

## LARSON: BUSH BUDGET SHORTCHANGES KEY PRIORITIES WHILE DRAGGING THE NATION FURTHER INTO THE RED

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WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today issued the following statement on President Bush's fiscal year 2005 budget request.

"When President Bush took office, the nation had a projected 10-year budget surplus of \$5.6 trillion. The surplus could have fully funded a real prescription drug benefit for seniors, funded education assistance, helped achieve energy independence, and met the needs of our veterans. Unfortunately, only three years later, we are staring at a budget deficit of more than half a trillion dollars for next year alone. The Bush administration has pushed through trillions in tax cuts primarily benefiting the wealthiest Americans. This budget, which is deep in red ink and under funds key priorities, is the consequence of that total fiscal irresponsibility, and yet the President still wants his disastrous budget-busting tax cuts made permanent.

"In this budget, the president falls far short of meeting the federal share of 40 percent for the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, and instead only provides a small fraction of the increase in funding that is needed. This leaves the burden of paying for this massive program on states and municipalities. This budget under funds his own No Child Left Behind education program by \$9.4 billion, meaning he will have under funded this program by a total of \$26.5 billion since it was signed into law. The budget also freezes and cuts college tuition aid, slashes funding for vocational and community colleges by 25 percent, and freezes funding for after school programs -- shutting the door in the faces of 1.3 million children.

"While the VA budget request does provide an increase in funding, it fails to meet the needs of veterans in the VA healthcare system. The addition of new fees and co-payments will actually increase healthcare costs for more than half a million veterans. All of our veterans deserve better.

"The Bush budget continues the pattern of chronically under funding alternative energy investments and development. Funding for science programs and energy conservation programs at DOE are both reduced by one percent. The administration continues to ignore the deteriorating conditions in our national labs-submitting a request that reduces infrastructure funding by 46 percent. These labs are at the heart of our energy research enterprise. Energy supply research programs-programs designed to develop alternatives to petroleum and coal-based energy generation-are barely up by one percent. Fuel cell funding, while increased slightly, is no where near as comprehensive as what I have proposed or what was included in the energy bill, which is bogged down because of the many other controversial provisions that were attached. This is not even close to being a path towards energy independence.

"This budget calls for hundreds of millions in spending on the President's Mars and lunar exploration proposals, but at the same time makes cuts to other important NASA programs. At a time when we should be dramatically increasing the research and development funding for our aerospace industry to keep up with international competition, this budget request actually cuts what little funding is currently provided in this area. The goals of the new space initiatives are laudable, however, there are serious funding needs here on Earth that should be met first, and bolstering America's aerospace industry is at the top of that list.

"Funding for defense programs does continue to be strong and I am very pleased to see that the programs that are critical to Connecticut, including the F/A-22 Raptor and Joint Strike Fighter, are well funded. This portion of the budget request is good news for Connecticut's defense industry and workforce.

"The Bush administration is clearly content to dole out trillions in tax cuts that benefit the very wealthy and drain federal resources, then propose a budget that slashes funding for the nation's key priorities and neediest citizens," said Larson.

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