

We appreciate the Committee's interest in the question of whether individuals were naturalized or received permanent residence status while they were subjects of foreign counterintelligence investigations and, in fact, we have indicated in conversations with Committee staff our belief that this likely occurred prior to September 11, 2001. We do not have data to support this view, but based upon our knowledge of how Bureau and then-Immigration and Naturalization Services systems interfaced, we do not dispute the premise.

This is serious. In other words, suspected terrorists most likely received citizenship or permanent residency in the country they swore to destroy because the FBI and the INS did not talk to each other. This is extraordinary.

During my negotiations with the Department of Justice, I had suggested the Privacy Act concern the Department raised could be dealt with if the FBI passed the sealed findings of their review through my committee which then could, in turn, pass the findings along to the BCIS. That wouldn't work, Justice said, because it would violate—you got it—their longstanding policy against providing information to Congress about investigations that did not result in prosecution.

If you think we have been driving around in circles, you are right. The Justice Department refuses to provide my oversight committee with information because of a "longstanding policy." We suggest a way around that longstanding policy, and the Department cites the Privacy Act. We suggest a way to avoid the Privacy Act concerns, and we find ourselves back to the longstanding policy.

This is simply unacceptable. We know some terrorists and supporters of terrorism seek out the protective guise of American citizenship. We know a lack of coordination between the relevant agencies allowed this unacceptable situation to occur. What we don't know is how many times it has happened, how broad this problem is, how many people are involved and, most important of all, what has been done to stop it, to close that communications gap.

The Committee on Governmental Affairs will pursue this matter by continuing its investigation. I have again written to the FBI Director to request the records needed by the committee. I have now focused my request on those individuals who were named in the NBC report. It is not a burdensome request. It is not an onerous request. It is a request that is very specific, time limited, and narrow in scope. There is no reason for the Department of Justice not to promptly turn over these documents to the committee.

I want to acknowledge those courageous FBI agents who wanted to do the right thing, tried to do the sensible thing, who said: Let's share this critical information, when they discovered suspected terrorists were trying to become American citizens or permanent residents. It is deeply disturbing that in some cases their supervisors did not

listen to them. It is deeply disturbing that bureaucracy trumped national security and common sense.

I invite those agents to step forward again to make their concerns known by contacting my committee. We will listen, and we will act.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE PAGES

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the other day the distinguished majority leader came to the floor to call attention to the special contribution made by a number of our pages who volunteered to stay beyond the time that was originally scheduled for their experience in the Senate. I wanted to join with him in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to each of those pages, not only those pages who stayed as volunteers but to those pages who have been with us this past session.

Pages play a very important role in the Senate. They are not only spectators to the democratic experiment, but they are real participants. Each of them becomes all the more adept at all of their responsibilities as the session unfolds and they become students of Government in a unique and special way.

I have always been an admirer of our pages because of the great job they do and the little attention they get. I hope they leave with an appreciation of Government.

When we have graduation for our pages, I oftentimes urge them to consider this the first installment of their public experience. I urge them to consider coming back, not only as members of the staff, but hopefully one day as elected Members themselves. I am absolutely confident at some point some will.

I will never forget Senator David Pryor, MARK PRYOR's father, telling the story that when he was a page he left a penny in the Capitol and promised himself he would come back and pick up that penny as an elected official. He did. I think it was a testament to the dreams, aspirations, and remarkable persistence that oftentimes our pages have.

As I noted, there are a number of pages who not only served the time that was expected of them but stayed on afterward to accommodate the elongated Senate schedule. Many others offered to stay, but because they had schedules that were in conflict were not able to. There are seven pages who stayed on until the last couple of days and in a couple of cases all the way up until today. Margaret Leddy, Melissa Meyer, Krista Warner, Yael Bortnick,

Emily Holmgren, Farrell Oxley, and Sarah Smith all went above and beyond the call of duty. They all have served the Senate in their capacity as pages superbly. I did not want this day or this session to end without publicly acknowledging their remarkable contribution, the quality with which they did their work and the gratitude we have for the job they did.

Yesterday was Melissa Meyer's birthday. I wish her a happy birthday besides, but to each of our pages—those who may still be here and those who have gone, those who served—again let me express on behalf of the entire Senate our heartfelt thanks, our best wishes for a happy holiday season, and, perhaps most importantly, our sincere wish that they come back again in some other capacity, because we need them.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, earlier today I spoke briefly about the need to get our appropriations bills, many of which are now included in the so-called omnibus appropriations measure—some of us think it is an "ominous" appropriations measure—passed prior to the end of calendar year 2003. Among the things I pointed out were some very important measures. This body passed something called the Help America Vote Act, which I think focused attention on two very important problems. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle wanted to make sure we had up-to-date voting machines to make sure everyone who was entitled to vote could vote to remove barriers to voting. We supported that.

We also got support for something I thought was very important as well, and that was to stop the rampant fraud that has come back as a result of post-card registration.

I have the honor of representing an area that has probably the dubious distinction of being one of the vote fraud centers perhaps in the universe. The city of St. Louis, as I have said many times before, is famous for voting rolls clogged with people registered one, two, three, even four times; vacant lots with small cities worth of registered voters; and even my favorite dog, Ritzzy Meckler, a 13-year-old Springer Spaniel who was registered there.

We have had some great theological experiences. For the last general election, a very prominent and outstanding alderman of the city of St. Louis registered to vote on the 10th anniversary of his death. It is a wonderful theological statement. It does not do much

for me as a political scientist, but he registered by postcard.

