

Washington, D.C.-Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) issued the following statement tonight in response to President Bush's Annual State of the Union Address:

"The State of the Union should mark the transition from the vague rhetoric of the campaign and the inaugural speech to how to address real problems and make America stronger. Tonight, President Bush failed to make this transition, and it remains unclear how he plans to address our country's most pressing issues.

"The President's budget should tell us what we are for and how we are going to invest in America's future while still controlling overall spending. However, Bush's presentation of his budget priorities was still too vague and it answered neither of these essential questions.

"A good place to start reigning in our runaway spending should be Iraq. To spend \$300 billion and counting, without a plan to win the peace is unacceptable. The administration needs to start with a timetable to scale down American involvement and use Iraqis to defend and rebuild their country. Why pay \$100,000 to foreigners to drive a truck when 40 percent of Iraqi workers are unemployed and would do it for \$200 a month?

"The Social Security debate appeared to me to be the President's missed opportunity. He is proposing to borrow trillions of dollars to start private accounts while using the Social Security surplus to hide the true cost of the deficit. As a result, the President's proposal would give young people far less for their retirement (54 percent of current benefits), than doing nothing at all (when the system would still cover 78 percent of current benefits in 2052). This proposal is a non starter for Oregonians and I believe, for this Congress as well. It is still not too late to involve people in a bipartisan effort to strengthen and make this essential program more secure, but the President must provide that leadership if we are going to be successful."