

The Congress also included major new goals with respect to a robust renewable fuel standard of 36 billion gallons a year. All of those provisions were recommendations of the SAFE Coalition and recommendations in the legislation that I introduced in the Congress.

The recommendations on additional production of energy was advanced with the recent passage legislation to open a portion of the Gulf of Mexico, known as Lease 181, to additional production of oil and natural gas.

There is still more to be done to reduce our oil intensity and to allow us to become less dependent on foreign sources of oil. But I was proud to have been a member of the Energy Committee in the Senate that has advanced an energy bill with real and constructive solutions that will improve America's energy future.

And I was also pleased to work with Fred Smith, P.X. Kelley, and many other American leaders who wanted to do the right thing for this country and whose efforts as a part of the SAFE Coalition, I believe, had measurable and substantial impact on the progress that we made this year.

In a climate of so much partisanship, and at a time when it is so difficult to get things done, I am proud that all of us, working together, did something that represents a real investment in America's future.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

HONORING SARGENT SHRIVER

• Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to Sargent Shriver, a humanitarian and powerful advocate for the poor and most vulnerable among us.

While serving under President John F. Kennedy, Sargent Shriver was the driving force behind the creation of the Peace Corps and is credited with turning a bold idea for public service into a reality. Each year, more than 8,000 of our best and brightest citizens travel around the world, representing our Nation and values, to work with governments, nonprofits, schools, and local citizens to fulfill three goals: providing aid to those in need, promoting a better understanding of America, and fostering greater understanding between people of different nations.

Today, Peace Corps volunteers join with people across the globe in helping to lift up families and communities: farming and agricultural development in Paraguay; promoting education in China; combating HIV/AIDS in Ghana; and so much else. More than 190,000 Peace Corps volunteers have served in nearly 140 countries. The work Peace Corps volunteers are carrying out on behalf of our country has never been more important than it is today. There is an urgent need to repair the damage to America's image abroad, both among our friends and those who do not wish America well.

And the Peace Corps is only one part of Sargent Shriver's important contributions to our country.

Sargent Shriver served as the first Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity under President Lyndon Johnson. He helped lead President Johnson's war on poverty where he created or inspired the creation of many social programs, including Volunteers in Service to America, VISTA, Head Start, Foster Grandparents, Job Corps, Upward Bound, and the Legal Services Corporation. I was honored and proud to serve on the board of Legal Services Corporation from 1978 to 1981, chairing the board of directors from 1978 to 1980. The Legal Services Corporation, and many efforts mentioned, continue to help millions of low-income Americans today.

He played a significant role in the drafting and passage of the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993, legislation that created AmeriCorps, and I was proud to work with him on this effort in the Clinton administration. In recognition of his service to this Nation, on August 8, 1994, President Bill Clinton presented Sargent Shriver with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our country's highest civilian honor.

I continue to be inspired by Sargent Shriver's service to our country. In fact, nearly a decade ago, I joined Sargent Shriver at the dedication of the new Peace Corps building and recounted a story I once heard. When the founders of Peace Corps were just starting out—still figuring out what the organization would look like and how it would work—Sargent Shriver was shown an organizational chart. This chart showed him at the top, with lines pointing down at staff members at various levels of a hierarchy. At the bottom of the chart was the word "volunteer." When Sargent Shriver saw this chart, he turned it upside down because he believed deeply that the volunteers were the heart and soul—and the most important part—of the Peace Corps. His vision set the course of the agency—and that is how it has been run ever since.

Each of us has a responsibility to live up to that vision, to promote volunteerism, to give our young people a chance to give back to the Nation that has given each of us so much. That is why I stood with my colleagues in 2003 to undo massive funding cuts to AmeriCorps. These are cuts that would have meant thousands of Americans who wanted to serve through programs like VISTA, City Year, and Teach For America but would be turned away at the doors.

And that is why I have worked to support AmeriCorps and to remove barriers to public service. I proposed the Public Service Academy Act. It would create a new Public Service Academy, modeled on the military service academies, to provide a 4-year, affordable college education for more than 5,000 students each year in exchange for 5-year commitment to public service.

Sargent Shriver is a leader and servant whose legacy will live on for generations to come. It will live on in the work of Peace Corps volunteers in nations around the world. It will live on in the work of AmeriCorps helping to lift up communities here at home. And it will live on in his work to create more opportunities for children and families living in poverty.

