

Building A Better Future Through Trusting And Empowering The American People

*President Bush Delivers 2008 State Of The Union Address, Says Congress And The Administration
Must Come Together To Achieve Results*

Tonight, President Bush will deliver his 2008 State of the Union address and set forth a vigorous agenda to achieve results for the American people this year. The President will reaffirm his belief in the power of freedom and in policies that trust the American people to make wise choices. He will present new ideas and identify key areas where the Administration and Congress can come together to complete important unfinished business to protect Americans and to ensure that our country continues to prosper. This includes:

- **Keeping America's Economy Healthy:** To help keep our economy growing in the short-term, President Bush will ask Congress to quickly pass the \$150 billion economic growth package agreed upon in bipartisan negotiations between the Administration and House leadership. President Bush will also ask Congress to make sure the tax relief that is now in place is made permanent – this is the most important action to ensure the long-term health of our economy.
- **Expanding Opportunities For America's Workers:** President Bush will call on Congress to open markets to American workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs by approving free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. The President believes Americans can compete with anybody, anywhere as long as the rules are fair, and these trade agreements will ensure open markets and new opportunities for U.S. business and agriculture. The Administration is also working for a successful Doha Round of trade talks, and the President is committed to completing a good agreement this year to expand opportunity for Americans and millions struggling to escape poverty worldwide.
- **Eliminating Wasteful Federal Spending:** President Bush will issue a pledge to veto any appropriations bill Congress sends him that does not cut the number and cost of earmarks in half. He will also issue an Executive Order on Tuesday, January 29, directing Federal agencies to ignore any future earmark that is not voted on by Congress.
- **Saving Social Security, Medicare, And Medicaid:** The President will challenge Members of Congress to come up with a bipartisan solution to save these vital entitlement programs for future generations. He has laid out several proposals to reform these programs, and now he calls on Members of Congress to develop their own ideas.
- **Caring For Our Nation's Veterans And Their Families:** The President will call on Congress to expand support for military families by expanding their access to childcare, creating new hiring preferences for military spouses across the Federal government, and allowing our troops to transfer their unused education benefits to their spouses or children. He will also ask Congress to ensure our returning wounded warriors effectively and efficiently receive the services they need by completing work on the remaining Dole-Shalala Commission recommendations that require legislation.
- **Reauthorizing No Child Left Behind And Expanding Education Options:** President Bush will call on Congress to pass bipartisan legislation reauthorizing and strengthening No Child Left Behind. He will also ask Congress to support a new \$300 million "Pell Grants for Kids" program to help poor children in underperforming schools afford the schools of their choice and announce a White House Summit on inner city children in faith-based and other non-public schools that will be held this spring.
- **Keeping America Competitive In The 21st Century:** The President will ask Congress to continue on the path to double Federal support for critical basic research in the physical sciences and ensure America remains the most dynamic nation on earth. Last year, Congress passed legislation supporting full funding of research under the President's American Competitiveness Initiative, an agenda to strengthen our scientific education and research, improve our technological enterprise, attract the world's best and brightest workers, and provide 21st century job training. Unfortunately, Congress has not provided sufficient funding. This funding is necessary now for American entrepreneurs and workers to maintain a competitive edge.

- **Increasing Energy Security And Confronting Climate Change:** President Bush will call on Congress to build on the success of the energy bill he signed in December and take the next steps to improve our energy security and confront the challenge of climate change without undermining economic growth. He will reaffirm the United States' commitment to work with the other major economies and through the UN toward an international agreement on climate change that can slow, stop, and then reverse the growth of greenhouse gas emissions through actions by every major economy. He will also call for the creation of a new \$2 billion international clean technology fund.
- **Empowering America's Armies Of Compassion:** President Bush will call on Congress to help ensure equal treatment for faith-based organizations seeking Federal funding by permanently extending Charitable Choice provisions guaranteeing their participation on equal footing in certain Federal programs. In addition, the President will honor the resilience of the people of the Gulf Coast, and the contributions volunteers have made to the region, by announcing that the United States will host the annual North American Leaders' Summit in New Orleans this April.
- **Improving Border Security, Immigration Enforcement, And Assimilation:** President Bush will review the steps his Administration is taking to improve our border security and address immigration challenges within the boundaries of existing law. Although Congress has not passed legislation to address the immigration challenges our Nation faces, the Administration continues to build upon progress we have already made in strengthening our borders, enforcing our worksite laws, prosecuting criminal aliens, keeping our economy well-supplied with vital workers, and helping new Americans successfully assimilate into our society. Without legislation that creates a lawful way for foreign workers to support our economy, however, we cannot fully relieve the pressure on the border.
- **Empowering Americans With Affordable Options For Health Care:** President Bush will lay out elements of his health care agenda to promote accessible and affordable health care and leave medical decisions in the hands of patients and the doctors that treat them. He will call on Congress to eliminate the unfair bias in the tax code in order to make basic private health insurance more affordable for millions.
- **Confirming Qualified Judicial Nominees:** The President has submitted qualified judicial nominees who will interpret the law instead of attempting to make new laws. Many of these worthy candidates' nominations are being unfairly delayed, and the Senate should give each of them a prompt up-or-down vote.
- **Increasing Federal Support For Ethical Stem Cell Research:** President Bush has directed Federal agencies to provide funding for stem cell and medical research that does not harm human embryos. In November 2007, several new studies reaffirmed the President's commitment to support this type of research by showing the potential of reprogramming adult cells, such as skin cells, to make them function like embryonic stem cells. President Bush will also call on Congress to pass legislation that bans unethical practices such as the buying, selling, patenting, or cloning of human life.

President Bush will ask Congress to work with him to advance the freedom agenda abroad and continue to fulfill his top priority of keeping our Nation safe. This includes:

- **Keeping Our Nation Safe From Terrorism:** President Bush will remind Congress that one of the most important tools we can give the men and women who protect us from attack is the ability to monitor terrorist communications. To protect America, we need to know who the terrorists are talking to, what they are saying, and what they are planning. Last year, Congress passed legislation to help us do that, but it is set to expire on February 1. This means that if Congress does not act this week, our ability to track terrorist threats would be weakened --and our citizens will be in greater danger. Congress must act now to ensure the flow of vital intelligence is not disrupted and to pass liability protection for companies believed to have assisted our nation following the attacks on 9/11.

- **Supporting Our Troops As They Make Progress In Iraq And Afghanistan:** The President will call on Congress to fully fund our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan so they get the equipment they need as soon as possible to do the job they have been asked to do. While much work remains, U.S. and Iraqi troops working together have achieved significant results, and as we are seeing more success, some of our forces in Iraq are returning home and not being replaced. He will also announce the United States is adding 3,200 Marines to our forces in Afghanistan to ensure the gains this nation has made toward democracy are not reversed.
- **Keeping America Safe By Advancing Freedom Worldwide:** President Bush will reaffirm his commitment to support those in other countries who are advancing freedom and justice as hopeful alternatives to the violent extremism embraced by America's enemies.
- **Supporting A Compassionate Foreign Policy:** President Bush believes freedom can only be advanced if the United States does its part to eliminate the hunger, disease, poverty, and illiteracy that creates despair and allows violent extremism to take root. The President will ask Congress to reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, consistent with the program's successful founding principles, and to double the Plan's historic initial commitment with an additional \$30 billion over five years. He continues to support the President's Malaria Initiative to combat malaria in 15 African countries, and the President will also ask Congress to support an innovative proposal to provide food assistance by purchasing crops directly from farmers in the developing world.

Keeping Our Economy Healthy

President Bush Lays Out Short- And Long-Term Measures To Keep Our Economy Growing And Creating Jobs

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to enact the pro-growth policies needed to ensure our economy continues to grow and create jobs. The U.S. economy has a solid foundation, but there are also areas of real concern. America has seen the longest uninterrupted period of job growth on record, but job creation has slowed. Consumer spending has been growing, but the cost of imported oil has increased. Business investment and exports are still rising, but the housing market is declining. These mixed indicators reinforce the need for a short-term economic boost and long-term policies that hold down taxes, open new markets for U.S. exports through trade agreements, increase energy production, and reform the mortgage markets.

- **The President will ask Congress to quickly pass the \$150 billion economic growth package agreed upon in bipartisan negotiations between the Administration and House leadership.** This agreement meets the criteria the President set forward last week to provide an effective, robust, and temporary set of incentives to protect the health of our economy and encourage job creation. If enacted in a timely manner, it is expected to help create more than half a million jobs by the end of 2008 and to increase economic growth by roughly two thirds of a percent of GDP. Congress should move quickly to pass this bill, without derailing or delaying it.
- **The Administration has also taken several steps to shore up the housing sector.** The Administration has launched the *FHASecure* initiative, expected to help more than 300,000 families refinance their homes. In addition, Secretaries Paulson and Jackson have facilitated the private-sector HOPE NOW alliance, which has developed a plan under which more than a million homeowners could receive help.
 - **The President continues to call on Congress to pass legislation to modernize the Federal Housing Administration to assist struggling homeowners and to strengthen the regulator for Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae to ensure they focus on their housing mission.**
- **In a time of economic uncertainty, the worst thing Congress could do is raise taxes.** The economy benefits when Americans can keep more of their own hard-earned money to spend and invest. President Bush continues to believe tax relief must be made permanent to keep our economy healthy in the long term.

President Bush Urges Congress To Quickly Pass The Growth Package Negotiated By The Administration And Bipartisan House Leadership

The bipartisan economic growth package would allow Americans to keep more of their money to stimulate consumer spending. The growth plan provides approximately \$100 billion in temporary relief that will allow Americans to keep or spend more of their incomes. Under the agreement:

- **In 2008, taxes would be cut from 10 percent to zero percent on the first \$6,000 dollars of taxable income for individual taxpayers and the first \$12,000 of taxable income for couples.** Taxpayers could receive rebates of up to \$600 for individuals and \$1,200 for couples, with a minimum of \$300 per person and \$600 per couple. This relief would be fully available to everyone with adjusted gross income less than \$75,000 for singles and \$150,000 for married couples filing jointly and everyone eligible for this relief would also receive an additional \$300 per child. It gradually phases out for taxpayers with income above those thresholds.
- **For example, this would mean:**
 - A single parent with two children earning \$38,000 would receive a check for \$1,050 – a rebate of \$450 and a child tax credit of \$600.
 - A married couple with two children earning \$80,000 would receive a check for \$1,800 – a rebate of \$1,200 and a child tax credit of \$600.
 - An individual with no children earning \$20,000 would receive a rebate check for \$600.

