

## House votes to raise hourly minimum

WASHINGTON -- The House voted Thursday to raise the hourly minimum wage from \$3.35 to \$4.55 by October 1991, rejecting a more modest increase proposed by President Bush and sending the partisan battle to the Senate.

The House adjourned for a week-long Easter recess after voting 248-171 for a bill that included compromises long resisted by its Democratic sponsors but still left the Democratic congressional leadership and the Republican president far apart on the issue.

Bush proposed raising the minimum wage to \$4.25 an hour by 1992 provided newly hired employees could be paid a subminimum wage for six months. That plan was offered by Republicans as a substitute for the bill supported by the House leadership but

was defeated 218-198, with more than 40 Democrats defecting to the GOP effort.

Bush has insisted his offer is his last and says he has the strength to sustain a veto of minimum wage legislation he considers unacceptable. But the House sponsors refused to accommodate the president and the showdown now shifts to the Senate, where floor debate is scheduled early next month on a proposal to raise the hourly minimum wage to \$4.65.

The Senate sponsor, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., hailed the House action and urged Bush to refrain from further veto threats until he sees the final measure, which is likely to undergo further changes.

"This is an excellent opportunity

for Congress and the administration to demonstrate that they can work together and in doing so achieve a fair increase in the minimum wage and an honest training wage," Kennedy said.

Before the House gave final passage to the bill, the chamber approved by a 240-179 vote a leadership-backed amendment cutting the bill's target from \$4.65 an hour to \$4.55. The amendment added a provision allowing new entrants in the job market to be paid a subminimum wage for two months.

Debate centered on Republican assertions that too big an increase in the minimum wage would fuel inflation and force employers with marginal profits to slash hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Democrats disputed those arguments and said that by failing to increase the minimum wage for eight years Congress had forced the working poor to get by on a wage that has lost nearly 40 percent of its buying power.

"It isn't enough but it certainly is better than nothing," House Speaker Jim Wright said of the Democratic bill. "I'm asking you for this vote today for one simple reason. Vote for this bill because it is right and you know it."

The revisions represented significant retreats by the sponsors, who last year proposed raising the minimum wage to more than \$5 by 1992 and long have opposed a two-tiered system allowing lower wages to be paid to newly hired workers.

But they agreed to the amendment

to stem defections by moderate-to-conservative Democrats, largely from Southern states, to the Republican effort to win passage of the Bush plan.

Forty-three Democrats defected anyway, and Republicans insisted the majority Democrats eventually would have to accept the Bush proposal or see a ninth year pass without an increase in the minimum wage, now \$3.35 an hour.

Current law exempts service businesses with annual sales of less than \$362,000 from the minimum-wage law; the House bill increased that level to \$500,000. The provision is rarely used, however, because of confusing regulations lawmakers have said would be simplified in conference committee if the Senate passes a minimum-wage bill.

## Hall: Shredding 'no big deal'

WASHINGTON -- A weeping Fawn Hall praised former boss Oliver North Thursday as an inspirational, tireless and selfless man and said their wholesale shredding of Iran-Contra documents "was no big deal."

Alternately crying and spitting back sharp responses, Hall twice appeared unable to go on with her testimony at North's trial, causing impromptu recesses. Her sympathies throughout were obviously with North, though she hardly ever looked at him.

"It's tough when people portray you as a witness for the prosecution when you are a witness for the truth," she said outside the courthouse. "Hopefully, the good guy will win."

She called North's firing by then-President Reagan on Nov. 25, 1986, unfair. "I was very upset," she recalled.

Hall, who was North's secretary at the National Security Council for nearly four years, admitted that when attorney general's investigators were closing in on Nov. 21, 1986, she altered documents to soften recorded versions of North's involvement with the Nicaraguan Contras. She also said she helped him in what has been called "a shredding party" of Iran-Contra documents.

The former Marine lieutenant colonel is on trial on 12 charges, including destroying documents and lying to Congress about his activities.

At one point Thursday, she became upset when prosecutor John Kecker confronted her with a transcript of "your words" in previous testimony. She had testified then that North may have directed her to shred some documents, but she said on Wednesday that North had given no such instructions.

## Yeltsin campaign highlights discontent with Soviet system

MOSCOW -- "Spets! Spets! Spets! Spets!" Boris N. Yeltsin rasped at a gathering of 1,000 workers, using Russian slang to criticize the network supplying special food, consumer goods, cars and drivers to Communist Party officials.

His voice cracking from overuse, the former Communist Party boss of Moscow demanded the privileges be eliminated. "All of them have to go," Yeltsin said.

