

The proposal would offer subsidies to small employers whose workers have low average wages and who offer health benefits to those workers. The amount of the subsidy would vary with the size of the firm (up to a limit of 50 workers), and firms that contribute larger amounts toward their workers' health insurance would receive larger subsidies. The credit would be available indefinitely, but firms would be eligible to take the credit for only three consecutive years at a time.

KEY PROVISIONS NOT YET TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

There are several features of the proposal that CBO and the JCT staff have not yet reflected in their budget estimates. The most significant features of the proposal that have not yet been estimated would do the following:

Require insurers to offer dependent coverage for children of policyholders who are less than 27 years of age.

Delegate authority to a Medical Advisory Council to establish minimum requirements for covered health benefits and to determine the level of coverage that individuals would need to obtain in order to qualify as having insurance.

Require insurers to maintain a minimum level of medical claims paid relative to premium revenues (otherwise known as a "medical loss ratio"), or to repay certain amounts to policyholders; the HHS Secretary would have the authority to set the minimum medical loss ratio.

Apply "risk adjustment" (a process that involves shifting payments from plans with low-risk enrollees to plans with high-risk enrollees) to all health insurance policies sold in the individual and group insurance markets.

Allow employers to buy health coverage through the exchanges.

Require health insurance plans participating in the new exchanges to adopt measures that are intended to simplify financial and administrative transactions in the health sector (such as claims processing).

[From the Wall Street Journal, June 15, 2009]

STATES' BUDGET GAPS ARE ANOTHER TEST FOR WASHINGTON

(By Jonathan Weisman)

As the White House eagerly scans the economic landscape for signs of recovery, a looming drought in the form of state budget deficits could make any "green shoots" wilt.

States face a cumulative shortfall of \$230 billion from this year through 2011, and there is little sign in bailout-weary Washington of any attempt to create yet another aid program to solve that problem. But if the federal government did want to hold that drought at bay, it has options: passing another stimulus plan; assisting states in the bond market; assuming a greater share of Medicaid payments. If the recovery stalls a few months from now, those may suddenly become central to the rescue efforts.

While discouraging talk right now of any federal response to state budget woes, the Obama administration is anxiously eyeing state efforts to close persistent budget gaps. So far, 42 U.S. states have slashed enacted budgets to cope with rising demand for services and plunging revenue, according to the National Governors Association. About half have also raised taxes.

Those policies run counter to Washington's efforts to prime the economic pump, with a \$787 billion stimulus plan, plus hundreds of billions of dollars more in new lending, mortgage relief and other efforts. About \$246 billion of the stimulus funds are already going to the states, to offset rising Medicaid costs, stave off education cuts and help with infrastructure problems. Friday, the Treasury made \$25 billion in bond authority avail-

able for state and local governments under the Recovery Zone Bonds program, a little-known piece of the massive stimulus law.

But all that money will start drifting away next year, when the administration hopes a recovery will be taking hold. And that is exactly when states anticipate their fiscal problems could be even worse. "The states have so few options to respond," said Nick Johnson, director of the state fiscal project at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal think tank. "Drawing down reserve funds, various accounting gimmicks—those options are either gone or won't do enough. The remaining options threaten to slow the recovery."

If Washington were inclined to help, the easiest approach would be a second stimulus bill pouring more money directly into state coffers. But with a federal budget deficit approaching \$2 trillion, there is little chance of that.

So creativity is in order.

House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank has been searching for low-cost ways to step in. His staff has looked into a raft of measures to loosen state borrowing and lower the interest rates state governments must offer on their bonds. The Massachusetts Democrat would like to create a reinsurance fund, financed through premiums paid by bond sellers, which would offer bond purchasers additional assurance that their money is safe.

Legislation also could mandate that ratings companies such as Standard & Poor's would have to use the same criteria to rate state bonds as are used to rate corporate bonds—a requirement that doesn't exist now, sometimes to the disadvantage of states. "Where there's the full faith in credit behind these municipal bonds, where the full taxing power of a state or city is behind them, they never default," Mr. Frank said, yet the bonds are "treated as if they're risky."

In the short run, the Treasury or Federal Reserve could use existing programs established to prop up consumer borrowing to underwrite state bond offerings, he said. That would bring more lenders into the state bond market and lower interest costs for cash-strapped states.

President Barack Obama suggested in a recent C-SPAN interview that some kind of clever bond-market moves may be in the works. "We are talking to state treasurers across the country, including California, to figure out are there some creative ways that we can just help them get through some of these difficult times," he said.

