



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on July 26, 2010

The National Conference for State Legislatures Opened With Praise for Big Government

This year's National Conference for State Legislatures (NSCL), held in Louisville, Kentucky, opened on Monday with state legislators from all 50 states, federal congressional members, and representatives of foreign countries, including five members of the Russian delegation who sat in the fourth row of the center aisle in the packed Cascade Ballroom of the Marriot Hotel. The featured guest speakers on Monday morning were Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.



State Senator Richard Moore (D-Mass.) gave the introduction to Speaker Pelosi, who came on the stage with a gracious smile and a warm good morning welcome to the state legislatures and attendees. She quickly thanked Senator Moore because of his "provided valuable insight" on the recently passed healthcare legislation.

Pelosi exalted the Obama administration's "stimulus package," the Rescue and Recovery Act, which she attributed for having "created or saved 3.6 million jobs, so far." Following the applause from Democratic legislatures, she rallied on, telling the state delegates that \$87 billion had been provided to fund FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentages) and other various state infrastructure projects, ranging "from paving highways ... laying high-speed track and employing broadband." She passionately heralded, "We are making progress, but as we all know much more needs to be done."

In addition to offering praise for the Rescue and Recovery Act, Pelosi stressed that "it was also essential that we extend unemployment benefits, which we did just last week," garnering more applause from the Left. Pelosi referred to the extension of federal government unemployment benefits and subsidies as "the most efficient way, for the government, to generate economic growth."

"I ask for your help to engage your activism and call upon your advocacy," Pelosi told the legislatures as she continued to urge the case that extension of enhanced FMAP funding would be one of the "best ways" to help states alleviate their financial deficits. Calling FMAP both "fundamental and flexible," Pelosi went on to say that it also presented both an "opportunity and challenge" to legislatures.

Pelosi took swipes at Republicans, citing them for the stalling of FMAP funding in the Senate — despite its majority support in that body — as one of the challenges that have to be addressed. She offered a grim outlook as to the risk of not passing the extension to the enhanced FMAP funding, warning of the "cuts to hospitals, nursing homes, and public safety, elimination of domestic violence and homelessness initiatives, and slashed budgets for mental health and child welfare services." Pelosi called upon Republicans to work with Democrats to secure passage of the funding.

In regard to benefits for teachers, she stated that the \$10 billion "wasn't enough but was the best we can do," citing Senate Republicans as the obstacle toward government action.



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"We can't move forward without Republican support in the Senate," Pelosi said as she continued to make the case for extending enhanced FMAP funding in the upcoming Jobs bill, as part of the Democrat's "Make it in America" agenda.

"Now that the healthcare bill is the law of the land," Pelosi said, "we must work together on implementation." She presented the healthcare legislation as "a great opportunity to make a mark for the future," going on to commend it as an "investment in all Americans" to remake "healthcare as a right and not a privilege."

Without mentioning George W. Bush by name, she attacked the previous administration for turning a surplus into a deficit and went on to again applaud the Recovery Act, saying it was responsible for creating more jobs in last eight months than in the last eight years. She conveniently forgot to mention that the private sector has lost about three million jobs since Obama's "stimulus" and that any new jobs were government positions — and those jobs don't create wealth. She credited President Obama's leadership as having brought about the change to America and greater government assistance to the people and the states.

She ended off her speech urging legislatures to work toward passing FMAP.

Following an award ceremony for state legislators serving in the military, Pelosi's speech was rebutted by Senator McConnell, who clarified the "Republican approach" to the current issues, discussing federalism and the role of government.

Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, explained Republican opposition to the Democrats' initiatives as a result of the role of government and division of powers between the states and the federal government.

He refuted the notion that Washington, D.C. bureaucrats know what is best for the people and the states and went on to quote Thomas Jefferson's view of federalism.

McConnell received applause from the Right when he stated that states know what is best for themselves, not the federal government, and he also received additional applause when he called for a repeal of the healthcare insurance mandates.

He referred to the healthcare legislation as an example of the erosion of freedom and individual choice to the American people: "The government has absolutely no right to force anybody to buy health insurance, no right," McConnell said receiving applause from Republican legislatures, but that was it; Senator McConnell only called for a repeal of the mandate, he did not make mention of repealing the healthcare legislation in its entirety.

Although McConnell made mention of the 10th Amendment, he did not quite define his view of where the division lies or should be, and he also did not state a single government agency or department that he would like to see abolished, in accordance to the U.S. Constitution, which he, like Pelosi, made little to no reference too.

Both Pelosi and McConnell gave praise to the Clinton administration; Pelosi applauded President Clinton for working toward balancing the budget, while McConnell gave high praise to the bipartisan Welfare Reform Act of 1996 signed by President Clinton.

Senator McConnell referred to President Bill Clinton's Welfare Reform Act as "one of the great bipartisan achievements of this generation."

His encouraging words for that legislation was an example of the kind of bipartisan solutions he hoped



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to accomplish with his Republican Party together with Democrats, to pass needed reforms and legislations that offer both parties what they want.

McConnell's only solution to the current Democratic agenda seemed to be for only greater bipartisanship with Pelosi and the Democrats. If Pelosi's speech was a cry for big-government, then it can be said that McConnell offered only medium-government, at best, as an alternative.

The applauses for Pelosi and McConnell were along party lines but neither offered an alternative view for the future work that lies ahead in Congress. Both looked to Clinton and bipartisanship as the direction ahead, instead of the Constitution.

Photo of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell: AP Images



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