

# "BIPARTISAN"

I avoided today's debate on the stimulus package (I shouldn't have, because real Dems actually spoke, unlike last night, but I had to make an apple pie for mr. ew). But both in last night's "debate" and the media today, it's clear Republicans are pushing one meme above all others.

In spite of the fact that this bill was heavily crafted by Susan Collins, has the support of Arlen "Scottish Haggis" Specter, and probably Olympia Snowe, Republicans claim, it's not a bipartisan bill. Whereas having Sanctimonious Joe vote with Republicans two years ago qualified as a bipartisan bill, this one doesn't because, they say, they were locked out of the room where this was crafted. (In reality, a bunch of "moderates" left on their own accord, but truth is not a Republican strong point.)

But that's not the most offensive part of their claim that this is not a bipartisan bill. AFAIK, Tom Coburn's amendment remains a part of this bill, which basically prohibits these funds from going to support things like museums and parks.

Tom Fricking Coburn, one of the most conservative members of the Senate, has contributed to this bill. But that doesn't qualify it as a bipartisan bill, for these fuckers.

And that's not all. As Lithium Cola points out, using the work of Haley Edwards, the reason the Senate had to cut education and funds for states and Head Start is because Chuck Grassley insisted on putting the annual patch for the Alternative Minimum Tax in this stimulus package.

Haley Edwards at the Columbia Journalism Review points out a big part of why the Senate version of stimulus bill was more expensive than the House version and so "needed" to be cut back by scrapping projects to build schools and so on. The

House version didn't include the standard annual modification of the Alternative Minimum Tax, and the Senate version does.

But why, you might ask, is the Senate package so much more expensive than the House bill?

It's got much to do with a single \$64 billion tax cut benefitting the wealthiest 20 percent of Americans—a fact that was largely buried in reporting about the squabbling over which spending programs to cut.

Haley adds, "that's one of the reasons why the House's stimulus measure seemed to be \$80 billion dollars cheaper than the Senate's. It was really only about \$30 billion cheaper—after you subtract the \$64 billion revenue loss that happens every year when lawmakers curtail the scope of the AMT."

This raises an interesting question. Why is the usual AMT alteration being shoved through by the Senate as part of the stimulus package? Back on January 28 the Wall Street Journal **noted**:

The Obama administration indicated it would agree to a \$69 billion Senate proposal to shield tens of millions of middle-income Americans from the so-called alternative minimum tax, a priority of Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley, the top-ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee. The panel later folded the change into the Senate bill.

Although it is standard in the tradmed to say that the AMT benefits "millions

of middle-income Americans," it is to put it mildly stretching things to put it that way. Haley points to a study at the Tax Policy Institute which shows that slashing the AMT increases the incomes of Americans in the top quintile by 1.3%, Americans in the next-highest quintile by .7%, the middle quintile by .1%, and does nothing at all for Americans in the bottom 40% of incomes.

Chuck Grassley ... Chuck Grassley ... not as reactionary as Tom Coburn, sure, but last I checked he's a Republican too. So Grassley is responsible for putting in a benefit for the upper middle class which led to the removal of things that benefit children and cash-strapped states. And most of those cuts were done at the direction of moderate-but-still-solidly Republican Susan Collins.

Tom Coburn, Chuck Grassley, and Susan Collins. They're the ones responsible for the way this bill looks.

And fricking Coburn and Grassley won't even have the decency to vote for their own handiwork. That's the new definition of "bipartisan": three Republicans screw with a bill, and in the end, only one of them even votes for it.