

## Bush sends 'investment in future' budget to Congress

WASHINGTON - President Bush on Monday sent Congress a \$1.23 trillion budget for fiscal 1991 that keeps new spending below inflation and recognizes "remarkable changes" in the world by scaling back defense and rewarding emerging democracies.

Bush called the spending plan an "investment in the future." But Democratic leaders in Congress pounced on it as a "standpat budget" and challenged its claim to halve the federal deficit, to \$63.1 billion.

Fights loomed with the Democratic-controlled Congress on a range of fronts: Bush's desire to cut Medicare and capital gains taxes, to close military bases he considers outmoded and, on the other hand, to preserve some expensive weapons.

Bush would increase spending on

space, education, the environment and the war on drugs. Losers, this year, are Medicare, college student loans, farm subsidies, energy conservation grants and mass transit.

The president's budget for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 calls for \$36.5 billion in spending cuts and other deficit-reduction measures.

It projects a 7 percent increase in revenues, to \$1.17 trillion, without a general tax increase and just a 3 percent boost in overall spending -- more than a percentage point below the current rate of inflation.

Bush proposed defense spending of \$292.1 billion, a cut of 2 percent measured against inflation; while boosting foreign aid to Eastern Europe, the Philippines and Latin America.

On the domestic front, his budget would leave in place the Social Security tax increase that took effect earlier this month. But it honors Bush's 1988 campaign pledge to propose no general tax increase.

Still, the budget recommends \$15.6 billion in lesser tax increases and a \$5.6 billion increase in user and service fees -- most of them recycled from Reagan budgets and previously defeated in Congress.

The budget calls for "family savings" accounts under which families could bank up to \$5,000 a year and pay no tax on interest on deposits held for seven or more years.

"With an eye toward future growth, and expansion of the human frontier, the budget's chief emphasis is on investment in the future," Bush said in a brief message to Congress ac-

companying the 1,569-page document. But Sen. James Sasser, D-Tenn., called it a document of "low aspirations. . . . It predicts huge fiscal problems ahead and then goes on to propose no change in course."

And House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., said, "I think it's a standpat budget" but he said lawmakers would "take it very seriously" rather than pronouncing it "dead on arrival" as Democrats had done with several Reagan budgets.

Bush's budget asserted it was meeting the \$64 billion deficit target for fiscal 1991, under the Gramm-Rudman budget balancing law, "with specific and defensible measures -- and without gimmicks."

However, critics claimed the administration's prescription for get-

ting the budget deficit down to \$63.1 billion -- from a projected \$123.8 billion this year -- does rely on accounting gimmicks.

"They continue to jimmy the figures," said Sen. Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C. "It's another fraud."

For one thing, Bush's budget uses an optimistic set of economic projections that assume both declining interest rates and falling inflation. The budget also calls for overall growth this year of 2.4 percent this year -- compared to the 1.7 percent forecast by private forecasters and the Congressional Budget Office.

The government's most recent figures showed economic growth slowed to an annual rate of 0.5 percent during the last three months of 1989.

## Bush's farm and deficit proposals get mixed reaction from delegation

President George Bush unveiled his budget proposal Monday to praise and criticism from members of Nebraska's congressional delegation.

Bush's proposal to eliminate the Federal Crop Insurance Corp. drew criticism from Sen. Bob Kerrey and Rep. Virginia Smith.

"I think it's a mistake," said Kerrey, a Democrat and member of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Kerrey said there are problems with the crop insurance program but administration officials have not made a good faith effort to improve the agency.

A crop insurance commission made 26 recommendations but the administration has only implemented three, Kerrey said Monday.

"They ought to get new management," Kerrey said. ". . . I think the program can be self-sustaining."

The Bush proposal calls for scaling back the crop insurance corporation, which provides subsidies to farmers who carry all-risk protection for crop loss. The agency's budget - \$1.2

million this fiscal year - would fall to \$430,000.

In place of the crop insurance program, a new disaster assistance program would be worked out with Congress.

Kerrey said relying on a disaster assistance program would put Congress in risk-management business, a business Congress should not be in.

Mrs. Smith, a Republican, said she is concerned that "agricultural programs are being asked to take undefined cuts in programs and bear an unfair share of the burden in deficit reduction efforts."

Kerrey also said he was concerned that Bush's budget coupled with Agriculture Department policies would mean reduction in target prices and a cut in net farm income.

Bush's proposal pushes off tough decisions until 1993 "as if he's running for re-election," Kerrey said.

Mrs. Smith said a close look at budget recommendations for commodity and rural programs seems to indi-

cate that the "Office of Management and Budget, as they have in past years, is unaware of the different needs of and issues facing rural America."

Sen. Jim Exon called the budget a "political document which does not fully face up to the serious economic crisis created by continuing annual deficits and rapidly growing national debt."

Exon, a Democrat and member of the Senate Budget Committee, said the budget doesn't realistically come near to meeting the Gramm-Rudman budget deficit target.

