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GEORGE W. BUSH

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Office of the Press Secretary  
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## President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week, I appeared before Congress to report on the state of our union. I asked members of the House and Senate from both sides of the aisle to join me in confronting the great challenges before us, so we can build a future of hope and opportunity for all Americans.

Two key challenges we face are reducing our dependence on oil and expanding access to affordable health care. I have asked Congress to take several vital steps to address these issues. And while some members gave a reflexive partisan response, I was encouraged that others welcomed this opportunity to reach across the aisle. One Democratic Senator said the initiatives I put forward were "serious proposals" and encouraged his fellow Democrats to "respond in a constructive way." Another Senate Democrat pledged to work toward these goals "through sincere bipartisan efforts." This is a good start, and I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to reform our health care system and increase energy security.



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Our Nation's dependence on oil leaves us vulnerable to hostile regimes and terrorists who can hurt our economy by disrupting our oil supply. To protect America against supply disruptions, I have asked Congress to double the current capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We also must diversify our Nation's energy supply, and the way forward is through technology. On Wednesday, I visited DuPont's Experimental Station in Wilmington, Delaware, where researchers are developing new methods of producing cellulosic ethanol and other advanced biofuels using everything from grasses to cornstalks to agricultural wastes. By expanding our use of renewable and alternative fuels like ethanol, we can become less dependent on oil, and confront the serious challenge of climate change.

To increase the supply of alternative fuels, I've asked Congress to join me in setting a mandatory fuel standard to require 35 billion gallons of renewable and alternative fuels in 2017 -- nearly five times the current target. At the same time, we need to reform and modernize fuel economy standards for cars the way we did for light trucks, and conserve

up to 8.5 billion more gallons of gasoline by 2017. By taking these steps, we can help achieve a great goal: reducing the use of gasoline in the United States by 20 percent in the next ten years, and cutting our total imports by the equivalent of three-quarters of all the oil we now import from the Middle East.

We must also work together to ensure that Americans have accessible and affordable health care. The government has an obligation to provide care for the elderly, the disabled, and poor children; and we will meet these responsibilities. For all other Americans, private insurance is the best way to meet their needs. And this week, I proposed two new initiatives to help more Americans afford their own insurance.

First, we should establish a standard tax deduction for health insurance that will be like the standard tax deduction for dependents. Families with health insurance will pay no income or payroll taxes on \$15,000 of their income. Single Americans with health insurance will pay no income or payroll taxes on \$7,500 of their income. With this reform, more than 100 million men, women, and children who are now covered by employer-provided insurance will benefit from lower tax bills. This reform will also level the playing field for those who do not get health insurance from their employers. On Thursday, I met an uninsured mother of two children from Overland Park, Kansas. The restaurant where she works does not offer health insurance, and she cannot afford to buy it on her own. My plan would help put a basic health insurance plan within reach of this mom, and millions of uninsured Americans like her.

Second, we must help states that are developing innovative ways to cover the uninsured. States that make basic private health insurance available to all their citizens should receive Federal funds to help them provide this coverage to the poor and the sick. I have proposed using existing Federal funds to create "Affordable Choices" grants. These grants would give our Nation's governors more money and flexibility to get basic private health insurance to those most in need.

Over the next few weeks, I will be talking more about my energy and health care proposals. We've set important goals, and now Republicans and Democrats must work together to make them a reality. Together, we can reduce our dependence on oil, improve health care for more of our citizens, and make life better for all our citizens.

Thank you for listening.

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