

this bill means and what it doesn't mean?

The last thing we want is for the little guy to get hurt by a piece of legislation that is intended to rein in bankers on Wall Street. But that is precisely why we have gotten so many letters of opposition to this bill over the last few days from groups like the National Federation of Independent Business, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Tax Reform, and the National Taxpayers Union.

That is also why we have gotten so many letters expressing serious concerns from groups like the United States Automobile Association, the Military Officers Association of America, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the Farm Credit Council, the American Council of Life Insurers, the Housing Policy Council, the National Association of Home Builders, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Fertilizer Institute. The list goes on.

In fact, the only people who seem willing to come out in support of this bill are the executives at Goldman Sachs, the biggest bankers at the biggest Wall Street firm of all. The CEO of Goldman Sachs was here on the Hill yesterday discussing his firm's role in the financial crisis, and the point he made about this bill is that he agrees with the President, who said last week that the biggest beneficiaries of this bill are on Wall Street.

So the supporters of this bill may have locked up the support of the folks at Goldman Sachs. But Republicans aren't about to rush this bill just to make Lloyd Blankfein happy, and not before there's an ironclad protection against any taxpayer funding of Wall Street firms like his. Americans want to know that this bill will protect them too. And right now, they have got more questions than answers.

I already mentioned concerns about section 1027. How about section 1022? It relates to government collection of information through a new Bureau of Consumer Protection. Here's what that section of the bill says: "In conducting research on the offering and provision of consumer financial products or services." It continues: "The Bureau shall have the authority to gather information from time to time regarding the organization, business conduct, markets, and activities of persons operating in consumer financial services markets."

It continues:

In order to gather such information, the Bureau may make public such information obtained by the Bureau under this section, as is in the public interest in reports or otherwise in the manner best suited for public information and use.

I have a question: Does having a credit card make you a person operating in consumer financial service markets? What if you sell something

on eBay and someone pays you with their credit card through Paypal? Does that make you someone operating in consumer financial service market? I am sure it is not the intent of the chairman to give the government the authority to collect personal financial information on Kentuckians who use Paypal. But why not make it clear?

These are just some of the questions people are asking once they have had a chance to look at this bill. And I am just talking now about the unintended consequences. Plenty of other groups have pointed out some of the real, practical adverse consequences of this bill on people who had absolutely nothing to do with the financial crisis.

For instance: I have heard from a number of utilities in Kentucky that use traditional derivatives as a way of keeping prices low for themselves and, by extension, for homeowners and small business owners across my state. General Electric employs more than 5,000 people in Kentucky, so I want to hear what they have to say about this bill. And what they are telling me is that this bill could really hurt them. They have got a lot of concerns. They are concerned this bill will increase the cost of managing foreign exchange risk associated with their vast global supply chain.

They are concerned about the potential cost increases related to the hedging of commodities they use in the manufacturing process. And they are concerned about increased hedging costs related to the financing they provide to suppliers and retail customers who buy GE appliances like washers and dryers and water heaters that are made in Louisville.

Homeowners and small business owners in Kentucky didn't have anything to do with the financial crisis. I am sure none of the Kentuckians who work at GE in Louisville had anything to do with it either. But because this bill doesn't distinguish between utilities that use derivatives for a legitimate use and those who abused them, ratepayers and others in my State will almost certainly get hit by this bill.

These are some of the concerns people are raising about this bill. And the fact is, those concerns are only magnified by the recent performance of the Democrat majority. I am afraid those who claim that this bill wouldn't do any of the things people are afraid of now have a higher hurdle to cross after the assurances they gave the American people on the stimulus, the debt, and health care. A lot of people took Democrats at their word in those debates, and they got burned. Now they want more than a verbal assurance that this bill doesn't allow bailouts. They want proof.

I don't think anybody really thinks the Fertilizer Institute is responsible for the financial crisis. And I don't think the authors of this bill think

Kentucky farmers are to blame for the collapse of Lehman Brothers. But whether they intended to or not, this bill would punish them. And that is not right.

So Americans want a number of things in this bill fixed. And they want more than verbal assurances. At this point, Americans want the supporters of this bill to put a highlighter through the relevant passages and then tab the pages. Americans expect us to prove we are doing what we say we are doing. And after the past few debates, I don't blame them one bit. None of this should be viewed as a burden. After all, isn't that how the legislative process is supposed to work: major legislation is proposed, the American people get to take a look at it, they let us know how it would affect them, and then we weigh those concerns against the various problems at hand? The authors of this bill may believe some of these concerns are misplaced. But they are going to have to prove it.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business for 90 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, and with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished majority leader for his generous and complimentary comments. As today completes 1 year since my return to the Democratic Party, I have a few observations on what we should do as Senators, not as Democrats or Republicans, to tend to the Nation's business in these difficult days.

Partisanship ran high in 2005, with Republican threats to invoke the nuclear or constitutional option, which would, in effect, change the rule to allow 51 votes to cut off filibusters. The so-called "Gang of 14," a group of centrists from both parties, structured a compromise which confirmed some judicial nominees, rejected others, and established a standard that filibusters should not be employed except in "exceptional circumstances." That spirit of compromise, I suggest, should be revisited today.

In the threat of a great depression in February 2009, I refused to join the Republican obstructionism and played a

key role in the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. I am fully aware that my vote put my job on the line.

Achieving civility and cooperation for the common good in 2010, as it occurred in 2005 with respect to judicial nominations, will require independence and risk-taking by Senators. Senators must be willing to cross the aisle and work with their colleagues even at the peril of the disfavor of their own political party. The problems of the country today are too severe, too many Americans are out of work, too many Americans are fighting and dying in foreign lands, for members of this body to be unwilling to risk their seats for the public good. The stakes for America require we all do our level best and permit the public to judge us accordingly.

