That is a mandate from the Federal Government to the States to register voters.

In the law, the Federal Government may choose to assist people to register to vote if the State requests NVRA designation and the agency accepts.

Immediately after the legislation was passed, then-President Clinton issued Executive Order 12926—which has not been rescinded by the current administration. That Executive order calls on all Federal agencies, ''to the greatest extent practicable'' to provide both voter registration information, and voter registration forms.

Some might claim that this legislation is premature—that under the scheme of the act, the State must request the Federal Government's involvement. Well, that has already occurred.

Several States, including my home State of California, under the leadership of Secretary Bowen, have asked that the VA designate the facilities within their States.

All three have been refused by this Department.

Ten secretaries of State—from both parties—have requested that the VA reverse its directive. Still no change.

In the case of Connecticut, secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz defied the VA's directive and attempted to gain entry to the West Haven VA facility.

There, she intended on providing nonpartisan voter registration services, as well as showing veterans how to use the new disabled-access voting systems.

Guess what. She was turned away at the door because of this new directive.

As she was standing outside the door to the VA facility, she met a 91-year-old gentleman, a veteran of World War II. Secretary Bysiewicz asked him if he would like to be registered to vote, and he said that he would.

After registering, he made the comment that ''I wanted to do this last year—but there was no-one there to help me.'' That is wholly unacceptable.

When we hear of why so many veterans express pride in their service and their sacrifice, we hear the phrase ''protecting the American way of life'' again and again.

At the cornerstone of our democracy is that every eligible citizen should be registered and receive their chance to cast their vote.

After many months of trying to work out a meaningful solution with the Department, I believe it is time the VA provides veterans the support they deserve to register, cast their vote, and have that vote counted.

This is why we are introduced the Veteran Voting Support Act of 2008. This legislation would: Require the VA to make voter registration services available at VA facilities in states that request it, in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act. These services include voter registration forms, answers to questions on registration issues and assistance with submitting voter registration forms. Those services are available to veterans using VA facilities.

Require the VA to assist veterans at facilities to receive and fill out absentee ballots if they choose to vote by absentee.

Allow nonpartisan groups and election officials to provide nonpartisan voter information and registration services to veterans.

Require an annual report to Congress from the Department of Veterans Affairs on progress related to this legislation.

I hope that my colleagues are willing to support this effort to reverse an overly bureaucratic and irrational burden at the VA.

Passage of this bill would recognize the long history in our country of nonpartisan and civil rights groups that have helped register those who have the greatest need for assistance.

And it respects election officials have long worked to register all eligible voters and provide them with the information and tools to cast a ballot.

I hope my colleagues join me in supporting S. 3308, the Veterans Voting Support Act of 2008.

VETERANS PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, technology continues to affect both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of Government. Advances over the past decades in computer technology have enabled us to generate and access unprecedented amounts of data, and make information easily accessible to citizens as well as Government employees seeking to assist them. Technology allows information to travel from one coast to the other in the blink of an eye, offering the possibility that as technology improves so will the efficiency of Government.

Unfortunately, the possibilities of the information age include an increased risk of data theft. According to the Identity Theft Resource Center, identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America. As we learned in 2006 with the theft of a Department of Veterans Affairs' laptop, which put into question the security of the personal information of 26.5 million veterans, neither Government Departments nor the people who rely on them are immune to these new and changing risks.

In response to the VA computer theft, I, along with a number of my colleagues in the Senate and the House, requested the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study to determine whether existing privacy laws and guidance were adequate to protect the Federal Government's collection and use of personal information. Last month, GAO reported back to Congress, and recommended we consider revising existing Federal privacy laws. Following a June 18, 2008, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on this and other matters related to privacy security, I joined committee Chairman JOE LIEBERMAN and Ranking Member SUSAN COLLINS in calling for changes to modernize the Privacy Act.

The Privacy Act of 1974 is the foundation of the Federal Government's privacy protection law. While this act provides a worthwhile basis for the protection of privacy, it was written in a different time when the Government faced different challenges. Mr. President, 1974 does not seem that long ago, but it was well before the emergence of many computer technologies that have changed the demands of data security. At that time, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were unknown, Apple and Microsoft were little more than ideas, and neither laptops nor the Internet were part of the common American experience. The technological changes that have occurred since 1974, while bringing new opportunities, have also brought new challenges to the security of our privacy and safety of the personal information that is kept by the Federal Government. As technology changes, we need to continue to adapt the framework of Federal data security laws, as we began to do in 2002 with the E-Government Act.

As chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I know the Department of Veterans Affairs still has a long way to go towards establishing and securing the personal information of veterans. VA and several other Departments received an ''F'' on this year's Federal Information Security Management Act—FISMA—report card. I do not doubt that VA recognizes this is a problem, and I am pleased by the Department's recent move to streamline its information technology management structure. Still, good intentions provide little comfort or security to a veteran whose identity is potentially placed at risk because VA failed to put adequate policies and procedures in place to protect personal information. I expect VA to rapidly take the steps necessary to achieve a passing FISMA grade, so that veterans can have confidence in the Department's ability to protect their personal information. Technology should serve its intended purpose of helping, not harming, those who rely on the efficiencies it provides. I also look forward to Congress taking action to create privacy laws which meet the demands of 21st century technology.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF INTEGRATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today we recognize the 60th anniversary of one of the momentous steps forward for equality of opportunity in our Nation's history. On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman, signed Executive Order 9981. That order read, in part:

> there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.