

make much sense; it doesn't seem to fit into the priorities; this special project, this unusual study"—[laughter]—"or this particular project, this doesn't make sense."

I believe that part of a budgetary reform program is the line-item veto, the opportunity to put the light on such programs. And that will help Members resolve the dilemma of either voting for an important bill with bad items in it or being a part of trying to put bad items in it in order to justify their existence in the Congress.

The good thing about the line-item veto, it has bipartisan support. We've got a Democrat Member from the United States Congress who supported that bill strongly. Governors have had the line-item veto. I met with Senator Ben Nelson earlier this morning in the Oval Office—he talked about what an effective tool it was to have the line-item. Did you have it, Engler, when you were Governor? Engler had it. It's an important part of relating with the legislative process. And by the way, these aren't just Republican Governors with the line-item veto; they're Democrat and Republican Governors who are using that line-item veto effectively.

The line-item veto has bipartisan support in the Congress. Thirty-five Democrats joined more than 200 Republicans in the House to get the bill passed. That's a good sign. I was disappointed, frankly, though, that more Democrats didn't vote for the bill, especially those who are calling for fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. I mean, you can't call for fiscal discipline on the one hand and then not pass a tool to enhance fiscal discipline on the other hand. You can't have it both ways, it seems like to me.

Now the Senate is going to take up the measure. And again, I want to thank the Senators who are here for strategizing on how we can get the bill moving. Senator Frist is committed to getting the bill moving. Senator McCain is one of the important cosponsors, as is Senator John Kerry. I remember campaigning against him in 2004, and I remember him talking about the line-item veto, and I appreciate the fact that he's living up to the political promises he made. It's a good sign, and I applaud Senator Kerry for taking the lead on the line-item veto. And I hope

members of his party listen to his justifications for that important piece of legislation.

What's really interesting is, we've had Senators on record for the line-item veto. After all, the Senate passed a line-item veto in 1996. And for those Senators who passed the line-item veto in 1996, I hope they still consider it an important vote in 2006. Ten years hasn't made that big a difference. It was good enough 10 years ago; it's good enough today, for those who voted for the line-item veto.

Oh, I know this town is full of all kinds of politics, but we ought to set politics aside. We need to set politics aside when it comes to reforming Social Security and Medicare, and we need to set politics aside so that the President can work with the Congress to bring fiscal discipline to our budgets. That's what the taxpayers expect from those of us who are honored to serve.

So that's my opinion on the line-item veto. I hope you can feel—tell I feel strongly about it. I think it makes sense, no matter who the President may be. I think it makes sense for a Republican President to have a line-item veto, and I think it makes sense for a Democrat President to have a line-item veto. And I urge the United States Senate to pass this important legislation so we can reconcile whatever differences there are between the House and the Senate version and show the people that we are serious about being responsible with their money.

Thanks for letting me come by and say hello.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at the JW Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Lawrence J. Mone, president, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research; and former Gov. John Engler of Michigan.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the National Endowment for Democracy Award Recipients

June 27, 2006

It has been my honor to welcome four amazing individuals to the Oval Office. These four folks are from the continent of Africa. They're here to receive the National Endowment for Democracy's award, which is an

award to honor courage and fortitude and strength in promoting freedom.

And we have had an amazing discussion. My spirits are enriched by talking to freedom lovers and freedom fighters. We've got a man from the Sudan who talked eloquently about free press. We had a doctor from Zimbabwe who talked about the human condition and the need for the United States to make sure we stay engaged with the democracy movements and help people who are hungry.

I talked to two really unusual ladies, one from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is very concerned about free elections, and she wants to make sure people in the rural part of her country are represented in free elections.

And then we had an amazing discussion with a lady from Sierra Leone but who's working in Liberia. And one of the most amazing stories is when she recounted the fact that she was escaping Liberia in the mid-1990s and had to get on a fishing boat to escape the authorities who wanted to bring—to do her harm because she expressed her desire for people to be free.

Again, I want to thank all of you for doing what you have done. I'm proud to be in your company. I'm proud to have you here in the Oval Office. I thank you for being witness to this universal fact: that liberty is universal in its application; that people everywhere desire to be free; that freedom is not just—belongs to the American citizens, freedom belongs to everybody. And you're courageous in your fight and your desire to spread the concept of freedom.

Congratulations on winning a very important award. Congratulations on being so courageous. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to National Endowment for Democracy's 2006 Democracy Award recipients Alfred Taban, Reginald Matchaba-Hove, Immaculee Birhaheka, and Zainab Hawa Bangura.

Remarks During a Run With Staff Sergeant Christian Bagge

June 27, 2006

The President. So I first met Christian when I went to Walter Reed—Brooke Army, San Antonio, Texas. And he said, "I want to run with you." He was in bed. He had lost both legs. I looked at him, like, you know, there's an optimistic person. But I could tell in his eyes that he meant it. And after a lot of hard work and a lot of compassionate care, this fine man is here on the South Lawn running with the President. And he ran the President into the ground, I might add. [Laughter]

But I'm proud of you. I'm proud of your strength; I'm proud of your character. Thank you for your service.

It's an amazing sight for me to be running with a guy who, last time I saw him, was in bed wondering whether or not—I was wondering whether or not he'd ever get out of bed. There was no doubt in his mind that he would.

Thanks for your service.

S. Sgt. Bagge. Your welcome, Mr. President.

The President. Good man. God bless you.

S. Sgt. Bagge. It's a privilege.

The President. We're not through running yet. Get out of the way. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. S. Sgt. Christian Bagge, USA, was injured in Iraq in June 2005 while serving in the Oregon National Guard.

Statement on Senate Action on a Proposed Constitutional Amendment To Prohibit Desecration of the American Flag

June 27, 2006

Today a bipartisan majority of United States Senators voted to protect our Nation's most important symbol through a Constitutional amendment to authorize Congress to prohibit the desecration of the American flag. Unfortunately, the final count fell short of the votes needed to send this important proposed amendment to the States for ratification.