

Washington, DC— This evening, Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) attended President Bush's final State of the Union address. He issued the following statement:

“After seven long years of a president whom history will judge harshly, I had low expectations for tonight's final State of the Union. Though I am pleased that President Bush finally was willing to come to the negotiating table and work with Democrats on a much needed economic stimulus package, it took far too long to do so.

“Despite our desperate need for policies that will help us address a brutal war in Iraq, a broken health care system and a warming planet, this president has ignored our nation's most pressing issues and refused to cooperate. Under his leadership, earmarks exploded and the globe warmed, yet suddenly he wants to be named the earmark and energy reformer. This country doesn't have time, money or patience for more empty, partisan promises. I look forward to having a more willing partner in the White House in less than a year's time.”

The State of the Union addressed Americans' economic anxiety, and Democrats worked in a bipartisan way in the House to fashion an economic stimulus package that will be voted on in the House of Representatives tomorrow.

Unfortunately the President called for more of the same in Iraq and offered no hope for a change of direction. 2007 was the deadliest year for U.S. troops in Iraq and the President's refusal to change direction comes even though the troop surge has failed to meet its stated objective: political reconciliation in Iraq.

The President's speech included a belated call for reform of the earmark process, which has ballooned under the Republican-controlled Congress. When Democrats gained control on Congress early last year, they instituted a one year moratorium on earmarks for 2007 until a reformed process could be put in place and rules adopted that provided for unprecedented transparency in earmarks, making significant reductions in their amounts and costs. The Democratic Congress is willing to continue to work with the White House on earmark reforms that provide better transparency and accountability for American taxpayers.