News From:
U.S. Congressman John B. Larson
serving Connecticut's First District
106 Cannon Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
221 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06106

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CONTACT: Emily Barocas/202-225-7295 or 202-593-1377

CONGRESSMAN LARSON CONDEMNS PRESIDENT'S RHETORIC ON GAS PRICES

Washington, DC – Today, Democrats in Congress reacted strongly to the President's call to increase offshore drilling for oil. Congressman John B. Larson *(CT-01)* ¸Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus, said:

"President Bush's attempt to politicize the oil crisis that is wreaking havoc on average American's ability to make ends meet is uncalled for and poorly informed. Time and again we have shown that more drilling for oil will do nothing to lower the prices at the pump for the millions of people who are suffering today. In fact, drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge will not produce a drop of oil for ten years. And even after waiting ten years for, the drilling won't lower gas prices by more than a few pennies per gallon.

"The President's speech was nothing but a gift to his friends at the big oil companies. And, it is these oil companies who already have rights to drill for 70% of the oil on the Outer Continental Shelf. They have leases to drill on 40 million acres of offshore land, yet they have put only 7 million acres into production. Why should we open more lands to oil exploration, when oil companies are not utilizing the lands they have? This is part of a trend of stockpiling leases to control oil prices and this New Direction Congress can not support it.

"The President should keep his focus on ways we can actually lower prices and help American families today. For seven years he has allowed speculators to run rampant in the energy markets. It is time for that to end."

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