

encouraged the President to promptly nominate qualified nominees with dispatch. FBA chapters in districts and circuits with pending judicial nominees have contacted their home-state senators to urge a prompt vote on their nominees. This advocacy must continue.

Will the FBA help to make a difference? If the FBA doesn't raise its voice, who will?

CONVICTION OF BAHAI LEADERS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to express my concern about the detention of seven leading members of the Baha'i community in Iran: Mahvash Sabet, Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Wahid Tizfahm.

The seven leaders were arrested in 2008 and accused of espionage and propaganda against the state. In June, the Iranian Government sentenced them to 20 years in prison, a sentence which was subsequently reduced to 10 years.

The State Department, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, and leading human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have all expressed concern about the harsh sentence and the lack of due process in these cases.

The seven Baha'i leaders were held for 2 years without formal charges and access to legal representation and they were convicted behind closed doors.

The Senate added its voice to this case by passing a resolution introduced by Senator WYDEN, S. Res. 71, calling on the Government of Iran to release the seven leaders and respect the freedom of religion of the Baha'i community.

These convictions are yet another example of the abuses suffered by the Baha'i community, the largest religious minority in Iran with more than 300,000 members.

The Baha'i are denied official recognition of their faith by the state and are barred from establishing places of worship and schools. According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Baha'is cannot serve in the military and are barred from government jobs and benefits.

In condemning the sentences as a violation of Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated: "Freedom of religion is the birthright of people of all faiths." I could not agree more.

As a U.S. Senator representing approximately 30,000 Baha'i Americans in California, I urge the Iranian Government to release these seven leaders and allow the Baha'i community in Iran to practice their religion freely and without fear of persecution.

NATURAL GAS PRODUCTION

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the development of natural gas in the U.S. is vital to our energy security, environment, and economy. As we continue to craft policies affecting the develop-

ment of natural gas, we must ensure participants in policy crafting are above reproach.

U.S. natural gas supplies are abundant and will increase our Nation's energy security. There is an estimated 2,000 trillion cubic feet of U.S. natural gas reserves found in shale gas plays across the U.S. As countries around the world move aggressively to secure oil resources, U.S. natural gas reserves can play an important role in enhancing our energy security.

The significant U.S. reserves of natural gas provide the opportunity to reshape our energy future. A recent study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT, states that natural gas will provide an increasing share of America's energy needs over the next several decades, doubling its share of the energy market from 20 percent today to 40 percent.

The increase in our natural gas reserves is creating economic opportunities for American workers and communities around the country. In 2008, natural gas companies directly employed roughly 622,000 Americans and indirectly sustained almost 2.2 million additional jobs. The industry contributed \$385 billion to our Nation's economy in 2008 alone. Representing Oklahoma, I recognize the benefits of the natural gas industry all too well. One in seven jobs in Oklahoma is directly or indirectly supported by the energy industry. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Oklahoma ranks third in the country in natural gas production.

One of the key techniques for natural gas production is hydraulic fracturing. I have spoken on this floor many times over the past 2 years about the value of this production method. Hydraulic fracturing, coupled with horizontal drilling, has not only aided in the production of both oil and natural gas from more than a million wells over the past 60 years, production from thousands of wells is dependent on hydraulic fracturing. First used in 1947, hydraulic fracturing allows previously inaccessible reserves of natural gas to be recovered with a relatively small footprint. A mixture of pressurized water, sand and additives—less than 1 percent of the overall mixture—is used to create small fissures in the shale rock which releases the natural gas, allowing it to flow up the wellbore to be collected.

As natural gas development assumes a more prominent role in our Nation's energy supply, some Members of Congress and the administration are looking at ways to have the federal government regulate the natural gas industry. Natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing is regulated effectively at the State level. Legislation has been introduced in Congress, the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act of 2009, FRAC Act, to impose new Federal regulations on hydraulic fracturing which would only add unnecessary regulations on this vital industry.

The Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, is considering how to construct its study of fracking, which was ordered last year by Congress after the agency's 2004 study, that declared the technology safe, was criticized by some groups as being as flawed. The EPA's Science Advisory Board recently released a list of candidates for its panel to assist with the review of its Hydraulic Fracturing Study Plan. This panel is to provide technical and scientific advice to the EPA as it crafts the study plan.

This is a great practice by the EPA to seek advice from knowledgeable experts and sound science to develop policy. These panel members must be above reproach. Sadly, several of these candidates have a troubled history, including questions about expert scientific credentials, error-laden research on the issue of hydraulic fracturing, and questions of objectivity based on previous research and statements regarding fracking.

One nominee is an environmental activist who also happens to be a scientist. A chemist by trade, she consults and advocates against various industries, including the petrochemical and natural gas industries. Her activist roots color her professional judgments. In fact, her expert testimony was once excluded from trial. If her so-called expert judgment was inadequate for a court of law, how can it be adequate for our nation's top environmental agency?

Another nominee issued a draft report concluding that natural gas production specifically using hydraulic fracturing negates the clean burning attributes of natural gas. However, the report contained so many errors that the author was forced to withdraw it shortly after it was released.

It is clear that these nominees are simply opposed to natural gas development and have already rendered a judgment regarding hydraulic fracturing, which raises serious questions about their ability to objectively assess scientific data on this issue and remain impartial. Clearly, they are not impartial.

But more troubling are the questions raised about their scientific credentials and quality of their academic research. Having testimony thrown out by a court of law and being forced to withdraw research on this subject because of errors should disqualify an individual from serving on the Agency's panel of advisors.

EPA record for accepting comments on the nominees to assist the Science Advisory Board will soon close. I know that the EPA has received a wide variety of comments, and I urge the EPA Administrator and the Science Advisory Board to carefully consider these comments so that this study may be above reproach and not be affected by anti-natural gas political agendas.