At the moment, there is a pressing need for Republicans to join with us in reforming Wall Street to prevent the kind of financial crisis that cost this country 8 million jobs. Both sides agree that legislation is necessary. On a motion to proceed, which is now pending on this legislation, there is no realistic contention that "extraordinary circumstances" justify a filibuster. Once the bill is being debated, there will be opportunity for amendments. Forty-one Republican Senators will then have the opportunity to filibuster whatever proposed legislation evolves before final passage occurs. "Extraordinary circumstances" now call for Republicans to join Democrats in passing legislation to prevent another economic crisis.

FINANCIAL REFORM

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I congratulate the Republican leader on his remarks. Listening to him, I was wondering how Kentuckians would respond to the thought that—as we seem to be hearing now about this so-called consumer protection bureau—"We are from Washington and we are here to protect you."

Mr. McCONNELL. I would say to the Senator from Tennessee, now that we are getting a chance to take a look at this bill, it is pretty clear that it has a broad reach that would touch a whole lot of people in Tennessee and Kentucky and has nothing to do with what happened on Wall Street. It is noteworthy that the most conspicuous supporter of this bill is the chairman of Goldman Sachs.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I wonder if the Republican leader would agree with me, if I may say through the Chair, that it is noteworthy that the legislation we are talking about focuses on shop owners, auto dealers, real estate agents, farmers, community bankers, doctors, and dentists who had virtually nothing to do with this recession we are in, but this legislation completely leaves out the two giant Federal hous-

ing agencies, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, that had almost everything to do with the recession we are in.

Mr. McCONNELL. Many, if not most experts, believed the crisis began through Fannie and Freddie. As far as I can tell, they are not addressed in this measure at all.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Republican leader.

Mr. President, "We are from Washington and we are here to protect you" is a promise or an offer that is creating a lot of suspicion around my State of Tennessee, and I suspect around the country. I am hearing from a lot of people who don't like the sound of that—shop owners, auto dealers, real estate agents, community bankers, retailers, doctors, dentists, traders on eBay—they're afraid the so-called consumer protection legislation we are hearing about will make it harder to borrow money. It will take more time to borrow money. It will be more expensive to borrow money. They will have to fill out more forms to borrow money. They will have fewer choices to borrow money.

If the shop owner, the auto dealer, the real estate agent, the community banker, the doctor or the dentist, and the traders on eBay can't borrow money, then they can't invest, we can't create jobs, and we can't put an end to this recession.

We wouldn't want to pass a piece of legislation, I would not think, that says "We are from Washington and we are here to protect you," and the effect of it, to people up and down Main Street, is to make it harder to borrow money, take more time to borrow money, and make it more expensive to borrow money.

Someone said yesterday, I believe the Senator from North Carolina—if the number of forms one has to fill out to buy a house is what it takes to stop a recession or to make sure we don't have one, then we should not be in this one. Anyone who has filled out a mortgage application lately knows one has to fill out a stack that high of consumer protection forms.

So just adding another layer of consumer protection forms to buying a house or borrowing money or buying something on credit, what does that have to do with Wall Street? What does that have to do with this great recession?

We need to make it possible for community banks to make a loan to a small business who can then hire a person, who can make an investment to help get the economy moving again.

Most of us thought this Wall Street bill was about Wall Street, but it is turning out to be more about Main Street. The auto dealer and the community banker and the retailer and the dentist say: Main Street is us. It is about whether we can borrow money, get credit, expand the store, or create a

job. "We are from Washington and we are here to protect you" sounds hollow to a lot of Americans, and it sounds like another Washington takeover to me.

We have already made Washington the new American automotive capital. We have already made Washington the new American health care capital. We have already made Washington the new American student loan capital. Now we are going to move Main Street to Washington, DC, for every little credit transaction up and down Main Street? We need to be careful about that. I don't think Chicago and New York City want to move the great financial centers of this country to Washington. With some of the kind of restrictions we are talking about passing, we may move those financial centers and those jobs to Singapore, to Shanghai, to London, or to other places. But moving Main Street to Washington, what is this all about? Why is this even in the bill?

If the bill is about reining in Wall Street, that is a good idea. But why are we going up and down Main Street reining in Main Street when Main Street is having a very hard time these days?

The President is in Iowa today talking about Main Street. I hope he is explaining why we have a piece of consumer protection legislation that says "We are from Washington and we are here to protect you," when most realtors, most auto dealers, most community banks, most dentists, most traders on eBay say: Wait a minute. We are not sure we need or want that kind of protection, if what it means is to make it harder to borrow money, take more time to borrow money, make it more expensive to borrow money, to fill out more forms to borrow money, or to have fewer choices to borrow money. If it means all that, we might not be able to create more jobs.

Of course, what we are saying on the Republican side is, we want to exercise the prerogative the Democrats offered when they were in the minority, which is to provide some checks and balances to the proposals made here. The majority leader, rather than encouraging that, is already the world recordholder in offering "no" motions. A "no" motion says no to more amendments, no to more debate, no to more checks and balances.

So we will vote on that again today. We want more debate. We want more amendments. We want more checks and balances. We want to exercise the prerogative we have to make sure the people up and down Main Street have a right to see what is in the bill, and so we are well informed about the bill before we pass it.

We are writing the rules for the economy of the United States of America. We produce 25 percent of all the money in the world. What we do here affects