Together, we can help to carry his legacy forward, too, through public service—and through small and large acts of kindness and generosity to build better communities and a better world.●

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

IRAQ'S RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

• Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I wrote to Secretary Rice on September 11, 2007, out of concern for Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities who appear to be targeted by Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish militants. The severe violations of religious freedom faced by members of these indigenous communities, and their potential extinction from their ancient homeland, is deeply alarming in light of our mission to bring freedom to the Iraqi people.

In addition, such violence may be an indicator of greater sectarian violence. Such rising violence and the Iraqi internally displaced people and refugee crises potentially could serve as catalysts for wider regional instability. These crises demand an urgent response from our Government.

On January 11, 2008, I received a response from the Department of State to the questions I posed in my letter. I ask to have my original letter and the response from the Department of State printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.●

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 11, 2007.

Hon. CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
Secretary, Department of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY RICE: I am writing out of concern for Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities, including Catholic Chaldeans, Syriac Orthodox, Assyrian, Armenian and Protestant Christians, as well as smaller Yazidi and Sabean Mandaean communities. I know that the fate of these communities was the subject of a recent letter to you from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

These communities appear to be targeted by Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish militants. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reports that Christians, now less than 4 percent of Iraq's population, make up 40 percent of its refugees. And according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, "violence against members of Iraq's Christian community occurs throughout the country, and the Commission has raised particular concern about reports from Baghdad, Mosul, Basra, and the north Kurdish regions."

Such violence bespeaks a humanitarian crisis of grave proportions. The severe violations of religious freedom faced by members

of these indigenous communities, and their potential extinction from their ancient homeland, is deeply alarming in light of our mission to bring freedom to the Iraqi people. In addition, such violence may be an indicator of greater sectarian violence. Such rising sectarian violence and the Iraqi internally displaced people and refugee crises potentially could serve as catalysts for wider regional instability. These crises demand an urgent response from our government.

In that regard, I request that you provide responses to the following questions:

(1) Is it the State Department's view that Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim minorities face particular threats because of their religion? Do they face a level of threat and abuse disproportionate to their representation in the Iraqi population?

(2) Has the State Department or our embassy in Baghdad sought out members of these communities to inquire as to what the United States could do to enhance their protection?

(3) What steps, if any, has the State Department taken to urge the Iraqi government to provide protection to Iraq's Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities?

(4) Has the Iraqi government been responsive to requests for such protection?

(5) Do you have reason to believe that any Iraqi security forces or other government forces or personnel are involved in violence against such vulnerable populations?

(6) What mechanisms are in place to ensure that U.S.-trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces do not use U.S.-provided assistance for sectarian purposes?

(7) What plans have the Agency for International Development and State Department developed to increase humanitarian assistance to Iraq's internally displaced?

I thank you in advance for the consideration of these questions, and I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA,
United States Senator.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, DC., January 11, 2008.

Hon. BARACK OBAMA,
U.S. Senate,

DEAR SENATOR OBAMA: Thank you for your letter regarding the status of Iraq's religious minorities. We regret the delay in sending you this response, but we wanted to provide you with a reply that was both comprehensive and accurate.

We share the concerns you express in your letter and assure you the Department of State takes matters relating to the safety of Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities very seriously.

Iraqis from all ethnic and religious communities suffer from the sectarian and general violence in Iraq. While it is true that in some cases religious minorities, such as Christians, are targeted due to their religion, the threat to Iraq's religious minorities is not unique to them; Shi'a in Sunni majority areas face much the same situation, and vice versa. In fact, Muslim citizens generally who do not support the actions of militants within their region are subject to similar threats. The assassination in Anbar of Sunni Sheikh Abdul Sattar Bezia al-Rishawi, who rejected extremist ideologies and sectarianism, and the murders of associates of the Shi'a Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani are recent examples of how violence impacts all of Iraq's communities, not just Christians or other non-Muslims.

Unfortunately, given the difficulty of compiling accurate data in Iraq, it is not possible to determine through statistical analysis whether violence against specific groups is

disproportionate to their representation in the population. However, communities that are isolated or small in number and that lack the means of providing for their own protection are particularly at risk.