But crafting the right balance would be tough.

Treasury officials have told California state legislators that the U.S. is monitoring the situation but isn't keen to provide assistance, according to people familiar with the matter. "It's hard to help just one state," says a government official. On the other hand, there is worry about setting up a broad short-term assistance program that some fret could turn into a permanent federal subsidy.

The move to bail out California—or any other state—is made harder by the current political climate, particularly opposition from home-state Republicans on Capitol Hill.

Rep. John Campbell, one of four California Republicans on Mr. Frank's committee, said a federal intervention would only halt state efforts to come to terms with budgets and could create incentives to spend even more. "The states are kind of on their own because the bullets are out of the federal gun," he said, "not because they couldn't print some more money but because I hope there's a recognition that printing and borrowing more money is going to have extremely negative consequences."

In response, Mr. Frank shrugs: "How am I going to get representatives from Pennsylvania and New York to send money to California if Republicans from California are fighting it?"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 15 minutes from now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I decided to come to the floor to talk about a couple of things. One is health care reform and the other is the stimulus package.

We are seeing attacks from the party of no, the Republican Party, every day on this floor, and I believe the purpose is to derail health care reform. I think it is perfectly legitimate to debate how we do it, but I think when everything is stripped away, you are going to see the Republicans as the party of the status quo.

In relation to health care reform, the status quo has to go, because it is hurting our people. I will put a couple of facts out there that are irrefutable; they are just facts. The fact is, if we don't act, soaring health care costs are unsustainable for our families. In this great Nation, we pay twice as much as any other nation for our health care. The fact is we must turn this around. As the wording is now, we must "bend that cost curve," because we cannot sustain the situation as it is. It is hurting our families. Premium rises are unbelievable. We all know it in our own circumstances. And we know the uninsured keep growing. Why? Because they cannot afford the premiums or maybe companies won't take them because they may have had high blood pressure or something, and they don't get the coverage they need. So they don't avail themselves of prevention.

We have too much obesity in this country among our kids and adults. We know that prevention in and of itself could bend that cost curve. If someone understands nutrition and diet, and they get help in making sure they change their lifestyle or that their kids don't eat sugar and fattening foods all the time, it has an enormous impact on what happens to them when they get older. Diabetes is a major problem. We can turn that around, along with the heart risks that go with it later on, and the stroke risks that go with high blood pressure. These things can be controlled.

We took a first step in prevention when we passed the bill on smoking

which, for the first time, will give the FDA the ability to regulate cigarettes and keep these products away from our kids, who are lured into smoking. You know how it is, because I am sure everybody knows someone who has this addiction, how very difficult it is—those folks who want to quit have such a hard time. Clearly, if we have prevention as the name of the game, we are going to see a decrease in costs, we are going to see healthier families, and we should see lower premiums.

The question is: If we do nothing, can we sustain what happened? If we do so, it ought to stress prevention and also make sure that the insurance companies are kept honest. How do you do that? It seems to me you want to make sure we have some kind of plan out there that has to live by the same rules as the private sector, be it a cooperative, a public plan, but it should live by the same rules so we can test and judge whether our people are getting ripped off when they get these huge increases in their premiums. We also need a plan that covers the uninsured, however we deal with it, because there is no question about it that when people are uninsured, they are still going to get the health care they need. No doctor is going to turn them away when they show up in the emergency room with a stroke or heart condition that probably has not been looked at for a long time. The signs of a stroke you can find through blood pressure taking. If they haven't done that, when they show up there, who pays for it? The fact is, those costs come right back home to us. Somebody has to pay for it. That is reflected in the premium.

So here is the point. I don't think it is that complicated. If you stress prevention, and if you have a plan out there—a nonprofit plan—that can keep the insurance companies honest and make sure they are not overcharging us, and if you cover the uninsured, I think those are the principles I am looking for. I don't think it is that complicated. But we hear our colleagues on the Republican side come out to the floor day in and day out bashing public plans.

Let the Republicans introduce a bill to repeal Medicare. That is a public plan. Our seniors love it. The Republicans fought it in the 1960s. The Democrats passed it under Lyndon Johnson. Why don't they come here and say they want to repeal Medicare?

Another public plan is veterans' health care. It is a government plan. Why don't they come here and put forward a proposal to completely do away with veterans' health care? I will tell

you, the veterans in this country will rise up—the Republican veterans, the Democratic veterans, the Independent veterans, the old and young veterans. Why don't they do that, instead of coming here and saying public plans are bad?

