

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Senate fails its first AIDS test

The Senate failed its first test vote on requiring some mandatory testing of the population for the AIDS virus.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) had offered an amendment to the FY87 Supplemental Appropriation bill, S. 1827, which would have required mandatory AIDS tests for immigrants, and withheld new funds for AIDS victims from states that did not test applicants for marriage licenses. The amendment failed by a vote of 63 to 32 on May 21.

Both Helms and the leading opponent of his proposal, Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.), pushed for a vote on the measure, despite the screams from colleagues who objected to being forced to take a stand on the issue. "This is panic; this is really panic," Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) pleaded, in trying to avoid a vote. "This is no way to decide matters of life and death; it really isn't."

The key saboteur of the measure was Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), who claimed it was the President's responsibility to set policy and that a vote on the issue was premature. Dole asked what the result of false positives on the AIDS test would be. "Will jobs be lost, careers destroyed, families disrupted all for the sake of a false positive result?" Dole asked.

The House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, meanwhile, is preparing to hold hearings beginning in June on the issue of testing. Only witnesses invited by the subcommittee, which is chaired by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), a leading proponent of the "civil rights" of the virus, will be allowed to testify. Waxman and Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) are

expected to introduce testing legislation shortly.

House passes defense authorization

The House passed the Defense Authorization bill, H.R. 1748, on May 20, by a vote of 239 to 177, but not before doing some more damage to the nation's defenses.

An amendment offered by Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) which prohibits the use of funds for conducting nuclear tests with a yield greater than one kiloton, provided that the Soviet Union halts testing and agrees to the installation of in-country monitoring equipment, passed by a vote of 234 to 187 on May 19.

Rep. William Broomfield (R-Mich.) read a letter from Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, indicating that this testing moratorium imposed by the House directly contradicted its earlier votes in favor of development of the Midgetman missile and the D-5 missile, to be deployed on the Trident submarines, and would interfere with safety and security measures for existing warheads. But an amendment submitted by Broomfield to allow testing, if the President determined that the ban interfered with the development of these systems, went down to a 220 to 201 defeat.

The House also adopted an amendment sponsored by Reps. George Brown (D-Calif.) and Larry Coughlin (R-Pa.) imposing a test moratorium on anti-satellite weapons against objects in space, as long as the Soviet Union refrains from such testing. The vote was 229 to 188.

Rep. William Dickinson (R-Ala.) argued against this amendment, point-

ing out that the Soviets "do not need to test anymore. They are already deployed. . . . We have just approved the building of two new carriers, yet we are debating whether or not to deny ourselves the ability to defend these and other carrier groups against Soviet satellite surveillance that will pinpoint their locations," he warned.

Also adopted were restraints on deployment of U.S. troops in Central America, similar to those adopted last year, and an amendment by Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) barring the withdrawal of U.S. chemical munitions from Europe unless they are replaced with binary chemical munitions stationed on the soil of at least one European NATO member nation.

Campaign finance reform faces filibuster

Efforts to force quick passage of public financing of Senate campaigns are expected to run into a Senate filibuster, which backers may not be able to break. A campaign finance reform bill, S. 2, sponsored by Sens. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) and David Boren (D-Okla.), has already been sent to the full Senate.

A test vote on the issue came as Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) attempted to transfer \$100 million earmarked for public financing to the Veterans Administration. Although losing by a vote of 50 to 48 on May 6, the result indicated that Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.V.), a key backer of public financing of campaigns, will have a difficult task rounding up 60 senators to cut off a filibuster. Sens. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Mitch

McConnell (R-Ky.) are all reportedly prepared to filibuster the bill to death.

Republican objections to S. 2, which has been passed out of the Senate Rules Committee by an 8 to 3 vote, are fundamental opposition to public financing of campaigns.

One provision of the public financing would substitute tax dollars for private financing of high-cost campaigns. This would mean that a candidate who has refused public financing would have minimal legal restraints, in terms of private funds raised, but a candidate who has accepted public financing audits would be able to exceed those spending ceilings with public funds if necessary, to keep up with a big-spending, privately financed rival.

Another provision requires that a candidate raise a quarter of a million dollars or more which is not matched, to qualify for matching funds. Such levels are far in excess of even presidential campaign requirements.

The House Administration Subcommittee on Elections will begin hearings on campaign finance reform on May 21, and get to public witnesses sometime in June.

Helms, Wallop: Abrogate the ABM Treaty

Senators Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) have urged that the United States abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in order to protect its "supreme national security interests."

A pullout from the ABM Treaty would cut short the bruising months-long Senate debate—and then filibuster—which have held hostage the De-

fense Authorization bill.

Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) temporarily abandoned his effort to end the filibuster blocking consideration of the defense bill, saying he would let the President put some muscle behind the bill if he wants to. Byrd failed for the third time on May 20 to get the 60 votes necessary to end the filibuster.

"The public should now be aware that the CIA has evidence that the Soviets have actually privately admitted and boasted to themselves that their Krasnoyarsk radar violates the ABM Treaty . . . and they will have an operational nationwide ABM defense within a year or even less," Helms warned on April 8. "The chilling impact of this new information is that the Soviets will soon be able to use their overwhelming strategic offensive first strike capability, combined with their emerging monopoly on nationwide ABM defense, for nuclear blackmail."

"This senator would favor providing the Soviet Union with notice under the terms of the treaty for eventual withdrawal" from the ABM Treaty, Wallop said on May 20. "This country is going to have to decide whether its safety lies in defense or its safety lies in lying belly up to the Soviet Union."

"While we engage in our irrelevant debate, we are allowing the Soviets to lock in the final one sided prohibition on the U.S. SDI," Helms said. "This one-sided prohibition is all the Soviets need to obtain overall offensive and defensive strategic supremacy for all time, to obtain the capacity for nuclear blackmail and world domination that comes with such military supremacy. . . . Near-term deployment of SDI is absolutely essential to American national security."

House approves FSLIC package as bailouts loom

The House approved H.R. 27, a \$5 billion, two-year package to recapitalize and prop up the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corp. (FSLIC) on May 5, and went into conference with the Senate which has passed a \$7.5 billion package. The debate over the merits of a larger \$15 billion, five-year package, versus the smaller one finally approved, was replete with warnings from both sides that several institutions are begging for federal bailouts to stay afloat.

"We are currently witnessing a race to the Treasury between the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, in by far the biggest and deepest trouble, with a deficit estimated to be \$35 billion to \$45 billion," Rep. Stan Parris (R-Va.) warned during debate; "by the Farmers Home Administration, estimated to have a need of \$8 billion; by the Pension Guarantee Fund, the Maritime Commission and two or three other government agencies—all in the race to the federal Treasury to get thier hands on public funds to keep from getting in deeper financial trouble. All at the same time."

Both sides argued that their package was necessary to avoid use of federal funds. Advocates of the smaller amount argued that \$15 billion in additional obligations placed on the healthy S&Ls would bankrupt them. For the fourth quarter of 1986, 24% of S&Ls lost \$3.2 billion, \$500 million more than the profits made by the 74% of the industry which is healthy.

Advocates of the larger package pointed out that the FSLIC currently needs \$26 billion to settle accounts. But despite the switch of Speaker Wright behind the larger package, it went down to a 153 to 258 defeat.