

S. 2120. An act to ensure regulatory equity between and among all dairy farmers and handlers for sales of packaged fluid milk in federally regulated milk marketing areas and into certain non-federally regulated milk marketing areas from federally regulated areas, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate concurred on a House Amendment with an amendment to Senate bill:

S. 467. An act to extend the applicability of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002.

#### IRAQ ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, we have just witnessed one of the freest elections ever held in the Middle East. It is important to recognize that independent multinational election monitors have confirmed that yesterday's Iraqi elections, in which a remarkably large number of Sunnis turned out to vote, met international standards. It is estimated that 10 to 12 million Iraqis renounced fear and defied those who seek to demoralize them and to undermine U.S. and international support for their noble commitment to rebuilding a civil society.

As we seek to encourage our friends in the Middle East on their journey of self-determination, let us take a moment to recall with an appropriate level of humility that our own democratic journey was neither quick nor easy and no less worthwhile for the difficulties endured.

Mr. Speaker, this historic moment inspires me to highlight an outstanding bipartisan initiative here in the House which is making a significant impact to strengthen fledgling democratic institutions throughout the world.

I want to commend Speaker HASTERT for his foresight in launching the House Democracy Assistance Commission on which I serve along with 15 of my colleagues. I wish to thank my colleague, Congressman DAVID DREIER, for his leadership on this initiative and his dedication to see it through to fruition.

I also wish to acknowledge Representative DAVID PRICE and my predecessor, Congressman Doug Bereuter, for their hard work since 2003 to move this initiative and to make it a reality.

Since the establishment of the commission in March 2005, Members and staff have worked diligently to identify countries and legislative bodies in need of technical assistance. The House Democracy Assistance Commission has established an exemplary framework to help elected legislators develop badly needed parliamentary infrastructures to foster just and thriving civil society based upon democratic principles.

In his second inaugural address, President Bush issued a global call to freedom, the heritage of all mankind.

Through the commission, Members of Congress have answered the President's call to move the principles of democracy around the world. And beginning next year, Democratic and Republican Members alike will join together to support and encourage our counterparts in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country; in East Timor, the world's newest country which hungered for independence and now hungers for working democratic institutions; in Georgia, where the 2003 Rose Revolution ushered in peaceful change; in Macedonia, which emerged from the brink of civil war to a new day of freedom; and also in Kenya, a regional African power in the forefront of the war on terror.

Through technical assistance missions, material assistance and exchange programs that bring legislators to the U.S. and allow our Members to share their knowledge and experiences with members of parliaments in partner countries, the House of Representatives is working directly with legislators around the world to provide expertise and parliamentary best practices. This assistance will emphasize committee operations, budgetary issues, defense oversight, specialized legislation and oversight, legislative procedures, research services, information services, as well as constituent services.

The commission also plans to support emerging legislative institutions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Lebanon, countries where governments had imposed unspeakable hardships on their own people previously. It is staggering to realize that just a few short years ago the brutal Taliban regime held all of Afghanistan hostage.

On December 19, thanks in great measure to the perseverance and dedication of our men and women in uniform, Afghans are inaugurating their first parliament in over 30 years.

Khalid Farooqi, a legislator in Afghanistan's Lower House of Parliament, was recently quoted as saying, "We want to build our country, we do not want to destroy it again."

For the first time since Saddam Hussein began his savage reign, and despite factional tensions and the threats of nihilistic insurgents, an astounding 70 percent of Iraqis courageously rose yesterday to determine their own future and held elections for a new National Assembly and government.

We also look to a new dawn of hope in Lebanon, where, tragically, Gibran Tuani, a publisher and deputy at Lebanon's Parliament, was assassinated this Monday in a bombing by those who fear the freedom that comes from self-determination.

Just as our troops and over 22,000 soldiers from 30 coalitions nations stood strong to help make yesterday's victory possible in Iraq, I am proud of my fellow Democrats and Republicans as we stand together to provide hope, encouragement, and vital technical assistance to the work of the House Democracy Assistance Commission.

#### FEMA TRAILERS, BUT NOBODY'S HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed the gulf coast as a category 4 storm. Due to the massive damage caused by one of the most costly natural disasters in our Nation's history, thousands of Louisiana and Mississippi residents whose homes were destroyed were forced to relocate to areas such as my home State of Arkansas. Many are still there today.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, commonly referred to as FEMA, purchased at least 20,000 brand-new manufactured homes; and thousands of these homes, nearly 4 months later, have not reached those who need them, citizens of this country who lost their homes and everything that they owned on August 29, 2005.

Instead, these homes are being stored by FEMA in five different so-called staging areas, including staging areas in my congressional district near my hometown at the Hope Municipal Airport in Hope, Arkansas, at Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant near Texarkana, all of these staging areas some 450 miles from where the eye of the storm hit the gulf coast.

Due to the inability of FEMA to provide displaced families with manufactured homes in a timely manner, staging areas are overflowing. For instance, at Hope Airport, the inactive runways and tarmacs are overloaded with manufactured homes, forcing the excess homes to be placed in the surrounding fields and pastures. These pastures and fields were not effectively prepared by FEMA for staging or storage, if you will. When the winter rains hit the inadequately prepared sites, many of the trailers carrying the manufactured homes will sink. This will result in even more unnecessary delays and additional work for a system that is badly flawed.

I have written a letter to the acting FEMA director, David Paulson, requesting that he immediately review the apparently ineffective process of distributing the FEMA-purchased manufactured homes to the Hurricane Katrina evacuees who so desperately need them.

As I drive throughout Arkansas's Fourth Congressional District, and in my very hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, I see these manufactured homes sitting empty; and I am appalled at the waste of taxpayer money and the lack of a timely response on behalf of FEMA and the Federal Government for those who desperately need housing for their families, with many residents literally still living in tents on the gulf coast nearly 4 months after the detrimental hurricane hit our gulf coast.