

## Congressional Closeup by Carl J. Osgood

### House passes population awareness resolution

In a procedure that took less than five minutes, the House on Sept. 30 passed a joint resolution designating the week of Oct. 23, 1994 as World Population Awareness Week. The resolution was passed by voice vote without any apparent objection.

In floor remarks in support of the resolution, Connie Morella (D-Md.) blamed excessive population growth for almost every major crisis in the world. "Overpopulation is an issue touching nearly every aspect of our lives, including unemployment, immigration, disease, hunger and ecological degradation," she said.

"Rapid population growth fuels tensions and instability, as hopelessness and desperation arise from rapid urbanization, lack of government services, unemployment, and declining public health standards," she added.

### Banking bill may open new trade war

The House passed the "National Treatment in Banking Act of 1994" on Sept. 30, to open up foreign financial markets to U.S. banks. The bill would authorize the Treasury Department to assess the treatment of U.S. banks operating in foreign countries, and to retaliate against banks of foreign countries that are perceived to be treating U.S. banks unfairly, denying them the right to operate in the United States.

Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) said the bill "expands the notion of financial services. It is not protectionist, but quite the opposite. It provides our government tools to open up foreign markets that have not been fair to us."

Douglas Bereuter (R-Neb.) described the bill as providing U.S. negotiators in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade talks, "the tools and

negotiating leverage to accomplish this important task" (a level playing field for U.S. financial institutions in world markets) despite the fact that there was no agreement on trade in financial services in the last stages of the Uruguay round negotiations.

### Murtha: Media are endangering U.S. troops

John Murtha (D-Pa.), chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, who led a delegation of House members to Haiti on Oct. 1-2, said media "distortions" of the situation in the country "are starting to change the mission" by putting pressure on U.S. troops to become involved in dangerous confrontations, Associated Press reported on Oct. 4.

Murtha said depictions of violence are "like looking at the country through a straw."

### Foley opposes setting withdrawal date on Haiti

House Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.) said at a press conference on Oct. 3 that Congress should not set a date for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Haiti. However, he said, there is a need for Congress to debate the issue. As of Oct. 5, it was not clear if the House would take up a resolution before it adjourned.

"I believe it is wrong to set a date because there is a tendency then for those that might oppose and even confront our troops in Haiti to attempt to wait them out or attempt to stimulate acts of violence against them in order to push the date forward and so on," Foley said. He acknowledged that there is a strong feeling in the House that there should be a definite date set and that there should have been an authorization from the Congress before

the troops were sent in.

Even though U.S. forces went in peacefully, "there is still that sense that the issue itself of our presence in Haiti justifies some action by Congress, some expression by them as to the right of Congress to act, particularly prior to the use of any military force in combat," he said.

### Whitewater hearings unlikely this year

Sens. Donald Riegle (D-Mich.) and Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) said after meeting with Special Counsel Kenneth Starr on Sept. 29, that they will delay further congressional hearings on the so-called Whitewater affair involving President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton in order to protect Starr's investigation. The Senate Banking Committee, which Riegle chairs and on which D'Amato is the senior Republican, held two weeks of hearings in July and August.

The two had wanted to hold hearings on the removal of papers from the White House office of the late deputy counsel Vincent Foster, but Starr "informed us that his investigative work is ongoing," they said in a statement.

### Lantos wants indefinite boycott of Iraq

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) implied that the economic embargo against Iraq should be continued indefinitely, during a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing with Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Robert Pelletreau on Oct. 4 (see *Feature*).

Lantos said, in a sarcastic reference to an assessment by one of Pelletreau's predecessors just prior to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait: "I don't anticipate an invasion immi-

nently, but what I do anticipate is the continued chipping away by Iraq of the policy of sanctions. . . . And if in fact the forces that move toward lifting the sanctions prevail and Iraq again will be able to sell oil on a large scale, one does not need to be a nuclear scientist to understand that they will go headlong for rebuilding their weapons of mass destruction."

## **Schumer, Lantos maneuver on status of Jerusalem**

Reps. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) tried to corner Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Robert Pelletreau on the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, in hearings on Oct. 4 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Lantos complained that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is attempting to hold meetings in Jerusalem with Israeli and U.S. officials. He asked Pelletreau "whether the Clinton administration fully supports the principle behind the law concerning Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel and the fact that no discussion of that matter can take place during this transitional period."

Pelletreau said that "we [the administration] support and agree with the agreement in the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestinians that Jerusalem will be a final status question and a final status issue. We are not ourselves going to take any positions that are inconsistent with that. It is true that there have been some meetings in Jerusalem between Israelis and Palestinians as agreed to by the two parties, and when that occurs, I don't think it's the position of the United States that we should object to that." Pelletreau assured Lantos that the United States does "not have meetings on assistance matters with

members of the Palestinian authority in Jerusalem."

Schumer complained that the Palestinians have "tried to actively create symbols of sovereignty over Jerusalem . . . by coordinating PLO activity from Jerusalem" and by "attempting to hold official meetings with foreign diplomats."

Both Schumer and Lantos are close to the Anti-Defamation League in the United States which is allied with the anti-Middle East peace factions in Israel.

## **Report on D'Amato stock transactions covered up**

Sen. Alfonse ("Mr. Ethics") D'Amato (R-N.Y.), in line to become chairman of the Senate Banking Committee if the GOP gains a majority in the November elections, is party to a court-ordered report describing questionable stock dealings which is being quashed by the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Oct. 1 *Washington Post* reported. The SEC is overseen by the Banking Committee.

D'Amato traded stock through Long Island-based Stratton Oakmont Inc. in the summer of 1993. The firm was fined a multimillion-dollar penalty in February for defrauding investors and manipulating stock prices. Additionally, the firm's two top executives were banned from the securities field for life and were ordered to hire a special consultant to study the firm's business practices. That report contains the information on D'Amato's dealings. The SEC has failed to reply to several Freedom of Information Act requests by news organizations to make the report public.

Unnamed SEC sources said the report hasn't been released due to objections by Stratton Oakmont and the SEC's fear of offending D'Amato.

Stratton Oakmont attorney Ira Sorkin confirmed that the firm "raised certain legal issues" about release of the report, although he would not discuss either its contents or the legal arguments for secrecy.

## **Brown: Getting aid to Russia is unsuccessful**

"Getting U.S. aid to Russia has been extremely frustrating and highly unsuccessful," Rep. George Brown (D-Calif.) stated in a roundtable discussion with reporters on Sept. 26, on the eve of President Clinton's summit meeting in Washington with Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

While \$400 million from the NASA budget had been voted by Congress a couple of years ago, "I know Russia never got the money," Brown said in response to a question from a *21st Century Science & Technology* magazine reporter on aid to Russian science programs. Brown said that he has told President Clinton that the biggest problem is to get the Congress to actually *release* the money it appropriates. Brown said that he thought the space station agreement would "provide a flow of funding" for the Russians, and that we might start to see some "overall impact."

Recently, Brown announced that one of his initiatives, a U.S.-Russian Science Foundation to fund joint research projects, would finally receive government funding to begin work. The purpose of endowing a separate foundation, even though it is government-funded, is to "make it immune to the vagaries of annual budget appropriations," he explained. The work of the foundation is similar to programs with Israel and Mexico, he said. In the Israeli case, the interest from the funds supports cooperative programs and supplements other forms of aid.