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United States Senate

Senator Tom Coburn, MD
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July 17, 2008

Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid,

While the proposed omnibus spending bill that you have expressed your intention to bring to the floor next week is unprecedented in size, scope and practice—it nearly reaches across the full spectrum of the federal government and contains over 100 individual bills suggested by over 10 committees—it would be my preference that this bill should be considered under the usual Senate rules allowing amendments and debate.

In the interest of achieving our shared goals, however, I would be willing to enter into a unanimous consent agreement that would limit amendments and debate as long as, first and foremost, the cost of the bill is addressed and I am given an opportunity to offer amendments to address other issues of concern.

It is difficult to suggest specific amendments that I would offer until a final package has been compiled and I can examine the impact and cost of the proposal. Based upon the list provided by your staff yesterday, I am holding many, but not all, of the bills that will be included but there are more than 10 bills in this package that unanimous consent has never been previously requested for passage on the floor or via the hotline. It seems reasonable, therefore, that any bill that members of the Senate were not asked to provide unanimous consent to pass before the Senate wrap up on July 15, 2008 should not be included in the omnibus.

The omnibus is likely to cost around \$25 billion when the costs of all of the bills are added together. I would request an expedited Congressional Budget Office analysis and score be made available to all Senators prior to the omnibus' floor consideration.

I understand that the omnibus bill is still being developed, but I am willing to explore a general set of parameters for an agreement that would limit debate time and amendments to the bill.

I would strongly recommend that the underlying bill or the managers' package would include offsets that would pay for the cost of any new spending authorized by the bill by reducing lower priority federal spending elsewhere as well as an explicit assurance that there would be no limitations on energy or mineral exploration resulting from the

bill. This would be my preference and would require no amendments or lengthy floor debates. It would also set an important precedent that any new spending approved by Congress will be paid for rather than continuing Congress' "borrow and spend" policies that have resulted in a \$9.5 trillion national debt.

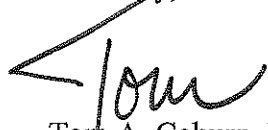
If there is no willingness to pay for the cost of the omnibus, then I would request a fair amount of time to debate the contents and have the opportunity to offer a fixed number of amendments to address cost and any other related negative impact of the bill.

Some potential agreements include:

- One related amendment and one hour of debate for each \$1 billion authorized in new spending by the omnibus;
- One related amendment for each new government office, government program federal commission, park, heritage area, wilderness area, or museum created by the omnibus with at least 30 minutes to debate each amendment; or
- One related amendment for each of the individual bills wrapped into the omnibus with 30 minutes of debate for each amendment.

Surely it is not unreasonable for the taxpayers to expect the Senate to set aside one hour of debate for each \$1 billion it seeks to authorize in spending or to consider one amendment for each new government program or project established by the omnibus. If you believe otherwise, I am receptive to other suggestions that you might have that could help us resolve our differences on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the left.

Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator