

Washington, DC - In response to the President's "State of the Union" address, Rep. Peter Welch issued the following statement:

"I was disappointed by President Bush's address tonight. Indeed, its most notable feature was what it didn't say; neglecting to mention the lack of meaningful political progress in Iraq, or the need for fundamental changes to our economic priorities.

"In Iraq, the President insists that the surge is succeeding even though there has been no meaningful political progress by the Iraqi politicians, whose ongoing paralysis places the burden of Iraq's future squarely on the backs of American troops and American taxpayers.

"The President suffers from a case of selective amnesia: he conveniently forgets that the purpose of the surge was to set the stage for Iraqi political progress, which has not materialized, yet he boasts of a successful surge. Tonight, he misled America by omission.

"America is nearing the beginning of our sixth year at war in Iraq with no end in sight. This disastrous war, which burdens our military readiness and diminishes our standing in the world, has now become a deadweight on our economy. At a time when working Vermonters and Americans are having trouble paying their mortgages, heating their homes, and sending their kids to college, we simply cannot afford to divert scarce federal resources to this terrible war.

"Economists tell us that a short-term economic stimulus package can help give our economy a temporary boost and get us through some tough times - let's hope they're right. This package, however, is no substitute for long-term, fundamental change to our nation's economic policies.

"We need a health care policy that reduces costs and makes sure every American can get health insurance.

"We need an energy policy that cuts costs on heating oil and gasoline, creating new green-collar jobs by leveraging American ingenuity and technology to help fight global warming.

"And we need an education policy that encourages young Vermonters to get the skills they need to compete and succeed, without saddling them and their families with mountains of debt.

"Tonight, President Bush failed to deliver new ideas or new solutions to the challenges we all face. It's time to end the war in Iraq. It's time to focus on economic policies that help all Americans get ahead, not just get by. I will continue to fight in Congress for these new priorities."