

## **Congressional Closeup** by William Jones and Carl Osgood

### **Tougher anti-abortion language adopted**

After a heated five-hour debate on abortion in a rare Saturday session on Aug. 5, the Senate voted 50-44 to approve a stricter abortion ban in legislation regulating health insurance for federal employees.

The House had passed a bill that permitted federal insurance to cover only abortions necessary to save the mother's life, but the likelihood of such an extreme measure passing in the Senate was very small indeed. There, a measure proposed by Don Nickles (R-Okla.) that was similar to the House measure, failed to garner a majority.

Nickles then put forward an amendment with language that would also permit abortions in the cases of rape or incest, thus broadening support for the bill, and bringing on board three Democrats and five Republicans who had voted no on the more restrictive language in the House measure.

### **Missile defense proposal challenges ABM Treaty**

The Republican-controlled Senate beat back attempts to keep an anti-ballistic missile defense program within the bounds of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and adopted the Senate Armed Services Committee proposal to add \$300 million to the \$371 million requested by the Clinton administration for missile defense. The money was explicitly provided to speed the development of a multiple-site missile defense system to protect U.S. cities from missile attack. The committee stipulated that the system should be deployed by the year 2003.

According to the 1972 treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union could only have one ABM site each.

The bill would also mandate a demarcation between regional defenses permitted by the ABM Treaty and strategic systems banned by the treaty. "We should work with Russia to move to a situation in which both we and Moscow can defend our peoples against limited missile attacks," said William Cohen (R-Me.), a supporter of the bill.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher indicated that the Senate measure could "put the U.S. on a path to abrogate the ABM Treaty." The Defense Department has expressed concern that such a move might endanger Russian ratification of the START I and START II (strategic arms limitation) treaties. The administration has threatened to veto the legislation.

### **Republicans attempt to dismantle Commerce Dept.**

Hearings were held by the House International Relations Committee on Aug. 4 to deal with two pieces of legislation that together would totally dismantle the U.S. Department of Commerce. The legislation, sponsored by Dick Chrysler (R-Mich.), would farm out some Commerce functions to other departments, with export licensing being transferred to the State Department, and the International Trade Administration to be absorbed by the U.S. Trade Representative. Other functions would be eliminated entirely, such as the Office of International Economic Policy, Economic Development Administration, the Minority Business Development Agency, and the Technology Administration.

On the other hand, the Trade Reorganization Act, introduced by John Mica (R-Fla.), would transform the U.S. Trade Representative into a cabinet-level United States Office of

Trade, which would focus exclusively on trade.

These measures would sabotage efforts of the Clinton administration to establish peace in areas such as Northern Ireland and the Middle East, in which the department, under Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, has played a key role in encouraging private investment in those war-torn areas as the basis for reconstruction and lasting peace. Further, the measure would also cripple economic cooperation with key countries such as Russia and China, where Commerce has played a central role in fostering cooperation. The President has indicated he would oppose any attempt to dismantle the department.

### **Bring Taiwan into U.N., say House Republicans**

The House International Relations Committee on Aug. 3 held a hearing on a resolution sponsored by Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.) expressing the sense of Congress that the U.S. government should support and encourage the entry of Taiwan into the United Nations. The proposal is part of a strategy aimed at maximally antagonizing the Chinese government in Beijing.

Committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) opened the hearings by complaining about the behavior of China and the failure of the State Department to make dialogue with China anything more than a "one-way endeavor." Gilman said that this failure compelled Congress to ask "if Taiwan's time has come" to be recognized by the world's community of nations. "Now is the time," he said, "to help our friends on the island of Taiwan who have been waiting far too long to respond to their aspirations at home."

Most of the other committee members, including Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), Bob Torricelli (D-N.J.), and Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), gushed praise for Solomon's resolution, as well as for the \$80 billion in foreign exchange reserves held by Taiwan, and had only harsh rhetoric for the Beijing government.

The only committee members who expressed reservations were Doug Bereuter (R-Neb.) and Jay Kim (R-Calif.), both of whom pointed out that Taiwan's entry into the U.N. would require the cooperation of Beijing—cooperation that would definitely not be forthcoming. Bereuter noted that the resolution, if passed, "will only aggravate the downward spiral of U.S.-China relations."

## Senate GOPers pan Clinton war on drugs

In an 11th-hour reversal of an incredibly stupid proposal, the Senate on Aug. 5 restored \$9.3 million in funding to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The House had deleted the funding in its version of the Treasury, Postal Service, and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill, claiming the White House had a "do-nothing" drug policy.

In light of the recent dramatic arrests of key figures of the Colombian Cali Cartel, especially, the claim is ludicrous. The Clinton administration, as noted by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), has succeeded in persuading the Colombian government "to take a more aggressive stand against the cocaine cartels."

Nevertheless, Republicans have trying to eliminate the White House Office of Drug Policy. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) claimed that casual drug use dropped by more than half between 1977 and 1992, but that "un-

der President Clinton's leadership, we are losing ground." "Over the past two years, almost every available indicator shows that these gains have either stopped or been reversed," ranted Hatch.

During an election year, the Republicans will have a difficult time explaining how eliminating that office is being "tough on drugs."

## Simpson would privatize Social Security system

On Aug. 2, Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), chairman of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy, held a hearing to consider the advantages of "privatizing" Social Security. With these hearings, he has gone one step further in targeting the elderly to bear the brunt of Republican "budget austerity."

Simpson said that the complete privatization of the Social Security system is an idea that "deserves" consideration. He introduced as witnesses two individuals, Steve Enten of the Institute for the Study of the Economics of Taxation and Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute, who called outright for the full privatization of the system.

Simpson is also the key player in attempting to dismantle the Association for the Advancement of Retired Persons, the largest lobby organization for the elderly in the country. Simpson prided himself on being the only Republican who is saying, "in a bipartisan way," that Social Security "is not off the table." Simpson claims that the deficit and debt ceiling issues can't be dealt with unless "we deal with an item of \$360 billion," the amount of the Social Security fund.

Enten called Social Security a "tax transfer system" that has been responsible for reducing the income of the working population. It must be "re-

placed by a private system of savings," he said, that puts funds into private plans. He said that it was preferable for private plans to invest in stocks rather than government bonds. Enten endorsed the Chile model, in which workers' mandatory contributions are used to prop up Chile's financial system, with the qualification that he "wouldn't want to see the entire Chilean system adopted."

Tanner called privatization of Social Security "the only viable alternative" to the current system, because private investments "produce higher rates of return."

Also testifying was Matthew Fink of the Investment Company Institute, of the mutual fund industry, which would benefit from the Simpson proposals.

## Anti-terrorism bill stalled in House

The anti-terrorism bill that the Clinton administration crafted shortly after the Oklahoma City bombing, which the President asked to have on his desk for signing by Memorial Day, is not likely to arrive before Labor Day.

The Senate approved its version of the bill two months ago, but the legislation has been bogged down in the House, held up by conservative Republicans, who feel, in the words of Thomas Ewing (Ill.), "the bill goes too far in granting new powers to the federal government at the expense of civil liberties."

Forty-three Republicans have written House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) complaining of the legislation. The anti-terrorism legislation was endorsed by the Judiciary Committee six weeks ago, but has been delayed in getting to the floor because of the workload, according to Hyde.