



## PRESIDENT OUTLINES 2007 AGENDA

January 24, 2007

*In his sixth State of the Union address Tuesday, President Bush defended his recent troop level increase for Iraq and introduced wide-ranging goals for the military, the environment and health care.*

Article II of the Constitution requires the president to deliver a speech that explains the condition of the country. Since 1790, presidents have used the speech to outline the executive branch's goals for the coming year.

President Bush stressed that America is on the right path, stating that the economy is "strong," citing job growth, low inflation, and rising wages. "This economy is on the move and our job is to keep it that way," he said.

But Tuesday's address came with new challenges for the president: His job approval rating is as low as it has been at the time of any State of the Union address -- 33 percent, according to an ABC News-Washington Post poll -- and for the first time in his presidency, Mr. Bush found himself delivering his address to a Congress with a Democratic majority.

### **Defending Iraq policy**

"Our country is pursuing a new strategy in Iraq -- and I ask you to give it a chance to work," the president told Congress as Vice President Dick Cheney and new Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi sat behind him.

The president spent much of the 49-minute speech defending his new Iraq policy -- outlined two weeks ago -- in which he called for the deployment of 21,500 additional U.S. troops.

Most of the troops would be sent to Baghdad, Iraq's capital, the president said, to end the violence between Sunni and Shiite Muslim extremists that escalated dramatically following a February 2006 bombing of a holy Shiite mosque in Samarra, Iraq.

"This is not the fight we entered in Iraq, but it is the fight we are in," Mr. Bush said.

The president also asked Congress to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps by 92,000 -- about 15 percent -- and establish a volunteer reserve corps along side the military reserve to aid in the "war on terror."

## **Addressing climate change**

President Bush took the other half of his address to lay out a broad agenda for domestic issues, spanning health care, the federal budget, education and immigration, with the environment topping the agenda.

The president received extended applause after calling climate change a "serious challenge."

Showing concern for the projected increase in greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, Mr. Bush called for a 20 percent decrease in gas use by 2017, along with an increase in supply of cleaner fuels and alternative fuels such as ethanol, fuel-cell batteries and nuclear power.

The president said this initiative would reduce but not eliminate the nation's dependence on oil imports from the Middle East.

## **Health insurance proposals**

In the address, the president also proposed new tax cuts that would decrease the cost of basic health insurance for Americans.

The White House said these tax cuts, in combination with funds given to state governments under the announced Affordable Choices Initiative would cut the average cost of health insurance in half for uninsured families.

## **Reviving the old agenda**

The president also took time in the speech to remind Congress of goals the White House had previously set.

Reminding Americans that foreign policy is "more than a matter of war and diplomacy," the president called for Congress to continue funding the fight against AIDS and malaria in Africa, and to "continue to awaken the conscience of the world to save the people of Darfur."

Mr. Bush also emphasized the renewal of the No Child Left Behind law, which he spearheaded with bipartisan support early in his presidency to increase student achievement, and called on Congress for a temporary worker program as part of a comprehensive immigration reform plan, a proposal many Republicans rejected last year.

## **Democrats challenge president on Iraq and economy**

In the Democratic response, newly elected Virginia Senator James Webb, a former Marine, challenged the president's view of the economy and his Iraq strategy.

"When one looks at the health of our economy, it's almost as if we are living in two different countries," Webb said.

On Iraq, Webb argued the president took the country to war "recklessly" and recalled the actions of former general and soon-to-be President Eisenhower during the "dark days" of the Korean War.

"When comes the end?" asked the general, who had commanded our forces in Europe during World War II. And as soon as he became president, he brought the Korean War to an end," Webb said.

Indeed, as the president serves out the remaining two years of his second term, he faces a series of confrontations with the Democratically controlled House and Senate -- House bills on minimum wage and stem cell research are heading for his desk and the Senate is considering a resolution saying the president's plan is the wrong way forward in Iraq -- even though both sides have promised to find bipartisan solutions to the country's most pressing problems.

-- *Compiled by Adnaan Wasey for NewsHour Extra*

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