

**Floor Statements by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND)  
on Motion to Instruct Budget Conferees on Spending  
May 15, 2008**

I wish now to turn to the Gregg amendment that was previously offered with respect to a \$1 trillion cap.

Let me indicate that the spending in the budget resolution that has gone to the conference committee takes spending down as a share of GDP each and every year from 20.8 percent of GDP in 2008 and 2009, every year stepping it down until we get to 19.1 percent of GDP in 2012 and 2013. I might add, we balance the budget in 2012 and 2013 under the budget.

The comparison of the spending under the resolution and the President's budget is depicted by these lines: The green line is the budget resolution spending line; the President's is the red line. You can see almost no difference. That is because there is almost no difference between the spending in the President's budget and the spending in the Senate budget resolution.

In fact, here are the differences: The Senate budget resolution has \$3.08 trillion of spending over the period of the 5 years. The President has \$3.84 trillion of spending over the period.

What are the differences? Let me indicate as a percentage, that is a 1-percent difference--1 percent. Why do we have 1 percent more than the President? Well, because first we rejected his Medicare cuts. That is 45 percent of the difference. Forty-three percent of the difference is we rejected his cuts to law enforcement. We rejected his cut to veterans. We rejected his cuts to transportation. My goodness. We just had a bridge collapse in Minnesota, 35W. Can you imagine the horror? You are driving home and the bridge collapses. We don't think it is wise to be cutting transportation funding when we are not maintaining the roads and bridges we have now, much less dealing with the gridlock that exists around the country as well. So we have rejected those cuts by the President.

We specifically rejected his proposal to cut the COPS program, not by 10 percent and not by 20 percent. The President proposed cutting the COPS program 100 percent. What is the COPS program? That is a program that has put 100,000 police officers on the street in this country. In my State, it has put over 200 officers on the street. I just held a hearing with every part of law enforcement represented: the police chiefs, the sheriffs, the States' attorneys--open testimony. They said it was absolutely beyond their understanding why the President would propose cutting the COPS program 100 percent, but he did.

He proposed cutting weatherization assistance 100 percent. Why would you cut weatherization assistance when that is designed to reduce fuel bills when oil is \$120 a barrel? He says cut weatherization assistance 100 percent.

He says cut first responder grants 78 percent. I just held a hearing that involved all of the first responders in my State: The fire chiefs, the police chiefs, and all of the others, including the

EMS personnel, emergency medical services. I asked them: Do they think it makes any sense to cut the first responder grants 78 percent? They unanimously said absolutely not. What are we going to do in terms of interoperability of communications if we are not upgrading those systems? One of the things we learned on that fateful day, September 11, was that the failure to have interoperable communications created a fiasco at the Pentagon when all the emergency responders were going there to try to help and they couldn't communicate with each other. That is what these grants are for, to provide interoperable communications, to provide the training to respond to disasters, both natural and manmade. The President says cut it 78 percent.

The President said cut community development funds 24 percent. He said cut clean water grants 21 percent. He said cut low-income home energy assistance--the very popular LIHEAP program--which is already underfunded, another 15 percent. We said, no, that doesn't make any sense.

Yet we produced a budget that balances. It balances in the fourth year--not by much, but it does balance, according to CBO. We stay in balance in the fifth year, unlike the President's budget. The President balanced in the fourth year but went right back out of balance in the fifth.

He has an addiction to debt unlike anything I have ever seen. This President has almost doubled the national debt in just 7 years. He has more than doubled foreign holdings of our debt in that period. We owe the Chinese hundreds of billions, we owe the Japanese hundreds of billions, and we even owe Mexico. This President's legacy is one of debt.

In this budget, we bring down the debt as a share of GDP in each and every year, according to the scoring of the budget resolution, from 69.6 percent down to 66 percent. That is not as much progress as I would like to make.

Senator Gregg and I have a separate proposal to deal with the long-term entitlement problems and those challenges, to deal with that in a bipartisan special task force that would have the power to come back with a recommendation that would get a vote in the Congress of the United States if a supermajority of the members of the task force, who are completely bipartisan, would agree on the plan.

I am proud of this budget resolution. I think this trillion-dollar cap on discretionary spending is a pure political gambit.

Let me add one other thing. If this cap were imposed, part of what is included in that spending is spending on our national defense. So that would put defense under the gun and put it at risk of additional cuts. I am a little surprised that the Republicans are proposing that. I don't think this is the time to be making cuts in national defense, but that would be in the pot and be subject to cuts under their proposal. I hope we reject that approach.

With that, I think we are very close to being ready to go to votes.

### **Concluding Statement Prior to Vote**

Under the budget resolution, spending goes down each and every year as a share of domestic product, 20.8 percent down to 19.1 percent

The Senator opposite seeks to make those reductions more steep and embrace the President's proposal which would eliminate the COPS Program--not just cut it but eliminate it, a program that puts 100,000 police on the street--cut the Weatherization Assistance Program 100 percent at a time of \$120 oil; cut the first responder grants--police, fire, emergency medical 78 percent; cut community development 24 percent; cut clean water 21 percent; cut LIHEAP 15 percent.

More than that, because of the way this amendment has been written, this would put defense in the pool to be cut. If you want to do that, vote for the Senator's motion. I urge a ``no" vote.