

The public for too long has been misled by deficit demagoguery. The public has been told that the problem is a result of congressional pork-barrel spending. The public is told that giving the president line-

by 1998) would be a tonic for the economy. The key word is credible. Any politician who says it can be done just by trimming waste, or just by eliminating pork, or just by the item veto should not be believed.

Don't kill this one

Popular wetlands preservation program should be expanded, not cut.

The Wetlands Reserve Program is an experiment to encourage farmers who have plowed up wetlands to let them return to nature. The program proved to be popular with farmers, is a favorite of environmental groups, and it has the backing of President Bush.

So Congress is about to kill it.

It seems that the program is *too* popular. Demand for enrollment exceeds the available money, so Congress is about to eliminate it altogether. It boggles the mind.

The program being tested in Iowa and eight other states invites farmers to sell easements to the wetland area at prices up to its fair market value. Federal officials will accept the lowest bids offered for the best of such land. The feds have \$46.6 million to spend in the nine states.

Thus far, 757 Iowa farmers have offered 45,000 acres for the program. Much of it is in the prime north-central region, heart of the "prairie pothole" lands that extend into the Dakotas and Minnesota and constitute some of the best farmland in Iowa.

Farmers included in the program will grant perpetual easements that require that wetlands remain wetlands, regardless of future sales of the property. Tax responsibility remains with the farmer (although Iowa law allows for the exemption of wetlands). Owners will control hunting and fishing permission on the property; some are expected to rent out their wetlands as commercial hunting grounds.

It's a generous offer to get wetlands re-established on land once drained. Far more farmers than anticipated signed up. The goal the first year was to enroll 50,000 acres in nine states. Farmers in Iowa alone offered 45,000 acres. In all nine states, 466,000 acres were offered.

The rush to sign up for the program demonstrates both the need for the program and the willingness of farmers to participate in it.

The program should not only be preserved, it should be expanded to include farmers who have preserved wetlands on

their farms, as well as those farms where wetlands were drained and plowed. Under provisions of the program, the qualifying land must have been cropped for at least one year between 1986 and 1990.

Over the past century, Americans have destroyed wetlands at the rate of a million acres per year. Far fewer than half the acreage is left; just 2 percent of Iowa's wetlands remain.

Reclaiming all the wetland is impossible and irrational. Among other things, it

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would mean sacrificing the agricultural capacity of northern Iowa, some of the most productive land on the globe. In spring-times of the early 1800s, that land was a vast, shallow sea of marshes.

But the draining of wetlands has gone past that point at which it no longer makes sense. The capacity to produce crops already exceeds the need, which painfully weighs down the agricultural economy.

Alas, the House voted to eliminate the Wetlands Reserve Program in June.

The Senate is on the verge of following suit in a vote scheduled for today. An effort is expected on the Senate floor today to save the program. The proposal would be to cut \$100 million from the Market Promotion Program and shift it to the Wetlands Reserve Program.

The Market Promotion Program uses tax money to subsidize the overseas advertising budgets of major U.S. food corporations.

Restoring or saving a small portion of this nation's disappearing wetlands should be a far higher priority.

for his reputation as small deficits? This business of calling Democrats "tax-and-spend liberals" is a lie. The Republicans think if they repeat it often enough people will believe it. The truth is liberals have been pushing for a middle-class tax cut while Republican policies have resulted in higher taxes on the poor and middle class to finance big tax subsidies for the rich.

The near-dictatorial control of our federal government by conservatives the last 12 years, including six years when the Republicans held a majority in the Senate, has resulted in nearly \$4 trillion accumulated debt.

Ross Perot or Bill Clinton might be able to soften some of the damage, but thanks to the tax-borrow-and-spend conservative Republicans, we're going to eventually have a serious economic depression now no matter who is elected.

— Jay Miller,

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What analysts?

Columnist James Gannon ("Harsher Campaign Without Perot"), July 18 Essay/Comment, stated, "But the Perot move simplifies the race more for Bush than for Clinton, most analysts agree."

Most analysts agree? What type of analyst? Did Gannon survey all such analysts? I suspect not, and I question how he can positively assert "most analysts."

Many people reading the column will accept the words as fact and form opinions based on such statements.

Writers do help mold opinions, and in doing so, they should be more prudent.

— Woodrow W. Geery,

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Primary fault

The decline in influence of the political parties can in my opinion be charged to the open primary system. Because of this, many candidates, especially those in office, consider themselves above the party except to collect donations for their personal campaigns.

We now have elected officials who carry the party designation for their convenience but act and vote outside the party philosophy. This is not good.

I believe that we should return to the convention system of candidate selection and the appointment of U.S. senators by the governors and the legislatures. This would give the parties some reason for existence and establish a firm party-line program that would give some reason for separate parties.

The national conventions of both parties serve no useful purpose except to give some of the party stalwarts an outing away from home and the party leaders a chance to be heard and seen.

Technology and rapid communications have made the conventions an

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