

have a lower incidence of crime where you have a higher presence of police.

Mr. Speaker, in our State just about 4 years ago, in the city of Houston, a mayoral candidate ran on the platform that he would dramatically increase the size of the Houston Police Department if he was elected, and he did so. In that city, the violent crime rate decreased in 1 year by 27 percent. Crime went down all over the city of Houston, and the mayor was recently reelected with one of the largest percentages of any big city mayor in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Members that the new cops program is going to work because I have been there and I know, and so will every law enforcement association in America who have endorsed this program and who share our concerns with the direction of turning everything in the arena of law enforcement into some kind of block grant, where we send a check from Washington and just trust the folks at home to know what to do with it.

Our cities, our communities, our neighbors, our homes, our schools deserve to have the very best that we can offer. One of the good things Congress did last year in passing the crime bill was to put the cops on the beat, 100,000. We say without understanding, sometimes, "What does 100,000 new policemen mean?"

□ 2000

When you think in the context that in our country we only have about 600,000 police officers, what it means is a 17 percent increase in the number of policemen in our communities, on the streets, in the patrol cars, working with our kids, working in the schools, working to make sure that our neighborhoods are safe.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we do not undo the good we did. Clearly there are some things in the crime bill that we can improve on. I hope we do that in this debate and the votes that we will face in the days and weeks ahead. But one of the things that Congress did right, joining together in a bipartisan way, was to put the cops program in place.

Given a chance to work, that program will reduce crime, increase the confidence of American citizens in their police, will increase the assurance that those who violate the law will pay the price. It is a good policy, it is a good program, it is one that is working and it is one we ought to keep.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we do not undo the good things we have done.

DISENFRANCHISING CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. ENGEL] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, during the debate earlier today on the line-item veto, Members were not permitted to strike the requisite number of words and speak before the vote. And therefore I want to take this opportunity to

put my thoughts on in terms of the vote that just happened.

I voted against the line-item veto. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we in this Congress are going to rue the day that we voted for the line-item veto, and as was said many times by many colleagues, this line-item veto, in my opinion, is nothing more than an unconstitutional ceding of power to the executive branch.

I believe that in order for a line-item veto to be put forward we need a constitutional change, and therefore, a constitutional amendment, and surely when there is a legal challenge to the line-item veto I believe it will ultimately be declared unconstitutional without a constitutional amendment.

Congress is granted the power of the purse. I do not believe Congress has the right to cede that power to the Executive.

This to me has nothing to do with partisan politics, it has nothing to do with Congress being controlled by the Democrats or the Republicans or the President being a Democrat or a Republican. It simply to me reflects the very serious nature that I feel about our Constitution. I feel it is a very sacred document and I do not think any vote of Congress ought to be allowed to alter that.

Much is said today about this being President Reagan's birthday and the gesture of passing this on his birthday, but I must say with all due respect to President Reagan, he was President for 8 years, and while he talked about the importance of a line-item veto in terms of bringing the budget deficit down, he never once in his 8 years as President submitted a balanced budget to Congress. President Bush in 4 years in the Presidency never submitted a balanced budget to Congress.

So I think this fervor that people are rushing toward in terms of both the balanced budget amendment and the line-item veto is a bit misplaced.

What also scares me, Mr. Speaker, is that now if this becomes law, and the Senate concurs, two-thirds will have to pass something to override the President's veto.

I think that is very, very dangerous. It means simply that the President, plus one-third, plus one, of either House, would have control not just over entire spending bills, but each detail within them. To me that is a huge increase in Presidential power, and an increase in Presidential power, I might add, not just to affect the composition of spending, but also to punish and reward.

Simply put, the President might send to the Senate certain nominees to be confirmed and might make it very, very clear that unless his putting forth the line-item veto was sustained, that Congress would be in big trouble in terms of the confirmation. In other words, unless the Senate confirmed the Presidential appointments, the President might line-item veto certain appropriations.

