

chance to reconsider or think twice about what they might do.

As a new member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I can assure my colleagues, I don't take lightly proposals to alter the Congress's power of the purse. For Congress to appropriate is as natural as for Johnny Cash to sing or for the President to nominate Supreme Court Justices. But I don't think this interferes with that because both the Senate and House must vote to adopt the President's proposed cuts; second, we can strike portions of his proposed cuts; and third, the power to do all this would sunset after 4 years, giving us in the Congress a chance to evaluate how well it is working.

There are some other things I think we can do. A biennial budget would help. Passing a 2-year budget, so we can focus all of the first year on the budget and all the next year on oversight over programs to help them work better, avoid duplication, and get rid of some programs—all of that would help control spending. We also ought to have a commission on accountability and review of Federal agencies, which would help reorganize duplicative and unnecessary programs.

I am honored to sponsor the Gregg second look at waste amendment because it gives the President and the Congress one tool to reduce wasteful spending at a time when we urgently need to do that and the country knows that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I understand we are in morning business at this time?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

SECOND LOOK AT WASTE

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to thank the Senator from Tennessee for his support at this second look at waste amendment which I have offered. The Senator's arguments, as always, are extraordinarily cogent and logical. He makes the point—which I think is very valid, as a former Governor who had the line-item veto, which is a much stronger authority than what we have in this amendment—that this is important, managing the fiscal house, to making sure that items which get into legislation as a result of being put in arbitrarily by some individual Member of Congress but which are not subject to the light of day in the traditional way—by being brought across the floor as individual items but, rather, are put into major pieces of legislation, sometimes representing hundreds of billions of dollars in spending—that those items can be reviewed again and get a vote as to their credibility and as to their appropriateness and whether they represent something on which American tax dollars should be spent.

This proposal, this fast-track rescission, which is what it really is, is not

a partisan proposal. In fact, as proposed in my amendment, second look at waste, it would actually be primarily under the control of the next President. It has a 4-year window of activity and then it is sunsetted. By the time it would get into law, should it pass the Senate and then pass the House, it is likely that this President will only have, probably, a year and a half to use this authority, and then the next President, whoever that President may be—maybe a Republican, maybe a Democrat—will have the authority to use this rescission ability for 2½ years. So it is not partisan.

Second, it was drafted, as the Senator from Tennessee noted, basically to mirror a proposal that was put forward by Senator Daschle. In fact, I have called this amendment daughter of Daschle. It is essentially the Daschle amendment as offered back in 1995, which was cosponsored by Senator BYRD. There are only two major changes—well, three major changes, and I have already said to those who have asked me that I am willing to adjust those changes to bring it even more in line with Daschle.

One of the changes in this bill from the Daschle bill was that the President would have 300 days to send up his rescission notice. Some people have expressed concern that that gives the President the ability to use that rescission notice as a club over people's heads. The reason we gave the President 300 days in this amendment was we had reduced the number of rescission notices in the Daschle amendment. There were potentially 13 rescission actions available to the President, and in this amendment, there are only 4 available to the President. Therefore, in the Daschle amendment, it was required that the rescission notice be sent up soon after the bill was signed. But, of course, with 13 different opportunities, it could go on all year long. We felt that since we were reducing it to four, we should give the President more leeway as to when he sent up those rescission notices.

But I can understand the argument. In fact, I accept the argument that maybe that is too much authority in the sense it gives the President too much leverage over the Congress. So when, I hope—I am using the term "when"—when this amendment comes forward in an amendable form, I will offer an amendment to reduce the 300 days back to 30 days. So the President would have to send up his rescission notices within 30 days of it being signed, or at least asking us to take a second look at it, and that should adjust that problem and bring it directly in line, pretty much in line with what the Daschle amendment was originally.

The other area which was different from the Daschle amendment is the issue that deals with mandatory spending. Some people have said new mandatory spending—not existing programs, not existing veterans programs or farm programs or Medicare or Medicaid, but

if there is a new mandatory program, that can also be subjected to the President asking for a second look at it. It has been argued by some on the other side that this would undermine the ability to reach a comprehensive settlement on entitlement reform. That is really a straw argument. That argument has no legs.

