

THE NEW YORK SUN



Betting the House

In light of the news that House Republicans will take their anti-immigrant show on the road this August instead of passing a reform bill, we can't help but suspect that Speaker Hastert is moonlighting as Rahm Emanuel's chief adviser over at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Few strategies seem as calculated to play to one of the Democrats' few strengths while calling particular attention to one of the Republicans' most glaring weaknesses.

The move comes as House Republicans should be buckling down to intensive negotiations with their Senate counterparts over a final reform package. The House passed an enforcement-only bill last December and that legislation needs to be reconciled with a less protectionist bill recently passed by the Senate. House Republicans seem to have convinced themselves that Americans do not support immigrants, despite evidence to the contrary. Now they are maneuvering themselves more deeply into a corner.

Polls, and an actual election result, underscore this point. A poll of 807 likely *Republican* voters conducted last fall by the Manhattan Institute found that 72% actually supported immigration reform resembling the Senate's proposal — stepping up border enforcement but also allowing illegal immigrants already in the country to step out of the shadows and onto the path toward eventual citizenship. The poll also found that translating directly into electoral support. A full 71% of respondents said that they would be more likely to vote for their member of Congress if he supported such a plan.

That has already come to bear in the race to replace Rep. Randy Cunningham in California. The Republican, Brian Bilbray, edged to victory over the Democratic, Francine Busby, by barely 50% to 45%. If anti-immigrant politics were going to win landslides, surely this would

have been the place. The district supported President Bush by a 10 percentage point margin over Senator Kerry in 2004. It is also anti-immigrant. Both Cunningham and Mr. Bilbray, himself a former congressman, scored well with anti-immigration groups. Cunningham even co-sponsored legislation eliminating birthright citizenship for the children of illegal immigrants.

Despite Ms. Busby's own gaffes on the issue — late in the campaign she made comments that sounded like she was encouraging non-citizens to vote — Mr. Bilbray's anti-immigrant rhetoric failed to rally a base that, in 2004, had carried Cunningham to victory over Ms. Busby by a double-digit margin. Let it be a warning that Americans understand that more border enforcement alone is not a winning formula. With 12 million illegal immigrants in the country, many Americans have come into contact with illegal immigrants and understand that they are important for the economy are usually hardworking people out for a better life instead of monsterish near-terrorists.

Republicans would be dumb to bet the House on protectionism. Voters are shrewd enough to grasp that at bottom building walls against immigration is a form of protectionism, which has been a losing issue at the polls for decades. What was the name of that Democratic majority leader who wanted to be president? Dick Gepwell? Gepworth? Gepharke? Gephardt? Something like that. He led the protectionist faction of our debate for years. It didn't work. Better for the Republicans to get out on the hustings and talk about growth — making tax cuts permanent, cutting regulations, making a sound currency, winning the war on terror. Those are the issues that won them the leadership of all three branches of government.

Bush in Budapest

President Bush, on a visit to a Europe seething with anti-Americanism, today will visit Budapest to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1956 anti-Communist uprising in Hungary — a sobering reminder of the consequences of flinching in a face-off with totalitarianism. It is an amazing story, we thought as we read of it yesterday on the English-language Web site of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A student uprising in Budapest on October 23, 1956, blossomed across the country. Free elections were planned. Soviet statues were dismantled. Then, on November 4, Soviet tanks rolled in, massacring the forces of freedom. And Hungary was under the Soviet Communist boot for another 34 years.

Iraqis and Iranians and Lebanese and

even Syrians and Egyptians are in the midst of a Budapest moment just now. Iraqis are braving violence to vote and form a free constitutional government. Iranian students are rallying against their government. Lebanese are rallying against Syrian domination. Even in Egypt the winds of democracy and the rule of law are stirring. The Baathist ideology that held sway in Saddam Hussein's Baghdad and in the Syria of the Assads was influenced by the worst of European Nazism and Communism. What a shame it would be if Europe consigned the people of the Middle East to the same fate as the Hungarians of 1956, of tasting freedom, of coming tantalizingly close to it, only to have it crushed for decades until a new leadership arose — a Reagan, a Thatcher — with the vision to see and the courage to act.

