

Statement of Senator Tom A. Coburn, MD

Statement for the Record

June 2012

Members of Congress are debating fewer bills, casting fewer votes, and holding fewer hearings. Meanwhile, important government agencies including the Department of Defense and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) are being targeted by Congress for spending reductions.

What Congress has not considered cutting is the budget for its own summertime parties.

On June 4, 2012, I introduced bipartisan legislation to eliminate taxpayer subsidies for political party conventions in the elections occurring after December 31, 2012. Additionally, the bill would allow Presidential Election Campaign Fund (PECF) funds disbursed before December 31, 2012, to be returned to the U.S. Treasury for the purpose of deficit reduction.

Despite our \$15.6 trillion national debt, political parties received a \$36.6 million check (\$18.3 million per party) from taxpayers to pay for the costs of political conventions occurring this summer. The funds that are used to cover the conventions come from the PECF.

According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), “Federal law places relatively few restrictions on how PECF convention funds are spent, as long as purchases are lawful and are used to ‘defray expenses incurred with respect to a presidential nominating convention.’”<sup>1</sup> The money is, after all, essentially being used to throw a party.

Besides funding the event itself, the money is used to pay for entertainment, catering, transportation, hotel costs, “production of candidate biographical films,” and a variety of other expenses.<sup>2</sup> These events will be weeklong parties paid for by taxpayers, much like the highly maligned General Services Administration conference in Las Vegas.

The \$15.6 trillion debt cannot be eliminated over night. But eliminating taxpayer subsidies for political conventions will show strong leadership to getting our budget crisis in control.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support this commonsense legislation to demonstrate for once and all **the party is over** when it comes to travel and meetings paid for by the taxpayers.

I want to thank my colleagues for the opportunity to speak on the Senate floor today in support of this bill and would ask my statement be submitted for the permanent record.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Federal Funding for 2012 Presidential Nominating Conventions, *Congressional Research Service*, October 21, 2011, report provided to office of Senator Coburn, page 2.

<sup>2</sup> “Federal Funding for 2012 Presidential Nominating Conventions, *Congressional Research Service*, October 21, 2011, report provided to office of Senator Coburn, page 2.