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House Budget Process: The Hard Realities

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In regard to your June 30 editorial "[Lost GOP Souls¹](#)": It is true that these so-called budget process reforms were opposed by myself and other members of the Appropriations Committee, but that is where the accuracy of your editorial ends. This was not a serious attempt at reform.

It was simply the fulfillment of a commitment to a few members to allow the issue to be discussed. To describe the past-primetime, disjointed discussion on some stale budget process changes as a fight for the soul of the Republican Party is preposterous. None of the initiatives soundly defeated on the House floor were new ideas.


At no time were subcommittee chairmen "twisting arms" or threatening members with the loss of local projects if they voted for reforms. Neither have we targeted the projects of any group in the Congress, conservative or otherwise. While these types of allegations make for good Beltway folklore, it is not how my committee does business.

I do support some common-sense reforms of the budget process but don't believe Congress should cede its constitutional prerogatives over spending to the executive branch. I would agree that these are democratic arguments (small d) but reject the notion that this reveals some sort of ideological predisposition toward spending.

I strongly support and have adhered to conservative limits on discretionary spending. Last year's appropriations bills for fiscal year 2004 limited discretionary spending to the Bush administration's top-line figure of \$786 billion or about a 3% increase over last year's comparable levels. Any additional spending was offset by corresponding cuts. Committee Republicans rejected an additional \$18 billion in politically popular spending during consideration of last year's budget. This year, we have already rejected \$14 billion.

Unfortunately, these cuts pale in comparison with the hundreds of billions of dollars added in recent years for programs outside my committee's jurisdiction. These so-called "mandatory" programs continue on without annual review. Real budget reform should start with better control over these programs.

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