

White House Expenses Face Hill Spotlight

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The White House has been put on notice that a bill providing for presidential expenses faces rough going when it comes to the House floor.

That view was expressed to Roy L. Ash, director of the Office of Management and Budget, who was testifying on the bill before the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee Thursday.

Rep. Morris K. Udall (D-Ariz.) spoke of widespread resentment in the House on a range of issues.

"This is a sensitive bill. When it reaches the floor there very well could be trouble," Udall told Ash.

Since the mid-1950s Congress has routinely appropriated money for White House expenses without first authorizing the appropriation in another bill. (For other budget items, legislative committees go over budget requests and set authorizations which the appropriations committees take into account in providing the money.)

On the House floor last year, a point of order was raised on the absence of an authorization for the White House appropriation.

So this year, the White House drew up a proposed authorization bill, which in effect will give the House and Senate the opportunity to review White House spending twice every year from now on.

Ash, in his testimony, stressed that the President

routinely has signed all the housekeeping bills of the Congress and the judiciary automatically and without comment.

"That suggests to me that the President is sending up his budget and we are supposed to rubber-stamp it," Udall said.

Udall expressed concern about what he called "an explosion" in the size and pay of White House staff. He said much of the work should be done in the Cabinet departments, and not by White House aides who cannot be called to account by Congress.

Ash said the President has so many new responsibilities that he either must have a staff or in effect let each Cabinet officer "be his own President."

"Or," Udall said, "appoint Cabinet members who are not 'yes' men."

The committee bill would authorize about \$19 million for White House staff salaries, expenses, travel, presidential entertainment, upkeep of the White House; \$1 million for presidential contingency fund, and \$920,000 for the staff of the Vice President.

These amounts do not reflect total taxpayer upkeep of the presidency. That figure would include, among others, Secret Service security, military budget items for White House aircraft, and Park Service upkeep of the White House grounds.