

LARSON COMMENTS ON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

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WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) offered his reaction this evening to the President's address to a joint session of Congress.

"I would like to commend the President for the tone of the speech he gave tonight. It was clearly designed to reach across party lines and attempted to bridge some of the ideological differences in Congress. The President also mentioned that he seeks a more civil tone in Washington, which I do not think anyone could argue with.

For much of his speech, the President spoke about issues that Americans care deeply about including health care, Social Security, national defense and taxes, however he spoke without including much detail, and let us remember that the devil is in the details. There are indeed areas where I differ from the President and his budget plan.

I will only support a budget that includes prescription drug coverage for all seniors, and that meets the needs of all the American people, plain and simple. This budget plan requires a tax cut so large, and based on economic forecasts so distant, that it will be very difficult to fund comprehensive prescription drug coverage, make serious investments in education, effectively preserve Social Security and Medicare, or pay down the national debt.

No conversation about the budget can be held without a discussion on the size and scope of a tax cut. The President is relying on a 10-year economic forecast to justify the argument for a massive tax cut, which I'm sorry to say is no more reliable than a 10-year weather forecast. With all the hidden expenses added in, such as interest on the debt, the Administration's tax cut plan will amount to more than \$2 trillion dollars, with 43% of this cut going to the top 1% of Americans, who on average earn more than \$900,000 a year.

I fully support a budget plan which would cut taxes for Americans who need it the most, under a much more responsible fiscal framework. The plan would divide the surplus between debt reduction and meeting the needs of the American people, and still leave room for a \$900 billion dollar tax cut.

The budget I would support must also include funding of a national energy policy which invests in alternative energy sources such as fuel cells, which are more efficient, cleaner, and would reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil. It must also include adequate funding for technology education to help close the digital divide in America, as well as provide for school construction.

Programs such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires the states to provide specialized education to students with disabilities, must be fully funded. As it stands now, the government is only providing about 15 percent of the needed dollars, when it should be providing 40 percent.

Additionally, I will also support a budget that leaves enough room to fully fund our critical national defense programs including the F-22 Raptor and the Joint Strike Fighter.

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