



BUDGET COMMITTEE



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

Contact: Betsy Holahan (202)224-6011
Jeff Turcotte (202)224-2574

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**Senator Judd Gregg's Comments at Press Conference
on Democrats' Refusal to Allow Vote on Wasteful Spending Amendment
(Unofficial Transcript)
Senate Radio-TV Gallery
January 18, 2007**

Thank you Mr. Leader, and thank you for your efforts to remind people the way the Senate works -- which shouldn't take much reminding because it was only a few months ago that they were trying to run the Senate the way that they're now opposing the operation of the Senate.

But basically this amendment, which is very much relevant to this bill, because it deals specifically with earmarks -- and most of the time we've spent on this bill has been earmark-related. I think almost 30% of the amendments that have been offered have been earmark-related, and half the time that we have debated has been earmark-related.

This amendment would essentially put in place a process where the President can ask the Congress to take a second look at wasteful spending, specifically earmarks, and things that get buried in omnibus bills. So it is relevant -- it doesn't survive the germaneness test, because we all know the germaneness test is an extraordinarily narrow test, but there is no reason not to take it up on this bill.

However, in an act of accommodation, which I think is pretty significant, the Republican Leader has, with my support, essentially accepted the offer, which was made by the Democratic Leadership, as to how we could deal with this by taking it up at another time.

However, it was their side of the aisle who has objected to that. To the extent that this process is now being held up, it is being held up because their side of the aisle has an individual senator who has decided to assert his right -- which is absolutely correct on his part if he wishes to do that -- to assert his right not to allow to reach a unanimous consent agreement which would allow us to take this amendment and move it to another section or another place in this process, outside this bill, which everybody had agreed to except for this individual senator.

So you can't say that the Republican Party, and the Republican membership of the Senate, is in any way not trying to move this bill forward – we are. We have said we want to complete this bill. We have agreed to scenarios which would allow the bill to be completed rather promptly. And we're perfectly willing to go forward under that unanimous consent, or some other thing, some other approach that will allow us to get to this amendment in a reasonable way.

But the stoppage here, to the extent that stoppage is the right term, is occurring because there is an individual senator on their side who has threatened to filibuster this amendment. It is his right, but if the other side wishes to address that, they can of course address it. It's not our responsibility or our authority really, to address it. I believe they "doth protest too much."