Mr. President, elections are currently underway in Iraq.

It is very exciting. The election formally in Iraq itself will be

Thursday, although in the United States those Iraqi citizens are

voting. They are actually voting in Tennessee at one of those distant,

remote locations, remote from Iraq.

That is a powerful statement to the progress made in Iraq over the

last 2\1/2\ years, that this is the third election in the last year. At

the first election in January, about 8.5 million turned out; at the

next election in mid-October, over 10 million people turned out; at the

third election, we will have to wait and see, but it looks as though

there will be record numbers of individuals voting in Iraq.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we had a country that had no representative

government whatsoever and had a tyrant, Saddam Hussein, oppressing the

people there. This morning, several of us had the opportunity to talk,

by teleconferencing, with our Ambassador in Iraq, as well as General

Casey. They did review with us a number of the real advances that have

been made. When you look at issues such as Iraqis who are currently

participating, they cited several statistics. In August 2004, there

were five Iraqi army battalions actually in the fight. There are

currently 97 Iraqi battalions in the fight. In July 2004, there were no

ready operational divisional headquarters. Today there are at least 7

operational divisional headquarters and 31 operational brigade

headquarters.

There has been huge progress over the last year, year and a half. In

November 2004, there were about 110,000 fully trained and equipped

Iraqi security forces. Today there are almost double that, a year

later, 214,000 trained and equipped security forces.

Does all of this make a difference? One of the fascinating statistics

cited and brought to my attention was compared to last year, or at some

point last year, how many tips were being provided by the Iraqi people.

In many ways it reflects the confidence the Iraqi people have in law

enforcement and security. In March, there were just under 500 tips to

the Iraqi Armed Forces. In September 2005, there were 4,700 tips by

Iraqi citizens to Iraqi and coalition forces. Therefore, information is

flowing much more freely, which reflects, I believe, the confidence the

Iraqis have in their security forces. One tip resulted in the

disruption of an IED factory and the capture of 4,000 pounds of

explosives and about a dozen 500-pound bombs. That shows the importance

of the improved security by the Iraqi people and what it allows to

flow, in terms of information.

Mr. President, 75,000 Iraqi policemen are patrolling Iraqi cities,

and another 5,700 are in training. I think we are seeing real progress

there. There is much progress to make, but the progress being made

currently, as we speak, and will be made over the next several days is

truly exciting in terms of an operational, permanent government being

formed. Lastly, as I mentioned earlier, it won't be until actually

April that the new government is in place. The elections are occurring

now. Certification takes place in December, and the final is in early

January. From that point, the government takes root. So the government

itself won't be formed until April of next year.