The practical matter is, if a President reaches an agreement with the Congress on something as extraordinarily important as major entitlement reform, part of that agreement is going to be that the President signed off on it. So this argument of, well, but the President might come back and change it later on with a rescission notice really has no legs. It is just being made for the purpose of giving comfort to folks who believe they want to vote against this amendment. If people want to vote against it, that is their right. But don't use that as an excuse.

What this amendment essentially does is it allows the Congress to fulfill its obligation to make sure that money which is sent by our taxpayers is spent effectively, honestly, appropriately, and without waste. And, it gives the executive branch a role in asking the question of Congress: Did you really mean to spend this money?

I have to say, I have been here for a while—14 years in the Senate—and I have seen a lot of bills come across this floor which were fairly large, and when I took a look at them after I maybe had voted for it, I realized there were some things in them that I wished weren't in them. I didn't happen to vote for the highway bill which had the bridge to nowhere—the famous highway bill. But had I voted for it, I think I would have wanted to take a second look at some of the projects in that bill.

The same is true of a lot of our appropriations bills when we get to the end of the year and we haven't gotten our appropriations process completed effectively, so we lump 3 or 4 different appropriations bills, sometimes 5 or 6, occasionally 10, appropriations bills into 1 and we call it an Omnibus appropriations bill. Those bills tend to get items in them which have received no scrutiny, which are simply the result of an earmark for the purpose of accomplishing something which some Member of the Senate or the House feels is appropriate but which one suspects, if the entire House or the Senate were to take a look at, we would say: Well, better to put that money toward reducing the deficit than toward spending the money in this specific area.

So this bill is, as I have said and as the Senator from Tennessee so eloquently said, a second look at waste. The purpose is to give us, the Congress, another tool to manage waste.

Now, I wish it had come up last week because, quite honestly, I thought it was much more appropriate to last week's debate when we were debating earmarks and when about 50 percent of the debate time was spent on earmarks

because that is what it is really about. But it has now been put on this bill as a result of an agreement I reached with the Senator from Nevada, the majority leader. I respected his position. I admire his leadership. I didn't want to create a situation where the lobbying bill got tied up forever over this issue, and the Senator from West Virginia said he would do that if I kept this amendment on the lobbying bill. So I agreed to put the amendment off and bring it forward at this time. So, hopefully, no one, when we get to this issue of cloture, is going to vote against cloture on the theory that it is not appropriate to this bill because, as I said earlier, I think people are stopped from making that position. It is a technical legal term that basically says, out of fairness: You can't make that case because, basically, the reason this amendment is on this bill is because I was asked to put it on this bill by the majority leader. Therefore, that is why we are going forward at this time.

So this is going to be the opportunity for Members of the Senate to vote on whether they believe a tool which will significantly improve our capacity to manage earmarks, to manage waste, is going to have a chance to be passed. It is a tool which has been offered by myself but which was actually offered by Senator Daschle and which was actually voted for by 37 members of the Democratic Party at that time, 20 of whom are still serving in the Senate. So it does seem to me that it is not unreasonable to ask that we take it up and pass it at this time and move it forward.

When we get to the cloture debate, I will have more to say on the matter, but I did want to come down and express my appreciation to the Senator from Tennessee for supporting the amendment.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator from New Hampshire would allow me to ask him a question or two.

Mr. GREGG. Of course.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the Senator from New Hampshire was Governor, as I was, and my sense of this amendment is that it understands human nature pretty well. Is it not the Senator's experience as Governor, and as a member of the Appropriations Committee for a long time, that sometimes items slip through, and that the idea here would be for the President to be able to just send it back to Congress and say: Don't you want to take a second look at this before you actually spend taxpayers' money? Is that not the general idea that is expressed by this amendment?

Mr. GREGG. I thank the Senator for his question. He is absolutely right. The essence of his question is that the power is retained with the legislative branch. This is not a line-item veto. This is not a veto. This is just the President saying to us, the legislators who have the power of the purse, take another look at this, which is why Sen-

ator BYRD supported it the last time it was on the floor of the Senate.

