



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

AFRICAN ISSUES

Ethiopian professor honored at OSU Homecoming celebration (P 2)

Good U.S.-Liberian Relations Help Liberia Build Its Future (P 3)

Diverse Investment Opportunities Springing Up Across Africa (P 5)

New Defense Department Command Targets African Health Issues (P 6)

South African Children Affected by HIV/AIDS Get After-School Help (P 7)

U.S. Urges More Pressure on Zimbabwe's Mugabe to Share Power (P 8)

AFRICAN ISSUES

World Looking to America for Leadership, Colin Powell Says (P 9)

One-Third of Americans Likely to Vote Before Election Day (P 10)

Special Election in Mississippi Garner National Attention (P 12)

"Youthquake" Expected in 2008 U.S. Election (P 14)

AMERICAN NEWS

White House Conference to Showcase Successes in Development Aid (P 16)

McGovern, Dole Receive World Food Prize (P 17)

U.S. State Department Launches Iraq Cultural Heritage Project (P 18)

Lecture Series Examines Values at Work in U.S. Democracy (P 19)

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

Scientists Discover Workings of New Class of Antibiotics (P 20)

\$2 Egg Beater May Help Diagnose Disease in Developing Countries (P 21)

U.S.-Funded Program Aims to Balance Human, Environmental Needs (P 22)



David Kramer, the U.S. State Department's Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Rights and Labor, speaks to journalists on October 21 at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa. Kramer visited Ethiopia for the second time since July, and met with Ethiopian government officials and other stakeholders to emphasize concerns about provisions in the draft Charities and Societies Proclamation that could affect U.S. assistance activities.

U.S.-Sponsored Workshop Fights HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

October 23, 2008 Addis Abba (U.S. Embassy) – Ato Abdissa Yadetta, Minister of State for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, opened a conference on "Social Aspects of HIV and Reproductive Health Vulnerability in Ethiopia" at the Lalibela Ballroom of the Sheraton Hotel. The one day conference featured keynote addresses by USAID Mission Director



Glenn Anders and Ms. Helen Amdemikael, Assistant Representative of the UNFPA.

Co-sponsored by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Population Council, the October 22 conference addressed social issues that make Ethiopians

(Continued on page 2)

Ethiopian Professor Honored at OSU Homecoming Celebration

The College of Human Environmental Sciences at Oklahoma State University honored Yewesew Abebe as a distinguished alumna at the 2008 Homecoming celebration on Friday, Oct. 17. The award gives CHES alumni public recognition for their outstanding career achievements and contributions of service to the College.

Abebe earned a Ph.D. in human environmental sciences with an emphasis in nutritional sciences in 2003 from Oklahoma State University. Currently, she is the associate vice president for Research, Extension and Publication at Hawassa University in Awassa, Ethiopia. She completed her Ph.D. as part of an agreement between OSU and Hawassa University financed by Winrock International.

Since returning to Ethiopia, Abebe has dedicated her work to nutritional issues in her country. She



Yewesew Abebe

has been an associate professor since Sept. 2007 and has served as the academic dean of the College of Agriculture at Hawassa for over a year. Her efforts to improve the

nutrition problem in Ethiopia have resulted in a master's degree program in Applied Human Nutrition which is now being offered at Hawassa University. Abebe has served on the board of the Ethiopian Family Guidance Association and is an executive committee member of the Food and Nutrition Society of Ethiopia.

"I am very much interested and concerned with issues affecting the nutritional well being of communities," Abebe said. Her development related work and research has taken her to eight different countries excluding the U.S. She is collaborating with a group of scientists from the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, OSU and the University of Otago, New Zealand on a project focused on the link between the lack of zinc and its effect on Ethiopian infants and toddlers' cognitive development. ♦

U.S.-Sponsored Workshop Fights HIV/AIDS and Reproductive . . .

(Continued from page 1)

more vulnerable to negative health outcomes such as HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancies, and sexual violence. By examining research findings and programmatic examples, conference attendees were better informed and better able to shape programs for Ethiopia's most vulnerable populations.

This conference was especially timely given that the Ministry of Health just concluded its Annual

Review Meeting, which identified areas in which programs need improvement, especially as they pertain to women and maternal health. The United States Government continues to support efforts by the Ethiopian Government and other stake holders in the struggle against HIV/AIDS through PEPFAR, USAID, and its implementing partners. ♦



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Good U.S.-Liberian Relations Help Liberia Build Its Future

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf holds talks with President Bush at the White House October 22 to review that country's progress, its future and bilateral relations, which are "as good as they can get," says U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

In an interview with America.gov, Thomas-Greenfield said the Bush administration "has paid a lot of attention to Liberia — to helping Liberia move its agenda forward."

The two leaders are expected to talk about ongoing areas of U.S.-Liberian cooperation, including security-sector reform, combating malaria and improving the quality of education. President Bush, who traveled to Liberia as part of his five-nation Africa tour earlier in 2008, is expected to reinforce his administration's strong commitment to ongoing reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Liberia.

Thomas-Greenfield said Sirleaf is likely to raise the issue of repairing Liberia's major port and likely will seek more help in her effort to rebuild Liberia's police force. The countries have a strong, cordial relationship built on mutual respect, Thomas-Greenfield said. The U.S. ambassador saluted Liberia for being a democratic country and for electing the first woman president in Africa.

"It's a farewell call for her," as the president prepares to leave office in January, the ambassador said in summing up the White House visit. The meeting will mark the Liberian president's fourth visit to the Oval Office and her fifth one-on-one meeting with Bush.

While in Washington, Sirleaf also attended the one-day White House

Greenfield said, "we all can learn from." It is important, she said, because Sirleaf built the strategy only after consulting local leaders and people throughout the country. The strategy calls for increased education, infrastructure for development, additional agriculture and more funding for job creation.

Over the past several years, the United States has spent more than \$190 million to help rebuild Liberia's army, which will provide security and protect human rights. The United States is also contributing to the U.N. efforts to rebuild Liberia's police.

The United States provides about \$160 million in aid to Liberia annually, which covers security-sector reform, improved education

and health care, road construction and improved democratic governance. "The United States contributes about the same amount in annual assessed contributions to the United Nations Mission in Liberia as well," Thomas-Greenfield added.

The U.S. Agency for International Development's Liberia program is the second largest in Africa behind Sudan. "Liberia has only 3.5 million people, so the money we are providing there can go a long way in helping to bring about change," she said.

Chronicling Sirleaf's successes,
(Continued on page 4)



President George W. Bush shakes hands with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf following their meeting Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2008, in the Oval Office at the White House. White House photo by Eric Draper

Summit on International Development October 21. Thomas-Greenfield said the Liberian president was invited to the global summit "in recognition of the important successes that she has had in Liberia in focusing attention on the development needs of Liberia, but also more importantly, in getting Liberia turned around economically."

Sirleaf spoke at the summit on the theme "Country Ownership of Development." Liberia, the ambassador said, is a "case study" in that regard.

Sirleaf recently completed a poverty reduction strategy that, Thomas-

Good U.S.-Liberian Relations Help Liberia Build Its Future . . .

(Continued from page 3)

Thomas-Greenfield said, "She has spent tremendous efforts over the past three years to bring this country out of the disaster that it was when she became president. The country was in debt for almost \$4 billion."

That has been brought down, she said, in part by \$400 million in U.S. bilateral debt forgiveness along with \$1.4 billion in similar forgiveness from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Additionally, she said, Sirleaf "has done a great job of improving Liberia's image abroad so that Liberia is in a position to get more development and debt assistance from other donors."

Thomas-Greenfield said since her arrival in Monrovia one month ago, she has had nothing but well-wishes from the entire Liberian population, many of whom call her "Ambassador Linda." "So it is a good strong relationship."

Thomas-Greenfield said her biggest challenge is to "manage Liberia's expectations of the United States" and to deliver the message that "it is in the hands of the Liberian people to bring about change to their country. It is not something that we can hand to them. The Liberians must do it themselves."

