

House Republican Factions Reject Defense Bill

Antiabortion Forces Lead Rebellion

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By Dan Morgan
Washington Post Staff Writer

Rebellious House Republican factions, ignoring pleas and lectures from senior GOP members, decisively rejected the final version of the \$243 billion 1996 defense bill yesterday and sent it back to be re-negotiated with the Senate.

The major opposition came from antiabortion forces, irate over the softening of a provision in the original House version of the bill that prohibited abortions in military hospitals.

But in the end, the huge measure appeared to have been simply overwhelmed from all sides, by GOP "cheap hawks" upset with big spending on the B-2 bomber and SeaWolf submarine, a group favoring stronger congressional prerogatives in Bosnia policy and an almost solid block of Democrats.

For the Republican leadership on the eve of a 10-day recess, it was a ragged day. Just hours before the 267 to 151 vote to reject the defense bill, which 130 Republicans joined in bringing down, the House, voting 277 to 147, also rejected the final version of the 1996 Interior Department funding bill.

The rejection of the defense measure will have no immediate impact because Pentagon funds are assured through Nov. 13 under the temporary spending resolution agreed to by the White House and Congress this week. The House on Thursday passed the "continuing resolution" to finance the government after the start of the fiscal year Sunday. The Senate passed it late yesterday by voice vote.

But the defense vote yesterday has considerable significance for the broader budget politics between the

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BY RAY LUSTIG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan makes a point during a Senate committee vote on a Medicare amendment. (Details, Page A4). Under Republican proposals for Medicaid, Virginia would fare better than the District and Maryland. (Details, Page A8).

Helms to Allow

Vote on Nominees

■ Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) freed most of President Clinton's ambassadorial nominees whose confirmation he was blocking after the Senate agreed to vote on his controversial plan to reorganize the government's foreign policy apparatus and slash its funding.

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A Senator's

Tragic Lesson

■ As Oregon's Bob Packwood leaves the Senate today, brought down by sexual misconduct charges, he's learned too late what other senators have discovered far less painfully: that power and glamour may be the currency of the Capitol, but they can't buy happiness or love.

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Rebellious GOP Factions Kill Defense Bill

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Republican-controlled Congress and the White House. Budget Director Alice M. Rivlin indicated in a letter to House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) that President Clinton would veto the bill because "it allocates nearly \$7 billion more than we need at this time for defense" while it "starves our needed investment in education and training and other priorities."

The House action yesterday relieves Clinton, at least for now, from having to veto a bill that supports popular military programs and provides millions of jobs. It also may improve his leverage in negotiating for the restoration of some domestic spending in exchange for a modest cut in defense.

Rep. C.W. Bill Young (R-Fla.), who chairs the national security subcommittee on the House Appropriations Committee, said: "The president won today. He didn't want this bill on his desk. This puts the president in the driver's seat from today."

Young said he believed funds for additional B-2 bombers, which were provided in the bill rejected yesterday, are now "very vulnerable." Fiscally conservative Republicans such as Reps. Steve Largent (R-Okla.) and Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.) circulated letters calling on members to vote down the bill because of the B-2 and Seawolf, to keep the budget on its "glidepath" to balance in 2002.

"There's more corporate welfare in the defense budget than anywhere else," said Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.), who voted against the bill even though his home state builds the Seawolf submarine.

Other Republicans used the vote to register their protest at House negotiators who agreed in talks with the Senate to soften a requirement that the president seek congressional approval before deploying troops in Bosnia.

Young said it was uncertain when House negotiators would meet with senators to try to draft a bill acceptable to the House.

With antiabortion organizations going all out to make yesterday's vote a key one, the vaunted House Republican machine seemed unwilling—or unable—to crack the whip. Throughout the day, Republicans seemed fatalistic about the defeat of the bill.

Gingrich arrived on the floor from a meeting at the White House too late for the vote. And House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) made no apparent effort to rally support for the measure.

Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.), an antiabortion leader in the House, told members: "We don't contend that supporters of this bill are pro-abortion. But this is a pro-abortion bill."

But House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.), faced with a sudden setback in his effort to complete work on the 13 annual spending bills for government, uncorked his best revivalist rhetoric and 6-foot-5 body-language to rally support. Livingston, who introduced an amendment earlier this year calling for an end to the government's family planning program, asked the House to put defense first.

"I am not going to let that one issue come between me and protecting my constituents," he shouted. "If you vote against it you are in derogation of your

responsibility to the people of the United States."

Similar divisions surfaced in the House's rejection of the House-Senate compromise on the 1996 Interior Department appropriation bill.

The compromise did away with a House-backed moratorium on the issuance of titles to mining rights on federal lands. But yesterday 91 Republicans, most of them from environmentally conscious districts in Florida, the Northeast and Midwest, joined Democrats to send it back for more negotiation.

On the Senate side of the Capitol, the internal Republican disagreements persisted over two major appropriations bills.

The Senate approved an amendment by Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R-N.M.) to provide \$340 million to the Legal Services Corp., which Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) had proposed eliminating from the \$27 billion measure to fund the Commerce, Justice and State departments.

Republicans also appeared last night to have backed down from a fight with Democrats over Gramm's proposal to scuttle Clinton's program for helping local governments hire 100,000 new police officers.

Staff writer Helen Dewar contributed to this report.

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