

Statement of Congressman Mike Michaud on President Bush's FY 2009 Budget

Tuesday, February 05 2008

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud reacted to the release of President Bush's Fiscal Year 2009 budget.

"Today the President released his budget recommendation, which is the first step in the budgetary process. Budgets reflect our priorities and it is my hope that we can work together in a bipartisan way to meet the challenges facing our country. While I continue to review the budget, it is not surprising that there are portions of the President's budget which I support, and there are portions that I will oppose. Although recommending a \$2 billion increase for veterans' health care, the overall Administration request recommends an increase for veterans' discretionary programs of only \$1.7 billion. The Administration's request for veterans' health care funding appears to be a good starting point for us to build on but we have more work to do to make sure that our veterans' needs are fully addressed. The Administration has also ranked the Machias River Project as its number one Forest Legacy project. This project supports the combined goals of habitat preservation, maintenance of working forests and recreational access.

"Unfortunately, the President's budget makes cuts to programs important to Maine. The budget cuts the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and weatherization assistance. LIHEAP provides critical assistance to many low income Mainers struggling to deal with freezing temperatures and rising fuel costs. I will oppose this cut. The Administration's budget also cuts funding for programs that help cities and states fight terrorism, and important education and early literacy programs. I will work with my colleagues to see that our budget does not abandon those in need.

"Most importantly, we must get our fiscal house back in order. Under this Administration, the national deficit has grown by \$3.4 trillion to record levels. This budget submission projects a deficit for FY09 of \$407 billion. It does project a surplus in 2012. I support the President's determination to get back into the black, but this budget's projections are based on several unrealistic premises including: cuts in the growth of Medicare and Medicaid by \$195.7 billion over five years; only spending \$70 billion more in Iraq and Afghanistan in FY09 and not a dollar more in the future, which seems very unlikely; and allowing the Alternative Minimum Tax to impact an

ever expanding group of taxpayers.

"As I said, budgets are reflections of priorities. We must invest in the future of our country, support economic growth and address our huge deficit. By working together, we can make the tough decisions necessary to get our country back on the right track."