

While agreeing with President Barack Obama's call for bipartisanship, two of Nebraska's congressional Republicans expressed concerns that Obama's message might result in more rhetoric than action following Wednesday's State of the Union address.

Here are their reactions to the speech, as well as Rep. Jeff Fortenberry's expectations prior to Obama's address.

Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb.:

"Well, first of all I think the president was very strong in his comments about the economy and what needs to be done. He made it very clear that spending is an issue and that if Congress gets out of control with spending he'll veto legislation. I applaud that. As a former governor I can tell you, I did veto legislation and spending when I thought the Legislature had exceeded its bounds, and I hope he'll hold true to that promise. I hope it's not necessary, but if it is, I hope he'll do it.

"I also thought it was important to point out jobs and the economy, and not simply what he inherited, but what we do to get out of the problems we're in. Clearly, employment and jobs are going to be a big part of it. Focusing on small businesses -- the backbone of our economy -- is extremely important. We need to make sure that our taxes are appropriate, deductions are available for small businesses to expand and that we can export more of our products. That's a very important part of making sure that our economy will strengthen over time and that there will be more jobs here at home. I think most Americans are tired of exporting jobs as opposed to products. Whether its agricultural products or other manufactured products I think he's absolutely right on and most people, I think, will agree with him on that.

"On bipartisanship, I think he really made it clear it's time for us to come together. The people across America -- and I know in Nebraska it's true -- are tired of the bickering and the fighting and partisanship. We really do need to move beyond the partisan divide. We've got to come together. He reached out and said if you have ideas on health care, bring them, and we'll look and see if there are other good ideas. That kind of reaching out to Republicans and Democrats alike is extremely important for the future of this country.

"So I'm encouraged by what I heard tonight. It's a very difficult challenge ahead, and things are not going to turn around overnight. But I hope this is the beginning of the turnaround, to continue to reduce unemployment numbers, begin to find jobs, and to help small businesses establish those jobs. Tonight, I think, was a night of encouragement but also of caution. It's going to require bipartisanship. It's going to require people working together and less division across this country. I hope tonight is the beginning of that change."

Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb.:

"I am pleased that after a year in which his agenda has drastically deepened our national debt, the president finally appears interested in our country's need for fiscal responsibility. Proposing a budget freeze that amounts to \$250 billion over ten years while running a \$1.4 trillion deficit in 2009 and a projected \$1.35 trillion in 2010 proves he is still far from serious about it.

"We need to start paying down our debt and embracing fiscal responsibility. I appreciate the president's initial step in the right direction, and hope he is committed to back it up with his veto pen.

"The American people have loudly and clearly rejected health care legislation that increases costs, cuts Medicare, and required backroom deals and special carve-outs just to achieve only partisan support. It is a long way from the bipartisan consensus the president promised we'd have a year ago. Unfortunately, he missed this opportunity and has left the door open for his party to engage in more backroom dealing and legislative gimmicks.

"We must have a renewed commitment to be smart in the fight against al-Qaida and other Islamic extremists. Giving terrorists the same rights as common domestic criminals is tremendously misguided and dangerous, and does not project the image of a country serious about protecting its people and its ideals. It will hinder our ability to prevent future attacks, and potentially allow unrepentant terrorists back on the battlefield.

"I look forward to addressing these issues in 2010 and hope both parties in the Senate can work together to address our most pressing problems with responsible solutions."

Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb.:

"As a fiscal conservative, President Obama has my full support to hold the line on spending and reduce our ever-increasing national deficit. I also agree with President Obama that we must create jobs and job growth for small businesses -- that is key to getting our economy back on track.

"At the same time I am deeply concerned with the trillions of dollars that will be added to the national debt over the next several years. And the amount of tax increases, especially in the last year is mind-boggling.

"I sincerely hope that President Obama's message is not just political rhetoric and these promises are backed up with actions. When Speaker Nancy Pelosi walks out of a secret, closed-door meeting and says we are a transparent administration, words do not match actions.

"I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find fiscally sound ways to get our economy back on track, bring meaningful reform to health care and stop the wasteful government spending which has become the norm in Washington."

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb.:

"I hope the president will address the economic and national security concerns of American families. Having spent the better part of the last year on an unnecessarily partisan health care debate, he must now focus sincere attention on the health of our economy and the strength of our homeland security.

"Lasting economic recovery must start at home with a renewed focus on hometown small businesses, entrepreneurs and a revitalized manufacturing base. At the same time, Washington must get its fiscal house in order. Recent news of this year's \$1.35 trillion deficit is staggering. The combination of bailouts for Wall Street, excessive spending and government overreach has run its course.

"We must also strengthen our commitment to national security and global stability. We have committed expansive resources in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet an extremist ideologue exposes our vulnerabilities by successfully getting a bomb on a plane. We must recognize the threats to our security are very real, ranging from such acts of terror to nuclear weapons proliferation, and demand engagement from an international community too often content to benefit from American sacrifice."

