



## Arlen Specter Speaks

### RETURNING POWER TO IRAQ

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The current situation in Iraq is very difficult, as the United States prepares to hand over political power to the Iraqi people. The United States is set to end its formal occupation of Iraq on June 30, 2004. At that time, the administration hopes to also be able assist the Iraqis in choosing new leadership.



There has been substantial disagreement as to how this election process will be structured. Iraq's leading cleric does not want to have caucus elections and prefers to hold direct elections. Understandably, they want to gain as much power as they can, but it is not in the interest of Iraq's future to take an action that would promote

instability.

While June 30<sup>th</sup> remains the target date, it is difficult to commit to a timetable. Our troops are still encountering violence on a daily basis by suicide bombers and attacks.

I believe that the suicide bombers have concluded that they are not going to drive the United States out and have since tried to intimidate Iraqis

with their actions. However, the U.N. Emissary has been to Iraq and is confident that we can hold elections in the reasonably near future.

I believe that the exchange of power is going to be a tough battle, but we are going to win. I agree with the President that the sooner we can have a government turned over the Iraqis, the better off we will be.

This war has been very costly and very painful with the casualties and fatalities, but I think in the long run if we can establish a democracy in Iraq, it will stabilize the entire region. We need to start to look for a light at the end of the tunnel so we can bring back the fighting American men and women who are there.

### BASE REALIGNMENTS AND CLOSINGS

Starting in 2005 and over the next several years, the Department of Defense is set to close as many as one-fourth of the United States' 425 military bases. Among those considered are several sites in Pennsylvania.

With respect to action by the Base Realignment and Closing Commission, it has been my view that this is not an

appropriate year to have closings in light of the difficulties in the economy. However, there will be commission action, notwithstanding my vote to the contrary.

In 2003, I voted for the Dorgan Amendment to delay any BRAC closing in 2005. Beyond that, I have taken the lead in forming a Depot Caucus with members from other

states to ensure that there is fairness in what is done. I have been very dissatisfied with what the BRAC closures have been in the past, going back to the Philadelphia Navy Yard, where I personally argued the case in the Supreme Court of the United States.

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## U.S. SENATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### The Highway Authorization Bill

On February 12, 2004, by a vote of 76-21, the United States Senate passed the Highway Authorization Bill, which sets the funding levels for each state's highway and transit programs. I opposed the Highway Bill because I believe that Pennsylvania is not being fairly treated and because the bill is over budget.

Pennsylvania has a tremendous amount of interstate truck traffic that does not stop in Pennsylvania. Its very heavily used roads are also subject to bad weather. The purpose of the Highway bill is to accommodate states with heavy travel through a nationwide trust fund.

Traditionally, Pennsylvania has received more

funding for highways than we pay into the trust fund, receiving slightly more than a dollar for every dollar we contribute, which is necessary because of the heavy

**"Pennsylvania is being unfairly treated."**

traffic on our highways.

Under the new bill and for the first time, Pennsylvania will helping to support the highway programs of other states. By the year 2009, the state will only receive 97 cents back for every dollar Pennsylvanians contribute.

My other consideration is that I don't believe this

Highway Bill is going anywhere because the White House has made it pretty plain that the President will veto it, since it's \$62 billion over budget at a time when the deficit is already going to be in excess of \$500 billion. The Highway Bill is a 47% increase over the last one, which is very high.

I think that we ought to continue to consider the bill and try to bring in a bill which will get a Presidential signature. The bill is already a year late. It is essential to ensuring that interstate travel and travel in Pennsylvania is safe. We ought to regroup and find an accommodation which will get a bill passed so we can get these important highway funds - and the jobs associated with them - in motion.

## MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL

Since Medicare was established in 1965, people are living longer and living better. Today Medicare covers more than 40 million Americans, including 35 million over the age of 65 and nearly 6 million younger adults with permanent disabilities.

In December 2003, the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act was passed by the U.S. Congress. The bill makes available a voluntary Medicare prescription plan for all seniors. Medicare beneficiaries will now have access to a discount card for prescription drug purchases. Projected savings from cards for consumers would range between 10 to 25 percent.

This bill has the potential to make a dramatic difference for millions of Americans living with lower incomes and

chronic health care needs. In Pennsylvania, this benefit would be further enhanced by



including the Prescription Assistance Contract for the Elderly (PACE), a program which will work in coordination with Medicare to provide increased cost savings for low-income beneficiaries.

For medical services, Medicare beneficiaries will have the freedom to remain in traditional fee-for-service Medicare, or enroll in a Health Maintenance Organization

(HMO), or a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO), also called Medicare Advantage. These programs offer beneficiaries a wide choice of health care providers, while also coordinating health care effectively, especially for those with multiple chronic conditions. Medicare Advantage health plans would be required to offer at least the standard drug benefit, available through traditional fee-for-service Medicare.

The Medicare Prescription Drug legislation has been worked on for many years. I believe this bill will provide a significant improvement to the vital health care seniors so urgently need, and it does so in a way that accommodates our budget. It is not a perfect bill, but I believe that it is a significant step forward and a good compromise for many differing points of view.

## ADDRESSING PENNSYLVANIA'S JUDICIAL VACANCIES

Senator Santorum and I have established a bi-partisan nominating committee to provide the President with the most qualified Pennsylvania judges to fill vacancies across the state.

The President has listened to our recommendations and we have put forward nominees who have been met with universal approval. Since the President took office in 2001, we have had a tremendous success rate of getting our judges nominated and confirmed. Of the fifteen Pennsylvania judges who have reached the floor of the Senate for a confirmation vote, all were eventually sworn in as judges.

