

CCAGW 2010 Congressional Ratings

Introduction

Since 1989, the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW) has examined roll call votes to help identify which members of Congress have stood up for the taxpayers' interests and which have failed to deliver on campaign promises of fiscal responsibility. The ratings separate the praiseworthy from the profligate by evaluating important tax, spending, transparency and accountability measures. CCAGW applauds those members of Congress who clung to their waste-cutting mission in the face of a recalcitrant spendthrift majority. However, those who turned a blind eye to the needs of taxpayers and forged ahead with their big-government agendas deserve to have a negative spotlight cast upon them.

CCAGW's *2010 Congressional Ratings* scored 46 votes in the House and 62 votes in the Senate. By comparison, in 2009, CCAGW rated 120 votes in the House and 74 votes in the Senate. The decrease in the number of votes scored in 2010 is due to the stalemate that characterized the second half of the 111th Congress, as members of Congress did all they could to avoid taking politically difficult votes in the aftermath of the notorious 2009 stimulus, cap-and-tax, and healthcare votes.

CCAGW rates members on a 0 to 100 percent scale. Members are placed in the following categories: 0-19% Hostile; 20-39% Unfriendly; 40-59% Lukewarm; 60-79% Friendly; 80-99% Taxpayer Hero; 100% Taxpayer Super Hero.

House and Senate Breakdown

In the House, Reps. Paul Broun (R-Ga.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Tom Graves (R-Ga.), Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas), Pete Hoekstra (R-Mich.), and Sam Johnson (R-Texas) achieved "Taxpayer Super Hero" status with a grade of 100 percent. In 2009, Reps. Flake and Hensarling were also named Taxpayer Super Heroes, and CCAGW applauds them for maintaining this perfect score two years in a row. Rep. Broun deserves special recognition for now holding the Taxpayer Super Hero title for three consecutive years, since 2008. There were 144 "Taxpayer Heroes" with a grade of 80 percent or above, 62 percent greater than the 89 in 2009.

In 2009, a whopping 105 members, or 41 percent of the 256 House Democrats, scored a big fat zero. The number of zeros decreased to 30 Democrats in 2010. That list still includes Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Assistant Democratic Leader James Clyburn (D-S.C.), and House Ways & Means Committee Ranking Member Sander Levin (D-Mich.).

In 2009, Sens. Michael Enzi (R-Wyo.) and John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) took home the Senate's first Taxpayer Super Hero awards in four years. In 2010, Sens. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) and James Risch (R-Idaho) all earned the coveted Taxpayer Super Hero status. There were a total of 35 Taxpayer Heroes, 21 percent greater than the 29 in 2009. While there were no senators with a score of zero in 2009, there were 18 Democratic senators and one Independent senator who scored zero in 2010.

The Year of Living Expensively

The first session of the 111th Congress was characterized by intense partisanship, failed economic policies and massive expansions of government. Unfortunately, taxpayers felt little relief during the second session. After evaluating 108 votes in the House and Senate, CCAGW found only four victories for taxpayers in the House and three in the Senate amidst a host of failed opportunities to cut spending, reduce the deficit, and improve government efficiency and accountability.

Lost Opportunities

TARP Elimination: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) offered an amendment to a debt limit increase bill that would terminate the profligate Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), which allocated \$700 billion to buy failed mortgages and other toxic assets in an effort to address the nation's financial crisis. However, hundreds of billions of TARP funds have been used to bail out banks, acquire ownership stakes in financial institutions, and rescue failing automakers. Approximately \$319 billion in unobligated TARP funds could have been returned to taxpayers if senators had not rejected Sen. Thune's amendment in a 53-45 vote on January 21, 2010.

"Jobs" Bill: The American Workers, State and Business Relief Act of 2010 was speciously dubbed another "jobs" bill. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the legislation would add \$107.6 billion to the deficit over the next 10 years. Struggling Americans know that jobs will only be created when individuals and businesses are given a break from Congress's wasteful spending. Nevertheless, the bill passed the Senate on March 10, 2010 in a 62-36 vote.

Passage of Obamacare: On December 24, 2009, Senate Democrats strong-armed enough members with giveaways such as the "Cornhusker Kickback" and "Louisiana Purchase" to pass President Obama's healthcare legislation by a vote of 60-39. On March 21, 2010, the House followed suit, voting in favor of Obamacare in a 219-212 vote. This \$2.3 trillion healthcare legislation paves the road toward a government-run system and will burden Americans with higher insurance premiums, slashed Medicare benefits, limited choices, and countless mandates, taxes, and regulations.

