bogus registrations for people already registered.

The U.S. attorney has now taken over the case, and a Federal grand jury investigation is underway, as the FBI has recently issued a subpoena to the St. Louis Election Board for records pertaining to any person who registered to vote between October 1 of last year and March 6 of this year. They also requested all records of anyone who cast absentee ballots or regular ballots, as well as anyone who was turned away from voting.

It is obvious that there has been brazen fraud with these bogus voter registrations. With dead people registering, fake names on voter lists, and phony addresses, it is painfully clear that the system is being abused.

The only conclusion: Reform is imperative.

There are three key weaknesses in the current system: the ease in which drop sites can be created; the ability of individuals to imposter others and vote in their name; and dual registrations.

The drop sites are a direct result of allowing mail-in or drop-off registration without also requiring some form of authentication that the names being registered are of people actually existing. This creates pools of false names on the voter rolls.

Because absentee voting after mail-in registration is allowed, it is very easy for those bent on cheating to cast votes for people who never existed. This clearly is in need of reform.

Second, the ability of individuals to pose as others is directly dependent upon what type of identification is required for people voting. In the St. Louis mayoral primary this past March, as a result of the attention I and others brought to this situation, they required photo IDs, and there were no complaints of voter impersonation or voter intimidation. Obviously, the ability to pose as another would be severely restricted with a simple photo ID requirement. St. Louis may have had an honest election. It should be celebrated in the history of Missouri. The March election was an honest one.

Third, the number of dual registrations creates a huge pool of names for the unscrupulous to abuse. It also causes confusion for the legitimate voters. A statewide database would clearly eliminate most dual registrations. That is certainly one of the recommendations of the Carter-Ford Commission that deserves support.

However, as simple as these reforms may be, the problems are deeper. For example, motor voter actually blocks States from requiring notarization or other forms of authentication on mail-in registration cards.

Given that nearly all of the fraudulent registrations were mail-in forms, it is obvious that we need to make real reforms in this area. At a minimum, States need to be given the authority to require on mail registration forms a place for notarization or other authentication. Under current law, States are actually prohibited from including this safeguard. This is one obvious place where the Federal law is clearly an impediment to antifraud efforts. Why do we so easily require a photo ID to board a plane or to buy beer and cigarettes, while leaving the ballot box undefended?

Motor voter has also built a system whereby once bogus names are registered, it is impossible to get them off the lists. Current Federal law blocks a person's removal from the rolls unless he or she is reported dead, requests removal, or the U.S. Postal Service returns certified election board mailings to the person as ''undeliverable'' and the person fails to vote in two successive Federal elections. When names are added to vote lists for fraudulent purposes, they certainly are not going to request removal, or they certainly are not going to forget to vote. If you have gone to the trouble to register somebody fraudulently, you are going to vote them in every election. What protections do we have? None.

We passed the motor voter bill with best intentions. Unfortunately, we now have proof that the very mechanism designed to boost voter participation has turned the Nation's voter rolls into a tangled mess. In Missouri, we saw how the motor voter flaws paralyzed the St. Louis Election Board last year. The board's inability to maintain its lists invited brazen vote fraud, now the subject of a Federal criminal probe.

In Florida, St. Louis, and elsewhere, sloppy maintenance of voter rolls fueled charges of minority disenfranchisement. The legacy of the motor voter bill is that while it tried to boost voter participation, it may, in fact, now be responsible for reducing the integrity of and confidence in our elections. The best election ''reform'' Congress can undertake this year is to go back and fix the flaws in the law we passed 7 years ago.

We need to get a handle on the voter lists. People who register and follow the rules should not be frustrated by inadequate polling places and phone lines, or confused by out-of-date lists. At the same time, we must require the voter list to be scrubbed and reviewed in a much more timely manner—so cheaters cannot use confusion as their friend.

It is time we got rid of St. Louis's lasting reputation, described my old friend Quincy Troop this way: The only way you can win a close election in this town, you have to beat the cheat.

Madam President, I thank the Chair and my colleagues. I yield the floor.

RELEASING THE HOLD ON TWO NOMINEES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, I had written placing a hold on two nominees from the Department of Health and Human Services. I wrote that last week on Janet Rehnquist, on July 27. She is up for inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services; and Alex Michael Azar, II, up for general counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services.

I placed a hold on them and had notified them on that day, last Friday. I had a meeting with them on Monday and I have written today releasing the hold.

The hold was placed on them on a matter that is ongoing. That is because, when we had the Budget Appropriation hearings on the National Institutes of Health, Senator HARKIN and I had written—I was chairman at the time—to the Institutes asking questions about stem cell research. The replies we got were censored, and we finally laboriously got the originals and found that information very favorable to stem cell research had been deleted. I asked Secretary Thompson about that and got an unsatisfactory answer, which I need not go into in any detail about here. And then NIH had submitted a 200-page report to the Department of Health and Human Services, and that report on the report was published in the New York Times in mid-June.

Senator HARKIN and I could not get it until less than 24 hours after we had a hearing on stem cells on that report 2 weeks ago. I talked to the inspector general nominee, Janet Rehnquist, about assurances that if she were confirmed that she would, as inspector general of HHS, conduct a thorough inquiry into why those reports were censored.

I received a letter in reply, and I need not go into detail now, and it is really not determinative for consideration because I am advised by the chairman of the Finance Committee they will not be reported out before recess with respect to Mr. Azar. I asked him about his standards as general counsel to render an opinion on stem cell research, which would be an objective opinion. The general counsel, under the previous administration, had rendered an opinion that the Federal statute barred extracting stem cells from the embryos, but did not ban research once they had been extracted.

The President has taken a contrary position, and funding has been held up. I wanted assurances from Mr. Azar that his determination would be an objective determination. He has written to me. It is not ripe for a final determination, but I wanted to comment because of the importance of the subject and state publicly that the holds have been withdrawn as far as this Senator is concerned.

I thank the Chair especially for her diligence in presiding.

I yield the floor.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG DAY

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleagues, Senators SCHUMER, BREAUX, LANDRIEU, and