

Early this month, the President presented his budget proposal for fiscal year 2006 to the Congress. I believe that the budget is an illustration of where we are willing to invest the funds collected by our citizens to enhance the programs and services provided to our people. And, it is a reflection of the interests and values of our country.

However, the budget presented by the Bush Administration is inconsistent with the priorities and values cherished by the American people. I believe it will have dire implications for our nation and our state and Marylanders have reasons to be concerned.

Our state depends on the federal government to support programs and services to educate our children, protect our environment, provide healthcare to our people and provide assistance to our first responders. Not only does this budget proposal make drastic cuts to the programs our state relies on, it deliberately excludes the trillions of dollars that would be needed to implement the President's Social Security privatization plan and the billions of dollars that are needed to fund the war effort in Iraq – further masking the cuts that must be absorbed by state and local governments.

For example, the President's budget proposes to cut \$60 billion from Medicaid, putting tremendous pressure on states to reduce eligibility and benefits, at a time when states like Maryland are already struggling to pay their state share of Medicaid costs. Federal cut backs will severely and negatively impact vulnerable populations such as low-income children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, who rely on this critical safety net health care program. This is at a time when 45 million Americans are already without health insurance.

Additionally, the President has proposed a budget that fails to keep the bipartisan promise of No Child Left Behind, the landmark education law that aimed to increase performance and accountability in all public schools. Not only does the budget cut education spending across the board, but this budget falls \$12 billion short of what was promised when No Child Left Behind was signed into law three years ago, and if adopted, President Bush will have provided \$39 billion less than he agreed public schools should receive.

I am also disappointed that the President's request for the Chesapeake Bay Program Office fails to even keep up with the rate of inflation with an increase of only \$100,000. It also has eliminated or cut additional programs crucial to cleaning up the Bay including Farm Bill Conservation programs that help farmers reduce agricultural runoff entering the Bay, the Small Watershed Grant program, the Oyster Recovery Project and his budget drastically cuts the

Clean Water State Revolving Program. In November of last year, I joined the Maryland delegation in calling on the Bush Administration to commit \$1 billion in its fiscal year 2006 budget towards restoring the Bay's water quality, but this budget falls far short of that goal.

I am very pleased the President has included a fair pay adjustment for the brave men and women of the armed services, yet his failure to equally recognize the hard work of America's civilian federal employees by once again proposing a pay adjustment less than their counterparts in the Armed Forces is unacceptable. Many of these dedicated civil servants, ranging from FBI agents to CIA analysts to FDA food safety inspectors are on the front lines in the war on terror every day and we must recognize their invaluable contributions to our country.

And, the President also continues to break our nation's promise to our veterans. He has proposed a \$250 annual enrollment fee and increased co-payments for outpatient pharmacy services, thus raising health care costs for hundreds of thousands of veterans.

Furthermore, this budget will exacerbate the record deficits and debt we are passing onto our children by adding trillions to the deficit over the next ten years. In four short years we have seen record surpluses turned into a projected record deficit of \$427 billion this year. And, the real number is actually \$589 billion – \$162 billion larger because the Social Security surplus masks its true size.

Even worse, this Administration has simply not proposed a real plan to restore fiscal discipline to the federal budget. More than 40 percent of the proposed deficit reduction in the President's budget would be achieved not by tough choices on taxes and spending but by the growth of Social Security surpluses. And many of the spending cuts the President has proposed will be rejected outright by Members of the President's own Party.

What is absolutely stunning is that this President has told the nation that Social Security is nearing 'bankruptcy,' when the reality is that his own economic policies are bankrupting our nation, immorally forcing our children and grandchildren to pay this generation's bills, and threatening our long-term national security.

Democrats are committed to restoring fiscal discipline to the federal budget process by returning

to the pay-as-you-go policies which produced budget surpluses in the 1990s. We will fight for a budget that reflects the values of America's middle class and gets our fiscal house in order while enacting pro-growth economic policies that create jobs and making crucial investments in our national security, education and health care. A responsible budget is the first step toward building a future worthy of the trust of the American people, the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, and the aspirations of all of America's children.