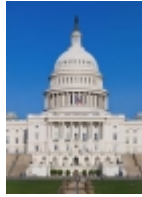




Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on April 6, 2009

Bipartisan Chicanery in Budget Passage

Even the leftist *Washington Post* couldn't help but [editorialize](#) that the Democrats had dishonestly made phantom cuts in the budget in order to claim that they had trimmed Obama's deficits. "The House and Senate pile on the chicanery to mask the growing debt," rang the sub-head for their house editorial on the subject, which concluded: "Rather than change policy to brighten the fiscal picture, the House and Senate chose to add more gimmicks and dishonesty."



Specifically, the *Post* editorial objected to the Democrats' "cut" of President Obama's "placeholder" \$250 billion for another bailout bill from budget projections, a natural disaster placeholder from the budget, and their projection that the alternative minimum tax would increase dramatically against the middle class after 2010.

Democrats claimed they were being fiscally responsible, noting that the Congressional Budget Office had already [exploded](#) Obama's dishonestly optimistic economic assumptions. "When you lose \$2.3 trillion in revenue because of the new CBO forecast, we felt it was necessary to make adjustments in the president's budget while maintaining his priorities," [said](#) Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND).

But the reality, the *Post* realizes, is that hiking the alternative minimum tax against the middle class is not politically viable, and more bailouts are coming with the Democrats in charge of Congress. Indeed, the day after both houses passed the budget, [Reuters news service reported](#) that U.S. congressional budget analysts "have raised their estimate of the net cost to taxpayers for the government's [TARP] financial rescue program to \$356 billion, an increase of \$167 billion from earlier estimates." So much for cutting that \$250 billion "placeholder" in the Obama fiscal 2010 budget. Most of it has already been spent.

Clearly, the Democrats in charge of Congress had to know that their own budget agency, the CBO, was about to revise upward the cost of last year's TARP program. But instead they dishonestly "cut" Obama's placeholder knowing it was already spent.

Meanwhile, Republicans mouthed empty talking points during congressional debate while failing to attempt a filibuster to stop the budget in the Senate. "Spending is needed in the short term to stabilize our financial systems and help our economy recover," Ranking Minority member of the Senate Budget Committee Judd Gregg (R-NH) [said](#) in favor of massive deficits today, but he claimed to oppose the "deficits forever" philosophy of the White House and Democrats in Congress: "But the recession will not last forever, and our budget should not spend as if it will. The president's proposal adds, on average, almost \$1 trillion a year to the debt." A trillion dollars of new debt every year into the indefinite future is obviously an economic calamity for the nation. So did Senator Gregg try to stop this trillion dollar debt forever budget with a filibuster? No.



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Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) followed the same pattern: “The administration’s budget simply taxes too much, spends too much and borrows too much — in a moment, interestingly enough, when we can least afford it.” McConnell lectured his fellow senators in front of the C-SPAN 2 cameras. Just about every Republican in the House and Senate uttered the talking points “taxes too much, spends too much and borrows too much” during debate, but not one senator actually did “too much” to stop the budget. All 42 Republicans in the Senate voted against the budget resolution, which would have been more than enough votes to maintain a filibuster (60 of 100 senators are needed to stop a filibuster). But not one senator started a filibuster attempt.

To the contrary, the Democratic and Republican leadership were [congratulating themselves](#) on how smoothly they let the budget pass the Senate. “I think the Senate has conducted itself well, and distinguished itself today,” Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) [said](#) of debate. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who attended the [April Fools Day press conference](#) to praise the Republican Party’s alternative budget (which [calls for no program cuts](#) and \$500 billion-plus deficits forever), also [congratulated](#) the Senate on how easily it passed the most unbalanced budget in U.S. history: “We have a lot of freshman senators here, and you probably think that this is a tough day I might just mention to you this is one of the least tough budget days we’ve had in the time I’ve been here. And I think, uh, I see the Vice President smiling, he would agree with that. And I think that’s a tribute to Senator Gregg and Senator Conrad. Thank you so much for an excellent job.”

Yes, they were all smiles and giggles in the Senate chambers after passing the budget. And why shouldn’t they all smile and praise each other? The Democrats got to lie about their deficit levels with minimal criticism. The Republicans got to pose against the budget, while at the same time doing little to stop it. And Obama got the budget he wanted. Everybody won ... except the taxpayer.

Every Republican voted against the bill in both the House and Senate, and the [final vote](#) was 233-196 in the House and 55-43 in the Senate. After the April 3 votes, the bill proceeds to a House/Senate reconciliation committee. Both chambers will have to vote again on final passage before it can be presented to President Obama and signed into law.



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