

Common Cause; Demos; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Food Research and Action Center; Frances Perkins Center; Generations United; Global Policy Solutions; Health & Medicine Policy Research Group; International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural; and LGBT Caucus of the American Academy of Physician Assistants, Inc.

MoveOn.org Political Action; NAACP; National Asian Pacific Center on Aging; National Association for Hispanic Elderly; National Association of Area Agencies on Aging; National Association of Mother Centers and Its MOTHERS Initiative; National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.; National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare; and National Council of Women's Organizations.

National Indian Council on Aging; National Organization for Women; National Hispanic Council on Aging; National Senior Citizens Law Center; National Women's Law Center; OWL—The Voice of Midlife and Older Women; OpenLeft.com; and Pathways PA.

Pension Rights Center; People for the American Way; Progressive Democrats of America; Project to Defend and Improve Social Security; SEIU—Service Employees International Union; United Methodist General Board of Church & Society; USAction; Voices for America's Children; Wider Opportunities for Women; Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement; and the Women's Research and Education Institute.

STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

AFGE Council 220; AFGE Local 3937, AFL-CIO; California Alliance for Retired Americans; Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups; DelcoAction Seniors; New York Statewide Senior Action Council; Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans; and Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans.

Mr. BAUCUS. It is not just progressive groups that oppose the Conrad-Gregg amendment. On January 15, a broad consortium of conservative groups sent what they called "An Open Letter to U.S. Senators Urging Opposition to the Conrad-Gregg Bipartisan Tax/Spending 'Reform' Commission." This conservative consortium said:

On behalf of the millions of taxpayers, small businesses, families, senior citizens and shareholders represented by our respective organizations, we urge you in the strongest terms to oppose and vote against the "Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action Act of 2009," sponsored by Senators Kent Conrad and Judd Gregg, be it in stand-alone form or as an amendment.

These conservative groups explained their motivation. In their view, they said:

As written, the Conrad-Gregg proposal would lead to a guaranteed tax increase.

These conservative groups concluded as follows:

We urge you to oppose and vote against the misguided plan when it comes before you.

Among the signatories of this letter are the American Conservative Union, Americans for Tax Reform, the American Shareholders Association, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, and the National Taxpayers Union.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the full text of the consortium letter.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JANUARY 15, 2010.

AN OPEN LETTER TO U.S. SENATORS URGING OPPOSITION TO THE CONRAD-GREGG BIPARTISAN TAX/SPENDING "REFORM" COMMISSION

DEAR U.S. SENATOR: On behalf of the millions of taxpayers, small businesses, families, senior citizens and shareholders represented by our respective organizations, we urge you in the strongest terms to oppose and vote against the "Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action Act of 2009," sponsored by Sens. Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Judd Gregg (R-NH), be it in stand-alone form or as an amendment.

As written, the Conrad/Gregg proposal would lead to a guaranteed tax increase.

The plan put forth by Sens. Conrad and Gregg establishes an eighteen-member task force comprised of ten Democrat and eight Republican Congressmen, Senators, and Administration officials. A report from the commission would need to gather fourteen votes in order to make an expedited recommendation to both bodies. The recommendation would only pass with a supermajority vote in each chamber.

Despite the appearance of protection for taxpayers, this commission would guarantee a net tax increase be in its proposal. Every Democrat on the commission would insist on tax increases to "balance" spending cuts in the recommendation.

There is no conceivable scenario whereby the commission would issue a report that does not contain tax hikes, and history underscores the dangers of such a bipartisan deal that puts everything on the table:

In the 1990 Andrews Air Force Base debacle, Congressional Democrats convinced a number of Republicans to join them in a bipartisan deal promising \$2 in spending cuts for every \$1 in tax increases. Every penny of the tax increases (\$137 billion from 1991-1995) went through. Not only did the Democrats break their promise to cut spending below the CBO baseline—they actually spent \$23 billion above CBO's pre-budget deal spending baseline.

In order to make such a commission acceptable from a taxpayer perspective, language must be included that explicitly removes tax increases and/or new taxes from commission consideration.

