

unique way to celebrate the Biblical journey of Balthasar, Melchior, Caspar.

Like Christmas, it is a day for kids and family, a time to exchange gifts and celebrate life. Surely, it is also a time to remember that acts of kindness and generosity should extend well into the year. Yet, perhaps more than any other day of the season, it is day to remember the potential that we all have for greatness, especially our children.

Balthasar, Melchior, Caspar traveled on the wings of hope, believing that a better future lay in the hands of this humble child in the manger. They did not write him off because he was a carpenter's son or because he was poor. They crossed desserts and overcame hurdles because they believed that despite his present conditions, his future was as bright and limitless as the stars that adorned the sky.

Unfortunately, not enough of today's children are at the center of that kind of investment of time and energy. Despite the tireless work of many parents and educators, far too many are falling through the cracks in schools that are ill-equipped to teach them the skills that they need for work and life.

So on this last weekend of the holiday season, let all of us resolve to renew our commitment to our next generation. The private and public sector must work together to arm our children with the necessary tools that they will need to realize their goals and dreams. The future of this great land rests on their shoulders and how many of them have the opportunity to fully shine and reach their full potential.

CONGRATULATING CHRIS BROWNING ON HIS APPOINTMENT TO CHIEF INVESTIGATOR FOR THE ALABAMA ATTORNEY GENERAL

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I rise to honor Mr. Chris Browning for his dedicated service as the Fairhope chief of police and to offer congratulations on the occasion of his appointment to chief investigator for the Alabama Attorney General.

Chris has served the city of Fairhope since he was 16 years old when he worked as a pay booth attendant at the city beach. His first position with the Fairhope Police Department was as a dispatcher; upon graduation from the police academy, Chris was promoted to patrol officer and later patrol shift supervisor. In 1999, he was promoted to investigator and quickly rose to chief investigator, earning the rank of sergeant. In 2001, Chris was promoted to lieutenant and became chief of police in 2002.

In the midst of his demanding professional schedule, Chris also finds time to serve on a number of regional, state, and local boards: the Baldwin County Drug Task Force, the Baldwin County Gang Task Force, the United States Custom Service Blue Lightning Strike Force, the Alabama Coalition against Domestic Violence, the Fairhope Rotary Boys and Girls Club "Make a Difference" Committee, the Fairhope "Strengthening Our Communities" Committee, the Beverly Healthcare

Community Council, the Baldwin County Court Referral Program Steering Committee, J. Larry Newton School Executive Patron, the Light-house Domestic Violence Program Board of Directors, the Alabama Attorney General's Law Enforcement Advisory Committee, and the Baldwin County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board.

Chris Browning is an outstanding example of the quality of individuals who have devoted their lives to the field of law enforcement. Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating Chris on his new appointment. I know Chris's colleagues; his wife Renee; his three sons, Scott, Nick and Baxter; his family and many friends join with me in praising his accomplishments and extending thanks for his many efforts over the years on behalf of the citizens of Fairhope and the state of Alabama.

A NEW PATH FOR AMERICA'S IRAQ POLICY

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Mr. LIPINSKI. Madam Speaker, President Bush's misadventure in Iraq may be the worst foreign policy disaster the United States has ever been involved in. It is good that Saddam Hussein is out of power, but it has come at an incredibly high price. More than 3,000 of America's soldiers have been killed and thousands more have been wounded, many very seriously. And hundreds of billions of tax dollars have been spent, and in some cases wasted, in Iraq. This has occurred because of the errors in judgment, tactical mistakes, and other major missteps by the Bush administration that have plagued this endeavor since the brave men and women in our military ended the tyrannical reign of Saddam Hussein.

In addition to the high cost in lives and dollars that we have suffered, the reasons for going to war in Iraq in the first place have proven faulty. Furthermore, as the recent report from the Iraq Study Group, ISG, states, the situation in Iraq is "grave and deteriorating," with violence among sectarian groups increasing. Threats to security come from many sources, including the Sunni Arab insurgency, Shiite militias, and al Qaeda, not to mention widespread organized crime. Millions of Iraqis have either fled Iraq or are displaced within their country. Given all of this discouraging information, we need to ask—Why are our soldiers still in Iraq and why should they not come home immediately?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to turn back the clock 4 years and start again. The United States and the rest of the world, not to mention the Iraqi people, have to construct a policy that deals with the current conditions that have created new threats. If Iraq did not occupy such a critical place in the world, it might be the best policy for America to simply pull our troops out as soon as safely possible and leave the Iraqi people to work out a solution. But, Iraq is in one of the most important locations in the world, and although the situation in Iraq is dire, it could get much worse.