She also cautioned on corruption. While Sirleaf is committed to fighting corruption and has named an anti-corruption commission, the ambassador said more work remains to

"All Liberians must focus on the fact that they have peace and that other things will follow as long as peace remains," she added.

In closing, Thomas-Greenfield was asked to assess the level of economic development and progress being made in Liberia.

"You do see a lot of progress," she said. "I was there in 2004 and 2005. When I was there in 2004, the country really looked war-torn. You don't see that as much anymore. You see more and more children going to school in their uniforms. Every day, more companies are coming into Liberia to invest and more jobs are being created, and there is a feeling among Liberians that they have the right to protest" publicly to get the government focused on issues of popular importance.

For those reasons, she said, "It is now a country where freedom reigns."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦



President George W. Bush stands with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf before delivering his remarks at the White House Summit on International Development Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2008, in Washington, D.C. White House photo by Eric Draper

be done to fight what she called a "cancer" on Liberian society. She asked that all Liberians ask what they can do to improve their situation and not necessarily always wait for the government to address their needs.

Liberians constantly talk about the "peace dividend," she said, that they now enjoy, after 15 years of war which destroyed the country's infrastructure.

Diverse Investment Opportunities Springing Up Across Africa

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Significant, diverse investment opportunities are springing up across Africa, where change is occurring at a faster pace than many realize, says a prominent U.S. investment banker.

Thomas Gibian, chief investment officer of Emerging Capital Partners, emphasized that point at the 2008 U.S.-Africa Infrastructure Conference, "Connecting the Continent." The October 6-8 conference, the third of its kind, was held in Washington and was organized by the Corporate Council on Africa.

The investment situation has expanded in many places across the continent, Gibian said. "We have just really touched the surface."

"The challenge for all of us is to understand that Africa is changing much faster than our perceptions of Africa," he told a conference workshop on private equity opportunities in Africa.

"It is really necessary — particularly for Americans — to get out of the echo chamber of what we hear, think and are exposed to through the media about Africa and get some altitude and look at Africa as it is — a place that is very, very quickly reforming."

Gibian said the reform process in Africa is not a recent development. "Africa has been reforming through the whole decade, but we are approaching a tipping point as to what that really means on the ground for ... investment opportunities in African businesses," he said. "Sustainable businesses, world-

class businesses that are governed the way you would expect ... that practice transparency and that really emulate the kind of values and expectations that we have regarding [leadership] succession, independence of directors, independent audit committees," increasingly can be found operating across Africa.



Thomas Gibian, chief investment officer of Emerging Capital Partners

To illustrate his point about the importance of reforms, Gibian recalled his days in Hong Kong in the mid-1990s, when he was serving as a managing director of the EMP Global Asia Fund, which managed almost \$3 billion in investments in China, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand.

"There was essentially, at that stage, zero private equity happening in China because there was no private property. It was a communist country so you did not have title to assets," he explained. "That was 1994-95. Last year, \$30 billion was raised for private equity space in China, so reform matters. Reform

actually occurs and has a potent effect."

A similar situation was found in India, he said, where the new century ushered in reforms that now are common in emerging markets: telecommunications reform, banking reform, insurance reform, pension reform. Such reforms, he said, may not have been perfect and may not always have gone far enough. "But enough that you could get real traction in the India private equities base," he said.

The same types of reform now are occurring in Africa. "You can track the trajectory of those reforms and the impact that it is having on the ground in all of those same businesses, plus natural resources," and other business areas that up to now have not been considered likely investment candidates, like health care and pharmaceuticals, he said.

Factors benefiting Africa are its close proximity to Europe, affordable land, abundant rainfall and labor, he said.

Speaking about his current venture, Gibian said ECP has been in business since 2000 and has raised more than \$1.5 billion with 33 investments across Africa in more than 40 countries. Gibian said his company prefers to invest in pan-African and regional companies. ECP operates six offices in Africa, a headquarters in Washington and an office in Paris.

ECP now believes that Africa is "far enough along in its reform process," Gibian said, "in its key countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania, to provide meaningful and working examples to other nations." ♦

New Defense Department Command Targets African Health Issues

By Cheryl Pellerin
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Defense Department's newest regional military headquarters — the Africa Command, called AFRI-COM — is set to streamline a range of operations and step up health care services in a part of the world where national security and infectious disease are inextricably linked.

AFRICOM, declared a full unified command October 1, has a mission — “sustained security engagement” — it will carry out “with other U.S. agencies and international partners,” a fact sheet says, through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities and other operations that support U.S. foreign policy by promoting a stable and secure Africa.

Until October 1, U.S. military involvement on the continent was divided among the U.S. European Command in Germany, Central Command in Florida and Pacific Command in Hawaii. AFRICOM is responsible for U.S. military operations in Africa and military relations with 53 African nations, with the exception of Egypt.

“AFRICOM was created out of the belief that the key to long-term success and stability of African partners is a strong, independent and loyal military structure,” Erik Threet, of the AFRICOM Strategy, Plans and Programs Directorate, said during a September 23 panel discussion in Washington, “one that un-

derstands its role is to support civilian rule rather than dominate it.” U.S. agencies involved with AFRI-COM include the U.S. Agency for International Development and the



Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 researchers train Libyan collaborators in Cairo, Egypt, in virus identification and isolation.(NAMRU)

departments of State, Treasury, Homeland Security and Justice. The command is currently based in Stuttgart, Germany.

BEFORE AND AFTER HIV/AIDS

Military health programs have been helping people on the African continent since 1946, when the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 (NAMRU-3) began operations in Cairo, Egypt, working closely with the Egyptian Ministry of Health to study typhus and other endemic diseases that affected deploying service members.

Today, NAMRU-3 is a regional reference laboratory for viral disease diagnostics for the World Health

Organization and is home to three public health officers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who are expanding surveillance for acute respiratory illness in several Egyptian hospitals.

NAMRU-3 also has a detachment in Accra, Ghana, said Captain Sybil Tasker of NAMRU-3, and a smaller detachment in Afghanistan.

The U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Nairobi opened in 1969 at the invitation of the Kenyan government as a special foreign activity of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Maryland. Through a cooperative agreement with the Kenya Medical Research Institute, scientists there conduct research on malaria and other diseases.

Sub-Saharan Africa has just more than 10 percent of the world's population but is home to more than 60 percent of all people living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

“The Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program, otherwise known as DHAPP,” said Theresa Whelan, DOD deputy assistant secretary for African affairs, “has been in existence since the late 1990s, when Congress first authorized the department to expend dollars specifically in Africa to address the problem of HIV/AIDS” among African military members.

The concern, she said, was that HIV/AIDS was being addressed in civilian but not military populations.

(Continued on page 11)

South African Children Affected by HIV/AIDS Get After-School Help

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Soweto, South Africa — Around 2 p.m., a dusty compound in the sprawling, impoverished black ghetto of Soweto is filled with the shouts of children arriving from school for a nutritious meal, homework tutoring, exercise and a chance to build a decent life.

"I like to come here because I get a chance [to] learn," said 13-year-old Zama, one of 300 children who were selected for the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program (AGSP) funded by the U.S. government. All the children, 150 girls and 150 boys, have been orphaned or infected by HIV/AIDS. They faced bleak and, in some cases, short futures before they were brought into the program, which is run by the Humana People to People charity.

"I teach Zama to stand on her own," said Thoko, who is HIV positive and one of 45 AGSP mentors in Doornkop, a South African township west of Johannesburg. "Zama is a little heroine. She has survived three cases of meningitis, and she continues to live with hope. I have taught her that there is life after being diagnosed HIV positive."

The scholarship program was launched in 2005 with funding from the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the multi-billion-dollar U.S. initiative to combat the disease around the world. Initially, the scholarships were limited to girls.