However, the proposal in its current form will likely come before you later this month as an amendment to yet another bill to increase the debt limit, as Democrats will be looking to use this commission idea as a way to cover their big-spending tracks.

This bipartisan commission is a veiled attempt to lure Republicans into taking joint ownership of massive tax increases to pay for their crisis and is arguably one of the biggest threats to taxpayers. What's worse, it could become the Trojan horse for a European-style Value-Added Tax (VAT).

We urge you to oppose and vote against this misguided plan when it comes before you.

Sincerely,

Jim Martin, chairman, 60 Plus Association; Stephen P. Gordon, media director, Alabama Republican Liberty Caucus; Brian Johnson, executive director, Alliance for Worker Freedom; Susan A. Carleson,* chairman and CEO, American Civil Rights Union; David A. Keene, chairman, American Conservative Union; Grover Norquist, president, Americans for Tax Reform; Tim Phillips, president, Americans for Prosperity; Ryan Ellis, execu-

tive director, American Shareholders Association; John Tate, president, Campaign for Liberty; Sandra Fabry, executive director, Center for Fiscal Accountability; Timothy Lee, vice-president of legal and public affairs, Center for Individual Freedom; Chuck Muth, president, Citizen Outreach; Barbara Anderson, executive director, Citizens for Limited Taxation (MA); Wayne Crews, vice president for policy, Competitive Enterprise Institute; Tom Schatz, president, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste; Rick Watson, chairman, Florida Center-Right Coalition; Jamie Story, president, Grassroot Institute of Hawaii; Gregory Blankenship, president, Illinois Alliance for Growth.

Andrew Langer, president, Institute for Liberty; Robert McClure, president and CEO, James Madison Institute; Rep. James DeCesare, chairman, Kentucky Taxpayer Protection Caucus, House of Representatives; Colin Hanna, president, Let Freedom Ring; Del. Warren Miller, chairman, Maryland Taxpayer Protection Caucus, House of Delegates; Shane Osborn, Nebraska State Treasurer; Andrew Moylan, director of government affairs, National Taxpayers Union; Jerry Cantrell, president, New Jersey Taxpayers' Association; Deborah Owens, co-chair, Ohio Center-Right Coalition; Brandon Dutcher, vice president for policy, Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.; Kim Thatcher, chairman, Oregon Taxpayer Protection Caucus, House of Representatives; Todd Kruse, Property Rights Association of Minnesota; Jason Williams, executive director, Taxpayer Association of Oregon; William Greene, president, RightMarch.com; Ben Cunningham, spokesman, Tennessee Tax Revolt; Laura Lee Adams, chairman, Utah Center-Right Coalition; Susan Gore, founder, Wyoming Liberty Group.

Mr. BAUCUS. Also on the conservative side, on December 29, 2009, the Wall Street Journal editorial page—no friend of progressive causes—published an editorial entitled "The Deficit Commission Trap." The editors of the Wall Street Journal wrote:

We only hope Republicans aren't foolish enough to fall down this trap door.

I conclude by saying that people on both sides of the political spectrum have very grave reservations and urge opposition to the amendment to be offered by our good friends and colleagues, Senators CONRAD and GREGG, and I hope we do not adopt that amendment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, due to the fact that I was ill and concerned for others traveling on the same airplane to Washington, DC, I was unable to cast a vote for rollcall No. 1 in the second session of the 111th Congress, the nomination of Beverly Baldwin Martin, of Georgia, to be a U.S. Circuit Judge for the 11th Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" to confirm the nominee. •

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BRIAN R. BOWMAN

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise with a heavy heart to honor the life of PFC Brian R. Bowman from Waveland, IN. Brian was 24 years old when he lost his life on January 3 when insurgents attacked his unit in Ashoq, Afghanistan. Brian was serving as a medic in the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado, as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Today, I join Brian's family and friends in mourning his death. Brian will forever be remembered as a loving son and friend to many. Brian is survived by his devoted wife Casie, his father Robert Bowman and mother Paula J. Gerdes, two sisters and countless friends and relatives.

