

SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE

KENT CONRAD, CHAIRMAN

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Contact: Stu Nagurka (202) 224-7436
Steve Posner (202) 224-7925

SENATE RENEWS KEY BUDGET ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

Washington, DC - The Senate today, by unanimous consent, renewed key budget enforcement mechanisms that expired on September 30. The enforcement mechanisms help to maintain fiscal discipline by making it much more difficult to pass additional tax cuts or spending that are not fully paid for.

“This is a victory for fiscal discipline,” said Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND). “Without these budget enforcement mechanisms, the tax cut and spending doors would have been left wide open. At least for now, the key enforcement provisions will remain locked in place.”

The measures adopted today, which apply only to the Senate and are effective immediately, include:

- 1) a six-month extension of the provision requiring 60 votes to waive certain budget points of order, such as the point of order against any tax cut or spending legislation not provided for in the most recent budget resolution, and
- 2) a six-month extension of the Senate pay-as-you-go rule, requiring 60 votes to pass any tax cut or mandatory spending legislation that would increase the deficit, further tapping into Social Security funds.

“Make no mistake, the extension of these provisions does not represent everything that I would have liked to accomplish,” said Conrad. “I would have preferred that they were statutory rules, instead of applying only in the Senate; that they were extended for five years, instead of just six months; and that they included a discretionary spending cap of \$768 billion for 2003.

“Senators Domenici, Feingold, and I offered such a bipartisan package back in June, which received 59 votes in the Senate, just one short of the number needed to pass.

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Unfortunately, the Bush administration, along with some Republican Senators, have blocked our efforts to extend a more comprehensive package of budget enforcement tools.

“But while today’s action does not represent everything that ultimately can be done to ensure fiscal discipline, it does represent a critical step in the right direction. I plan to continue working to put in place the other key budget constraints, such as the discretionary spending cap. And I can assure the American people that I will be back early next year working to extend these budget enforcement tools well into the future.”

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