



For Immediate Release  
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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)  
Regarding the Conrad-Gregg Deficit Reduction Commission**

Mr. President, I oppose the Conrad-Gregg amendment. This amendment would set up a new deficit reduction commission and have its recommendations considered in the Senate and House under expedited parliamentary procedures.

This amendment invites Congress to abdicate responsibility. This amendment is fundamentally unfair to many of our constituents across this country. This amendment should be defeated.

Under the Conrad-Gregg proposal, 18 people would make recommendations on how to reduce projected mid-term and long-term federal budget deficits. Of the 18 members, 16 would be Members of Congress and two would be officials in the administration.

The recommendations of this 18-member Commission would be made the subject of votes in both chambers with no amendments allowed. Thus, the entire package of recommendations would be given to Congress on a take-it or leave-it basis.

If the Conrad-Gregg amendment were enacted, Members of Congress who were not on the Commission would have no say in the development of the Commission's recommendations. Members of Congress who were not on the Commission would have no ability to change the recommendations. They would have to vote on the entire package on a take-it-or-leave it basis.

If Members of Congress not on the Commission found that they favored most of the recommendations, but positively abhorred a few of them, they would be given no opportunity to try to change the ones to which they objected. Their choice would be either to vote for no deficit reduction at all, or to vote for recommendations that they abhor with no way to change them.

Members of Congress should not be put in that position. This amendment would disenfranchise the overwhelming majority of Members of Congress. This would be fundamentally unfair to their constituents and to them. We should not allow it to happen.

And let me say a few words about the effects of this commission on Social Security and Medicare.

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If we create this commission, what is to stop it from making further reductions in Medicare spending beyond the changes in the health care reform bill? Although the health care reform

bill would reduce some reimbursements to providers, it would not cut Medicare benefits or eligibility one bit. But the Commission could recommend cuts in Medicare benefits and eligibility.

And what about Social Security? Some people talk as if Social Security is a major factor in long-run budget deficits. But the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office's projections of the 75-year growth of spending for Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security tell a different story.

As a share of the economy, the growth of Medicare and Medicaid spending before enactment of health care reform is more than seven times the growth of Social Security spending.

If we are to reduce projections of mid-term and long-run Federal deficits, we should use the regular order in the Congress to do so. And there is good reason: The system is already working.

The comprehensive health care reform bill that is awaiting final approval by the House and Senate is solid evidence that the system works. Once again according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, the Senate-passed legislation will reduce Federal budget deficits by \$132 billion in the first 10 years, and by \$650 billion to \$1.3 trillion in the second 10 years. And significant deficit reduction is likely to continue in subsequent decades.

This deficit reduction will make a substantial dent in long-run budget deficits. And it has been accomplished entirely through the regular order. It would be ironic to give up on the regular order just when it has achieved such a promising result.

There is more work to be done to reduce deficits in the mid-term and the long-term. But the regular order is up to the job of performing these tasks. We should not give up on it prematurely.

We should vote against creating a commission that can take away many of the responsibilities that the Constitution gave to Congress. I urge my colleagues to reject this amendment.

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