"The original aim was to encourage girls to stay in school," said Mathata Madibane, an education

adviser for the U.S. Agency for International Development. "When a problem arises at home, the girls are the first to suffer. They have to stay at home and look after sick



Alina (left) and Thoko (right) are mentors helping Zama (center) and other Soweto children affected by AIDS.

siblings or sick parents. This year, we opened the program to boys because we realized that HIV/AIDS does not distinguish between boys and girls. You cannot treat girls and neglect boys." (The name of the scholarship has not yet been amended to reflect the change.)

The children range in age between 7 and 16. Thoko mentors five children whom she reminds daily about taking medication. On Mondays, she makes it a point to find out how they passed the weekend in their neighborhoods where rape, alcoholism and violence are common.

"Many children have been traumatized," said Alina, another mentor, who is HIV positive. "The children need to know they are safe and loved here." Alina, who speaks in a soft voice and looks at people with kind eyes, has been trained to help people overcome trauma. Thoko credits Alina with saving her after she was diag-

nosed with HIV.

"I wanted to die. I was pregnant. My family left me. Alina said, 'Thoko, come to me. I am here. If you want to live, you must learn to love yourself.' You see me today. I am strong, and I can help others. It is because of Alina. She taught me love, support and acceptance. I teach that to others now," Thoko said.

After the weekend events have been addressed, Thoko spends Tuesdays helping the children she mentors with homework. Zama gets particular help with math, because the girl finds it difficult. Wednesdays are devoted to sports, music and game playing. Thursdays are for library visits.

"I teach the children to take care of books, not to tear them and to put them back in the right places, and I teach them to be silent in the library," Thoko said. The library on



Children wash at a U.S.-sponsored program in Soweto. In addition to teaching hygiene, mentors help with homework and lead activities.

the compound is a corrugated metal hut, roughly the size of a shipping container, with shelves holding aged Reader's Digest books, encyclopedias with brittle, yellowing

(Continued on page 13)

U.S. Urges More Pressure on Zimbabwe's Mugabe to Share Power

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Bush administration wants Zimbabwe's neighbors to step up pressure on President Robert Mugabe to share power with the country's political opposition. The United States has warned that it might impose additional sanctions if Mugabe fails to fulfill the agreement he signed with opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said October 21 that the United States is "looking for all of Zimbabwe's neighbors and then the other interested countries in the international system to apply the pressure required to have President Mugabe live up to the agreement that he signed on to."

Under the agreement, signed September 15, Mugabe would remain president, but Tsvangirai, who heads the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), would become prime minister and Zimbabwe's Cabinet positions would be divided between the MDC and Mugabe's ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF).

Discussions have broken down over ZANU-PF's attempts to award itself control of all the key ministries and the government's failure to return Tsvangirai's passport so he can participate in further discussions in neighboring Swaziland. South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) leader, Jacob Zuma, met with both Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security

Advisor Stephen Hadley in Washington on October 21.



Ambassador James McGee says that although ZANU-PF is stalling, democratic transition is "inevitable."

McCormack said South Africa "has been deeply involved in trying to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe."

Following his meeting with Secretary Rice, Zuma told Reuters they had discussed Zimbabwe's political crisis and agreed that "a quicker solution to Zimbabwe is desirable for the sake of the Zimbabwean people and their country."

"We also agreed that Zimbabwean leaders should be urged to complete the package which is already on the table so that it is implemented for the sake of the Zimbabwean people," he said.

The ANC also is urging ZANU-PF and the MDC "to find a solution," Zuma said.

Deputy State Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters October 20 that the United States is encouraging the parties to reach an agreement on how to allocate the Cabinet positions in a way that reflects the September 15 power-sharing agreement.

Wood warned that "should Mugabe renege" or fail to negotiate with the MDC in good faith, "the United States ... is prepared to impose additional sanctions."

"We want an agreement that reflects the will of the Zimbabweans. They've suffered a very long time. The suffering should come to an end, and we need to move forward with the political process," he said.

Former South African President Thabo Mbeki is continuing his efforts to broker an agreement between the two sides, and, Wood



Mugabe must share power with political rivals if his government wants international legitimacy and assistance.

said, Zimbabwe's neighbors in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) also are interested in seeing an agreement go forward. ♦

World Looking to America for Leadership, Colin Powell Says

By Michelle Austein
Staff Writer

Washington — The next U.S. president will present a new image of leadership to the world, according to former Secretary of State Colin Powell. Powell, a Republican, said that after months of personal deliberation, he has concluded Democrat Barack Obama is the best person for the job.

In a September 15 forum at George Washington University in Washington, Powell told students he was watching the race closely and was interested in seeing how the candidates would perform in the debates. Like many American voters, Powell seems to have remained undecided between the candidates well into the general election campaign.

After watching the candidates lay out their policies, Powell decided he will cast his vote for Obama, the former secretary said in an interview on NBC's Meet the Press October 19. Powell, who has known Republican John McCain for 25 years and has met with Obama over the past two years, reiterated the respect he has for both candidates.

Powell said that while observing the candidates on the campaign trail, he found Obama "displayed a steadiness, an intellectual curiosity, a depth of knowledge and an approach to looking at problems. ... I think he has a definitive way of doing business that would serve us well."

The former secretary added that he believes Obama has the ability to inspire people across the country

and would represent a new generation on the international stage.

Powell, who served as President Bush's first secretary of state and previously had donated money to



Former Secretary of State Colin Powell speaks during a taping of 'Meet the Press' at NBC in Washington October 19, 2008. (Brendan Smialowski/Meet The Press/Handout/Reuters)

the John McCain campaign, said he believed both of the candidates "are distinguished Americans who are patriotic, who are dedicated to the welfare of our country," adding, "Either one of them, I think, would be a good president."

A retired general in the U.S. Army, Powell had a distinguished military career and served as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Obama campaign hopes that this endorsement will influence those still unsure about whether the Democratic candidate has the experi-

ence needed to handle national security issues.

Addressing the issue of Obama's experience, Powell said he thinks Obama understands the military, political and economic challenges facing the nation. "He is surrounding himself ... with people who'll be able to give him the expertise that he, at the moment, does not have."

Political experts debate the impact of endorsements by a well-known person or publication such as a newspaper. Most say that even though endorsements generate headlines that might help a campaign for a day or two, they tend not to sway many voters, especially those who already have decided to support a particular candidate.

PRIORITIES FOR NEXT ADMINISTRATION

In his interview, Powell said he believes the first thing the next president should do is "start talking to the American people and talking to the world and conveying a new image of American leadership, a new image of America's role in the world." The next president has to use the "power of the Oval Office and the power of his personality to convince the American people and to convince the world that America is solid, America is going to move forward."

Powell said he expects the next president to be a leader in reducing poverty worldwide and curbing global warming. He said he expects the economy to be the president's top concern, as "that's what the American people are worried about."

(Continued on page 15)

One-Third of Americans Likely to Vote Before Election Day

By Michelle Austein
Staff Writer

Washington — By the time polls open on Election Day on November 4, about one-third of Americans might already have cast their votes.

With record voter turnout expected in much of the country, state election officials are encouraging citizens to avoid Election Day lines and vote early by mailing an absentee ballot or stopping by an in-person voting center. Many jurisdictions are reporting high numbers of early voters, so it seems many Americans are following that advice.

According to the Early Voting Information Center at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, 31 states allow people to vote early in person without providing a reason as to why they cannot vote on Election Day. Some states will allow a person to drop off an absentee paper ballot at a designated site, while others enable citizens to cast votes on the same machines used on Election Day.

States also allow citizens to apply for and return ballots via mail. Absentee mail-in voting is the primary method used by members of the military and other Americans living overseas. Some states require voters to submit an explanation for why they cannot make it to the polls on Election Day, but 28 allow no-excuse absentee voting. In Oregon, everyone votes by mail.

