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Senate majority leader



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—THOMAS A. DASCHLE (D-S.D.),  
Senate minority leader

## Republican Juggernaut Hits Roadblock in Senate

*‘Contract’ Items Languish as Break Begins*

8/12/95  
By Helen Dewar  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Term limits are dead. Regulatory reform is stalled. Overhaul of the welfare system is on hold. Anti-crime legislation is out there somewhere, gathering dust. Bitter fights over tax cuts, spending constraints and the future of Medicare are still to come.

As the Senate yesterday joined the House in exhausted flight from Washington for an abbreviated summer recess, the Republican-led Congress passed the midpoint of its first session with its promises far outstripping its accomplishments.

While revolutionary zeal still courses through the House, the Senate has proved to be far more cautious and skeptical, slowing some measures and blocking others. The degree to which the Senate has set the outer limits of action was summed up in sharply contrasting characterizations of the Senate’s role by Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) and Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.).

“I think we’ve done pretty well,” Dole said. “We’re a little behind but we’ll catch up—a little gridlock here and there”—an apparent

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# WHERE THE CONTRACT STANDS

Many of the "Contract With America" bills are still awaiting action in the Senate; two have been signed into law.

BILL	DESCRIPTION	HOUSE	SENATE	PRESIDENT
<b>Congressional compliance</b>	Subjects Congress to its own laws	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Signed into law
<b>Unfunded mandates</b>	Curbs mandates on states without supplying funds to fulfill the mandates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Signed into law
<b>Balanced budget amendment</b>	Amends the Constitution to require a balanced budget by 2002	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Defeated	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Line-item veto</b>	Allows president to cut individual items in congressional appropriations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed in different form and headed toward conference	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tax cuts</b>	Provides tax breaks for families, reduces capital gains tax, expands IRA savings, repeals Social Security hikes and raises Social Security earnings limit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input type="checkbox"/> To be considered in budget reconciliation bill this fall	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Welfare reform</b>	Limits benefits and extends control to states	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input type="checkbox"/> To be considered in September	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Crime</b>	Cuts crime spending while toughening sentencing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input type="checkbox"/> No action	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Regulatory reform</b>	Restricts power of government to regulate health, safety and the environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed	<input type="checkbox"/> Stalled	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Legal reforms</b>	Limits litigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed broad bill rewriting litigation laws	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passed bills limited to product liability and securities litigation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Term limits</b>	Limits terms for members of the House and the Senate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<input type="checkbox"/> Action planned this fall	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>National security</b>	Increases defense spending and limits U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased defense spending passed; also prohibits U.N. command of U.S. troops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved smaller increase in defense spending; no action on peacekeeping	<input type="checkbox"/>

THE WASHINGTON POST

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For the "Contract With America," see *Digital Ink*, The Post's on-line service. To learn about *Digital Ink*, call 1-800-510-5104, ext. 9000.

reference to Democrats' success in blocking key initiatives, including a proposed balanced budget constitutional amendment and legislation limiting the powers of regulatory agencies.

"Very little has passed, and what has passed has done so because Democrats supported it," Daschle said. Democrats have had "remarkable success . . . in stopping the Republican agenda when it has meant right-wing extremism," he added.

The debate on Capitol Hill is still being conducted on Republican terms, with emphasis on sharply reducing the power and reach of government. And, on issues ranging from abortion to taxes, President Clinton is running little more than a damage-control operation. But the frantic early pace has slowed, many initiatives have run into serious obstacles, and there is less certainty than ever that the most far-reaching of the GOP promises will end up on the statute books.

Four months after House Republicans' whipped through their "Contract With America" in less than 100 days, the Senate has rejected, rewritten or delayed action on most of its major provisions.

In part this is because of Senate rules requiring 60 votes to break filibusters on seriously contested measures. But it is also because of strains within the Republican caucus and uncommon Democratic unity.

In a metaphor for the 104th Congress's accomplishments so far, the only Contract items that have been enacted were two bills left over from the 103rd Congress that the House zipped through in its first few hours and the Senate passed in its first few days. One required Congress to live by the workplace laws it imposes on private businesses; the other made it harder for Congress to impose mandates on state and local governments without providing the funds to carry them out.

What amounted to a "revolution" in the House has turned out to be only a "glancing blow" in the Senate, said Rep. John A. Boehner (R-Ohio), a member of the House GOP leadership.

At a news conference yesterday, Dole cited defeat of the balanced

budget amendment, which failed by one vote in early March, as his biggest disappointment of the session.

But the debate over the amendment was far from a total loss. In the wake of its defeat, Republicans in both houses set about producing a budget blueprint that wipes out deficits by 2002, as the amendment would have prescribed—which may be the biggest achievement of Congress so far.

While there are big differences between the House and Senate over how far to go in cutting social programs such as Medicare, with veto threats looming even after they agree, Republicans have gone farther down the road toward producing a balanced budget by cutting spending programs than many believed possible only a few months ago.

"The deep interest of the Republican Senate is in getting this budget under control," said Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.), a moderate who has strayed from the GOP fold on other issues. Unlike issues such as abortion or environmental protection, Chafee said, the budget is "a unifying force" for Republicans in both houses.

On other issues, a combination of factors—including conservative-moderate divisions among Senate Republicans—have combined to stop the House GOP juggernaut in the Senate.

For instance, the House passed sweeping legislation to curb civil litigation by limiting damages, while the Senate balked at going beyond limits on product liability and shareholder lawsuits. Efforts to resolve the differences may be put off until next year.

The House also passed tough legislation aimed at slowing the issuance of health, safety and environmental regulations by requiring new cost and risk tests and making it easier for industry to challenge the rules. But Senate Democrats and some GOP moderates balked at a similar bill pushed by Dole, and efforts to broker a compromise have not succeeded so far.

Crime legislation passed by the House has gone onto a back burner in the Senate, although a long-sought Republican goal of limiting death row appeals was included in counterter-

rorism legislation passed by Congress at Clinton's behest after the Oklahoma City bombing in April.

Legislation to overhaul the nation's welfare system easily passed the House but has bogged down in the Senate, where Dole, beset by pressures from left and right, had to delay action until September when it became clear that he lacked the votes to pass his own bill.

Both houses have passed different versions of legislation to give the president line-item veto authority to knock individual items out of spending and tax bills but have been unable to agree on a compromise. Some Republicans say one reason is that GOP lawmakers are unwilling to expand Clinton's veto authority at a time when so many Republican spending bills are headed toward his desk.

Early votes also indicate the Senate is far less keen than the House about eliminating or eviscerating federal agencies or gutting environmental laws. At the time when the House was voting to curb the Environmental Protection Agency's authority to enforce air and water quality rules, the Senate rejected a conservative bid to block reintroduction of the red wolf in southeastern states, Chafee noted, suggesting this was a harbinger of other environmental votes.

Political reforms also are a source of division between the two houses. The Senate approved new registration and disclosure requirements for lobbyists, but the House shows no interest in following suit. Nor does the House seem interested in following the Senate in approving rule changes to limit gifts to lawmakers from lobbyists and others. Although there is some talk in the Senate of making another stab at campaign finance reform, its priority is low in both houses.

Ironically, the House and Senate have found common ground on one of the most controversial issues in the Contract: proposed limits on congressional terms. It was the only Contract item rejected by the House, and the Senate is likely to do the same when it votes on the measure this fall.