

tors. In December, for instance, a 17-month probe by Edward Stancik, an investigator for the New York City Public School District, found that teachers and administrators at 32 separate schools had helped students cheat on standardized tests by providing answers and, in some instances, by filling out the tests themselves. Administrators in the beleaguered district are under pressure to boost test scores, and 52 employees have been suspended pending a final investigation and evaluation by the schools chancellor.

Beyond ethical lapses, sometimes teachers just don't understand their own subjects. Ari Armstrong, a researcher with the Golden, Colorado-based Independence Institute, has faulted Colorado's school board for approving ambiguous and muddled math materials and tests.

As an example, Armstrong cites a sixth-grade worksheet on probability that declares, "An outcome which can happen has a probability of one." Armstrong notes that the statement is nonsensical, since it implies that anything that *can* happen *will* happen. Fully half the problems on the worksheet are impossible to solve as a result of missing conditions, leading Armstrong to declare: "The probability that a student will end up utterly confounded and frustrated by the exercise approaches 100%."

## Name Dropping

By Jacob Sullum

To police worried about hackers, con men, and other cyberspace menaces, the ability to conceal one's identity on the Internet is a

DATA

# More Than Anybody Wanted

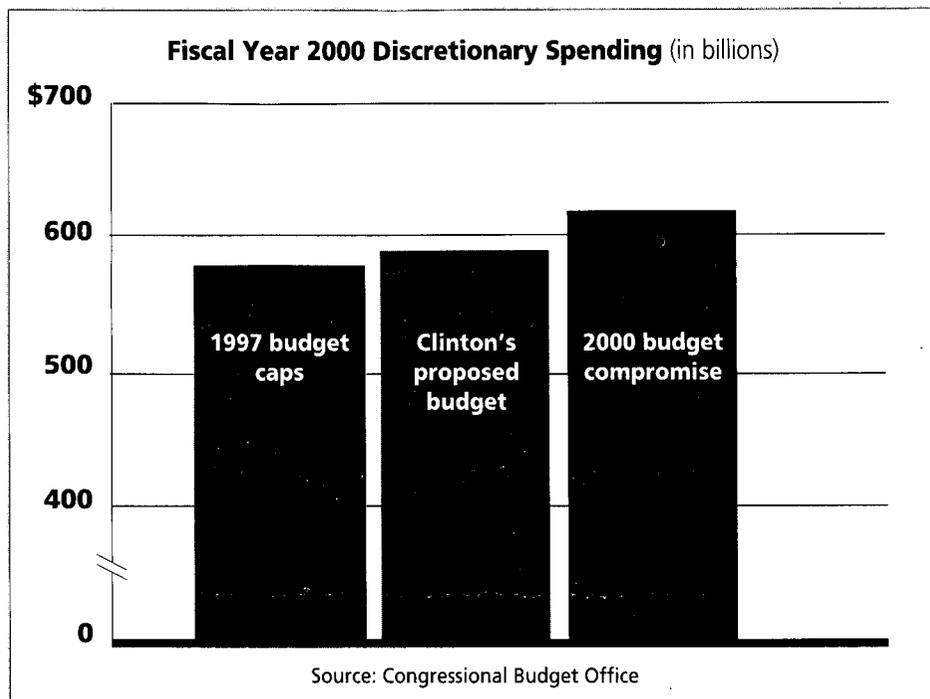
By Michael W. Lynch

The standard definition of a compromise is that each side gives up something to facilitate a deal. In Washington, however, compromise means that both sides get more than they originally asked for; only taxpayers are asked to give something up.

Consider last fall's budget compromise. Way back in 1997, the president and Congress agreed that in fiscal year 2000, the federal government would spend no more than \$580 billion from its discretionary accounts. No matter: President Clinton proposed spending \$592 billion. After much wrangling, Congress managed to get him to agree to spend a mere \$617 billion.

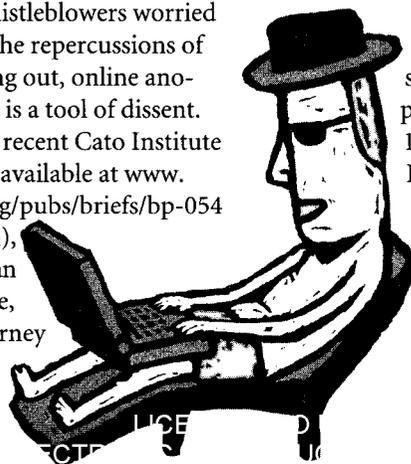
"This is how agreements are made in Washington," says Scott Hodge, a budget analyst at Citizens for a Sound Economy. "The president requests a level of spending, Congress approves a slightly lower amount, and after they negotiate they compromise at a higher level than even the president asked for."

