

H.J. RES. 9, THE LINE ITEM VETO CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGLISH. Madam Speaker, for many of us who came to Congress in 1994, elected on a platform of fiscal responsibility and reform, it is a source of wonder and considerable pride that America now has something that a generation of national leaders had only dreamt of, and that is a balanced Federal budget.

The current surplus is a major public benefit, opening long-term vistas of a debt-free America with a higher growth rate, lower interest rates and a cornucopia of economic opportunity. It was achieved through the disciplined efforts of a fiscally conservative Congress dedicated to reining in Washington's spending counterculture.

We now know we can balance the budget, but we can only realize the long-term benefits of a balanced Federal budget if we keep it balanced. This will require changes in the way that Congress appropriates tax dollars.

As Members of Congress, we need to look at real budgetary reform which will promote accountability in the appropriations process when we consider how to spend taxpayers' dollars. With this in mind, my friend, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. JOHN BALDACCIO), and I have introduced House Joint Resolution 9, a proposed constitutional amendment that would provide a line item veto to the President of the United States in his consideration of any appropriation. This is important, bipartisan, and fiscally responsible legislation that deserves the prompt attention of this House.

For too long presidents have had to adopt an all-or-nothing approach when considering action on bills containing appropriations. This presents a predicament for them when good policies and necessary investments are overloaded by unnecessary spending proposals.

This line item veto has had a long history in the U.S. Congress. The first proposal was introduced in 1876. President Grant endorsed the mechanism in response to the common practice of Congress attaching riders to appropriations bills. In 1938, the House approved a line item veto amendment to the independent offices appropriations bill by voice vote, but the amendment was rejected by the other body.

It did not come until 1996, in this reform Congress, that the line item veto act was finally signed into law by the President, and this law became effective in 1997. Unfortunately, after the President first invoked this new authority in August of 1997, the Supreme Court weighed the constitutionality of this law when it upheld a District Court ruling declaring the line item veto law unconstitutional.

Those of us who support the line item veto have come to recognize that in order to authorize a line item veto, a

constitutional amendment must be passed, and that is why I stand before my colleagues today. My legislation will correct an imbalance in our budgetary process long recognized, permitting a president committed to cutting unnecessary spending to do so surgically, using a scalpel instead of a broad sword.

Madam Speaker, the line item veto is a powerful weapon in the cause of fiscal responsibility. It flushes out special interests, pork barrel spending buried in the depths of large appropriations and forces them to be considered individually, on their own merits, in the light of day. It allows a determined chief executive to challenge specific expenditures no matter how powerful their champions of the legislative process.

Currently, constitutions in 43 States, including my own commonwealth of Pennsylvania, provide for a line item veto, usually confined to appropriations bills. These constitutions allow the governor the power to eliminate discrete spending provisions in legislation that comes to his desk for his signature. Governors have successfully utilized this power on the State level and it is now time to give this power to the President to cut unnecessary spending.

Already, Madam Speaker, this amendment has been endorsed by a number of prominent national organizations, including the National Taxpayers Union, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Citizens for a Sound Economy and Citizens Against Government Waste. More importantly, in my view, the line item veto enjoys broad support from millions of taxpayers who are frustrated by the ponderous size and unbridled waste of the Federal Government. Their call to action deserves to be heard.

Madam Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in supporting this reform legislation and supporting this important amendment in restoring accountability to the process.

VACATION OF SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. TALENT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

SUPPLEMENTAL DEFENSE BILL NEEDED TO SUPPORT AMERICA'S MILITARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TALENT. Madam Speaker, tomorrow we have a chance to be true or false to the interests of our country and the men and women in America's military service when we consider the supplemental defense bill to add \$7 billion to defense spending this year.

It is about time that we considered such a measure. For the last 10 years we have reduced military spending by 31 percent; by almost a third. At the same time, the number of engagements we have asked our men and women in America's military to be involved in has increased by a factor of three.

