



AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

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A New Model for Bureaucracy...Why not?

President Bush's proposal for management flexibility in new Homeland Security Department follows an efficient, business model. So why are so many of Washington's interest groups against it?

WASHINGTON — Watching out for America's security is an enormous job, where thousands of federal workers are scattered across more than 100 different federal agencies. Yet, as legislation moves through Congress to establish a new Department of Homeland Security, some seem to want the new department to run more like HUD than Federal Express.

President Bush has proposed a Department of Homeland Security with a modern and efficient personnel system that will provide much-needed flexibility to bureau and agency administrators. The U.S. House has passed a similar bill, but it is held up in the Senate due to the flexibility measures.

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), who refuses to budge over the issue, recently told reporters, "I can't believe he'd veto a bill over the issue of accountability." But critics of Senate intransigence are praising that veto threat.

"For the first time since the creation of the HHS and Education departments out of the ashes of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare back in the 70s, Congress can do something positive in the creation of a new bureaucracy," said taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, who heads Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) in Washington. "Jimmy Carter obviously failed due to his extreme lack of impetus," he continued, "but to see this thing fail due to a single Senator's intransigence would mark a colossal failure in future government oversight."

The Senate bill supported by Daschle does not provide sufficient flexibility to attract, hire and reward good performers, or to hold poor performers accountable for their work, which is the most common critique of bureaucracy. The Senate bill would cement into place a status quo described by the Brookings Institution as "slow at hiring, interminable at firing, permissive at promoting, and useless at disciplining."

"For the first time in decades, Congress actually has the chance to follow through on all the constant rhetoric about 'changing Washington,'" continued Norquist, "and to see a handful of Senators squander that opportunity would be a veritable disgrace."

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who support tax simplification and oppose all federal and state tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jcollegio@atr.org