



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

Mr. President, Dr. Laurence Peter, the educator who came up with the Peter Principle, once said: "Democracy is a process by which the people are free to choose the [person] who will get the blame."

Mr. President, in a democracy, that's the people's right. In a democracy, the people elect us to represent them. And in a democracy, the people elect us to be accountable.

But the Chairman and Ranking Republican Member of the Budget Committee have come up with a process to shift the blame. They have come up with a process for Congress to punt our accountability away. They have come up with a process to outsource Congress's central fiscal responsibilities to a new budget commission.

I can see that a commission may be attractive to some. It's the easy way out. Senators can blame everything on the commission. Senators can say, "The commission made me do it."

But we should not shirk our responsibility. Rather, we should do the job that our constituents sent us here to do.

And we already have a process for doing so. It's called the budget process.

The Chairman and Ranking Republican Member of the Budget Committee have proposed a new budget process.

No one has shown greater zeal in taking on the budget deficit than the Chairman and Ranking Republican Member of the Budget Committee. I commend their good intentions.

But we should reject their new process.

Senators Conrad and Gregg have said: “everything needs to be on the table, including spending and revenues.” But why stop there?

If Congress is going to outsource its central fiscal responsibilities, why stop there? Why not cede to this commission all of our responsibilities? Why don’t we just outsource all the year’s work, and then adjourn for the year?

Come to think of it, if we do cede all of our powers to this commission, what’s to stop them from inserting anything and everything that they choose into the commission’s one, non-amendable, omnibus vehicle?

That’s the catch with this commission. If we were to cede all of our responsibilities to this commission, and we were to tie our hands so that we could not amend its recommendations, then we would risk setting in motion some truly terrible policy.

Under the proposed fast-track procedures, we would not be able to amend the proposal. What if we did not like the commission’s recommendations? We would not be able to replace the commission’s recommendations with our own.

And it’s clear from the statements of Senators Conrad and Gregg that they have painted a big red target on Social Security and Medicare. That’s what this commission is all about. It’s a threat to Social Security and Medicare.

And that’s why the first amendment that this Senator offered is to protect Social Security. Senators Conrad and Gregg have proposed a system that will not allow Senators to offer amendments to protect Social Security later, after the commission has come up with its recommendations. That’s why we have to vote to protect Social Security now, while we still can offer amendments.

Mr. President, we already have a process to address the budget. It’s called “the Congressional Budget Process.” Anytime that we wanted to, we could use the budget process to address the budget deficit. And since the creation of the budget process, it has been the process that Congress has usually used to address fiscal challenges.

The Chairman and Ranking Republican Member of the Budget Committee should just skip the commission. They should go straight to their recommendation. They should bring it up in their own committee. That’s exactly why Congress created the Budget Committee, the budget resolution, and the reconciliation bill in the first place.

We don’t need a commission to do our work. We don’t need a new process to shift the blame.

Rather, to address our fiscal challenges, let us just get to work on it now. Let us do the job that the people sent us here to do. And let us reject this commission.

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