

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