

LARSON APPLAUDS PRESIDENT FOR INCLUDING FIRST RESPONDER LEGISLATION IN THE BUDGET

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today applauded President Bush's announcement that he will include a request for \$3.5 billion in his fiscal year 2003 budget for a homeland security initiative targeted to meet the needs of communities and front line responders throughout the nation. The president's proposal is similar to the provisions in H.R. 3161, the Municipal Preparation and Strategic Response Act, which Larson introduced last October, designed to aid local governments, police departments, firefighters and emergency medical responders in defending against acts of terrorism.

Larson's legislation - which currently has 93 House co-sponsors - was based on several meetings he held with state and local leaders in conjunction with the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) in the weeks following September 11 to determine their needs. After its introduction, Larson sent his legislation to Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Today, Larson stated: "I am very pleased to see that many of the provisions contained in the Municipal Preparation and Strategic Response Act will be included in the president's homeland defense proposal aimed at aiding municipalities, local police officers, firefighters and emergency medical responders. We must meet our homeland defense needs by planning from the bottom up, focused on the men and women who would respond first to an act of terrorism. I greatly appreciate the many thoughts and ideas that state and local leaders provided when we discussed their specific needs in the wake of September 11, many of which were adopted when the legislation was being written."

Although pleased with the preliminary announcement, Larson and Rep. John Baldacci wrote to the president today to urge him to address several other issues in his final proposal. Specifically, that he expand funding for strategic planning for communities, that he work to ensure that the majority of planning funds proposed in this initiative go directly to local communities and that he waive the local matching fund requirements that exist with most of the programs currently in place to disburse these types of grants - which many local leaders Larson met with named as a serious concern.

Larson also stated: "While I am very pleased about the president's preliminary announcement, we will not see many of the details until he submits his budget request to Congress, and I have deep concerns about where this funding will come from in the president's budget request, because of our increasing budget deficit. The massive tax cut that was signed last year by President Bush has seriously limited our resources to fund much needed homeland defense proposals such as this. In order to ensure that we are able to meet our homeland defense needs, while at the same time preventing deep budget deficits, Congress must roll back the tax cut."

Richard Porth, the Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments stated: "Congressman Larson's efforts in meeting with state and local leaders in the aftermath of September 11 were greatly appreciated. The series of meetings that were held in partnership with CRCOG were both productive and useful, and provided a valuable outlet for local leaders to bring their needs and ideas to the forefront in terms of affecting the legislation that Congressman Larson later introduced."

See attached side-by-side comparison of H.R. 3161 and the president's proposal and copy of Larson/Baldacci Letter to President Bush

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