First, Iraq sits on the world's second largest oil reserves. While I have been working hard to bring about an energy policy that will wean

America and the world off our dependence on this fossil fuel, it will continue to be an extremely valuable commodity for whoever controls it. That is why we must ensure that Iraq's oil does not fall into the hands of radical groups. Oil revenue could be used to fund the spread of radical Islamist revolution to other countries as well as threaten the rest of the world with terrorist attacks. The United States abandoned Afghanistan after the Cold War ended and that country became a haven for terrorists who planned the 9-11 attacks. Iraq would likely become an even worse terrorist training ground.

Second, Iraq is wedged between two countries that have shown themselves to be belligerent, Syria and Iran. Iran is working on building a nuclear weapons capability and has threatened to destroy the state of Israel. Syria has continuously meddled in the affairs of Lebanon and provides ongoing support to terrorists in Palestine. Both of these countries have been active in supporting groups in Iraq who are wreaking havoc and both seek to increase their power by exploiting the situation in Iraq. Leaving Iraq immediately would only embolden these regimes and allow them greater influence throughout the Middle East. Consequently, a stable Iraq is necessary to limit the power of these two dangerous countries.

Third, an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops would create regional instability that could result in a large-scale war. If Iraq falls into complete chaos, Iran and Syria will likely get more directly involved in the fighting. In addition, Saudi Arabia has said that they may intervene militarily in Iraq if they believe it is necessary to stop a widespread slaughter of Iraqi Sunnis. If chaos in Iraq propels Iraqi Kurds to attempt to break away and form their own country in the north of Iraq, Turkey may feel the need to intervene so as to quell any nationalist uprising of Kurds within their own borders. And these are only a few of the likely scenarios for a larger conflict. Clearly, the prospect of a multi-nation war is even less appealing than the current situation, and the United States must act to try to head-off conditions that may lead to such a catastrophe.

As long as there is still hope that we can serve a positive role in Iraq, the U.S. must not abandon Iraq and leave the situation to deteriorate. However, a new strategy in Iraq is needed now. This new Iraq policy must be based on the understanding that the keys to a solution in Iraq are political and social. Although it is important to recognize that an enforcement capability is necessary for security at any given place and time, peace and stability in Iraq cannot be won and maintained simply through military force. Therefore, the United States should implement a new Iraq policy based on three important components:

(1) Bring the world community together to seek solutions in Iraq, including calling an international conference that will work on putting together a peacekeeping force and setting up an international reconstruction program.

(2) Encourage achievement of important goals in national reconciliation, security, and governance by arranging a peace conference for Iraq's ethnic and religious factions, similar to the conference that led to the Dayton Accords.

(3) Require the administration to give Congress detailed reports on the situation in Iraq

so that informed decisions can be made regarding funding Iraq's reconstruction and deciding when American forces can be redeployed.

First, the United States must bring the world community together to seek solutions in Iraq. Iraq's oil reserves, strategic location in the Middle East, and its potential to become a failed-state breeding ground for international terrorism dictate that the entire international community has an interest in Iraq's success. The administration and the State Department must make more of an effort to utilize America's considerable diplomatic resources in order to rally international involvement in Iraq.

In rallying support, the U.S. should start by talking to all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria. Iraq's sectarian violence, while rooted in centuries old conflicts, is being at least partially fueled by Iran and Syria. Consequently, the United States must be willing to work with Iran and Syria as well as all other nations in the region and around the world. But talking does not mean ceding to all requests that these countries make. Iran must not become a nuclear power and Syria must not once again move into Lebanon. But the United States should be willing to engage with these and other nations if we are to move forward with international cooperation on Iraq.

As part of bringing the world community together, the U.S. should call an international conference on Iraq. This conference will work on putting together an international peacekeeping force that will replace American and other troops that are currently in Iraq. A second purpose of this conference will be to put together an international reconstruction plan for Iraq. Iraq still suffers from critical shortages in electricity and drinking water, while infrastructure such as oil wells and roads remain in a state of disrepair. Many Iraqis remain unemployed and impoverished, making them easy recruits for sectarian militias and terrorist groups. While Congress must be given more complete information and oversight over U.S. reconstruction aid being sent to Iraq so that American money can be spent more effectively, the international community must also be called upon to provide other aid and plans for Iraq's rebuilding.

Second, the United States should join with other nations to arrange a peace conference—akin to the meetings that led to the Dayton Accords—that will bring together Iraqi leaders to achieve important goals in national reconciliation, security, and governance. Broad-based pressure from a variety of international sources can make a difference in situations like Iraq's, as evidenced by the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the war in Bosnia. Much like the current conflict in Iraq, the war in Bosnia was fueled by ethnic and religious divisions. However, after intense pressure from the international community, the warring parties came to the negotiating table in Dayton, Ohio and an agreement was reached. With similar international pressure applied to Iraqi leaders, and promises of international peacekeeping forces and increased reconstruction aid, it is my hope that Iraq's warring factions would peacefully come to the negotiating table. Peace discussions could take place in a country seen as a more neutral arbitrator than the U.S. such as El Salvador, which has proven its commitment to Iraqi stability by providing over 300 soldiers for peacekeeping operations. El Salvador would serve as a good

location because it is physically far away from Iraq and provides an easily secured environment. In addition, El Salvador has special standing because it has had experience with its own civil war and subsequent aftermath.

