geology. But, lo and behold, that was the site that was chosen.

You will hear again and again from colleagues on the other side that this siting decision is a purely local matter. It is not. The most obvious reason is that it is up to the Congress to ratify this Compact between Texas, Maine, and Vermont. Without the Compact, it is unlikely there will be a dump. Without the upfront payments from the other States, where is the construction money going to come from? And by the Texas Waste Authority's own projections, the dump will not be economically viable if Maine and Vermont do not sign up in advance. Texas does not generate enough waste.

There are other reasons why this debate rises above the purely local level. If the Texas Compact passes the Senate, it is entirely possible that Sierra Blanca will become the low-level radioactive waste dump for the entire country. Backers of the Compact say that that is not their plan. They say no other States besides Maine and Vermont will ship waste to Texas. If that is the case, then I propose a solution. And I am hoping there will be support for this.

Let the Senate agree to an amendment I want to offer, which is just like the Doggett amendment that passed the House, limiting the Compact to Maine and Vermont. Now, it seems to me, if the argument is being made that the only waste that is going to come to Texas is from Maine and Vermont, then let us just pass that amendment. And let us be clear about it. Then the debate is over.

But we cannot shirk our responsibilities by pretending that this is nothing more than a State or local affair. The Sierra Blanca dump is unlikely to be built if the Senate rejects this Compact. But if the Senate approves this Compact, Sierra Blanca may become the Nation's premier dump site for low-level radioactive waste. It is that simple.

The Senate vote will largely determine whether or not a grave injustice is inflicted on a community that deserves no such thing. It would be easy for all of us to turn our backs and just ignore this issue. But there is no way for the Senate to wash its hands of this business. For good or ill, we bear moral responsibility for what happens to the people of Sierra Blanca. This is a wrong that richly deserves to be righted. And we have the power to do just that.

Mr. President, again, let me just make it clear that this is an issue of environmental justice. It is a David versus Goliath fight. There are lots of big guns in here that are pushing for this waste dump site. But we have one thing on our side. My colleagues have said, ''Rest assured, this will only be waste from Maine and Vermont that will go to Texas.'' I say, if that is the case, please support the Doggett amendment. It has already passed the House of Representatives. Then we can go forward.

I will have one other amendment which just says that if we approve the Compact, but it turns out that it can be proven that this has a discriminatory effect on a community of color or low-income people, then they have the right to go to court. If those amendments pass, then this Compact will pass the floor of the Senate.

Mr. President, I do believe that the people of Sierra Blanca and hundreds of minority communities just like them from around the country have not been given their due. But we can make the system work. I am firmly convinced of that. Sometimes justice needs a second chance. Sometimes it needs a little push. And over the next few weeks, I think we are going to give justice a second chance on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I am hoping that these amendments will be accepted. I believe that would be the right thing to do. I think there should be strong bipartisan support for that. If that does not happen, then I am prepared to use all of the hours on the floor of the U.S. Senate that I have at my disposal as a Senator—and I will use those many hours—to talk about environmental justice in this country.

Over and over and over again, we essentially take this waste and we dump it, right on the heads of low-income people. Over and over and over again, we look to the communities of color, we look to poor communities, we look to the communities that are not the heavy hitters, that are not well connected, and this is where we put it.

This happens all across the country. I can bring to the floor of the Senate study after study after study that show that. I can marshal the evidence. I am hoping that we will agree that this Compact will be something we can pass, if we make it clear that the waste can only come from Maine and Vermont. If not, I think for the first time on the floor of the U.S. Senate we will have a really—maybe not the first time—but we will certainly have a very thorough and important debate, I think, about environmental justice.

TRIBUTE TO FRANK STRUKEL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Finally, Mr. President—I know other colleagues are on the floor. I just looked back and I saw Senator KENNEDY from Massachusetts, who I think has been the best labor Senator maybe in the history of the country. Maybe along with Senator Metzenbaum.

It was Saturday night, and I promised myself I would do this. I want to make this a part of the official RECORD of the U.S. Senate. Saturday night, on the Iron Range in Eveleth, MN, there was at a gathering to honor a man named Frank Strukel who has been one great labor organizer. He is struggling with ALS, which is commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease. His friends from all over the State of Minnesota came to honor him. He should be honored.

I see my colleagues—Senator ASHCROFT, who happens to be a good friend, even though we do not always agree on issues. But one thing we do agree on is we respect people who work hard on things that they believe in. We respect people who live by the words they speak. Frank Strukel was that way. Frank Strukel is that way.

I am hoping and praying he will somehow figure out a way to defeat this disease. He said that night he is going to be with us for a long time. I hope and pray that is the case. I promised him that I would say on the floor of the Senate that Frank Strukel has been one heck of a hell-raising labor organizer. And he has been just that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). Who yields time?

Mr. ABRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Missouri yield time or—

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. HARKIN. Sorry? What was that request?

Mr. ABRAHAM. To speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. Oh.

CONCERNING RECENT NATURALIZATION DEVELOPMENTS

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I come to the floor today in my capacity as chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee to call my colleagues' attention to some recent developments in the naturalization area, some of which are extremely serious.

As many of you may have read in today's Washington Post or the Los Angeles Times, Coopers & Lybrand today unveiled its recommendations to the Justice Department for reengineering the naturalization process. After a year-long review, Coopers & Lybrand has developed what it is calling a ''blueprint for a new naturalization process,'' which would involve a complete overhaul of that process. Given what we have seen in the past in this area—particularly in the area of criminal background checks—a reworking of the entire process is certainly needed and Congress should be involved in any redesign. Coopers & Lybrand has prepared us with what is essentially a solid outline for a streamlined, more automated and more centralized naturalization system. Of course, many details remain to be worked out, but I am

genuinely pleased with many aspects of the Coopers & Lybrand recommendations for redesigning the process. I hope the administration will take those recommendations seriously. For far too long, the naturalization process has been characterized by intolerable backlogs, very poor customer service, and, of course, unfortunate examples of outright fraud and mismanagement.

