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**A NEW DIRECTION FOR AMERICA**  
**Bush Republicans Take Us in the Wrong Direction,**  
***Nebraska Families Pay the Price***

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Americans are worried about gas prices, health care costs, and college tuition. Republicans are ignoring these concerns and taking our country in the wrong direction – choosing instead to pursue issues designed to distract and divide. Democrats have a plan to take our country in a *new direction* to create economic opportunity and security for middle-class working families by ensuring access to affordable health care and energy, good jobs and a secure retirement.

**Health insurance costs rise sharply in Nebraska.** Since 2000, health insurance costs for Nebraska families have increased by \$1,538 – an 80 percent increase. [KFF 2005; MEPS 2005] During President Bush's tenure in the White House, the number of residents without health insurance has reached 197,000 here in Nebraska – an increase of 37,000 since 2000. [CPS, 8/05] Yet the Republican leadership has failed to take action to lower health care costs for middle-class working families. Democrats will address the affordability of health care by fixing the Republican prescription drug program and making insurance more affordable for both employers and employees.

**Nebraska families are paying record prices at the pump.** This week, Nebraskans are paying \$2.83, on average, for a gallon of regular gasoline – 94% more than when Bush took office in January 2001. [AAA, Fuel Gauge Report, 6/06] This year Nebraska families will spend an additional \$1,028,809,393 – \$1,564 per two-car family – on gasoline as a result of these high prices compared to 2001. [House Government Reform Committee, Democratic Staff, 6/06] Instead of working to bring down the skyrocketing fuel costs hurting Nebraska families, Republicans in Congress continue to push for billions in subsidies for Big Oil even as these companies report record profits. Democrats will crack down on price-gouging by Big Oil, invest in developing alternative energy resources from the American heartland and achieve independence from foreign oil.

**Cost of college soars for 121,053 Nebraska students, federal financial aid slashed.** Here in the Midwest, tuition costs at 4-year public colleges have spiked – increasing 64% since fall 2000. [College Board, 10/05] Students are paying an average \$4,450 for tuition at a 4-year public college in Nebraska – not including the cost of housing, food or books. [College Board, 10/05] Rather than helping Nebraska students, Republicans have made it harder to pay for college – cutting \$12 billion out of federal student aid programs. Democrats have a plan to make college more

affordable for Nebraskans – making college tuition tax deductible, expanding Pell Grants and lowering the cost of student loans.

**Republican economy not delivering for Nebraska's working families.** Since President Bush took office, 9,600 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Nebraska and 33,700 people are currently looking for a job. [BLS, 5/06] Family income in Nebraska has dropped by \$330 since 2000; and because of rising consumer costs, the minimum wage is at its lowest level in 50 years. [CEPR, 6/06] But despite this economic insecurity, Republicans have provided billions in corporate tax subsidies for shipping jobs overseas and steadfastly refused to increase the minimum wage for more than 7 million American workers. Democrats are fighting to repeal the tax giveaways that encourage companies to move jobs overseas, restore the fiscal discipline of the 1990s that helped spur record economic growth and raise the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour benefiting 246,000 hardworking Nebraskans.

**Republicans' plan to privatize Social Security puts Nebraskans' retirement security in jeopardy.** Saving for retirement has become a real challenge for Nebraska's working families, leaving many to increasingly depend on Social Security benefits in their golden years. The Republican plan to privatize Social Security would undermine workers' retirement security by cutting Social Security benefits for the middle class and adding trillions to the national debt. This could hurt the 292,000 Nebraskans receiving Social Security benefits. [Social Security Administration, 12/05] Democrats will ensure a dignified retirement for Nebraska workers by preventing the privatization of Social Security, expanding savings incentives and ensuring pension fairness.