There are many reasons Americans consider voting early or by mail. Election Day is not a national holiday, which means many voters



A voter receives a lapel sticker after voting at the Hamilton County board of elections, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2008, in Cincinnati. Tuesday was the first day registered voters could vote in Ohio. (AP Photo/Al Behrman)

must go to work or school that day. Others prefer voting by mail because they can take their time researching the issues while completing their ballot.

The increase in early and absentee voting has created new challenges for campaigns. Campaign strategies typically used to make the case to undecided voters in the final two or three days before Election Day now might have to be stretched out to reach early voters as well.

The campaigns of both John McCain and Barack Obama are using new get-out-the-vote tactics to secure early voters. In Ohio, Obama supporters have arranged rides to early voting sites. In Colorado, McCain supporters have been visit-

ing homes of voters who requested absentee ballots.

STATES EXPECTING RECORD NUMBER OF EARLY VOTERS

Throughout the country, election officials are citing evidence that early and absentee voting will increase in 2008. About one-third of Americans are expected to vote early, up from 22 percent in 2004, election experts say.

The candidates are working especially hard to reach early voters in important battleground states like Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada, where more than half of voters might cast their ballots before Election Day. The New York Times reported October 17 that so far 1.4 million of Colorado's 3.2 million registered voters have requested absentee ballots — a large increase from the 668,000 in 2004.

Experts say early voting historically has not benefited one party over another. Nor do most think the rise in early voting will change the outcome of the presidential election because those who vote early tend to be partisan and would not likely be swayed by late campaign events or debates.

MILITARY ENCOURAGES ABSENTEE VOTING

In the weeks leading up to Election Day, many of the estimated 4 million American voters living overseas have been receiving and submitting absentee ballots via mail. Among those voters are 1.4 million Americans serving in the U.S. military around the world.

(Continued on page 11)

New Defense Department Command Targets African Health Issues . . .

(Continued from page 6)

ROOT CAUSE

Since 2002, said Colonel Jerome Kim of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, "the spread of HIV and its impact on [African] nations has been viewed by the U.S. national security strategy as a humanitarian and a national security priority. With the inception of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR], the U.S. military has participated in HIV prevention, care and treatment activities in targeted countries."

When PEPFAR began working in Africa in 2004, Tasker said, the DHAPP program already was working closely with militaries throughout PEPFAR's 15 focus countries, 13 of which are in Africa.

"We engage through the office of military cooperation in the U.S. embassies in each country," Tasker said, "then often execute programs through grants or contracts at uni-

versities or local and international nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]."

In 2007, DHAPP had a budget of \$68 million and was working with military organizations in 70 countries. In Africa alone in 2007, DHAPP reached just under 500,000 military members and family members with comprehensive prevention messages and trained more than 7,000 peer trainers.

More than 100,000 people were tested for HIV and received counseling, and nearly 18,000 women received maternal-to-child transmission prevention services that included testing. Sixty-three laboratories received equipment or laboratory chemicals and nearly 19,000 patients are on anti-retroviral therapy through military hospitals.

"In the region," Tasker said, "militaries are sometimes the only providers of health care, especially away from capitals and major cities. In many countries, military hospitals have more beds or care delivery

than ministry of health facilities do. They also have security and logistical capability that may enable health care to be delivered in times of conflict."

In Africa, the Defense Department partners with traditional health care delivery agencies, including academia and NGOs, to make use of their technical expertise in social marketing and preventive health education.

"Militaries, even some foreign military leaders that you wouldn't expect," Tasker said, "realize that the root cause of HIV in their military force that is keeping their soldiers sick and unable to do their jobs is poverty, hunger, gender inequity and lack of education. [Addressing such problems] is where the NGO and academic communities have expertise."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

One-Third of Americans Likely to Vote Before Election Day . . .

(Continued from page 10)

A voter living overseas must request an absentee ballot from his or her home state. The state will mail the ballot to the individual, who fills it out and mails it back. The process can take weeks in areas with slow mail service, making some wonder if their ballot will make it back to the United States in time to be counted.

Because of these concerns, groups like Democrats Abroad and Republicans Abroad have been working on new ways to make it easier for overseas Americans to vote. So have officials with the Federal Voting Assistance Program, which oversees the absentee voting process for service members and other Americans living abroad. The Federal Voting Assistance Program has been ramping up its efforts to help military voters.

Some states can now fax or e-mail ballots, and others are testing new technologies in hopes of making the process of voting from overseas simpler. For instance, in Arizona, voters can fill out their ballots, scan them and send them back over a secure Internet server.

More information is available on the Federal Voting Assistance Program (<http://www.fvap.gov/>) Web site. ♦

Special Election in Mississippi Garners National Attention

By Charles Hays Burchfield
Special Correspondent

Oxford, Mississippi — The economic crisis, two wars and an unpopular Republican president are making the special Senate election in Mississippi a competitive race.

"This seat shouldn't be in play," said John Bruce, associate professor of political science at the University of Mississippi. "It shouldn't be close here. It goes to show it's a really crappy year to be running as a Republican."

The Mississippi contest is garnering national attention because it symbolizes a struggling year for Republican congressional candidates and because it is one of the races that could give Democrats in the Senate the 60 votes they need to place a time limit on consideration of a bill and bring it to a vote.

Trent Lott, a long-serving senator and a leader in the Republican Party, resigned in December 2007. Mississippi's Republican governor, Haley Barbour, appointed Republican Roger Wicker to fill the Senate seat until a special election could be held. To keep the seat, Wicker must defeat a former Democratic governor, Ronnie Musgrove, in the November 4 election.

Wicker was the representative from Mississippi's 1st Congressional District, so his appointment left that seat in the House of Representatives vacant. It was filled in an election on May 13 by Democrat Travis Childers. Childers' victory in a strongly Republican region was

cited by political experts as a sign of troubles the party would face in the upcoming general election.

The ballot in that election was nonpartisan, just as the one November 4 will be for the special Senate race, according to Pamela Weaver, spokeswoman for the Mississippi secretary of state. Candidates in a nonpartisan election are not identified by party affiliation on a ballot.



Senator Roger Wicker (left) faces a tough contest to keep the seat to which he was appointed by Mississippi's governor.

Bruce said not having the "D" printed beside Musgrove's name on the ballot would help him in this Republican stronghold state.

"As a former state governor, Musgrove benefits from name recognition," Bruce said. "Wicker doesn't have a reputation in the southern part of the state."

A few lesser-known candidates also are running for the Senate seat, so it is possible no candidate will win more than 50 percent of the vote November 4. Mississippi is one of the few states that require a candidate be elected by a majority (more than 50 percent) of the ballots cast rather than simply the highest num-

ber of votes. If no candidate receives a majority on Election Day, a runoff election will be held November 25, according to Barbour spokesman Pete Smith. The winner will serve the remainder of Lott's scheduled term, through 2012, Smith said.

Mississippi is one of two states electing two U.S. senators in 2008. In Wyoming, a special election is being held to fill the remaining term of Craig Thomas, who died of leukemia in 2007. Republicans Mike Enzi (elected incumbent) and John Barrasso (appointed incumbent) seem likely to retain their seats.

STATE SUPREME COURT RULES ON SPECIAL ELECTION

The special Senate election in Mississippi spawned two lawsuits in early 2008 that were decided by the Mississippi Supreme Court. The first involved the timing of the election.

Barbour called for the special election to be held November 4, while Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood, a Democrat, called for the special election to be held during the state's primary election on March 11. The dispute boiled down to an interpretation of a state statute, according to Matthew Hall, associate professor of law at the University of Mississippi.

"The statute isn't perfectly written," Hall said. "I think the average person would find the statute clear, but the governor had a tortured reading of it."

State law gives the governor 100

(Continued on page 13)

Special Election in Mississippi Garners National Attention . . .

(Continued from page 12)

days after being notified of a resignation to hold a special election unless the vacancy occurs in a year when a general state or congressional election is scheduled, Hall said.

Barbour argued the exception meant unless there is a general election within the next 365 days. Hood argued the law meant a calendar year: Because the vacancy occurred in 2007 but after the 2007 general election, the exception did not hold.

