United States Senate
Committee on Finance

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Floor Statement of Sen. Chuck Grassley on Illegal Immigrants and the House Stimulus Package
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You may be familiar with the phrase "where you stand depends on where you sit." Nothing better illustrates that point than this debate and the issue of rebates for illegal immigrants. We are told that we must pass the House bill, and that changes are unnecessary. I disagree. I think the House bill makes it too easy for illegal immigrants to get rebate checks. According to NumbersUSA, the House bill could allow as many as 3 million illegal immigrants to earn rebate checks.

The House Minority Leader's spokesman was quoted in the press as saying quote: "There is no language in the measure that would enable illegal immigrants to receive a tax rebate." End quote. Mr. President, there is no language whatsoever in the House bill that would PREVENT an illegal immigrant to receive a tax rebate.

My colleagues on the House side should be quite familiar with this line of reasoning. They devoted countless time on the House floor trying to convince people that, because the SCHIP bill didn't explicitly prevent states from covering children it up to 400% of poverty, it must mean states can cover kids up to 400% of poverty.

The same folks who want us to believe the House bill is just fine said we hadn't done enough to prevent illegal immigrants from receiving benefits in SCHIP even though the SCHIP bill had this very language in it:

"Nothing in this Act allows Federal payment for individuals who are not legal residents. Titles XI, XIX, and XXI of the Social Security Act provide for the disallowance of Federal financial participation for erroneous expenditures under Medicaid and under CHIP, respectively."

It's amazing how the standard has changed, isn't it? The same people who said the language I just read you wasn't good enough when we took up SCHIP are now saying no language whatsoever is just fine.

The simple fact of the matter is that the House bill allows illegal immigrants to get rebate checks. Plain and simple.

It is important for us to fix that. We should not give rebate checks to people in this country illegally, and we should give the House an opportunity to fix their huge mistake.

And I can't imagine why anyone on the House side would complain about that. My recent experience negotiating with the House on the issue of illegal immigrants and public benefits taught me that certain folks seem to care quite a lot about that issue.

I'll quote from debate on the SCHIP bill in the House on October 25th of last year, and I won't actually quote the Member by name – you can find it in the Congressional Record if you really want to know.

One Member alleged that the SCHIP bill tried Quote: "… to give benefits to illegal immigrants while we still have Americans unserved." He went on to say, quote: "That is not right. This is not fair. This is not democratic." End quote.

Well if it wasn't right there, it sure isn't right here. It's also not fair. We should not leave some Americans unserved when it comes to the rebates—like seniors and disabled veterans. And we should not give rebates to people who are in this country illegally.

Let me read you another quote from last October 25th:

Quote "I don't think our constituents want us to vote for a bill that makes it easier for illegal immigrants to get tax-paid health care. This bill does that." End quote.

So if that was the case, then I would I think that Member of the House would not want to make it easier for illegal immigrants to get rebate tax-paid checks.

Finally here's a quote from the September 25th SCHIP debate from a Member who used to chair one of the committees of jurisdiction:

Quote: "What that means is that they want illegal residents of the United States of America to get these benefits. That is what the objection means. So for that reason alone, I would ask that we vote against this bill."

For that reason alone, he said!

To my colleagues on the House side, the shoe is now on the other foot. The same principle that applied then should apply now. If you felt strongly enough to stop the SCHIP bill over your concerns about illegal immigrants receiving public benefits, then you certainly should not object to the Senate repairing a bill you sent us that would allow illegal immigrants to get rebate checks.

You cared about it then; you should care about it now. You said it wasn't right then; well, it's not right now. You said it wasn't fair then; well, it's not fair now.