

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2, 2011

Dear Colleague,

With our national debt poised to reach its \$14.3 trillion limit within the very near future, taxpayers expect we will work together to reduce wasteful and unnecessary spending and be more vigilant about how we spend public funds. As stewards of our nation's finances, we must ensure our good intentions today are not paid for at the expense of future generations. This means no longer spending money we do not have to pay for programs we do not need.

The House of Representatives has enacted a number of requirements to ensure any bill considered by the chamber does not grow the size or cost of the government or increase our national debt. We believe the Senate should apply these and other commonsense practices to restore fiscal responsibility and increase accountability and transparency to the legislative process.

We, therefore, are notifying you of our intention to object to the consideration of any legislation that fails to meet any of the following standards:

- **All New Spending Must Be Offset with Cuts to Lower Priority Spending:** Congress authorizes billions of dollars in new spending every year to create new or expand existing government programs. Yet, few bills are passed to eliminate outdated, duplicative, unnecessary, inefficient, wasteful, or low priority programs. To make government more efficient, any legislation authorizing new spending or creating a new agency, office, program, activity, or benefit or increasing the authorization of an existing function must offset the cost of this expansion by eliminating an existing program or function or reducing the authorized funding level of ongoing spending.
- **Government Programs Must Be Periodically Reviewed and Renewed:** Never ending government programs must end. Congress should periodically determine whether or not every government program is working as intended, is still needed, or is worthy of continued taxpayer support. To ensure this happens, any legislation establishing or continuing an agency, office, or program must also include a "sunset" date at which point Congress must decide whether or not to update or extend the life of the program.
- **The Cost and Text of Bills Must Be Available Prior to Passage:** Too many bills costing billions of dollars with far reaching implications are approved by the Senate with little debate, few if any amendments, and not even time to read the actual text of the legislation. To guarantee taxpayers and senators have sufficient time to read bills and information to understand their cost and impact, all legislation must be publicly available in an electronic format for at least three full days along with a cost estimate completed by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) prior to being passed.

- **Duplicative Government Programs Must Be Consolidated or Eliminated:** Despite the existence of hundreds of duplicative federal programs costing billions of dollars, Congress continues to create new programs with similar missions, goals, and purposes. To reduce redundancy, any bill creating a new program that replicates a current government mission must consolidate overlapping activities or eliminate the existing programs.
- **Congress Must Not Infringe Upon the Constitutional Rights of the People:** Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution grants Congress a very limited set of enumerated powers. Far too often, Congress infringes upon the rights and liberties reserved for the people and the states provided elsewhere in the Constitution. These overreaches are no more than an afterthought when most bills are debated. To restore the intended balance of powers between the states and the federal government and to preserve the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, all bills must have a clear and obvious basis connected to one of the enumerated powers and must not infringe upon any of the rights guaranteed to the people.

By making clear these expectations now, it is our hope we can work together earlier in the legislative process to resolve any differences that could otherwise delay or stop the passage of your legislative priorities. And while we expect all of these standards to be met for each bill the Senate considers, this is not an exhaustive list of all the reasons we may individually object to a particular bill or unanimous consent request.

Sincerely,

Tom Cole

John McCain

Jim DeMint

Rand Paul

Kelly Ayotte

John Ensign

Mike Lee

Ray Johnson