

## Castle: Bush Budget is a Mixed Bag for Delaware -- February 5, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle said the President's Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2008, which was released this morning, is a mixed bag of good, bad and questionable for Delaware.

"Traditionally, President's budget requests are meant to be spending blue prints for the upcoming fiscal year that are vetted by Congress and really put into place through the appropriations bills. This year is a different year all together because we have a Democrat majority who will then seek to pass their own budget and implement their funding priorities. I hope in the end, the final spending plan is a compromise that accurately reflects the priorities of the American people -- and not simply the priorities of one political party over another.

"Having said that, I am pleased the President is focused on key issues facing Delaware, such as a proposal to dedicate \$175 million to relieving traffic congestion on I-95 and other heavily traveled corridors. While this is a positive step forward, I also remain concerned that this Administration has not invested significantly in transit and passenger rail. Despite the proven ability of these transportation options to save fuel and reduce travel delays, the \$800 million proposed spending for Amtrak once again falls far short of what is required to ensure the safety of travelers. I also question the logic behind funding aviation security at \$5 billion, while dedicating less than \$50 million to security for other modes - such as rail and transit.

"While the President admits global warming is a real problem and proposes to pump \$9 billion into a loan guarantee program for research into alternative sources of energy and to increase funding for projects that promote biofuels, clean transportation fuels, and improving vehicle technologies, he fails to respond with a plan to cut greenhouse gas pollution, including carbon dioxide. The President's budget also assumes revenues from oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, even though this proposal continues to be rejected by Congress and the American people.

"With regards to housing, I am pleased I was able to secure additional funding in the Continuing Resolution last week for public housing authorities, like the Wilmington Housing Authority, and that the Public Housing fund for Delaware would receive another increase under this budget. However, I remain concerned that funding for Delaware for both the Community Development Block Grant and LIHEAP would face drastic cuts.

"As I will be helping to lead the effort to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, funding for K-12 education programs is an essential part of this effort. I have worked to increase funding for Delaware by 67 percent since the inception of this law. However, I have concerns with some of the targeted programs for elimination such as a vocational education program, mentoring, and civic education. I also continue to oppose funding the Administration includes every year for private school vouchers -- this is simply not the solution for public education reform.

"Under any President -- Republican or Democrat -- funding to protect our beaches from storm damage is an annual fight in Congress and funding for the Delaware beaches will remain a priority for me. While the overall funding request for the Army Corps is the highest we have seen from the Administration, it is still less than the amount Congress appropriated in FY 2006.

"While I am pleased the President is focused on efforts to expand access to healthcare and has called for the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance program to make sure low income children are covered, I continue to have concerns with respect to the feasibility of his health care standard deduction plan and the expansion of health savings accounts. While I think these programs may target a small portion of the population, many millions will continue to go uninsured. Hopefully this can be the basis for a much larger debate as to how to address this critical issue.

"The unveiling of this budget is just the very first step in what will be a long road ahead in determining how to best allocate federal spending. I will work closely with Members of both parties and this Administration to ensure funding is spent wisely, efficiently and on the priorities of the American people."

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