

voted for, but it is coming home to roost now.

Mr. LOTT. If the Senator will yield for a comment, I think there are probably more Senators and House Members that would agree with you this week than last week, I say to the Senator.

Mr. BYRD. Well, I am heartened by that. I thank the leader.

Mr. LOTT. I yield the floor, Mr. President.

Mr. McCAIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I will be very brief. In my discussions with the majority leader over a period of discussions of the campaign finance reform bill, I told him that I would come back with an amendment that I wanted an up-or-down vote on. I want to repeat again my intentions to have that. I do not desire to tie up the Senate. I do not desire to cause problems with ISTEAA or other pieces of legislation between now and when we go out, but I will have an amendment that I believe is important and one that I think should be considered by the Senate. This issue should be resolved, I hope, before we go to recess.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the distinguished Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I just want to make reference to the comments just made by the distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia, my friend and colleague of 23 years. He has served here much longer than that. I have had the opportunity to serve with him for now almost 23 years.

Mr. President, I have made it very clear in speeches on the floor and comments to the public and people back in my home State of Vermont that I completely agree with the distinguished Senator from West Virginia on the question of the line-item veto.

I was one of those, as he knows, who voted against the line-item veto. I recall when he first came trying to say something to me about it. He may well recall this: I said, "You don't even have to lay out the arguments. I can't imagine why anybody in any legislative body would want to give up the power of the purse strings to the Executive."

Again, I do not blame the Executive for asking for it. If any Executive thought that the legislative body would be foolish enough to just hand over the most significant part of their power to them, well, few Executives could resist the temptation.

Mr. BYRD. George Washington took the viewpoint that he had to veto the entire bill or sign it or let it become law without his signature. He could not do it piecemeal. Now the Senate and House have made it possible for any President to do just that. I do not think George Washington would have done that.

Mr. LEAHY. I say to my good friend from West Virginia, who has as strong and abiding history as any person I have had the privilege of serving with, that it goes back to George Washington, that more of us should say we want to go back to George Washington.

Unfortunately, we have a lot of people who give discussions about what were the Founders' intention, what was in the Constitution. I sometimes wonder if they have read either the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, or any history less recent than their latest poll.

I say this because I heard some Members say in the last couple days that they wonder whether they made the right decision in voting for that line-item veto but did not go on to say, "But it was so popular in the polls"—so popular in the polls.

My good friend from West Virginia has read much on decisions made by those who were at the drafting and introduction of the Magna Carta, has certainly read The Federalist Papers more than anybody else here. He has read the decisions that have been made at very difficult times in our history. And I suspect at most of those nobody was doing any polling.

I do not think that the Founders in Philadelphia—I do not think there were many polls being taken. There were certainly discussions among people who had a great sense of not only history but the history they were creating and the country they were putting together.

I suspect also, and my friend from West Virginia would probably agree with this, I suspect also there were many, many there who read, as the distinguished Senator from West Virginia knows, what happened to the Roman Senate. Caesar was given the power of the purse.

I think it is an interesting thing because shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, we had many visits here from parliamentarians coming to see how to set up a democracy. I am still struck by one group from Russia who sat in my office asking, how do you do some of these things? Suppose your President said, "No, we will build this weapon and we will do that," and you said, "No," how could you stop him? I said we would not give him the money, and they said, "You mean you can do that?" That is why, after 200 years of being the most powerful nation on Earth, we are still a democracy. We are not a dictatorship because there is that check and balance.

I hope some who feel set upon because their own projects may have been vetoed, if they would go back and read history and think not just to be concerned because they are discomfited for the moment, but be more concerned that they put an enormous hole in the walls that set up the checks and balances in our Nation.

Does a Congress always use the power of the purse wisely? Of course not. I can point to times I have been on

the losing end in battles on appropriations and spending bills. The distinguished Senator from West Virginia rarely loses, but can still think, I am sure, of times he may have. But it was the Senate working its will. It was the other House working its will. And then, if the President doesn't like it, veto it, veto the bill.

I might say, and my friend from West Virginia will remember, we have had a number of times in appropriations bills that we pass where the President really was against one particular point, and we sent it down, and he vetoed it. Then we entered into a process of negotiation and the bill gets passed again, and maybe that item, that one item he wanted out, was taken out. But he had to make that whole decision of thinking they lost the whole bill in doing it, and we had to, too. It is a two-way street up and down Pennsylvania Avenue. Now we just send it to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

I say to my friends here in the Senate, don't always jump to what is popular in the polls, especially if it hurts the country. The most popular part of the Contract With America, the most popular part, was term limits. Now, that struck so close to the bone that those who would sign the Contract With America made darn sure no term-length-limit bills went through.

There were five or six different versions, so everybody could vote for something, but no one version would pass. That struck close to home so that went through. Things that strike close to home like that are pay raises and what not.

What I say is, think about the country itself. The line-item veto is not a way in any democracy for a parliamentary party to give up its powers.

I thank my friend from West Virginia for raising the point. I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

(During today's session of the Senate, the following morning business was transacted.)

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise very briefly to explain my absence on roll-call vote No. 271. This was a procedural vote to instruct the Sergeant at Arms. I was attending a conference with Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and was involved in a discussion of Bosnia and the enforcement of the Dayton Peace accords. I was unable to return to the Senate for the vote.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, October 7, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,415,085,048,979.17. (Five trillion, four hundred fifteen billion, eighty-five million, forty-eight thousand, nine hundred seventy-nine dollars and seventeen cents)