

**Remarks by Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) on His “Do Your Job” Amendment
at Senate Budget Committee Markup of GOP Budget Process Proposal
June 20, 2006**

I think you are going to like this one. This is my final amendment, Mr. Chairman.

I am very concerned that many of the provisions in the Chairman’s legislation are really an abdication of our responsibility -- line item veto for the President, commissions to do the work of balancing the budget. My own strong belief is we have been the ones elected to do this job. I can’t for the life of me understand why we need to shuffle this off to a commission, or give the President more authority to do what we should be doing. We ought to do this job.

So, I am offering what I am calling the “Do Your Job” amendment. It is kind of a break-through concept here in Washington. It says that we, as elected members of the Congress, should do our jobs and uphold our Constitutional duties rather than outsourcing the responsibility for our nation’s fiscal condition to unelected, unaccountable outsiders.

My amendment is simple. It strikes the GOP entitlement commission, which is composed of potentially unelected officials; replaces it with an entitlement commission that is composed of the bipartisan membership of the Finance, Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and House and Senate Budget Committees. Commission recommendations on restoring solvency would be considered under regular order in the House and the Senate.

Second, it strikes the Chairman’s plan on the spending accountability commission, which again is composed of potentially unelected officials who are unaccountable, and replaces it with a commission composed of the membership of the Standing Committees of the Senate and the House. Recommendations by the commission to improve or eliminate federal programs would be considered under regular order.

...

This is isn’t that hard. We’ve done this before. In the ‘90’s, twice, we did it. We didn’t need a commission. We did it. It is our job, not somebody else’s job to come in here and do this. We were elected to do this job. Let’s do it.

...

I just think this is a job we need to do. I don’t think we should be setting up commissions. I don’t think we should be doing fast-track. I think we should call on our colleagues to step up to the plate and do this job. It is our job. We were elected to do this job.

I find this notion of putting together a commission with unelected people to come in here and bigfoot this problem, and send up under special procedures where you can’t have extended debate, you can’t have amendments, potentially can’t have any amendments under the way the Chairman has written this thing – that’s the most bizarre thing I have ever seen, that is totally

bizarre. Do you really want that, Mr. Chairman? Do you really want a situation where that could come up here and a Majority Leader could put in a quorum call and run the 50 hours and nobody gets a right to offer an amendment, nobody. That can't be.

...

Let me just say on this matter, because I think it really does make a difference how this is done. I do think people who have been elected need to be the ones who need to be on these commissions. My experience is when you bring in people from the outside, frankly, they aren't accountable. They are on this commission, and you may never see them again. Nobody elected them to make these decisions, and a lot of them have very fixed positions and they just aren't going to get off them.

And this takes people, as I say people who have skin in the game, people who are accountable to be responsible for coming up with an approach.

Let me just, if I can, press back on the question also of fast-track, because, first of all, the way this is structured what I have said could be done. Now, would it be done? I don't know, but I have learned around here if it could be done, at some point, it will be done. That's the one thing I have learned about this place. And to have a situation where people could be locked out of amendments, locked out of extended discussion, that's just a total non-starter. That can't be.