Mr. President, today is a historic day for the

people of Iraq as they go to the polls to freely elect a permanent 275-

member Iraqi National Assembly. It is important to remember that these

elections in Iraq would not have been possible without the bravery and

sacrifice of the U.S. Armed Forces who have served and are currently

serving in Iraq helping to provide the Iraqi people with the freedom

and democracy that they deserve.

Our service members who are serving in Iraq are promoting democracy,

restoring and repairing public services, working to prevent terror

attack, and destroying the insurgency in a country that hasn't known

freedom in decades.

As we focus on the meaning of Thursday's election in Iraq, it is

important to realize the extraordinary bravery exhibited by our service

members.

One unit in particular, the 4th Civil Affairs Group, CAG, U.S. Marine

Corps Reserve, based in Washington, DC was deployed to Iraq during the

January 30, 2005 elections of a temporary Iraqi National Assembly.

These marines, many of whom are from my State of Pennsylvania, helped

to promote democracy, restore and repair public services to the Iraqi

people, and prevent terror attacks by insurgents. This particular unit

played an active role in the election day operations in January by

setting up polling locations and participating in security patrols to

protect voters and voting sites and was an integral part in the United

States' battle for Fallujah. Also during its deployment, the 4th CAG

worked to install new electricity transformers in the Iraqi city of

Ramadi, the capital city of the al Anbar Province, also known as one of

the most dangerous cities in Iraq. And I would be remiss if I failed to

mention that the deputy commander of this unit of brave marines was

William Reynolds, now proudly serving as Senator Specter's chief of

staff.

One marine in particular from that unit, CPL William Cahir, has

written about his experiences in Iraq. Corporal Cahir, originally from

State College PA, was a journalist before September 11, 2001. After

seeing the horrific terrorist attacks that occurred in our country on

that day, Bill Cahir felt compelled to serve our country and joined the

Marine Corps. As part of the 4th CAG of the Marine Corps Reserve,

Corporal Cahir was deployed to Iraq.

During his deployment to Iraq, Corporal Cahir, along with other

members of the 4th CAG, helped to establish a

Civil Military Operations Center in Ramadi. On election day in January

in Iraq, Corporal Cahir and the 4th CAG were responsible for protecting

a polling site in Ramadi.

Having returned from his deployment to Iraq, Corporal Cahir has since

returned to his civilian job. As a journalist, Bill Cahir covers a

multitude of stories but has since focused many of those stories on his

own personal experiences in Iraq and the experiences of other service

members.

In one article he wrote for The Express-Times, a newspaper from

Easton, PA, Mr. Cahir told the story of two service members--COL James

T. Anthony, a marine reservist from Nazareth, PA, and LTC Stanley B.

Smith, Jr., an Army officer with the Army's 98th Division,

Institutional Training. Both service members were on their way to Camp

Taji in Baghdad to begin their deployments to Iraq.

In his article, Bill Cahir documented the sentiments of these two

service members during their deployments. Colonel Anthony had recounted

his observations of the training of Iraqi soldiers, ``U.S. Marines,

soldiers and sailors, along with their commanders, `did a fantastic job

really pushing the ball forward when it comes to training Iraqi

security forces, not just in terms of numbers but in terms of

efficiency and effectiveness.'''

Lieutenant Colonel Smith also recounted his experiences in Iraq when

he said, ``I am able to feel a sense of pride in accomplishment here in

seeing real results in the form of construction that has been completed

as planned and Iraqi units operating with installations that contribute

to mission readiness.''

Mr. President, these stories from our soldiers are just a few more

examples of the success in Iraq that our troops are contributing to.

Each and every one of our service members has contributed to the

promotion of democracy, the security, and the rebuilding of Iraq.

I applaud the marines of the 4th Civil Affairs Group and all of the

service members who are serving or who have served our Nation in Iraq.

The bravery that they have displayed and the progress they have made in

Iraq is remarkable, and it needs to be told.