
01/31/06: STATE OF THE UNION THOUGHTS - REP. SOLOMON ORTIZ (D-TX)

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Prior to State of the Union

Tuesday, January 31, 2006 Tonight, President Bush comes to the Capitol to deliver his fifth State of the Union Address. It is an important moment for President Bush and America, and will be offered at a moment of great difficulty for the nation at several levels. The state of our union is strong based on the strength and wisdom of our citizens, but our government can do better. We are the wealthiest nation on earth, but not the healthiest, because Republicans in Congress took care of drug companies and HMOs instead of the 46 million uninsured Americans. We can see the efficiency of their Medicare drug plan – which I opposed – in the present confusion and unhappiness of our seniors trying to participate in the new Rx drug program. Today, America faces a health care crisis of staggering proportions. We have 46 million Americans uninsured. The cost of health care premiums has almost doubled since 2001. Companies like Ford and GM are finding it difficult to compete in the world because they're crippled by skyrocketing health care costs. Health Savings Accounts are not a credible solution to the health care crisis. They do nothing to solve the real problem, and are as unavailable to working families as insurance. They make the health care situation worse for the American people, and create a financial windfall for the health industry. Tonight President Bush and his party must speak to the damage they have done to education in this nation. The signature education bill has been leaving children behind all over the country, and their budget cuts have shut the doors of college in the faces of thousands of students. They will continue their quest in making the largest student aid cut in history this week in the budget reconciliation vote. We have a national debt climbing past 8 trillion dollars, because the president and the current leaders in Congress squandered the strongest economy of our lifetime with spending our children's future on tax breaks for special interests and multi-millionaires, which I also opposed. These “tax cuts” will be certain tax increases on our children when they begin working and paying taxes. The corruption we have seen over the past months, from indictments of White House staff to Jack Abramoff and his lobbying associates, have damaged the public's trust in our government and taken a great toll on the state of our union. As Katrina made clear, the administration failed to prepare our homeland for a possible attack or other emergency following 9/11 and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. In South Texas, we know our border security is not what this nation deserves. America can do far better. For our families, we must make health care affordable and accessible. For our businesses, we must remove the burden of skyrocketing costs that is holding our businesses, our economy and our workers back in the global marketplace. This will be a difficult year; but I and other Members of Congress are committed to working with the President and leaders in Congress when their policies are helpful to the Republic – and we will oppose them when they do not. Another President from Texas – Lyndon Johnson – said, “This is a time for us to sit and reason together.” Let us do that now; the American people expect and deserve no less. They are watching.