

'Reform' in Washington, Harm in Ohio

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"First do no harm" should hang above the halls of Congress. Unfortunately, those four simple words aren't a consideration in our nation's capital. How else could you explain the budget-busting global warming and national health-care bills currently dominating the public debate? Separately, each measure is fiscally irresponsible. Taken together, the bills will devastate Ohio's weak economy and place enormous unfunded mandates on the state's Swiss cheese budget.

First, there is the Waxman-Markey cap-and-trade bill. With Ohio's natural abundance of coal, almost 90 percent of Ohio's energy is produced by carbon-dioxide producing coal-fired power plants. Those power plants feed electricity to what is left of Ohio's manufacturing plants, which produce still more carbon-dioxide emissions. All of that production translates into jobs.

On the renewable energy side of the fence, Ohio isn't blessed with an abundance of sunshine, consistent wind or powerful rivers to power solar panels, wind turbines or hydro plants. Although Ohio currently has two nuclear power plants, there appears to be no political will to build additional nuclear power plants.

Given these irrefutable facts, it is hard to imagine a scenario in which Ohioans don't suffer increased costs, job losses, and economic decline should the cap-and-trade bill pass. Unlike the future made-in-Hollywood catastrophes portrayed by the global-warming crowd, those costs, losses and decline will be immediate and real for Ohioans.

On health care, Medicaid spending already consumes 39 percent of the state budget. The Baucus national health-care bill would restrict Ohio from setting eligibility requirements, which would increase the load on states by \$37 billion according to the Congressional Budget Office. Because Ohio is the seventh largest state and possesses an anemic economy, a big slice of that \$37 billion will fall on Ohio taxpayers.

With these enormous economic stakes, Ohio's two senators must put aside partisan urges, resist trendy but illogical policy options, and work toward solutions that are in the state's best interests. To do otherwise is not only bad for Ohioans, but would actually go against the Founders' original intent for the Senate when it was first established in the Constitution.

For America's first 126 years, U.S. senators were elected by state legislatures. The reason rests in the Founders' use of checks and balances to keep the political system in harmony. With U.S. representatives elected by popular vote in apportioned

districts based on each state's share of the total U.S. population, the House served as the place where the "will of the people" ruled. In theory, if a handful of large states with a majority of representatives banded together, they could pass legislation harmful to the other states.

In the Senate, however, to check the tyranny of the majority, the Founders allocated each state only two senators, thereby structurally blocking large states from riding roughshod over the smaller states as could happen in the House. To further check the accumulation of power in the federal government, the Founders placed the election of senators in the hands of state legislatures who would ensure that those individuals elected to the Senate would protect the interests of the states regardless of what the passions of the people wanted. For example, a majority of people in a state may want a federal program that individually costs them very little in taxes, but would place large unfunded costs on the state.

In 1913, the passage of the 17th Amendment altered this finely tuned structure by placing the election of senators in the hands of the people. Not surprisingly, shortly after this structural change to the Constitution, the era of big government in Washington unchecked by the states began its march. Congress went from the New Deal to the Great Society to the era of unfunded mandates to today when Washington simultaneously considers bills that would nationalize 17 percent of the U.S. economy and impose additional burdens on our energy production just months after exploding the federal deficit, nationalizing car companies and banks, and passing the largest single year budget in American history.

So, how could Ohio's senators or Senate candidates support legislation like the Waxman-Markey or Baucus bills? When they no longer have to be accountable to the state they represent because it has no power to check their votes (i.e., a legislative threat not to re-elect them should they vote yea), they can place other special interests and even their own ideological views ahead of what is best for Ohio, its economy and its citizens.

The irony, of course, is that these "reforms" will hit Ohioans regressively so that the very middle class workers and poor that they claim to fight for will be hit the hardest.

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