In a 7 to 2 decision, the Mississippi Supreme Court sided with Barbour. Two justices, in a dissenting opinion, called the majority's opinion "gobbledygook."

The later election date might end up hurting Wicker rather than helping him, as many speculate was Barbour's goal in fighting for the delay.



A bad year for Republicans could help former Mississippi Governor Ronnie Musgrove win a Senate seat.

"Wicker would've won if the election had been in March," Bruce said. "Having [Barack] Obama on the ballot in November instead of Hillary [Clinton] has mobilized the African-American community in

Mississippi, which helps Musgrove."

The second lawsuit involved whether the candidates' names would appear near the top of the ballot with the other federal races or at the bottom of the ballot, as the governor had directed.

In an 8 to 1 decision, the Mississippi Supreme Court, citing a clearly written state statute, said the race should be listed near the top of the ballot.

The key to the Mississippi special Senate race is voter turnout, according to Bruce. He said Senator John McCain will probably carry Mississippi in the presidential race, but McCain's margin of victory in the state will affect the special Senate race.

"If some McCain voters stay home because they think he can't win nationwide, it could be enough for Musgrove to win the Senate seat," Bruce said. ♦

South African Children Affected by HIV/AIDS Get After-School Help . . .

(Continued from page 7)

pages, and paperback novels that were on the bestseller lists in the United States a decade or more ago.

Fridays are for uniform washing and personal hygiene. The children wash their school clothes in basins and iron them. The compound does not have showers or bathtubs for the children. They learn to clean themselves from buckets and are expected to do so at home.

In addition to the Monday through Friday routine, the children are introduced to community youth clubs, where they play sports and participate in drama and music with other children. Mentors take the children on field trips and visit them at their homes, which often are headed by teenage siblings or grandmothers.

The amount of each scholarship is roughly \$100 per child, per year. The money goes mainly for school supplies, fees, books and transportation. "A little money can do a lot," said Tonia Weik, a diplomat

assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria.

"More important than the money is the mentoring provided by people who understand the distress that the children are in," said Humana's Lone Torbenson. "This is a safe haven for them to grow and focus on education." She added that the children generally perform well academically and many return after their schooling to mentor younger children. ♦

“Youthquake” Expected in 2008 U.S. Election

By Meghan Loftus
Staff Writer

Washington — It is a historic presidential election, no matter what the outcome: Either an African American or a woman will be elected to one of the United States’ top two elected positions for the first time. But 18- to 29-year-olds also will be making history, as they turn out to vote in numbers projected to set new records.

Youth voting and increased youth engagement in the 2008 election process were the topic of a forum in Washington. It was sponsored by American University and held on October 14. Panelists discussed “Youthquake ’08: How Millennials are Shaking Up the Media, Mavericks, and History-Makers This Election.”

Moderator Jane Hall, a professor at the university, asked the crowd: “How many of you plan to vote? How many think your vote will matter?” The audience, mostly students, responded with loud cheers and clapping.

Panelists talked for an hour about new media and political participation, but they were most emphatic about voting. “Voting is the main power we have in a democracy,” said James Kotecki, video blogger for the Politico Web site.

Heather Smith, executive director of Rock the Vote, also spoke about the strength of a vote. “It gives power to leverage for change we want in our lives,” Smith said. Rock the Vote is a national organization dedicated to getting young people involved politically.



Young voters listen to U.S. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) at a rally in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, October 29, 2007. Young voters have historically taken part in U.S. elections at a much lower rate than the public as a whole, but the last two national elections have seen a substantial increase in participation.

“I’ve got a feeling election officials and politicians are going to hear you pretty loud,” said Cornell Belcher, a Democratic pollster.

Election officials, candidates and the public already have gotten a preview of a more youthful Election Day. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University put turnout in 2008 primary elections among 18- to 29-year-olds at double the national average in 2004. In some places, primary turnout was triple that of the last presidential election.

The increased turnout among young voters “really changed the face of the electorate in the primary process,” Belcher said.

According to Rock the Vote, the millennial generation (those born between 1980 and 2000) numbers 44 million, the largest generation in history. They constitute more than one-fifth of the American electorate. Researchers and the news media expect a surge in youth voting in November.

NEW MEDIA

Young voters frequently turn to new media and new technology to get and share information about candidates and issues. “It’s cool to talk about politics,” Smith said.

Young voters can bring the discussion to the Web through videos, podcasts and other applications. Kotecki got his start as an under-

(Continued on page 15)

“Youthquake” Expected in 2008 U.S. Election . . .

(Continued from page 14)

graduate at Georgetown University preparing two-minute video commentaries in his dorm room on the use of YouTube in the presidential campaign.

Kotecki landed the first dorm-room interview with then-candidate Ron Paul, a Republican from Texas. “You don’t have to use mainstream media to push the envelope and take risks,” Kotecki said.

Emily Freifeld makes a living in new media. As a multimedia producer on the politics desk at washingtonpost.com, she is thinking constantly about how to build a package, integrating video, sound, pictures and text around the latest political news. She said there is a hunger for the “story behind a story” — what the reporter sees and hears but does not always have space to talk about in traditional news outlets.

Rock the Vote also uses new media and technology to reach out to young voters. The organization recently partnered with ChaCha, a mobile answers service, to provide answers about voting and polling via text message.



McCain speaks to students during his campaign in Arizona

POST-PARTISANSHIP

Kotecki said party politics are not a top concern for young voters. “Our generation has been steeped in a very partisan political environment,” he said, terming the condition “post-partisanship.”

Others had a different take.

“It’s about engaging the group,” said David Winston, president and founder of The Winston Group, a marketing research company.

Young voters are particularly dedicated to causes, like health care and education reform, and want to elect the person that they think will support their goal.

“It’s not that you are for someone who’s about saving the environment,” Belcher said. “You want to save the environment.”

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

World Looking to America for Leadership, Colin Powell Says . . .

(Continued from page 9)

“It’s not just an American problem, it’s an international problem,” Powell said. “We can see how all of these economies are now linked in this globalized system.”

No matter which man is elected, Powell said he expects the next

president to begin drawing down troop levels in Iraq. The retired general said an agreement the United States is negotiating with the Iraqi government would enable most combat operations to cease in the coming year.

The next U.S. president will have to determine the exact details of a withdrawal, Powell said, but

“increasingly, this problem’s going to be solved by the Iraqis.”

“They’re going to make the political decisions, their security forces are going to take over, and they’re going to have to create an environment of reconciliation where all the people can come together and make Iraq a much, much better place.” ♦

White House Conference to Showcase Successes in Development Aid

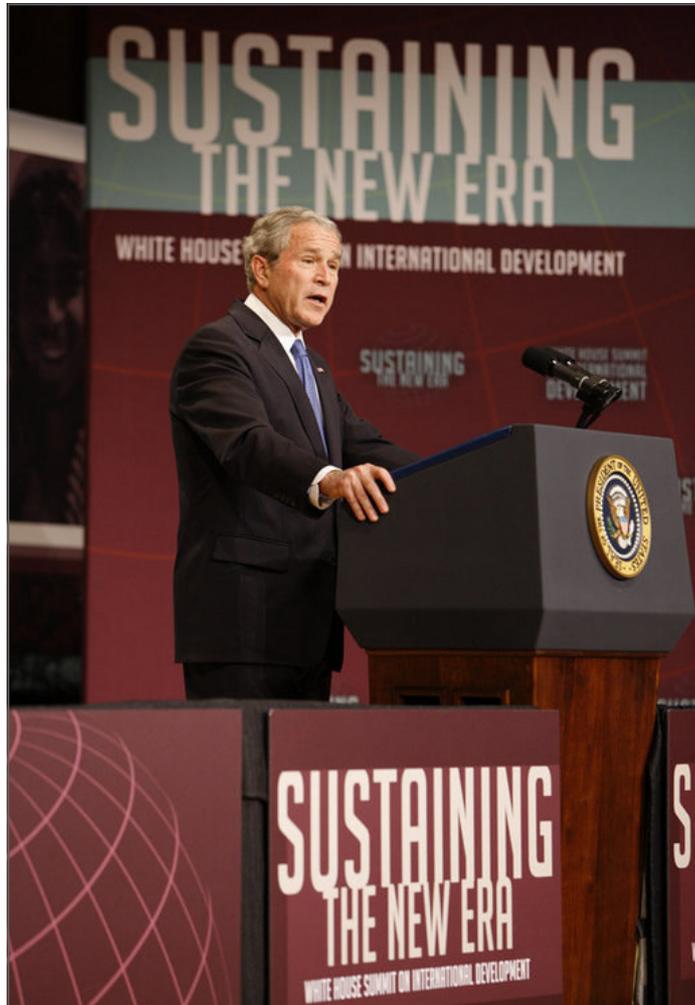
By David McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington — Despite global financial instability, the United States continues to seek progress in reducing global poverty, confronting disease and promoting economic opportunity in the world's poorest nations.

