

There were two official Christmas tree lighting ceremonies in Washington last week. The more popular was in front of the White House with the president, first lady and their daughters flipping the light switch. The other was at the opposite end of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the U.S. Capitol. Norman Rockwell himself could not have painted a prettier scene than those two trees ablaze in lights.

For all the festive pageantry, I could not help but think about a third "Christmas tree" that popped up on Capitol Hill last Wednesday. However, unlike the National and U.S. Capitol Christmas trees, this display was hardly worthy of holiday cheer.

In the dead of night, as conservative lawmakers slept all nestled in their beds, Speaker Pelosi and her minions crafted a spectacle reminiscent of the stimulus and cap and trade bills of last year. Hammered out behind closed doors and whisked to the House floor just hours before a vote was a \$1 trillion stop gap budget bill crammed with all the federal spending for the entire government for the next 12 months.

Dubbed Speaker Pelosi's "Christmas tree" by conservatives for all the goodies tacked onto this budget monstrosity, the Democrat leadership's Continuing Resolution was opposed by every single Republican in the House, along with 35 Democrats. It still passed by a mere six votes and now heads to the Senate where lawmakers there are none too sure they will accept it.

If you will allow me to continue the Christmas metaphor, as many Americans are looking ahead to servings of turkey and ham in a few weeks, Congress is already feasting on lame duck; stuffed from one end to the other with anything and everything the outgoing liberal House leadership can make fit before they are forced from power in January.

Boasting that their lame duck budget banquet did not increase federal spending in 2011, House liberals failed to trumpet the fact that they shifted funds around to bolster some of their pet big government programs that would not have been funded otherwise.

One glaring example is a \$1.4 billion federal regulatory expansion into America's food economy. The House-passed 2011 appropriations measure would also impose more regulation on medium to small food producers and farmers while ignoring inefficiencies and failures in the current food safety monitoring system. More red tape and less streamlining will do little but drive up food prices and frustrate already over-regulated businesses.

It goes without saying that I voted against the Democrat stop-gap budget. I would have liked to have had the opportunity to vote on an alternative Republican-backed plan. Unfortunately, as she has done so many times before, Speaker Pelosi blocked all Republican amendments, denying conservatives a choice.

**DREAM Act a "Dream Come True" for Amnesty Backers:**

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Last week, House Democrats made good on their pledge to pass an amnesty bill during the lame duck session. The DREAM Act cleared the House by a 216 to 198 margin on December 8. I opposed this controversial legislation which opens the door to amnesty for illegal immigrants, beginning with their children.

Our country cannot afford to reward illegal behavior no matter how expedient it might be to a particular political party. The DREAM Act is one such example. It has been estimated that up to 1 million illegal aliens would be in line for amnesty if the DREAM Act becomes law – a goal of Speaker Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Reid and President Obama.

While the DREAM Act has been packaged by its supporters as narrowly focused on children who grew up in this country to illegal alien parents, the impact is, in fact, much broader. Illegal aliens up to age 29 would be eligible for amnesty, and more significant, once they achieve legal status they can begin the process to petition for other family members – a right already afforded those who come here legally.

Although the House has passed its version of the DREAM Act, a similar bill in the Senate is currently on hold. According to Senator Jeff Sessions, a leading opponent of this flawed bill, the DREAM Act does not require illegal alien children to have a high school diploma, a college degree or military service to receive amnesty. All they need is a GED and two years of college or trade school.

America is a nation of laws and our government loses its authority when our laws are disregarded and law-breaking is encouraged. Any attempt to afford amnesty to those who enter this country illegally is nothing short of a mockery of our laws and the millions of legal immigrants who follow the rules each year to work here and become citizens.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.