

gathering became fair game for a poll. In Pennsylvania, one political aficionado kept a record of how many toasts were made to each candidate at a Fourth of July celebration. Newspapers began reporting such results. By early October of 1824, the *Star and North Carolina Gazette* had collected poll results from 155 different meetings. Surprisingly, Smith says, the straw polls

rather accurately foretold local results.

The ultimate irony is that popular opinion finally counted for little in 1824. Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, won a plurality of the popular vote but fell short of a majority in the Electoral College. The election was decided by the House of Representatives, which chose John Quincy Adams to be the sixth U.S. president.

### *Budget Magic?*

"Line-Item Veto: Where Is Thy Sting?" by John R. Carter and David Schap, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Spring 1990), 1313 21st Ave. So., Ste. 809, Nashville, Tenn. 37212.

In politics, old panaceas don't die or fade away. They just keep hanging on.

Such is the case of the line-item veto. First employed by the Confederacy, the presidential line-item veto has been proposed in more than 150 bills introduced in Congress since 1876. President George Bush, like his predecessor, frequently proclaims it the nation's fiscal elixir.

The remarkable thing, as Carter and Schap, both economists at College of the Holy Cross, peevishly note, is that governors in 33 states already possess the line-item veto, and although scholars have sliced and diced the data from these states every which way, no signs of budget magic have been detected. As long ago as 1950, Frank W. Prescott reported that governors armed with line-item veto power rarely even used it, and during the early 1980s,

the average was two item-vetoes annually.

Perhaps in exasperation, Carter and Schap take the hunt for the elusive line-item-veto effect further afield. If it is worth anything, they speculate, the veto should enhance the authority of governors. And that would be reflected in other ways, such as better chances of reelection or elevation to the U.S. Senate. But statistical tests of these and four other indicators reveal no impact.

Theoretically, the authors say, the line-item veto may keep state expenditures down by forcing legislators to tailor proposals to avoid rejection. However, there is very little evidence that this happens. The line-item veto, they write, "need not cause, and apparently has not caused, the kind of sweeping changes either feared or favored by so many policy analysts."

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## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

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### *Soviet Gaullism?*

"Inventing the Soviet National Interest" by Stephen Sestanovich, in *The National Interest* (Summer 1990), 1112 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Meeting with his staff in July 1988, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze announced a revolutionary change in policy. Mikhail Gorbachev had just revealed his plan to create a new legislature and thus to begin the redistribution of power within the Soviet Union. Now, Shevardnadze said, Soviet foreign policy would be reoriented as well. Henceforth, it would be guided by a new concept, the "national interest."

What sounds mundane to Western ears was revolutionary in Moscow, says Sestanovich, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. For decades, Soviet leaders had used the "national interest" as a term of contempt; Soviet foreign policy was guided by the need to advance the international class struggle.

After he came to power in 1985, Gorbachev spoke of a new foreign policy