

## Local reactions to speech vary

By Michael Davis and Chloe Morrison Staff Writers

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Local officials and area residents had a variety of reactions to the president's State of the Union address, which tackled issues ranging from homeland security and the war on terrorism to the state of health care.

Chattanooga Police Department Chief Steve Parks said he supports the president's call to renew the Patriot Act.

"I agree with his pressing forward to get that re-enacted, because I do believe there are (now) adequate national safeguards in place," he said.

He said the country needs to continue fighting terrorism both abroad and at home.

"We're in a better position if we fight it across the borders instead of waiting for it to cross our borders," he said.

However, Gail Lindsey, a Democrat and East Ridge resident who works in the longterm health care field, said she thought the president "spent an awful lot of time talking about war and little about domestic issues."

She said he didn't say much about "where he wants to make changes and how he's going to go about doing that."

Lt. Andy Gienapp is a Chattanooga resident who served in Iraq with the 278 th Regimental Combat Team. He said the president did a good job balancing the need for constructive criticism in regard to the Iraq war against being overtly negative for partisan purposes.

"I think his point was for someone to just be out there on the political bandwagon beating a drum saying you made a mistake ... (is) not the least bit helpful," he said.

Mark Kleiner, grants planner for the Hamilton County Development Department, said he was pleased with the president's message on immigration. He said President Bush understands "terrorism and immigration are not necessarily tied together."

Yet the president also acknowledges that immigrants are a vital part of the national economy, Mr. Kleiner said.

"He did clearly say our country could not function without immigrants," he said.

Memorial Hospital CEO Ruth Brinkley said the president tied his message of leadership into the health care situation.

"I would have liked a bit more details, but given the context of the State of the Union (address) I got about the level of details I was expecting," she said.

She said it's now up to Congress to pass solid reform to help fix a national crisis as Americans hunger for affordable health care.

"It's a national issue, and we're feeling it right here," she said.

Geoff Whitaker, a Republican and a Tennessee Temple University student from North Carolina, said he liked the president's "spirit of unification."

Mr. Whitaker said he "liked him pointing to some specific people and stories and making (the speech) personal."

Jeremiah Cook, also a Republican and student government president at Tennessee Temple, said he believes "liberty and freedom" are the driving forces behind the president's policies. "He sees people across the world that enjoy freedom and knows our country can have a hand in giving it to them," Mr. Cook said.

Chattanooga Joe Harmon, the owner of a promotional products company and a Democrat, said he thought the speech was "incredibly sad, because the first 32 minutes of our State of the Union (address) talked about supporting killing other people and perpetuating the climate of fear in America."