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 off 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.

Folks, whether you are pro-choice or whether you are pro-life, the focus of the Surgeon General for this country and of that nomination process needs to be on credibility. How is the credibility going so far with this nomination? Mr. Foster and the people supporting this nomination sent information to Senator NANCY KASSEBAUM, who is the chairwoman of the committee which will handle this nomination, saying that Dr. Foster was only involved in one abortion, and, in fact, that abortion involved saving the life of the mother, hardly objectionable in some circles, in some other circles, maybe, but just maybe. But just one abortion.

Then within hours, there is a revision of that statement. Now Dr. Foster comes out and says,

> Well, not exactly one abortion, but less than 12 abortions, and not all to save the life of the mother, but mostly to save the life of the mother.

And now if you read your news reports this evening, a new press conference, press release, comes out. It seems Dr. Foster served on a panel in 1978 under which testimony was taken from a Dr. Foster, and he was the only Dr. Foster on that panel where that Dr. Foster boasts or talks of performing up to 700 abortions.

What is the truth, Dr. Foster?

President Clinton said, if, and he is referring to Dr. Foster, he has done what he said he has done, the abortion issue should not be a disqualification. Well, Mr. President, has he done what he said he has done?

He did not do one abortion. He did less than 12. And if the evidence shows 1 more abortion than 12, then the issue should leave abortion and go immediately to the center focus of credibility.

Why do I stand up here today in front of you talking about that issue? Because, doggone it, folks, we have got a lot of people in rural America that need a Surgeon General that will address the health care issues of this country. We need a Surgeon General who is going to focus on health care issues and not this abortion issue.

The abortion issue cannot continue to be the focus of the Surgeon General's office with the kind of health crisis we have in every State in this country.

If the Surgeon General nominee is not telling the truth, if, in fact, it has now gone over 12, he has an obligation to the United States of America to step forward and announce the withdrawal of his nomination. If the President of this country determines that his nominee for Surgeon General has, in fact, been less than straightforward, has, in fact, performed more of these procedures than he admits to, then it is the President's obligation not to stand by his nominee, but to stand by the country and say, ''Your credibility has now been damaged to the extent by credible evidence, by the way, that it cannot be repaired. You must then step down as my nominee.''

Mr. President, do us a favor. If your nominee is not being straight with us, dump him, and move on to somebody who is qualified to do this job, and whom the No. 1 question that is asked of him will not pertain to their credibility.

COMMEMORATING PRESIDENT REAGAN'S 84TH BIRTHDAY

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Mr. Speaker, today is former President Ronald Reagan's 84th birthday and thus a fitting time to remember his striking record of accomplishment and his uniquely American life.

Late this year, President Reagan once again tugged at the heartstrings of our Nation by revealing he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease—an act of great courage. His intent was typically Reagan. It was not to gather sympathy, but to be an example and a beacon of hope for the millions of people who suffer from this disease.

Today, as the Republican-controlled Congress tries to move the Contract With America through the House of Representatives, we are reminded of the first revolution—the Reagan revolution—that swept through Washington during the 1980's. Many of the things President Reagan championed throughout his Presidency have found a home and a new life in the Republican contract.

Mr. Speaker, Ronald Reagan was one of the finest President's in our Nation's distinguished history. Despite the arguments put forth by revisionist thinkers, President Reagan's place in history is secure. As he fights with courage, conviction, and that famous Reagan optimism against Alzheimer's, let us remember and pay tribute to a man who embodies the American dream.

THE MEXICAN RESCUE PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, we are holding this special order this evening because our various offices here on Capitol Hill have been inundated with telephone calls and inquiries regarding the Mexican rescue package, and many questions are being asked by constituents and citizens of our country that we can not, in fact, answer.

I was asked today how much money has already left our U.S. Treasury as part of the drawdown on the deal that was announced last week by the Secretary of the Treasury and the President. The facts are that we cannot tell you.

□ 2020

Therefore tomorrow morning, likely after the morning business, there will be a special resolution brought up here in the House, and it will be a privileged resolution. In that resolution we will be asking for a vote of the House and a ruling of the Speaker so that we can obtain the information that we cannot give you this evening about the terms of the arrangement that was made by our Government with the nation of Mexico. Our resolution requires that the Comptroller General of the United States report back to us within a 7-day period.

So, we would try to draw to the Members' attention that this vote will likely occur tomorrow morning after the regular morning business, the 1-minutes and, perhaps, a vote on the Journal, and we will look forward to that moment.

It is likely that in the way that the resolution will be brought up there will be very little time for debate. There may actually be an effort by certain interests in this Chamber to table the resolution, and we would ask the Members to vote against tabling the resolution so that, in fact, we will have an opportunity to get the facts that we really want.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. DEFAZIO].

Mr. DEFAZIO. So, the situation we are confronted with is the Treasury, in concert with the Federal Reserve Board, agencies of the Federal Government of the United States, have extended, as far as we know, in excess of $40 billion of credits, loan guarantees, currency swaps and other instruments to Mexico, that our questions regarding the source of these funds, the exact amount and the terms of these funds, whether or not these funds are somehow secured—you know, what authorization exists for extending these funds without coming to Congress for appropriations; the gentlewoman saying that there is a possibility that this House will not ask to have those questions answered, that we could just be shut down here on the floor by ruling of the chair, and we will have no opportunity for debate, no opportunity to go forward and ask these questions.

I, for one, as a Representative of a district from the Far West United States, feel that my constituents—this is not the greatest issue before them, but they would certainly like to know what authority the President, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Federal Reserve, have, if it was extended to them by Congress, what amounts of money are controlled, what risk are involved, what collateral are involved. I mean all sorts of things we would like to know about even a small business transaction let alone one of this magnitude.