

VOTING RIGHTS ACT
REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today for the second week in a row the Senate Judiciary Committee's agenda included a proposed amendment to the Constitution, to its fundamental purpose and to our rights as Americans. I understand that Republicans are trying to keep to a political timetable for raising divisive matters in the runup to the November elections.

I know that in election years they love to wave the flag amendment, rather than work on veterans health care or protecting veterans' privacy. We have just witnessed the largest theft of private information from the Government ever, the loss of information on more than 26 million American veterans. Compounding the incompetence was the misguided decision by the Veterans' Administration for secrecy in trying to cover this up for the last 3 weeks. This follows on the heels of last year's debacle of a billion-dollar shortfall in VA's budget for veterans health care, after repeated denials. It all adds up to a "heckuva bad job" for America's veterans.

The President should call Secretary Nicholson into the woodshed for a serious shakeup in how the VA is run. In the meantime, Secretary Nicholson needs to answer why this information was left vulnerable to such a breach, why such a delay in notification was allowed to occur, and what specific steps he is taking to ensure such a breach does not happen again. The Nation's veterans—who have been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country—deserve to have the best tools available to protect themselves and their families from identity theft.

Rather than work on our privacy and identity theft legislation, including the Specter-Leahy Personal Data Privacy and Security Act of 2005, or the Kerry-Salazar legislation to provide credit checks and monitoring to those veterans whose private information was compromised, we are being directed to another divisive debate on a proposed constitutional amendment.

In that regard, I noticed that earlier this week, the White House Press Secretary was asked about this constitutional amendment and had no knowledge of it existing. I would like to include that exchange in the RECORD:

Question. [C]ould you tell us if the President also supports the proposed amendment to protect the United States flag from public desecration?

Mr. SNOW. Do we have a flag desecration—I apologize; this is something that, believe it or not, in the last two weeks has not come up. So I'm afraid—

Question. Flag burning.

Mr. SNOW [continuing]. Flag burning. I'll just have to get back [to you].

The White House Press Secretary has yet to become familiar with the talking points on how much more important this is than national security, the war in Iraq, unprecedented gas prices, the lack of a Federal budget, the pen-

alties on seniors who may now wish to sign up for Medicare drug prescription, comprehensive immigration reform, emergency supplemental appropriations, preparations for the hurricane season, preparations for a possible avian flu pandemic, privacy legislation, and completing our work on reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

FEDERAL HOUSING ENTERPRISE
REGULATORY REFORM ACT OF
2005

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, this week Fannie Mae's regulator reported that the company's quarterly reports of profit growth over the past few years were "illusions deliberately and systematically created" by the company's senior management, which resulted in a \$10.6 billion accounting scandal.

The Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight's report goes on to say that Fannie Mae employees deliberately and intentionally manipulated financial reports to hit earnings targets in order to trigger bonuses for senior executives. In the case of Franklin Raines, Fannie Mae's former chief executive officer, OFHEO's report shows that over half of Mr. Raines' compensation for the 6 years through 2003 was directly tied to meeting earnings targets. The report of financial misconduct at Fannie Mae echoes the deeply troubling \$5 billion profit restatement at Freddie Mac.

The OFHEO report also states that Fannie Mae used its political power to lobby Congress in an effort to interfere with the regulator's examination of the company's accounting problems. This report comes some weeks after Freddie Mac paid a record \$3.8 million fine in a settlement with the Federal Election Commission and restated lobbying disclosure reports from 2004 to 2005. These are entities that have demonstrated over and over again that they are deeply in need of reform.

For years I have been concerned about the regulatory structure that governs Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—known as Government-sponsored entities or GSEs—and the sheer magnitude of these companies and the role they play in the housing market. OFHEO's report this week does nothing to ease these concerns. In fact, the report does quite the contrary. OFHEO's report solidifies my view that the GSEs need to be reformed without delay.

I join as a cosponsor of the Federal Housing Enterprise Regulatory Reform Act of 2005, S. 190, to underscore my support for quick passage of GSE regulatory reform legislation. If Congress does not act, American taxpayers will continue to be exposed to the enormous risk that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac pose to the housing market, the overall financial system, and the economy as a whole.

I urge my colleagues to support swift action on this GSE reform legislation.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGIA'S 48TH
BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, it is my honor and privilege today to pay tribute to the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade Combat Team. The 48th Brigade is an integral part of Georgia's widely respected National Guard and is comprised of more than 4,000 of Georgia's 9,000 guardsmen. The Georgia National Guard is the thirteenth largest in the Nation, with nearly 60 percent of its forces classified as "high priority units" which would be among the first to deploy during a national crisis.

The 48th Brigade has a long and proud history. The 48th was originally organized on April 23rd, 1825, in Macon, and served in some capacity during the Civil War, WWII, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War. The unit was mobilized into Federal service on November 30th, 1990 at Fort Stewart in order to participate in Desert Storm.

During Desert Storm, the 48th Brigade successfully completed intense combat training at the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA. Upon completion of this training, the 48th received the distinguished honor of being the first and only National Guard combat unit deemed combat-ready for the Gulf War. Later in 2001, the 48th was deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina for a period of 8 months. This deployment established Georgia's 48th as one of the first National Guard units of its size to assume such a large multinational peacekeeping mission.

The 48th Brigade recently joined the 3rd Infantry Division in Iraq, making it the first unit to utilize the Army's new concept of integrating reserve units with active units in order to form a highly effective and efficient active-reserve team. The 48th Brigade was mobilized under the Presidential Selective Reserve Call Up in October 2004 and in January 2005, under the leadership of Brigadier General Stewart Rodeheaver, the 48th was ready to serve our country in Iraq. As a "Combat Ready" force, the 48th was deployed to Iraq on May 22nd, 2005, after undergoing brief training in Kuwait. On June 14, 2005, the 48th Brigade officially took over its assigned area of responsibility in southern Baghdad. They were responsible for conducting full-spectrum counter-insurgency operations in an attempt to defeat anti-Iraqi insurgents. The 48th also played an important role in developing the newly formed Iraqi Security Forces.

During their deployment to Iraq, Georgia's 48th Brigade was known for its bravery, effectiveness, and commitment to getting the job done. During a 12 month deployment, the 48th Brigade completed numerous missions and was responsible for offensive and defensive victories throughout Iraq. The Brigade was involved in a multitude of operations conducted over nearly 1,900 square kilometers throughout southern Baghdad. These missions were in conjunction with 5 larger U.S. operations