

# 'One Hundred and Worst' Congress adjourns

WASHINGTON - The Congress that adjourned Sunday stumbled, stalled and scandalized but then passed dramatic national policy changes for taxes, the environment, military spending, foreign policy and child care.

"A Congress of significant accomplishment," bragged Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine.

The history books, making a cold, hard assessment, may agree. But that wouldn't do justice to the raucous and ugly path this Congress took to get there.

The latest two-year lawmaking conclave was America's 101st. At the end, lawmakers were referring to it as "The One Hundred and Worst."

"So many of us wasted so much time," House Republican Leader Robert H. Michel, R-Ill., said. "What a horribly poor example of Congress at its best."

It started with Senate rejection of President Bush's nomination of John Tower for secretary of Defense, because of his reputation as a boozier and womanizer.

The House then weighed in with its own ethics scandal, which culminated in the resignations of Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, and Majority Whip Tony Coelho, D-Calif.

An attempt at a bipartisan budget deal in the first year collapsed into a nasty, partisan fight over Bush's proposed cut in the capital gains

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tax rate.

The new House speaker, Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., received a black eye when his conservative Democrats sided with the Republicans and passed the plan. Outvoted, Mitchell was able to stop it in the Senate only through a parliamentary blockade.

The first session passed a publicly supported federal minimum wage increase, and Bush and the Democrats agreed to end aid to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Early in the year, Wright tried and failed amid a storm of public outrage to protect former President Ronald Reagan's proposed 50 percent boost in congressional pay. But it wouldn't die.

After taking over as speaker at midyear, Foley engineered a compromise: a big salary boost in exchange for no more special-interest money for making speeches.

The House approved it; the Senate didn't bite. House salaries, which were \$89,500 last

year, will soar to roughly \$125,000 in January. With only cost-of-living increases, the senators will make just over \$100,000.

Congress returned this year to resume a slow legislative pace with only mixed results.

A new law designed to reduce chances of major oil spills was enacted. The Americans With Disabilities Act, giving new rights to people with impairments, became law.

Democrats succeeded in defeating Bush's proposed constitutional amendment to ban flag burning.

The Democratic Congress couldn't override the president's veto of legislation guaranteeing workers six weeks of paid leave for childbirth or family medical emergencies.

The 101st Congress never overrode any of 16 Bush vetoes.

The ethics scandals continued. One House member was disciplined and another quit following sex-related charges.

In the Senate, a group of lawmakers became

known as the Keating Five, all under investigation for ties to the head of a failed California savings and loan institution.

Meanwhile, all efforts to contain the costs of the S&L bailout were proving fruitless.

Major legislation including a historic revision of the nation's clean air laws, federal aid for child care, civil rights, the farm bill, housing, and anti-crime proposals languished while Congress went from May to fall with no progress on the budget.

At the end of September the White House and congressional leaders signed a budget pact calling for a \$500 billion reduction in federal deficits over the next five years. Rank-and-file lawmakers, however, rebelled at the 12-cent gasoline tax hike, deep cuts in Medicare subsidies and dozens of other new fees or service reductions.

On Oct. 5, the day Congress had been scheduled to adjourn, the House killed the deal in a painful defeat for Bush and the Democratic leadership. Hoping to put the onus on Congress for the failure, Bush let the government shut down for the weekend.

A new package emerged, one less to Bush's liking but still acceptable to him. It had higher taxes on the wealthy, only a nickel in new gas taxes and a lighter hit on Medicare. The Senate gave it final congressional approval Saturday.

## S&L letters reported missing

*Congress members' correspondence with regulators in files*

WASHINGTON - Dozens of letters are missing from the special file of correspondence from members of Congress to savings and loan regulators, according to the Office of Thrift Supervision.

Most of the letters were written by lawmakers on behalf of constituents who complained about problems in their dealings with S&Ls, such as accounts that were transferred from one thrift to another as the result of mergers.

But some letters provide evidence of members of Congress pressing regulators on behalf of S&L operators, some of whom contributed to the lawmakers' political campaigns.

There are thousands of letters, all maintained by the OTS and filed alphabetically under the names of the senators and representatives who sent them. The thrift supervision office, the federal agency created by last year's S&L bailout legislation, keeps the letters for its own use and opens

them to members of the public by appointment.

There is no supervision of people perusing the letters, which are kept in an area of OTS' Washington headquarters that is out of view of agency employees.

Nancy Cohen, OTS' director of congressional correspondence, said she is aware of at least one entire file that is missing. Each file contains dozens of letters written by a member of Congress arranged in chronological order.

Cohen declined to say what file is missing or who may be suspected of taking it.

The agency has only one copy of each letter in the centralized archives, although individual regulators may have kept their own copies, Cohen said.

"I know something's missing and it really bothers me," she said. "I think it's real important to the agency" to make the files secure, she added,

saying she has complained about the situation to high-level OTS officials.

"There is a problem; we're trying to address the problem," said Robert Schermund, director of public affairs for OTS.

S&L contributions and the role of some lawmakers has become a hot issue in this election year. The escalating savings and loan crisis has made the letter file a sought-after source of information.

Reporters have been the most frequent users of the files, but in recent months congressional aides, political consultants and law firms also have looked at them, Cohen said.

"It's an election year; everyone wants to see their own file," she said.

Schermund said the agency is concerned about the vulnerability of the current system but also wants to continue to give the public quick access to the files. OTS Director Timothy Ryan wants the agency to be "as open as possible," Schermund said.

