House bill. As I understand it, it essentially says that the President can veto tax expenditures that have the practical effect of benefiting a particular taxpayer or limited class of taxpayers when compared with other similarly situated taxpayers. While there is some ambiguity, I take this provision to have a broad interpretation.

I might offer an amendment during the course of the debate to clarify that this provision should be interpreted broadly, or I might through the course of the debate, in hearing what other Senators say about it and my own interpretation of the amendment, decide not to offer such an amendment. But I do think that it is a step far in the right direction. This is really an opportunity to bring tax expenditures into the line-item veto in a significant way, and allow the President of the United States not only to veto those pork projects that are in the appropriations process but also to look at every tax bill that often is dotted with special interest provisions or attempts to expand special interest provisions that are already in the Code and strike those lines with a line-item veto.

So, Madam President, when we have the cloture vote on Wednesday, I intend to vote for cloture. And I hope that we will be able to dispense with this bill by the end of this week and move on to other matters. I think this is an important measure.

I look forward to working with the distinguished Senator from Indiana who has been a good colleague throughout this process. I compliment him on the bill that has come before the Senate.

Mr. COATS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I want to thank the Senator from New Jersey for his remarks and commend him for his longstanding efforts on behalf of the line-item veto concept.

The Senator from New Jersey has talked to me on numerous occasions about expanding the original concept of the bill that Senator MCCAIN and I have proposed to include—not just appropriated items but also tax expenditures. He, as a member of the Finance Committee, detailed for me the process of what most would consider tax pork that occurs as tax bills are written. It is not just the appropriations process.

I am pleased that we could address this issue in this bill as an amendment introduced last evening by the majority leader. I say to the Senator from New Jersey our goal, I believe, is the same—to address the same items that he attempts to address. I hope that as we debate through this and work through this we can clarify that so that Members know exactly what we are after. It is hard to get the exact words in place so that we understand just exactly how this applies to tax items. But I believe that the targeted tax expenditures which are targeted in the Dole amendment very closely parallel what the Senator from New Jersey has tried for so long to accomplish.

So we look forward to working with him. I thank him for his support.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call roll.

Mr. EXON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will now stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:16 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer [Mr. ABRAHAM].

LEGISLATIVE LINE-ITEM VETO ACT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ABRAHAM). The pending question is amendment No. 347 offered by the majority leader to the bill S. 4.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. STEVENS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I have to attend a meeting in Delta Junction, AK, pertaining to Fort Greeley on Friday, March 24. I ask unanimous consent that I be excused from attendance in the Senate from 3:45 on Thursday, March 23, until the Senate convenes on March 27.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, this afternoon I rise in support of S. 4, the Legislative Line-Item Veto Act.

What is now ongoing is, in my opinion, the long overdue and what I hope is a historic debate toward resolution of this very important issue.

Let me recognize both Senator COATS and Senator MCCAIN, as well as Chairman PETE DOMENICI and Majority Leader DOLE, for their willingness to work together to bring us to a point of compromise that I think has produced a line-item veto product in S. 4 that can pass the Senate, work through the conference with the House, and ultimately be placed on the President's desk with the degree of confidence I think we now have that he will sign it.

This is one of those items that an overwhelming majority of the citizens of our country say they agree with. It is certainly something that most Senators have agreed with in principle, and now that we have been able to refine it, we have a product that I think the majority can support.

The issues, of course, were the two-thirds override: What kind of authority would the President have in the ability to veto and in our ability to react to that veto? I think it has to be a tough vote, a supermajority vote. The idea of a simple majority, while I supported a concept like that a year ago, now clearly, if we can get the tougher version, we ought to do so.

The idea of separate enrollment or rescission is an issue that has been discussed. To extend the line-item veto authority in new, direct entitlement spending as well as appropriations is another issue that we had to work our way through. And, of course, to extend the targeted tax benefits, again, is another one of those issues that I am extremely pleased to see that we have been able to deal with.

Let me first talk about the majority versus the two-thirds override which is really at the heart of all of this. It is the heart of the division of authority and responsibility and the power associated with that authority. As I have mentioned, I have supported both approaches in the past, but I have always argued in doing so it was extremely important that the Congress of the United States pass the strongest possible line-item veto. In fact, as Senator MCCAIN read earlier yesterday, that is exactly what the President has now said publicly he wants—the the strongest possible product that the Senate of the United States or the Congress collectively can yield.

Last year's House passed a majority override. This year, an overwhelmingly bipartisan House, by a majority of 294 to 134, passed the two-thirds override, an important signal from that new Republican House.

Now that Senators know we are firing with what all of us know are real bullet votes, it is an opportunity to get our two-thirds. That is the product at hand now. That is why I am extremely pleased that we can deal with it.

The second issue I mentioned, the idea of separate enrollment versus rescission—as I say, I have sponsored both and cosponsored both because, whether I was in the majority or whether I was in the minority, I have always argued that we had to get to the President's desk and into his power some form of line-item veto. The stronger versions were always greatly appreciated by this Senator, but at the same time I felt it was critically important that we move the issue. Now my preferences lie clearly with a strengthened rescission approach. It is simpler. In enrollment, transmission to the President, and at signing of a law, it could be used as a scalpel instead of the idea of a butcher knife, because rescissions can reduce as well as zero out an item. I think that is the way we want to handle this.

But I will vote for a separate enrollment—or I would have, if that had been