"Optimistic economic assumptions, unspecified spending reductions and the huge surpluses in the nation's trust funds, including the Social Security Trust Fund, are used to hide the true magnitude of the budget deficit," Exon said.

Exon did applaud the president for initiatives that call for simulating savings and investment and a new tree-planting and reforestation initiative.

## Survey shows disapproval of regents

A newspaper poll shows that only 38 percent of the people surveyed approve of the job the NU Board of Regents is doing.

The poll also found most of those surveyed favored election of the regents, agreed NU's Lincoln campus should be the state's flagship of higher education and the Omaha campus should allow doctoral degrees.

Thirty-five percent of the 450 people polled Jan. 15-17 by National Research Corp. don't know how to assess the board. Twenty-seven percent disapproved of the board's performance.

State Sen. Ron Withem of Papillion, chairman of the Legislature's Education Committee, said the 27 percent disapproval rating is high compared with most polls evaluating the performance of public officials.

"I think a 27 percent disapproval rating is very high for a board like the Board of Regents," Withem said. "I would not perceive the poll as reflecting a strong vote of confidence by the people in the immediate past leadership."

Withem was referring to the board of regents under the leadership of Nancy Hoch of Nebraska City.

During Hoch's tenure as chairman, the board was criticized for not telling the public why it fired former President Ronald Roskens and for not taking a stand on whether Kearney State College should become part of the university system.

Hoch was chairman until early January when Don Blank of McCook was elected to that office.

The poll has an error range of plus

or minus 4.6 percent, said National Research, which conducted the poll for The Lincoln Star and Lincoln Journal.

Poll results also indicated the public is nearly split, with 45 percent against and 44 percent for a complicated constitutional amendment to restructure the governance of higher education institutions across the state.

Only 11 percent of Nebraskans don't know whether to vote for or against the constitutional change that would abolish the NU Board of Regents and the State Colleges Board of Trustees and replace them with a new Board of Regents to coordinate the state's seven four-year schools.

Overwhelmingly, Nebraskans want regents to be elected rather than appointed by the governor. Eighty-nine percent of those polled want the regents to be elected, while 7 percent favor the governor appointing them and 4 percent don't know how they should be chosen.

On the issue of doctoral degrees at UNO, 79 percent said UNO should be allowed to join UNL and the NU Medical Center in offering those degrees, while 9 percent said no and 11 percent had no opinion.

On whether the Lincoln campus should remain the flagship of any four-year educational system, 54 percent said it should, 30 percent said it should not and 17 percent didn't know.

On the question of whether the UNL chancellor should also be the president of the Nebraska University system, 51 percent of those polled were opposed, 27 percent favored the change and 22 percent said they don't know.



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

## Experiment shows computer as good as human therapist

NEW YORK - Depressed patients who were treated by computer during an experiment improved as much as those who consulted a human therapist, suggesting an economical treatment for a condition afflicting millions.

Depression strikes about 10 million Americans within any six-month period. Human therapists can now treat only a fraction of that number, but using computers might let them reach more, said researcher Greist, a psychiatry professor at the University of Wisconsin Medical School in Madison.

Computerized treatment could be provided day and night at a cost of perhaps only 50 cents an hour, he said. And unlike a human therapist, a computer "doesn't have bad days," he said.

Humans would still be needed to screen patients for the therapy and to step in if the computer fails to treat the patient adequately, he said in a recent interview. And the therapeutic approach used in the study works best for people with only mild to moderate depression, he said.

The study compared the progress of 12 depressed people who received therapy from a computer, 12 who consulted a therapist, and 12 who received no treatment during the experiment.

The two treated groups followed a six-week course of weekly cognitive-behavioral therapy. This approach aims to correct harmful patterns in how people interpret their experiences, such as in people who habitually perceive slights and conclude that they must be unliked and worthless.

The therapist's job in this approach is fairly routine and can become repetitious, Greist said.

Using a program designed by coauthor Paulette Selmi, a computer asked such questions as how long a person had felt depressed

and which activities in a list made the person feel better. It also asked about particular symptoms and asked the person to rank the severity of his depression on a standard scale.

Responses to the computer's multiple-choice questions shaped the course of each session and future sessions.

The actual therapy included teaching basics of cognitive-behavioral therapy, testing the person's understanding of the lessons, and assigning homework. Depending on the person's problems, the homework could include such tasks as assigned reading, thinking about less damaging explanations for perceived slights or introducing oneself to new people daily to discover that one is not always rejected.

Analysis showed that, as a group, patients who took computerized therapy improved as much as those in the other treated group, both at the conclusion of treatment and two months later. Both groups improved significantly more than the people who had received no therapy.

The study is presented in this month's issue of the American Journal of Psychiatry by Selmi, Greist and others at the university.

T. Byram Karasu, professor of psychiatry at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, called the new work important.

But he cautioned that cognitive-behavioral therapy is generally less effective for depression than other strategies, including medication.

He also stressed that while computers might be useful for some aspects of psychotherapy, they cannot totally replace a human therapist. Most depressed patients are "starving for human contact," he said.

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