

voted. Therefore we must praise the efforts of the Iraqis, the U.S. civilian and military personnel, all those of our coalition partners and those of international organizations for planning and executing an electoral referendum in such a challenging environment. The United Nations chief electoral adviser in Iraq said:

The process has gone so smoothly and well, from a technical point of view.

The Vice Chairman of the International Mission for Iraqi Elections, a coalition of electoral monitoring bodies, praised the referendum for its legal framework, planning, and logistics. Now the world will await the final result, due hopefully later this week. The Independent Electoral Commission in Iraq is supervising this process and will announce an official tally after votes are counted at a central location overseen by the United Nations election advisory team to ensure that international standards are being met.

There are, no doubt, difficult days remaining ahead. Generals Abizaid and Casey told the Congress, the American people, and indeed the whole world, just that in appearances throughout the United States last month. Both men were confident that we are moving in the right direction. We saw that progress this Saturday and we salute them for their leadership and their participation and their responsibility in achieving the results that came about on Saturday.

If the constitution is ratified, Iraqis will vote again on December 15. This time they will vote for a permanent government to take office on December 31. That leaves 60 days, basically, between now and December 15. It will be a very unusual period in the history of Iraq, in that many of those in this current government, the interim government, will be seeking office in that election. So we have to exercise a degree of patience as we watch them, as they pursue their political campaigns at the same time they have official duties to maintain a government and serve the needs of the people of Iraq—whether it is the power, whether it is the water, whether it is the security. All of those things must be maintained during this interregnum until the election takes place.

Then, following December 15 there is basically a 60-day period as established under the law that they have adopted. There is a 60-day period in which that government must replace the existing one and take the reins of authority and govern Iraq for a period of 4 years—truly a permanent government.

As this political situation matures, so too will the Iraqi security forces, and I am confident we will see a continued strong pace to obtain the needed numbers of trained police, border security, internal security, national guard, and a standing army to provide that nation with protection for its sovereignty and internal protection from the insurgents. With an Iraqi permanent government in place and steady

progress in these security forces, I see—and I want to say with great caution—an opportunity, following the first of the year, to begin to review our present force structure and to consider such options as will hopefully be available to lessen the size of our overall troop presence.

Watching Iraqis vote, we as Americans should be especially proud of the contributions of those men and women who proudly wear the uniform of the United States. When I speak with them in Iraq, as I did weeks ago on my sixth trip, and in Afghanistan, they know the importance of what they are doing.

I would like to underline that. Individually, they know and understand the importance of the mission which they, as members of the all-volunteer force of our military, have undertaken. Together with the commitments in support of their families back home, they are performing brilliantly in Iraq, Afghanistan, and all across the world, protecting the security of this Nation and the security of our principal allies.

We will continue to demand from these people as we always have, but they are like generations before them, answering a call to duty to defend the values and freedoms we cherish. We wish them well. We wish the blessings of the Almighty on them and their families. We have taken heavy casualties in this conflict, both in terms of lost lives and wounded. Not a day goes by that those who are privileged to serve in this Chamber do not have that foremost in their minds, as do most Americans.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The Journal clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, THE JUDICIARY, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3058, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3058) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, the District of Columbia, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Kennedy modified amendment No. 2063, to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank the Chair. I note that my partner and co-manager of the bill, the Senator from Washington, and I are here and ready to do business. We were ready to do business yesterday. We had one rollcall vote. There were more than 40 amendments filed yesterday. I know there are many others who have or are thinking about amendments. But we have enough work to do now if Members will come forward and offer their amendments that are filed or talk with us to see if they can be accepted.

We would like very much to move forward on this bill today, and perhaps complete work on it by 8 o'clock tonight when the baseball game is on television. But hope springs eternal. We would love to see Members come forward. I think more are ready to go.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2113

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 2113.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Limits the availability of funds under this Act for use in paying for eminent domain activities)

Insert the following on page 348, after line 5, and renumber accordingly:

“SEC. 321. No funds in this Act may be used to support any federal, state, or local projects that seek to use the power of eminent domain, unless eminent domain is employed only for a public use: Provided, That for purposes of this section, public use shall not be construed to include economic development that primarily benefits private entities: Provided further, That any use of funds for mass transit, railroad, airport, seaport or highway projects as well as utility projects which benefit or serve the general public (including energy-related, communication-related, water-related and wastewater-related infrastructure), other structures designated for use by the general public or which have other common-carrier or public-utility functions that serve the general public and are subject to regulation and oversight by the government, and projects for the removal of blight (including areas identified by units of local government for recovery from natural disasters) or brownfields as defined in the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act (Pub. Law 107-118) shall be considered a public use for purposes of eminent domain: Provided further, That the Government Accountability