The growth package would also offer incentives to spur business investment. The agreement would save businesses approximately \$50 billion in near-term taxes through a temporary change to the tax code that will allow American businesses that buy new equipment this year to deduct an additional 50 percent of the cost of their investment in 2008. This will encourage businesses to expand and create new jobs now, because buying equipment, software, and tangible property this year will dramatically lower their taxes. The agreement also increases expensing for small businesses.

The package agreed upon by the Administration and House leadership does not raise taxes or include unnecessary spending or regulatory provisions. The President appreciates the hard work of Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and House Republican Leader John Boehner in working together on these temporary and effective measures to help our Nation deal with difficult economic challenges.

To Help Ensure Long-Term Economic Growth, The Tax Relief We Have Already Passed Must Be Made Permanent

President Bush believes the most important action to ensure the long-term health of our economy is to make sure the tax relief that is now in place is made permanent. The President's tax cuts are set to expire in less than three years. If Congress allows that to happen, we will see an end to many of the measures that have helped our economy grow – including the 10 percent individual income tax bracket, reductions in the marriage penalty, the expansion of the child tax credit, and reduced rates on regular income, capital gains, and dividends. This would mean that:

- A single mom with two children and \$30,000 in earnings would see her taxes go up by 67 percent.
- An elderly couple with \$40,000 in income would see their taxes go up by about 155 percent.
- Twenty-six million small business owners would see their taxes increase by nearly 17 percent – or about \$4,000 on average.

The Administration Has Taken Robust Steps To Help Struggling American Homeowners

In September, the President and his Administration launched a new initiative at the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) called *FHASecure*. *FHASecure* expands the FHA's ability to offer refinancing by giving it the flexibility to work with homeowners who have good credit histories but cannot afford their current payments. By the end of 2008, the FHA expects this program to help more than 300,000 families refinance their homes.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson have facilitated the private-sector HOPE NOW alliance. HOPE NOW is a cooperative effort among mortgage counselors, servicers, investors, and lenders to maximize outreach efforts to homeowners in distress and to help homeowners refinance into a new mortgage or receive a modification.

President Bush signed the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act of 2007, which will help Americans avoid foreclosure by protecting families from higher taxes when they refinance their home mortgages. This Act created a three-year window for homeowners to refinance their mortgage and pay no Federal taxes on any debt forgiveness they receive.

Last week, President Bush created the President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy to help ensure the problems now disrupting the housing industry do not happen again. This Council includes representatives from the business sector, non-profits, and faith-based organizations. Chuck Schwab will serve as Chair and John Hope Bryant as Vice Chair.

Congress Has More Work To Do On Measures To Help Families Stay In Their Homes

The President has called on Congress since August to complete work on responsible legislation modernizing the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). This bill will give FHA the necessary flexibility to help hundreds of thousands of additional families qualify for prime-rate financing.

Congress needs to pass legislation permitting State and local housing agencies to help troubled borrowers by issuing tax-exempt bonds for refinancing existing home loans. Under current law, State and local housing agencies can issue tax-exempt bonds to finance new mortgages for first-time homebuyers, but States are unable to do the same for homeowners seeking to refinance.

Congress needs to pass legislation to reform the regulation of Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs) like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. GSEs provide liquidity to the mortgage market that benefits millions of homeowners, and it is vital that they operate safely and soundly. The President has called on Congress to pass legislation that strengthens independent regulation of the GSEs and ensures they focus on their important housing mission.

The President strongly believes that government assistance must be responsible – the wrong answer, such as a bailout for speculators and unscrupulous lenders, could actually prolong or worsen the problem.

Staying On Track To A Balanced Budget By 2012

President Bush Challenges Congress To Come Up With A Bipartisan Solution To Save Entitlement Programs For Future Generations, Pledges To Veto Appropriations Bills That Do Not Cut Earmarks

Tonight, President Bush will issue a pledge to veto any appropriations bill Congress sends him that does not cut the number and cost of earmarks in half. Last year, President Bush asked Congress to voluntarily cut the number and cost of earmarks in half, stop all wasteful and unnecessary earmarks, and to refrain from slipping earmarks into committee reports that never come to a vote in Congress. Unfortunately, these goals were not met – the FY08 appropriations bill passed by Congress in December 2007 contained nearly 11,700 earmarks totaling more than \$17 billion. Much of this spending is wasteful. We have a duty to the American taxpayers to be more responsible with the hard earned money they send to their government.

- In addition, President Bush will announce that he is issuing an Executive Order on Tuesday, January 29, directing Federal agencies to ignore any future earmark that is not voted on and approved by Congress. This will effectively end the common practice of concealing earmarks in so-called report language instead of placing them in the actual text of the bill.

The President will also challenge Members of Congress to develop a bipartisan solution to save entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare. Millions of Americans rely on these vital programs for their retirement and health care needs. However, spending for these programs is the biggest challenge to our Nation's budgetary health – it is growing faster than inflation, faster than the economy, and faster than our ability to pay. The President has offered proposals to reform these programs, and now he is asking Members of Congress to offer their proposals. If we do not begin to act now, future generations will be faced with three bad options: huge tax increases, huge deficits, or huge benefit cuts.

Congress Should Act Now To Save Social Security

Social Security's long-term financing shortfall has not gone away simply because Congress has ignored it. According to the Social Security Trustees, the total Social Security shortfall has now grown to \$13.6 trillion and is rising. With each passing year of inaction, the problem will only get worse, and the eventual corrective action will become more severe and less fair.

The cost of financing Social Security is about to rise dramatically due to the retirement of the Baby Boom generation. It now costs approximately 11 percent out of every workers' taxable wages to pay somebody else's Social Security benefits. Under current law, this toll will rise to approximately 17 percent over just the next 25 years. By 2017 – only nine years from now – the annual cost of paying benefits is expected to exceed incoming Social Security tax revenue.

The first Baby Boomers are already beginning to retire and claim Social Security benefits. The first Baby Boomer, born one second after midnight on January 1, 1946, became eligible for benefits this year. In 1950, there were 16.5 workers to support each person on Social Security. Today there are 3.3 workers, and by 2030, there will only be 2.2.

Without reform, future taxpayers would need to pay \$14.4 trillion more into Social Security than they will receive back from it. Social Security cannot work well for future generations if it takes far more money from them than it returns.

Every year of inaction makes the result less fair and tends to add approximately \$700 billion to the dollar amount of the shortfall. Were we to fix the system today, current seniors could continue to receive full benefits, a tax increase could be avoided, and benefits could continue to rise in real terms. Within the next decade, without action, the Social Security Trust Fund will begin to pay out more than it receives each year.

Congress Must Also Address The Unsustainable Growth In Spending For Medicare

If left unaddressed, Medicare's long-term unfunded liability will lead to increased strain on our Nation's workers, Medicare beneficiaries, and the Federal budget. Total net Medicare mandatory expenditures were \$325 billion in 2006 and are expected to increase in future years at a faster pace than either workers' earnings or the economy overall. The 2007 Trustees Report predicted that Medicare spending will grow from approximately 3.1 percent of the size of the economy in 2006 to as much as 11.3 percent in 2081.

The problem is not just long-term – under current law, the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund's assets (Medicare Part A) will be exhausted by 2019. Medicare Part A helps pay for hospital, home health, skilled nursing facilities, and hospice care for the aged and disabled.

Fortunately, in part as a result of the successful competition among private plans under the new Medicare prescription drug benefit (Medicare Part D), costs have been much less than originally estimated. In 2003, President Bush signed legislation that reformed Medicare to add a prescription drug benefit and give beneficiaries more private plan choices.

President Bush Remains Committed To Balancing The Budget By 2012 Without Raising Taxes

On February 4, President Bush will submit his budget proposal for FY 2009, which will once again restrain spending, keep taxes low, and continue us on a path toward a balanced budget. The Administration worked with Congress last year to successfully complete the FY08 Budget within the reasonable and responsible spending levels set by the President, without raising taxes. There is still more to be done to rein in government spending.

- The President's FY 2009 Budget will hold the rate of growth for non-security discretionary spending to less than one percent, well below the rate of inflation.

In addition to earmark reform, the President has called for a line-item veto to control spending and bring accountability to the Federal budget. The legislative line-item veto would allow a President to send wasteful and unnecessary spending back to Congress for an up-or-down vote. The governors of 43 of the 50 states already have this authority.

Giving Our National Security Professionals Tools They Need To Protect America

Congress Must Act Now To Ensure That The Intelligence Community Can Continue To Monitor Terrorist Communications Quickly And Effectively And To Provide Meaningful Liability Protection To Telecommunications Companies

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to help keep our Nation safe by acting now to pass legislation that will ensure that the Intelligence Community can continue to monitor terrorist communications quickly and effectively. Last August, Congress passed the Protect America Act (PAA) to modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) and provide our intelligence community essential tools to acquire important information about terrorists who want to harm America. The PAA restored FISA to its original focus of protecting the rights of persons in the United States, while not acting as an obstacle to gathering foreign intelligence on targets located in foreign countries.

- **The PAA temporarily closed a critical intelligence gap that was making our Nation less safe, but this important legislation expires on February 1.** If Congress does not act quickly, our national security professionals will not be able to count on critical tools they need to protect our Nation, and our ability to respond quickly to new threats and circumstances will be weakened. That means it will become harder to figure out what our enemies are doing to recruit terrorists and infiltrate them into our country.
- **Congress must act now to ensure the flow of vital intelligence is not disrupted and to pass liability protection for companies believed to have assisted in the efforts to defend America following the 9/11 attacks.**

Liability Protection Is Critical To The Ongoing Effort To Protect The Nation From Another Catastrophic Attack

The Senate Intelligence Committee carefully studied this issue and found that without responsible retroactive liability protection, "the private sector might be unwilling to cooperate with lawful government requests." The Committee rightly determined that this lack of protection could result in a "possible reduction in intelligence" that is "unacceptable for the safety of our Nation."

Companies should not be threatened with billion-dollar lawsuits by plaintiffs' lawyers for accepting the government's determination that requested assistance was necessary and lawful. Requiring companies to second-guess the government's determinations would slow or eliminate critical intelligence collection and would place private parties in the impossible position of making legal determinations without access to the classified facts necessary to make such determinations. It is also fundamentally unfair to subject these companies, and their thousands of employees and shareholders, to the possibility of multi-billion dollar payouts to plaintiffs' lawyers only because the companies are believed to have helped in efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

Companies alleged to have assisted the government in the aftermath of September 11th should not face massive and costly litigation for helping protect our country. Such litigation also risks the disclosure of highly classified information.

