

## **Senator Kent Conrad - Senate Floor Statement on 2003 Omnibus Appropriations Bill - 2/13/03**

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, it has been very interesting to me to review the budget document that is now before us that has the omnibus appropriations for 2003, which provides funding for all the discretionary programs and activities outside the Department of Defense.

For months last year, our Republican colleagues prevented completion of the remaining 2003 appropriations bills, arguing that that level for appropriations was too high and the President would not accept appropriations bills that exceeded \$750.5 billion in total.

The President's veto threat persisted even with the Senate Appropriations Committee having voted out all 13 appropriations bills on unanimous 29-to-0 votes.

After delaying the 2003 appropriations process for 5 months, and forcing most of the Federal Government to operate under a series of continuing resolutions, our Republican colleagues have produced a bill that, when combined with the already enacted defense and military construction bills, exceeds the President's level by more than \$12 billion.

Republicans provide total discretionary budget authority for 2003 of \$762.7 billion, and highway obligational authority of \$31.8 billion, for a total of \$794.5 billion.

Last year, they railed against the Senate Budget Committee reported spending level of \$797 billion.

My friends, that is a difference of three-tenths of 1 percent, a \$2.5 billion difference. Five months of delay over a difference of three-tenths of 1 percent. Levels they said were fiscally irresponsible they have now adopted.

Most interesting--most interesting--when the bill was here on the floor, some of our colleagues on the other side ran up a debt meter on amendments offered by some Democrats that had a total cost over 10 years of \$37 billion.

We are poised to vote now on their proposal which is \$62 billion above what was offered on the floor at the time. So if they still have their debt meter chart, they had better get it out. And they ought to put another \$25 billion on their tote board because they are running up the debt--and it is their spending. They are in charge, and all their talk about Democratic spending, and that that is the problem with fiscal responsibility, is shown for what it was. It was all talk.

The reason we are in the deficit ditch is the tax cuts that were unaffordable that they have put in place and the additional tax cuts this President is seeking that are going to drive us deep into deficit and debt.

Mr. President, the numbers do not lie. I have been waiting for this moment for 5 months, to see if the rhetoric matched the reality. And now we see. In just a few moments we are going to have a chance to vote, and then we are going to see who stands with their words, and who stands with their rhetoric, and who votes to spend the money.

This has been a very interesting year, but this is just the beginning. Because we are going to see, in the coming months, who is serious about fiscal responsibility, who is serious about having budgets that add up, who is serious about paying down debt, who is serious about exploding deficits and debt--right on the eve of the retirement of the baby boom generation. I hope very much that the rhetoric matches the reality because we have not seen that in the last 5 months. I thank the Chair and yield the floor.