Where We Are At Year's End

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It's time to take a tally of where we are at year's end.

Although taxpayers' money is rolling into the U.S. Treasury at an unprecedented rate, we didn't get the tax cut Republicans promised. Bill Clinton says taxes shouldn't be cut because the people "might not spend it right"; we only hear about "targeted" cuts that might allow us to spend for government-designated purposes.

Clinton seems to be avoiding the blame for the shockingly inhumanitarian results of his "humanitarian" bombing of Yugoslavia. When the truth is finally known, the big majority of House Republicans will be able to take pride in their foresight in going on record against Clinton's war in Yugoslavia: 93% voted to require Congressional approval before sending in ground troops, 86% voted against the bombing, 80% voted against sending in peacekeeping troops, and 58% voted to withdraw the troops Clinton had already sent in.

But then Congress appropriated double the funds Clinton requested to pay for the war he had already waged. Congress called this spending to rebuild "defense" but it was actually spending for Clinton's offensive war.

The Republican Congress made progress in resisting Clinton's promise to the United Nations that he would put our country in a "web" of treaties. The Senate asserted itself by rejecting the dangerous Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Congress also put a crimp in Clinton's plans to implement unratified treaties such as the Global Warming (Hot Air) Treaty, which has never even been submitted to the Senate. The Omnibus Appropriations Act included a provision to forbid Clinton from proposing or issuing "rules, regulations, decrees, or orders for the purpose of implementation, or in preparation for implementation, of the Kyoto Protocol."

In the Omnibus Appropriations Act, Congress repealed the 1996 law federalizing driver's licenses by requiring them to contain a "machine- readable" Social Security number. Congress repealed this

requirement (which ought to be a state matter, anyway) but many states are going ahead as though the law were still on the books, some states even requiring fingerprinting to get a driver's license.

Getting rid of the federal agency that continues to fund obscene "art" with taxpayers' money should have been a no-brainer for the Republican Congress. Despite the latest outrage at the National Endowment for the Arts-funded Brooklyn Museum, whose current exhibit shows the Virgin Mary spattered with elephant dung and pornographic pictures, we got brave words but no cuts.

The Senate denounced this "religious bigotry" and the House condemned this "sacrilegious" exhibit. Then the Senate upped the NEA's budget by $5 million, but the House stood firm against an increase and kept NEA funding at "only" $98 million.

On the health care front, we heard more posturing about plans to impose more regulations and controls but no serious move to address the real reason why health insurance is expensive and so many millions don't have it. The fundamental problem is that the system is rigged so that, unless you have a job with an employer offering a good health plan, health insurance is difficult or sometimes impossible to obtain.

An essential part of Clinton's original plan for national health care was to control all treatment through the use of a medical ID card, called a "unique health identifier," for every American. The Omnibus Appropriations Act postponed the creation of these medical ID cards "until legislation is enacted specifically approving the standard."

However, Congress failed to enact medical privacy legislation. This tossed the ball to HHS Secretary Donna Shalala to issue medical privacy regulations.

The feds took another step toward a cradle-to-grave healthcare tracking system by requiring "all babies" born in hospitals to get a "hearing screening before leaving the birthing facility." This will input data on newborns into a federal database where the Centers for Disease Control can "promote the sharing of data."

Hillary Clinton's "village" mentality for child rearing is marching forward. The Treasury/Postal Appropriations bill allows federal agencies to help employees pay for child care if the children are cared for in a daycare facility, but not in the home.

Under a last-minute White House-Congress compromise, the United Nations gets nearly $1 billion in alleged back dues, and the "Mexico City Policy" was attached to funding for international family planning. However, Clinton was given the option of waiving the law, which would cause a mere 6% cut in the $385 million appropriation for foreign family planning, a $20 million penalty.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting was embarrassed by the scandal that this taxpayer financed agency was sharing its donor lists with Democratic fundraisers and pro-abortion groups. Congress wasn't embarrassed, however, and rewarded CPB with an additional $10 million, bringing its budget to $350,000,000.

On July 15, 134 Democrats joined 142 Republicans to give themselves a 3.4% cost-of-living raise, from $136,700 to $141,300 a year, not including medical and pension benefits and travel budgets. A parliamentary maneuver prevented a roll-call vote on the pay raise, so members cannot be held individually accountable.

Did they earn it? The voters will render their decision next November.