Cash for Caulkers: The Home Star Energy Retrofit Act of 2010 sought to authorize a \$6.6 billion "Cash for Caulkers" program, including rebates of up to \$3,000 per home for qualifying energy savings measures and rebates of up to \$8,000 for retrofits that achieve whole home energy savings. Taxpayer money was squandered on the infamous "Cash for Clunkers" program in 2009; this "Cash for Caulkers" program would be no different. The House voted in favor of this wasteful program on May 6, 2010 in a 246-161 vote.

Fix Fannie and Freddie: Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) proposed an amendment to end the conservatorship of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, eliminate government subsidies and level the playing field for private sector competitors. While lawmakers were focused on Wall Street reform, little was done to address the failed mortgage giants that played such pivotal roles in the nation's economic collapse. This amendment was rejected on May 11, 2010 in a 43-56 vote.

Eliminate the Alternate Engine: Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) offered an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 to eliminate \$485 million in earmarked funding for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter alternate engine. The Department of Defense proposed canceling the alternate engine program each year since 2006, yet Congress earmarked more than \$1.2 billion for the program. Lawmakers failed to stand up for taxpayers, rejecting the amendment on May 27, 2010 in a 193-231 vote.

1099 Mandate Repeal: Sen. Mike Johanns (R-Nebr.) offered an amendment to the Small Business Lending Fund Act of 2010 in an effort to fully repeal the requirement that 40 million businesses and other organizations file a 1099 with the Internal Revenue Service for each supplier or service provider to which payments exceed \$600 in a single year. The amendment was rejected on September 14, 2010 in a 46-52 vote.

Earmarks, Spending Reductions and Rescissions: In a time of runaway spending and sky-high debt, lawmakers should have supported every opportunity to cut wasteful and unnecessary expenditures. The House and Senate each had 11 opportunities to strike pork, prohibit earmarking, rescind superfluous funds, and reduce overall spending levels. A majority voted against each and every one of these 22 measures, a stunning 100 percent rate of failure to trim the fat and protect taxpayer interests.

A Few Notable Victories

Report on Foreign Debt Holdings: Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) attempted to kill Sen. John Cornyn's (R-Texas) commonsense amendment that would require reports on the risk posed by the U.S. debt and foreign holdings of the debt, which more than doubled from \$2 trillion in 2005 to \$4.3 trillion in 2010. There are adverse consequences to foreign-owned U.S. debt, especially when it is being held by non-democratic countries like China, and oil exporting countries like Libya, Iran, Iraq, and Nigeria, which combined are the fourth largest foreign holders. The Senate voted 38-61 against the motion to kill the Cornyn amendment on June 9, 2010 and the amendment was subsequently adopted by voice vote.

Defeat of DISCLOSE: The Democracy is Strengthened by Casting Light on Spending in Elections (DISCLOSE) Act was an attempt to overturn the *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling, expand the scope of campaign finance regulations, and impede free speech. The DISCLOSE Act would have, for the first time, forced corporations and associations engaged in election-related activities to reveal the names of individual donors. The legislation passed the House on June 24, 2010 in a 219-206 vote. However, in a win for taxpayers, the DISCLOSE Act was ultimately rejected by the Senate on July 27, 2010 in a 57-41 procedural vote.

Estate Tax Hike: Rep. Sander Levin (D-Mich.) offered an amendment to set the estate tax, or death tax, rate for 2011 and 2012 at 45 percent on estates worth more than \$3.5 million for individuals and \$7 million for couples. This would have overturned an agreement to restore the estate tax rate to 35 percent, taxing estates worth more than \$5 million for individuals and \$10 million for couples. The amendment was defeated on December 16, 2010 in a 194-223 vote.

Further Analysis

CCAGW also analyzed ratings based on party affiliation and House membership in the Republican Study Committee and Blue Dog Democrats. The averages were: Senate

Republicans – 90 percent, up nine percentage points from their 81 percent score in 2009; Senate Democrats – 8 percent, down two percentage points from their grade of 10 percent in 2009; House Republicans – 86 percent, up 15 percentage points from their 71 percent score in 2009; House Democrats – 8 percent, up four percentage points from their 4 percent score in 2009; House Republican Study Committee – 91 percent, up 11 percentage points from their 80 percent score in 2009; and House Blue Dog Democrats – 18 percent, up seven percentage points from their 11 percent score in 2009.

With a ballooning national debt, high unemployment rate, and stagnant economy, lawmakers utterly failed to do the right thing...101 times. That means in the second half of the 111th Congress, members collectively only managed to vote the right way 6 percent of the time. Thanks to Congress's defiant behavior and pathetic voting record, CCAGW dubiously dubs 2010 "the year of living expensively."

CCAGW congratulates the members who stood by taxpayers and championed fiscal responsibility throughout the most spendthrift Congress in history, and encourages the constituents of the zeros and other non-heroes to demand better results in 2011 and beyond.