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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

December 10, 2008

*Response to
our letter of
11/11/08 re: HR 6496*

Ms. Pat Long
York Society of Friends
135 West Philadelphia Street
York, Pennsylvania 17401

Dear Ms. Long:

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate your taking the time to make me aware of your concern for refugees from Iraq, as well as other Middle East nations affected by violence.

As you are aware, Representative Alcee Hastings introduced House of Representatives Bill 6496 (H.R. 6496). H.R. 6496 would direct the Secretary of State to provide such countries or appropriate international organizations and nongovernmental organizations with specified humanitarian assistance for dealing with Iraqi refugees. Additionally, H.R. 6496 would direct the Secretary of State make every effort to ensure that the humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations in Iraq and neighboring countries are met. H.R. 6496 is currently pending in the House Committee of Foreign Affairs and the House Judiciary Committee. Rest assured I will keep your thoughts in mind when and if H.R. 6496 or additional legislation regarding Iraqi refugees comes before the full House of Representatives for a vote.

It may interest you to know that on May 10, 2007, Representative Earl Blumenauer introduced House of Representatives Bill 2265 (H.R. 2265), the Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act. This legislation would allow the Secretary of Homeland Security to assign special immigration status to an Iraqi national if that individual worked directly with the United States government, the United Nations, a certified government or United Nations contractor or subcontractor, or a United States-based non-governmental organization for over one year. Additionally, H.R. 2265 permits the Secretary of State to grant temporary housing on United States military bases to Iraqi refugees seeking protection from imminent danger. This bill would also allow the Secretary of State to negotiate a resettlement policy with countries containing a significant population of displaced Iraqis, such as Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon. H.R. 2265 is currently pending in the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Additionally, House of Representatives Bill 1581 (H.R. 1581), the Iraq Reconstruction Improvement Act, introduced by the late-Representative Tom Lantos, would enable the Secretary of State to provide much needed assistance to refugees displaced from Iraq and living in other Middle East countries since March 19, 2003. H.R. 1581 would also work to establish a Civilian Active Response Corps in order to implement stabilization and reconstruction activities

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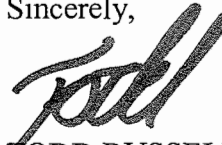
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in regions considered likely to enter into conflict or civil strife. H.R. 1581 has been referred to the House Armed Services Committee. Rest assured I will keep your thoughts in mind if and when legislation related to Iraq's refugee situation comes before the full United States House of Representatives for a vote.

Again, thank you for making me aware of your opinions. I hope that you will continue to keep me informed on issues of importance to you. Best wishes!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd", written in a cursive style.

TODD RUSSELL PLATTS
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
19th DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA