

LEVIN has raised a very important issue that transcends this nomination and reaches every agency and office in this government. It is the issue of preserving the openness, transparency, and accountability of our democratic government. I thank Senator LEVIN who, once again, during his service here, has proved how valuable attention to detail is. I commend my colleague for raising it.

I thank the indulgence of the Chair. I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:38 p.m., recessed until 2:14 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. VOINOVICH).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL CHERTOFF TO BE SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael Chertoff, of New Jersey, to be Secretary of Homeland Security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished Senator from Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maine for yielding me time.

I am in support of the President's nominee, Judge Michael Chertoff. He seems to have worked for almost every part of the Federal Government, including this body. I heard the Senator from Maine say that she had never seen a better witness before her committee.

As Secretary of Homeland Security, Judge Chertoff will play a very important and visible role in our everyday lives, protecting us from terrorism, but my purpose today is to highlight another job he has. He is also the chief immigration officer. As Secretary, he will oversee the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, the suc-

cessor to the INS, which manages immigration in this country. This job of Judge Chertoff is not primarily about keeping people out of the United States; it is also about welcoming new Americans into the United States.

The numbers are down some since 2001, but as many as 1 million immigrants become new American citizens each year.

I have attended a number of the ceremonies which are held in Federal courthouses all over America every month to welcome and naturalize these new citizens. I was in Nashville in December when 50 or 60 people from all backgrounds were administered the oath of allegiance by Judge Echols. The oath requires each new American to renounce any old allegiance and swear a new one to the United States of America.

Each one of these new citizens has waited at least 5 years. They have learned English. They have learned something about U.S. history. They have proved they are of good character. Many new citizens have tears in their eyes as they recite that oath. It is an inspiring scene. Each of these new citizens brings a new background and cultural tradition to the rich fabric of American life. That increases our magnificent diversity, but diversity is not our most important characteristic.

Jerusalem is diverse. The Balkans are diverse. Iraq is diverse. A lot of the world is diverse. What is unique about the United States of America is that we take all of that diversity and make ourselves into one country. We are able to say we are all Americans. We do that because we unify it with principles and values in which we all believe: liberty, equality, rule of law. It also helps that we speak a common language. It is hard to be one people if we cannot talk with one another. Many of these new citizens and many others living in this country lack a solid grasp of our common language or a clear understanding of our history and civic culture. Without proficiency in English, our common language, and an understanding of our history and values, immigrants will find it difficult to integrate themselves into our American society.

So my hope today is that Judge Chertoff does a magnificent job in his role at preventing terrorism. My hope also is that he does a good job in keeping out of this country people who are not legally supposed to be here. But equally important is Secretary Chertoff's role in welcoming new citizens to this country, helping them learn our history, our common language—helping all of us remember those principles that unite us as one country. That is a part of the Department of Homeland Security. It is of increasing interest to Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle, and I look forward to working with Judge

Chertoff in this new role and I support his confirmation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time? The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished Senator from Virginia and, from the minority's time, I will yield 10 minutes to the distinguished Senator from New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am privileged to be the new boy on Senator COLLINS's committee. My mission is to try to achieve the smoothest working relationship between the Department of Defense, with which I have been privileged to work these 27 years in the Senate, and the distinguished new department and the committee for homeland defense over which my colleague presides as able chairman together with Senator LIEBERMAN.

Just a word or two I want to speak on Judge Chertoff. I, frankly, had not met him prior to the President's very wise selection of this able individual. I rise today to urge my colleagues to give the strongest endorsement possible to this nominee.

I started my career as a young lawyer, a prosecutor, but my first job out of law school was law clerk to a Federal circuit court judge, the same position that Judge Chertoff holds today. I recall all through law school and the early part of, I guess about 8 or 10 years that I practiced law, lawyers always thought: Maybe someday I could be a judge, a Federal judge. The whole bar looks up to the judicial branch, as they should. It is the third branch of our magnificent Republic. When an individual is selected by a President and confirmed in the Senate, he or she then dons that black robe, and it is a lifetime appointment.

I was privileged to observe the life of a Federal judge. My judge was E. Barrett Prettyman, and I had the privilege of standing on this very floor several years ago and recommending the Federal courthouse here in Washington be named for Judge Prettyman. I am always grateful to the Senate for its wisdom in accepting my recommendation. But I remember that judge so well. He had the strongest influence on my life. I aspired at one time to be a Federal judge, but I hastily tell my colleagues I am not sure I ever would have been qualified, for various reasons.

But when you accept that appointment you take that oath of office for life. That is why I, and I think most if not every one of my colleagues, spend so much time working with our Presidents to find the best qualified people to assume these important jobs in the Federal judiciary. But it is a lifetime appointment.

When I looked at Judge Chertoff in my office, we compared experiences. He was a law clerk on the Supreme Court,