

Beer lobby trying to drown out chances of 'sin tax'

WASHINGTON — A thousand beer sellers inundated Capitol Hill on Tuesday hoping to avoid picking up some of the tab for President Clinton's health care plan.

Fresh from a daylong training session in which they were pumped full of statistics and arguments, the wholesalers and brewers hoped to meet with virtually every member of the House and Senate.

Their mission was to confront any increase in the excise tax on beer — a "sin tax" — before it was proposed to pay for the health care plan.

"Remember, you're not going up there to save the world" but instead to save jobs, Henry King, director of the Brewers Association of America, told the beer sellers in a private training session beforehand.

For Bo Huggins, who with his father owns a Miller-Heineken distributorship in Houston, the first stop was the office of Rep. Mike Andrews, D-Texas.

Andrews is a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, which gets the first crack at any legislation dealing with taxes, and is also a leader in the effort to impose a stiff new tax on cigarettes.

Huggins said he came away "encouraged that he (Andrews) seemed to understand the difference between tobacco and beer."

But the Houston lawmaker made no commitments, explaining to his guest that often Congress must deal with issues as they are packaged by the White House.

"I hope beer is not in the mix," Andrews said. But he noted: "The administration is

struggling to pay for health care."

Clinton has promised a comprehensive health care reform package by May 5 that will, among other things, provide health insurance for the 36 million Americans currently without it.

To help pay for the plan, many anticipate the White House will propose higher excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco products — and perhaps firearms.

The beer sellers' lobbying onslaught is not the first to hit Capitol Hill since work began on the health plan. Last week hundreds of doctors lobbied lawmakers in a campaign organized by the American Medical Association.

"The guy from back home is the best lobbyist going," explained Ronald A.

"I hope beer is not in the mix. (But) the administration is struggling to pay for health care."

—Andrews House representative

Sarasin, president of the National Beer Wholesalers Association, which helped organize Tuesday's campaign.

"It's extremely effective for people to come to Washington from back home. There's a message there, even if he doesn't say anything," he said.

Israel seals off West Bank after policemen's murder

HADERA, Israel — Gunmen shot to death two Israeli traffic policemen sitting in a squad car Tuesday, and the government struck back by barring the West Bank's 1 million Palestinians from entering Israel.

Police blamed militant Arabs for the pre-dawn slayings. The assassinations at an intersection near this town in Israel's heartland appeared to escalate a wave of Arab attacks that has claimed 13 Israeli lives in March. Twenty-six Palestinians also have been killed this month.

The unrest provoked a public outcry that threatened to weaken Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at a time when he is defending the U.S.-sponsored peace process against demands from Israeli hard-liners to scrap it.

Palestinians said the tough measure of sealing the occupied territories and barring 120,000 Palestinians from their jobs in Israel would damage peace prospects.

In Washington, White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos said the Clinton administration wants to keep the peace talks on track but said: "We're obviously concerned by the escalating violence on all sides."

Most recent attacks on Israelis have happened in the occupied lands, especially the Gaza Strip, which was sealed on Monday after the stabbing death of a Jew. But Hadera is a city of 40,000

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—Stephanopoulos White House spokesman

people, eight miles from the West Bank.

Police said highway patrolmen Mordechai Yisrael, 35, and Daniel Hazut, 32, were found slumped in their car, riddled with machine gun bullets, their weapons gone.

"This event represents the bankruptcy of the Rabin government," said Daniel Hazut's brother, Gadi.

Rabin, who is also defense minister, canceled his engagements to deal with the violence, unprecedented since the Palestinian uprising began in December 1987.

About 200 people gathered at the scene of the killings, in the countryside outside Hadera, chanting "Death to the Arabs!" and "Rabin go home!"

Benny Harby, a 38-year-old mechanic, said: "This morning my kids crawled into bed with me and told me there was a murder nearby. ... I'm frightened."

Right-wingers denounced the gov-



ernment for failing to halt the violence.

"The blood of Israeli citizens being murdered and stabbed without letup is on this government's head," said former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon of the Likud party.

Most of this month's Palestinian deaths, which include six youths under 13, have resulted from army gunfire during rioting.

Congress keeps jobs bill intact

WASHINGTON — Democrats erased an embarrassing setback the Senate had dealt to President Clinton's jobs bill as Congress resumed its drive Tuesday to complete the first pieces of the White House's economic program.

In a watershed 52-48 vote, the Senate reversed itself and killed a Republican amendment trimming the \$16.3 billion jobs measure. Lawmakers had given the GOP provision preliminary approval on a 48-44 vote the night before.

The tally showed that the chamber's majority Democrats will probably be able to keep enough of their 57 members together to muscle the jobs measure through the Senate largely intact.

Even before the vote, Clinton sounded undaunted when asked if the Senate would pass the legislation. "I'm optimistic. I think so," he said.

