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Drug Policy Director Denounces Senate Plan

Abolishing Office Would Be 'Hypocritical'

By Stephen Barr

Washington Post Staff Writer

White House drug policy director Lee P. Brown yesterday said a Senate Appropriations panel plans to abolish his office, a proposal he denounced as "a hypocritical act by a Congress that criticizes the administration for not doing more."

The Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the Treasury, Postal Service and general government is scheduled to vote today on a spending bill that includes the White House budget accounts. Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.), the panel's chairman, said last night that he believes the drug office's nearly \$10 million budget could be better spent on increased funding for drug interdiction efforts.

"If this administration will not facilitate and prosecute the drug war, then Congress is forced to do it for them," he said. "I believe my subcommittee will go to the mat on this issue."

Shelby said that if the administration "had worked as hard at making this position effective as it has at trying to save this office, then the committee would likely be looking [to] increase rather than reduce funding."

Senate Republicans have argued that President Clinton has not provided strong political support for the drug policy office, noting that he cut back the office's staff during a period when drug use by young Americans is once again rising.

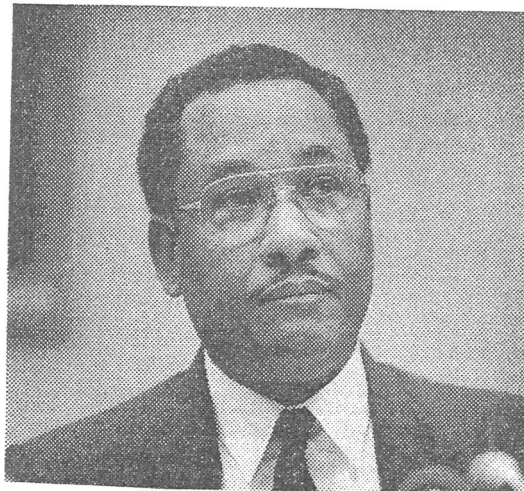
But Brown said yesterday that shutting down the Office of National Drug Control Policy would do "irreparable damage to the nation's ability to have a coordinated anti-drug strategy among 50 agencies dealing with supply and demand, concerning education, prevention, treatment, enforcement, interdiction, eradication and international cooperation."

"I think the Senate is acting in a vacuum, not realizing the devastating real impact of cutting the president's ability to coordinate anti-drug efforts," he added.

Funding for the White House has been under attack this year in the Republican Congress. A House bill approved last week would abolish the Council of Economic Advisers and reduce spending in other presidential budget accounts.

But the House bill, which strongly supports law enforcement activities, proposed \$9.3 million for Brown's office in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, almost as much money as the office received this fiscal year.

Last week, Brown began a new campaign against marijuana use, saying its dangers have been overlooked for too long and that it now sends nearly as many people to the hospital as cocaine. Brown also has criticized the return of Darryl Strawberry to baseball, saying the New York Yankees were "sending the worst possible message to the youth of America" by signing a player who had been suspended for cocaine use.



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