

seem fair to the average American consumer that they are having to pay so much at the pump each time they fill up their vehicle. It simply can't go on indefinitely. We can't continue to rely on foreign oil that comes from governments that are unstable or are directly hostile to America's interests. Just this week, Iran's hard-line President threatened that "the global oil price has not reached its real value yet."

We need to find short- and long-term solutions to America's dangerous dependence on these foreign sources of oil. We need to find ways to strengthen and diversify our own domestic supply.

On Monday, Speaker HASTERT and I sent the President a letter. In that letter we urged an effort to direct the Federal Trade Commission, as well as the Department of Justice, to examine, investigate possible price gouging and other anticompetitive practices that may be unfairly driving up gas prices. Price gouging, price fixing, and other forms of collusion are wrong. They are immoral. They should be prosecuted to the full extent of Federal and State law. I am pleased that the President announced yesterday that the investigations we asked for are underway. I also urge consumers to report any suspicious activity directly to the Department of Energy's Web site so that we can track down any wrongdoers and bring them to justice.

Meanwhile, Senator STEVENS and others have developed an anti-price-gouging bill in response to my request last fall following the hearing with the CEOs of the major oil companies. I anticipate that the Senate will take up the Stevens proposal. In addition, the President has wisely called for suspending additions to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve this summer. We have enough oil in the reserve to get through any major short-term supply disruptions. While it is not a lot, this brief halt will leave a little more oil on the market and, as the President said, every little bit helps.

These are important first steps in bringing relief to millions of Americans being pummeled with high prices at the pump. But there is much more to be done. We need to think long term and strategically on how to move the supply and demand equation in our favor by breaking America's addiction to oil and diversifying our energy supply. Instead of looking for scapegoats, as the other side is doing now, we need to look for solutions and provide long-term security for the American people.

Last summer, after a decade of partisan obstruction, Congress passed a comprehensive energy bill. We doubled the amount of ethanol and biodiesel in our gasoline. By 2012, this should reduce oil consumption by 80,000 barrels a day. We passed a hybrid car tax credit of up to \$3,400 per vehicle. There is more that we can do to encourage consumers to purchase fuel-efficient hybrid cars, and we will pursue those options vigorously. The Energy bill also allocated significant funding for re-

search and development of hydrogen fuel cells. If just 20 percent or one out of five cars used fuel cell technology, we would cut oil imports by 1.5 million barrels a day.

We need to build on these initiatives and encourage American consumers, the producers, and entrepreneurs to think beyond oil. I believe, as does the President, that America's future lies with technology that will allow Americans to use environmentally safe and diverse energy sources. Instead of driving into a gas station, we will pull up to a fueling station where we might plug in or fill up with ethanol, electricity, or hydrogen or some combination that technology has made possible.

Political instability in Venezuela won't send our energy prices soaring. Foreign dictators won't be able to use oil to hold the world's policies hostage. America will be safer and more secure with American energy coming from American sources.

The Energy bill we passed last year is a good start. We can accomplish a whole lot more if we can get bipartisan cooperation. Unfortunately, when it comes to energy security, bipartisanship has been hard to come by, and that makes solving the energy problem even more difficult.

Developing new energy sources takes time and research. For example, had President Clinton not vetoed ANWR a decade ago, the reserve would be producing a million barrels of oil a day right now. That is about three-fourths of what we currently import from Saudi Arabia.

I hope to be able to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find fair and effective ways to strengthen and diversify America's energy supply.

Challenge, action, solutions—that is what the American people sent us here to do. By staying focused on our long-term goals, we can keep America moving forward.

METHAMPHETAMINE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, the growing problem of meth has been particularly personal to me. As I have traveled across my home State of Tennessee, I have heard the heart-wrenching stories of how meth is tearing families apart and about the unique challenges that meth abuse presents to law enforcement and social services.

I would like to commend Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS of the Finance Committee for holding a hearing earlier today to discuss the social and economic impact of methamphetamine on our Nation's child welfare system.