Failing to provide retroactive liability protection sends the wrong message to every private party that may in the future consider whether to help the Nation.

The Basics Of FISA: Why Legislation Is Necessary To Bring The Law Up-To-Date

Congress enacted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 1978 to regulate the Government's efforts to conduct certain foreign intelligence surveillance activities directed at persons in the United States. Congress recognized that the Government must be able to effectively collect foreign intelligence about those who wish to harm our country. To allow this collection to proceed while protecting the rights of Americans in the United States, Congress established a process for judicial approval that generally applied when the government targeted persons located inside the United States for foreign intelligence surveillance – but which generally did not apply to activities directed at persons overseas.

Revolutionary advances in telecommunications technology since 1978 upset the careful balance established by Congress to distinguish between surveillance governed by FISA and surveillance directed at targets outside the U.S. The mechanism Congress used to identify which activities fell within FISA's scope – and to strike the balance between surveillance directed at persons overseas and persons in the United States – was a careful and complex definition of the term "electronic surveillance." This definition was framed in terms of the specific communications technologies used in 1978.

Technology changed dramatically over the course of the next decades, and as a result, prior to the Protect America Act, the Government often needed to obtain a court order before vital intelligence collection could begin against a terrorist or other foreign intelligence target located in a foreign country. These targets often were communicating with other foreign persons overseas, but FISA's court order requirement still applied. It made no sense to require the Government to obtain a court order to collect foreign intelligence on targets located in foreign countries – nor was such a requirement generally intended when Congress passed FISA nearly 30 years ago.

This requirement resulted in a critical intelligence gap that was making our Nation less safe. Requiring the Government to go to court before the collection of foreign intelligence could begin resulted, as the Director of National Intelligence put it, in our intelligence professionals "missing a significant amount of foreign intelligence that we should be collecting to protect our country."

By changing FISA's definition of electronic surveillance to clarify that the statute does not apply to surveillance directed at overseas targets, the Protect America Act has enabled the intelligence community to close this critical intelligence gap. The Protect America Act makes clear – consistent with the intent of the Congress that enacted FISA in 1978 – that our intelligence community should not have to get bogged down in a court approval process to gather foreign intelligence on targets located in foreign countries. It does not change the strong protections FISA provides to people in the United States. FISA's definition of electronic surveillance remains unchanged for surveillance directed at people in the United States, and continues to require court approval as it did before.

The President calls on Congress to send him a bill he can sign before the Protect America Act expires on February 1. The Senate is currently considering the Senate Intelligence Committee bill, which was crafted in a careful, bipartisan manner to protect our country against terrorists and other foreign threats while preserving the privacy of Americans. While the bill needs some changes, it is a fundamentally sound piece of legislation. It would maintain the vital flow of intelligence on terrorist threats, protect the freedoms of Americans while making sure we do not extend those same protections to terrorists overseas, and provide liability protection to companies now facing billion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks. The President calls on Congressional leaders to follow the course set by their colleagues on the Senate Intelligence Committee, bring this legislation to a prompt vote in both houses.

Continued Progress In Iraq Allows "Return On Success"

President Bush Calls On Congress To Provide Our Troops On The Ground With The Funding They Need To Succeed

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to show continued support for our troops as they make significant gains in Iraq. The President's strategy in Iraq has put us on the path to success. While much work remains, U.S. and Iraqi troops working together have achieved significant results, violence is down dramatically, and some political progress is being made.

- **The U.S. strategy in Iraq is guided by the principle of "return on success" – and as we are seeing more success in Iraq, some of our forces are returning home and not being replaced.** One Army brigade combat team and a Marine Expeditionary Unit have already returned from Iraq without replacement, and in the coming months, four additional Army brigades and two more Marine battalions will return.
- **President Bush urges Congress to meet its responsibilities to the brave men and women serving in Iraq by fully funding our troops.** The President appreciates Congress passing a down payment on funding for our troops without imposing artificial conditions. Now, Congress needs to pass the remainder of this funding so our troops get the funding they need as soon as possible to do the job they have been asked to do. No matter how some leaders here in Washington, D.C. feel about the war, our troops deserve their full support.
- **The success of a free Iraq is critical to the security of the United States – we must not turn our backs on the hard-won progress being made.** If we were to be driven out of Iraq, extremists of all strains would be emboldened, and al Qaeda could find new recruits and new sanctuaries. A failed Iraq could also increase the likelihood that our forces would someday have to return and confront extremists even more entrenched and even more deadly. By contrast, a free Iraq will deny al Qaeda a safe haven and serve as a partner in the fight against terrorism.

Violence In Iraq Has Decreased Dramatically In The Past Year

The surge is achieving its primary aims of improving population security in Baghdad and reversing the cycle of sectarian violence that plagued Iraq in 2006. Although there is much more work to be done, security has improved considerably since General Petraeus began implementing the strategy that became fully operational in mid-June.

According to the U.S. military:

- Monthly attack levels have decreased 60 percent since June 2007 and are now at the same levels as early 2005 and some points of 2004.
- Civilian deaths are down approximately 75 percent since a year ago, dropping to a level not seen since the beginning of 2006.
- From January to December of 2007, ethno-sectarian attacks and deaths decreased over 90 percent in the Baghdad security districts.
- Coalition forces found and cleared approximately 6,956 weapons caches in 2007, well over twice the amount (2,662) cleared in 2006.
- Although al Qaeda in Iraq remains a dangerous threat, its capabilities are diminished.
- Over the past year, thousands of extremists in Iraq have been captured or killed, including hundreds of key al Qaeda leaders and operatives.

Iraqi Security Forces and Concerned Local Citizens groups continue to grow, develop capabilities, and provide more security for their country.

- Iraqi forces now have assumed responsibility for security in nine of 18 Iraqi provinces.
- Iraq's Security Forces grew by more than 100,000 in 2007 and now stand at more than 500,000.

Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs) continue to play a key role in the decreasing trends of violence and improving stability across Iraq.

- More than 130 different CLC groups are volunteering to support security in their neighborhoods, with more than 80,000 active members.
- More than 10,000 Iraqis from the original Anbar Awakening were hired and now serve in the Iraqi Security Forces.
- The Government of Iraq is committed to one day assuming fiscal and overall responsibility for CLCs and has begun structuring vocational training programs for CLCs who want to rejoin the civilian work force.

The U.S. Will Continue Working With Iraqi Leaders As They Build On Progress Toward Political Reconciliation

The government in Baghdad has not made progress as quickly as we would like on legislative issues, but the Council of Representatives has passed de-Baathification legislation and a pension law, and is sharing oil revenues with the provinces.

On November 26, Prime Minister Maliki and President Bush signed a shared statement of intent called the "Declaration of Principles" to enumerate common principles to frame our future relationship as two fully sovereign and independent states.

Significant bottom-up political progress is occurring at the local level in Iraq, where provincial governments continue to spend national revenue on reconstruction and many people are engaging in local politics. For example, the Mosul Airport recently reopened for commercial flights for the first time in 14 years after the Ninewa Provincial Council, Iraqi Ministries of Transportation and Finance, and the U.S. Department of State partnered to renovate the passenger terminal.

With improvements in security, we are also seeing improvements in important economic indicators.

- The central government of Iraq reached its 2007 target of \$30.2 billion in budget revenue one month before the end of the year.
- The Government of Iraq recently completed early repayment of its outstanding obligations to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and reached a new Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF.
- Cell phone penetration has gone from almost zero prior to 2003 to over eight million today.
- The Government of Iraq has begun the process of accession to the World Trade Organization.
- Inflation is currently at around 20 percent year-on-year, down from a peak of 77 percent in August 2006.

Over the past year, we have doubled the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq – there are now 24 of these teams active in all 18 Iraqi provinces. Many of these teams are "embedded" PRTs, created as part of the President's new strategy. These civilian-led teams are working together with Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) or Marine regiments to support the military surge in Anbar Province and the greater Baghdad area.

- **PRTs are playing a vital role in sustaining the bottom-up political progress that is laying the groundwork for national reconciliation in Iraq.** For example, the Kirkuk PRT last year helped broker a settlement that brought Sunnis back into the Provincial Council.

PRTs are making significant gains working with the Iraqi people to achieve economic progress. In 2007, achievements by embedded PRTs (ePRTs) established after the beginning of the troop surge include a regional security summit in Taji sponsored by an ePRT located in Baghdad and facilitated by a Brigade from the 1st Cavalry Division, and the opening of the Fallujah Business Development Center in Anbar with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Community Stabilization Program (CSP).

Keeping America Safe By Fostering The Freedom Agenda

U.S. Is Promoting Liberty As A Hopeful Alternative To Violent Extremism

Tonight, President Bush will reaffirm his commitment to advancing freedom and justice as hopeful alternatives to the violent extremism embraced by America's enemies. The fight against the forces of violent extremism is the great ideological struggle of our time. In this fight, free nations have a weapon more powerful than bombs or bullets – the universal desire for freedom and justice. Expanding freedom is therefore not only a moral imperative but also the only path to a safe and secure America.

The United States Will Be A Partner In Building A Middle East That Is Growing In Peace And Prosperity

The U.S. believes that lasting stability is built on freedom and justice. Advancing the cause of freedom and justice in the Middle East will marginalize extremists by empowering millions of parents who want the same opportunities for their children that we have for ours. The President has renewed America's strong commitment to the security of the Gulf countries.

- We will continue to work with the international community to halt Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, counter their lethal activity in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories, and shut down their support for terrorism.

The United States Is Supporting Citizens In Iraq, Afghanistan, And Lebanon Who Have Made The Choice For Democracy

- In Iraq, the U.S. is supporting more than 80,000 "Concerned Local Citizens" who decided to reject al Qaeda and other violent extremists, and cooperate with Coalition forces to keep their communities safe. Since our surge of operations reached full strength in June, violence in Iraq has significantly decreased in virtually every category, including civilian casualties, coalition casualties, IED events, suicide attacks, and ethno-sectarian violence. Iraqi forces have assumed responsibility for security in nine of 18 Iraqi provinces, and brave Iraqis are increasingly taking responsibility for their own security throughout the country.
- The United States is working with courageous Afghan and international Forces to stand up to the Taliban. Together, they are working to ensure a stable and safe environment to allow our gains in local governance and economic development to take hold and be sustained. Thanks to their courage, a nation that was once a safe haven for al Qaeda is now an emerging democracy.
 - To ensure these successes continue, the U.S. is adding 3,200 Marines to our forces in Afghanistan to fight the terrorists and train the Afghan national security forces.
- The United States has been a stalwart ally of those fighting for Lebanon's freedom. We have provided economic and security assistance to the Lebanese Government, committed \$7 million to the UN's Special Tribunal for Lebanon, imposed sanctions against those working to obstruct Lebanon's democratic processes, and publicly stressed our ongoing support for those seeking to defend Lebanon's freedom and sovereignty.

