

the lead sponsor on the bill, has been working on this for over a decade, and versions of this bill passed through the Judiciary Committee in each of the last two Congresses. In 2003, it came within one vote of passage. Finally, because of the continuing work of both sides of the aisle, people came together to recognize the intent was right, the legislation at different points could be improved, it was improved, and then we had relatively quick passage of it. The House will be addressing the bill shortly. Then hopefully we can have a bill to the President of the United States to be signed into law for the benefit of the American people.

Also, at the beginning of last week, on Monday, we passed a resolution commending the Iraqi people on their January 30 elections. As we saw over the weekend, those elections were finalized and, in terms of the final reports, again, it is a great victory for freedom and liberty throughout the world. It was an extraordinary event, and it was fitting that we came together on this floor to celebrate and commend the process and the results in those elections.

It was in the midst of terrorist blasts and terrorist threats that 8 million Iraqi voters streamed to over 5,000 polling stations to express that influence, that power and dignity that comes with voting. The various pictures that we all saw of families bringing their sons and daughters so that they could witness this moment in history is something that captures us all.

As I mentioned, over the weekend the votes were tallied of the 8.5 million people voting. For the first time in decades the Iraqi people have been able to speak and to speak freely—and they were heard, as we saw with the outcome. It is a transformation that is fundamental. It is a fundamental transformation of power from the people, instead of over the people. This has renewed a sense of momentum and optimism and hope.

The process, as we see, continues to unfold with negotiations going on as to who will be part of the Presidential Council. Again, looking from afar, from where we sit it is very encouraging to see the various coalitions working with each other, Shiites working with the Sunnis and working with other minority parties, all working together to fashion this government. It is an exciting time for the Iraqi people and all who watch.

Jumping ahead, today we will, as I mentioned in my opening statement, vote on the nomination of Judge Michael Chertoff to lead the Department of Homeland Security. We have heard much about the judge, both in committee and then on the floor yesterday, and we will over the course of today. He has a long and distinguished career in public service and law enforcement. In the mid-1980s he was an assistant U.S. attorney alongside Rudy Giuliani. He aggressively prosecuted mob and political corruption cases. He then

went on to become New Jersey's U.S. attorney, where he oversaw high-profile and politically sensitive prosecutions in Jersey City, actually prosecuting the mayor of Jersey City, Mayor Gerald McCann, New York chief judge Sol Wachtler, and the kidnapers and killers of Exxon oil executive Sidney Reso. Fearless and scrupulous as a prosecutor, he became known not only for his legal brilliance but also for his skills as a manager and leader.

We all saw that take real meaning after 9/11. For the 20 hours after that worst ever attack on American soil, Judge Chertoff was central in directing our response. It was through his work as Chief of the Justice Department's Criminal Division that they traced the 9/11 killers back to al-Qaida, a central focus. We are indebted for all these things to his strong and unwavering leadership.

For the next 2 years Judge Chertoff was the key figure shaping our antiterrorism policies. His experience working directly with law enforcement, his expertise in homeland security policy, and his proven ability to lead in times of national crisis make him overwhelmingly qualified to direct our Homeland Security Department.

He earned unanimous approval in committee last week, with one member voting "present." I am confident that today Judge Chertoff, who has already been confirmed by this body three times, will receive overwhelming, strong bipartisan support. He is an outstanding candidate and we all look forward to working with him in his new capacity.

Another matter of security, a different type of security, which I hope we will be addressing this week—I mentioned it also a little earlier—is the Genetic Nondiscrimination Act. This is the security of information about us that can be used to give us health care security. It is a bill that many of us on the floor have been working on aggressively over the last 7, 8 years. The bill, the Genetic Nondiscrimination Act, is just that. The bill is designed to protect Americans from having valuable genetic health information abused or misused by others—for example, being used against them to get health insurance coverage or being used in some way to discriminate against them for a future job. This whole field of genetic testing and genetic information has blossomed, in part because of a wonderful public-private project that was over about a 10-year period called the Human Genome Project. This explosion of information has introduced these genetic tests that can have—and it is early, they are early—but they do have the potential for having great predictive value regarding what disease or illness you might have later in life, and would allow you to prevent that, to take preventive measures if that is the case.

Right now, scientists tell us most Americans have about a half dozen potentially harmful genetic mutations.

That is a statement that will change a week from now, a month from now, a year from now, as we learn more and more about it, but the point of this bill is that people run the risk of losing their jobs or not being promoted or not being able to get an insurance policy based on getting this test which could be of so much benefit to them. We need to prevent it, and we need to do it now, instead of waiting until it becomes a huge problem in the future.

One study in 2003 found that 40 percent of people at risk for colon cancer refused to participate in a screening exam, many citing the fear that the results might in some way cause them to lose their health insurance. That means they don't get this test. If they don't get the test, they lose the potential benefit to their own health and health security in the future. The knowledge of genetic risk has the power to save lives. As we look at tests that are early, and they are just being proven—the tests for heart disease, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, a host of other diseases—there is great hope in these genetic tests becoming a powerful tool. The legislation we are considering this week is intended to make sure genetic testing is used as a tool to help and not hurt. I hope we will be able to pass that bill so that medical science does deliver a meaningful solution and keeps America moving forward.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leader time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business until the hour of 12:30 p.m. with the first 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the next 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the remainder of the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

TSUNAMI ASSISTANCE—NEW MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, pursuant to that consent, I would like to be recognized to speak to an issue which the whole world has focused on over the last several weeks and months. Within a few weeks, the Senate is likely to vote to send hundreds of millions