

Congressional Closeup by Carl Osgood

Budget Clash with White House Intensifies

After four days into fiscal year 2001, Congress and the White House have found little agreement in the appropriations process. To buy time, the Congress passed a continuing resolution on Sept. 28, extending Federal funding until Oct. 6, which was signed into law by President Clinton on Sept. 29. However, given that little progress would be made in that timeframe, the House on Oct. 3 passed a second continuing resolution, this one running until Oct. 14, more than a week after the original Oct. 6 target adjournment.

Meanwhile, two spending bills, the Energy and Water Development bill and the Interior Department appropriations bill, made it out of conference committee and to floor votes. While House and Senate conferees reached an agreement on the Interior bill that President Clinton could endorse, the Energy and Water bill faces a veto. Clinton objects to a provision that prohibits the Fish and Wildlife Service from changing the flow of the lower Missouri River to a "more natural" state.

Republicans are looking forward to that veto. House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) told reporters on Sept. 28, "It would make our day if he loses Missouri to Bush." The veto could also impact the Missouri Senate race, where Gov. Mel Carnahan (D) is attempting to unseat John Ashcroft (R). Carnahan and other Missouri Democrats back the provision.

Other bills nearing action include the Transportation and Agriculture bills. The conference report on the Transportation bill was reported out on Oct. 3, but the Agriculture bill is bogged down in negotiations on sanctions reform. It also faces problems from Senate Democrats who are angry over the fact that while both houses passed the bill in July, the House didn't appoint conferees until Sept. 28, pre-

venting any official conference committee meetings until then.

Zinni, Perle Clash Over Iraq Policy

Gen. Anthony Zinni, recently retired as commander of U.S. Central Command, came into conflict with one of Republican Presidential candidate George W. Bush's "Vulcans" (as his foreign policy advisers are known), during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Sept. 28. The hearing also heard from Richard Perle, another Bush foreign policy adviser, and former UN Special Commission chairman Richard Butler. Zinni reiterated his view, that the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA) is not a tenable policy.

Perle told the committee, "It is increasingly clear that the only solution to the danger posed by Saddam Hussein is a sustained, determined plan to remove him from power." He called on the United States to support, alone or with others, the "nascent opposition" to the regime of Saddam, including the equipping of opposition forces and the use of air power to support them. He accused Zinni of mischaracterizing all such policies as "short little quickie solutions."

Zinni replied that an opposition force such as that contemplated in the ILA not only would not succeed in toppling the government in Baghdad, but that such a "half-baked scheme" would also fall to the U.S. military to handle. "When this law was being considered here," he said, "and these schemes were being designed, they were being done in a back room," and no U.S. military officers, including the commander of Central Command, were consulted on their feasibility. Zinni clarified that he was in favor of "credible" support to the opposition, but warned against a "Bay of Pigs that could turn into a Bay of Goats."

A demonstration of the ill-will that Zinni has earned from Congressional Republicans, is their handling of the nomination of Larry Pope, a career foreign service officer who last served as Zinni's political adviser, to be U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait. According to the Oct. 3 *Washington Post*, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) is refusing to consider the nomination because Pope is associated with Zinni's views.

Procedural Gridlock Threatens Senate

Senate Democrats, who have been complaining for years about how Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) has been running the Senate and their inability to bring items to the floor, are finding that partisanship has been getting increasingly bitter since the August recess.

Indicative was the lengthy process by which a bill to increase quotas for non-immigrant workers in certain high-tech sectors of the economy was handled. The bill was subject to repeated delays and cloture votes before it finally came to a vote, passing on Oct. 3 by a vote of 96-1.

To dramatize the point, on Sept. 27 Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) moved to suspend Senate rules so that an amendment supported by the Democrats could be voted on. The amendment, the Hispanic and Immigrant Fairness Act, would update immigration law to treat all refugees from all Central American and Caribbean countries equally, rather than giving Cubans and Nicaraguans special treatment. Daschle complained that the Republicans had used Senate rules to prevent a vote on the amendment so that they wouldn't have to explain to Hispanic and immigrant voters why they voted against it. The Senate rejected his motion by a vote of 55-43.