

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3604

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT,  
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CHAIRMAN  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
INCARCERATION AND REHABILITATION

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

February 5, 2007

Dear Colleague,

I look forward to working with you over the next two years to confront the problems facing our nation.

Perhaps the greatest threat to our nation is our nearly insurmountable national debt which now exceeds \$8.6 trillion. This ever growing red ink threatens both the long-term solvency of important programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, as well as the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren.

Over the past two years, I have heard members on both sides of the aisle call for fiscal responsibility. While we may have different concepts of how to obtain this goal, balancing the budget is not a partisan issue. We may have differences in opinions on the role of government, but those differences should not prevent us from working together to ensure our charity today does not come at the expense of future generations of Americans.

For too long, Congress has simply borrowed more and more money to pay for new spending. In the real world, families can not follow this example and must make difficult decisions and set priorities on how to spend their limited financial resources. Paying for a child's college education or the medical expenses of a loved one compete against purchasing a new car or taking a vacation.

Americans want Congress to live within its means, using the same set of common sense rules and restraints they face everyday.

To this end, I wanted to communicate with you a list of principles I will use to evaluate new legislation in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. I also want to give you advance notice I intend to object to consideration of legislation that violates these common sense principles:

- 1) If a bill creates or authorizes a new federal program or activity, it must not duplicate an existing program or activity without de-authorizing the existing program;
- 2) If a bill authorizes new spending, it must be offset by reductions in real spending elsewhere;

- 3) If a program or activity currently receives funding from sources other than the federal government, a bill shall not increase the federal government's proportion of the costs of the program or activity;
- 4) If a bill establishes a new foundation, museum, cultural or historical site, or other entity that is not an agency or a department, federal funding should be limited to the initial start-up costs and an endowment shall provide funding thereafter.

This is not an exhaustive list as I may also object to legislation that I believe oversteps the limited role of the federal government enshrined in our Constitution by our Founders or that violates my own deepest personal convictions.

I wanted to alert you, however, to the basic fiscal measurements that I will use to evaluate legislation. My intent is not to be an obstacle, but rather to give you the courtesy of knowing how we can work together now to advance our individual and collective goals.

I recognize that the Senate's diversity is one of its strengths. I certainly appreciate that you might articulate a different set of core principles to evaluate legislation. I would humbly suggest, however, that we are at a point in our history when the question of whether we should live within our means and prioritize spending is beyond debate. Our nation's unsustainable fiscal course, the impending bankruptcy of Medicare and Social Security, and our national security challenges leave us no option but to make the hard choices today that will secure the future for tomorrow.

Again, I look forward to working with you to address the challenges facing America in a fiscally responsible manner.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.  
United States Senator