



BUDGET COMMITTEE

Judd Gregg, Ranking Member
<http://budget.senate.gov/republican>

Contact: Betsy Holahan (202)224-6011

What Have They Said on Reconciliation? March 3, 2010

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND):

“Reconciliation was never intended for this purpose [health care reform], and it doesn’t work well...It was never intended for this purpose, and I think there would be a lot of unintended consequences.”
RollCall, 4/21/09

“Reconciliation was designed for deficit reduction. The place where I would agree with the Senator is, I don't believe reconciliation was ever intended to write major substantive legislation.”
Senate floor statement on FY 2010 Budget, 3/31/09

“Our distinguished Parliamentarian has said, if you try to write major legislation in reconciliation, you will be left with Swiss cheese. So I hope people are thinking about that. I know there are attractive features of reconciliationI don't think we should do it for substantive legislation that is really not deficit reduction legislation.”
Senate floor statement on FY 2010 Budget, 3/30/09

Senate President Pro Tempore Robert Byrd (D-WV):

“I oppose using the budget reconciliation process to pass health care reform and climate change legislation. Such a proposal would violate the intent and spirit of the budget process and do serious injury to the Constitutional role of the Senate.”
Dear Colleague letter, 4/2/09

“As one of the authors of the reconciliation process, I can tell you that...reconciliation was intended to adjust revenue and spending levels in order to reduce deficits...it was not designed to create a new climate and energy regime, and certainly not to restructure the entire health care system.”
Dear Colleague letter, 4/2/09

“I am one of the authors of the reconciliation process. Its purpose is to adjust revenue and spending levels in order to reduce deficits. It was not designed to cut taxes. It was not designed to create a new climate and energy regime, and certainly not to restructure the entire health care system. The ironclad parliamentary rules are stacked against a partisan minority, and also against dissenting views within the majority caucus. It is such a dangerous process that in the 1980s, the then-Republican majority and then-Democratic minority adopted language, now codified as the Byrd Rule, intended to prohibit extraneous matter from being attached to these fast-track measures. The budget reconciliation process will not air dissenting views about health and climate legislation. It will not allow for feedback from the people or amendments that might improve the original proposals.”
Senate floor statement on FY 2010 Budget, 4/1/09

“Americans have an inalienable right to a careful examination of proposals that dramatically affect their lives. I was one of the authors of the legislation that created the budget "reconciliation" process in 1974, and I am certain that putting health-care reform and climate change legislation on a freight train through Congress is an outrage that must be resisted.”

Washington Post, 3/22/09

“Reconciliation, with its tight time limits, excludes debate and shuts down amendments. Essentially it says “take it or leave it” to the citizens who sent us here to solve problems, and it prevents members from representing their constituents' interests. Everyone likes to win, and the Obama administration, of course, wants victories. But tactics that ignore the means in pursuit of the ends are wrong when the outcome affects Americans' health and economic security. Let us inform the people, get their feedback, allow amendments to be considered and hear opposing views. That's the American way and the right way.”

Washington Post, 3/22/09

“I can say with confidence that the process the Senate utilizes today hardly resembles the process envisioned in 1974. Today the reconciliation process serves as a reminder of how well-intentioned changes to the Senate rules can threaten the institution in unforeseen ways. Reconciliation can be used by a determined majority to circumvent the regular rules of the Senate in order to advance partisan legislation.”

Senate Budget Hearing “Senate Procedures for Consideration of the Budget Resolution/Reconciliation,” 2/12/09

Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA):

“The unique feature of the Senate, which has frequently been called the world's greatest deliberative body, is that any Senator can offer virtually any amendment on virtually any bill at virtually any time. That plus extended debate gives this Chamber the opportunity to acquaint people with serious problems and to build up public demand one way or another. That is an expression of speech and persuasion in a setting where there is opportunity to advance the public good. If we start to shortcut that procedure and undertake major legislative change on items such as health care or global warming or education, we will destroy a most precious aspect of Senate procedure.”

Senate floor statement, 3/30/09

Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV):

“No one has said -- I read what the President has online -- no one has talked about reconciliation but that's what you folks have talked about ever since that came out, as if it's something that has never been done before. Now, we as leaders here, the Speaker and I, have not talked about doing reconciliation as the only way out of all this. Of course it's not the only way out.”

The White House Health Care Summit, 2/25/10

Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR):

“I will not accept any last-minute efforts to force changes to health insurance reform issues through budget reconciliation, and neither will Arkansans.”

Politico, 1/27/10

Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN):

“My concern is that if reconciliation is used, that will really destroy any prospect for bipartisan cooperation on anything else for the remainder of this year...That would be a regrettable state of affairs and something that I think the American public would not react well to.”

Politico, 1/27/10

Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR):

“I’m not real wild about using that procedure [reconciliation] that way.”

Politico, 1/27/10

Sen. Claire McCaskill (D- MO):

“I don’t think it’s [reconciliation] a good idea.”

Politico, 1/27/10

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI):

“[Reconciliation] is an abuse of the process.”

From 2003, as cited in The Hill, 4/ 23/09

“I have strongly opposed past efforts to use reconciliation...it wasn’t appropriate then. It isn’t appropriate now.”

Senate floor statement, 4/2/09

“There are some features of this resolution with which I take exception, most notably the use of reconciliation as a tool to expedite health care reform. The arguments over the use of reconciliation are familiar to this body. Sadly, a tool intended to streamline the painful process of deficit reduction has been used to clear a path for major policy changes that have, at best, only a passing relationship to reducing the budget deficit.”

Senate floor statement, 4/29/2009

“Health care reform is long overdue, and I look forward to the Senate finally acting on an issue that is so important to my constituents. But let's not kid ourselves. It is no more appropriate to use reconciliation as a hammer to push through health care reform under regular procedures than it is to use it directly to enact those reforms. Both are abuses. Both undermine its original intent. Both invite even greater abuses in the future.”

Senate floor statement, 4/29/2009

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI):

“Reconciliation was designed to help Congress pass a large package of measures to reduce the deficit, not to be used to resolve one major policy issue.”

Senate floor statement, 3/16/05

Wendell Primus, House Speaker Pelosi’s top healthcare adviser:

“The trick in all of this is that the president would have to sign the Senate bill first, then the reconciliation bill second, and the reconciliation bill would trump the Senate bill...There’s a certain skill, there’s a trick, but I think we’ll get it done.”

Congress Daily 2/9/10

Larry J. Sabato, Director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics; author of *A More Perfect Constitution*:

“Using budget reconciliation, President Obama could get just about everything that matters to him in year one. But short-term gain would yield long-term pain. Grabbing 51 easier Senate votes now could make reaching the critical 60-vote threshold on most everything else much tougher for the rest of his presidency. Rushing passage of controversial health-care and energy plans will alienate not just Republicans but also a sizable corps of moderate Democrats, especially in the Senate.”
Washington Post, 3/22/2009