Third, the administration must be required to give Congress detailed reports on the situation in Iraq, especially in regard to security and progress on reconstruction. One of the reasons Iraq has reached this point is that the Republican Congress gave the administration free rein on Iraq policy without asking questions. The Democratic Congress must, and will, act differently. The start will be bringing the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, military commanders, the members of the Iraq Study Group, and other leading experts on Iraq to testify before congressional committees. Also, we must require from the administration a written, detailed report on the current security and reconstruction situation in Iraq with mandatory monthly follow-up reports.

Up to this point it appears that decisions regarding Iraq have been made based upon politics and not facts, political calculation instead of national interest. There is no place for partisan politics when it comes to the use of military force. The lives of our brave men and women should not be affected by political whims. That is why Congress must demand information from the administration. When Congress is fully informed we will be able to make intelligent decisions, based on our national interest, about when U.S. forces can be redeployed from Iraq. I believe that with congressional oversight and greater international involvement, U.S. troops will be able to start redeployment from Iraq in 2007, with or without the President's leadership.

Clearly, America needs a new direction in Iraq. President Bush is scheduled to announce his new plan very soon. Since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, nothing that this administration has done has yet proven to be successful in Iraq. But I will wait to hear the President and I will listen to the congressional hearings before I make a final decision on his proposal. However, if President Bush were to follow the three-point proposal laid out here, we would truly be moving forward in a new direction that will help stabilize Iraq and bring our troops home soon.

HONORING WESLEY AUTREY

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call attention to and to honor the recent heroics of Wesley Autrey, the selfless New Yorker who this past week jumped in front of a subway train to save a stranger that had fallen below.

As we begin the difficult task of putting America back on track, we can all draw inspiration from this 50-year-old Harlem father, The construction worker was with his two daughters waiting for the train when he noticed that film student Cameron Hollopeter had suffered a seizure. The Navy veteran and two other strangers immediately rushed to the 20-year-old's aid. Autrey helped stabilize him, sticking a pen in his mouth to prevent him from swallowing his tongue.

Yet, just when it appeared that he was fine, Hollopeter had a relapse and stumbled off the subway platform. With a No. 1 train fast approaching, Autrey made a split second decision to put this young man's life ahead of his own. He jumped down and pinned Hollopeter between the rails, shielding him from harm's way.

In the days since that split second decision, Autrey has been deservedly lavished with tons of media attention and honors. Not surprisingly, the humble Autrey has been caught off guard. He wasn't thinking of the fame or glory. All he could think about, he says, was his girls—six-year-old Shuqui and four-year-old Syshe. He didn't want them to see a man die before their eyes. He didn't want them to witness their father do nothing to stop the blood and the screams that could follow.

He asked himself, how will I be judged? Will it be said that I had the opportunity to help and just sat there to do nothing. His conscience wouldn't let him be still—and neither should any of us.

We live in a time of great imbalance. In the midst of great prosperity, far too many are struggling to just keep their head above water. Far too many are disconnected from opportunity and hope.

We must follow the example set by Mr. Autrey and not sit on the sidelines while injustice and tragedy unfolds before our eyes. We must ask ourselves: did we do all that we could to help our fellow brothers and sisters? What did we do to help better the world?

Wesley Autrey has done his duty. Now it's time to do ours.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 2007 CONGRESS-BUNDESTAG/BUNDES RAT EXCHANGE

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

Ms. PELOSI. Madam Speaker, since 1983, the U.S. Congress and the German Bundestag and Bundesrat have conducted an annual exchange program for staff members from both countries. The program gives professional staff the opportunity to observe and learn about each other's political institutions and interact on issues of mutual interest.

A staff delegation from the U.S. Congress will be selected to visit Germany from April 20 to 29 of this year. During this 2-week exchange, the delegation will attend meetings with Bundestag/Bundesrat members, Bundestag and Bundesrat party staff members, and representatives of numerous political, business, academic, and media agencies. Participants also will be hosted by a Bundestag member during a district visit.

A comparable delegation of German staff members will visit the United States for 2 weeks July 14 to 22. They will attend similar meetings here in Washington and visit the districts of Members of Congress. The U.S. delegation is expected to facilitate these meetings.

The Congress-Bundestag/Bundesrat Exchange is highly regarded in Germany and the United States, and is one of several exchange programs sponsored by public and private institutions in the United States and Germany to foster better understanding of the politics and