These facts are especially encouraging considering the difficulty that has arose in the United States Senate with confirming judges. The point is to call the attention to the American people to the politicization of the judicial proc-



Senators Specter and Santorum with Judge Lawrence F. Stengel, nominated for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District

ess. In many circuits, in many districts, there are judicial emergencies because we don't have a sufficient number of judges. My position is really quite simple, don't confirm them, necessarily, but have a vote.

In 2003, Senator Santorum and I were successful in getting three judges confirmed, including former Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Five other Pennsylvania judges have received nominations by the President and await hear-

ings in front of the Judiciary Committee, of which I am a member.

Recently the Judiciary Committee held hearings for three more Pennsylvania judges: 1) Gene E.K. Pratter for the United States District Court for the Eastern District, 2) Franklin Van Antwerpen for the Third Court of Appeals, 3) Lawrence F. Stengel for the United States District Court for the Eastern District, and 4) Juan Sanchez for the United States District Court for the Eastern District. The hearings are the first step in getting these judges confirmed.

Admittedly, confirming judges in the next year will be difficult, but these hearings are an important first step. It is my hope that Senator Santorum and I will continue in our success to fill judicial vacancies in Pennsylvania.

## Judicial Nominations of 2003 and 2004

Kim Gibson  
Western District of Pennsylvania  
CONFIRMED  
September 23, 2003

Thomas Hardiman  
Western District of Pennsylvania  
CONFIRMED  
October 22, 2003

Dennis Michael Fisher  
U.S. Court of Appeals  
for the 3rd Circuit  
CONFIRMED  
December 9, 2003

Gene E. K. Pratter  
Eastern District of Pennsylvania  
Judiciary Committee Hearing  
January 22, 2004

Franklin S. Van Antwerpen  
U.S. Court of Appeals  
for the 3rd Circuit  
Judiciary Committee Hearing  
January 28, 2004

Lawrence F. Stengel  
Eastern District of Pennsylvania  
Judiciary Committee Hearing  
February 5, 2004

Juan Sanchez  
Eastern District of Pennsylvania  
Judiciary Committee Hearing  
February 11, 2004

Paul S. Diamond  
Eastern District of Pennsylvania  
Nominated  
January 20, 2004

## Improving Our Response to Mad Cow Disease

On January 20, 2004, I introduced the National Farm Animal Identification and Records Act, which would implement an electronic Nationwide Livestock Identification System for individual animals. The legislation would enhance the speed and accuracy of USDA's response to the outbreaks of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as "Mad Cow Disease."

On December 25, 2003, a case of BSE was diagnosed in a single dairy cow that had been slaughtered in Washington State. Discrepancies in the cow's records with regards to its age had mistakenly cleared the cow for shipment to the United States. Identification of the disease in the slaughtered cow had a worldwide impact on the American livestock industry.

This disease has had a major impact on the livestock

industry in Pennsylvania and many other states in the country.

With this legislation, it will be possible to identify animals and their point of origination, so that in the event an animal is diagnosed with a disease, a system will be in place to contain the effects of the disease, to prevent its spread, and to provide the public with accurate information so that they can be confident that the product they consume is safe.



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## BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURES (CONTINUED)

With respect to the new criteria, which was released on December 28, 2003, the inclusion of foreign bases is one facet that concerns me. If we are looking to save money, that should be the first place we look before we disrupt long-standing traditions or impinge upon the economies of the local communities, especially at a time when the economy is so fragile.

There is another issue of concern beyond military value and beyond the economic impact on the area. The installations have had a great impact on tradition and serve as a matter of prestige in their local communities. When the Philadelphia Navy Yard was taken away, for example, it was quite an impact on the pride of the community. There are installations all around the country where people are very proud of what goes on there.

To address the current situation, I have asked one of my top deputies to visit all of the installations in Pennsylvania, which could be subject to closing, and to talk with civic groups in the area to make sure that it is a fair process. If we need economies, I am prepared to listen but they have to be done in a professional, fair, and nonpolitical way so that we are not depleting the military, economic, and traditional value of our local communities.

## ABSTINENCE EDUCATION

In preparation for our budget for the next fiscal year, my Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, and Education held a hearing in Harrisburg on February 16, 2004, to consider how much to appropriate for abstinence education. During the course of the hearing, we heard from experts in the federal government, directors of abstinence education programs, and from students who have benefited from abstinence education.

Since I have been chairman of the Subcommittee, we have helped secure funding for abstinence education programs. Last year, more than \$3 million was appropriated for Pennsylvania abstinence programs. We have more than 50 educational centers in the state that are teaching abstinence and there has been a noticeable decline in the rate of teenage pregnancies.

I think there has been a

beneficial effect from abstinence education, not only in the number of reduced pregnancies but also in the number sexually-transmitted diseases.



Abstinence education also addresses the very important issues of peer pressure and self-esteem. The statistics are high for those in high school and even below high school who have had sexual intercourse and have said that they responded to peer pressure. Abstinence education counters peer pressure so that young people learn that they do not have to

engage in behavior in order to be part of the in-crowd or go along with what everyone else is doing.

There are some who believe that abstinence education should be taught in conjunction with the use of contraceptives. There is evidence that abstinence-only education does work. At the hearing, we heard from several young, confident men and women who have benefited tremendously from abstinence education.

This is a subject we will continue to consider as we decide the budget for the Subcommittee for the next fiscal year, but I believe that abstinence education has many positive consequences and I support the President's plan to continue its funding.