

and our common concern about sectarian violence targeting innocent Iraqis. In this regard, the Prime Minister affirms the commitment of his government to advance efforts toward national reconciliation and the need for all Iraqis and political forces in Iraq to work against armed elements responsible for violence and intimidation. The Prime Minister also affirms his determination with help from the United States and the international community to improve the efficiency of government operations, particularly in confronting corruption and strengthening the rule of law.

We discussed the plague of terrorism in Iraq which is being fomented and fueled by Al Qaeda. The people of Iraq, like the people of the United States and the entire civilized world, must stand together to face this common threat. The Prime Minister affirmed that Iraq is a partner in the fight against Al Qaeda. We agreed that defeating Al Qaeda and the terrorists is vital to ensuring the success of Iraq's democracy. We discussed the means by which the United States will enhance Iraq's capabilities to further isolate extremists and bring all who choose violence and terror to full justice under Iraqi law.

We agreed in particular to take all necessary measures to track down and bring to justice those responsible for the cowardly attacks last week in Sadr City. The Prime

Minister has also pledged to bring to justice those responsible for crimes committed in the wake of this attack.

We discussed accelerating the transfer of security responsibilities to the Government of Iraq; our hopes for strengthening the future relationship between our two nations; and joint efforts to achieve greater cooperation from governments in the region and to counter those elements that are fueling the conflict.

We received an interim report from the high-level Joint Committee on Accelerating the Transferring of Security Responsibility, and encouraged the Committee to continue its good work. We agreed that reform of the Iraqi security ministries and agencies and addressing the issue of militias should be accelerated. The ultimate solution to stabilizing Iraq and reducing violence is true national reconciliation and capable and loyal Iraqi forces dedicated to protecting all the Iraqi people.

We are committed to continuing to build the partnership between our two countries as we work together to strengthen a stable, democratic, and unified Iraq.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this joint statement. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Locality Pay Increases Payable to Civilian Federal Employees *November 30, 2006*

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases payable to civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems in January 2007.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS

and certain other pay systems would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2007: (1) a 1.7 percent across-the-board adjustment in scheduled rates of basic pay derived from Employment Cost Index data on changes in the wages and salaries of

private industry workers, and (2) a 6.9 percent locality pay adjustment based on Bureau of Labor Statistics' salary surveys of non-Federal employers in each locality pay area. According to the statutory formula, for Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 8.6 percent. The total Federal employee pay increase would cost about \$8.8 billion in fiscal year 2007 alone.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative locality pay plan if I view the adjustment that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." For the reasons described below, I have determined that it would be appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority to set an alternative January 2007 locality pay increase.

A national emergency, within the meaning of chapter 53 of title 5, has existed since September 11, 2001, that includes Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The growth in Federal requirements is straining the Federal budget. Full statutory civilian pay increases costing \$8.8 billion in 2007 alone would interfere with our Nation's ability to pursue the war on terrorism.

Such cost increases would threaten our efforts against terrorism or force deep cuts in discretionary spending or Federal employment to stay within budget. Neither outcome is acceptable. Therefore, I have determined that a locality pay increase of 0.5 percent would be appropriate for GS and certain other employees in January 2007. Our national situation precludes

granting larger locality pay increases at this time.

Accordingly, I have determined that under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments for the locality pay areas in amounts set forth in the attached table shall become effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2007. When compared with the payments currently in effect, these comparability payments will increase the General Schedule payroll by 0.5 percent.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. To the contrary, since any pay raise above what I have proposed would likely be unfunded, agencies would have to absorb the additional cost and could have to freeze hiring in order to pay the higher rates. Moreover, GS "quit" rates continue to be very low (2.0 percent on an annual basis), well below the overall average "quit" rate in private enterprise. Should the need arise, the Government has many compensation tools, such as recruitment bonuses, retention allowances, and special salary rates, to maintain the high quality workforce that serves our Nation so very well.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks on World AIDS Day *December 1, 2006*

Laura and I welcome our guests. This is World AIDS Day. It's a day for the world to recognize the fact that there are 39 million people living with HIV/AIDS and a day to remember the fact that 25 million people have died of AIDS. It's a day, as well, for the United States to remember that we have a duty to do something about this epidemic, this pandemic.

And today Laura and I met with the Secretary of HHS, as well as Mark Dybul, our U.S. Coordinator for our AIDS effort, and people who are involved with helping to save lives, people from our country and people from around the world who have come to share with us the stories of compassion and courage.

This country is committed—we're committed in helping solve this problem by dedicating a lot of resources to the battle against HIV/AIDS. The American taxpayers have funded over \$15 billion to help groups around this table save lives. Before the PEPFAR program—that's the name of the program that we—that's what we call the program that we dedicate money to, to help save lives—before it became into being, there was about 50,000 people receiving lifesaving drugs. Today, there are over 800,000 people receiving lifesaving drugs, and we thank those who are on the ground in the countries around the world who are using taxpayers' money to save lives. We believe that it's one thing to spend money; we also believe it's another thing to say that we expect there to be results. And the American people need to know, we're

getting good results with your money, and we'll continue to spend it wisely.

We also—as we think about people affected with HIV/AIDS in countries around the world, we remember those who have got HIV/AIDS here at home. And it's very important for the American people to understand we're spending over \$18 billion to help save lives here at home. And I call upon the Congress to reauthorize the Ryan White Act. The bill has passed the United States House of Representatives; the Senate has time to act before it goes on recess. It is an important piece of legislation that will enable us to continue our fight against HIV/AIDS domestically.

I can't thank you all enough for coming, and I thank you for being such decent, compassionate people. The pandemic of HIV/AIDS can be defeated, and the United States is willing to take the lead in that fight. But we can't do it alone. And so for our international partners, we appreciate what you do. For the faith-based community, we thank you for hearing the universal call to love a neighbor. And for the taxpayers, we appreciate your generosity in showing the world the good heart and compassion of the American people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The World AIDS Day proclamation of November 26 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.