

**Transcript of Remarks by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND)  
at Press Conference on Negative Impact of President Bush's Budget Proposal  
February 12, 2008**

I want to thank my colleague, Senator Stabenow from Michigan who is a valuable member of the Senate Budget Committee, and of course Senator Menendez of New Jersey who has also played a very strong role on the Senate Budget Committee as we debate the priorities for this year. We are also joined today by Judy Cato and Gabe Pendas and our youth contingent. We have Caroline and William from Silver Spring, Maryland, who are doing such a great job. They are six and five. We are delighted they are with us as well.

Today we wanted to highlight the negative impacts of the President's policies on our young people, because the President's budget is sending them the bill. The President says run up the debt and leave it to this next generation, or the next several generations to pay it.

The President says the deficit is going to be some \$400 billion, but what he neglects to tell the American people is the debt is going to go up, by his own calculation, more than \$700 billion this year alone. And of course that is just a snap shot for one year.

If we look at the full time the President has been responsible for the budget, what we see is that he is building a wall of debt of staggering proportion. The debt at the end of his first year - we don't hold him responsible for the first year - is \$5.8 trillion. And for the eight years that he will have been responsible, we will see the debt rise to over \$10 trillion, nearly doubling during this President's watch.

The result is that debt is growing so fast that by 2009 each man, woman and child's share of the debt will total over \$34,000. And of course that means these children are getting stuck with a debt of that magnitude. That's the debt for every man, woman and child in the country. Stunning.

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*Question:* How can you avoid the type of fight that you had last year over spending bills...now you are in an election year...what is the outlook for your rearranging the budget?

*Conrad Answer:*

You know, it is going to be challenging, isn't it? It is going to be tough. If you look at what happened last year, basically we split the difference in the end. And that meant at least some of the key priorities were enacted. We made major strides on college affordability; we made major strides on funding our veterans' health care. Those were dramatic accomplishments. We passed expansion of childrens' health care insurance so that our kids would at least have a chance of having health insurance. The President vetoed that, not once, but twice.

We expect tough fights again this year. Look, we understand the priorities that will be included in our budget are fundamentally different than the President's. The President says that

the top priority is providing more tax cuts, disproportionately to the wealthiest among us. The cost of the President's tax cuts for one year for those earning over \$1 million a year is \$51 billion. The President says that is more important than the COPS program, which he eliminates. It is more important than weatherization of homes, which he eliminates. It is more important than low-income heating assistance, which he cuts by almost 20 percent. It is more important than restoring funding for education, which he cuts by \$800 million. I mean these are the President's priorities.

Our priorities are very different. We say we admire those who accomplish much in our society and who are financially successful, but we wouldn't say that providing them even more tax cuts is more important than educating our kids; than providing health insurance for our children; than making certain that those who are able and work hard have a chance to attend college so that they have a brighter future. These are very, very different priorities.

And I would just say on law enforcement, the President says eliminate the COPS program. What kind of priority is that? That put a 100,000 police officers on the street. That has helped us be a safer nation. The President says eliminate it because it is so important that people earning over \$1 million a year get more tax cuts. I just don't think those are the priorities of the American people.

*Question:* Given the shorter time frame you are working on to get this budget to the Senate floor, doesn't that mean that it will be a budget pretty much like last year, and in that sense, won't it also leave out extending AMT and war cost?

*Conrad Answer:*

Let me just say the President's war cost budget would make much more sense in the context of our policy than his policy because he intends to stay in Iraq. Some of his people told us, "Think Korea," when we asked how long might we stay. You will remember we have been in Korea for 50 years. So, he has a very different view than we do. So the President has played hide the ball in the budget on war cost with respect to his policy. Again, our policy would be very different.

On the question of alternative minimum tax, you can be assured we will deal with the alternative minimum tax. We dealt with it last year. We'll certainly deal with it this year to prevent 20 million people from being swept up in a tax that was never intended.

But I think it is also fair to say the underlying question you asked, "Won't this budget be quite close to last years?" And, I think the answer is, candidly, yes. This is an election year. We are on a very short time frame. We intend to have the budget on the floor the week of March 10. And so I anticipate there will be some changes, for example, I think you will see strong initiatives on infrastructure and energy, because those are key priorities for the country.