

Why We're All Confused About Which Party Is in Charge

In 2014, Republicans won a majority in Senate. However, if you've been watching the Senate lately, you'd be forgiven for wondering who is actually in charge.

Democrats demand—and receive—amendment votes, while Republican amendments are stifled. Appropriations bills, ostensibly written by Republicans, come to the floor lacking any GOP priorities, while conservative efforts to amend the bill are set up to fail.

Even more troubling are the policies coming out of this Republican-led Senate. Appropriations bills are passed, but at higher spending levels than even President Barack Obama requested. Just this week, the Senate voted to bail out the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico—without considering any of the economic reforms supported by conservatives.

Things really took a turn last week, however, when the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced its 2017 foreign aid bill.

In a sign that principles were about to be shelved, all 16 Republicans and 14 Democrats on the committee unanimously supported an amendment by Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., to provide \$500 million to the U.N. sponsored Green Climate Fund—the principle funding mechanism for Obama's international climate change treaty.

For the record, this is the same treaty that the Obama administration imposed upon taxpayers without the advice and consent of the Senate, and the same funding mechanism that GOP Senators previously swore up and down that they would fight tooth and nail to oppose.

But the committee action got even worse with the passage of an

amendment offered by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., to add \$37.5 million to the United Nations Population Fund, which provides services for “international family planning and reproductive health”—that is, taxpayer funded abortion performed overseas.

In a Republican controlled committee, this amendment supporting abortion passed 17-13, thanks to the votes of Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine; Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska; and Mark Kirk, R-Ill.

Most disturbing, however, was that the entire bill—containing language to fund abortion, and to fund the president’s climate change treaty—passed the committee 30-0.

Some will argue that this is just a committee process, and that the real consideration of the bill will be on the Senate floor, where all senators will have the opportunity to weigh in. Perhaps—but only if Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., allows senators to participate in an open process (which he has lately been loath to do).

If and when this bill hits the floor, we should expect that Republicans will stand up for what they’ve said they believe in, and vote to strike provisions of this bill that violate their principles.

Republicans may be in charge of the Senate, and Democrats may be in the minority. But it is getting increasingly difficult to tell the difference.

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