

in favor of a democratic Iraq. In doing so the Iraqis demonstrated to us all the importance of voting.

Earlier this week I was in Iraq and had the opportunity to see first hand the preparations for the historic election on December 15. I even had a chance to witness some of the early voting that took place in Iraq. It was a moving experience and one that demonstrated that the great sacrifice that America has made in Iraq helped to free people from tyranny and start them on the road to a democratic future.

While in Baghdad, I met with the Chairman of the Independent Election Commission of Iraq, IECI, Isadin Al Mohamaady and the members of the commission. I had an opportunity to see first hand the extensive preparations that were being undertaken by the Iraqis. I was impressed by the sacrifice made by the members of the commission and their staff, many of whom have paid the ultimate price for democracy with their lives. However, the spirit that I found in Baghdad, Fallujah, and everywhere I went, was one of determination, professionalism, and a dedication to making sure that Iraqis could freely select their future leaders at the ballot box.

It is important also to recognize the work of the International Foundation for Election Systems also known as IFES that has played a critical role in helping advance free and fair elections in Iraq and in 120 countries around the world. With the support of U.S. taxpayers, IFES was able to provide critical assistance that helped to make these elections possible.

I stand here to salute the brave Iraqis who at great personal risk sent an important message to the world about the triumph of the ballot over the bullet. Iraqis of all ethnic groups have joined together with unity and determination to freely choose their leaders in a free and fair election. They have sent a message around the world that the best way to defeat tyranny is at the ballot box, the source of power of the people, by the people and for the people.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

The Senator from Mississippi.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 4440

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I have a unanimous consent request that we have been working on, and I think we are ready to go with. We would like to get that done before we go to the hour of debate on the PATRIOT Act. I wish to see if we can confirm that with the minority.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I object.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, could I inquire what the anticipated time is on

when we could get this done? I know the Democratic leader has indicated we are very close and should be able to get this done momentarily. Do we have any information on that?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, my understanding is that colleagues are working to clear this continued Katrina tax relief issue and that there is progress being made. That is the reason we are objecting. As soon as we can get it cleared, we will interrupt what we are doing to take it up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I must say my patience is wearing thin. I have been going through this for several days now and have been assured by the Democratic leader himself that we would get this done this morning. I am expecting that to occur. I am going to be standing right here waiting for that signal from the Democratic leader.

The people of the area that have been damaged by Hurricane Katrina cannot wait any longer. I expect this to be done momentarily, and if it is not, there is going to be hell to pay this day.

I yield the floor.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

NATIONAL BORDER NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced S. 2117, which is a bill engaging our Nation to fight concerning our right to control entry. It is legislation that covers many aspects of the problem we are having on our very porous borders. One part of this is utilizing retired law enforcement officers. As many people know, national law enforcement officers have to retire at age 57. We learned of their availability after 9/11 when the Transportation Safety Administration and our office was inundated with calls from these brave law enforcement officers who are retired, saying that they wanted to participate in this activity, and they are willing to do it for costs. The legislation I have introduced does include the very sophisticated type of a fence that goes along the border between Mexico and the United States and also with an army of people who can join those who have already demonstrated very clearly that if we have enough people down there, we will be able to secure our borders.

I am cautioning any of our colleagues who are concerned about this issue not to be tempted to use military because right now our military is stressed. We have an OPTEMPO that is unacceptable as it is right now. It should not be taking on other duties. Besides that, with the enactment of S. 2117, that would not be necessary.

Illegal immigration is at an all-time high, with around 1 million illegal aliens infiltrating our borders each year.

My legislation focuses on empowering our citizens and law enforcement

officers to fight this flood of illegal immigration.

First of all, I want to make it clear that I honor the millions of immigrants that have come to this Nation, waited their turn, and gone through all the requirements to become American citizens to make our great country what it is today. I have spoken at many naturalization services and seen what these people have gone through to become American citizens.

I agree with the 1997 U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform that measured, legal immigration has "led" to create one of the world's greatest "multiethnic nations."

I also agree with the Commission that immigrants who are "Americanized" help cultivate a shared commitment to "liberty, democracy and equal opportunity" in our Nation. However, I cannot stand idly by and watch this great Nation collapse under the pressure of uncontrolled illegal immigration.

Roy Beck, Executive Director of Numbers USA, a non-profit organization dedicated to immigration reform, stated that "a presence of 8 to 11 million illegal aliens in this country is a sign that this country has lost control of its borders and the ability to determine who is a member of this national community . . . a country that has lost that ability increasingly loses its ability to determine the rules of its society—environmental protections, labor protections, health protections, safety protections."

Beck goes on to say, "In fact, a country that cannot keep illegal immigration to a low level quickly ceases to be a real country, or a real community. Rather than being self-governed, such a country begins to have its destiny largely determined by citizens of other countries who manage to move in illegally."

My bill, the ENFORCE Act, works to solve the illegal immigration problem in several ways. It will provide a way for more civilians and retired law enforcement officers to help the Border Patrol in stopping illegal border crossings and reduce the illegal immigration rate.

Through the creation of the National Border Neighborhood Watch Program, NBNW, retired law enforcement officials called the Border Regiment Assisting in Valuable Enforcement, BRAVE, Force agents, will come and work alongside Border Patrol agents. Civilian volunteers, much like the now well-known Minutemen, will be able to report immigration violations to assigned BRAVE Force agents.

The NBNW Program is modeled after the National Neighborhood Watch program, a collaboration between law enforcement, businesses, and concerned citizens who watch for and report suspicious criminal activity in neighborhoods to the local police.

The Neighborhood Watch Program has proven effective in reducing the crime rate in areas where it is implemented. I am hopeful that the National