

to our most important goal: making the American people safer here at home.

I want to say a word to our troops and civilians in Iraq. You've performed with incredible skill under demanding circumstances. The turnaround you have made possible in Iraq is a brilliant achievement in American history. And while this war is difficult, it is not endless. And we expect that as conditions on the ground continue to improve, they will permit us to continue the policy of return on success. The day will come when Iraq is a capable partner of the United States. The day will

come when Iraq is a stable democracy that helps fight our common enemies and promote our common interests in the Middle East. And when that day arrives, you'll come home with pride in your success and the gratitude of your whole Nation. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

## Statement on House of Representatives Action on Colombia Free Trade Agreement Legislation *April 10, 2008*

Today's unprecedented and unfortunate action by the House of Representatives—led by Speaker Pelosi—to change the rules governing legislation to implement our trade agreement with Colombia is damaging to our economy, our national security, and our relations with an important ally. It also undermines the trust required for any administration to negotiate trade agreements in the future.

By lowering tariffs for products made in America and sold in Colombia, this trade agreement would level the playing field for American workers and provide a boost for our economy at a vital time. Rather than supporting the opening of markets for our farmers and manufacturers, Democratic congressional leaders instead listened to narrow special interests and followed an isolationist path.

Today's action by the House of Representatives also sends a damaging message to the world that Congress cannot be counted on to keep its promises. Colombia is one of our strongest allies in the Western Hemisphere. Colombia's leaders are showing courage in improving the safety of their

citizens while battling narcoterrorists that receive support from anti-American forces outside Colombia. The message Democrats sent today is that no matter how steadfastly you stand with us, we will turn our backs on you when it is politically convenient.

In addition, by changing the rules for how it considers legislation to implement trade agreements, the House has severed a bond of trust between the executive branch and the Congress, and with our trading partners, that has served our Nation well for decades. In order to negotiate trade agreements, we empower our trade representatives with the promise that Congress will consider trade agreements with a timely up-or-down vote. By breaking this bond, Democrats have undercut not just this administration, but future administrations as well. This will weaken our Nation's ability to negotiate fair trade agreements for American workers, farmers, ranchers, and service providers.

During the 16 months since the Colombia free trade agreement was signed, my administration has gone above and beyond any reasonable effort to achieve a bipartisan

path for considering this agreement. At the expense of our economy and our national

security, the House has instead chosen to take a shortsighted and partisan path.

## The President's Radio Address *April 12, 2008*

Good morning. Fifteen months ago this week, I announced the surge. And this week, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker gave Congress a detailed report on the results.

Since the surge began, American and Iraqi forces have made significant progress. While there's more to be done, sectarian violence, civilian deaths, and military deaths are down. Improvements in security have helped clear the way for political and economic progress. The Iraqi Government has passed a budget and three major benchmark laws. And many economic indicators are now pointed in the right direction.

Serious and complex challenges remain in Iraq. Yet with the surge, a major strategic shift has occurred. Fifteen months ago, extremists were sowing sectarian violence. Today, many mainstream Sunni and Shi'a are actively confronting the extremists. Fifteen months ago, Al Qaida was using bases in Iraq to kill our troops and terrorize Iraqis. Today, we have put Al Qaida on the defensive in Iraq, and now we are working to deliver a crippling blow. Fifteen months ago, Americans were worried about the prospect of failure in Iraq. Today, thanks to the surge, we've revived the prospect of success in Iraq.

This week, General Petraeus reported that security conditions have improved enough to withdraw all five surge brigades. By July 31, the number of U.S. combat brigades in Iraq will be down 25 percent from the year before. Beyond that, General Petraeus says he will need time to assess how this reduced American presence will affect conditions on the ground before making recommendations on further reduc-

tions. I've told him he'll have time he needs to make his assessment.

Our job in the period ahead is to stand with the Iraqi Government as it makes the transition to responsibility for its own security and its own destiny. So what would this transition look like? On the security front, we will stay on the offense, continue to support the Iraqi security forces, continue to transfer security responsibilities to them, and move, over time, into an overwatch role.

On the economic front, Iraq's economy is growing. Iraq is assuming responsibility for almost all the funding of large-scale reconstruction projects, and our share of security costs is dropping as well. On the political front, Iraq is planning to hold elections that will provide a way for Iraqis to settle disputes through the political process instead of through violence.

All our efforts are aimed at a clear goal: a free Iraq that can protect its people, support itself economically, and take charge of its own political affairs. And no one wants to achieve that goal more than the Iraqis themselves.

The turnaround that our men and women in uniform have made possible in Iraq is a brilliant achievement. And we expect that as conditions on the ground continue to improve, they will permit us to continue the policy of return on success.

I'm confident in our success because I know the valor of the young Americans who defend us. This week, I commemorated the sacrifice of Michael Monsoor, a Navy SEAL who gave his life in Iraq and became the fourth Medal of Honor recipient in the war on terror. On September 29, 2006, Mike