

voice to the bipartisan call for significant changes in our health care system. This is only one step in the process of the public discussion of ideas for improving our health care system. I also intend to continue working with Chairman BAUCUS and members of the Senate Finance Committee on his health care reform agenda.

We have serious problems, and we need to solve them. So it's time to get to work.

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE AND DISPLACED IRAQIS ACT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight a bill my distinguished colleague, Senator CARDIN of Maryland and I introduced last week. S. 3509 addresses the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Iraq and potential security breakdown resulting from the mass displacement of Iraqis inside Iraq and as refugees into neighboring countries.

If passed, this bill will help the United States address the needs of millions of Iraqis who have been forced to flee from their homes. The heart of the bill requires the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive regional strategy to address this humanitarian crisis. Senator CARDIN and I are joined in this effort by our colleagues, Senators BINGAMAN and VOINOVICH, who have cosponsored the bill.

Unfortunately, we were not able to reach agreement to have this legislation placed on the Foreign Relations Committee business agenda this week. We may not have enough time left this year to bring this bill to the floor. I hope that is not the case—and if so, it is my hope that the State Department recognizes the need to formulate a strategy and take prompt action itself.

It has been 5 years since the fall of Baghdad, and although this administration refuses to acknowledge it, Iraq and her neighbors are in the midst of a humanitarian crisis that threatens to undermine the stability of the Middle East. Wherever one stands on the future of the U.S. combat presence in Iraq, we have a moral responsibility to those innocent Iraqis who have been driven from their homes and fear for their lives and their children's lives every day.

As I noted during my floor statement marking World Refugee Day this past June, Iraqis are now one of the largest displaced populations in the world. According to host countries hosting Iraqi refugees, up to 2 million Iraqis have fled their homes for neighboring country in order to avoid sectarian and other violence. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, there are over 2.7 million internally displaced persons in Iraq.

Iraqi refugees are overwhelming the basic infrastructure of Iraq's neighbors, especially in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. This raises troubling concerns about the region's stability and shifting sectarian balances. No one in

the region, and I must stress this, no one including host countries and refugees themselves expect Iraqi refugees to return anytime soon. This means we will be dealing with the exodus of displaced Iraqis for some time to come. Despite this administration's position that security conditions are improving in Iraq and life is normalizing, there are no signs of imminent return.

I saw firsthand the humanitarian and security implications of this crisis during my trip to the region last year. Beyond the obvious humanitarian and moral dimensions, this crisis has grave implications for our national security interests in the Middle East.

We often talk about our military surge in Iraq. What has been missing for far too long now has been our humanitarian surge to address basic needs—access to food, health care, shelter, drinking water, and education. This needs to be at the heart of any campaign to win "hearts and minds." Strong U.S. leadership is critical in bringing the Iraqi Government, regional neighbors, and the international community to the table to discuss and implement concrete measures.

To date, Congress has not passed any comprehensive legislation addressing this humanitarian crisis. My bill, S. 3509, would prompt the next administration to act quickly and make the displacement of millions of Iraqis an urgent foreign policy priority. The heart of the bill requires the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive regional strategy that addresses the mass displacement of Iraqis. The strategy would: address the serious challenges facing Iraqi refugees; address the responsibility of the Iraqi Government to help meet the urgent needs of its citizens in the region; include an assessment of how much assistance is needed to help meet these needs; include an assessment of what conditions are necessary for the voluntary, safe, sustainable return of displaced Iraqis; include a description of the steps the U.S. Government has taken and will take to engage the international community to implement the strategy; and include plans to assess the impact of the strategy.

S. 3509 also includes reporting requirements from the State Department and the Government Accountability Office so that Congress is informed on how the administration is moving forward on the Iraqi humanitarian crisis.

Mr. President, I believe this bill will help define a roadmap for the United States and the international community on how we are meeting our basic obligations towards helping vulnerable Iraqis displaced as a result of the 2003 war. It will once again promote responsible American leadership abroad.

I want to thank the following groups who have supported S. 3509 thus far:

America's Development Foundation; Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, CIVIC; CARE; Catholic Relief Services; CHF International; Church World Service, Immigration and Ref-

ugee Program; EPIC: Promoting a Free & Secure Iraq; Friends Committee on National Legislation; International Medical Corps; International Relief and Development; International Rescue Committee; Leadership Conference of Women Religious; Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns; Mercy Corps; NETWORK; Presbyterian Church, USA, Washington Office; Refugees International; Save the Children; U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

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

In response to your request for stories reflecting rising energy prices, I would offer the following: It is not unique to my family, but it affects everyone, everywhere, and as an elected official, I would advise you to keep it foremost in your mind when debating the need for renewable energy resources.

Our dependence on foreign oil has the effect of spilling our blood on foreign sands in wars that we sure should not be sticking our noses into. It is causing the rest of the world to see us as imperialists, rather than as the beacon of freedom, and it is edging our nation toward facism, as the wealthy have no qualms about sacrificing the poor to make sure the oil keeps flowing from these sources.

And, in the end, we the people lose. How can we call ourselves an independent nation if we are to rely on foreign energy? And how can we call ourselves a free people if we cannot afford basic necessities? We the people are seeing prices skyrocket, and our wages decline, despite what the annual reports say, as they do not account for the devaluation of the dollar.

WILLIAM.

P.S. Thank you for actually doing something about this mess.

Per your request, I am sending an e-mail in regard to my concern for the rising costs of fuel and the impact it is having upon me and my family.

As you know, Idaho is, to a great extent, a rural state. Most of our employment involves traveling to or from our job sites in automobiles. Since we aren't privileged enough to have a rapid transit system or bus