How about SCHIP, the public plan that allows our children to be covered, our poor kids? Why don't they come here and say our children should not be covered and let's repeal it?

How about our military? They get free health care through the public domain. Should we now cancel that and contract it out?

Look, I am for a robust debate. I am for a bipartisan bill. I want to work toward that. But let me tell you this: If we don't get 60 votes for something, we cannot quit around here. We cannot allow a terrible crisis toward the end of life bankrupt our families. More than half of our families who file bankruptcy do it because of a crisis in their health. We cannot afford that. The fact is that we are on the verge of being able to do something but not if the party of no comes here every day and bashes every idea and starts frightening the American people. They will have their chance, but I hope we won't stop. We will have to figure out a way to do it with a majority vote. That is my feeling. This is too important an issue. Our families cannot take it. They cannot take a circumstance where they are now already paying a third of their money for their mortgage. Are they going to pay another third, or half, for health care? What is left over to live a life and support their kids?

Come on, get over it, party of no. Come to the table and work with us. Don't bash every idea President Obama lays down on the table. He is the President. Give him a chance to move this forward.

THE STIMULUS PROGRAM

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, speaking of bashing things, my last commentary until we vote is this:

Senator COBURN has put out a report in which he bashes the stimulus program. I think it is very important for the American people to understand a few things. One, a couple of his examples are right on target, and we always expect there will be a couple of things that would happen that were wrong. The administration is aware of that. We tried to get on top of it and stop it. But we lost over a trillion dollars from our economy and we put in this stimulus package—about \$787 billion—so we can make sure that this great recession doesn't turn into a great depression.

That is why we have I think 30 inspectors general overseeing this program.

Despite that, I understand Senator COBURN. He was never for the stimulus. He said let the American people work their way through it, that government should stay out. That is fair. Now he is bashing the stimulus program. All of the work he has done thus far has identified .7 percent—not even 1 percent—that was a problem. Some of those are way off base. I want to talk about some of them in California that he has highlighted and has bashed:

First, \$200,000 to place restrooms at a Black Butte Lake, California park. Excuse me. Maybe there is something wrong with me, but I think having a clean restroom in a State park that is safe and available is quite important. But he says that is ridiculous. It creates jobs to build that, and it is an important hygienic issue that I think needs to be addressed.

He talked also about a State park. This is near and dear to my heart. It is \$620,000 to build a State park for our children in Long Beach, CA. I don't know about Mr. COBURN in Oklahoma—they have fewer people there, true. I have a State of 37 million people. We have a lot of kids. We have a lot of kids who get in trouble after school and who drop out of school. We have a problem. They love to skateboard. As a matter of fact, we had a former gang in Oakland come forward and actually construct it themselves. Building a State park for our kids is not a boondoggle. It is a safe place for them to go, and you create jobs when you do it.

We are installing energy efficient runway guidance lights at the San Diego Airport. Yes, energy efficient lighting saves money. As a matter of fact, this thing has a payback. It cost \$5 million. It has a payback of 2 to 5 years. When you put in efficient lighting, there is a payback. It uses less electricity and it lowers the cost. But, no, Senator COBURN bashes that. Those are some examples of what he is bashing just in my State.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a document entitled "Funding Notification By Program" for my State of California.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FUNDING NOTIFICATIONS BY PROGRAM

The table below presents breakdown of total dollars allocated to a state by program. Programs are identified by the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number and the program title provided in the agency report.

STATE: CALIFORNIA

CFDA number	Program	Allocated
84.394	State Fiscal Stabilization Fund	\$5,960,267,431
93.778	MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	1,991,907,534
84.391	IDEA Part B Grants to States	1,226,944,052
84.389	Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies	1,128,225,993
14.258	Tax Credit Assistance Program	325,877,114
14.317	Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Program Special Allocations	305,037,547
66.458	Clean Water SRF	280,285,800
81.041	State Energy Program (A)	226,093,000
17.260	WIA Dislocated Workers	221,906,888