Spitzer Tacks Right

The big news in the governor's race is that the Democratic frontrunner is tacking to the right on policy issues. On Monday, the New York Post reported that Eliot Spitzer opposes both a plan the United Federation of Teachers is pushing to turn 50,000 home day care workers into state employees and another union-backed effort to force large retailers to provide health insurance for their workers. Yesterday, the Daily News's Michael Goodwin took a break from the anti-immigration jag he has been on lately to come in with an interview in which Mr. Spitzer vowed to lift the cap limiting the number of charter schools in the state and in which Mr. Spitzer said, "We can't raise taxes, we just can't do it." Mr. Spitzer said to Mr. Goodwin of tax increases in a Spitzer governorship, "It's not gonna happen. Not gonna happen."

It's not the first time New Yorkers have seen Mr. Spitzer tack to the right. When Mr. Spitzer originally ran for attorney general it was as a centrist, supporting the death penalty and favoring making it easier for authorities detain violent mentally ill people against their will. After he got elected, he tacked left, turning into the scourge of Wall Street. Mr. Spitzer has been in office now for nearly eight years, and he's had plenty of time to speak out on charter schools. Somehow, he hasn't managed to prevail over the Democrat-led assembly to lift the cap. Nor do we recall him as a particularly vocal opponent of tax increases over the past eight years that the same Democrat-

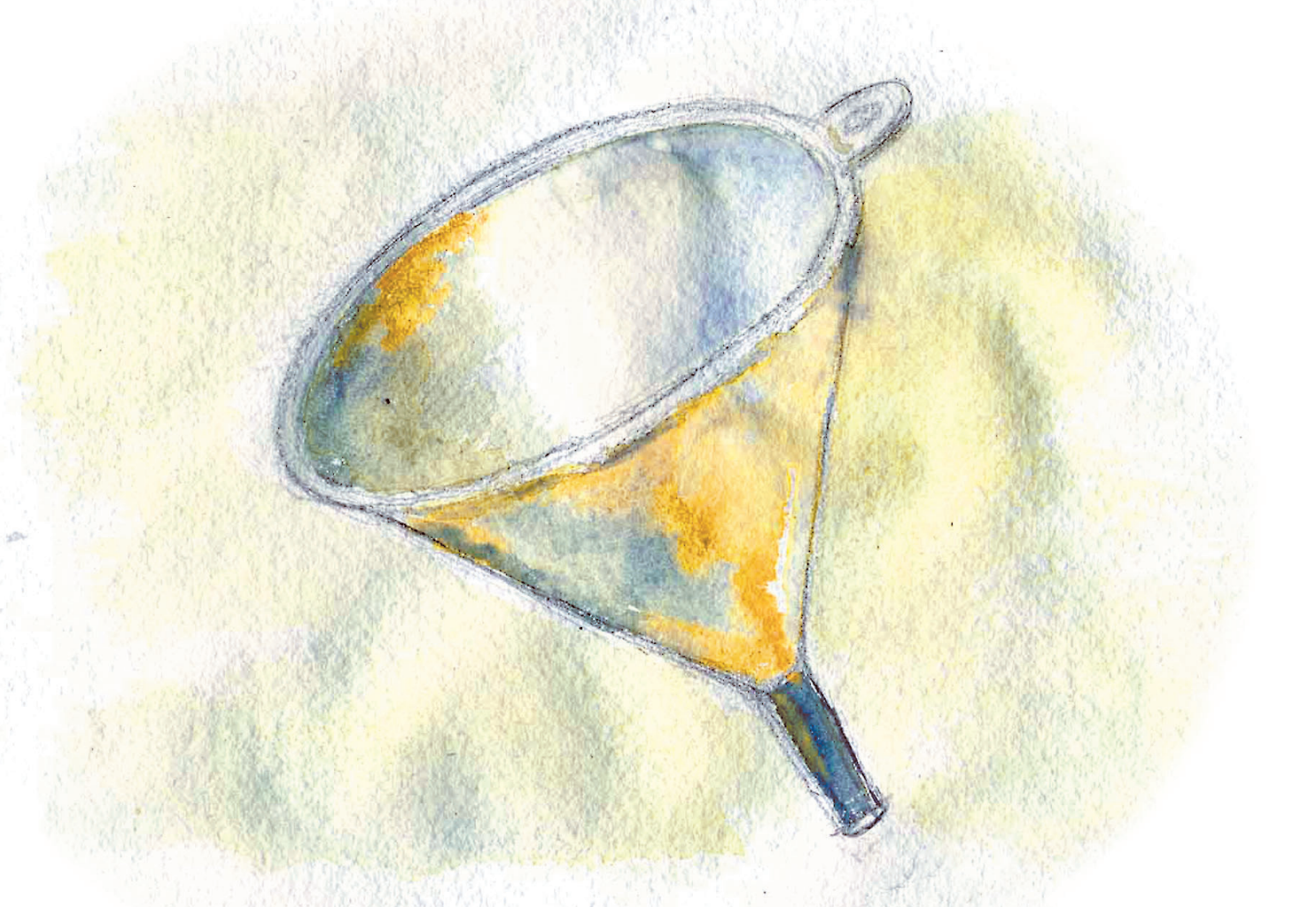
led assembly imposed over Governor Pataki's vetos.

