

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Earl Blumenauer reacted strongly today to the Bush administration's announcement to deploy a nationwide missile defense system. "Again, the Bush administration is off-target from the nation's priorities and fiscal reality," Blumenauer stated. "This theological approach to national defense is not a priority now or in the future."

"This is a terrible waste of resources. September 11th and subsequent terrorist activities have proven that national missile defense is not a major priority at this time. This Star Wars technology has proven elusive for twenty years. There is no indication that it will ultimately be successful."

"Oregon and the country are in serious economic problems, and we have much higher priorities for the quarter of a trillion dollars the President wants to waste. With Oregon's financial condition it is outrageous that we are not going to spend this money to meet responsibilities for Medicare, Medicaid and for the other needs of our senior citizens."

President Bush will begin deploying a limited system to defend against ballistic missiles by 2004. In the past two years, \$7.8 billion has been spent on research, development and testing for missile defense, with limited success. The estimated long-term costs are expected to be in the range of hundreds of billions of dollars, which would place missile defense as the Pentagon's most expensive development program.

This announcement comes six days after the latest test of the system failed when an interceptor rocket did not separate from its booster rocket and destroy a Minuteman II intercontinental ballistic missile as planned.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said in an October speech "We actually can hit a bullet with a bullet. Our missile-defense program since 2001 has demonstrated that missile technology, in particular hit-to-kill technology, actually works," Wolfowitz.

However, only three of eight tests of the ground-based system since 1999 have been judged successes by the military.