

**Washington, D.C.** - The disastrous fiscal policies of the past six years have stranded our nation in a sea of red ink, and the President's latest budget offers no hope for relief. Our deficit is forecast at \$218 billion this year, and a realistic assessment of the President's proposal shows continued deficits as far as the eye can see.

Leading up to its release, the President claimed he was committed to balancing the budget, and he even made overtures of cooperation to the Democratic Congress. Indeed, there are a couple of items included in this year's budget that have long been priorities of mine and of many of my colleagues, including a significant increase in the Pell Grant for college students. But at what cost is the President offering these inducements to support his budget?

In order to make his tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans permanent, the President wants to hammer the poor and the middle class. His budget would eliminate the Perkins Loan and nine other assistance programs for college students; it would refuse to reform the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) which is set to ensnare many middle class Americans with tax hikes in the near future; it would shortchange the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), resulting in a loss of coverage for thousands of children; and it would under-fund his own signature No Child Left Behind program by \$15 billion. The President also wants to cut billions from Medicaid, which provides health coverage to the poor and disabled. One small step forward in some areas does not make up for giant leaps backward in many others.

As The Washington Post reported on Saturday, by the end of this year more money will have been designated for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than was spent on the entire 16-year Vietnam War, when adjusted for inflation. The Administration's decision to pursue this dangerous course in Iraq continues to sacrifice too many lives along with precious resources to achieve national security and take care of other priorities at home.

Over the next few months, Congress will be formulating a budget resolution to set priorities for our government. The President's budget proposal will not find much support in Congress, nor should it. Democrats are committed to balancing the budget by 2012, but we will do so by upholding the priorities of the American people. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I am committed to working with my colleagues toward this goal.

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# Statement on the President's Budget Proposal

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