

Congressional comments . . .

# Symms seeks to blur issue on 'nay' vote

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Members of the U.S. Congress and the Idaho Legislature often seek to confuse the issues by disseminating false information in explaining their votes and positions on certain issues.

Such was the case when U.S. Sen. Steve Symms, R-Idaho, said his vote against the proposed Ronald Reagan budget in Senate Budget Committee action last week "was a victory for Reagan, not a defeat as detractors of the president have claimed."

Symms has claimed to be one of the foremost supporters of Reagan and his economy and budget plans. His astonishing negative vote, which helped defeat the Reagan budget proposal, requires a closer look.

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Symms joined two other Republican conservatives to vote with a solid Democratic minority last week to reject Reagan's budget on a 12-8 vote. Joining Symms in this amazing action were two other Republicans, a freshman, Sen. Charles Grassley, Iowa; and a third-year colleague, Sen. Bill Armstrong, Colorado.

Symms glosses over his part in this vote by saying President Reagan, Budget Director David Stockman, and the committee chairman, Sen. Pete Domeniec, R-N.M., "have done a magnificent job so far, and in two weeks, when the Senate Budget Committee reconvenes, we will complete the job by giving the president additional cuts."

If Symms has been honest and given the true reason for his negative vote, rather than expounding rhetorics in saying it was a Reagan victory, it would have been acceptable.

**It would appear that Symms and the two conservative Republicans are so used to being in the opposition camp they are having troubles adjusting to a position in the majority party.**

It was amusing to see Symms join what he has often called the free-spending liberal Democrats

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in defeating the measure, although it was for entirely different reasons. The three Republican dissenters voted against projected deficits because they didn't like the projected \$53.8 billion deficit for 1982, but even more so the projection of a \$44.7 billion deficit in 1984. The Democrats voted against the budget because they felt the president wants to spend too much for defense but not enough for social programs.

Symms' ploy was so effective that even Carter Clews, director of communications for the Senate Conference Committee headed by Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, sent a letter substantiating Symms' views, but conveniently ignoring the adverse political effects.

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**It is no surprise that Republican leaders see the situation somewhat different than Symms in feeling it was a Reagan victory.**

The goal of Reagan and the Republican leaders was to rush the president's budget through the Senate, thus putting pressure on the House where the controlling Democrats have moved more cautiously in hopes Reagan's popular support would ebb.

With Congress heading into a two-week Easter recess, frustrated Republican congressmen close to the budget process said the Republicans have now done just what the Democrats have been trying to do. They have lost time.

It's quiet possible enough conservative House Democrats will join Republicans to push through a somewhat altered Reagan budget later in the session, according to Associated Press news dispatches from Washington.

**If this is the case, it is not to Symms' credit to shout "we won" when his actions brought a Reagan defeat. In fact, Symms' lone vote with the Democrats in the Senate Budget Committee was enough to defeat the Reagan proposal and delay budget approval by several weeks. Let him explain that.**