

Two days ago, I criticized Democrats for failing to support Tom Coburn's proposal to eliminate the infamous ethanol "blender" subsidy, hiding behind procedural objections. Well, [it turns out either that they had a change of heart, or the procedural objections were real](#):

The Senate voted 73-27 Thursday to kill a major tax break that benefits the ethanol industry, handing a political win to a bipartisan group of lawmakers that call the incentive needless and expensive.□□

The vote also could have ramifications on future votes to reduce the deficit. Much of the GOP conference supported Feinstein's bill even though it does not include another tax break to offset the elimination of the ethanol tax credit.

As the clip suggests, this measure was co-authored by Coburn and California's Dianne Feinstein. Thirty-three Republicans, 38 Democrats, and independents Bernie Sanders and Joe Lieberman voted for Coburn's amendment. Now it's up to the Republican-controlled House. Will they show themselves to be serious about the deficit or merely Deficit Peacocks? The environmental benefits of this bill are greater than its fiscal ones, but in today's political climate, I'll take what I can get.

One particularly nice thing about this win is that it really sticks it to Wingnut Enforcer Grover Norquist. Speaking of whom, here is some interesting background on him, courtesy [Andrew Stiles of National Review](#). Turns out that not only is Norquist a terrible influence on American politics, he is really something of a sick man:

Norquist accuses Coburn of trying to trick colleagues into supporting a tax increase in order to undermine the Republican position in the ongoing debt negotiations. "He's trying to screw the rest of the Republican party because he is so mad at the world," Norquist tells NRO. "He didn't want to get rid of the ethanol tax credit without raising [taxes](#). The important thing in his life was raising taxes."

In fact, Norquist has been at odds with Coburn ever since the senator voted in support of the Bowles-Simpson deficit commission's final report, which Norquist describes as "a massive \$2 trillion tax hike" and a blatant violation of the ATR pledge. He has constantly criticized Coburn's involvement in the "Gang of Six" talks, as well as his stated willingness to negotiate when it comes to taxes.

Norquist says Coburn's statements after the vote make it clear that his amendment had nothing to do with ethanol subsidies and everything to do with forcing Republicans to go on record supporting a tax increase — essentially a gateway drug that would inevitably lead to additional increases down the road. *"He said, 'Ha ha, popped your cherry, lost your virginity. Now give me \$2 trillion in tax increases,'" Norquist says. "As soon as they voted, he turned around and called them sluts. Guys like that didn't get second dates in high [school](#)."*

Norquist's sexual hangups should not be allowed to dictate national policy.

UPDATE: [The White House has threatened a veto if the phase-out passes in its current form](#). Every politician postures for the sake of election year politics, but if Obama gets a good bill, and vetoes it, it will be a truly shameful action on his part. As a Senator from Illinois, he had a terrible record on this issue. He doesn't have that excuse now.