So the President could use the line-item veto not only to stop spending, but can use it as a wedge over the heads of Congress to say if you do not do what I want, I am going to line-item veto what you want.

When there are negotiations between the executive branch and the legislative branch, Mr. Speaker, everyone knows how negotiations go, be they labor-management negotiations or any other kind. Baseball is now on strike and owners and players in negotiations whenever there is a settlement there is give and take on each side, each side gives a little, each side accepts a little bit of the other person's side, and they come out with a final document that may not be to everyone's liking, but it is a compromise document.

Now if the President has a line-item veto, what will happen I fear is when Congress and the President sit down and each gives a little, the little that the Congress gives to the President will be sustained, and the little that the President gives to the Congress will be line-item vetoed, altering the balance.

I want to just read in conclusion the first paragraph from the editorial of the Washington Post last week entitled "Disenfranchising Congress," and I will put the entire editorial in the RECORD, but I want to just conclude by reading this first paragraph. It says,

The version of the line-item veto now on the floor of the House is dangerous legislation. Too little attention has been paid to what it would do. It would likely do very little to reduce unnecessary spending and the deficit, the stated purpose. It would, however, transfer an enormous amount of power from Congress to the President, which the President could use for other purposes. It would also greatly strengthen congressional minorities at the expense of majority rule. That threatens to become a pattern: the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution that the House approved last week would also disenfranchise the majority.

I am sorry to say, Mr. Speaker I think with the passage of this, it is a very sad day for our country and I believe that those of us who voted no will be proven right in the future.

The text of the article referred to is as follows:

DISENFRANCHISING CONGRESS

The version of the line-item veto now on the floor of the House is dangerous legislation. Too little attention has been paid to what it would do. It would likely do very little to reduce unnecessary spending and the deficit, the stated purpose. It would, however, transfer an enormous amount of power from Congress to the president, which the president could use for other purposes. It would also greatly strengthen congressional minorities at the expense of majority rule. That threatens to become a pattern; the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution that the House approved last week would also disenfranchise the majority.

There's a better way to give the president line-item veto authority, which Reps. Bob Wise, Charles Stenholm and John Spratt are offering as an amendment, and which Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici supports in the Senate. The House should adopt this benign version.

A president now can't choose among the items in an appropriations bill. He must sign or veto the whole thing; then he can ask Congress to rescind the items he regards as ill-advised; but Congress is free to ignore him. A line-item veto would let him pluck out offending items and force separate votes on them. But there are different ways of doing that.

The proposal on the House floor would give him what is known as enhanced rescission authority. He'd sign an appropriations bill, then announce his intention not to spend—in effect to impound—some of the money in it. The money couldn't be spent unless Congress next passed a separate bill within a set time ordering him to do so, and he could veto the bill. Two-thirds votes of both houses would be required to override the veto; the president plus one-third plus one of either house would thus have control over not just entire bills but each detail within them. That's a huge increase in presidential power not just to affect the composition and level of spending but to punish and reward.

The alternative, called expedited rescission authority, would not upset the present balance of powers to the same degree. It's the same system as now, except that Congress couldn't ignore a rescission request but would have to vote on it within a certain time. If it passed, the money wouldn't be spent; if it failed, that would be the end of it. The president's only new power would be to turn a spotlight on a disputed item and force Congress to cast an explicit majority vote to adopt it. That's fair enough, and all you need.

In purely fiscal terms, the line-item veto is more a symbol than anything else. Presidents Reagan and Bush both suggested they could reduce the deficit significantly if given the power to cut the pork out of spending bills, and President Clinton has asked for the power as well. But domestic appropriations are only a sixth of the budget and already under tight control; the pork in the budget amounts to much less than the mythology surrounding federal spending would suggest. Congress makes a huge mistake if on the basis of mythology it disturbs the traditional balance of power between the elected branches to the extent that this bill would do.

REVISING THE CRIME BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MEEHAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I too rise to join with my colleagues, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. STUPAK], the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER], and the gentleman from Texas [Mr. CHAPMAN] to discuss what is going to happen before this body this week, and that is action on the crime bill.