STATE: CALIFORNIA—Continued

CFDA number	Program	Allocated
14.257	Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program	189,086,299
17.259	WIA Youth Activities	186,622,034
81.042	Weatherization Assistance for Low-Income Persons (A)	185,811,061
66.468	Drinking Water SRF	159,008,000
16.803	Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Formula Program— http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryact.html .	135,641,945
14.885	Public Housing Capital fund Stimulus (Formula)	117,918,838
14.253	CDBG Entitlement Grants	112,675,396
16.804	Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Formula Program— http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryact.html .	89,712,677
17.258	WIA Adult Program	80,117,954
84.386	Educational Technology State Grants	70,805,622
93.703	Health Center Integrated Services Development Initiative	63,688,867
84.126	Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants	56,470,213
84.393	IDEA Part C Grants for Infants and Families	53,233,307
17.207	Employment Service/Wagner-Peyser Funded Activities	46,970,564
84.392	IDEA Part B Preschool Grants	41,028,219
84.033	Federal Work Study	20,657,189
93.659	Adoption Assistance	19,904,604
66.805	LUST Trust Fund Program	15,577,000
14.882	Native American Housing Block Grants (Formula)	15,033,342
14.907	Lead-based Paint Hazard Control in Privately-Owned Housing	14,999,190
93.658	Foster Care—Title IV-E	13,888,000
16.588	Office on Violence Against Women (OWW) Recovery Act STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program— http://www.oww.usdoj.gov/BJA/recovery.html .	13,298,809
10.579	Child Nutrition Discretionary Grants Limited Availability	12,864,683
10.569	The Emergency Food Assistance Program (Food Commodities)	12,411,681
10.561	State Administrative Matching Grants for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance	10,795,187
14.255	CDBG State's Program and Non-Entitlement Grants in Hawaii	10,652,033
16.802	Office of Justice Programs (OP) OVC FY09 VOCA Victim Compensation Formula Grant Program (Compensation)— http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryact.html .	8,110,055
93.707	ARRA—Aging Congregate Nutrition Services for States	6,585,441
17.235	Senior Community Service Employment Program	4,293,139
16.800	Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program— http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryact.html	4,233,003
84.399	Services for Older Individuals who are Blind	3,707,078
93.705	ARRA—Aging Home-Delivered Nutrition Services for States	3,242,063
10.568	The Emergency Food Assistance Program (Administrative Costs)	3,110,696
16.801	Office of Justice Programs (OJP) OVC FY09 VOCA Victim Compensation Formula Grant Program (Assistance)— http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryact.html .	2,931,000
66.454	Water Quality Planning (604b)	2,830,700
14.908	Healthy Homes Demonstration Grants	2,624,992
66.040	State Clean Diesel Grant Program	1,730,000
84.398	Independent Living State Grants	1,623,087
84.401	Impact Aid Construction	1,428,766
17.265	Native American Employment and Training	\$236,970
Total		\$13,462,105,063

Mrs. BOXER. If you go through this, you will see in the largest State of the Union, which is suffering with an 11.2 percent unemployment rate, projects that are putting people to work today and doing good things. There is a medical assistance program; a clean water State revolving fund grant; a State energy program, which is putting people to work; weatherization assistance for low income; working with the youth; and it goes on and on. There are safe drinking water grants, a law enforcement grant, educational technology grant, adoption assistance grant, and a foster care grant.

Why is my colleague not coming down here and saying he did find less than 1 percent of a problem, but these other things are good, and these other things are putting people to work and they are saving our children, saving our environment, and saving energy?

It is the party of no. No, no, no, a thousand times no. The American people understand that we on this side of the aisle, and our President, in reaching across the aisle, are going to continue to work for change. Change means getting out of this mess we are in right now—this deep recession. We are going to continue to do it. They are going to say no, no, a thousand times no. We will work with them when they want to work with us. If they don't, we have to figure out a way to bring the change and jobs to America, the energy efficiency to America, and all that is good that the American people deserve.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be closed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. Morning business is closed.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. BOXER. I ask unanimous consent that the hour for debate prior to the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 1023 be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. I yield the floor.

TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT OF 2009—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 71, S. 1023, the Travel Promotion Act of 2009.

Byron L. Dorgan, Tom Udall, Patrick J. Leahy, Barbara Boxer, Kay R. Hagan, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Roland W. Burris, Benjamin L. Cardin, Bill Nelson, John D. Rockefeller, IV, Daniel K.

Inouye, Blanche L. Lincoln, Ron Wyden, Bernard Sanders, Sheldon Whitehouse, Ben Nelson.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 1023, the Travel Promotion Act of 2009, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Nevada (Mr. ENSIGN) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. GREGG).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 90, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 208 Leg.]

YEAS—90

Akaka	Bingaman	Cardin
Alexander	Bond	Carper
Barrasso	Boxer	Casey
Baucus	Brown	Chambliss
Bayh	Brownback	Cochran
Begich	Burr	Collins
Bennet	Burris	Conrad
Bennett	Cantwell	Corker