

## Statement on the National Economy *December 8, 2006*

Today we received a new report that confirms the continued strength of the American economy. The November jobs report showed that 132,000 more Americans found work last month and that job creation in previous months was stronger than first estimated, adding 42,000 jobs to the numbers released last month. The unem-

ployment rate remained low at 4.5 percent. This is good news for American workers, and they are also seeing good news in their paychecks. As we look forward, our goal is to maintain the progrowth policies that have strengthened our economy and will stimulate the creation of good jobs and higher wages.

## The President's Radio Address *December 9, 2006*

Good morning. This week, I held important meetings at the White House about the situation in Iraq.

On Monday, I met in the Oval Office with one of Iraq's most influential Shi'a leaders, His Eminence Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim. We discussed the desire of the Iraqi people to see their unity Government succeed and how the United States can help them achieve that goal.

On Thursday, I had breakfast with Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain. We discussed the sectarian violence in Iraq and the need to confront extremists inside Iraq and throughout the region. The Prime Minister explains it this way: "The violence is not an accident or a result of faulty planning. It is a deliberate strategy. It is the direct result of outside extremists teaming up with internal extremists—Al Qaida with the Sunni insurgents and Iran with Shi'a militia—to foment hatred and thus throttle, at birth, the possibility of nonsectarian democracy."

The Prime Minister and I also discussed the report I received this week from the Iraq Study Group, chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. Their report provides a straightforward picture of the

grave situation we face in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group's report also explicitly endorses the strategic goal we've set in Iraq: an Iraq that can "govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself."

The report went on to say, quote, "In our view, this definition entails an Iraq with a broadly representative government that maintains its territorial integrity, is at peace with its neighbors, denies terrorism a sanctuary, and doesn't brutalize its own people. Given the current situation in Iraq, achieving this goal will require much time and will depend primarily on the actions of the Iraqi people."

I agree with this assessment. I was also encouraged that the Iraq Study Group was clear about the consequences of a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq. The group declared that such a withdrawal would, quote, "almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence" and lead to "a significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional destabilization, and a threat to the global economy." The report went on to say, "If we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-range consequences could eventually require the United States to return."

The Iraq Study Group understands the urgency of getting it right in Iraq. The

group also understands that while the work ahead will not be easy, success in Iraq is important, and success in Iraq is possible. The group proposed a number of thoughtful recommendations on a way forward for our country in Iraq. My administration is reviewing the report, and we will seriously consider every recommendation. At the same time, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Council are finishing work on their own reviews of our strategy in Iraq. I look forward to receiving their recommendations. I want to hear all advice as I make the decisions to chart a new course in Iraq.

I thank the members of the Iraq Study Group for their hard work and for the example of bipartisanship that they have set. The group showed that Americans of different political parties can agree on a common goal in Iraq and come together on ways to achieve it. Now it is the responsibility of all of us in Washington—Republicans and Democrats alike—to come together and find greater consensus on the best way forward.

As part of this effort, I met this week with House and Senate leaders from both parties, as well as senior members of the Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Intelligence Committees. We had productive discussions about our shared duty to forge a bipartisan approach to succeed in Iraq. The future of a vital region of the world and the security of the American people depend on victory in Iraq. I'm confident that we can move beyond our political differences and come together to achieve that victory. I will do my part.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on December 8 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 8 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, chairman, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## **Statement on Congressional Passage of Outer Continental Shelf Legislation *December 9, 2006***

I commend Congress for passing the Outer Continental Shelf legislation, which will help to reduce our dependence on imported sources of energy by increasing access to domestic sources of oil and gas. Developing these reliable domestic resources in an environmentally sound manner will help address high energy prices, strengthen our energy security, and protect

manufacturing jobs. The bill also provides the producing States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama a share in the royalty revenues from OCS leases. I appreciate the commitment by the State of Louisiana to use revenues from these leases to restore coastal wetlands.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 6111.