

Washington DC, 1/23/07—Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY), Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water and Co-Chair of the Congressional Defense Energy Working Group, issued the following statement in response to this evening's State of the Union Address:

In last year's address, President Bush gave plenty of lip service to energy independence, but his actions contradicted his words. He told us that he would end our dependence on foreign oil by replacing more than 75 percent of our oil imports from the Middle East by 2025. The next day, the President's Secretary of Energy clarified that 'he didn't really mean it' and took measures to lay off 30 employees at the National Renewable Energy Lab. This is not the way to confront America's addiction to foreign oil.

I agree with President Bush that we need to decrease U.S. gasoline use by 20% in 10 years, not just for environmental or pocketbook reasons, but because of national security reasons. Our reliance on foreign oil is a national security imperative: we are buying Persian Gulf oil with money borrowed from China, so that our military will protect us from the Persian Gulf and China!

President Bush's goal of decreasing gasoline consumption is laudable, but we need to realize that energy is a supply and demand issue. Rather than using lofty goals and vague rhetoric, the President could have announced a simple, common sense initiative to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. He could do this by ordering the federal government to swap out 50,000 gas guzzlers from the federal fleet and buy 50,000 plug-in hybrids. Mandates and formulas won't incentivize Detroit, purchase orders will.

Last year's State of the Union Address could be described as "say one thing and do another." I hope that this year, the President's rhetoric is followed by action.

In July 2006, Israel, along with his Republican colleague Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, formed the

Defense Energy Working Group. The working group, founded on the premise that the military's dependence on energy is a national security vulnerability, is a bipartisan study group of House members that identifies challenges associated with this dependence and recommends logistical and policy solutions.