

New veto power needed, overdue

The Senate passed a bill last week which could mean a new and potentially more cost-effective way of doing business in Washington.

That bill is the line-item veto.

The line-item veto, which has been sought by various representatives and senators for years, gives the president the right to veto individual items spending in a bill, commonly called "line items."

It has been argued that a line-item veto disturbs the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches of government. However, the truth is that the benefits of this new veto outweigh the possible negatives suggested by opponents.

The line-item veto will promote fiscal responsibility in Congress. The object of the bill is not to give the executive branch sweeping new powers, but to give the president the power to eliminate wasteful or unneeded spending. The president, as goes the logic, doesn't have the same kind of political pressure from constituents that senators and representatives do and can look more impartially at spending items than can others.

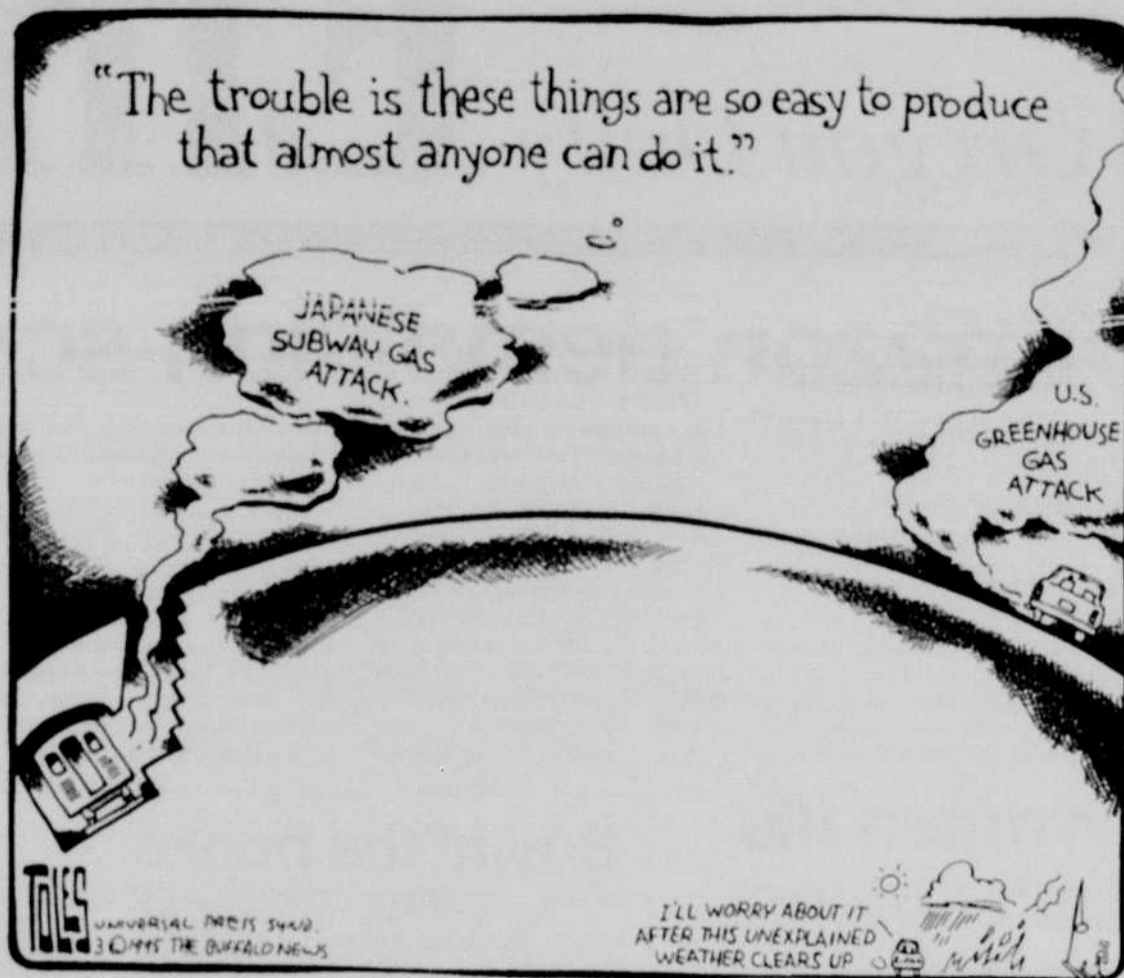
Members of Congress will no longer have reason to sneak unnecessary or inflated funding measures into a bill for folks back home in the hope that the president will look past it and sign the entire bill into law. With a line-item veto, the president need only veto the one line in the bill, rather than the entire bill as has been previously required.

