

**Transcript of Floor Statement by Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND)
on Budget Committee Jurisdiction Amendment
October 9, 2004**

I rise today to speak on behalf of the amendment from the chairman of the Budget Committee, Senator Nickles. The Senator from Ohio just got it wrong, what the amendment of the Senator who is the chairman of the Budget Committee does. We do not take the jurisdiction of Governmental Affairs on management issues at all, not at all. That is not what the amendment does.

What the amendment does do is end the duplication of the jurisdiction of the committees on budget process issues. I would submit to my colleagues, it does not make any sense any longer, after 30 years, for Governmental Affairs and Budget to have joint jurisdiction on budget process issues.

The reason they have that joint jurisdiction is because Governmental Affairs wrote the Budget Act. There was no Budget Committee, so at that time they had expertise that the Budget Committee simply did not have, so they were included on jurisdiction on budget process issues.

Well, 30 years have passed. The expertise on these issues is on the Budget Committee. It makes no sense in any management sense to have joint jurisdiction on budget process issues--not on the management issues. The management issues are retained by Governmental Affairs, as they should be. But budget process issues, as the chairman of the Budget Committee has suggested in his amendment, ought to be the jurisdiction of the Budget Committee.

Second, it makes no earthly sense for the nominee to be the Budget Director only to go before the Governmental Affairs Committee. That is what happens now. I think my colleagues would be stunned--I must say, I was very surprised, serving on the Budget Committee--that the Director of the Budget does not come before the Budget Committee. What sense does that make?

The amendment of the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Senator Nickles of Oklahoma, does not expand the jurisdiction of the Senate Budget Committee. It simply eliminates the overlap in jurisdiction between the two committees on the narrow issue of budget process issues.

The expertise on budget process issues, on pay-go, on discretionary caps, on oversight of budget agreements, does not reside with the Committee on Governmental Affairs; it resides in the Budget Committee. We ought to clean up this overlap that has existed for 30 years that started for a good reason--because the Committee on Governmental Affairs wrote the Budget Act because there was no Budget Committee. But now there is a Budget Committee. It has been in existence 30 years. It ought to have jurisdiction over budget process issues. That just makes common sense.

Who could possibly defend the notion that a Budget Director should not come before the Budget Committee for confirmation? It makes no earthly sense.

The amendment of the Senator from Oklahoma is entirely reasonable. It is rational. It improves the operations of both committees. It does not take jurisdiction to the Budget Committee; it simply reduces the common jurisdiction that currently exists between Governmental Affairs and the Budget Committee on the narrow issue of budget process. ... And it gives to the Budget Committee the right to hear from the Office of Management and Budget, the man who is named or the woman who is named Budget Director in the confirmation process. That just makes common sense.