COUNCIL FOR



Thomas A. Schatz

President

October 6, 2011

U.S. Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the more than one million members and supporters of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW), I urge you to support S. 1651, the Honest Budget Act of 2011, introduced by Senators Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine).

Budget gimmicks have unfortunately become the norm in Congress. At a time when the national debt tops \$14.8 trillion, lawmakers cannot and should not dupe Americans into believing they are voting for a bill that shrinks the size and scope of the federal government when, more often than not, it does exactly the opposite.

The Honest Budget Act would close accounting loopholes and end the budget subterfuge employed by lawmakers. The legislation would make it more difficult to pass an appropriations bill without a budget resolution in place. It would also tighten the process for adding "emergency" designations; force members to use a market default risk rate that reflects loans' fair value; prevent scoring rescissions of budget authority as savings if they do not produce actual cash savings; eliminate automatic within-grade step increases, thereby making President Obama's two-year federal pay freeze genuine; require that transfers from the General Fund to bail out the Highway Trust Fund be scored as new spending; and reinstate a budget point of order to limit Congress's ability to defer increased spending to future years.

Sometimes, legislation includes provisions that serve no purpose other than to move outlays and revenues between fiscal years in order to skirt budget rules. The Honest Budget Act would institute a scoring rule to prohibit spending and revenue impacts of time shifts from counting for budget enforcement purposes. Additionally, the legislation would extend an existing Senate point of order against all changes in mandatory spending programs (ChiMPs) that increase the deficit. Currently, appropriations bills can claim phony discretionary savings from ChiMPs. Appropriations bills typically include at least \$8 billion in ChiMPs to offset increased spending on discretionary appropriations.

Many current budget practices are dishonest, deceitful and unacceptable to taxpayers. The Honest Budget Act of 2011 will force Congress to adhere to fair and transparent budgeting and accounting procedures. All votes on S. 1651 will be among those considered in CCAGW's 2011 Congressional Ratings.

Sincerely,
Thomas Schatz

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