

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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MOTOR VOTER

ANOTHER UNFUNDED MANDATE ON CASH-STRAPPED STATES AND LOCALITIES; MONEY-GUZZLING CLUNKER BELONGS IN CONGRESSIONAL JUNKYARD

Washington--Today Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole made the following remarks on the Senate floor on the so-called "Motor Voter" legislation:

Along with saxophones and McDonald's hamburgers, the newest rage in Washington seems to be "the unfunded mandate."

Earlier this year, Congress passed a family leave bill costing businesses hundreds of millions of dollars.

In March, Congress rammed through an unemployment compensation bill raising the deficit by nearly \$6 billion...But didn't offer a single way to pay for it.

Last month, the Senate debated the so-called stimulus package, highlighting the fundamental differences between the two parties: Democrats wanted to increase the deficit with \$19 billion in additional federal spending. Republicans would prefer to cut spending, and pay for any spending increases with spending cuts elsewhere.

And now, we have the motor-voter mandate.

We seem to think we can come up with any idea, no matter how expensive, and just charge it--charge it to business, charge it to future generations, and with this bill, charge it to the cash-strapped states and localities.

NO FREE RIDE WITH MOTOR-VOTER

With a \$4 trillion national debt, we have learned the hard way there is no such thing as a free lunch.

And, today, there is certainly no free ride with motor-voter. Ten states, including my state of Kansas, have estimated that complying with the motor-voter mandates will cost them more than \$87 million. The total cost for all fifty states would obviously be much higher.

So it's no wonder that the National Governors Association, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Towns and Townships, the National League of Cities, and hundreds of state and local officials throughout the country have all registered their opposition to this bill.

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle a simple question: How do we expect the states to pay for this legislation?

Should they cut their education budgets? Their child nutrition programs? Or should they just raise taxes?

THE NICKLES-DOLE AMENDMENT

Last March, I joined with my distinguished colleague from Oklahoma, Senator Nickles, in offering an amendment that would have allowed each state to estimate the additional costs associated with the motor-voter requirements and to submit this estimate to the Senate Rules Committee and the House Administration Committee.

The amendment would have delayed the effective date of these requirements until Congress appropriated funds to defray the additional costs.

The amendment was simple and straightforward, and an honest attempt to restore some accountability by forcing Congress to pick up the motor-voter tab.

Unfortunately, the amendment was defeated along party lines, the victim of politics.

CONFERENCE REPORT: AN IMPROVEMENT, BUT IT RUNS OUT OF GAS

No doubt about it, the Conference report is an improvement over the original Senate and House bills.

Because of the hard work of my distinguished colleague from Kentucky, Senator McConnell, the Conference report closes the so-called election-day escape hatch. This loophole would have encouraged states to adopt same-day registration procedures as a means of escaping the bill's requirements. In many areas, same-day registration is a prescription for fraud and corruption.

The Conference report also allows, but does not require, registration at unemployment offices. And it prohibits workers at welfare offices from influencing the registration decisions of welfare recipients, though registration at these offices continues to be mandatory.

These changes are steps in the right direction, but in the final analysis, the Conference report runs out of gas.

It is still unfunded. Still a mandate. And still a lemon.

BEST WAY TO INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT

No one is against increasing voter registration.

The more people who vote, the better for our democracy.

In 1992, I am pleased to report that Kansans turned out to vote in record numbers. 75% Of the voting-age population was, in fact, registered to vote. And 85% of those who were registered actually voted.

This 85% participation rate represents a 14% increase over the previous turnout record.

What these numbers prove is that voter participation has little to do with the nation's secretary of states and county clerks, who supposedly have not made it easy enough for people to vote, as this bill's proponents would contend.

People will take the time to vote if they believe they have a stake in an election.

And they will vote if they are convinced that Congress is a credible institution, that we can conduct our affairs responsibly and without gimmicks.

Unfortunately, the motor-voter bill flunks the credibility test.

With its credit-card approach to voter registration, this legislation proves that Congress is ready, willing, and able to bask in all the hype, but a deadbeat when it comes time to pay the bill.

By any measure, the motor-voter bill is one money-guzzling clunker. It belongs in the congressional junkyard.

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