We deployed them 10 times during the Cold War around the world. We have deployed them 26 times in the last 8 years. Essentially, we have never reduced operational tempo, the business of the force, since Desert Storm. We have continued to ask them to do more and more with less and less, and they are at the breaking point.

First, they robbed the future to pay for the present in order to deal with that. They deferred maintenance. They reduced pay raises and retirement. They allowed health care to decline in the service. They postponed military construction and they slashed modernization.

When that was not enough, they robbed parts of the present to pay for other parts of the present. They sacrificed the important to the urgent. So now we have a shortage of spare parts. We have reduced training for our men and women in the military. We have a huge shortfall in ammunition, and we cannibalize the troops that are deployed here at home in order to support deployments abroad. We take people and spare parts and machines away from units that are here in the United States in order to support units abroad.

It has gotten so bad, Madam Speaker, that at the end of last year the Joint Chiefs of Staff came and testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services that we are \$148 billion short over the next 6 years in what we need to maintain minimal standards of readiness. And tomorrow we have a chance to make a modest downpayment on what we need to do to protect America's greatness and to provide for our men and women in the military.

Nobody disputes these figures, Madam Speaker. The administration does not. Nobody here will stand up tomorrow and argue that we do not need to spend this money to maintain readiness. They will have a lot of excuses why we should not vote for the bill tomorrow, just as we have had excuses year after year after year.

We heard one of them a little while ago. We cannot pay for this extra military spending because that would pay for the war in Kosovo. No, it will not. That is going to pay for the money that otherwise will be sucked away from the military by the war in Kosovo.

If my colleagues want to stop the war in Kosovo, wait for the military appropriations bill and put a rider on it that says the money cannot be used in Kosovo. Do not starve the rest of the military in order to fund one of the deployments that has caused the military to go hollow in the first place.

Another excuse we will hear is that we cannot take the money out of Social Security. Madam Speaker, by the most conservative estimates we will have over \$800 billion in surpluses over the 10 years, even apart from the money that comes from Social Security.

My father is 87 years old. He gets Social Security. He fought in the Navy in the second world war. The generation that saved private Ryan, my father's generation, is not going to begrudge the men and women of America's military what they need now to provide for our security, especially when it does not even affect Social Security.

The excuse I like the most is that we do not have an emergency. That is why we do not need this supplemental now. Well, whether we have an emergency kind of depends on one's point of view. Standing here in this chamber, it is nice and warm and safe, no, we do not have an emergency.

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But if they are in an AWACS unit and they are working 80 hours a week and they have for years because they need two people in that unit to do their job and there is only them to do it, maybe they would think there is an emergency.

If they are on their second tour of duty on an aircraft carrier and they have been at sea for 9 months and they have not seen their kids and their wife wants to divorce them, maybe they would think there is an emergency.

If they are an infantryman in the Korean Peninsula and they know that if the attack comes they are not going to have the modern anti-tank weapons they need so they are going to have to stand out there in the middle of the open, look that tank in the eye and fire, rather than fire and get back to cover, maybe they would think there is an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, my first year in the Committee on Armed Services we had a hearing. A retired military person testified; and he said, "The military life is a difficult one. We sacrifice a lot. We are willing to put our lives on the line. It is not easy, but we are proud to do it." Then he looked up at us in the Committee on Armed Services and he said something that applies to the whole Congress. He said, "But we count on you. We count on you to protect us."

Mr. Speaker, we have let them down year after year after year after year. Tomorrow we have a chance to stop letting them down. Let us end the excuses. Let us do what we all admit now we need to do. Let us make a modest down payment on what we need to do to allow these men and women to protect us and to protect our families and protect our future. Vote for the supplemental bill tomorrow.

History is watching. The dictators of the world are watching. And these men and women who count on us are watching.

