

Rep. Bilirakis Gives Budget Proposal Mixed Reviews

WASHINGTON (4 Feb.) — U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) on Monday released the following statement reacting to President Bush's fiscal year 2009 budget proposal.

"While the President has proposed a budget that helps to secure our borders, properly provides for our troops and gives much needed permanent tax relief and economic stimulus, I do believe that some of the President's proposed cuts are unjustified.

"For instance, I am strongly opposed to proposed cuts in homeland security grant programs, which provide much needed resources to improve port security, outfit our local first responders and help Florida's cities prepare for and respond to terrorist attacks. Cuts in this grant funding is certainly an issue I will be raising with Secretary Chertoff when he testifies before the Homeland Security Committee next week, and something for which I will fight to restore.

"The President has also proposed to eliminate funding for the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education Program, which will have an adverse impact on All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg and St. Joseph's Hospital in Tampa. This education program is pivotal to ensuring that hospitals like All Children's and St. Joseph's continue to grow and provide the best possible care for our children.

"I am pleased to see that the President seeks to increase resources for veterans and their families, particularly in veterans' health care resources, disability compensation and programs to ease the transition of active duty personnel to civilian life. I am also encouraged by another pay raise for our servicemembers of 3.4 percent, but I believe we can do better, which is why I plan to introduce legislation that would increase that number by half-a-percent.

"I recognize this is just the first step in the budgeting process, and that the President has moved expeditiously to get this to Congress for review. Now it is Congress's job to act in a bipartisan manner to get a budget passed that improves the lives of the American people and adequately provides for our nation. I will be working with my colleagues in the coming months to do just that."

View the President's FY09 Budget of the U.S. Government at <http://www.budget.gov>.