

business days. Eliminating the availability of this data would make it even more difficult to monitor the activities of reckless gun dealers. In addition, the amendment would prohibit the release of information related to crime-gun tracing requests.

The amendment would also prohibit the ATF from issuing a rule requiring Federal Firearm Licensees to submit to a physical inventory. A physical inventory recently revealed that a Tacoma, WA, gun dealer could not account for the sniper rifle used by the Washington, D.C. area sniper and more than 200 other guns in its inventory. The amendment would also require the immediate destruction of records of approved firearms purchases and transfers generated by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. The retention of these records has assisted law enforcement officials in trying to prevent guns from getting into the hands of criminals, as well as identifying gun trafficking patterns.

I believe this provision could shield reckless and negligent gun dealers from public scrutiny and weaken the ATF's oversight and enforcement authority. It will hopefully be rejected here in the Senate.

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#### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred in Boston, MA. On July 4, 2003, a group of teens attacked a lesbian woman, Lisa Craig, at a Fourth of July fireworks display in Piers Park. Craig, her partner, and her two daughters were picnicking and watching fireworks. The trouble began at the park's playground when a group of teens began shouting homophobic epithets. When Craig asked the groups to leave, she was struck in the head by one of the teens. The attackers continued to punch and kick Craig as she was bleeding on the ground. Given the severity of her head injuries, Craig underwent 2 operations and received over 200 stitches.

I believe that government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

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#### IRAQ

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, for nearly 15 years, our country engaged in a bitter struggle with the tyrannical

regime of Saddam Hussein. We argued, negotiated, debated, and compromised with this brutal dictator, and yet the results were always the same: deception, deceit, and lies. In the meantime, thousands of innocent Iraqis were raped, tortured, or murdered. Some disappeared entirely, never to be seen again. Meanwhile, Iraq's enormous wealth was pilfered and squandered by Saddam's cronies who were more concerned about their collection of foreign sports cars than ensuring the Iraqi people had running water and sufficient electricity.

It is easy to lose sight of how far we have come. As we constantly hear stories of the guerrilla style warfare, of secret Iraqi resistance groups, and the criticism regarding the pace of reconstruction, we forget about the people we have saved or the freedom we have provided. Iraqis are now truly free, and we must remember that.

Change is not instantaneous, particularly when it comes to freeing a people who have been oppressed for over 25 years. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies recently reported, the reconstruction in Iraq will be an enormous task. We cannot and should not expect immediate results: decades of neglect and degradation cannot be overcome by the simple exertion of will. No, rebuilding of Iraq will be a slow and deliberate process. It cannot be rushed, and we must remember that we have only been rebuilding for 11 weeks.

The recommendations from the CSIS report were helpful in identifying those areas that we need to work on. For example, the CSIS team found that public safety remains the primary concern for many Iraqis as well as American commanders and recommends quickly expanding the Iraqi civilian defense forces. Another critical recommendation is finding work for unemployed Iraqis who have far too much time to consider their plight. Realistically, I believe agriculture and construction could provide that employment.

Though we still have a long road ahead, we should also recognize how far we have come. Saddam's brutal dictatorship is no longer in power, and we have taken steps to track down members of his former regime. The recent killing of Saddam's two sons was an important victory, and it appears that it will only be a matter of time before we catch Saddam. The Iraqi people are starting to realize that Saddam is not coming back to power and that freedom is truly theirs.

We have also restored most of the public utilities and improved security. Thousands of Iraqis are joining the country's new civil defense force, which will free up thousands of American troops for other missions. And oil revenue is increasing daily, helping defray the costs of running the country.

Perhaps most significantly, Iraq's governing council has convened and the process of developing a formal structure for governing the country

has begun. We also must not forget that 85 percent of the cities are now governed by local Iraqi leaders.

Despite this amazing progress, some have criticized the administration's approach to Iraq. For example, many have wanted to know when our troops will come home for some time. Unfortunately, the Army was unable to provide a rotation schedule until recently because of ongoing military operations and security concerns.

This concern resonated in my home State as well. In Colorado, we have been awaiting word on when the local soldiers from the 3rd Armored Cavalry based at Fort Carson might return since the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Thankfully, the Army recently announced its unit rotation schedule, which means that if all goes according to plan, many of the units in Iraq, including the 3rd Armored Cavalry, will be home within a year.

This information will bring joy to our troops who have served so valiantly over the last several months. It will also give hope to the many families who had been patiently awaiting for information on when their loved ones might return. We should not forget that without their support and sacrifice, our troops would not be able to function. It is their families who give our troops strength.

This is why I have been working with nonprofit organizations like the Armed Forces Foundation that have been providing support to these families during this prolonged deployment. During the August recess, for example, I will be joining the Armed Forces Foundation in organizing a fishing trip for the children of the soldiers from Fort Carson. While activities like the children's fishing trip cannot replace a mother or father, they can lift the spirits of these families who have sacrificed so much.

Other criticism, however, is completely unjustified at this time. For example, some pushed for cost estimates on our future operations in Iraq, which everyone knows is nearly impossible to predict at this time. Department officials can't look into their crystal ball and pull out the magic number. Future operations in Iraq may cost more than the \$4 billion we are currently spending or they may cost less. We just don't know at this time, and we won't know until Iraq is completely stabilized.

Another criticism centers on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. Almost all of us believed, and many of us still believe, Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. And what happened to these weapons is a legitimate question.

Our forces have not found these weapons yet, but that does not mean they didn't exist or that we won't find them in the future. There are few matters that our intelligence agencies have ever conclusively agreed on. One of those was that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction. Last October's National Intelligence Estimate clearly lays out the intelligence supporting this belief.