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STATEMENT BY U.S. REP. NICK RAHALL CONCERNING PRESIDENT BUSH'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS:

"This evening we heard the President of the United States speak to the Members of Congress and the American people about the Persian Gulf War. He outlined how this was a just war, a war of right versus wrong, and a war of good versus evil. He said that this was a war in which we would ultimately prevail, and on this I do agree.

I stand behind the President and our fighting forces in the Persian Gulf, and I pray for peace to come sooner than later in this horrible conflict.

But I would urge President Bush that in any war, the real victory comes in the knowledge learned from that war. We will have gained nothing from this conflict if we return to the policies and programs of the past concerning the Gulf Region.

We, as a nation, have got to become energy independent. It no longer can be a matter of the quick and easy (and lucrative) decision. We need to build a coordinated Energy Program based on alternative fuels. Fuels that are abundant in this resource rich country of ours.

Also, as the war continues and well after it is over, America must continue to seek out and collect the pledges owed to them by our allied nations. Nations, who at times, appear much more supportive in word than in action. These allies must no longer think of the U.S. as the lone Ranger, casing the countryside for evil and oppression. They must stand shoulder to shoulder with us, fighting and paying on equal terms. Saddam Hussein is not a menace only to the United States. Everyone has a stake in this conflict.

Finally, when this war is over, it must be time to turn to the problems facing our people. Over the last few months there has been much to distract us from the pressing problems at home, but we need to return that focus on our own people and their needs. Needs like a new infrastructure program that will guide us into the 21st Century, and increased monies for Education and Economic Development.