

CAMPAIGNING – NOT GOVERNING

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DEC. 17, 2009 -- I thought I was through for the year, but the President’s idea of a commission to study the budget problem is what’s wrong with Washington.

I saw this nonsense develop. When I came to the Senate in 1966, we had year-to-year budgets. But the Appropriations Committee was broken down into thirteen functions and the one function didn’t know what the other twelve were doing. When we summed up at the end of the year, we had a budget that exceeded everyone’s spending limits. So we instituted the Budget Committee to get an allocation for each particular function at the beginning of the year, and important programs were not ruined by cuts across the board in the old procedure. As we instituted the budget process, the economists taught us that a three-year budget was more realistic. But three years became five years, and five years

became ten years, and ten years now is about to become a study commission.

When Dick Lugar was Mayor of Indianapolis, he had to submit a budget each year that would pay the bill. If he had submitted a five or ten year budget, Wall Street would have downgraded his credit rating. The same with Mark Warner as Governor of Virginia. Every mayor, every governor, in America next year will submit budgets that will be paid for in a year. And the President and Congress ought to approach the problem like a mayor or a governor. Even a three year budget that would pay the bill would be salutary. But this nonsense of campaigning by appointing a commission instead of governing has got to stop. We elected President Obama not to referee, but to play. Not to campaign, but to govern. Tell him as President to submit his budget that will pay the bill.

Senator Hollings of South Carolina served 38 years in the United States Senate, and for many years was Chairman of the Commerce, Space, Science & Transportation Committee. He is the author of the recently published book, [Making Government Work](#) (University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

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