

State of the Union fails to satisfy community leaders

■ Many feel the president didn't address some important issues

By Brook Reinhard
Oregon Daily Emerald

Community leaders praised parts of President Bush's State of the Union Address Tuesday night, but were hesitant to fully endorse the speech made by our nation's leader.

"Tonight, I stand firm with the president and say clearly that America is united to protect and preserve our

freedom," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Eugene. "While we differ in the details, I look forward to working with the administration and my colleagues to resolve our differences and move forward on these important issues for Oregon and our nation."

DeFazio's "important issues" include legislation to stimulate the economy, provide unemployment assistance and come up with new energy legislation — all of which Bush detailed, albeit briefly, during

his hour-long speech.

State Rep. Vicki Walker, D-Eugene, said Bush didn't spend enough time hashing out the details.

"I didn't hear anything tonight that told me what direction this country is going to take to fight the recession," Walker said. "He gave a very strong, patriotic message, but I didn't see much beyond that."

Stephen Haynes, a professor of economics at the University, said Bush's address was uniquely suited to the events that occurred over the past year.

"It's a little different than a standard State of the Union," Haynes said. "It would have been interesting to compare it to (President Franklin Roosevelt's) speech in 1942," he said, since Roosevelt gave his address to a nation that faced a similar recession in a comparably war-like time.

Journalism Professor Stephen Ponder said the image Bush projected was the most important part of his address.

"These State of the Union addresses have become very important," Ponder said. "The president's success will depend on his ability to use the mass media."

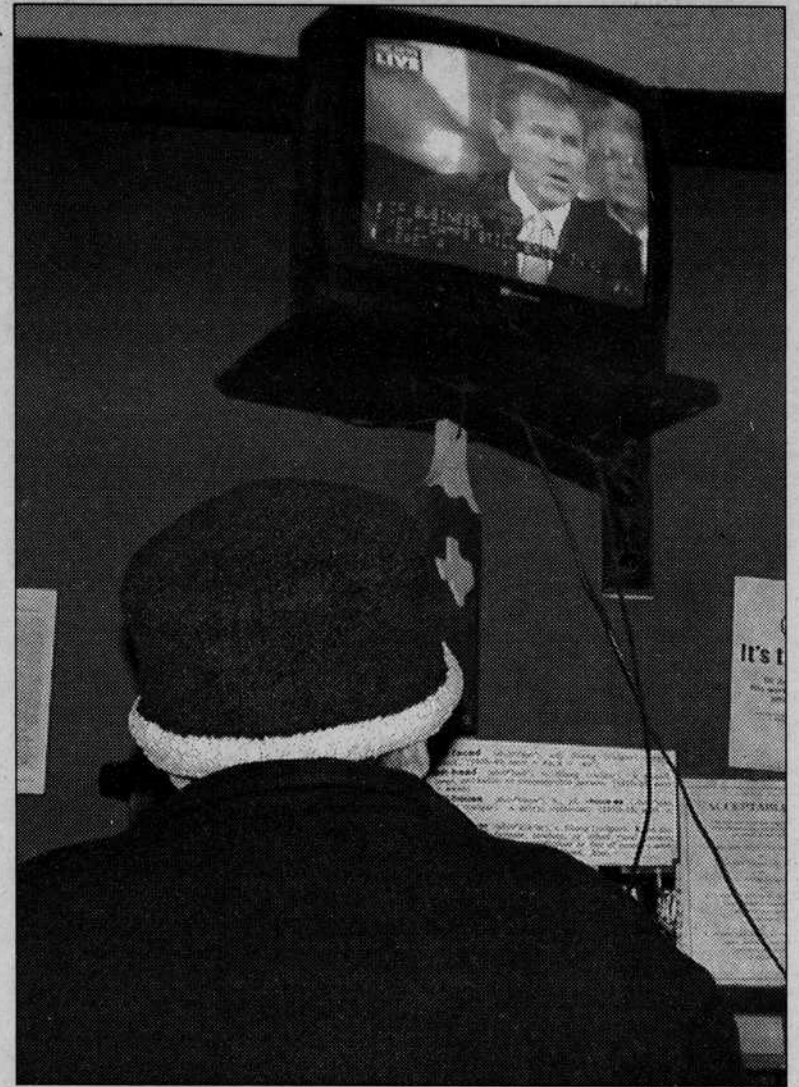
Bush used his hour of prime-time to focus on fighting terrorism, increasing homeland defense and helping the economy recover.

"We have prevailed in the war, and we will defeat this recession," Bush said. As a start to defeating the recession, the president appealed to Congress to "make these tax cuts permanent." Half the room gave this comment a standing ovation while Democrats remained seated and silent.

"The president said we all need to work together; I am anxious to work with him to get Oregonians back to work," said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Tim Young, student representative for the Oregon University System, said Bush's priorities may be "a little misguided."

"We need to see more attention put toward education and an adequate health plan," Young said. Referring to the economy, Young added



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Jimmy Scalon watches the State of the Union Address attentively over the commotion Tuesday night at New Max's Tavern. He was one of many patrons who voiced concern for the President's economic stimulus plan.

that Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan "said this type of incentive would not work."

Haynes said that Bush didn't need to go into economic specifics because his policies were already in effect.

"There's not a great deal one can do except wait for the policies to take place," Haynes said.

Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey said Bush will be evaluated this year on

the performance of the economy.

"If we don't see some improvement in the economy, he's in trouble," Torrey said. "If we're going to move anything through Congress, the president and the Senate have got to agree with what's going to be done. They simply have to find a way to find some common ground."

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Bush

continued from page 1

as it seeks to block terrorists and regimes that sponsor them from committing further atrocities.

"The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons," the president warned.

It was his third speech in a year to a joint session of Congress, but his first formal State of the Union address. His debut speech last year unveiled his budget.

With the nation in recession and Bush presiding over the first federal budget deficit in four years, he did not offer the usual list of spending proposals that mark most State of the Union speeches.

The administration is proposing a huge increase in defense spending — \$48 billion in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 — for a total Pentagon budget of \$379 billion. If Congress approves, the increase would be the largest in two decades.

Bush also is asking for \$37.7 billion for homeland security, double the current budget for that post-Sept. 11 program. He said he would focus these efforts on "four key areas: bioterrorism, emergency response, airport and border security and improved intelligence," according to the excerpts from his speech.

In an effort to boost the economy, the president pushed Congress to pass tax breaks for businesses and extra relief for the unemployed "in the same spirit of cooperation we have applied in our war on terrorism," the excerpts said.

Bush addressed the mushrooming Enron debacle delicately. He chose not to point fingers, but to call for stricter accounting practices and corporate disclosure.

The official Democratic Party response to Bush's address reflected the public's broad bipartisan support for the war. House of Representatives Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri assured the president and the nation that the country speaks with one voice against terrorism.

"Like generations that came before us, we will pay any price and bear any burden to make sure that this proud nation wins the first war of the 21st century," Gephardt said, according to prepared remarks. Since Sept. 11, he said, "There has been no daylight between us in this war on terrorism. We have met almost every single week and built a bipartisan consensus that is helping America win this war."

But Gephardt noted growing partisan divisions over domestic issues, intensified in this election year when control of both houses of Congress is up for grabs. The House Democratic leader said Democrats would not necessarily side with Bush on such issues as tax cuts, Social Security, Medicare, overhauling campaign-finance laws and the bankruptcy of Enron.

"I refuse to accept that while we stand shoulder to shoulder on the war, we should stand toe-to-toe on the economy," Gephardt said.

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