The candidate with the credibility on these issues is the Republican, John Faso. He was more often on the right side of them while serving in the assembly. What's more, Mr. Faso has gone beyond opposing tax increases. Mr. Faso has actually proposed tax cuts — eliminating the estate tax and cutting taxes on income between \$40,000 and \$80,000 — that Mr. Spitzer has not endorsed. We would like to see a far more aggressive approach on tax from Mr. Faso, too, and to see him develop his tax views further. The point to note is that Mr. Spitzer is moving in his direction.

We wouldn't want to fail to acknowledge it. We interpret the attorney general's newfound outspokenness on taxes and charter schools to be a sign that Mr. Spitzer is concerned about the impression that is rapidly forming in voters' minds of him as a tax-and-spend leftist. It is a sign that he takes Mr. Faso's challenge seriously and that Mr. Spitzer senses that the voters of New York State overall are not advocates of more taxes, more spending, and more regulation of business. New Yorkers are overtaxed as it is. They are receptive to tax cuts and competition in education. So Mr. Spitzer's shift to the right is a sign that both the Faso campaign and the broader ideas of the free-market movement in New York are succeeding and having an influence. Even in the public sector competition has positive effects.

Matt Kibbe on the line-item veto

Hey, Big Spender



HOWARD SCHWARTZ

Thirty-five years ago, Richard Nixon justified his big-government economic policies by stating: "We are all Keynesians now." Given the way government spending has exploded in the last six years, a similarly candid member of the current Congress or administration would be forced to observe: "We are all big spenders now." While many on the left would applaud such a day, fiscal conservatives are desperately looking for some reason to think this is not true of their elected officials. Fortunately, the House is about to vote on a bill that would make it easier to trim some of the budgetary fat Tom Delay so erroneously claimed had been squeezed from the federal budget.

The president's proposed budget for 2007 approaches \$2.8 trillion — a full \$1 trillion more than President Clinton's last budget in 2000. Federal government expenditures have increased 56% since 2000 under Republican control of both the White House and Congress. Spending now tops \$22,000 a household. It hadn't been over \$20,000 a household, in inflation-adjusted dollars, since World War II.

The wasteful spending is epitomized by the explosion of pork barrel spending projects — more politely referred to as "earmarks" — that proliferate in large budget legislation. These projects, like the now famous \$223 million "Bridge to Nowhere" in Alaska, have increased by 900% since 1991. In 1996, 958 earmarked projects cost taxpayers \$12.5 billion. The 2005 Congress passed 13,999 earmarks that cost \$27.3 billion, or almost \$100 for every American man, woman and child.

