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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

In Spending Denial

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House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bill Young (R., Florida) takes issue with one of our recent editorials in a letter to the editor nearby. While we appreciate him taking the time to respond to our points, one of his claims can't be left unchallenged.

Congressman Young admits that he opposed proposals for reform of the federal budget process that came to the floor of the House of Representatives for several votes last month. But he denies that any of his subcommittee chairmen threatened the supporters of reform with the loss of federal projects in their districts to get them to change their votes. Mr. Young may well believe this.


But we didn't make it up. Our information comes from Republican Members of Congress who were on the receiving end of that intimidation, and who understandably do not want to be named for fear of further retaliation. These backbenchers all saw how Congressman Nick Smith of Michigan was clobbered when he went public about the leadership arm-twisting he endured during the Medicare drug debate last year. The fact that 20 Republicans who felt strongly enough about budget reform to add their names to the bill as co-sponsors turned around and voted against it shows just how intense the persuasion became.

As to Mr. Young's complaint that it is "preposterous" that budget process reform is a fight for the soul of the Republican Party, that's really a matter of opinion. But we'd bet that most Republican voters would agree that when GOP leaders care more about their own prerogatives than about reducing the size of government, the party is in danger of abandoning what it at least likes to claim is a core principle.

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