Unfortunately, just today we also learned the results of a separate review of the current naturalization process. That review was conducted by the Department of Justice and by KPMG Peat Marwick. In a review of roughly 5,500 naturalization files selected at random over a 1-year period, it was determined that 90.8 percent of the files contained at least one significant processing error, and a total of 87.7 percent of the files had insufficient documentation in the file to support a proper naturalization decision.

The bottom line is that we can be confident that naturalization was proper in only 8.6 percent of the 1,049,867 cases naturalized between August 1995 and September 1996. Mr. President, clearly these statistics are alarming and appalling. I don't doubt that most of the cases involved were, in fact, properly naturalized. But because of the system that is currently in place, we not only have enormous backlogs in the naturalization process but we cannot determine on a case-by-case basis whether naturalization decisions have been made correctly.

In my judgment, any redesign of the naturalization process must ensure a 100 percent level of compliance. So, in the coming weeks, I plan to hold hearings at which the Senate Immigration Subcommittee can explore the Coopers & Lybrand proposal—which at this point is simply a blueprint—in more detail and so that we can get to the bottom of the complete breakdown of the process I have described here today.

In particular, we need to examine some open issues in the redesign proposal, such as who would conduct the tests that are given with respect to English proficiency and civics and what those tests should contain. Given the recent indictments in California for fraud in citizenship testing, in which 20 defendants have been indicted for nationwide fraud in this area, we must take a close look at the extent of the fraud in the testing process and we must reform the system to eradicate any future wrongdoing in connection with citizenship testing.

As a proponent of legal immigration and the value of naturalization, I do not come at this in any way trying to undercut the naturalization system. Yet recent information suggests such a complete breakdown that the process has to be redesigned to eradicate the fraud and the mismanagement that has characterized this system.

What we need to do is strike the right balance, Mr. President, so that the people who deserve and have the right to be naturalized and become citizens have the opportunity to do so in a timely manner, and so that everyone, both the people who are waiting in those lines who ultimately will become naturalized and those who are already citizens, will have confidence that the people who are becoming citizens have met the standards and the criteria which the Congress has established for doing so. That means, Mr. President, close scrutiny of the current system, close scrutiny of the proposed recommendations by Coopers & Lybrand, and action, I believe, ultimately by the INS and Congress to move us in the right direction.

I am very disturbed by the report we received today, but I hope that will form the basis for all of us to work together to find the right solutions.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF DAVID SATCHER, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, AND SURGEON GENERAL OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

The Senate continued with the consideration of the nomination.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I am proud today to speak in support of the confirmation of Dr. David Satcher to be our Nation's Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary of Health.

I want to speak about Dr. Satcher's qualifications for these important jobs, but first I want to quickly comment on the circumstances that have led to the delay of our consideration of his nomination. I think the course of events that have taken place is very unfortunate. I think whenever we let certain political views interfere with the public health, we are doing the American people a great disservice. It has been 3 years since we have had a Surgeon General. That has not been good for this country. It has created a vacuum of leadership on public health issues. I hope that once everyone has had a chance to voice his or her opinion on his nomination we can quickly move ahead and fill the longstanding vacancy.

Mr. President, as chairman and as now ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, I have had the pleasure of working very closely with Dr. David Satcher since he has been the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Over the past 4 years, he has directed the CDCP with integrity, compassion, and a commonsense approach. Because of his leadership, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has successfully addressed some of the most pressing public health challenges facing our Nation by promoting health and preventing disease, injury, and premature death.

Mr. President, let there be no mistake, the position of Surgeon General is an important one. Americans look to our Nation's top medical official for leadership and guidance on a number of critical health care issues. For example, one of our most honored Surgeons General, Dr. C. Everett Koop, used the office's bully pulpit to further public awareness of the dangers of smoking, and he was a courageous advocate for public health measures to address the growing AIDS crisis. Now those are big shoes to fill, but I can think of no one more qualified or capable than Dr. David Satcher.

In 1992, I worked with former CDC Director William Roper to change the name of the CDC from the Centers for Disease Control to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We added the word ''prevention'' to the name. Now, Dr. Roper has moved on, but under Dr. Satcher's direction the CDCP has truly lived up to its new name.

Since he took the helm, Dr. Satcher has spearheaded a child immunization initiative, upgraded the Nation's ability to detect and respond to emerging infectious diseases, and he has expanded the participation in the agency's breast and cervical cancer screening program.

Dr. Satcher has taken the lead in creating an early warning system to detect and prevent food-borne illnesses and did the bulk of the work on the first-ever Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health, which outlined ways in which all types of Americans can be more physically active. These initiatives have been very successful, and they have made the CDCP renowned worldwide for its leadership on prevention efforts.

As many of you may know—and I will probably repeat a lot what has been said here, but I think it is worth repeating—Dr. Satcher has a distinguished background. President of Meharry Medical College from 1982 until he was named Director of the CDCP in 1993. At Meharry, he gained national recognition as an able administrator, and his leadership has been accorded wide recognition.

In 1986, he was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences for his leadership skills.

In 1996, Dr. Satcher received the prestigious Dr. Nathan B. Davis Award for outstanding public service to advance the public health. He has also received Ebony Magazine's American Black Achievement Award in Business and the Professions in 1994, and the Breslow Award for Excellence in Public Health in 1995.

Most recently, Dr. Satcher has received the James D. Bruce Memorial Award for distinguished contributions in preventative medicine from the American College of Physicians. He has received the John Stearns Award for Lifetime Achievement in Medicine