Rep. Jim Moran, a Democrat of Virginia, re-

cently showed just how brazen members of Congress have become with pork barrel spending when he proudly told an audience in his Northern Virginia district that if the Democrats took back Congress, as the new chairman of a House appropriations subcommittee he would, "earmark the [stuff] out of it."

Members of Congress have indeed become deft at "earmarking the [stuff]" out of bills and inventing new ways to soak taxpayers to pay for their pet vanity projects. In many cases, earmarks are not even contained in the initial legislation that passes the House or Senate. Instead, conference negotiators slip them in the

veto an entire bill because of a few egregious earmarks, but that involves throwing out the baby with the bathwater. He also has some authority to challenge individual spending items, but in practice Congress can simply ignore this action, as it always does.

The "Legislative Line-Item Veto Act of 2006," as introduced by Rep. Paul Ryan, a Republican of Wis., and which has already passed the House Budget Committee, would allow the President to veto individual budget items, or special-interest tax breaks that affected fewer than 100 beneficiaries, while signing the rest of a bill into law.

The measure is more limited than similar legislation the Supreme Court overturned in 1998 after determining that it did not pass constitutional muster. To ensure Congress keeps the "power of the purse," the president's veto could be over-ridden by a simple majority in both houses of Congress.

This legislation would give the president an important tool for pushing fiscal responsibility, similar to that which President Clinton effectively used, and which is used by 43 governors across the country.

Unfortunately, the line-item veto alone won't bring fiscal discipline to Congress, where over half of all federal spending goes to entitlement programs like Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid, which will continue to grow. But it is a first step that is desperately needed, and would be a much welcomed move toward controlling the congressional spending spree.

Mr. Kibbe is president and chief executive officer of FreedomWorks (www.freedomworks.org), a grassroots organization advocating lower taxes, less government, and more freedom.

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backdoor, attaching them to large appropriations bills that can no longer be amended. Congress is then forced into an up-or-down vote on the entire legislation. At that point it's much more difficult for Congress to vote against legislation — some because they're getting a gold-plated swimming pool for their district in the bill and others because they support the main piece of the legislation to which the earmark has been attached.

The president is in the same situation. He can



LETTERS

'Anti-Abortion Group Accused'
Your article exposing so-called "crisis pregnancy centers" neglected the disturbing fact that these sham abortion clinics receive huge federal subsidies under the guise of providing "abstinence-only education" ["Tax-Funded Anti-Abortion Group Accused of Using Deceptive Tactics," National, June 16, 2006].

Tens of millions of dollars of abstinence-only funding subsidize the far right's anti-abortion crusade and crisis pregnancy centers have become a booming industry nationwide. The just-say-no approach is dangerously ineffective, especially as the proportion of young people with HIV/AIDS continues to rise and young women are especially at risk.

We need increased funding for comprehensive sexuality education, not for religious rhetoric.

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'Ballot Is Open for Mayor'
In one day, both articles on Mayor Bloomberg's putative presidential aspirations ["Ballot Is Open If Mayor Opts For Cam-



DENNIS COOK/AP

paign," Josh Gerstein, Page 1, June 15, 2006] and on minority leaders' call for descriptive representation in Brooklyn's 11th Congressional District ["Sharp-ton To Call For United Front Behind 1 Candidate," Azi Paybarah, New York, June 15, 2006] put into stark relief the defects of plural-ity voting. However, John Ander-

son advocates the wrong solution with instant-runoff voting.

Instant-runoff voting suffers from many flaws. It's "non-monotonic," which means raising someone in your preference ranking can cause him or her to lose. Instant-runoff voting also may drop a centrist candidate because he or she comes in third but, in fact,

this candidate could beat, in separate contests, the candidates to the left and right that get more initial support.

Approval voting, in which voters can vote for one or more candidates, or range voting, in which voters score each candidate, the scores are added up, and the candidate with the highest score wins are both far better voting systems for electing candidates who represent "the vital center" that John P. Avlon used to so clearly limn in his columns on the next page. Now that he's on leave to work with Rudolph Giuliani, will he call on his mentor to embrace effective and empowering election methods?

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