Although the bill was brought up in a Republican-controlled Congress, it is important to note that a line-item veto is not a Republican issue, but one of fiscal responsibility. Rather than disrupt the system of checks and balances as they had been envisioned when the Constitution was written, this system adds a much-needed check — individual items of funding that Congress passes will undergo a final review by the president.

It is true that, some day in the future, the line-item veto could become more of a partisan weapon than a cost-cutting tool. A president can, theoretically, veto an item for any reason and that could translate into cutting out spending for political rather than fiscal reasons. That would be unfortunate and beyond the spirit of the line-item veto, but that is a risk that must be taken when additional powers are given to other branches of government. The tool now given to the executive branch must be used wisely and with discretion.

The line-item veto, already enjoyed by most state governors, is long overdue for the president. If used to eliminate wasteful spending, it has the potential to eliminate billions of dollars annually of waste of taxpayer dollars. Who could disagree with something that simple?

The line-item veto will be a powerful new tool that will, if used as has been proposed, be a positive and useful new weapon in the fight against wasteful federal spending.



■ OPINION

Spring break in Troutdale means TV



ROBBIE REEVES

With the beginning of spring term, it's time for everyone to snap out of the spring break daze and into the sober reality of the new term.

Damn. When many people I know talked about spring break yesterday, visions were evoked of some tropical paradise with 80 degree weather and blinding sun, usually complete with palm trees and drinks. Invariably, the sun tan was indicative of a destination of Tahiti or Mexico, if not a nuclear fireball.

I, on the other hand, spent my spring break on the cheap. Sitting at home in a little town called Troutdale — somewhere near the distant edge of civilization in the Portland area — I soaked up a different kind of radiation, the TV.

The way I figure, we're all getting cancer in the long run anyway, plus it was spring break, when all cerebral thought is optional, so I vegetated. I'm proud of it, too.

A friend here at the *Emerald* (who, for the purpose of retaining intact his/her image, will remain nameless) reintroduced me to the world of trashy television talk shows.

I used to glance at them years ago, way back in the pioneering days of *Geraldo*. After all, who can forget the time that *Geraldo* got his nose bashed by a chair in a fight on TV?

Times have changed, as I have now realized. Instead of broken noses being adventurous, guests on talk shows are being murdered, as a recent interviewee on the *Jenny Jones* show recent-

ly realized.

I couldn't even count the number of new shows, but from the looks of a couple of them, Oprah, Phil and Sally look like they could be nominated for sainthood.

However, to give equal credit where it is due, the zillions of other losers with talk shows during the day are quite creative in topics for their shows and even more so in finding guests. In fact, one such show had a man with a rap piece about the fallopian tubes.

Enough said. It'll be another five years before I watch that show again.

Tuning through the dial, being the political junkie that I am (compounded by the fact that spring break lasts all of nine days), I caught up on Congress with a touch of C-SPAN.

C-SPAN, of course, is that network where live proceedings of Congress are broadcast to the world. I tend to think of it as America airing its dirty laundry to the world.

I tuned in for part of the debate on welfare reform. This is the debate where, as some might have seen, some Republicans compared welfare recipients to alligators and wolves, while opposing Democrats, at times, screamed, "Sit down and shut up!" to the Republicans.

This, my friends, is the democracy that we brag to the rest of the world about. Only in America would we actually broadcast it. And I thought that I was watching some sort of sick comedy.

It was clear that it was time to reach for the remote. Actually, after C-SPAN, I think that I

dived, screaming, for it.

Ah, the next channel was quite a find. Unfortunately, *Emerald* rules prohibit me from mentioning any more, specifically the fact that I spent a total of 10 hours of my spring break watching certain legal proceedings from the state of California.

But then again, if I did tell you that I saw the ex-football star intently watching testimony from the Los Angeles detective and the long-blond-haired brainless friend of the defendant, I'd probably be strung up by most of the people reading this, not to mention the *Emerald* staff. But if you have any doubt as to who I'm talking about, turn on CNN. It's on for five or six hours a day.

But as bad as all of this can be, it couldn't be anywhere near as bad as the news. I caught a little of CNN and enough of the *Today Show* to see that Jane Pauley left. But from nerve gas being spread in Tokyo to several gasbag presidential candidates laying the groundwork for their stab at the presidency, I determined that I prefer to live in the land of the unreal. After all, that's why I live in Troutdale and watch the tube during spring break.

As you can see, spring break isn't all bad in Troutdale. After catching up on all of the trash on television in the time allotted, I feel reborn, like a new man of sorts. Or, at least, until the in-room cable TV installation is completed in the dorms.

Here's to another break in front of the tube!

Robbie Reeves is the editorial editor for the *Emerald*.

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