The workers applauded. Days before Soviets vote in the first multi-candidate elections, Yeltsin has become a lightning rod for people resentful of plenty for a privileged few and empty store shelves for the rest.

The election is Sunday, and Yeltsin is running against Yevgeny Brakov, director of the ZIL plant that manufactures the ultimate symbol of power and privilege: the shiny black ZIL limousine.

Yeltsin received a warm welcome when he criticized official privileges at Brakov's plant Tuesday in his drive to capture in a popular election a seat representing all of Moscow.

Olga Ultiova, who joined a pro-Yeltsin demonstration in downtown Moscow on Wednesday, praised him as the "only one in 70 years of Soviet power who did not take the privileges offered by his position."

Yeltsin rallies, speeches and campaign posters are all over the Soviet capital. The campaigning is an unprecedented sign of political activity after years when Soviets dutifully went to the polls to mark their ballots for the only choice available, the candidate approved by party officials.

The burly 58-year-old Siberia native has become an issue himself. For or against, it is Yeltsin who voters are discussing.

"For me, Comrade Yeltsin is a real national hero," N. Barinov, a disabled World War II veteran wrote to the Vechernaya Moskva newspaper.

But in a letter printed just above it, retiree I.

Pidevich wrote that a "cult of personality" already has begun to form around him. "His personality is already covered by something that doesn't correspond to reality, an unrealistic halo -- the basis of a cult."

Those are charged words in the Soviet Union. For more than 30 years "cult of personality" is the term by which Soviets have referred to Stalin's reign of terror.

It was Yeltsin's criticism of the party and warning that a cult was developing around President Mikhail S. Gorbachev that got him fired as Moscow party chief in November 1987.

He charged into Moscow in late 1985 from the industrial city of Sverdlovsk as Gorbachev's choice to take over from the corrupt city administration of Viktor Grishin. He won admirers for his energetic attacks on bureaucracy and food shortages, and was among the strongest supporters of Gorbachev's policy of "glasnost," or greater openness.

After his firing, Yeltsin went back to his original profession -- construction -- and was given a job as the first deputy chairman of the State Construction Committee.

That job has the status of a government minister, but nowhere near the prestige. Yeltsin arrived at the ZIL plant in a black Chaika -- a limousine, but a step below the status of the factory's ZIL. He admits to accepting special health services and a country home but says he turned down special food supplies, access to other special stores and services.

Yeltsin is no more popular now with the party hierarchy than he was when he was accused of mistakes in his work as Moscow party chief and being overly ambitious. But a Yeltsin victory would be proof that under Gorbachev the party can tolerate diverse opinions.

The maverick communist says he recognizes Gorbachev as the Soviet leader and does not intend to challenge him.

## Prosecutor dropping case against Adams

DALLAS -- Texas will not retry Randall Dale Adams for the 1976 slaying of a policeman, a prosecutor said Thursday, two days after Adams' court-ordered release from prison on grounds his first trial was unfair.

Dallas County District Attorney John Vance said the case has been dropped because there is not enough evidence to try Adams again.

Adams was convicted and sentenced to die in 1977 for the murder of Dallas police officer Robert Wood, a crime to which another man has virtually confessed. Adams once came within three days of his execution date.

Adams has maintained that he is innocent. His case drew national attention after it was portrayed in the movie documentary "Thin Blue Line."

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in March threw the conviction out, saying Adams hadn't gotten a fair trial because prosecutors suppressed evidence and witnesses lied on the stand.

Vance announced his decision as Adams was en route to Ohio to rejoin his family. He is free on a \$50,000 personal recognizance bond.

Adams has repeatedly said he'd welcome a second trial.

"I believe we're going to win and I believe we can prove it," Adams said after his release.

## Daily Nebraskan

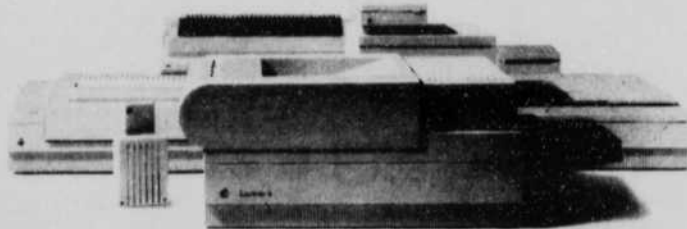
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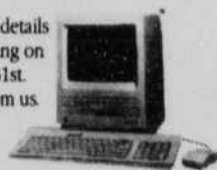


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