America Is Using Its Influence To Foster Peace And Reconciliation In The Holy Land

The President returned less than two weeks ago from a successful trip to the Middle East, during which he reiterated that the U.S. is committed to helping the Israelis and the Palestinians achieve peace. The President also reminded leaders in the region that, in order for there to be peace, nations in the Middle East must support both the Palestinians and the Israelis.

- **The President's recent Middle East trip built on progress made at the Annapolis Conference to lay the groundwork for peace in the Middle East.** This international conference brought together Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, Palestinian Authority President Abbas, members of the Arab League Follow-on Committee, permanent members of the UN Security Council, members of the G-8 and other key international actors, to signal international support for peace and begin negotiations toward establishing a Palestinian state.
- **President Bush is encouraged by the fact that the Israelis and Palestinians each understand that the only way to realize their own goals is by helping one another.** The Israelis understand that an independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state is not just the hope of Palestinians but also the best guarantee of peace for all its neighbors.
- **By supporting the legitimate aspirations of both sides, the U.S. will encourage reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian people and between Israelis and Arabs.** We will build a foundation for lasting peace that will contribute to the security of every state in the Middle East.

The United States Will Continue To Stand Up For People Suffering Under Dictatorship

President Bush has announced a series of steps to help the Burmese people bring peaceful change to their country, where a military junta has imposed a 19-year reign of fear. Mrs. Bush also continues to remain active in supporting the Burmese people's demands for reconciliation and basic human rights such as freedom of speech, worship, association, and assembly. The United States has:

- Tightened existing economic sanctions and levied new sanctions against the leaders of the regime and their financial backers.
- Imposed an expanded visa ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights, as well as their family members.
- Called on the Government of Burma to uphold its obligations to the UN Security Council.
- Continued to support Burmese who seek a peaceful, democratic transition.
- Facilitated the efforts of humanitarian groups working to alleviate suffering in Burma.
- Tightened the Commerce Department's export control regulations for Burma.

The United States continues to insist on the release of all political prisoners, free speech, free assembly, and ultimately, free and competitive elections in Cuba as the nation transitions from the long dictatorship of Fidel Castro. In October, President Bush demanded the release of all political prisoners and announced measures to help prepare Cuba for transition to a democratic future, including a new initiative to develop an international multi-billion dollar Freedom Fund to help the Cuban people rebuild their economy and make the transition to democracy.

The United States continues to call for freedom for the people of Zimbabwe. President Robert Mugabe's government has cracked down violently on peaceful calls for reform and forced millions to flee their homeland.

The United States reaffirms its commitment to helping the victims of genocide in Sudan. The U.S. has provided more than \$2 billion in humanitarian and peacekeeping aid to Darfur since 2005 and has responded to the repression in Sudan and genocide in the Darfur region with tough sanctions against those responsible for the violence.

President Bush Remains Committed To Supporting The Foundations Of Freedom By Advancing An Agenda Of Compassion Worldwide

It is in the best interests of our Nation to alleviate the despair that allows extremism to take hold by fighting hunger and disease, supporting basic education initiatives, and advancing global economic development. The United States leads the world in food assistance and is taking unprecedented steps to fight disease through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the President's Malaria Initiative. In addition, the United States continues to support free trade as the best mechanism to lift people out of poverty and has expanded support for basic education initiatives.

Supporting Our Nation's Troops And Their Families

President Bush Announces Proposals To Help Military Families, Calls On Congress To Pass Legislation To Implement Dole-Shalala Commission Reforms

Tonight, President Bush will announce new proposals to expand support for families of the men and women serving in America's Armed Forces. The President understands that the wives, husbands, and children of our men and women in uniform make great sacrifices as their loved ones give invaluable service to our Nation. In order to thank military families for their support, President Bush is announcing the following new proposals:

- **The President will call on Congress to approve legislation that allows service members to transfer their unused Montgomery GI education benefits to their spouses or children.** The GI bill provides up to 36 months of education benefits to eligible veterans for college, technical or vocational courses, and other job training. Today, the Army is the only branch of the military to allow benefits to be transferred to service members' children. The President believes benefits should be transferable to spouses and children of those who have served America in the Armed Forces.
- **The President will ask Congress to pass a bill creating new hiring preferences across the Federal government for military spouses.** Under current law, veterans of America's Armed Forces are entitled to preferences over others in competitive hiring for positions in the Federal government. The President proposes extending this preference to the spouses of our Nation's veterans.

President Bush will also call on Congress to enact the reforms recommended by the Dole-Shalala Commission so that our returning wounded warriors receive the services they need. President Bush created the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors in March 2007 to conduct a comprehensive review of the services America is providing our returning wounded warriors. The Commission, co-chaired by Senator Bob Dole and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, released its findings in July and the Administration has already moved forward to implement the recommendations that can be achieved administratively. Some recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission require legislative action, however, and Congress should act promptly to pass legislation the President has called for.

President Bush remains committed to the well-being of the brave men and women who have served in America's Armed Forces. Over the past seven years, the Administration has increased funding for veterans by more than 95 percent.

The Administration Is Taking Steps To Keep America's Promise To Those Who Have Defended Our Freedom

The Administration is successfully implementing the six recommendations of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors that can be achieved administratively. Our military doctors and nurses are among the best in the world. Unfortunately, some of our wounded warriors encountered unacceptable bureaucratic delays and administrative failures. The Administration took immediate action to fix those problems and ensure that America's injured service members are receiving the care and attention they deserve. The President has called upon the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to implement the Dole-Shalala Commission recommendations:

1. **The first Federal Recovery Coordinators, who will help guide seriously wounded service members through their recuperation, have been hired, trained and are working with patients.**
2. **A pilot program establishing a single comprehensive disability exam – replacing the two separate exams normally given in the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – is underway in the National Capital Area.**

3. A new National Center of Excellence for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury has been established in the D.C. area.
4. DoD and VA are creating a single Web portal that will enable wounded service members and veterans to track their medical and recovery records, access information regarding Federal, State, and local services and benefits, and apply for benefits and services through available self service options.
5. Proposed regulations to update the disability schedule for Traumatic Brain Injury and burns were published in the Federal Register on January 3, 2008 for a 30-day public comment period
6. DoD is using special authorities to retain the best health professionals working at Walter Reed right up to its scheduled closure.

VA has also initiated two important technical studies that will allow a thorough modernization of the VA's disability system. These studies are part of the Dole-Shalala Commission's recommendations. One study will examine compensation payments for service connected disabilities. The second study will determine the appropriate level and duration of transition payments for veterans participating in a rehabilitation program.

The President Is Keeping His Commitment To Provide For Our Nation's Veterans

Since 2001, VA has provided medical treatment to nearly 1.4 million additional veterans, including hundreds of thousands of men and women returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Nearly 5.3 million veterans will receive care at the VA in 2009.

VA has significantly expanded its counseling and other medical care services for recently discharged veterans suffering from mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder. VA has created dozens of new mental health teams based in VA medical facilities that focus on early identification and management of stress-related disorders. It has also recruited about 100 combat veterans to help former service members transition successfully from military to civilian life.

VA has expanded resources for patients with multiple complex injuries. To further meet the specialized medical care needs of returning combat veterans, VA has expanded its four polytrauma rehabilitation centers in Minneapolis, Palo Alto, Richmond, and Tampa to encompass additional specialties to treat patients for multiple complex injuries. A fifth polytrauma center has been approved in San Antonio, and is currently under design for construction. This polytrauma system of care has been expanded to 21 polytrauma network sites and clinic support teams around the country that can provide state-of-the-art treatment to injured veterans at facilities closer to their homes.

VA is leading the way in the use of electronic health records to enhance patient safety and prevent medical errors. All VA medical records are stored and tracked electronically, rather than on paper. This system allows physicians to review a patient's medical history, diagnoses, medications, charts, and X-rays at any of VA's 1,400 sites. It also substantially cuts down on errors in drug prescription, curbs repetitive and unnecessary tests, and helps identify patients who need vaccinations and other services.

DoD and VA have made great progress in sharing the electronic data necessary to streamline eligibility and benefits determinations for separated service members. At more than 140 military installations, VA benefits counselors reach out to separating service members in the "Benefits Delivery at Discharge" program – ensuring that each can seamlessly transition to civilian life.

The President remains committed to reducing processing time for veteran disability benefit claims by continually improving methods and technology. Since the President took office, average waiting time has dropped from 230 days to an estimated 145 days in 2009.

New VA facilities are being located in communities where many veterans live, so that more veterans can access top-quality health care closer to their homes.

VA is expanding access to non-institutional long-term care, enabling veterans to live and be cared for near, or in the comfort of their homes, surrounded by family.

Expanding Opportunity Under No Child Left Behind

President Bush Urges Congress To Strengthen Our Commitment To Helping Every Child Succeed By Reauthorizing NCLB

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to pass bipartisan legislation strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The 2007 Nation's Report Card shows NCLB is helping raise achievement for children, in all different backgrounds, in every part of the country. Students are achieving record success, with minority students, poor students, and students with disabilities reaching all-time highs in a number of areas. We must build on this progress by reauthorizing and strengthening the law to increase accountability and flexibility for States and districts, reduce the number of high school dropouts, and provide extra help for struggling schools.

NCLB Is Working For Children Of All Different Backgrounds, In Every Part Of The Country

- **The Nation's Report Card, released this fall, shows improvement in 4th and 8th grade reading and math nationwide.**
 - In reading, scores for 4th graders were the highest on record.
 - In math, scores for 4th and 8th graders were the highest on record.
- **African-American and Hispanic students are making significant progress, posting all-time highs in a number of categories.**
 - In 4th grade reading, the achievement gap between white and African-American students is at an all-time low.
 - In math, 4th and 8th grade African-American students achieved their highest scores to date.
 - In 4th grade reading and in 4th and 8th grade math, Hispanic students set new achievement records. In reading, Hispanic 8th graders matched their all-time high.

