

Daily Nebraskan

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Bush says he'll trade tax hike for cut in capital gains rate

WASHINGTON - President Bush said Thursday he could trade a modest increase in taxes on affluent Americans for a deep cut in capital gains rates but that it was "a waste of time" to try to push such a deal through a divided Congress.

Instead, Bush called on lawmakers to put aside that battle and come up with a \$500-billion deficit-reduction plan that contains neither element.

Within hours, Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee said they were well into writing an alternative budget that would not only raise taxes on rich Americans but push them higher than Bush has said he can accept.

The committee's chairman, Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois, said the changes would "restore fairness to our tax system." He said the Democrats would meet again today to decide whether the package will also

reduce the capital gains tax rate, but if it does "it'll be a lot less rich" than the administration's version.

Congressional committees are working toward the goal of finding a half-trillion dollars in spending cuts and tax increases before the Oct. 19 deadline when the latest emergency spending authorization expires.

By most accounts, higher Medicare premiums and taxes on alcohol, cigarettes and gasoline are likely to be included.

"We believe we have made progress," Senate Democratic Leader George Mitchell said after a meeting with Republican Leader Bob Dole and members of the Finance Committee.

Trying to end two days of confusion surrounding the president's position on taxes, the White House laid out — but said it wouldn't push — a plan that would combine higher taxes on the 500,000 or so wealthiest

Americans with lower capital gains rates for people who profit from sales of stocks, real estate and other investments.

Bush, trying to put the pressure on lawmakers, said, "The meter is running, but look, I can't dictate to Congress."

His hypothetical package would increase the top rate on the highest-income people from 28 percent to 31 percent, ease the top rate from 33 percent to 31 percent for some 4.5 million slightly less well-to-do taxpayers and chop the rate on capital gains from 28 percent to 15 percent.

That would do away with the "bubble" in the tax code, under which some upper middle-income taxpayers now pay a higher rate than the wealthiest.

The president presented his case in three separate White House meetings on Thursday with House Republicans.

House rejects NEA restrictions

WASHINGTON - The House on Thursday rebuffed conservative demands for strict new obscenity curbs on the National Endowment for the Arts. Representatives also voted overwhelmingly to let the courts decide whether federally subsidized arts projects are obscene.

After an emotional five-hour debate, the House approved a bipartisan compromise sponsored by Reps. Pat Williams, D-Mont., and E. Thomas Coleman, R-Mo., that would penalize grant recipients if they are subsequently convicted of violating obscenity laws.

Passage of the Williams-Coleman measure on a 382-42 roll call vote signaled a major reversal of congressional sentiment on the politically explosive issue of federal support for art that some lawmakers consider

offensive.

A year ago, in the heat of a controversy over support for exhibitions of works by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and artist Andres Serrano, Congress approved explicit anti-obscenity restrictions on the endowment at the urging of Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C.

On Thursday, the House rejected even more stringent curbs proposed by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., and overwhelmingly defeated a separate proposal to abolish the \$171 million federal arts agency altogether.

Like a similar measure awaiting Senate floor action, the House bill would scrap the current Helms restrictions on the endowment and rely on the courts to make determinations of obscenity.

The House bill also would renew

the endowment's statutory authority for three years and order reforms in its grant-making procedures.

At the request of Republican negotiators, the bill provides an increase in the share of grants allocated to state arts agencies from 20 percent to 35 percent over three years.

The House planned to vote today on a separate appropriations bill that would boost the endowment's budget from \$171 million to \$180 million in the current fiscal year.

That bill, approved by the House Appropriations Committee, omits any content restrictions on works subsidized by the endowment. It also would order endowment chairman John E. Frohnmayer to scrap a controversial requirement that grant recipients sign an anti-obscenity pledge before they can receive federal money.

Jews end festival with celebration at Western Wall

JERUSALEM - Thousands of Jews celebrated the end of the Sukkot festival Thursday at the Western Wall, answering a government call to assert control over Judaism's holiest site after bloody riots on Temple Mount.

Ultra-orthodox Jews carrying sacred Torah scrolls stood side by side with less observant countrymen waving Israeli flags in the cobblestone plaza in front of the wall.

Security was tight around the wall and the adjacent Temple Mount. On Monday, 19 Palestinians were killed and 140 wounded when police fired at rioters stoning Jewish worshippers at the site.

Hundreds of riot police, backed by soldiers, were deployed nearby. At the gates to Jerusalem's Old City, riot police frisked Palestinians, and some of them were turned away.

In New York City, meanwhile, the U.N. Security Council held consultations to end the stalemate over criticism of the violence in Jerusalem. But a vote wasn't expected Thursday.

Earlier Thursday, police battled Palestinian protesters in several Jerusalem neighborhoods.

Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse about 300 Palestinians who tried to march from the city's Shuafat refugee camp to a major thoroughfare used by many Israelis. Clashes were also reported in east Jerusalem.

Police fired tear gas to break up a march by about 150 Palestinians to the Temple Mount. "World, listen to us! We are people who will never submit!" the marchers chanted before being blocked by police from entering the compound.

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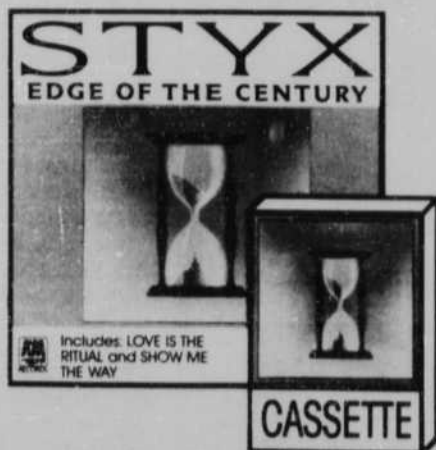
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