"The United States is staying steady in our commitments," U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Henrietta Fore told reporters October 20. "It is a challenge that we as countries around the world must do as partners together."

Fore previewed the White House Summit on International Development, titled "Sustaining the New Era," an October 21 conference showcasing foreign-assistance successes from USAID and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, as well as innovative initiatives such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the President's Malaria Initiative.

Since 2001, the Bush administration has introduced the largest expansion of foreign aid programs since the postwar reconstruction of Europe under the Marshall Plan, Fore said. The administration has also championed innovative strategies to empower a new generation of leaders to deliver health care, education and new economic oppor-



President George W. Bush delivers remarks at the White House Summit on International Development Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2008, in Washington, D.C.

tunities to their citizens.

"The best argument for our development programs is found in the people they benefit," President Bush said in a February 2008 speech. "You see it when you hold a baby that would have died of malaria without America's support. You see it when you look into the eyes of an AIDS patient who has been brought back to life. You see it in the quiet pride of a child going to school for the first time."

The conference will be organized around four key principles: the importance of countries leading efforts to tackle their own development challenges; a focus on good governance; linking further development aid to measurable progress; and complementing aid with trade by developing new strategies to promote sustainable, long-term economic growth.

"This is a worldwide approach to development," Fore said. "I think it will be multifaceted and very interesting."

Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will address the October 21 conference, as will Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and British musician and activist Bob Geldof, Fore said.

"Given the recent economic downturn where there is concern that developing countries and their citizens will be more vulnerable," said White House Press Secretary Dana Perino, "it's more important than ever that we and other developed countries keep our commitments and continue to fund development assistance programs, as well as work to increase trade."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

McGovern, Dole Receive World Food Prize

By Kathryn McConnell
Staff Writer

Des Moines, Iowa — World Food Prize winners Bob Dole and George McGovern said more money from more sources is needed to solve the problem of world hunger, which is exacerbated by today's financial crisis.

Ending hunger is within reach, McGovern said at the October 16 World Food Prize award ceremony at the Iowa Capitol Building in Des Moines.

In a briefing with reporters on World Food Day (October 16), the two retired senators said that, in addition to pressing members of the new Congress for more money and commodities for food assistance programs, they would ask other countries to increase contributions.

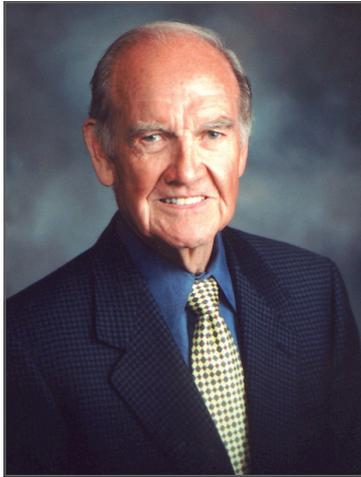
"The United States can't do it alone," Dole said the previous night at a public forum.

The World Food Prize recognizes McGovern and Dole for their long-time work for global hunger assistance and for founding the McGovern-Dole international school feeding program.

The retired senators spoke about the importance of school feeding programs in reducing poverty, especially for girls.

"If we're going to prepare children to learn, we have to feed them," Dole said.

"The majority of the hungry children



Senator George McGovern, who shares the World Food Prize, initiated the World Food Program.

are girls, because of the favoritism to boys. When girls are hungry, they stay home from school, and when they stay home from school, they marry as early as age 10" and begin having children, McGovern said.

Education improves a woman's opportunities, her chances for higher paying work, and the likelihood she'll marry someone close to her age who is not likely to transmit HIV/AIDS to her, McGovern said. And, he said, that education simply reduces the chance that a female will be "pushed around by men and boys."

South Dakota Democrat McGovern and Kansas Republican Dole credited each other for creating a bipartisan atmosphere in the Senate needed for "a lot of good legislation" dealing with hunger.

The award ceremony was the highlight of the World Food Prize week in Des Moines. The prize was established by Iowa native Norman Borlaug, the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize winner who launched a "green revo-

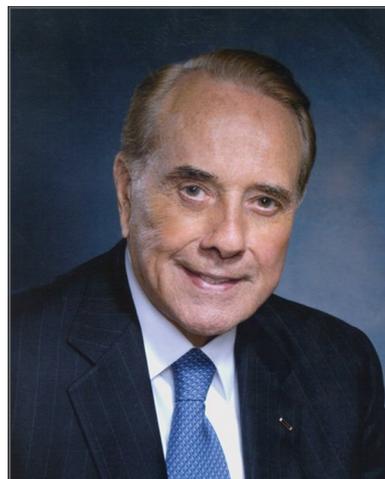
lution" that reversed the growth of famine in poor countries. He is credited with saving 1 billion lives.

Due to illness, the 94-year-old Borlaug was unable to attend the ceremony for the first time in its 22-year history.

MORE RESEARCH NEEDED

Dole and McGovern said research is needed to find new sources for producing ethanol and biodiesel. They held out hopes for switchgrass and maize stalks in energy production and said other alternative sources of energy should be developed.

"It becomes a moral challenge not to use food for fuel if hunger exists," McGovern said.



Senator Bob Dole shares the 2008 World Food Prize with Senator George McGovern.

McGovern said international food programs should be shifted to being at least 25 percent in cash, with the remainder in commodity contributions. In the past, U.S. farmer groups have wanted to keep a higher proportion of aid in the form of contributions of U.S.-produced commodities.

Cash allows recipients to purchase agricultural-production

supplies and fresh produce from local markets, and thus can be a form of economic development for local communities, they said.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

U.S. State Department Launches Iraq Cultural Heritage Project

By Lauren Monsen
Staff Writer

Washington — First lady Laura Bush has announced the implementation of the Iraq Cultural Heritage Project (ICHP), a major effort launched by the U.S. Department of State to preserve the archaeological and cultural treasures of Iraq.

Appearing October 16 at a ceremony hosted by the Embassy of Iraq in Washington, Mrs. Bush explained that the State Department — through the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad — is funding the project with a grant of nearly \$13 million. An additional \$1 million will be provided by the department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), "and Iraqi officials are requesting increased funding from their own government that will complement the project's goals," said the first lady.

In her remarks, Mrs. Bush emphasized the antiquity of Iraqi civilization, whose roots can be traced to the Bronze Age. During that era, the societies that occupied the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers collectively were known as Mesopotamia.

"Americans have become well versed in Iraq's recent history," said Mrs. Bush. "Yet many of us may not realize that the people of today's Iraq are the guardians of 10,000 years of history — tablets etched with the earliest samples of human writing, musical instruments from the kingdom of Sumer, statues from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. All of these ancient objects belong to the 'Cradle of Civilization' — a land we now call Iraq."