We Must Strengthen NCLB To Increase Flexibility And Help Struggling Schools Improve

One year ago, the President released *Building on Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act*, which proposed common-sense changes to NCLB:

1. **We need to increase flexibility for States and districts to help them turn around struggling schools.** The President has proposed to let States and districts tailor interventions to each school and to measure individual students' achievement growth over time.
2. **We need to increase support for struggling students and underperforming schools.** The President has proposed helping more students take advantage of NCLB's free tutoring by ensuring that districts notify parents when their children are eligible and by requiring school districts to use the full Federal funds set aside for tutoring and school choice. The President has also proposed increasing resources for School Improvement Grants, which supports implementation of troubled schools' improvement plans.
3. **We need to reward our best teachers and encourage them to take jobs in underperforming schools.** The President has proposed increasing our investment in the Teacher Incentive Fund to reward teachers who successfully raise student achievement in low-income schools.
4. **We need to make sure our children graduate prepared for the jobs of the 21st century.** The President has proposed increasing accountability in our high schools, expanding access to Advanced Placement courses, and strengthening math and science education. His Adjunct Teacher Corps would allow math and science professionals to bring real-life experience to the classroom as part-time teachers.

The Administration will do everything it can to help Members of Congress pass bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2001, President Bush worked with Republicans and Democrats to pass NCLB. The reauthorization of this bipartisan law is one of the President's top priorities and an area in which he believes both parties can work together to build on success, expand opportunity for Americans of all backgrounds, and provide all our children with the quality education they deserve.

Empowering Parents With More Choices For Their Children's Education

*President Bush Proposes New Pell Grants For Kids Program, Announces White House Summit
On Inner City Children And Faith-Based Schools*

Tonight, President Bush will ask Congress to support a new \$300 million "Pell Grants for Kids" scholarship program to help poor children reach their full potential. Like the Federal Pell Grant program, which students can use to attend the public or private college of their choice, Pell Grants for Kids would offer scholarships to low-income children in underperforming elementary and secondary schools, including high schools with significant dropout rates. These scholarships would help with the costs of attending an out-of-district public school or nearby private or faith-based school.

- **The President will also announce that a White House Summit on inner city children and faith-based schools will be held this spring in Washington, D.C.** Non-public schools, including faith-based schools, have helped to educate generations of low-income students; however, they are disappearing at an alarming rate. As we continue working to improve urban public schools through the No Child Left Behind Act, we must also work to preserve the critically important educational alternatives for underserved students attending chronically underperforming public schools. This Summit will help increase awareness of the challenges faced by low-income students in the inner cities and address the role of non-public schools, including faith-based schools, in meeting the needs of low-income inner city students.

Pell Grants For Kids Will Provide New Options For Parents Of Children Trapped In Underperforming Schools

Pell Grants for Kids would support State and local efforts to increase educational options for low-income K-12 students enrolled in the Nation's most troubled public schools. Under the Pell Grants for Kids program, the Education Department would make competitive awards to States, cities, local educational agencies, and nonprofit organizations to develop K-12 scholarship programs for eligible low-income students attending schools that have not made adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind for five years, or that have a graduation rate of less than 60 percent.

- **Students in chronically underperforming schools could use scholarships to pay tuition, fees, and other education-related expenses at higher-performing out-of-district public schools or nearby private or faith-based schools.** These scholarships would supplement aid already available through the Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies program and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which would follow the child.
- **Pell Grants for Kids is modeled after the highly successful Federal Pell Grant program for college students.** The Federal Pell Grant program provides low-income students with financial support to attend any of more than 5,000 public, private, and faith-based colleges. The same choice, flexibility, and support now available to students seeking a quality college education should be offered to low-income families with children in chronically low-performing schools.

President Bush also calls on Congress to fund \$800 million of scholarships for 21st Century Learning Opportunities. These scholarships will give parents the opportunity to enroll their children in high-quality after-school and summer school programs aimed at increasing student achievement, including programs run by faith-based and community organizations.

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program has helped more than 2,600 low-income students in our Nation's capital attend the schools of their choice. The Federal government has funded this program since 2004 and has provided scholarships to some of Washington's poorest children. The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program receives four applications for every available scholarship, and a recent poll found strong community support for the program.

A White House Summit On Inner City Children And Faith-Based Schools Will Help Urban Communities Prevent The Loss Of Educational Alternatives For Their Low-Income Students

Despite their educational successes, urban faith-based schools are disappearing at an alarming rate. This is especially troubling for minority students. Since 1970, the minority population at Catholic schools, for example, has increased by 250 percent, and the non-Catholic population has increased by more than 500 percent. Yet these important institutions are disappearing for financial reasons. From 1996 to 2004, nearly 1,400 urban inner city faith-based schools closed, displacing 355,000 students into other institutions.

A White House Summit will unite educators and community leaders to develop local strategies to partner with these schools in serving our Nation's urban students. The Summit will bring together national, State, and local leaders in education, policymaking, research, philanthropy, business, and community development to:

1. Draw greater attention to the lack of high-quality educational alternatives available to low-income urban students;
2. Highlight the impact non-public schools, including faith-based schools, have had in the education of youth in America's inner cities;
3. Increase awareness of the challenges facing these schools; and
4. Identify innovative solutions to the challenges facing these schools so they can continue serving their communities.

Opening New Markets And Expanding Opportunities Through Free Trade

President Bush Calls On Congress To Deliver Growth, Jobs, And Prosperity To The American People By Approving Pending Free Trade Agreements

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to open markets for American workers and entrepreneurs by approving free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. In December, President Bush signed legislation approving the U.S.-Peru free trade agreement, which Congress passed with strong bipartisan support to expand trade and investment and create new opportunities for citizens of both nations. Congress should build on this progress by approving free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea to level the playing field for U.S. products and services in these countries. All three pending free trade agreements include the same labor and environment provisions as the Peru free trade agreement, which the Administration negotiated with Congressional leadership as part of the May 10, 2007, bipartisan agreement on trade policy.

- **The President will urge Congress to reauthorize and reform the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program to help workers directly displaced by trade take advantage of America's dynamic economy.** President Bush believes American workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs can compete with anybody, anywhere as long as the rules are fair. The President also believes the Federal government has a role to play in helping workers directly displaced by trade adjust to changes in our dynamic economy. The TAA program puts money and choices directly in the hands of workers looking to learn new skills and find new jobs.
- **The President continues to support America's community colleges, which represent one of the best sources of training for the jobs of the 21st century.** As the economy changes and requires different skills, curricula at community colleges are flexible enough to respond quickly to the needs of local employers. Because they are adaptable and accessible, community colleges are increasingly critical providers of job training, both for degree-seekers and for workers seeking to retool, refine, and broaden their skills.

Expanding Free Trade And Investment Is Critical To Continued Economic Growth And Job Creation

- **Expanding trade and investment advances the national security and the economic interests of the United States.** Opening markets has helped expand democracy, strengthen the rule of law, and lift hundreds of millions out of poverty worldwide. Open markets also contribute to America's prosperity – exports now account for a larger percentage of our GDP than at any other time in our history, meaning that trade is supporting economic growth. Exports and foreign investment also support higher-paying jobs for American workers.
- **Free trade agreements are benefiting the U.S. economy.** For example, in the four years since we signed a free trade agreement with Chile, American exports to that country have more than doubled. And in just one year since we began implementing a free trade agreement with Central American nations and the Dominican Republic, American exports have grown by 13 percent. Free trade also benefits Americans by providing consumers with greater varieties of goods from which to choose.
- **The President is committed to concluding an ambitious Doha Round agreement this year to break down trade barriers at the global level.** A successful agreement will further open markets for American goods, crops, and services and help millions struggling to escape poverty worldwide.

Congress Should Approve The Free Trade Agreement With Colombia

For the sake of America's economy and national security, Congress should approve the vital free trade agreement with Colombia. Both houses of the Colombian legislature have expressed overwhelming support for the trade agreement with the United States. Now it is Congress' turn to support a key ally and expand opportunities in both our nations by approving this important agreement.

Today, most Colombian products enter the United States duty-free. The Colombia free trade agreement will level the playing field and help U.S. companies that export to Colombia find new buyers and be able to compete in the Colombian market. Over 90 percent of U.S. imports from Colombia now enter our country duty-free. This agreement will finally allow U.S. companies and farmers to have duty-free access to the Colombian market. Once implemented, it will immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American exports of industrial and consumer goods, and it will provide significant new duty-free access for American agricultural commodities.

Colombia is our fifth largest trading partner in Latin America. Colombia is the largest market for U.S. agriculture exports in South America.

Colombia has proven itself worthy of America's support. In recent years, Colombia's democratically elected president has taken courageous steps to stop drug traffickers, rein in illegal armed groups, including paramilitaries, and enforce the law. Since 2000, kidnappings, terrorist attacks, and murders in Colombia have all dropped substantially, while convictions have increased and Colombia has extradited hundreds of drug traffickers and terrorists for prosecution in the United States. With Colombian support and commitment, our rule of law and counterdrug assistance will continue to make a difference. The free trade agreement provides an opportunity for the U.S.-Colombia relationship to expand benefits for the American people.

- **President Uribe has responded decisively to concerns over violence and impunity in Colombia, particularly attacks on trade unionists.** President Uribe has established an independent prosecutors unit to investigate and pursue charges against those accused of homicides against labor unionists. He has allowed the International Labor Organization to station a permanent representative in Bogotá. He has also worked to help create an economy in which Colombians have better alternatives to a life of violence and drugs – including the new jobs and economic opportunities that would come from a trade agreement with the U.S.
- **The Colombian government has stepped up efforts to reduce violence throughout the country.** Since 2001, kidnappings have decreased by 76 percent, terror attacks by 61 percent, and homicides by 40 percent. Additionally, violence against trade unionists, among other groups, has dropped significantly.
- **Colombia has vastly expanded its police presence as part of an effort to bring security and stability to all of its territory.** Colombia has established a police presence in each of its 1,099 municipalities, which has secured 187 primary and secondary roads throughout the country, freeing Colombians to use these roads without fear of attack. As a result, traffic along these roads has doubled since 2002, and commerce is flowing between areas that were once virtually cut off due to violence.
- **The Colombian government is continuing to battle narcotics trafficking, which provides the funding base for illegal armed groups.** These efforts took 500 metric tons of cocaine off the market in 2006 alone, depriving terrorist groups of \$850 million in funds to buy arms and mount attacks. In addition, the Colombian government has extradited over 450 narcotics traffickers and terrorists to the United States over the past five years.

Approving The U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement Will Level The Playing Field For U.S. Business And Agriculture

In 2006, Panama and the United States exchanged around \$3 billion worth of goods – nearly 50 percent more than just four years ago. Panama has one of the fastest-growing economies in Central America, with a growth rate of more than eight percent last year.