This dynamic was on display in the agriculture research bill, which funds such worthy items as blueberry research and aquaculture studies. Clinton requested \$469 million, the Senate approved \$474 million, and they compromised at \$486 million. In the case of education, congressional leadership actually bragged that they spent \$1 billion more than the president requested.



tool of crime. But to critics and whistleblowers worried about the repercussions of speaking out, online anonymity is a tool of dissent.

In a recent Cato Institute paper (available at [www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-054.es.html](http://www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp-054.es.html)), Jonathan Wallace, an attorney and



software executive, notes that anonymous and pseudonymous speech has a rich pedigree. The 17th-century British writers John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, whose essays on liberty had a strong influence on the

Founders, called themselves "Cato" (the think tank's namesake). Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* was initially attributed simply to "an Englishman." The Federalists and Anti-Federalists debated each other under names such as "Publius" and "Candidus."

The U.S. Supreme Court has consistently recognized that the First Amendment protects the right to speak ▶

## BRICKBATS

◆ Irish censors have banned *In Dublin*, a mainstream magazine used by tourists and locals to find out what's happening in the city. The problem isn't the editorial content. It's the ads. The magazine has several small advertisements listing phone numbers for massage parlors and sex chat lines. The censors refuse to say exactly which ads they found offensive, which has left the publisher confused, since most of the ads also appear in other magazines that haven't been banned.

◆ Brazilian bikinis may be the tiniest in the world; many are just small scraps that could fit into an envelope. But there's still enough material there to depict the Brazilian flag. A Senate panel, aggrieved that the national symbol might appear near a woman's genitalia, has passed a bill outlawing the use of the flag on any item of underwear or clothing, especially the notorious "dental floss" swimsuits.

◆ Mayor Cecil Bjork of River Falls, Wisconsin, faces charges of disorderly conduct for allegedly grabbing reporter Sue Odegard in a bookstore and shaking her several times. Bjork was reportedly upset by an editorial cartoon.

◆ At a chess tournament on the Spanish island of Menorca, the players had to provide a urine sample for drug testing. Presumably, any player caught taking steroids was immediately disqualified.

—Charles Oliver

Henry Payne

THE SURGEON GENERAL REPORTS THAT 1 IN 5 AMERICANS IS CRAZY. CAN YOU GUESS WHICH ONE?



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• EMAIL: hpayne@detnews.com

without revealing one's identity, most recently in a 1995 decision overturning an Ohio ban on anonymous campaign leaflets. In 1997, a federal judge cited that case in overturning a Georgia law that made it a misdemeanor for senders of Internet messages to falsely identify themselves.

Yet opponents of Internet anonymity continue to argue that users should be compelled to give their names, either through a service provider's register or through information incorporated into data packets. They suggest that Web pages and e-mail messages, the contemporary equivalent of colonial pamphlets, do not deserve the same protection as that venerable form. Fortunately, the Supreme Court rejected that position when it overturned sections of the Communications Decency Act in 1997.

Aside from the constitutional problem, Wallace notes, attempts to ban anonymous Internet speech

face formidable technical obstacles. "Anonymity and pseudonymity are built into the architecture of the Net," he writes. "Legislators should

be particularly wary of laws requiring sweeping changes to communications technology in order to serve speech-restricting goals." ◆



☛ "A few nights ago, at a local outdoor rock concert, the strangest haze of smoke hung over the crowd. For anyone downwind who didn't happen to like the smell of pot, I guess that cloud would be pollution. To the freaks, it was pure ecstasy."

—Lanny Friedlander, "Ripping Off Mother Earth: The Theft of the Environment"

☛ "As Ralph Nader and other 'liberals' are painfully discovering, there seems to be a regular pattern in the history of [regulatory] agencies—they invariably come to represent and serve the special interests of the established companies in the industry supposedly being regulated."

—Robert Poole Jr., "Infinite Sink No More"

☛ "A political...philosopher ought to be able to tell a ruler how to accomplish any given purpose. Rulers, as it happens, have only one important characteristic in common: they want to keep the job. As it also happens, the most likely client for a political philosopher on the make is a ruler."

—Michael Etchison, "The Snow Turns Black in Moscow Too"