Law enforcement ranks the number one drug problem—above cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. I am proud that the Senate listened to law enforcement and that we acted earlier this year by passing the Combat Meth Act. Because of this legislation, meth users in all 50

States are now restricted from purchasing large quantities of ingredients, like pseudoephedrine, used to make meth. This law is a step in the right direction. However, as we heard today in the Finance hearing, there is much left to be done.

One particular aspect of meth abuse that was addressed in the hearing today is the impact that this poisonous drug is having on our Nation's children. The hazards to children living in meth homes are numerous. First, when meth is being cooked, children are exposed to dangerous gases and hazardous waste which spread throughout the house, contaminating everything, including the children's clothes and toys. A recent study shows that the amount of exposure children living in meth lab homes have is about the same as if they were using meth directly. Secondly, these labs often explode, resulting in serious injuries, burns, and even death to innocent children.

Children living in homes where meth is being made are also more likely to be severely neglected and physically, mentally, and sexually abused by members of their own family as well as other individuals who may be present. Meth causes users to become paranoid and irritable, often leading to child abuse. Once the drug wears off, users tend to sleep for long periods and sometimes days, leaving children to fend for themselves.

One individual testifying today told the committee about a mother who was on a meth binge and literally forgot she had a baby. Child protective services was called when the woman did not pick up her 2-month-old from a babysitter. Three weeks later when the mother was located, she admitted that she had been on a meth binge.

Child welfare services throughout the Country have seen a sharp increase in the number of children removed from meth homes in the last several years. Two weeks ago in Knoxville, TN, a 18-month-old boy was rescued from a meth home when law enforcement raided the house and arrested his mother and her boyfriend for manufacturing meth. Sadly, this is just one example of a much larger problem.

In the last 2 years, over 1,000 children have been removed from homes in Tennessee due to meth-related investigations. And, nationwide, thousands more children were rescued from homes where meth was being cooked. Dr. Nancy Young testified today that in the last 5 years, over 15,000 children have been impacted by meth manufacturing nationwide. She added that this number was very low because many incidents go unreported.

The methamphetamine epidemic continues to place a tremendous strain on an already overburdened child welfare system. Child protective services and welfare officials are struggling to cope with the staggering increase in meth-related cases and the subsequent challenges associated with this particular addiction. Social workers in rural

areas, where meth use is particularly prevalent, are rarely trained to deal with the unique issues related to this drug. They put themselves into harm's way every time they go into a home to rescue a child, both because of the toxic chemicals to which they are exposed, as well as the combative and sometimes violent state of the addicted parents.

As was highlighted by Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator BAUCUS this morning, the current funding structure for America's child welfare system is outdated and ill-equipped to respond to the challenges of the methamphetamine epidemic. We need to look at how we can better help States and communities respond to the spike in the number of meth-related child welfare cases, and I am pleased that the Finance Committee will continue to investigate the Federal role in healing children and families who are plagued by this dangerous and highly addictive drug.

Again, I thank Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator BAUCUS for holding the hearing today. And, I commend the individuals who shared their stories of recovery with the committee. From their testimony, we saw first hand that treatment can work. We heard that education about the devastating consequences of meth use can help to prevent potential users from going down this path of destruction. And, we learned that far too many of our Nation's children are being put at risk in homes where meth is being cooked.

As we continue to address the important issue of combating methamphetamine abuse, we need to do more to protect America's children, to educate our citizens about the dangers of drug use, and to support effective drug abuse treatment methods.

NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' WEEK AND LAS VEGAS TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize National Crime Victims' Week, which began April 23 and runs through April 29. This year's theme is Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity. Victims of violent crime may never be able to forget the trauma they have suffered, but with unity and support, they will have a chance to heal.

That is why I would also like to acknowledge a powerful event that will take place in my home State of Nevada on April 28—the Take Back the Night March.

Take Back the Night started in the late 1970s as a way to recognize and protest the concerns women had about walking outside at night due to threats of assault, rape, and murder. Since then, the event has spread to almost every corner of the United States and around the globe.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Take Back the Night marches and rallies are held each year—often in late April—to coincide with National Crime Victims'

Week. We have had events in Nevada before, especially on our university campuses, but this year is the first community-wide march in Las Vegas.