The U.S.-Panama free trade agreement will build on this vibrant trade relationship, immediately eliminating tariffs on 88 percent of U.S. industrial and consumer goods exports to Panama. It will provide significant new duty-free access for American farmers and ranchers, and create opportunities for American businesses to participate in the Panama Canal expansion project. It will also provide new market access for U.S. service suppliers, including in Panama's key financial services sector.

Approving The U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement Will Give America's Workers And Farmers Access To A Large And Growing Market

The President will continue to work closely with Congress to approve a landmark free trade agreement with South Korea. This agreement would create better jobs and opportunities on both sides of the Pacific and strengthen our relationship with a democratic ally in a critical part of the world. The President urges Congress to act quickly to approve this agreement.

- **The U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) is the most commercially significant bilateral free trade agreement the United States has concluded in over 15 years.** The KORUS FTA will open a growing market of 49 million consumers to the full range of U.S. goods and services, from autos to telecommunications services. The U.S. International Trade Commission estimates the reduction of Korean tariffs and tariff-rate quota provisions on goods market access alone would add \$10-12 billion to annual U.S. GDP, meaning more jobs for hard-working Americans.
- **The KORUS FTA will eliminate tariffs on 94 percent of trade in industrial goods within three years, and more than half of U.S. agriculture exports to Korea will become duty free immediately.** The free trade agreement will also address a range of non-tariff barriers, and increase transparency in Korea's regulatory processes. The agreement will strengthen Korea's economic reforms that have helped it become a prosperous economy and vibrant democracy and sustain the growth of trade and investment opportunities for the mutual benefit of both countries.

The agreement will strengthen the United States' competitive position in the rapidly transforming Asian market and cement ties with a vital regional ally. The U.S.-Korean alliance was forged in war more than a half century ago. The KORUS FTA will strengthen that alliance with shared prosperity.

Increasing Our Energy Security And Confronting Climate Change

The Administration Is Taking Steps To Reduce U.S. Dependence On Oil, And To Advance U.S. Leadership In Developing A Global Response To Climate Change

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to work with him on the next steps to improve our energy security and confront the challenge of climate change without undermining economic growth. Last month, the President signed an energy bill that will help cut greenhouse gas emissions and reduce U.S. dependence on oil, which harms America economically through high prices at the gas pump. As world demand for energy continues to increase, the President urges Congress to act on the remaining proposals from his energy security agenda:

- **We must continue changing the way America generates electric power through even greater use of clean coal technology, solar and wind energy, and clean, safe nuclear power.**
- **We must increase our domestic supply of oil in a prudent and environmentally sensitive way.** The President urges Congress to pass legislation that opens access to domestic energy sources in the Outer Continental Shelf and Alaska and that protects America against supply disruptions by doubling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.
- **President Bush is committing \$2 billion over the next three years to create a new international clean energy technology fund to help confront climate change worldwide.** Along with contributions from other countries, this fund will increase and accelerate the deployment of all forms of cleaner, more efficient technologies in developing nations like India and China, and help leverage substantial private-sector capital by making clean energy projects more financially attractive.

The President Will Call On Congress To Work With Him To Take Advantage Of New Clean Energy Technologies

President Bush supports an increase in the use of nuclear power as a clean, safe, and affordable alternative energy source to meet America's growing needs for electricity. Nuclear power produces no greenhouse gases, and a growing number of people believe it is an environmentally necessary choice. Without its use, power sector CO₂ emissions would have been 28 percent greater in the electricity industry in 2005 – nearly equal to the annual emissions from all 136 million passenger cars in the U.S.

President Bush seeks to fund new technologies that can produce power from coal with significantly lower carbon emissions. Coal is America's most abundant and affordable energy resource, responsible for generating about 50 percent of America's electric power. We are now cutting harmful air pollution from coal, and we have to learn to cut CO₂.

President Bush is dedicated to strong growth in renewable electricity generation. Since 2001, wind power in the U.S. has grown 550 percent and photovoltaic solar power grown by 525 percent; overall, renewable power has nearly doubled. The U.S. led the world in new wind capacity in 2006 and 2007. The President's Solar America Initiative – launched in 2006 – doubled U.S. investment in solar energy. The U.S. leads the world in geothermal electricity generation, with almost 3,000 megawatts of new capacity planned for development in the West.

The United States will continue to lead the way in developing the clean and efficient technologies critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions while fostering economic growth. Since the President took office, the Federal government has committed nearly \$18 billion to research, develop, and promote clean and efficient technologies and help get them to market. The private sector has responded with significant investments, ranging from corporate research and development to the venture capital markets.

To complement the new international clean technology fund, the United States and the European Union have jointly proposed in the WTO to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers to clean energy and environmental technologies and services. Global trade in the goods covered by the proposal totaled \$613 billion in 2006 and could increase by an additional 7-14 percent annually according to the World Bank.

The Administration Continues To Lead The Effort To Reach A New, Post-2012 Global Agreement

The President will reaffirm the United States' commitment to work with major economies and through the UN to complete an international agreement that will slow, stop, and eventually reverse the growth of greenhouse gases. This agreement will be effective only if it includes commitments by every major economy and gives none a free ride.

This week, the United States will host the second Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change. President Bush announced this initiative in May 2007 to work with all of the world's largest energy users, including both developed and developing nations, to produce a detailed contribution from the leaders of these countries to help establish an international agreement by 2009 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In September, the U.S. hosted representatives of 17 world leaders plus the United Nations.

In December, the United States joined the global consensus at the UN Climate Conference in Bali to launch a comprehensive "roadmap" for global climate negotiations. The Bali Action Plan is a critical first step in moving the UN negotiation process forward toward a comprehensive and effective post-2012 arrangement by 2009. The United States looks forward to participating in the negotiations envisioned in the Bali Action Plan, including through the Major Economies Process and other appropriate channels to achieve an effective outcome.

The Energy Independence And Security Act Of 2007 Will Reduce U.S. Gasoline Consumption And Help Diversify America's Energy Sources, And Produce Some Of The Largest Greenhouse Gas Reductions In U.S. History

In December, President Bush signed the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, which responded to his "Twenty in Ten" challenge in last year's State of the Union Address to improve vehicle fuel economy and increase alternative fuels. This bill will help reduce America's dependence on oil, improve efficiency, and cut emissions by:

- **Mandating that fuel producers use at least 36 billion gallons of biofuel by 2022.** Although on a longer timeline than the President proposed last year, the new requirement represents a nearly five-fold increase over previously required levels.
- **Mandating a national fuel economy standard of 35 miles per gallon by 2020 – which will increase fuel economy by 40 percent and save billions of gallons of fuel.** This requirement represents the first statutory increase in automobile fuel economy standards since 1975 and includes an important "attribute-based" reform the President called for that will ensure that increased fuel efficiency does not come at the expense of automotive safety.
- **Mandating increases in energy efficiency of light bulbs by 30 percent.** This will effectively phase out most common types of incandescent light bulbs by 2012.
- **Mandating new efficiency standards for nine appliances and encouraging the development of more efficient commercial buildings, in addition to work already underway to update dozens of existing standards.**
- **Mandating that Federal government operations reduce total energy use in Federal buildings by 30 percent by 2015, reduce annual petroleum consumption by 20 percent by 2015, and increase use of alternative fuels by 10 percent by 2015.** These new provisions effectively adopted key requirements of an Executive Order that President Bush issued last year. Because the Federal government is one of the world's largest consumers of energy, these steps will not only have significant energy security and climate benefits, but will also help boost markets for cleaner, more efficient technologies.

Taken together, these programs will cumulatively reduce projected greenhouse gas emissions by more than six billion metric tons by 2030, according to preliminary estimates.

Empowering Americans With Affordable Options For Health Care

President Bush Calls On Congress To Pass Standard Deduction For Health Insurance, Lays Out Key Elements Of Agenda To Empower Consumers And Make Basic Private Health Insurance More Affordable

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to eliminate the unfair bias in the tax code against those who do not get their health insurance from their employer. This would make basic private health insurance more affordable for millions and give patients more choices and control over their health care. Instead of favoring Americans who get health insurance through their jobs, the President has proposed reforming the tax code with a standard deduction for every American who buys health insurance, whether they get it through their jobs or on their own.

President Bush Has A Strong Agenda To Expand Access To Affordable Health Care And Empower Consumers To Receive Treatment That Best Meets Their Needs

The President believes the Federal government can help make health care more accessible and affordable, while leaving medical decisions in the hands of patients and the doctors that treat them. The President believes as many Americans as possible should have private health care coverage, which is better for consumers because it offers choice, flexibility, and increased quality of care through competition. His health care agenda will help more Americans receive the health care they need at a price they can afford, while empowering consumers to make their own decisions to best meet their health needs.

- **The President reformed Medicare to add a prescription drug benefit and give beneficiaries more private plan choices.** These programs have been a great success for our Nation's Medicare beneficiaries. The Medicare prescription drug benefit is now in its third year of operation and more than 32 million beneficiaries, including nearly 10 million low-income beneficiaries, now have coverage in a standalone drug plan, through a Medicare Advantage drug plan, or through their employer retiree plans. Thirty-nine million, or close to 90 percent of eligible beneficiaries, now have creditable drug coverage through Part D or another source, and the estimated costs of this program to taxpayers have declined about 38 percent since enactment. Nearly nine million beneficiaries are enrolled in Medicare Advantage and receive their comprehensive Medicare benefits through a private plan option.
- **The President has proposed expanding Health Savings Accounts (HSAs).** In 2003, President Bush signed into law HSAs to allow people to save money for health care tax-free, and to take these accounts with them as they move from job to job. These portable accounts are affordable for individuals and small businesses, and they offer consumers greater ownership and control over their health care decisions. In 2007, there were 4.5 million Americans enrolled in consumer-directed health plans with HSAs. The President has proposed policies that would expand the HSA option to more Americans.
- **The President has taken steps to increase the transparency of America's health care system and empower Americans to find better value and better care.** He has directed Federal agencies to share information with beneficiaries about prices paid to health care providers for procedures and about the quality of services provided by doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers. Increased transparency about prices and quality will help bring more competition to health care and enable consumers to make better health care purchasing choices.
- **The President is working to improve the adoption of health information technology.** Electronic health records show promise as a tool to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of medical treatment. In 2004, the President launched an initiative to make electronic health records available to most Americans within the next 10 years. Health IT systems can give citizens better access to their health information, resulting in informed decisions about their care and a better understanding of the quality of the care they are receiving. In 2006, the President directed Federal agencies to use improved health IT systems to facilitate the rapid exchange of health information.

