastructure is the lifeblood of every community. It includes the roads, bridges, public transportation and airports, the drinking water and wastewater treatment systems, the solid waste services and facilities and other important utilities essential to our quality of life. These structures and services help sustain community life, safeguard the environment, protect our health, support our economy and allow people and goods to move safely and efficiently. These structures and services are truly public goods.

Because of my work on the most recent transportation law, SAFETEA-LU, Public Law 109–59, I have a better appreciation of just how important a reliable, well maintained and fully functioning network of interstate highways and transportation infrastructure is to the Nation. America's transportation system is one of the world's most expensive, with more than 3.9 million miles of roads, 5,300 public-use airports, 26,000 miles of navigable waterways, and more than 173,000 route-miles serviced by buses and rail in urban areas.

Transportation-related goods and services contribute more than \$1.3 trillion to U.S. gross domestic product, about 11 percent of the total.

Furthermore, every \$1 billion invested in roads and bridges generates approximately 47,500 jobs. Not only are infrastructure investments of the most fundamental and important functions of government, but they are also financially wise.

The Nation's 54,000 community drinking water systems supply drinking water to more than 250 million Americans, and municipal wastewater treatment systems each year prevent billions of tons of pollutants from reaching our rivers, lakes, stream, and coastlines. By keeping water supplies free of contaminants, these water utilities protect human health and preserve the environment. Additionally, our water infrastructure supports a \$50 billion a year water-based recreation industry, at least \$300 billion a year in coastal tourism, a \$45 billion annual commercial fishing and shell fishing industry, and hundreds of billions of dollars a year in basic manufacturing which rely on clean water.

Clearly, public works professionals play a vital role in protecting the environment, improving public health and safety, contributing to economic vitality and enhancing the quality of life of every community of the United States.