Brian was a Crawfordsville native who grew up in Waveland. Prior to entering the service in August of 2006, Brian graduated from Southmont High School in 2004. A gifted musician, he played the baritone for the Royal Mounties who were perennial contenders in the Indiana State Fair's band competition. His father said that he gave up sports to be in the band because he loved music.

While we struggle to express our sorrow over this loss, we can take pride in the example Brian set as a soldier, a husband, a son and a brother. Today and always he will be remembered by family, friends and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero, and we cherish the legacy of his service and his life.

As I search for words to honor this fallen soldier, I recall President Lincoln's words to the families of soldiers who died at Gettysburg: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Brian R. Bowman in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commit-

ment to freedom, democracy and peace. I pray that Brian's family finds comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Brian.

CELEBRATING MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish today to honor the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I would like to take this opportunity not only to talk about the man but also the movement. During a time of segregation, violence, unnecessary bloodshed, and ignorant bigotry, a man named Martin Luther King, Jr., graced the world with his poignant determination for peace. His life continues to inspire not only Americans but the world in continued efforts for equality amongst all men and women.

This week the Nation reflects on Dr. King's life and legacy. I remember being a young man during his lifetime. I remember not only the struggles he faced but the justice he longed for. As I reread Dr. King's letter from Birmingham Jail, where he wrote about trying to explain to one's child why she can't go to a public amusement park because she was Black; where he wrote about the humiliation of nagging signs that read "white" and "colored;" where he wrote about the internal fight against a "degenerating sense of nobodiness," I ask our Nation not to return to such a time but instead continue to move our Nation forward in accepting all people.

While Dr. King was fighting for national civil rights, I was growing up in Baltimore City, MD. I attended a segregated public school, and I remember with great sadness how discrimination was not only condoned but, more often than not, actually encouraged against Blacks, Jews, Catholics, and other minorities in the community. I remember the local movie theater denying admission to African Americans. I remember the community swimming pools that had signs hanging that read, "No Jews, No Blacks allowed." In the wake of death threats, physical attempts on his life, home bombings, and jail time, Dr. King fought for the rights Americans hold so dear. He fought for the right to vote, the right to equal access, the right to an equal education, and the right to be treated and seen as an equal.

More than 40 years later, our Nation has made significant progress. We have elected our first African-American President, we have women running Fortune 500 companies, we have the first female Speaker of the House, we have our first Latina Supreme Court Justice, and many more accomplish-

ments have occurred. And while we have come a long way from segregated lunch counters and firehouses and dogs being unleashed on protesters, we still have not reached the mountaintop. There are still laws, policies, and negative perceptions that infringe on individual civil rights.

The issues of today are not so different than the issues of Dr. King's time. We are at war. There is discrimination. There are disparities. There is hate. We must fight and expose these injustices. Dr. King believed that you must expose injustices "with all the tension its exposure creates." We must take up these issues. We must address health care disparities, discrimination in all forms, abuses in our criminal justice system, and bad legislative policies. We must not shy away from what great people before us worked so hard to bring to light. This is not the time for what Dr. King called the "moderate." This is not the time for those who say they agree with us in the goal but fail to take direct action. This is the time for action against injustices.

When more than 40 million Americans don't have access to quality health care, an injustice has occurred. When Americans receive discriminatory sentencing, an injustice has occurred. When Americans are subjected to discriminatory lending, an injustice has occurred. When hate crimes are perpetrated, an injustice has occurred. When our country uses torture, an injustice has occurred. When any form of discrimination is used, an injustice has occurred.

So I ask my fellow colleagues in the Congress and my fellow Americans nationwide, as we start a new year, a new decade, remember that "human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God . . ." Stand with us as we take up the controversial issues of the day—immigration, employment nondiscrimination, pay equity for women, hate crimes, sentencing reform, education reform, and remember such actions are taken in dedicated efforts toward a more loving and just union.

Dr. King said that the ultimate measure of a man or woman is not where he or she stands in the moments of comfort and convenience, but where he or she stands at times of challenge and controversy. He stood up and fought for what was just in a world of controversy. I ask you all to stand up on the shoulders of Dr. King and fight for the elimination of hate and discrimination. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will always be remembered for his courage, elegance and tireless endurance for the fight of equality in America.