

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### Funding maintained for Space Station

The Senate supported Space Station Freedom on Sept. 21, defeating in a 59-40 vote an amendment by Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) which would have stripped \$1.9 billion from the project from the 1994 spending bill for NASA, the Veterans Administration, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Bumpers wanted to use the "savings" for deficit reduction.

During the September visit of Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Clinton administration signed an agreement on U.S.-Russian cooperation in space, including for collaboration on the Space Station. In a letter circulated before the debate, Vice President Al Gore stressed that it is "important to realize that this initiative on space cooperation fits into the context of a much larger partnership with Russia, a relationship that will define the post-Cold War era." Because of the agreement, some senators, such as Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), who were leaning in support of the Bumpers amendment, voted for the Space Station.

Space Station proponents also emphasized that important scientific experiments in microgravity, which require a long period of time, could only be done if such a station were operational. They emphasized the need for maintaining the type of international collaboration which has been achieved with many nations in the Space Station project.

Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) commented on how analysts have noted that the United States will face "a severe scientific manpower shortage in the next decade" and that, therefore, "the United States will not have enough scientists, engineers, and technical people to staff our space program, military program, or our high-technology industries." To address

this problem, Danforth said, "we must encourage more young people to pursue technical careers. Many of today's scientists and engineers were inspired by the exploits of manned missions like Senator Glenn's first orbital flight and Neil Armstrong's walk on the Moon. The Space Station holds the promise of similar inspiration for our youth."

The Senate action virtually assures funding for the new, reduced version of the Space Station, approved by the White House in June.

In another vote on Sept. 22, the Senate defeated an amendment sponsored by Bumpers which would have killed the Advanced Solid Rocket Motor project. The ASRM was to provide a more reliable and more powerful solid rocket booster for the Space Shuttle and future launch systems. It would provide an additional 12,000 pounds of payload capacity over current boosters.

### Some death penalty provisions dropped

At the behest of Attorney General Janet Reno, congressional Democrats dropped some provisions which would have expanded the use of the death penalty for drug "kingpins." The measure had been overwhelmingly approved by both chambers in the last Congress, but died in House-Senate conference.

The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel reversed a position taken during the Bush administration and challenged the constitutionality of the drug-kingpin measure. According to the measure, the head of a large-scale drug organization could be executed for drug-trafficking activities even without proof that the individual had caused any deaths. "The depart-

ment was concerned that imposing the death penalty in cases where no life has been taken was inconsistent with Supreme Court decisions," said DOJ spokesman Carl Stern. The DOJ also asked that a dozen provisions in a new version of the crime bill which is to be introduced this year, and which deals with new mandatory minimum sentences (mostly for repeat offenders and those who use guns in the commission of a drug or violent offense), be dropped from the bill.

Both House and Senate Judiciary Committee chairmen, Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) and Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), respectively, have agreed to drop the provisions. But Rep. Bill McCollum (R-Fla.), a sponsor of the drug-kingpin proposal, said, "If you sell enough drugs, you're going to kill not only one person, but many of them. There is plenty of constitutional basis for imposing the death penalty in those circumstances."

### Schroeder demands full disclosure on Waco raid

Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) has written to Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen expressing concern over efforts to seal from public view the department's investigation into the February raid on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. That operation resulted in the death of four agents of the Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). The FBI-led assault in April caused the death of at least 85 Branch Davidians, including 24 children.

Bentsen had set up a review group to look into the ATF's handling of the Branch Davidian investigation and its assault on the compound. The review group has finished its report, but the department does not want to make the

report public, claiming that publication would expose department "investigative techniques and procedures." On Aug. 16, the Treasury expressed concern in the *Federal Register* about such exposure as part of a request for an exemption to the Privacy Act of 1974. The department said the exemptions were intended to comply with legal prohibitions against disclosing "certain kinds of information" and to protect the privacy of people identified in the inquiry.

## **Base closings set to take effect**

The package of military base closings passed the Senate on Sept. 20 (the House had passed it earlier), and is now set to take effect. An amendment offered by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) which called on the Senate to reject the closings, was rejected by a vote of 83-12. The legislation closes 130 facilities and scales back another 45. It will affect tens of thousands of jobs.

Three states in particular will be heavily hit: California, which is slated to lose more than 40,000 military and civilian defense-related jobs; Florida, 22,000; and South Carolina, more than 14,700 jobs.

## **Aid package for Russia passes Senate**

The Senate passed on Sept. 23 a Russian aid package of \$2.5 billion by an overwhelming 88-10 vote. At the urging of Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the Senate linked the aid to a withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states.

Because the Russians would not meet an Oct. 6 deadline for signing withdrawal timetables with Estonia

and Latvia, a small amount of 1993 funds will be cut off. The fact that the vote was without significant opposition, indicates the desperation in Washington to "shore up" Russian President Yeltsin in the aftermath of his "cold coup."

At hearings in the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Sept. 21, administration spokesmen attempted to reassure legislators that the Yeltsin reform program was still moving forward. Undersecretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers was asked by committee chairman Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) about Harvard Prof. Jeffrey Sachs's comments that the "reform program" was "dead in the water." Summers said, "I think it's fair to say that his views have evolved . . . with [shock therapy advocate Yegor] Gaidar's coming into office and with . . . very recent indications from the Russian government following Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's visit to Washington."

Democratic and Republican congressional leaders have supported President Clinton's endorsement of Yeltsin's "cold coup." The statements of administration representatives were, however, characterized by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) as "Alice in Wonderland-like." Lantos commented that "we cannot allow ourselves to be that mesmerized by symbols." Lantos then voted for the aid package.

## **World Bank funding increase stopped**

An amendment sponsored by Sen. Hank Brown (R-Colo.) to the 1994 Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, which deleted additional funding in the bill for U.S. capital investment in the World Bank, passed by voice vote on Sept. 23. The World Bank is building a new headquarters in Wash-

ington, D.C.

Brown's amendment, which had the backing of the National Taxpayers' Union, would not limit the U.S. contribution to the World Bank, but would prevent an additional stock purchase in it until the bank sets up an Inspector General.

Brown attacked the bank's "lavish life-style" and below-market-rate loans. He has garnered support from groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, the Sierra Club, the Friends of the Earth, and the National Wildlife Federation, which feel that the World Bank has not done enough in financing programs consistent with their environmentalist agenda.

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) cautioned Brown against going overboard in his campaign against the World Bank, since the bank is expected to finance the Yeltsin reforms.

## **Nunn warns against expanding Somalia ops**

Interviewed on "Meet the Press" on Sept. 26, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) said that it would be a "fundamental mistake" for the administration to expand the mission of U.S. military forces in Somalia.

Although opposed to a complete pullout of American troops as called for by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), Nunn complained that the original mission as outlined by the United Nations had been significantly expanded, while the number of troops had been gradually reduced. Nunn called on the administration to "narrow the mission" in such a way that it would have a "definitive ending point" or "exit strategy."

Nunn also said that he didn't feel that the American people would support sending 25,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia to enforce a peace agreement.