

National News

Will Senate Agenda Shift to Policy?

In a press conference June 9, Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said that the Democrats want to focus on a substantive agenda—Social Security, defense, jobs, and energy—but they are being prevented from doing so. The Senate has spent two months dealing with five judicial appointments, Reid said—“all of whom have jobs”—while doing nothing on other urgent matters such as the Defense Authorization Bill, which is needed to fund the troops in Iraq. With almost 1,700 dead Americans in Iraq, 15,000 wounded, and the National Guard and the Reserves over utilized, the President should be more concerned about the defense authorization bill than about these five people, Reid declared.

As of June 10, the Senate had completed the agenda which had been laid out in the May 23 agreement, in terms of permitting up or down votes on Janice Rogers Brown, Priscilla Owen, William Pryor, and two Michigan judges who had been nominated for the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. All of the judges were confirmed, most of them on party-line votes.

But, according to *The Hill*, a Capital Hill leaksheet, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) has decided not to bring any of the other judicial nominees to the floor, to test whether Democrats would move to block the nominations with filibusters. Frist suggested that most of the time over the next two weeks, before the July 4 recess, would be taken up debating the energy bill.

Bipartisan Group Wants Probe of Prisoner Abuse

A group consisting of a number of prominent conservatives and liberals, including two former Republican Congressmen, is calling for Congress and the President to establish a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate abuse of prisoners at U.S. detention facilities.

The group's statement, issued on May 25, asks for the creation of a bipartisan commission modelled on the 9/11 Commission “to investigate various allegations of abuse of terrorist suspects by the United States, and make recommendations to guide U.S. officials in the future.”

The initiative is sponsored by the Liberty and Security Initiative of the Constitution Project, funded by the Open Society Institute (OSI). The co-chairs are David Keene of the American Conservative Union, and David Cole, professor of law at Georgetown University. Others participating in a press conference announcing the initiative were:

- John Podesta, President Clinton's Chief of Staff, now president of the Center for American Progress (CAP).
- Thomas Pickering, former Ambassador and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs in the Clinton and other Administrations.
- former U.S. Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga).
- former U.S. Rep. Mickey Edwards (R-Okla).
- Morton Halperin, of the OSI and the CAP.
- Eugene Fidell of the National Institute for Military Justice (NIMJ).
- retired Coast Guard Capt. Kevin Barry, also NIMJ.
- John Whitehead, Rutherford Institute.

Watergate Revelation: Is Bush the Target?

The revelation that former Deputy Director of the FBI, Mark Felt, was the “Deep Throat” who spilled the beans to the *Washington Post* on the illegal behavior of President Richard Nixon and his White House, has brought into the public eye parallels between the Nixon apparatus, and that of President George Bush's White House today.

Former Clinton senior advisor Sidney Blumenthal, for one, drew that parallel in an article in the London *Guardian* June 9, under the title “Nixon's Empire Strikes Back.” Nixon's grand plan for an imperial presidency was crushed by Watergate, Blumenthal notes. But today, George Bush is trying to do the same thing, and his plans are being

carried out by three veterans of the Nixon Administration: Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Karl Rove.

Donald Rumsfeld served as chief of staff to Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, with Dick Cheney serving as Rumsfeld's deputy. Both of them fought tooth and nail against Congressional efforts for “more transparency in the executive,” Blumenthal points out.

And then there was Rove, who began his political career as an agent of Nixon dirty trickster Donald Segretti.

Arnie Prepares To Call Special Calif. Election

While the official announcement of the next phase of the assault on the people of California is not expected until June 13, when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will likely give the thumbs up for a November special election, Team Arnie has been making it clear that they are prepared to run a well-financed, polarizing brawl against those they blast as “special interests.”

The *Los Angeles Times* reported on a recent conference call briefing to wealthy donors, in which Schwarzenegger's media adviser Don Sipple told them they will send a consistent message against public employees' unions (i.e., part of the “special interests”) that “creates a kind of phenomenon of anger” against them. The purpose of this “phenomenon” is to whip up support, by demonizing unions and their members, for the brutal budget cuts for which Arnie has been unable to build a consensus.

Sipple acknowledged that the campaign has been unsuccessful thus far, as Arnie's positive rating has been below 50% since April. “We . . . don't feel great about where we have been,” he added, in a colossal understatement. “But we kind of see ourselves on an upward trajectory as we go toward a November special [election].”