- **The President has proposed strengthening the buying power of America's small businesses by forming Association Health Plans (AHPs).** To help make the costs of providing health insurance more affordable, small businesses, as well as civic and community groups, should be allowed to band together in AHPs to get the same discounts big companies receive.
- **The President has proposed medical liability reforms to limit costly and frivolous lawsuits.** These lawsuits are driving many health care providers out of communities and forcing doctors to practice overly defensive medicine. This reduces access to medically necessary services and raises the costs of health care for all Americans.
- **The President supports permitting the purchase of health insurance across State lines.** Americans should be allowed to buy the best health insurance for themselves, based on their own circumstances, instead of being limited to only the policies available in their State.

Increasing Federal Support For Ethical Stem Cell Research

President Bush Has Strengthened America's Commitment To Non-Destructive Research On Pluripotent Stem Cells

President Bush has directed Federal agencies to provide new funding for stem cell research that does not harm human embryos. Recent research has reaffirmed the President's commitment to supporting non-destructive research methods, including:

- In January 2007, scientists discovered that cells extracted from amniotic fluid and placentas could also provide pluripotent stem cells that seem to function like embryonic stem cells.
- In November 2007, several new studies showed the potential of reprogramming adult cells, such as skin cells, to make them function like embryonic stem cells.

President Bush will also call tonight on Congress to pass legislation that bans unethical practices such as the buying, selling, patenting, or cloning of human life.

President Bush's Balanced Stem Cell Policies Are Advancing Science Within Ethical Boundaries And Enabling Many To Receive Therapeutic Treatments

In 2001, President Bush announced a balanced approach to stem cell research that would allow Federal funding for research using existing embryonic stem cell lines. This policy allowed the Federal government to support research on dozens of existing stem cell lines without sanctioning or encouraging the destruction of additional human embryos.

President Bush is the first president to provide Federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research. Since 2001, the Administration has made a total of more than \$170 million available for research on stem cell lines derived from embryos that had already been destroyed. In addition, we have provided more than nearly \$3.7 billion for research on all forms of stem cells, including those from adult and other non-embryonic sources.

The President opposes any attempt to compel American taxpayers for the first time to pay for research that relies on the intentional destruction of human embryonic stem cells. He believes that by enacting appropriate policy safeguards while encouraging the development of novel scientific techniques, it is possible to advance scientific and medical frontiers without violating moral principles.

The President has acted to strengthen our Nation's commitment to research on pluripotent stem cells, which have the potential to develop into nearly all the cell types and tissues in the body. In June 2007, he signed an Executive Order to expand support for these non-destructive research methods and make it more likely that exciting advances in this area will continue. The Order:

- Directed the Department of Health and Human Services and the NIH to ensure that any human pluripotent stem cell lines produced in ways that do not create, destroy, or harm human embryos will be eligible for Federal funding.
- Expanded the NIH's Embryonic Stem Cell Registry to include all types of ethically produced human pluripotent stem cells. NIH is planning to add to the Registry later this year new pluripotent stem cell lines not derived from embryos.
- Renamed the registry the Pluripotent Stem Cell Registry – so that it reflects what the stem cells can do, instead of where they come from.
- Invited scientists to work with the NIH to add new ethically derived stem cell lines to the list of those eligible for Federal funding.

In September 2007, the NIH announced a plan to implement the President's Executive Order. The plan includes a number of new or accelerated activities, including:

- The NIH Stem Cell Task Force will develop several funding opportunity announcements, including a request for grant applications proposing research on human pluripotent stem cells derived from non-embryonic sources, such as adult cells or cells found in amniotic fluid.
- In addition, the Stem Cell Task Force will create two programs that will rapidly stimulate research in specific areas. They would be awarded to researchers already working in stem cell research to augment certain areas of their work that are of particular interest to NIH.

Helping Those In Need Through The Faith-Based And Community Initiative

President Bush Calls On Congress To Permanently Extend Charitable Choice, Allowing Faith-Based Organizations To Continue Receiving Equal Treatment When Competing For Federal Support

Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to help guarantee continued equal treatment for faith-based organizations seeking Federal funding by permanently extending Charitable Choice. Passed with bipartisan support, Charitable Choice legislative provisions govern the participation of faith-based organizations in select Federal programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Welfare to Work, the Community Services Block Grant, and programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The provisions prohibit discrimination either for or against faith-based service organizations competing for these Federal dollars, and ensure faith-based organizations do not have to sacrifice their mission or character in order to participate. Charitable Choice also protects the religious liberty of people who are served by faith-based providers receiving these funds.

The Faith-Based And Community Initiative Is Ensuring A Level Playing Field For All Organizations Seeking To Partner With The Federal Government

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative is empowering faith-based organizations and other grassroots service providers in addressing the needs of their communities. President Bush launched the Faith-Based and Community Initiative on January 29, 2001, when he signed an Executive Order creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He has since established Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at 11 Federal agencies, where they are successfully eliminating barriers to Federal partnerships with these grassroots organizations.

The Initiative is changing the way government addresses human need by making grants programs and other opportunities more accessible to new faith-based and community partners. For example, through initiatives such as the voucher-based Access to Recovery program, the Administration is working to expand individual choice so that Americans in need of substance abuse treatment and recovery support services can receive help from the program that best suits them. In addition, the Compassion Capital Fund, another signature program of the Initiative, is helping small, grassroots organizations that have never received Federal funding build the capacity they need to compete for Federal grants and serve their communities.

- **The Initiative is producing real results for people in need.** For example:
 - **Prisoner Reentry Initiative:** Released inmates who participate in the Prisoner Reentry Initiative, which links adult nonviolent offenders who are reentering society with FBCOs based in the cities to which they return, are returning to prison at less than half the national rate.
 - **Mentoring Children of Prisoners:** More than 70,000 children whose parents are behind bars have been matched with caring mentors under the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program, which is on-track to reach its goal of 100,000 matches this year.
 - **President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief:** The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) represents massive-scale implementation of the Initiative's vision. In the PEPFAR's 15 focus countries, more than 80 percent of PEPFAR partners are indigenous organizations, and more than 20 percent of all partners are faith-based.

- **Under the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, Federal agencies have built on the success of Charitable Choice by issuing Equal Treatment regulations to level the playing field for faith-based organizations across a much broader array of programs.** An audit conducted after the Faith-Based and Community Initiative was launched in 2001 confirmed the Federal government was often suspicious of faith-based organizations and excluded these groups altogether from certain programs or burdened them with excessive, unnecessary regulations. The Equal Treatment regulations clarify faith-based organizations' eligibility to participate in Federal social service programs on the same basis as any other private organization, and provide clear and detailed guidance regarding faith-based organizations' rights and responsibilities regarding religious character, independence, and religious activities.

The Faith-Based And Community Initiative Is Strengthening FBCOs Across The Nation

In FY 2006 alone, more than 15,000 competitive Federal grants were won by both faith-based and secular nonprofits to grow their services to the needy. Grants won by faith-based groups totaled more than \$2.16 billion.

More than 100,000 nonprofit leaders and social entrepreneurs have received training and technical assistance through the Initiative. This training has ranged from grant-writing courses, to training in the use of technology for tracking client outcomes, to intensive on-site consulting.

Since 2002, the Compassion Capital Fund alone has provided small grants to more than 5,000 faith-based and community nonprofits to help strengthen their organizations and extend their services.

The Faith-Based And Community Initiative Is Taking Root At The State And Local Level

Thirty-five governors – 19 Democrats and 16 Republicans – and more than 100 mayors have offices or liaisons dedicated to strengthening faith-based and community organizations and extending their vital works. Twelve of these States have changed governors, some across party lines, but not one has ended their efforts.

Improving Border Security And Immigration

The Administration Continues Its Efforts To Strengthen Border Security, Improve Interior And Worksite Enforcement, Streamline Existing Guest Worker Programs, And Help New Americans Assimilate

Tonight, President Bush will review the steps his Administration is taking to improve our border security and address immigration challenges. America's broken immigration system is a major problem that the American people expect their elected leaders to solve. Although Congress has not passed legislation to address the immigration challenges our Nation faces, the Administration continues to build upon progress we have already made in strengthening border security, enforcing our worksite laws, keeping our economy well-supplied with vital workers, and helping new Americans assimilate into our society. Yet the President will also urge that in order to take the pressure off the border, we need a new way for foreign workers to come here lawfully, on a temporary basis, and support our economy.

The Administration Is Strengthening Border Security With Additional Personnel, Technology And Infrastructure

The Administration has increased funding for border security and immigration enforcement by 159 percent, including emergency funds, since the President took office - from \$4.8 billion in 2001 to \$12.3 billion in 2008.

The Administration has expanded the Border Patrol from approximately 9,000 agents in 2001 to more than 15,000 agents today. By the end of 2008, we will have more than 18,000 agents, doubling the size of the Border Patrol under the President's leadership.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is on track to complete 370 miles of pedestrian fencing along the southwest border by the end of calendar year 2008. As of this month, we have completed a total of 165 miles of pedestrian fence along the southwest border, giving us a total of 290 miles of pedestrian and vehicle fence already in place at the border. We expect to have 670 total miles of pedestrian and vehicle fence by the end of 2008, and have begun obtaining land to make this a reality.

The Administration is including a new Southwest Border Enforcement Initiative in its 2009 Budget. This comprehensive Justice Department initiative will provide \$100 million to help address the rise in crime and immigration cases on the southwest border. It will increase our ability to arrest, detain, prosecute, and house violent criminals, drug offenders, and immigration violators along the southwest border.

DHS is operating three Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) along the southern border in support of border security operations. An additional UAS is scheduled to be operational this year.

DHS saw a reduction of 20 percent in apprehensions of illegal aliens at the Southern border in Fiscal Year 2007. This is an indication that stronger border security and enforcement efforts have deterred aliens from attempting to cross the border illegally.

The Administration has effectively ended the policy of "catch and release" and now detains all removable aliens caught trying to cross the border until they can be removed. For years, limited detention space forced the release of many illegal border crossers from nations other than Mexico with nothing more than a Notice to Appear for a hearing before an immigration judge. Many aliens ignored these notices and instead blended into U.S. society. The Administration has effectively ended this policy of "catch and release" and replaced it with a policy of "catch and return," ensuring that all removable aliens caught trying to cross the border illegally are held until they can be removed.

