Not Me

On Friday, I predicted that Senate Republicans would side with Grover Norquist against Tom Coburn and block repeal of one of the egregious ethanol subsidies now polluting both our tax code and our country.

Well, so much for that: most Senate Republicans did the right thing and voted to remove the subsidy. In this case, it was the Democrats who voted to maintain the subsidy, along with farm state Republicans. Senate Democratic leaders argued that somehow the Coburn Amendment was unfair because he brought it up using an unusual procedure. Garbage.

Now, we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves, of course:

1) Norquist gave Republicans a pass on this bill only because they also promised to vote for an amendment from Jim DeMint, the leader of the Social Darwinists, to get rid of the federal inheritance tax. That might even be more disgusting, although from the Social Darwinist-Libertarian perspective, it is at least ideologically consistent. (It certainly isn't consistent with Norquist's position that the elimination of a tax credit is tantamount to a tax increase: this was a face-saving gesture for what was otherwise a real loss).

2) Coburn likes to claim he cares deeply about the deficit, but he voted to extend the Bush tax cuts. He also opposed the Affordable Care Act, which reduces the deficit, as well as the Obama Administration's sigificant changes in the student loan program, which does as well. But he has voted against Iraq War appropriations. He's more consistent than most Republicans, but is really more a Deficit Peacock than a deficit hawk.

3) And of course from an environmental perspective, the Democrats are better than the Republicans.

But the fact of the matter is that both parties had a chance to vote for a good bill today. Most Republicans did; most Democrats didn't. You can come up with any number of excuses you want, but that's the bottom line.