The current centerpiece for Arnie's special election this November is another gambit concocted by George Shultz and his gang of thieves at Stanford's Hoover Institute. Called the “Live Within Our Means Act,” this initiative would mandate automatic cuts

BUSH'S SOCIAL SECURITY

plan is being abandoned by one Republican Congressman and Senator after another, as it becomes clear that to embrace the privatization scheme would be political suicide. These include Senate Finance Committee Chair Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), both of whom have declared that they think the President's plan is going nowhere.

THE ARMY is lowering standards for candidates of the Officer Candidate School, due to the lack of candidates under the current rules. Current rules call for officer candidates to finish their training prior to age 29, and to be "in good moral standing." Apparently, the new rules allow more flexibility in waiving minor criminal or civil offenses by potential officer candidates.

U.S. GIVES UP OPPOSING Mohamed ElBaradei. On June 9, the State Department announced after a meeting between ElBaradei, the current head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, that the U.S. would support a third term for the IAEA head. Apparently, the U.S. had been unable to convince other nations to oppose the reappointment of ElBaradei.

CONDI RICE went on a bashing spree during a lengthy June 9 interview with PBS's Charlie Rose. Straight from her performance at the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in Florida, where she failed to ram through the U.S.'s "democracy" agenda, Rice insisted that democracy is flourishing throughout the Mideast because of George Bush. Rice then went through a litany of attacks, hitting North Korea, China, Iran, and Syria, while telling African nations that they have to earn debt relief by fighting "corruption," governing "wisely," and opening up their economies to free trade.

in the state budget whenever expenditures exceed revenue. Its passage would mean that the Governor would be empowered to make cuts without legislative approval. Some in Sacramento rightly identify this as the "Make Arnie Dictator" Act. A poll conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California shows that it is presently supported by only 43% of likely voters.

A memo released by the California State Association of Counties will probably cut into its support further, as it reports that the ballot initiative "contains serious drafting errors that will result in unintended consequences that will have a severe fiscal impact on counties." Analysts in Los Angeles County told the *Los Angeles Times* that if the automatic restraints that would be imposed if the initiative passes, were in place now, the county would have to cut the Sheriff's Department budget by \$37 million!

Fight Over Bolton Still Looms Before U.S. Senate

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), speaking on CNN June 9, was very firm, that Democrats are not backing off on the demand that the Bush Administration hand over relevant information, or documents, on UN Ambassador designate John Bolton. "If they want Bolton to be Ambassador to the United Nations, give us this information. If they don't, there will be no Bolton," Reid said.

The demand for the Administration to release information about Bolton's access to classified material on Americans whose names appeared in communications intercepted by the National Security Agency, and his distortion of intelligence on Syria, has been holding up the vote on the nomination for two weeks now. Democratic Senators, led by Chris Dodd of Connecticut and Joe Biden of Delaware, have insisted that the information is necessary to come to a judgment, and have even offered a compromise, by which National Director of Intelligence John Negroponte could break the impasse.

But the White House has remained adamant, and the issue has turned into one of the Senate's prerogatives. As Dodd said, "This

is now beyond Bolton. It is a question of whether or not the Senate should have a right to information pertaining to a nominee."

As of June 10, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) was indicating that he nonetheless intended to bring up the Bolton nomination the following week.

Election of Washington State Governor Upheld

Washington state Judge John Bridges on June 6 upheld the election of Gov. Christine Gregoire (D), and rejected GOP claims that wrongdoing, fraud, and felon voters were the reason why her GOP opponent Dino Rossi lost. When Rossi decided not to appeal, the more than six-month contest over the gubernatorial election finally ended.

Rossi had won the initial election tally by 261 votes. He also won the mandatory machine recount by 42 votes. But Gregoire and the Democrats decided to fight.

In the final hand recount, paid for by the Democrats, Gregoire moved ahead by 127 votes, and took office as Governor. This set the stage for a showdown, as the Republicans continued to fight. The Republicans contested the hand recount in court, focusing their argument on foul-ups in the counting, and to hundreds of felons who voted illegally. But the judge rejected the method proposed by Republicans for apportioning the number of felons who voted for Gregoire, and said the burden of proof for nullifying an election was not met.

Senators Clammed Up As Greenspan Testified

U.S. Senators did not confront Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan on June 9 before the Joint Economic Committee. No Senator challenged him on the General Motors crisis. As to his lie that "the U.S. economy seems to be on a reasonably firm footing," only Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) challenged him.