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'Mod Squad' supporters sold out for pork & party

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Sometimes, not even a politician can be all things to all people.

With Saturday night's vote to bring Harry Reid's health-care bill to the floor, "moderate" Senate Democrats like Ben Nelson (Neb.), Mary Landrieu (La.), and Blanche Lincoln (Ark.) had to choose between pleasing party leaders and their reputations for moderation.

Moderation lost.

Of course, some will say that this was merely a vote to proceed, not a vote on the merits of the bill. They were just "moving the debate forward," will try to improve the bill on the floor, and, as Seinfeld would say, yada, yada, yada.

But make no mistake about it: the further this debate "moves along," the harder it becomes to stop this fiscal and medical train wreck. As Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) recently pointed out, fully 97 percent of bills that win a vote to proceed eventually become law.

Landrieu's vote is perhaps the easiest to understand. She sold out the old-fashioned way — for pork-barrel spending. The bill allocated \$100 million in pork for Louisiana. (Well, actually the bill doesn't say Louisiana. In true congressional fashion it spends two pages describing a mysterious state "recovering from a natural disaster" and whose other specifications fit exactly one state.)

Old-fashioned vote-buying is one thing, but what is one to make of supposed fiscal conservatives who voted for a bill that would increase federal spending by \$2.5 trillion over its first 10 years of actual operation (2014-2023), paid for by 15 new or increased taxes?

Nelson, who has raised concerns about everything from the public option to taxpayer funding of abortion, once said he would be "comfortable being the lone Democrat to derail reform." Apparently not.

Polls show that 54 percent of Arkansas voters oppose the health-care bill. But Lincoln chose party loyalty over her constituents' views.

In the end, it should be clear what 60 Democrats voted for last night. They voted to require that every American buy a government-designed insurance plan, even if it is more expensive than the insurance they have today, or face a fine of up to \$6,750 for a family of four.

At a time of 10.2 percent unemployment, they voted to make it more expensive to hire workers, especially low-wage workers.

With the economy struggling, they voted for \$485 billion in tax hikes.

They voted to raise the payroll tax, limit your flexible spending account, and tax your health insurance plan.

This is moderation?

Final passage of this bill is, of course, not yet a foregone conclusion. But if this government takeover of the US health-care system is going to be stopped, at least one Senate Democrat is going to really have to be a "moderate."

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