

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

July 18, 2008

The Honorable Tom Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coburn:

Thank you for your letter to me yesterday regarding your decision to block Senate passage of a large number of bills, each of which would normally clear the Senate without objection. I appreciate your candid acknowledgement that you have halted action on an "unprecedented" range of bipartisan bills that "nearly reaches across the full spectrum of the federal government." Although I would prefer to continue trying to act on these bills individually, your unprecedented level of obstruction coupled with the fact that only a few weeks remain in this session of Congress have left me little choice but to put these bills together in a package. It is long past time that the Senate and the Congress finally legislate in these many important areas.

Your letter expresses a desire to enter into a consent agreement that would limit amendments and debate. I think that is a constructive offer on your part and I welcome the opportunity to work on putting together such an agreement to consider the package.

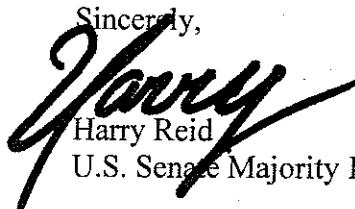
As a first step toward that end, I note that your letter indicates that cost is one of the primary concerns you will seek to have addressed in any agreement that governs consideration of this legislation. Per your suggestion, I have asked the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, the official scorekeeper of congressional legislation, to provide the Senate with their views by Monday on the potential costs of these bills and their impact on our debt and deficit. If the non-partisan CBO says these bills will truly increase spending and the deficit, I will work with you to insure that you have an opportunity to address this problem in a consent agreement. And if CBO says these bills will not have an impact on spending and the deficit, I am hopeful you will acknowledge that fact and we can then move past inaccurate rhetoric about "costs" and focus our consent negotiations on the substance of these bipartisan bills.

More generally, I am happy to discuss a consent agreement that contains an agreed set of germane amendments with a reasonable amount of time for debate. I am hopeful we can avoid a repeat of the lands bill package we passed earlier this year. I think there was some understandable frustration that your efforts merely served to delay Senate action on a package that ultimately passed 91-4. Similarly, the list of bills you are holding includes bills that have passed the House and the relevant Senate committee with broad bipartisan support. These are not controversial bills and there is no reason for

further delay. I will have my staff forward your office the outlines of a proposed unanimous consent agreement.

Thank you again for your letter. I look forward to enacting this important package of authorizations, reflecting American priorities, with broad bipartisan support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry", written over the printed name.

Harry Reid

U.S. Senate Majority Leader