I am pleased to see this event expanding into the entire Las Vegas community. Take Back the Night marches are positive events that bring together communities and empower victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The women and men who have survived these crimes can see they are surrounded by strong and supportive friends, neighbors, family members, and advocates. As organized by the Rape Crisis Center, this Take Back the Night includes activities for children and families, music, food, an open microphone, and a peace rally.

I have been a longtime supporter of legislation to combat violence against women, including the landmark Violence Against Women Act, VAWA. I voted for VAWA in 1994 and its reauthorization in 2000 and 2005. Our society can never be strong unless all its members feel safe in their own homes and on their own streets. We must do more to stop domestic violence and sexual assault.

I appreciate the time and effort of every Nevadan who is taking part in this year's Take Back the Night March. I would especially like to thank the Rape Crisis Center and its dedicated staff for organizing this wonderful event. I look forward to working with them in the future to make our streets safer.

TRIP TO COLOMBIA, PERU, BRAZIL AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, during the period of April 7–16, 2006, my colleague on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator JEFF SESSIONS, and I traveled to Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic for a firsthand view on issues of immigration, drug enforcement, and trade.

On April 7, 8, and 9, we traveled to Bogotá and Cartagena, Colombia. Upon exiting the plane, we immediately met with Ambassador William Wood, who has been U.S. Ambassador to Colombia since August 13, 2003, and is a graduate of Bucknell University.

I was looking forward to returning to Colombia in that I had not had an opportunity to visit there since December 1999. At the time, President Pastrana was the President of Colombia, and I had the opportunity to discuss with him my concerns about the forcible eradication of the supply of narcotics and the status of peace talks between the Colombia Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC.

Traveling to Colombia this time, I was aware that Colombia was still facing many serious challenges. Many of these suspicions were corroborated by Ambassador Wood. Ambassador Wood stated that the United States sent Colombia \$600 million in aid in 2005. The purpose of this aid is to assist Colom-

bia against various drug cartels and guerilla groups which threaten Colombia's security. Colombia faces two leftist and one rightwing insurgent group that wage guerilla warfare, carrying out kidnappings, hijackings, attacks on civilians, and political assassinations. The primary threat that Colombia faces is from FARC. Ambassador Wood estimated that FARC is composed of 17,000 members and operates in approximately 40 percent of Colombia.

Senator SESSIONS and I were also made aware of some recent changes that have occurred to Colombia's justice system. Ambassador Wood stated that the new Colombian Justice system has instilled in the Colombian people a new level of confidence in the prosecution of criminals. The new system provides for live testimony through the implementation of an oral accusatorial system, whereas the previous system was nonadversarial and operated almost exclusively on the basis on written testimony. Ambassador Wood stated that the new system is now in Bogotá and three other municipal areas. Over 17,000 prosecutors and judges have received intensive training in the new accusatory system in 2005 from various U.S. agencies. The implementation of this new justice system demonstrates that the Colombian Government is serious about cracking down on crime and will no longer serve as a kangaroo court for the benefit of the cartels.

Ambassador Wood also noted several other significant areas where the Colombian Government has improved in the area of law enforcement. Specifically, Ambassador Wood noted that the number of annual homicides were at their lowest number in 18 years. The number of kidnappings is down 39 percent, and terror attacks are down 42 percent under President Uribe's administration.

Later during the trip to Colombia, we had the opportunity to meet President Alvaro Uribe and Colombia's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Camilo Reyes. I came away extremely impressed with President Uribe and his agenda for Colombia. President Uribe is a true Colombian patriot who has elected to take the battle to FARC and to try to eliminate the cultivation of illegal narcotics in his country. Based primarily on his success against narcotic groups, President Uribe was reelected President of Colombia on March 12, 2006, on a platform to defeat guerillas, eliminate paramilitary organizations, end narcotrafficking, and enhance Colombia's domestic security.

The first issue that Senator SESSIONS and I broached with President Uribe was the issue of narcotics. Approximately 90 percent of the cocaine that enters the United States and 80 percent of the heroin east of the Mississippi comes from Colombia. President Uribe agreed with us that the biggest problem in the war on drugs was lowering the consumption of drugs. President Uribe believes, as do I, that so long as