

It is apparent that Federal coordination remains inadequate if notification of DHS is considered unnecessary by other responding agencies.

To ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to agroterrorism, my bills address many of the concerns raised by GAO and others. The Homeland Security Food and Agriculture Act will: increase communication and coordination between DHS and State, local, and tribal homeland security officials regarding agroterrorism; ensure agriculture security is included in State, local, and regional emergency response plans; and establish a task force of State and local first responders that will work with DHS to identify best practices in the area of agriculture security.

The Agriculture Security Assistance Act will: provide financial and technical assistance to States and localities for agroterrorism preparedness and response; increase international agricultural disease surveillance and inspections of imported agricultural products; require that certified veterinarians be knowledgeable in foreign animal diseases; and require that USDA study the costs and benefits of developing a more robust animal disease vaccine stockpile.

I look forward to working with the Agriculture Committee as agriculture security legislation moves forward. As ranking member of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, I will continue to make agroterrorism a priority for the Federal Government, and I ask my colleagues to join me in this quest.

#### 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, 40 years ago, in 1965, African Americans were excluded from almost all public offices in the South. At that time, with 21 million people fenced out of the political process, our nation was suffering a devastating failure. A failure to fulfill one of its signature promises: representation for all.

As I speak here today, African-American and Hispanic voters are now substantially represented in the state legislatures and local governing bodies throughout the South. And 81 minority Members currently serve in the U.S. Congress.

This turn-around came as the result of a monumental struggle, a struggle in which Americans risked their lives to secure the right to vote. They marched in Alabama and across the South to protest the use of poll taxes, literacy tests, and other barriers erected in Southern States to exclude African Americans from the political process. African Americans were harassed, intimidated, and physically assaulted for simply trying to vote. Televised broadcasts brought the horrible images of attacks on peaceful protesters with nightsticks, tear gas, and police dogs into the living rooms of citizens

throughout the country. Some brave souls, and some innocent bystanders, lost their lives in this struggle for justice, which still today stands as a testament to the power of ideas and non-violence to bring about crucial social and legal change.

Two days after "Bloody Sunday," a day on which protesters in Selma, Alabama, were attacked by State troopers while crossing the Edmund Pettus bridge, President Johnson sent the Voting Rights Act to Congress. In response to the horrific events in Selma and after years of efforts in Congress and around the country, on August 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act was signed into law.

The act outlawed barriers to voting, such as literacy tests, and empowered the Federal Government to oversee voter registration and elections in counties that historically had prevented African Americans from participating in elections. Since its enactment, the Voting Rights Act has been extended four times—in 1970, 1975, 1982, and 1992. Changes included increasing the act's scope to cover non-English speaking minorities such as Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and other minority groups. It has also been used to examine and challenge new election formats that dilute minority votes and have a discriminatory effect.

The Voting Rights Act has been hailed as the most important piece of federal legislation in our Nation's history. Not just the most important piece of civil rights legislation, but the most important piece of legislation ever passed. This may well be true: it is from our political rights, our rights of citizenship, that all other freedoms flow. Without a meaningful chance to vote, there can be no equality before the law, no equal access to justice, no equal opportunity in the workplace or to share in the benefits and burdens of citizenship.

The Voting Rights Act is also considered one of the most successful pieces of civil rights legislation ever enacted. In Selma, Alabama, in 1965, 2.1 percent of blacks of voting age were registered to vote. Today, more than 70 percent are registered.

Still, we must remember that the fight is not over. On this 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, many Americans are still disenfranchised by discriminatory redistricting plans, voter intimidation tactics, long lines at polling places and inadequate numbers of voting machines, and lifetime restrictions on voting rights for ex-felons.

In 2007, key elements of the Voting Rights Act, including the Federal pre-clearance requirement, are due to expire. The pre-clearance requirement is especially important. It requires Federal approval of any proposed changes in voting or election procedures in areas with a history of discrimination. The Supreme Court in *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*, the case that upheld

Congress's power to impose these requirements, aptly called this a shifting of the "advantage of time and inertia from the perpetrators of the evil to its victims." It simply means that voters in these areas do not have to refight the battles they won in the civil rights struggle. These provisions of the Act are crucial.

As we approach, the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act on August 6, I urge my colleagues and the citizens of this great Nation to renew our commitment to protect and strengthen the right to vote for all Americans. That right is the foundation of our democracy and it must never again be denied to a group of Americans based on the color of their skin.

#### CYPRUS

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to bring to the Senate's attention a troubling development in our efforts to support the reunification of Cyprus. I have recently learned that the State Department is encouraging members of Congress and their staffs to initiate certain visits to the country through an airport in the illegally occupied area of the island—an airport that is not authorized by the Republic of Cyprus as a legal port of entry. In fact, the airport is built on property that was expropriated from its lawful owners following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

As you may know, Cyprus was forcibly divided by an invasion of Turkish troops more than 30 years ago. Today, the United States and the world community recognize that the Turkish invasion was illegal, and that the Republic of Cyprus, which controls 3/4 of the island, is the only legitimate government of Cyprus. For years, as reflected in our domestic law and echoed in several U.N. Security Council Resolutions, U.S. foreign policy has refused to give either recognition or direct assistance to the self-declared administrative authority in the occupied area, the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." Indeed, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended following the Turkish invasion, has established that the United States supports a free government for Cyprus, the withdrawal of all Turkish forces from Cyprus, and the reunification of the island communities.

On the specific matter of flights into Cyprus, the U.S. is bound by the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, to which both the U.S. and Cyprus are signatories. The Chicago Convention provides that "[t]he contracting States recognize that every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory," including designation of official ports of entry. The Republic of Cyprus's sovereignty over the entire territory of Cyprus has been recognized and reaffirmed by numerous U.N. Security Council Resolutions as well as