



## The not-so-fine print

### think legislation should come with disclaimers.

You know, that annoying voice that talks 100 miles an hour at the end of radio advertisements. Or the fine print impossible to read on the bottom of the television screen. After years of wondering what those little sentences were trying to tell me, I now find myself pausing my television screen so I can read what I had been missing out on. What do you mean this offer is only valid in two states to residents who were born at the stroke of midnight on the first Friday of the month?

I think when debating or publically discussing any piece of legislation, the little-known facts that are buried in provision upon provision should be given by a speaker of disclaimers.

**Take, for example, the funding of the Federal Aviation Administration.** Why in the world would there be a dispute over long-term funding legislation to keep the FAA open for business? Why would some members of Congress be willing to simply watch as our country's flight safety agency partially shut down, causing thousands of workers to be furloughed and denying the federal government \$200 million in revenue from ticket taxes each week the shutdown lasted?

It's because a provision contained in the bill attacks unions.

Although a short-term fix finally was approved, the House's long-term funding bill seeks to reverse a regulator's ruling that airlines can unionize if an election is held and a majority of ballots favor a union. Previously, those not voting in airline unionization elections were counted as "no" votes. It was an unusual provision that isn't found in most workplaces and was rightfully reversed.

If there were a speaker of disclaimers, they would have said this: Attacking unions is more important to some members of Congress than having to furlough 74,000 workers, costing \$200 million a week in lost revenue to the federal government and putting the nation's travelers at risk. The true irony is that at the time the shutdown occurred, Congress was still debating the budget. And yet the same members of Congress pontificating about

government spending had no problem with losing \$200 million a week if it meant busting up some unions.

**Then there is the not-so-hidden agenda of Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA)**, the chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and Rep. Dennis Ross (R-FL), chairman of the committee's subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia, who introduced the Postal Reform Act of 2011. The title alone would make you think it is legislation to improve how the Postal Service operates. Not so.

The bill seeks to take advantage of the pending cash crisis the Postal Service faces to force a massive downsizing and to launch an assault on the pay, benefits and collective-bargaining rights of postal employees. The core of the bill is the creation of two unelected groups authorized to take extreme steps to cut costs and reduce services. One would generate lists of post offices and facilities to be closed. The other would serve as financial overseers with the power to alter or nullify collective-bargaining agreements. The bill also would allow the Postal Service to eliminate Saturday delivery.

And what would a speaker of disclaimers have to say? This: Issa and Ross' legislation fails to address the central cause of the financial crisis facing the Postal Service—the mandate to massively pre-fund future retiree health benefits that accounts for 100 percent of the Postal Service's loss over the past four years. They would rather do some union-busting than save a national treasure that provides an essential infrastructure service to this country that is worth preserving.

**Some of our elected members of Congress continue to use** the financial crisis facing this country as an excuse to wipe out unions and destroy the middle class. And they will apparently do so at any cost.

We must work together to make sure their agenda does not become reality. Failure is not an option. If you're not already, get involved. Become an e-Activist, sign up for Carrier Corps and donate to COLCPE.

Make this our disclaimer: We read the not-so-fine print and we won't back down. ☒