

Christmas is approaching, and many Americans are celebrating the holiday by decorating their homes with brightly decorated Christmas trees. Children throughout the country are casting excited glances towards these trees, eagerly envisioning the many presents that Santa will leave for them under the branches.

With the first snows of winter falling on Washington this week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid had visions of “Christmas trees” too. Regrettably, Reid’s vision of a “Christmas tree” has little to do with the time-honored tradition that American families are enjoying. In fact, the only “gifts” left under Senator Reid’s tree would be courtesy not of Santa Claus, but of the American taxpayer.

That is because in Washington, a “Christmas tree” is beltway jargon for a monstrous, end-of-session spending bill that is so loaded up with pork-barrel spending it is as if each line-item in the bill was an “ornament” added to it by a Member of Congress. This year, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid proposed what could only be referred to as the “mother of all Christmas trees”: a 2,000 page monster that sought to spend over \$1.27 trillion dollars.

To make matters worse, Senator Reid wanted Congress to pass this bill without Members having an opportunity to read it. Why? Because Senator Reid’s “Christmas tree” was covered with over 6,000 of the following types of unsightly “ornaments”:

- **\$10,000,000** for the “John P. Murtha Foundation” to help build a “John P. Murtha Center for Public Service” named after former Congressman, Jack Murtha;
- **\$8,000,000** for the “Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate” in Boston, Massachusetts;
- **\$3,500,000** to research Formosan Subterranean Termites in New Orleans, Louisiana;
- **\$2,000,000** for an “Ice Age National Scenic Trail” in Wisconsin;

- **\$413,000** for peanut research in Alabama;
- **\$200,000** to install solar panels at a Community Food Bank in Arizona;
- **\$100,000** for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Transportation Museum in Columbus, Mississippi.

Worst of all, Senator Reid even sought to add \$1 billion in funding to implement ObamaCare to this “Christmas Tree” spending bill.

But Christmas is, after all, a season of miracles and wonder, and this year is no exception. Instead of sailing to quick passage as Senator Reid wanted, Republicans in the United States Senate stood up to the Majority Leader and said “enough is enough.” Emboldened by the message to end backroom deals and to cut spending sent to them by voters in November, Republican Senators forced Senate Majority Leader Reid to pull his bill from consideration and ensure its defeat.

How big a Christmas miracle was this? Senator John McCain described the rejection of Senator Reid’s “Christmas tree” as a “seminal moment” representing “the first time since I’ve been here, [that] we stood up and said enough.” Clearly, preventing Senator Reid from putting this \$1.27 trillion “Christmas tree” in the stand is something that would not have happened in earlier years.

Because Reid’s omnibus spending legislation was defeated, America’s taxpayers received an unexpected Christmas gift this year. Hopefully those of us in Congress who are determined to end wasteful spending will be able to carry this momentum forward into the New Year. We will know that Congress is firmly on the right track when big-spenders like Senator Reid realize that wasteful end-of-year omnibus bills are about as welcome this time of year as a lump-of-coal. For now, though, the defeat of this 2,000 page spending bill has given us all even more of a reason to celebrate a very merry Christmas.

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