



The Daily Dish

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DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | DECEMBER 11, 2014

Senator Thune, soon-to-be chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, says that he would be open to finding a legislative solution to net neutrality before the FCC can reclassify broadband as a common carrier under Title II. According to [Bloomberg](#), the Senator says that the committee will take up the issue “fairly soon next year.”

Primary care doctors will [face steep cuts](#) to Medicaid fees, averaging 40 percent nationwide, with the ending of an Obamacare program that had Washington paying the full cost for fees in 2013-14. This comes as a new [Fox News](#) poll finds 58 percent of people would repeal Obamacare if they could. The same poll finds 60 percent respondents “wish President Obama had spent more time on the economy during his first years in office.”

House Republicans have mounted a late [bid to make tax breaks](#) for charities permanent. According to Congressman Camp, who introduced the legislation, “This legislation will ultimately increase charitable giving by making these policies permanent and enabling charities to better serve those in need.”

Eakinomics: The Cromnibus

The House will turn to passage of the so-called “[cromnibus](#)” — a cross between a full-year omnibus bill (for all departments except the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)) and a continuing resolution (for DHS as a penalty for the president’s executive action on immigration) through the end of February, 2015. After extensive negotiations, it is expected to pass both houses of Congress and solve most 2015 funding issues so that the next Congress starts with a clean slate.

This is the good news: no government shutdown, no economic disruption, and the ability of Congress to do better in the future. But it is a mixed blessing at best.

As the press is quick to [notice](#), there is a *lot* more in the cromnibus than simply funding the government. Inevitably, a must-pass piece of legislation becomes the vehicle to pass a slew of other, smaller measures. This instantly, raises the suspicion that all such provisions are rifle-shot favors or other pork-barrel politics. For example, a tax-related provision for non-profit insurers caught the eye of a conservative thought leader and was instantly labeled “[cronyism](#).”

Not quite. It is merely a technical correction to a mistake in the drafting of the Affordable Care Act that was immediately recognized by both parties in both the House and Senate. Senator Baucus made a floor statement immediately, and letters from Republicans Dave Camp and Chuck Grassley and Democrats Sander Levin and Max Baucus to then-Treasury Secretary Geithner followed. They asked Treasury to issue guidance administering this provision as intended, not as drafted. However, when the temporary guidance expired in 2013, it became necessary to act and Congress has.

Unfortunately, Congress should have acted in regular order and made clear the intent of the legislation. The unfortunate habit of bundling a slew of these corrections in with large spending bills undercuts trust in the

legislation. Bad process trumps good policy.

Let us hope the next Congress returns to a productive use of regular order.

From the Forum

[Happy Holidays Travelers!](#) by Gordon Gray, AAF Director of Fiscal Policy

[Expanding Medicaid Will Not Stimulate the Economy or Create Jobs](#) by Robert Book, AAF Health Care and Economic Expert