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Sen. Tim Johnson, the Death Tax, & Tom Daschle's Lingering Ghost

Tomorrow, the United States Senate will vote on a comprehensive package to significantly reduce the Death Tax, extend critical tax provisions such as the Research & Development tax credit, a tax deduction for state sales tax and a college tuition tax deduction. Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) is under pressure from Democratic Minority Leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) to oppose this legislation despite his "support" for repealing the Death Tax.

Johnson represents the same constituents who cast 80 percent of their votes in 2000 to abolish the state estate tax. South Dakota voters also used this issue to reject a sitting Senate Minority Leader, Tom Daschle in 2004. Consider these statements by Sen. Johnson and his staff:

In 2001 (Fox News)

"Bob Martin, spokesman for Rep. Tim Johnson, D-SD, said it didn't surprise him that voters in South Dakota supported repealing the tax "because they voted overwhelmingly to abolish the state's estate tax" earlier this year.

He added that Johnson supports an exemption for the first \$4 million for individual estates and \$8 million for small businesses before the estate tax would kick in. "That would effectively eliminate the estate tax for all South Dakotans," he said.

In 2002 (New York Times)

"It is an issue that Tim Johnson believes very strongly he needs to win," his chief spokesman, Dan Pfeiffer, said.

The big picture for Tim Johnson: his constituents have repeatedly and overwhelmingly voiced their support for estate tax repeal; he promoted his own estate tax reform plan; and he has acknowledged that he needs the issue to win.

Oddly enough, tomorrow he will most likely vote *against* the comprehensive tax package that would reduce the Death Tax burden. One thing is clear, despite Tim Johnson's talking the talk, he will not walk the walk. One South Dakota Senator lost his job for doing the same thing, after tomorrow's vote, Johnson could be following in Daschle's footsteps.