"BELIEVERS IN READING" HONORING KAREN TAYLOR AND NATIONAL TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. HULSHOF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, this week is National Teacher Appreciation week and our attention is focused on education. As the elected Representative of Missouri's Ninth Congressional District, I have the distinct honor of representing sixteen colleges and universities, and a plethora of public and private schools which help prepare students to enter these educational institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to honor all of the hard working individuals who work in these educational institutions in central and northeastern Missouri. Each and every one deserves accolades for their role in providing excellence in education.

Today, however, I would like to point the national spotlight to highlight one of many devoted teachers who have dedicated their lives to provide quality education in Missouri's Ninth Congressional District.

Last month, Mr. Stan Taylor of Columbia, Missouri, stopped by my district office to request a congratulations letter be sent to his wife, Karen, on her retirement from the Columbia Public School system. Karen began teaching in 1961 in a rural, one room school house called East Center School in Kirksville, Missouri. She had the tremendous responsibility for teaching all grades, first through twelve, at East Center School.

In 1967, Karen began teaching within the Columbia Public School District, and for the last twenty years she has taught second grade elementary school at Rock Bridge Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri.

Mr. Speaker, as I learned of Karen's dedication to improve education in Missouri's Ninth District, I felt it befitting that I recognize her special efforts, and in doing so, I honor all of those like her who have dedicated their professional lives to help enhance the education of their students.

Not surprisingly, I do not stand alone in placing this honor. On May 22nd, the Missouri Teachers Association and more than 300 people—family, friends, colleagues and former students—will help celebrate Karen's educational efforts at Rock Bridge Elementary School during a reception to commemorate her retirement after twenty years of teaching in the Columbia Public School system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close with Mr. Taylor's words about his wife. He wrote that the most important lesson Karen stressed to her students was the power of knowledge through reading. Every day she would read to her students. It was her goal throughout her thirty year teaching career to encourage every student to become believers in the importance of reading. Thank-you Karen, for your devotion to your students and for providing excellent education for many generations of children. I stand here today to honor you and all those who share your commitment towards excellence in education. May we all celebrate National Teacher Appreciation Week with those who have given us the priceless gift of education.

HOME SCHOOLING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDI. Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week. There have been a number of speeches on this floor. I have, in fact, come to this microphone before to extol the virtues of the teachers of America, the public school, the private school teachers who work so hard and contribute so much to the well-being of the children of this Nation.

Today, however, Mr. Speaker, I want to rise in recognition of a particular part of that educational establishment that is not often recognized. And it was brought to my attention again, although I have long been aware of its existence, but it was brought to my attention again by a card I received in the mail not too long ago.

Here it is, a little handwritten, hand-drawn and colored-in star here. It says, "thank you, thank you, thank you." It goes all the way around, "thank you very much." It is from a young man named Jerrod Padinama. It says:

Dear Mr. Tancredi, thank you for giving us the privilege of home schooling. My home school co-op is studying the Constitution, and it is fun. I am 9 years old. I am in the third grade. I am praying for you.

Jerrod Padinama.

Well, Jerrod, thank you for your prayers. I sincerely appreciate them.

But I tell my colleagues, this is really a very touching little card I received, and I have been holding on to it because I wanted to reference it in a way. The neat part is that this young man would take the time to send me this little card and draw it in. But in a way it is a sad commentary because he has to tell me "thank you" for letting me be home schooled.

And he does know intuitively, I suppose, and certainly his parents are well aware of the fact that often there are attempts in this body and certainly in legislatures all over the country and States all over the Nation to actually restrict the ability of parents to actually teach their children at home. And they have to say "thank you" to us for letting them have a right that, frankly, is as natural as breathing, a right of a parent to teach their child at home.

This is as if this is a strange anomaly, this is something weird that we do in this country that they have to be allowed to do by the legislature. And that is the only kind of negative part of this thing I see. Because, otherwise, it is a very beautiful thing.

I just wanted to point out that home schooling certainly preceded any other kind of schooling we had in the United States of America; and it did very, very well, and it continues to do very, very well. And it is an expanding phenomena. Many, many people are participating in this. It is growing astronomically, almost beyond, really, ways to describe it.