

## Congressional Closeup by Carl Osgood

### China-WTO Vote Not a Sure Thing, Archer Warns

In his opening remarks at a hearing of the House Ways and Means Committee on May 3, committee chairman Bill Archer (R-Tex.) warned against the reported optimism of the White House on the vote on Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) for China. He pointed out that the top two House Democratic leaders are “devoting enormous amounts of energy working toward its defeat.” For this reason, he said, “I am at least as concerned today as I was four weeks ago about our prospects for winning this historic vote.” He also expressed concern about the content of any potential side agreements that may be negotiated to gain votes for the PNTR bill. “We have to make sure,” he said, “that whatever we do . . . is not trade restrictive and should apply to China only.”

Sander Levin (D-Mich.), a key figure involved in negotiating side agreements, described the outline for the framework that he has been working on, which has three goals: first, “to maximize benefits to U.S. businesses and workers and farmers from China’s accession into WTO [World Trade Organization].” This means providing strong monitoring and enforcement of China’s compliance with the agreement.

The second, is to “minimize potential downsides from growing and more intense competition—and there will be, with a country where free markets and the rule of law are still in early stages of development.” This means legislating the “strong anti-import surge” protection built into the U.S.-China agreement.

Third, is to “keep the heat on China when it comes to human rights and other dimensions of our relationship.” This would be done by establishing a Congressional-Executive commis-

sion, modelled on the U.S. Helsinki Commission, to provide ongoing monitoring of human rights and other issues in China.

Levin’s proposed framework was endorsed by both Archer and Bill Thomas (R-Calif.). Archer called Levin’s efforts “constructive”; Thomas, also a PNTR supporter, said that while there might still be some disagreements on particular language to be used, “there are a number of areas on which we can work.”

### West Nile Virus Prompts Calls for More Funding

On May 5, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), and Rep. Joe Crowley (R-N.Y.) announced at a press conference that they will ask for an additional \$15 million to combat the West Nile River virus that first made its appearance in New York City last summer. Of this amount, \$5 million would be an emergency appropriation for fiscal year 2000 (in addition to \$5 million already spent), and \$10 million would go into the fiscal 2001 budget.

Motivating the call for more funding is the finding by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, that the virus, which caused 62 people to fall ill and killed 7 in last summer’s outbreak, survived the winter in hibernating mosquitos and larvae.

Lowey explained that the additional money would go to the CDC, and would be spent for preventing an outbreak, epidemic control measures, and for researching the side-effects of virus control measures, such as mosquito eradication. “If we don’t move quickly,” she said, “we’ll lose the opportunity to cut this virus down in its tracks.”

Schumer noted that the CDC initially misdiagnosed the virus. “We can’t afford that again,” he said. “We can’t afford not to know” how the disease spreads and how to eradicate it. “We need these funds to make sure that this summer does not bring another deadly outbreak. . . . If we want to truly eliminate this virus, we need to do more than kill the infected mosquitos. We need to figure out the cause and work to eradicate the outbreak so that it does not return in future years or spread to other places.”

### Trafficant Attacks DOJ-FBI Corruption

Rep. James Traficant (D-Ohio), who is the target of a Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation, attacked FBI corruption on at least two occasions recently. On May 2, during a one-minute speech, Traficant claimed that he has evidence that “certain FBI agents” in his home district in Youngstown, Ohio are violating the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations statute, by stealing Federal cash money that is vouchered to pay informants—which the FBI agents also failed to report on their tax returns. Additionally, these agents “suggested” to one of their field operatives, that he should commit a murder.

Traficant called on the House to pass a bill that he introduced on March 28 to establish a “Fair Justice Administration,” an independent Executive agency that would have the authority to “investigate and prosecute any alleged misconduct, criminal activity, corruption, or fraud by an officer or employee of the Department of Justice.”

On May 4, during a hearing of the Oversight, Investigations, and Emergency Management Subcommittee of

the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Traficant charged the DOJ and the FBI with interfering in the proceedings of the subcommittee with respect to a bill he and subcommittee chairman Tillie Fowler (R-Fla.) have introduced, to establish a White House office to coordinate training programs for local fire and emergency services agencies, and to develop a national strategy for defending against terrorist attacks. He accused the DOJ of trying to "limit open and honest discussion" on the bill by directly attempting to influence the testimony of witnesses. The bill is widely supported by state and local fire and emergency management officials, who complain of duplication and a lack of coordination among Federal agencies that have responsibilities regarding potential terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, but the DOJ opposes it. Traficant said that if the evidence warrants it, he'll call for a grand jury investigation into the DOJ for interference in the subcommittee's activities.

Traficant later said that, when it comes to cooperating with state and local officials to prevent terrorism, the DOJ doesn't want anyone on its turf. It has never released any of the funds Congress has appropriated for such purposes, and it does not share relevant intelligence information on potential terrorist threats against the United States with local officials.

## **Africa Trade Conference Report Passes House**

On May 4, the House passed, by a vote of 309-110, the conference report on the Africa-Caribbean trade bill, now entitled the Trade and Development Act of 2000. Trade Subcommittee Chairman Phil Crane (R-Ill.) claimed that the conference report "encourages

the development of an African textile and apparel industry and regional integration through the provision of duty-free and quota-free treatment of up to 3.5% of the U.S. apparel imports" over the next eight years. The bill is also supposed to redress the negative economic impact that the North American Free Trade Agreement has had on Caribbean nations, which, said Crane, represent a larger market for U.S. exports than China.

Only Robin Hayes (R-N.C.), who comes from a big textile state, spoke against the bill. "This bill will imperil the livelihood of thousands of U.S. textile workers," he said. He reported that last year alone, the U.S. textile industry lost more than 180,000 jobs. "This agreement represents the willingness to trade away American jobs for cheap goods," he said. "It creates the opportunity for massive fraud, turning Sub-Saharan Africa into a transshipment superhighway," which the Customs Service is ill-equipped to deal with.

International Relations Committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), a supporter of the bill, admitted that it will have an impact on the U.S. textile industry. He said, "Very careful monitoring and oversight will be needed by the Congress to make certain [that] preferential trade treatment for apparel imports . . . does not further displace our American workers."

## **Senate Begins Debate on Education Bill**

For the first time in six years, the Senate has revisited the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, originally passed in the 1960s, for re-authorization. However, the bill that emerged from the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will not im-

prove bipartisanship in the Senate. Rather, what started out as a bipartisan bill, has ended up as the centerpiece of the GOP's education agenda, and the process that resulted in that has Democrats fuming.

While there are many programs in the 920-page bill that are supported by Democrats, such as drug-free schools and programs that facilitate bringing Internet connections into schools, what peeved the Democrats so much is the emphasis in the bill on block grant programs, which have only played a small role in Federal education programs until now. During debate on May 3, Patty Murray (D-Wash.) accused the GOP majority of experimenting "with things that have no record of producing results for students." She said that block grants would hurt disadvantaged students, would reduce accountability for student achievement, and would mean less money for the classroom.

Republicans said that their approach is needed because Federal money spent on education since 1965, now about \$15 billion per year, has proven ineffective. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) asserted, "Generation after generation of children have been put through a system that has not allowed them to achieve." The GOP argued that block grants would allow states and local school districts "flexibility, innovation, and creativity," by allowing them to spend the Federal money as they see fit.

Democrats scoffed at the notion that Federal funding could be the cause of all the problems in education that the Republicans point out, because Federal funding makes up only about 6% of total education spending. However, several amendments sponsored by Democrats to redress what they saw as deficiencies were defeated on party-line votes.