

those nominees, particularly for the President's administration. It is his administration. Surely Assistant Secretary, Solicitor's General, Inspector's General, Ambassadors should be confirmed. And the judges, I'm not going to go through the litany here.

The fact is we've got a lot of people who are not being treated fairly. I don't understand why Miguel Estrada has not been moved. He's an immigrant from Honduras. He's well educated and is an outstanding attorney but hasn't even had a hearing. We ought to move not only the district judges but the circuit judges. Let's move judicial nominees if there are not problems. Let's pick up the speed. I know the President would appreciate that. The President deserves that. We can do better.

There will be those we want to fight over. We'll have a vote on them. We'll have a debate on them, but let's at least do it. My impression is we have about 50 on the calendar and about a hundred in committees—150 judges and administration officials. I think we need to go back and take a deep breath and get that job done.

From my discussions with this President, I can tell you: He is as determined to pull this country out of this economic recession as he has been to put an end to the terrorist threat.

It was 100 years ago that President Teddy Roosevelt uttered that quip we all remember: "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

One thing I have found out about President Bush is that he does speak softly, but he carries a heavy agenda because the needs of our country are great and the expectations of the American people are great. But our opportunities for accomplishment are great, too. And frankly, our chances as a government institution are great at showing the American people how men and women of good will can meet halfway and then when they disagree, take a fair vote to see whose argument will prevail, complete their work on that matter, and move on to the next priority. That's all we on the Republican side of the aisle can ask.

Let's begin today. Let's get some agreements on how we'll proceed on these to important bills. Let's continue next week when we hear the President's State of the Union Address. Let's see how much we can do in the next 3 months. I believe that American people want that. And I know they would appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Connecticut.

ELECTION REFORM

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I commend both leaders for their comments about the proposed agenda. While I certainly am not in a position to comment on the merits or demerits of the various proposals that have been suggested, there is one item in which the distin-

guished Senator from Kentucky and I are particularly interested. We are grateful to the majority leader and the Republican leader for making specific reference to the election reform proposal the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. MCCONNELL, Senator BOND, Senator SCHUMER, Senator TORRICELLI, Senator DURBIN, and others have worked on to bring legislation to the point where we think we have a good product to present to our colleagues, to the Congress as a whole, ultimately to the President for his signature, and, more importantly, to the American people in response to a situation that did not merely occur in one State, in one election, but as we all know now for a number of years a slow deteriorating process of our election system to such a degree that it was crying out reform.

While we have not solved every single problem, we think we have set up a mechanism for the first time to deal with election issues for the foreseeable future, under a proposal offered by my colleague from Kentucky, a permanent commission, which I think is an excellent suggestion. We deal with some fraud issues that Senator BOND thinks are very important if we are going to have an election reform issue. While we may not have dealt with every issue, we think we have taken a major step in addressing some of the concerns he has raised.

For those of us who are interested in the disabled in this country, those who were denied an opportunity to vote who had a right to vote—many studies indicate that happened in far more cases than any of us would like to admit—we think we have put together a pretty good package for which we are very proud. That is not to suggest we have dotted every "i" and crossed every "t" and thought about every possible reform or improvement, but we think we have about as good a product as could be presented to a body such as this for their consideration.

I do not know what the agenda will be of the leadership, but I think, for myself and Senator MCCONNELL, we are prepared to go forward when they would like us to go. Whenever that is appropriate, we are ready to present a proposal we think will enjoy very broad-based support, not only in this Chamber but throughout the country, including the National Association of Secretaries of State and others who have worked with us, and various other organizations around the country that are deeply interested in the election process.

I see my friend from Kentucky, to whom I would be happy to yield, but I say first when the bell rings and the leadership decides it is appropriate, these two Members and others who joined us and are prepared to present a proposal that we hope will enjoy the kind of support for which we think it is deserving.

I yield to my friend from Kentucky. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I echo the remarks of my good friend from Connecticut. Election reform had the potential of being an intensely partisan issue. While we know that may still develop, let me say we have had all of those discussions over the last 6 months in our negotiating process, and we have now come together with the hope we will be able to go forward in a totally bipartisan way to improve the election system in this country.

As the Senator from Connecticut, who has provided outstanding leadership on this issue, has indicated, we have dealt with the fraud issue, which is important to a lot of people on this side of the aisle. No one has been a more forceful advocate for removing barriers for the disabled to exercise the franchise. Senator DODD carried that ball very effectively in our negotiations.

I thought we needed a permanent repository for this kind of expertise, so we set up a commission with Presidential appointees equally divided between Republicans and Democrats. It would be the one place in America that States and localities could go for objective advice, not somebody knocking on the door trying to sell them a particular system but objective advice about the best way to meet their particular election needs.

We did not wipe out any particular election system in America. We did not mandate the use of any particular election system. We did provide some real money that would be dispensed on a matching fund basis by this Presidential commission to those who were interested in upgrading their system.

I think we have come forward with a good bill, and I thank my friend from Connecticut for his leadership on this subject. I have been happy to join with him on it. If and when we do go to this—and we think it will be early in the session—we would encourage people to offer amendments that are related to the subject. We think this is a bill that needs to move along, not be bogged down in extraneous matters unrelated to the subject.

Again, I thank the Senator from Connecticut. I look forward to working with him. We are ready to go whenever the leaders decide this is the subject matter before us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

THE INVESTOR CONFIDENCE PROTECTION ACT OF 2002

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I anticipate the arrival of my colleague from New Jersey, Senator CORZINE, at any moment because we would like to at least put our colleagues on notice today of our intention to introduce legislation to strengthen the independence and objectivity of corporate audits in this country.

I have the fortunate job of being the chairman of the Securities Subcommittee of the Banking Committee