The Department of State is coordinating closely with several U.S. Government agencies, as well as the Government of Iraq, religious leaders, and local ethnic and religious organizations in Iraq, to help alleviate the plight of minority groups. Moreover, the Embassy and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), together with Coalition Forces, are working at the national and provincial level to help the Iraqi Government provide the necessary protection and safety for all of its citizens, including Iraqi religious minorities. And the Government of Iraq continues to improve its capacity and capability to improve the overall security situation and, thereby, protect Iraq's minority communities. We would also note that while we have seen reports of violence against Iraqi non-Muslims, we have not seen evidence showing these acts were part of an orchestrated effort by Iraqi government forces.

As part of our efforts to help improve the situation for minority groups in Iraq, State Department and Embassy officials meet regularly with representatives of Iraq's ethnic and minority groups and raise their concerns with the appropriate Iraqi Government officials at all levels. The PRTs located in Ninewa province and the Kurdish region—areas with large Christian and other non-Muslim communities—also meet regularly with representatives from these communities and work to ensure that their concerns are heard at the provincial government level.

The status of religious minorities in Iraq will become more secure as groups representing them develop the capability to advocate on their own behalf and participate actively in the political system. To that end, U.S. Government-sponsored programs offer assistance to such groups upon request in areas such as conflict resolution, political party development, and human rights. In conjunction with these efforts, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) are supporting capacity-building programs for the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and Migration at both the local and national levels. While PRM focuses primarily on assisting refugees and facilitating entry into the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees, it coordinates its programs with those of USAID to ensure that as many vulnerable Iraqis as possible receive essential services as quickly as possible.

USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has five implementing partner organizations presently working with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in all 18 of Iraq's provinces. For 2007, assistance has been targeted to reach approximately 550,000 of the most vulnerable IDP beneficiaries. OFDA plans to obligate an additional \$26 million by December 31, 2007, and has requested an additional \$80 million for Iraqi IDP in FY 2008. USAID is also funding humanitarian organizations to collect data on IDP movements and needs to prioritize humanitarian assistance.

USAID's understanding of the current breakdown in IDP accommodation is that 56 percent are renting accommodations, 19 percent are living with host families, 25 percent are living in abandoned buildings such as former military sites (barracks, etc.), and less than one percent are living in tented camps. This indicates that coping mechanisms remain for the majority of IDPs, although threats and vulnerabilities still exist, includ-

ing a continuing need for access to food and potable water, adequate shelter and sanitation, and health care and other social services. In addition, IDPs are faced with border crossing closures; restrictions on their abilities to register as IDPs, and the upcoming winter. USAID is prepared to help IDPs respond to these vulnerabilities with existing resources and partners, and plans to continue responding with additional resources expected to be obligated by the end of calendar year 2007.

The Secretary of Defense could best address your question about mechanisms to ensure that U.S.-trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces do not use U.S.-provided assistance for sectarian purposes.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

JEFFREY T. BERGNER,
Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND DR. WALLACE S. HARTSFIELD, SR.

• Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize a devoted pastor, community leader, father and friend: Reverend Dr. Wallace S. Hartsfield, Sr.

On January 1 of this year, Reverend Hartsfield retired as senior pastor of the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in Kansas City, MO. He served as the congregation's pastor for more than 40 years and as a dedicated member of the clergy for more than 55 years.

Dr. Hartsfield has worked as a key leader and mentor in social, political, and religious circles in Kansas City and throughout the country. He has served at every level of the National Baptist Convention of America and as the president of the General Baptist Convention of Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.

My friend, Congressman EMANUEL CLEAVER, has dubbed this remarkable leader the "Godfather of Preachers" for his ministerial knowledge and superior oratorical skills.

Countless Kansas Citizens—and Americans—have been touched by this man and his messages. Always positive, Dr. Hartsfield speaks out for peace, social and racial justice, AIDS intervention, faith, and hard work. And like a true pastor, he cares deeply for his congregation and the surrounding community. My guess is he will not slow down much even in retirement.

As a measure of our appreciation for Pastor Hartsfield's long service to the community, Congressman CLEAVER, Senator MCCASKILL, and I worked to enact legislation designating the U.S. Postal Service facility at 4320 Blue Parkway in Kansas City the "Wallace S. Hartsfield Post Office Building." This designation is but small recognition of Dr. Hartsfield's many accomplishments as a minister, dedicated community activist, civil servant, and compassionate role model. I am proud to call him a friend.