

DeFazio: President mislead Americans about Iraq situation

by Bend Weekly News Sources

U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio, (D-Oregon) this week responded to President Bush's State of the Union address. Following are DeFazio's remarks regarding Iraq, energy, healthcare, budget, taxes, immigration, military, and social security reform:

"American voters sent a clear message for change last November that the president's failed policies on Iraq, the economy, energy policy, and health care, are no longer acceptable. Tonight's speech proves the president was not listening. He offers no substantial changes to the American people. Tax and health care policies continue to favor the wealthiest among us, with little relief for the average American family. The president's 'stay the course' plan for Iraq involves sending over 20,000 more troops to referee a civil war that's been going on for 1,400 years. And despite the president's professed interest in a new energy policy, he opposes legislation passed by the House that would move America toward energy independence."

Iraq: "The president continues to mislead the American people about the situation in Iraq, and he continues to offer a status quo, more of the same, stay the course plan. The war that Congress authorized has been won. Saddam Hussein is dead. There is no threat from weapons of mass destruction. Our troops should not be forced to continue policing a 1,400-year-old civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. It is time to turn control of the country over to the Iraqis to build their own future, and bring our troops home."

Energy: "Each year, the President talks a good game on energy, but his follow-through is always to lavish taxpayer subsidies on his powerful friends in the oil and gas industries while they gouge consumers. By contrast, the House just voted to repeal a variety of oil industry giveaways and to use that money to significantly boost the federal investment in alternative and renewable fuels, energy efficiency and conservation programs. Unfortunately, the president is opposed to that bill. If we're going to cure our nation's 'addiction to oil,' the White House must offer more than just rhetorical support."

Health care: "The president rehashed his greatest hits on health care policy, including health savings accounts, medical liability reform, and association health plans. However, none of these policies make health care more affordable or accessible for middle- and lower-income families. The only new idea he offered is to tax those who currently have employer-provided health care in order to allow those without to try their luck begging insurance companies to provide them with an individual plan. That is not a serious effort to expand health care to the 47 million Americans without insurance."

Budget/taxes: "The president insists that it is possible to cut taxes by trillions of dollars, increase defense spending by billions of dollars and still balance the federal budget. His record of the last six years proves otherwise. President Bush's strategy has led to more debt accumulated during the last six years than by the first 41 presidents combined. The budget cannot be balanced solely by cutting spending. In fact, we could eliminate the entire discretionary budget except for the Pentagon, and the federal budget would still be in deficit. Congress must instill discipline on both spending and taxation. The House just voted to require any additional spending or tax cuts in the federal budget be offset so that it does not add to the deficit. If the president were serious about restoring fiscal responsibility, he would support that common sense rule."

Immigration: "I agree with the president that we need to significantly improve security at our nation's borders. I have voted for a variety of bills to do just that. I also agree that employers who hire illegal immigrants must face the legal consequences. However, I strongly disagree with the president's proposal to import hundreds of thousands of so-called 'guest workers' every year. That is a recipe for lower wages, reduced bargaining power, and dismal working conditions for millions of American workers."

Strengthening the military: "I was pleased that the president ended his fight against Congress' efforts to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps. His belated recognition that we need a larger military force is welcome! For five years, I (and many of my colleagues) have supported an increase in active duty military."

Social Security reform: "The president again raised the specter of Social Security privatization. His proposal actually makes Social Security's financial problems worse, not better. That is no solution. His plan would also lead to large benefit cuts and would put beneficiaries at the whim of the stock market. I plan to reintroduce my own Social Security plan that would stabilize its financing by ensuring that millionaires pay the same percentage of their income to support Social Security as the average Oregonian, among other reforms to strengthen the program and improve benefits."

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