After the 2000 election, when we found tremendous vote fraud problems in St. Louis, they had a mayoral election scheduled for the spring of 2001. The last day of registration, 3,000 postcards showed up to register voters for that election. It did not take long for observant election officials to note that all of those cards appeared to be in the handwriting of one or two people. They started checking and they found that, lo and behold, there were a lot of phony people registered.

Terribly, the deceased mother of the prosecuting attorney of the city of St. Louis was registered to vote. This brought about some action. Several of the people involved in that little process came together and decided to destroy the records. Since that time, I have read in the paper that the prosecuting attorney in St. Louis has filed significant criminal indictments for those people.

However, I am proud to say that the St. Louis City election board is using new laws passed in the State of Missouri to tighten up on these postcard registrations. Prior to the Help America Vote Act, you couldn't even check on people who registered by mail. The process for getting voters off the list, if they are improperly registered, was byzantine, and took years to do. But under the Federal standards, there are still areas where these nonexistent or duplication voter registrations can be made by mail.

We provided new powers and new responsibilities for local election officials in the Help America Vote Act. We promised to fund them. So during the process of debate on the appropriations bills, Senator DODD of Connecticut, Senator MCCONNELL of Kentucky, the Chair, and the ranking member of the Rules Committee, when this passed, came to the floor and I supported them. We got over \$1 billion to fund the Help America Vote Act. That languishes in the omnibus appropriations bill. That money is necessary to support local efforts to carry out the mandates under the Help America Vote Act.

We all thought that once we passed that law we were going to ensure honest elections in 2004, elections where everybody entitled to vote could vote. The problem is, if we don't get around to passing the funding for the Help America Vote Act until we come back next year, the process drags on and on and we are probably into March before the money goes out—which is too late to make many of the changes and to build the infrastructure and to buy the equipment that is needed to carry out the requirements of the Help America Vote Act.

I have talked with other Senators about the many important measures that are included in that Omnibus Appropriations Act. But I want to call the attention of my colleagues to some further information that I have developed about the Veterans Affairs budget.

Senator MIKULSKI and I fought long and hard to get the funding that we needed to try to catch up to the backlog in the VA. People with service-related injuries, permanent disabilities, low-income people, homeless people, are being denied, for months, the ability to get in to see a doctor because so many new enrollees have come into the system. This body expanded the eligibility. We expanded the eligibility, but the money has not kept up. So we are trying to play catchup, and there is an additional \$2.9 billion above this year's funding level for the VA that cannot begin until the bill is signed. We are already a couple of months into the fiscal year 2004. We would be 6 or 7 months in before we could get funding if we wait until next year.

My staff tells me there are a number of other things that will happen. Specifically, noninstitutional long-term care cannot be increased. The VA has placed a high priority, providing a high quality of life, long-term care for each veteran. The VA planned to expand the program by over 20 percent this year because of the demand. The VA, without these funds, will not be able to expand the long-term care services under the fiscal year 2003 funding authority.

Second, pharmacy costs will continue eating the budget. For fiscal year 2003, pharmacy costs rose over 11 percent and the VA is incurring increasing demands for prescriptions each month. The continuing rise in demand for prescriptions is stripping funds from other priority areas as VA continues to operate under last year's funding levels.

Third, new community-based outpatient clinics will be curtailed. The VA has 48 high-priority community-based outpatient clinics ready to go that can't move forward because they don't have the funds under the continuing resolution.

Finally and most important, and something I hope will be significant to each one of us here, the waiting lists will continue to lengthen. Continued operations under a continuing resolution will force VA to curtail hiring of new physicians and nurses. The VA experiences about a 1-percent normal attrition rate of physicians per month. By January, VA's waiting list will rise by over 10,000 from the projected level.

VA patients, who should be getting our top priority attention, are going to find the waiting list longer. That is why I renew my appeal to the leaders on both sides to deal with the omnibus appropriations, to come to some agreement, either to take this on UC, or take it by voice vote, with the distinguished chairman and ranking member on our side and the other side to come to closure on it, or, if need be, bring us back in session.

The House is going to come back into session on December 8, I understand, and vote on the bill. We have an obligation to come in—either if there is a unanimous consent agreement granted to do it by voice vote or if there is not—and do what we are paid to do and

that is to vote up or down and pass the appropriations that are so essential for many areas where continuing resolution funding will be inadequate.

I urge the leadership to work on this. We need it in many areas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. DOLE). The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. BINGAMAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1966 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I have some remarks I would like to make shortly, but I know Senator LAUTENBERG got here before I did. He told me he had about 10 minutes. I know the majority leader may have some remarks, and, of course, I would defer to him.

Unless there is objection, I would like to ask—well, I will just defer to the majority leader at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, if I could just take 3 or 4 minutes, and then I know the distinguished Senator from New Jersey has his comments to make.

THANKING THOSE WHO WORKED ON THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG AND REFORM BILL

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, I, just very briefly, want to thank people for a lot of hard work over the last several months.

Earlier today, we did pass a historic bill that is notable for the fact that it does help so many people in a very direct way. I think it is gratifying to all of us as U.S. Senators. But that outcome is made possible by a lot of hard work. I will be very brief, but I do want to thank the appropriate people. Again, I leave out so many people.

But, first, I thank the President of the United States. President Bush does deserve credit for making this vision of being able to reach out and help people as soon as possible in a direct way with prescription drug coverage possible. That vision really did set the template for all of us. We pulled together and passed this bipartisan bill.

Secretary Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Tom Scully, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, spent literally hundreds of hours working on this legislation.

I participated on the conference committee and had the wonderful opportunity of working side by side with them, consulting with them, seeking counsel, receiving their input.

In the Senate, Finance Committee chairman, CHUCK GRASSLEY, and ranking member, MAX BAUCUS, really did put partisanship aside from day 1,