Mrs. Laura Bush delivers remarks at the launching of the Iraq Cultural Heritage Project Thursday, Oct. 16, 2008, at the Iraq Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The first lady observed that "Iraq's cultural heritage organizations were once the best in the Middle East." However, "travel restrictions, diminished resources, and violence under Saddam Hussein's regime made it impossible" for Iraqi museum officials to sustain this excellence, she added.

Since the overthrow of Saddam's regime, the United States "has worked to help the people of Iraq rebuild" their cultural institutions," said Mrs. Bush. "The State Department has already invested more than \$3 million in these efforts. It's helped to bring Iraqis to the United States for intensive professional training [as curators and conservationists]. It's helped to build partnerships between American and Iraqi museums, and support exten-

sive infrastructure repairs to the Iraqi National Museum."

The ICHP will be implemented in partnership with the ECA and Iraqi government entities responsible for cultural patrimony. A conservation and historic preservation institute will be established in the city of Erbil, which will focus on technical and professional training. Experts from the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, the Winterthur Conservation Program in Newark, Delaware, and the University of Delaware will be involved, and the U.S. National Park Service will provide expertise in establishing the historic preservation and archaeology program of the new institute.

In Erbil, the new institute will train professionals "to preserve Iraq's historic treasures and to protect more than 12,000 registered archaeological sites in Iraq," said the first lady.

In addition, the ICHP will help rehabilitate the infrastructure of the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, design and develop new collections storage facilities, and improve museum gallery space and the museum's conservation laboratory. Also, with the collaboration of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the ICHP will help create a two-year professional development program for employees of the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the Iraq National Museum and other museums.

Under the professional development program, Iraqis will study in the United States, "where they'll learn

(Continued on page 23)

Lecture Series Examines Values at Work in U.S. Democracy

By Meghan Loftus
Staff Writer

Washington — How can U.S. democratic values and the importance of participation in the democratic process best be conveyed to young Americans?

Scholars and citizens examined that question in the Taube Discussion Series on American Values, which opened October 14 with its first lecture, "Democracy and Citizen Participation."

The Taube series is a two-year project by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Taube Philanthropists. The series is aimed at identifying basic values of American democracy and ways to teach these values to American students.

Liberty, justice and equality are values Americans agree are part of the national identity. "What do we do to maintain these values?" asked Moses Boyd, a principal in the Integrated Solutions Group lobbying firm.

American values in democracy are rights-based, said Donna Shalala, president of the University of Miami and former U.S. secretary of health and human services. Shalala, the keynote speaker for the discussion, cited the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion, assembly, petition and the press.

LESSONS OF HISTORY

Underlying these values, Shalala said, is an important fact: Americans enjoy the right to dissent, protected as free speech. The town meeting, first used in America in

the early 18th century, was a way to voice opposition to local government and participate directly in its proceedings. Judicial review is a check on the power of the legislative branch of government and ensures citizens' rights are not violated.

"Democracy requires great and courageous individuals," Shalala said. She cited John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Profiles in Courage*, which showcased how eight senators during the Civil War era voiced opposition, often unpopular, to issues that threatened democracy.

One senator, Republican Edmund Ross of Kansas, voted against the Republican-led impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. Ross cast a decisive vote against conviction, breaking with his party but preventing a major government upheaval in a nation still fragile after the Civil War.

"I almost literally looked into my open grave," said Ross of his decision to break with his party. As his vote showed, it takes commitment to American democratic ideals to keep the U.S. system of government running.

"Understand it's going to take a lot of work to sustain the health of the American democracy," Boyd said.

Passing these principles from generation to generation continues through civic education.

Peter Levine of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) talked about some of the ways students have learned about American values: studying American history,

discussing current events, extracurricular activities, participation in student government and school administration, service learning (compulsory community service tied to academics), and simulations like model United Nations assemblies and mock trials. Such experiences teach U.S. students how to exercise their voices in the public sphere.

Democracy is hard work, Boyd said. Americans must remain vigilant to ensure rights are guaranteed to all. CIRCLE and similar civic education groups focus on expanding education about American democratic values.

College-educated young people historically have been more involved in the electoral process than those without a college degree. CIRCLE and others are working to bridge this gap to make sure everyone has access to civic education and has the knowledge to fully participate in American democracy.

Panelists expressed confidence that young Americans were up to the task, especially with the rise in volunteerism and voting levels among young people during the 2008 election cycle.

"I feel comfortable asking a lot of this Millennial Generation," Shalala said. "They can and must take ownership of the process."

The Taube series is scheduled to address the rights and responsibilities of citizens at its next session, to be held at the Hastings College of Law in San Francisco in February 2009. ♦

Scientists Discover Workings of New Class of Antibiotics

By Daniel Gorelick
Staff Writer

Washington — Scientists have discovered how several novel compounds attack bacteria, paving the way for development of treatments against antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis, according to a study published in the journal *Cell* on October 17.

More than 2 billion people are infected with the bacteria that cause tuberculosis, and an estimated 1.5 million die from it annually, according to the World Health Organization. Infections can be treated with a six-month course of antibiotics, but drug-resistant tuberculosis strains have emerged as a major challenge to treatment.

The new study focused on three compounds — myxopyronin, coralopyronin and ripostatin — and demonstrated that they attack a different site within bacteria than do antibiotics now used to treat infections. Bacteria have not yet evolved a way to defend against this unique attack mechanism, making these compounds promising candidates in the fight against antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis.

“For six decades, antibiotics have been our bulwark against bacterial infectious diseases,” said Richard Ebright, a professor in the Department of Chemistry at Rutgers University in New Jersey and a lead study author. “Now, this bulwark is collapsing. There is an urgent need for new antibiotic compounds and practical new targets.”

American and Indian scientists at Rutgers and researchers at the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Re-

search in Braunschweig, Germany, collaborated on the research.

OVERCOMING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

A battlefield adage — if you build a better sword your enemy will build a better shield — applies to scientists’ war against disease-causing

Rifampicin is particularly effective because it kills the slow- and fast-growing tuberculosis variants.

In the case of rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis, the bacteria develop mutations that prevent rifampicin from binding to RNAP. Such strains remain infectious and cause disease but are resistant to treatment.



A tuberculosis patient in rural Tugela Ferry, South Africa.

bacteria. New antibiotics may be effective initially, but, inevitably, strains of bacteria evolve that are resistant to a particular antibiotic.

The rate at which resistance develops is a function of how responsibly treatment is administered. For example, combination therapy — simultaneous treatment with multiple compounds that attack different targets — decreases the rate at which resistant strains evolve, Ebright told *America.gov*.

One frontline anti-tuberculosis agent, rifampicin (also called rifampin), attaches to an essential bacterial protein called RNA polymerase (RNAP) and prevents it from functioning, killing the bacterium.

More than 10 years ago, study co-authors Rolf Jansen and Herbert Irschik identified the antibiotics myxopyronin, coralopyronin and ripostatin from soil microbes and showed that they kill tuberculosis bacteria by attacking RNAP.

Hundreds of antibiotic compounds have been similarly identified, but without understanding how these chemicals attack bacteria it is nearly impossible to choose which to develop for use in treating infections.

TARGETING BACTERIAL PROTEINS

RNAP is shaped like a crab claw. The claw opens and closes to grab

(Continued on page 23)

\$2 Egg Beater May Help Diagnose Disease in Developing Countries

By Daniel Gorelick
Staff Writer

Washington — Plastic tubing, tape and a \$2 egg beater could be used to perform blood tests in the field, according to a report in the journal *Lab on a Chip*.

The portable apparatus requires no electrical power and could help diagnose diseases, such as hepatitis and tapeworm infections, in areas distant from centralized laboratories.

“This technique is simple and works remarkably well,” said Doug Weibel, a microbiologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Designed by George M. Whitesides and his colleagues at Harvard University, the modified egg beater is a substitute for bulky centrifuge equipment that costs hundreds of dollars and requires electricity to separate plasma from blood.