Just this past September President Clinton signed into law the smartest, most comprehensive, toughest crime bill in the history of this country. This legislation was the result of input over a 6-year period from Members of Congress and law enforcement officials all across this country. It puts more cops on the streets. It builds more prisons, it pays for crime prevention programs and imposes tougher penalties for violent crimes.

Before I got elected to Congress I had an opportunity to learn a little something about crime because I ran the

Middlesex County district attorney's office. We had 13,000 criminal cases in that office a year. I worked with 54 cities and towns, police departments, in urban areas and suburban areas working on a daily basis in the fight against crime, on the front line of the fight against crime.

This week the Congress will begin consideration of a crime bill designed by Republican political strategists based on focus groups and political polls. I have to tell my colleagues that you do not determine a strategy for fighting crime by reading a political poll or talking to a focus group, or sticking your finger in the wind to determine which way the political winds are blowing.

Fighting crime is a profession, fighting crime requires research, and experience on the front lines. And it is not ironic that the Attorney General of this country is a woman who has experience in the front lines of the fight against crime.

When I heard the rhetoric during the crime bill, it was so painfully obvious to me that there were so few Members of this institution that really had experience in the front lines against crime.

But not even 4 months after we passed and the President signed into law this crime bill, we are going to vote changes on this crime bill based on partisan politics, all in the name of partisan politics and solely for the purpose of claiming ownership of the crime issue.

□ 2010

What makes matters even worse is that the changes are not going to help but going to hurt the fight against crime. The bill will not put 100,000 new police officers on the streets. It eliminates community policing programs.

Community-based policing is one of the most effective proven ways to fight crime. My home city of Lowell just put a report out, because we instituted community policing, the new Lowell police chief with 13 new police officers as a result of a community policing initiative. Since instituting community policing, car theft, larceny, home burglary, and business burglaries are all down significantly. The Republican plan will put fewer cops on the streets by eliminating this community policing program and allowing local officials to do what they deem necessary, perhaps buy more fax machines, perhaps buy more automobiles. That is not effective community policing. Community policing involves community partnerships.

The city of Lowell has instituted a model program in community policing, forming partnerships, because that is the hallmark of community-oriented police departments. They have put in neighborhood police precincts, cutting the rate of crime in those neighborhoods, establishing a relationship with the people in those neighborhoods. They have closed down more than 150 buildings in 1994 which were identified as drug houses.

Other special units have resulted in the community response team having made over 350 arrests, school visits by precinct officers where precinct officers actually go into the schools and lecture about crime prevention and lecture about what the goals of the police department are and how the community can play a role, a flag football league where members of the Lowell Police Department actually volunteer their time to get involved with the community in that flag football program, street worker program, basketball leagues where the police officers again, they are volunteers, operating within the community to get to know the community and get those kids headed in the right direction. Community policing works. It is not a debatable proposition.

There is not a law enforcement professional in the country who will say that community policing is not in the best interests of fighting crime. Gov. Bill Weld, a Republican Governor from Massachusetts, is in favor of community policing.

While we look and watch the debate this week, let us put aside partisan politics and look at what really works. We cannot afford to dismantle this community policing program.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NOMINEE FOR SURGEON GENERAL

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

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to talk about the President's appointment for the Surgeon General of the United States of America. I think it is absolutely crucial that the Surgeon General be somebody who has a great deal of credibility, and I think that credibility is going to be the issue in this nomination.

As many of us know, the last Surgeon General of the United States, Joycelyn Elders, drew a lot of focus over what I think are main health care issues of this country by some of the positions that she took. Those positions apparently she felt would move this country forward in its progress on health care to the average American. But it did not do that. What it did do instead was draw attention to the issue of abortion or to the issue of sex education and draw attention away from the important issues like health care in rural America, like immunization for children throughout America, like prenatal programs throughout America.

Well, I am concerned now with the new appointment or the new nomination that the President has made that this country is headed down the same path. It comes back to the issue of credibility.