

SENATE—Monday, January 31, 2005

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

How great You are, O God, and how much we should praise You. Your greatness is beyond discovery. Each day, we meditate on Your unfailing love, for Your right hand is filled with victory. You guide us throughout the days of our lives, for Your salvation is near to those who honor You. Forgive us when we have sought fulfillment in the idols of our world. Help us to trust only in You, our helper and shield.

Today, strengthen our lawmakers in their work. Help them to faithfully follow Your wisdom. May they strive to help the fallen and to lift those bent beneath the loads of life. Bless the Iraqi people as they accept the challenges of freedom. Be with our military and protect all who defend our freedoms. We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we are in a period for morning business with Senators permitted to speak and introduce legislation. We are hoping to confirm the nomination of Samuel Bodman to be Secretary of Energy. We expect that nomination to require little or no debate and a rollcall vote is not anticipated. Therefore, we do not expect any rollcall votes today.

In addition to the Bodman nomination, this week we expect to consider the nomination of Alberto Gonzales to be Attorney General of the United States. I have been discussing with the Democratic leader the prospects for an agreement for debate and a vote on the Gonzales nomination. I understand Members wish to talk on that nomination, but at some point I hope we can reach an agreement as to a reasonable

period for debate and a time certain to vote.

I will continue to discuss this matter with the Democratic leader, and I hope to lock in a consent agreement at the earliest time. We have talked about it this morning and we will be talking about it over the course of the day and tomorrow.

The Homeland Security Secretary designate, Mr. Chertoff, is also expected to be reported by committee later this week. Following that, as soon as possible we would like to consider this nomination as well.

As a reminder to our colleagues, the President will deliver the State of the Union Address on Wednesday evening. Senators are asked to begin gathering in the Senate Chamber at 8:30 on Wednesday so we can proceed promptly at 8:40 to the Hall of the House of Representatives for the 9 p.m. address.

I do want to thank everyone for their attention and will have further updates on the schedule at the close today.

HISTORIC DAY IN IRAQ

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, very briefly I will comment on what has been a very historic occasion in Iraq, something that has been symbolized on television and by pictures so vividly by the image of that blue ink-stained index finger which is being held up in triumph. Two days ago, people did not even think of that image and today it symbolizes freedom and liberty, those basic elements of democracy that we all cherish.

Yesterday, the Iraqi people, 8 million strong, went to the polls to participate in the first free Iraqi election in decades. We were in Iraq 3 weeks ago, and before we went to Iraq even at that time people were saying there is no way these elections are going to be successful, nobody is going to show up for these elections, and to jump 3 weeks ahead to today and yesterday and to see those ink-stained fingers in the air and the fact that approximately 8 million voted is truly spectacular. I think all of us should feel real pride for the courageous men and women who risked their lives for freedom. Those pictures on the news really captured it.

The people who voted came by foot, bus, van. They were old and they were young. They were men and women. It was all in defiance of the intimidation by terrorists, thugs, and assassins. In spite of the critics and the doubters, millions of Iraqis stood in line and cast their vote. As they came out, we saw those pictures of those ink-stained index fingers, the symbol of the power

that is captured in that vote of freedom and democracy.

The Iraqi people yesterday showed their bravery, their boldness, their courage, and their heart. They showed the world that Iraqis, like all people, do yearn to be free. Baghdad's mayor was so overcome with emotion that he told one news agency:

I cannot describe what I am seeing. It is incredible. This is a vote for the future, for the children, for the rule of law, for humanity, for love.

This morning, and over the course of yesterday, I received numerous e-mails, letters, and written communication. The following letter from an Iraqi voter describing his elation at participating in this historic moment for his country really captures the essence of what the elections were all about. He writes:

Allow me on this historical opportunity to tell you how happy I am, and all those who I know. It is a great victory for Iraq, the United States and all freedom-loving people in the world. This is the event that children of future generations will read about in history books with great pride and appreciation to all who made it happen.

Today a new Iraq was born. This is the first seed of true democracy and freedom in our country and indeed the whole Arab world. Thanks to all who participated in, contributed to, protected and supported this historical event.

I also will want to applaud President Bush and the American people for their steadfast commitment, support, and encouragement of freedom in Iraq. Peace has not come and is not coming easily. We have suffered tough days and we all know there will be tough days ahead. We know the terrorists are committed to their violent campaign, but they will not succeed.

As we saw yesterday, Iraq is moving forward with the heartfelt support of free peoples all around the world. One of the people who will be instrumental in helping Iraq secure its freedom is our new Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice. Last week, this Senate voted overwhelmingly to support her confirmation, and that was a proud and, indeed, historic moment. We are all fortunate to have a leader of her talent and intellect helping Iraq take each momentous step toward democracy.

It was a meaningful and productive week, as I look over the last several days. The Senate also confirmed former RNC Chairman Jim Nicholson to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Michael Leavitt to lead Health and Human Services. Both are talented, gifted, and highly qualified men, and I know we all look forward to working with them.