

Playing Favorites May Be

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The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which has friends in the right places, would get its money. The National Endowment for the Arts, which has enemies in the wrong places, would get only part of its funding or perhaps nothing at all.

And "AmeriCorps will be no more," predicted a delighted Republican congres-

sional aide, referring to President Clinton's pet project to get young people involved in community service.

With the New Year comes yet another House Republican strategy for increasing pressure on Clinton to reach a balanced budget agreement with Congress while easing the political costs that GOP leaders suffered in broader governmental shutdowns late last year.

This approach—called "targeted appropriations"—departs from traditional

GOP's Next Step on Budget

agency-wide funding practices by designating only specific programs for full funding, presumably including only those regarded as essential or politically advisable by the Republicans.

Others would get no funding or sharply reduced funding, possibly at successively lower levels as the fiscal year goes on.

The strategy was tried in a limited way early this month when Congress approved year-long funding for many popular or critically needed programs, such as passport

offices, medical research and national parks, while keeping others on a shorter leash. Most of the less-favored programs were funded only through Jan. 26.

Now targeted funding is the chief fallback strategy of House Republican leaders for the rest of the fiscal year if they are unable to reach an agreement with Clinton on the budget and the six of 13 appropriations bills that still have not been enacted.

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BUDGET, From A1

While White House and congressional negotiators are scheduled to meet again Wednesday, House Budget Committee Chairman John R. Kasich (R-Ohio) appeared glum Sunday about prospects for agreement. "We are miles and miles away" from agreement, he said on NBC's "Meet the Press." Democrats seemed only slightly more optimistic in interviews.

"I think if we don't have an agreement this week, we'll just go to work with Democrats in Congress and not worry much about the Clinton liberals," House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) told reporters after a speech to Republicans in Houston yesterday, Reuter reported.

But enactment of targeted appropriations is far from a done deal.

Many Senate Republicans are said by aides to be cool to the idea, and White House Chief of Staff Leon E. Panetta said Sunday that Clinton would veto targeted appropriations as yet another form of legislative "black-mail."

"If they continue to try to go at what the president believes are important programs for this country and they try to do targeted appropriations, the president will continue to veto those," Panetta said Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation."

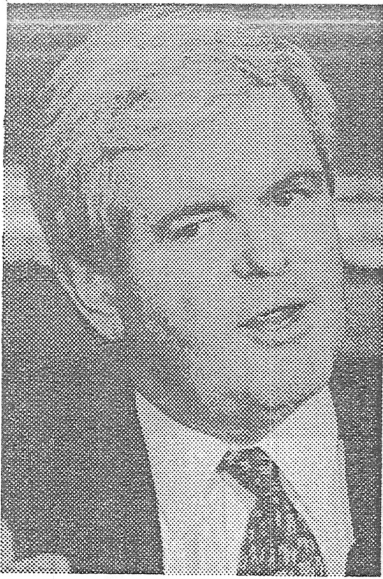
Moreover, House Republican leaders have not yet set-

tled on a precise plan and may be divided on how far to go in shutting down programs.

Kasich, Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) and others have talked about an all-or-nothing approach that would fund only favored programs. "We're going to fund programs that we think are important and not fund the programs that we think are not important. We think that will put some pressure on the president," Kasich said. He cited AmeriCorps, the Goals 2000 schools program and the Commerce Department as activities he'd like to shut down. A variation on that theme was laid out earlier by Gingrich, who suggested full funding for some programs and reduced funding for the rest.

As Gingrich described the approach Friday, this is the way it would work for programs not already covered by the seven approved appropriations bills or by the initial round of targeted funding: Selected programs would receive the full amount of what they would have gotten from a regular appropriations bill. Others would be funded at reduced levels, subject to renewal every few weeks, when further reductions could be considered.

"We are now going to do everything we can to keep the government open," Gingrich told reporters in Walnut Creek, Calif. "But you may see a continuing resolution at, say, 75 percent of last year's spending rate and then you'll see us do what we did with the National Institutes of Health and the national parks and pass a targeted ap-



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MAJORITY WHIP TOM DELAY
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propriation that pays 100 percent for the next year [for these targeted activities]. . . . You may see us pass continuing resolutions every two weeks or every month and keep the pressure on the president to get a deal but never close the government."

Other Republican members and staffers have said such measures could be approved at ever-diminished funding levels, gradually squeezing the government to the point where Republicans hope that Clinton would have to agree to a budget on GOP terms.

Advocates of this strategy see many advantages, including opportunities to save money, to showcase how a leaner Republican-style government would work and to hit Clinton where it hurts the most because programs he favors most would be hit the hardest. Democrats would be hard-pressed to oppose targeted funding for necessary or popular programs in order to protect other less urgent priorities, they say. And House Republicans would be back in the driver's seat after Senate Republicans seized the initiative to end the government shut-down earlier this month.

"It would breathe new life into our efforts to zero things out," DeLay said.

But there are potential problems.

Even if the Senate went along and Clinton signed the bills, the president and his Democratic allies could blame the Republicans for any crises arising from funding omissions, which are virtually certain to occur given the size and complexity of federal programs. It may also be difficult to find the proper balance: If there is not enough

pinch, the strategy is useless; if there is too much, the political costs could be high. And there is no guarantee that Republicans could agree on what to keep and what to kill or maim.

The poorest states and communities will suffer the most, and "mean-spiritedness toward the poor just doesn't go over," said Sen. John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.).

Although it was Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) who originally proposed some targeted funding as a way of reopening the government two weeks ago, he has had little to say about its broader use on a long-term basis. Associates say he is skeptical, especially about programs that may fall between the cracks. The last thing Dole wants in the midst of his presidential campaign is to be tied to government actions that hurt people, they note. "It's exactly what Bob Dole does not need," said Rockefeller.

House Republican aides emphasize they will make no firm decisions until Congress returns the week of Jan. 22. At a news conference Thursday in Seattle, Gingrich suggested that a brief interim funding bill for the government as a whole may be passed to get past the Jan. 26 funding cutoff and allow time for preparation of the targeted appropriations measures.

While the House Appropriations Committee staff is just beginning to draw up funding lists for review by members and the House Republican leadership, there is no lack of speculation about what may be included or excluded.

Targeted appropriations would cover "those aspects of the federal government that have a broad national mandate," probably including such programs as student loans and "some programs for the disadvantaged," said Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley.

They would not include "those programs that are supported by only a narrow faction of the left," Blankley added, citing "planning projects" at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, "much of the Department of Commerce," all but data-collecting activities of the Labor Department and "many aspects of the Department of Energy."

DeLay, whose Houston-area district has a major stake in the Johnson Space Center, puts NASA at the top of his must-fund list. At the top of his no-funding list are a variety of endeavors opposed by many Republican conservatives, from the arts endowment and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to "condom distribution." Such Clinton initiatives as AmeriCorps, federal funding for community policing and advanced technology promotion would also go on the DeLay chopping block.

The problem is that every program has its constituency, even among House Republicans, said a Senate Republican aide, noting that the list of targeted appropriations approved earlier this month included programs from an Indian water rights settlement to Gallaudet University's elementary and secondary schools for the deaf. "The Japan-United States Friendship Commission may not be high on everyone's list, but someone is going to want to see it funded," the aide added.

Staff writer John E. Yang contributed to this report.

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