Mr. ALEXANDER. If the President sends a package of proposals back and asks: Do you really want to spend this money, and if a majority of the Senate decides that it did, and a majority of the House decides that it didn't, what happens then?

Mr. GREGG. Well, answering the Senator through the Chair, then the money gets spent. If either House does not agree with the rescission, then the rescission fails. So the power of the legislative branch is retained, which is its constitutional authority, to spend money as it deems appropriate, and the President has no capacity to override that under this bill. All he has is the capacity to say to the legislative branch: Do you think you want to do this? If either House says, yes, we do, then the money is spent.

Mr. ALEXANDER. One final question, Mr. President. Does the Senator from New Hampshire believe that Federal spending is one of the most difficult challenges we have here and is a matter that will need a bipartisan approach? And that we need to employ all the reasonable tools that we can to try to bring Federal spending under control? Otherwise, we are going to create a massive crisis for our children and our grandchildren, and this proposal would be one such reasonable tool.

Mr. GREGG. I thank the Senator from Tennessee for his question, which may have been rhetorical, and certainly I agree with that. To put this in context, we have to remember we are going to spend close to \$3 trillion—we probably will spend \$3 trillion this year in the appropriating accounts and in our budgets. There is no way we can manage all that efficiently, but certainly every tool that we can get that helps us manage it efficiently we should have. This is just another tool in the tool box to make sure we don't waste the taxpayers' money.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Senator.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today I rise to talk about a portion of the President's address last night that I think is extremely important. I have heard from many of my colleagues in this body and on the talk shows that there are serious concerns about the war in Iraq. Primarily, they are saying we need to change our strategy; we shouldn't be involved in a civil war. We should be involving the Iraqis themselves in taking care of the civil war. We ought to be providing more—we ought to ensure the Iraqi Government cuts the Sunnis in on the oil revenues and makes them full economic partners. We need to bring in the friendly neighbors in the region, those countries that want to see a peaceful and

stable Iraq, and we ought to be following the Baker-Hamilton report.

As I listened to the President's speech last night, that is precisely what he did. This is a new strategy we have in Iraq. We have heard in our open Intelligence Committee hearings that now, for the first time, we believe Prime Minister al-Maliki and his Sunni and Kurdish fellow elected leaders believe they can take over and restore order in that country, and they are willing to crack down on the Shia death squads, such as Muqtada al-Sadr. We have seen reports of that in the media. They report that the neighboring countries are willing now to come in and help with reconstruction, provide job opportunities for young unemployed men to keep them from becoming insurgents or terrorists, and this, they say, is our best chance.

Frankly, for Prime Minister al-Maliki and his government, this is probably their last chance. This is an opportunity where al-Maliki said: If you will provide some additional support as we go in, get our troops up to speed and clear and hold Baghdad, we will take over the country.

That is what we need to do to bring a successful conclusion to this war and to draw out our military. We are probably going to have our military in the region for a long time because, as the President said, this is a generational war against radical Islam and the terror they bring.

I wanted to just briefly note a comment. Last night we heard that the military is against the war. Well, there may be some in the military who are against the war, but I can tell my colleagues, I have spent a lot of time listening to Missouri soldiers and marines, people who have been on the ground. I have gotten reports from them continually. I have seen newspaper reports about the people who have come back, the soldiers who have come back.

For example, one woman has written a book. She served with the Army's 101st Airborne. She lost her husband in the war. She says:

It is hard to stay positive about Iraq because of what you see on the news. But I was able to be there and I know what a difference we are making there.

Others, such as 1SG Stephanie Leonard, was moved to tears, saying that they are heroes for helping the Iraqi people. She said:

It is not a 24-hour war. We want things to be in a hurry. As soon as the Iraqi police are able to secure their own country, that is when the window begins to open.

These are just some of the many comments I have seen in print in Missouri and heard people express. They want to see us win. They know they are doing the job. They believe the liberal national media has painted a very unflattering and untrue picture, and that is why our troops think they are not getting a fair shake.

But in that context, in the context of what the President did, let's talk about