



NEWS

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JANUARY 23, 2007

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STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN WALLY HERGER

"On President Bush's State of the Union Speech"

"President Bush tonight expressed why this is a pivotal time in our history. Our nation is in the midst of a generational struggle against terrorism.

The American people have grown frustrated by the continuing violence in Iraq, a central front in the global War on Terrorism. I share this frustration. Progress has been unacceptably slow, and our strategy up to this point proved inadequate. Mistakes have been made, and our military strategy, leadership and tactics needed meaningful changes. The President responded, recently outlining a new strategy. By replacing our top generals and adjusting our course of action, he, too, recognized that the status quo is unacceptable.

"Yet, the importance of the conflict in Iraq has not changed. Winning is critical to our national security because a stable, democratic Iraq would deny terrorists a safe haven, and make the world's most dangerous region more secure. On the other hand, defeat would provide terrorists with an operating base to plan and train for attacks on America. This is why failure in Iraq simply cannot be an option.

"As our men and women in uniform prepare to implement the President's new plan, I believe it is essential that our nation speak with one voice in support of them. Congress plays a crucial role in providing counsel to the President and conducting meaningful oversight over our foreign policy. Yet, five hundred thirty-five members of Congress cannot serve as armchair generals. Now that our Commander in Chief, working with our generals on the ground, has adjusted our course of action, it is critical that we unite in support of our troops as they implement it. We must give this policy a chance to work.

"Meanwhile, I applaud the President for discussing the strength of our nation's economy. Since 2003, our economy has produced over seven million new jobs, and the national unemployment rate today is historically very low. I will continue working to maintain the tax relief that has helped spark our current economic strength. We must eliminate wasteful spending and address the looming financial catastrophe among our entitlement programs. Neglecting this challenge would be deeply irresponsible. We owe it to our future generations to address this issue now.

"I believe the President provided a bold and intriguing proposal to expand health coverage in our nation, and reduce rising health care costs. I share the President's concerns on the need to extend tax incentives for health insurance to people who work for small businesses or are self-employed. Through providing a standard tax deduction for health insurance purchased by individuals and families outside, separate from employer-sponsored health care, Americans will have greater flexibility to move from job to job and still retain their health coverage.

"In addition, I commend the President for discussing his Administration's increased commitment to border security. I also applaud him for recognizing the need for a temporary lawful guest worker program. We are a nation of laws, and our immigration policy cannot in any way provide an incentive for individuals to continue to enter our nation unlawfully. As Congress debates this issue later this year, I will work to ensure our new policy is balanced and amnesty free."