## Voters in Soviet Georgia face formal party choice

TBILISI, U.S.S.R. - Voters in Georgia flocked to the polls Sunday for parliamentary elections expected to pave the way for the southern Soviet republic's independence.

About 35 parties, most of them grouped into coalitions, were taking part in the contest, the first true multi-party elections in Soviet history. At stake were 250 seats in the republic's Supreme Soviet legislature.

Non-Communists have been elected in several cities and republics elsewhere in the Soviet Union. But Sunday's race marked the first time that formal parties, created under new Soviet laws, have competed and were listed on the ballot.

Long lines formed at ballot boxes both in Tbilisi, the capital, and in the surrounding countryside. There are about 3 million eligible voters.

Official results of the balloting were not expected until the end of the week, the official Soviet news agency Tass reported.

Maguli Latariya cast her ballot dressed from head to foot in black mourning clothes. Her 16-year-old daughter was one of 19 Georgians killed on April 19, 1989, when Soviet troops used sharpened shovels to break up a peaceful nationalist demonstration in downtown Tbilisi.

The incident fired strong sentiment for independence from Moscow.

Even the ruling Communist Party of Georgia was forced to adopt independence as part of its political platform.

Latariya wept as she cast her ballot. It was "as if my daughter's voice was telling me what to do," she said.

The head of the Round Table, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, standing near Latariya, nodded with approval as she spoke to reporters in School No. 50 in Tbilisi's Mtatsminda district.

Gamsakhurdia predicted that his coalition of seven political parties would win up to 70 percent of the legislative seats if the elections are fair.

Tass quoted election officials as saying the elections were being observed by experts from the United States, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Spain and Finland.

A poll released by the Sociological Center of the Georgian Academy of Sciences a week before the election suggested the Communist Party was supported by 32 percent of the voters, with 21-percent backing the Round Table and the rest divided among other non-Communist groups.

Many voters, interviewed as they left polling stations Sunday, said the Communists had gained ground in recent months because they represented stability.

## Israeli officials re-open Palestinian West Bank

JERUSALEM - Most Palestinians returned to work in Israel on Sunday after a four-day ban, but some found they had lost their jobs to Jews and others were turned back at roadblocks.

Police had new orders barring Arabs with a record of hostile activity against Israel. About 8,000 Palestinians carry green identity cards that ban them from Israel as security risks, according to the daily Haaretz.

"We will increase the list of those not allowed into Israel," Shmuel Goren, government coordinator in the territories, said on Israel radio.

The Cabinet, meanwhile, left its police minister to decide the fate of senior police officers criticized by an official inquiry into the Oct. 8 killings of 20 Palestinians.

The killings on Jerusalem's hallowed Temple Mount prompted a wave of Arab-Jewish clashes inside Israel, leading to the four-day closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The closure was lifted Sunday. But Defense Minister Moshe Arens warned he might reimpose it if violence continues.

"I hope we won't have to take such a step," he said on army radio. "There are tens of thousands who work in Israel who are trustworthy... and we want to allow them to make an honorable living."

Tel Aviv car wash owner Nissim Ahbari said he hired two recently discharged Israeli soldiers while his Arab worker was confined to the Gaza Strip.

"I prefer that Jews work instead of Arabs," he said. "I am ready to pay them more money. These guys are getting 15 shekels (\$7.50) more a day than the Arabs got."

A Jerusalem restaurant owner, however, said his hired Jewish replacements were temporary. He said his Arab workers had been

with him for 17 years and were like family.

An Arab construction laborer in east Jerusalem said most of his friends were looking for other jobs.

"There is always work, but the situation is different now. There is a lot of fear and everyone is tense," he said on Israel radio, without giving his name.

Three Jews were killed in Arab attacks, and two Arabs were killed by Jews in the random violence that prompted Wednesday's closure.

Israel radio said the attacks fueled a wave of applications by Israelis for weapons licenses, most of which were rejected by the Interior Ministry.

Up to 150,000 of the 1.7 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip have jobs in Israel, mostly as blue-collar workers.

The closure was welcomed in Israel, with many Jews saying it would vacate jobs for unemployed Israelis and Soviet Jewish immigrants, as well as free Israel from its dependence on Arab labor.

The Cabinet, meanwhile, said it accepted the conclusions of the three-man investigative team appointed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Police killed 20 Palestinians and injured 140 after Arab protesters on the Mount, known in Arabic as Haram es-Sharif, threw rocks at Jews praying below at the Western Wall.

The panel said the shooting was in self-defense but chastised senior police officers for failing to prepare for violence and being absent when it began.

The U.N. Security Council has passed two resolutions condemning Israel: one for the shooting and one for rejecting a U.N. investigative team. Israel has said its own investigation was sufficient.

## Rival groups kill eight in fight at mine

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - Rival black factions battled through the night at a gold mine compound outside Johannesburg, and company officials said Sunday that eight men were killed and 37 hurt.

The fighting erupted Saturday evening at a workers hostel on Rand Mines' Harmony Gold Mine in Virginia, 160 miles southwest of Johannesburg, the company said.

Officials said they did not know the cause of the fighting, which went on through the night despite attempts by security officers to halt the battles.

No additional details were immediately available.

About 800 blacks died in factional violence around Johannesburg in August and September.

The fighting between supporters of the African National Congress and the Inkatha movement was mostly an extension of their power struggle in the eastern province of Natal. That battle has claimed about 5,000 lives since 1986.

## Daily Nebraskan

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