Isolating plasma in the field would reduce the time required to diagnose an infection and would increase access to patients located in remote areas and unable to travel to central health facilities, according to the report.

AN INEXPENSIVE, PORTABLE CENTRIFUGE

Medical diagnostics often rely on testing plasma, the liquid portion of whole blood. Plasma is obtained by spinning tubes of whole blood rapidly in a centrifuge, which separates



The egg-beater centrifuge needs no maintenance, electricity or special operator training.

molecules according to their densities — blood cells sink to the bottom while the liquid plasma remains on top. The presence of viruses and parasites, and the levels of clinically important molecules such as cholesterol can be determined using plasma.

To make an egg-beater centrifuge, researchers took a short stretch of plastic, polyethylene tubing (inner diameter

1.57 millimeters), filled it with whole blood and taped one end to an egg beater. Operating the egg beater at a “comfortable pace” for approximately 10 minutes separated plasma, according to the study.

Scientists used a simple, inexpensive paper-based test to measure cholesterol levels in plasma before and after adding known amounts of cholesterol to whole blood. The added cholesterol increased levels as expected, indicating that the plasma was isolated correctly.

Plasma isolated using the egg-beater method is good enough to use in tests to detect hepatitis B and cysticercosis (a parasitic disease) and probably could be used to detect other infectious diseases,

according to the authors.

USING SCIENCE TO BENEFIT DEVELOPING NATIONS

One focus of the Whitesides Research Group is using science to benefit people in developing economies. Their goal is to develop diagnostic tools that are inexpensive, adaptable to local conditions and easily stored, transported and operated.

So far, they have developed an inexpensive and portable method for using antibodies to test for disease. This test can distinguish HIV-infected blood from uninfected blood.

For the egg-beater centrifuge, Whitesides purchased a \$2.50 egg beater from a local grocery store in Cambridge, Massachusetts — a similar egg beater is sold throughout India for 105 rupees.



Tubes of blood separated into its components. With a \$2 egg beater, similar separations may now be performed without electricity.

The egg-beater centrifuge should reduce the burden on health care workers, who often are limited by insufficient supplies. Unlike expensive medical equipment, the egg-beater centrifuge is not an attractive target for thieves.

Researchers hope that this tool will enable further development of tests that rely on blood plasma. ♦

U.S.-Funded Program Aims to Balance Human, Environmental Needs

By Daniel Gorelick
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Johnson & Johnson, a pharmaceutical and consumer health company, formed a three-year partnership that will invest \$3 million for an integrated health and conservation program in rural communities in Kenya, Nepal and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Representatives of USAID and Johnson & Johnson announced the initiative at a press conference October 8. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), an international nonprofit conservation organization, will administer the aid.

“We are very pleased to join WWF and Johnson & Johnson in this unique partnership, as such strategic alliances with the private sector and other nontraditional partners increase and sustain

USAID’s development impact,” said Kent Hill, assistant administrator of USAID’s Global Health Bureau. “By combining our resources and capabilities, we can help improve people’s health and build goodwill for conservation efforts that address community needs.”

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

More than 1 billion people live in remote areas of great biological diversity. Remote communities frequently lack access to basic services such as education and family planning.

The result is rapid population

growth that threatens ecosystems because, as communities grow, they deplete increasing amounts of natural resources. To combat this requires integrating population, health and environmental services, according to USAID.

Basic health services, family planning and natural resources management are connected and interdependent, according to Hill. Aid should be integrated and not focus only on one of these categories.

The initiative reflects the Johnson & Johnson philanthropic philosophy, which focuses on community-based approaches, said Sharon D’Agostino, vice president of worldwide corporate contributions and community relations at Johnson & Johnson. “Our previous successes with WWF lead us to believe that the populations reached through this new partnership will experience life-changing, long-term differences in their health and in their environment.”



An elephant strolls through the Tsavo East National Park in Kenya.

WWF will administer the program and coordinate aid.

Money will be used to expand aid to currently served areas, where infrastructure is already in place, and also will be used to add new areas of service, according to Tom Dillon, senior vice president of

Specific activities will include family planning, obstetric health, HIV/AIDS education, natural resources management and conservation education.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

“Government cannot manage social issues alone,” Hill said. By partnering with private companies and nongovernmental organizations, government aid programs can accomplish more. For every dollar contributed by the United States, \$2.70 comes from private sources, according to Hill.

field programs at WWF.

USAID’s population, health and environment aid program is based on 2002 legislation stating that under the Child Survival and Health Programs Fund, a portion of the funds allocated for family planning and reproductive health should be used “in areas where population growth threatens biodiversity of endangered species.” The program focuses on delivering aid to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Between \$1 million and \$3 million are allocated annually. ♦

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SECTION
AMERICAN EMBASSY**

P.O.Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Phone: 251-11-5174007
251-11-5174000
Fax: 251-11-1242454
Email: pasaddis@state.gov



See also

<http://www.america.gov/>

Telling America's story

U.S. State Department Launches Iraq Cultural . . .

(Continued from page 18)

the new methods of preservation that they were largely isolated from during Saddam Hussein's regime," said Mrs. Bush.

Describing the Iraq National Museum as "home to one of the world's finest collections of Mesopotamian antiques," she said that "this institution has endured frequent closures during times of war and social unrest." The museum's doors were permanently sealed in 2006, but "the Iraq Cultural Heritage Project will hasten the day when the museum reopens its collections to all Iraqis — as well as to scholars and visitors from around the world," the first lady predicted.

Both the American and Iraqi peoples are deeply committed to protecting historic landmarks and artifacts, Mrs. Bush declared. "Americans understand the importance of pre-

serving cultural heritage — as evidenced by our many museums, our National Park sites, and our initiatives like the National Register of Historic Places," she said.

"Preservation efforts are even more important in a country like Iraq, where many citizens cannot remember a time when their nation was free from conflict."

Not only will the Iraq Cultural Heritage Project "promote national unity by highlighting the rich heritage that all Iraqis share," but the project also "will benefit all humanity by preserving the great historic sites, archaeological wonders and cultural objects that tell the story of the world's earliest communities," said Mrs. Bush. "The United States is proud to partner with Iraq as it rebuilds its capacity to safeguard its birthplace of human civilization." ♦

Scientists Discover Workings of New Class of Antibiotics . . .

(Continued from page 20)

DNA and assemble RNA, the first step in synthesizing proteins.

"Just as with a real crab claw, one pincer stays fixed and one pincer moves — opening and closing to keep DNA in place," Ebright said. "The pincer that moves does so by rotating about a hinge. Our studies show that the three antibiotics bind to and jam this hinge."

"It's an amazing site," added Eddy Arnold, one of the study's leaders, referring to this hinge. "It's a drug designer's dream because it's a pocket that can accommodate a variety of chemical inhibitors."

Rifampicin binds a different region of the claw than does myxopy-

ronin, which explains why tuberculosis strains that are resistant to rifampicin are susceptible to myxopyronin.

Every cell, from those in bacteria to those in humans, needs proteins to function and uses some version of RNAP to produce them. The specific part of the claw's hinge where myxopyronin binds is different in humans and bacteria, suggesting that myxopyronin will not impair the human version of RNAP. Because bacterial RNAPs are similar to one another, myxopyronin could be effective against many types of bacteria.

Now that researchers understand how myxopyronin works, Ebright and his colleagues are synthesizing more potent myxopyronin deriva-

tives that potentially can be used as part of a combination therapy against antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis.

Already they have identified 12 compounds that are more potent than myxopyronin and nontoxic in laboratory animals, with dozens more remaining to be characterized. Ebright estimates that it will take about two years to identify the most effective compound. If this occurs, clinical trials could begin in five years.

For more information on U.S. efforts to fight tuberculosis, see "U.S. Increases Funds for Combating Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis" (<http://www.america.gov/st/health-english/2007/March/200703261448481cnirellep0.3804285.html>)." ♦