The bill, which would provide money for mass transit, summer job and other employment-heavy programs, is a major element of Clinton's plans for economic revival.

House-Senate negotiators began putting the finishing touches on a compromise outline for a five-year,

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—Kasich congressman

\$500 billion deficit reduction.

Each Democratic-controlled chamber had approved similar budget-cutting blueprints earlier this month, with each backing Clinton's mix of tax increases on the rich and deep defense cuts. The Senate measure has slightly higher tax increases, while the House version contained slightly deeper defense cuts.

Congress' Democratic leaders want to approve a compromise deficit-reduction outline this week. The measure sets goals for tax and spending bills lawmakers will consider later this year.

"We will have to fly Orville and Wilbur Wright's plane out of the museum if these cuts stick," said Rep. John Kasich, R-Ohio, ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee.

WORLD WIRE

Bush to receive Kuwaiti degree

KUWAIT — Former President Bush will visit the emirate April 13-15 and receive an honorary degree from Kuwait University.

Kuwait's minister of education said Tuesday that Bush was invited by the ruling emir, Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah.

Bush spokesman Andrew Maner confirmed the travel schedule in

Houston. Similar honorary degrees have been given to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and to Javier Perez de Cuellar, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, for their roles in liberating Kuwait from seven months of Iraqi occupation.

Clinton to end long-standing ban

WASHINGTON — The White House plans to end the ban on federally financed abortions for poor women, which critics say would put taxpayers into the "grisly business" of abortion.

Both sides predicted a heated battle in Congress. White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos said Tuesday that Clinton would

not include the ban when he sends his fiscal 1994 budget to Congress next week.

For 16 years, the ban, which originated in Congress, has been written into the budget. It bars federally paid Medicaid abortions except when there is a threat to the woman's life.

Yeltsin warned not to hold referendum

MOSCOW — Reformist lawmakers advised President Boris Yeltsin on Tuesday not to hold his own referendum and cautioned about discontent in the army as he plots strategy in the battle with parliament.



Yeltsin's chief of staff said the president might hold a plebiscite to counter an April 25 referendum on his leadership that was approved Monday by the Congress of People's Deputies.

"I still don't know whether I should take part in the April 25 referendum or oppose it," legislator Gleb Yakunin, a Russian Orthodox priest and staunch Yeltsin supporter, told the ITAR-Tass news agency.

The four-day emergency Congress session failed to decide the fight between president and parliament, although Yeltsin's opponents did succeed in eroding his powers. The opponents fell only 72 votes short of the 689 needed to remove him from office in a vote Sunday.

Many lawmakers oppose Yeltsin's free-market reforms and Western-oriented foreign policy.

The Congress approved the April 25 referendum, which Yeltsin himself had proposed as a way to resolve the political crisis. The lawmakers added a question on whether Russians support the painful economic reforms he launched 15 months ago.

Yeltsin's chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, told the newspaper Izvestia that the Congress could not block the president from "carrying out his simplest and most democratic plan." The referendum would ask voters to approve the basic principles of a new constitution that would strengthen the presidency and replace the Congress with a smaller, bicameral legislature.

Cities now waking up to defense cuts

WASHINGTON — It's no secret that the Cold War is over or that the military is shrinking. But many communities whose prosperity was built on defense dollars are just discovering that the cutbacks will strike close to home.

"Most people don't have any idea what cuts in defense spending mean for their local economy," said Virginia Mayer, who wrote a book on the subject for the National League of Cities.

In some areas of the country, such as southern California and southeast Connecticut, communities know full well the sting of defense reductions and are responding. Mayer says they are the exceptions.

"Now, it'll never happen here," is a common attitude, said Don Jordan, vice mayor of Seaside, Calif., a town of 39,000 which was caught flat-footed when it, indeed, did happen at nearby Fort Ord.

"Most people don't have any idea what cuts in defense spending mean for their local economy."

—Mayer author

In 1991, the Army decided to move the 7th Infantry Division out of Ord, cutting the base population from 20,000 to 2,000. Jordan said the move stripped Seaside, which is 80 miles south of San Francisco, of about 30 percent of its economic base.

"The word's out now: You better start assessing the economic vulnerability if your area has a particular military installation in it," Jordan said.

The word has been heard in Grand Prairie, Texas, and none too soon. Gary Gwyn, the city manager, said he was "stunned" — and without an adjustment plan — when the Pentagon this month recommended closing a

base adjacent to Grand Prairie, which is between Dallas and Fort Worth.

Closure of the Naval Air Station Dallas would mean losing 1,700 active duty military and 800 civilian jobs — a big blow for Grand Prairie, a city of 105,000 people that also is beginning to feel defense industry cuts.

It's not hard to see why many local governments have been slow to respond. Although the demilitarization of the economy is well under way, the biggest declines in defense spending and cuts in defense industry jobs are yet to be seen.

Daily Nebraskan

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