Rep. Peter Welch issued the following statement Wednesday night following President Obama's address to the nation:

"President Obama made clear tonight the urgency and necessity of reforming the nation's health care system so that it benefits the American people - not the insurance industry.

"As I heard throughout Vermont during the past five weeks, Congress must focus on providing security and stability to those who have health insurance and extending access to those who don't. By dispelling the myths that have percolated throughout the health care debate - about non-existent death panels and the rationing of care - the President tonight refocused the nation on the importance of improving health care for all families.

"In the coming weeks, I am optimistic we will pass a bill that will protect families and businesses from insurance company rip-offs, extend coverage to 37 million Americans, and provide more choice to Americans by creating a strong public option."