The Administration will end the decades old practice of allowing U.S. and Canadian citizens to enter the country at our land and sea ports of entry with merely an oral declaration of identity and citizenship. Beginning January 31, 2008, all cross-border travelers must present documents establishing their identity and citizenship. This is a precursor to the Congressionally mandated full implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative in June of 2009, at which time passports or similarly secure documents will be required by all travelers.

The Administration Is Continuing To Enhance Interior And Worksite Enforcement

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has replaced the old approach of administrative hearings and fines for employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens with a much tougher combination of criminal prosecutions and asset forfeitures.

- Arrests for criminal violations brought in worksite enforcement actions have increased from 19 in FY 2001 to 863 in FY 2007 – a more than 45-fold increase. ICE also made 4,077 administrative arrests in FY 2007, for a total of 4,940 arrests.
- In FY 2007, DHS obtained more than \$31 million in criminal fines, restitutions and civil judgments as a result of worksite enforcement.

E-Verify is helping more than 48,000 companies verify the employment eligibility of newly hired employees. The number of companies enrolled in E-Verify has more than quadrupled in 16 months, now representing almost 200,000 business locations. Currently, 2,000 employers are being added each week. More than 3.7 million new hires were processed through E-Verify last year alone. As more States like Arizona require local businesses to use E-Verify, and the Federal government begins to require Federal contractors to enroll in the program, it will become increasingly difficult for those here illegally to find work, greatly weakening the magnet that draws so many people to enter the country illegally. In addition, E-Verify is a valuable tool in detecting immigration fraud and identity theft.

DHS has issued a "No-Match" Employment Eligibility Verification regulation to help employers ensure their workers are legal and help the Government identify and crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal workers. Unfortunately, this useful regulation is being held up by litigation. We expect a revised rule to be finalized and in effect this year.

In FY 2007, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and ICE returned or removed almost 1.2 million illegal aliens from the United States.

ICE has increased its enforcement efforts:

- Since 2005, ICE has quintupled the number of teams devoted to removing fugitive aliens from the U.S. – from 15 Fugitive Operations Teams in 2005 to 75 of these seven-member teams by the end of FY 2007.
- ICE has helped keep our communities safe by arresting 3,302 gang members and their associates in FY 2007.
- ICE has expanded its Criminal Alien Program to identify incarcerated criminal aliens. In FY 2007, ICE identified for removal 164,296 criminals who were incarcerated in Federal, state and local facilities.

The Administration is training hundreds of State and local law enforcement officers to address illegal immigration in their communities. The Administration is maintaining the 287(g) program, which allows State and local officers to enforce immigration law, and expanding other measures that help State and local law enforcement officials. These measures include a broad array of enforcement tools, such as formal task forces, greater use of the ICE Law Enforcement Support Center, and enhanced partnerships to address location-specific threats, such as gangs. The Administration is proposing an increase in funding for this program in its 2009 Budget.

The Administration Is Streamlining Existing Guest-Worker Programs To Help Keep Our Economy Well-Supplied With Vital Workers

The Department of Labor (DOL) and DHS are prepared to unveil a rule that would modernize the H-2A agricultural seasonal worker program to better provide farmers with an orderly and timely flow of legal workers, while protecting the rights of laborers. No sector of the American economy requires a legal flow of foreign workers more than agriculture, which is experiencing labor shortages.

DOL is also working on regulations streamlining the H-2B Program for non-agricultural seasonal workers.

DHS and DOL are studying potential administrative reforms to visa programs for highly skilled workers.

The Administration Is Taking Steps To Help New Americans Assimilate In Order To Keep Our Nation United

In September 2007, the DHS Office of Citizenship announced a revised naturalization test emphasizing the fundamental concepts of American democracy, basic U.S. history, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This test is ensuring fairness by eliminating the wide variations in testing quality between regional offices that plagued the former system.

The Office of Citizenship is also providing additional training for volunteers and adult educators who lead immigrants through the naturalization process.

The Education Department is working on a free, Web-based portal to help immigrants learn English. Knowledge of English is the most important component of assimilation.

Advancing An Agenda Of Compassion Worldwide

President Bush Expands Commitment To Ease Hunger, Disease, Illiteracy, And Poverty

Tonight, President Bush will ask Congress to expand our Nation's efforts to promote a global agenda of compassion around the world to support the basic human needs of all people. Around the world, ordinary people want the same things for their children that we want for ours – a decent life and a peaceful future. The President believes it is in the best interests of America to help remove the causes of despair and support the foundations of freedom by fighting hunger and disease, supporting basic education initiatives, and advancing global economic development. American volunteers, businesses, and dedicated faith-based and secular service organizations stand among those on the front lines of this work, and the President champions continued expansion of their vital efforts in partnership with the United States government worldwide.

The United States Is Doing Its Part To Fight Hunger Around The World

President Bush will call tonight on Congress to support an innovative proposal to provide food assistance by purchasing crops of local and regional farmers. While U.S.-grown food would continue to play an important role in meeting global needs, local food purchase would help our Nation respond, especially in crisis situations. Such a program would be an important step to break the cycle of famine in the developing world.

More than half of the world's food assistance comes from America. The United States' humanitarian food aid totaled more than \$1.7 billion in FY 2007, and our emergency food aid reached about 23 million people in 30 countries.

America Is Helping To Turn The Tide Against Global HIV/AIDS

The President will also call on Congress to reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and double its historic initial commitment with an additional \$30 billion over the next five years. The United States launched PEPFAR in 2003 – the largest international health initiative in history ever dedicated to a single disease. This effort has helped bring life-saving treatments to more than 1.4 million people around the world. The next phase of the American people's commitment to those suffering from HIV/AIDS will help bring us closer to our goal by supporting:

- Treatment for 2.5 million people.
 - Prevention of more than 12 million new infections.
 - Care for more than 12 million people, including five million orphans and vulnerable children.
- As of the end of FY 2007, PEPFAR was supporting life-saving antiretroviral treatment for more than 1.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the 15 focus countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. PEPFAR is partnering with local communities and indigenous organizations, including faith- and community-based organizations to support treatment, care, and prevention activities. PEPFAR has also:
- Supported over 33 million counseling and testing sessions for men, women, and children.
 - Supported care for nearly 6.6 million individuals, including care for more than 2.7 million orphans and vulnerable children.
 - Supported prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission services for women during more than 10 million pregnancies from FY04 to FY07.
- The United States supports one of the most diverse prevention portfolios of any international partner. In addition to the balanced, evidenced-based ABC (Abstain, Be faithful, and the correct and consistent use of Condoms) approach, the U.S. supports programs that address mother-to-child transmission, blood safety and safe medical injections, male circumcision, injecting drug users, HIV-discordant couples, alcohol abuse, and other key issues, including gender-specific programs.

- **The United States leads the world in its support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.** President Bush made the Fund's founding contribution, and the United States has pledged over \$3.5 billion and contributed approximately \$2.5 billion to date – far more than any other nation.
- **As a result of the President's leadership, the U.S. and other G-8 leaders in June demonstrated their commitment to work with Africa and set a goal of supporting treatment for five million HIV/AIDS-infected individuals, preventing 24 million new infections, and caring for 24 million people, including 10 million orphans and vulnerable children.**

The President's Malaria Initiative Has Already Reached An Estimated 25 Million People In Sub-Saharan Africa

Announced in June 2005, the President's Malaria Initiative is spending \$1.2 billion over five years to combat malaria in 15 African countries. At least one million infants and children under age five in Sub-Saharan Africa die each year from malaria – one approximately every 30 seconds. The President's Malaria Initiative is combating this high mortality rate by providing bed nets, indoor spraying, and anti-malaria medicine with the goal of reducing mortality by 50 percent by focusing on the most vulnerable groups.

In its second year, the President's Malaria Initiative reached an estimated 10 million people with lifesaving prevention or treatment services. The Initiative expects to reach 30 million people by the end of FY 2008.

In October 2007, the first round of grants were awarded under the Malaria Communities Program (MCP) to help support locally-sustainable malaria control work. MCP was launched at the White House Summit on Malaria in December 2006 and focuses on enabling communities and indigenous organizations that are new to partnering with the U.S. Government in their efforts to combat malaria in Africa.

The President's Malaria Initiative continues to leverage private sector support, and more than six million long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets are being distributed through PMI public-private partnerships. For example, in partnership with Malaria No More, PMI was able to distribute 580,000 nets in Uganda. In Zambia, PMI joined with PEPFAR and the Global Business Coalition to distribute 500,000 nets through home-based care programs serving people affected by HIV/AIDS.

The United States Is Helping Provide Basic Education For People Around The World

The United States is joining with nations around the world to help them provide a better education for their people. In partnership with other nations, America has: helped train more than 600,000 teachers and administrators; distributed tens of millions of textbooks; and helped nations raise standards in their schools.

In May 2007, President Bush launched the Expanded Education for the World's Poorest Initiative and committed to provide an additional \$425 million over five years to make our international education programs more robust. This initiative provides an additional four million children with access to basic education in six target countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Liberia, Mali, and Yemen.

The Africa Education Initiative (AEI) established by President Bush in 2002 is providing \$600 million over eight years to increase access to quality basic education. By 2010, AEI will have distributed over 15 million textbooks, trained nearly one million teachers, and provided 550,000 scholarships for girls.

Through the partnership between Afghanistan, the U.S., and the international community, more than five million children are now in school in Afghanistan, up from only 900,000 children under the Taliban. Almost two million of these children are girls.

In March 2007, the President announced the Partnership for Latin American Youth, a three-year, \$75 million initiative to provide young people with access to English language training and increased educational opportunities in both the United States and their home countries. Thousands of students in the Western Hemisphere will benefit from these programs.

The United States Is Fighting Poverty By Promoting An Open Global Economy

Through the Millennium Challenge Account, the United States is delivering economic assistance to developing nations in innovative ways. The Millennium Challenge Account increases aid to nations that govern justly, fight corruption, invest in the education and health of their people, and promote economic freedom. Since its inception in 2004, the Millennium Challenge Corporation has approved compacts totaling over \$5.5 billion with 16 partner countries.

In the long run, the best way to lift people out of poverty is through trade and investment. Open markets ignite growth, encourage investment, increase transparency, strengthen the rule of law, and help countries help themselves.

- **The United States remains committed to a successful conclusion to the Doha round of trade talks this year.** The Doha round is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to open up markets, create new trade flows, and help millions escape poverty worldwide.
- **The United States will continue to pursue market-opening agreements that increase trade and investment.** The President urges Congress to approve free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea.