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Five killed in Illinois as train hits school bus

Fox River Grove, Ill. (AP) — A commuter train ripped apart a school bus stopped on the tracks Wednesday as youngsters in the back rushed forward at the sight of 620 tons of steel bearing down on them. Five students were killed and about 30 injured.

Some witnesses said the bus was trying to cross the tracks about 7:20 a.m. when it got caught at a red light behind a car and couldn't make it all the way across. But others said there was no car ahead and the driver could have moved forward.

"You could see the terror in their eyes," witness Coreen Bachinsky said. "You could hear the metal, the glass flying, the screams. It was very, very scary."

The bus was taking the youngsters to 1,400-student Cary-Grove High School in Cary. The Chicago-bound express train was traveling between 50 and 60 mph and sheared the body of the bus off the chassis, spinning it around 180 degrees.

"From then on out, all you heard was screaming," said Andrea Arens, 19, who was waiting for another train.

Four students were pronounced dead at the scene and one died at a hospital. Eleven were hospitalized Wednesday night, six in critical condition.

Taben Johanson, a 15-year-old who was sitting in his usual third-row seat on the bus, said the gate came down on the back of the bus and there was a car in front. Then he looked up and saw the train bearing down on them.

"I basically figured it out when all the kids were running forward,

screaming," he said.

Jim Homola, a carpenter driving his children to school, said he had been stopped behind the bus and saw the approaching train. "We started screaming, 'Go! Go!'" he said. "It was over in a matter of seconds."

Homola said bus driver "was in hysterics" afterward.

The driver, Patricia Catencamp, was taken to a hospital for evaluation.

She was filling in for the regular driver on the route, students said. The secretary of state's office said the 54-year-old woman had been licensed to drive a school bus since 1987 and had a flawless driving record.

"There were kids laying on the ground on the driver's side of the bus," said James Orlandino, a witness. "It looked like they had been thrown out."

The crossing was guarded by a gate, bells, flashing lights and signs, but there was little space between the stoplight and the tracks, said Chris Knapton, a spokesman for Metra, the agency that operates Chicago's suburban commuter trains.

"It's the kind of a crossing that railroaders hate," he said.

Mark Davis, a spokesman for Union-Pacific, which employs the train crew, said the engineer tried to stop the train. "He slowed down. Then he applied the emergency brake, then he got on the horn," Davis said.

Cathy Monroe, spokeswoman for Secretary of State George Ryan, said the school district had a fine safety record. "They've set very high standards for themselves and their driv-

School bus deaths

Fatalities in school bus-related crashes in the United States:

1984	162
1985	158
1986	128
1987	178
1988	130
1989	142
1990	115
1991	134
1992	124
1993	141
1994	105
Total	1,517

AP

ers," she said.

In the afternoon, cars lined up out of the parking lot and onto a nearby highway as people showed up to donate blood at Good Shepherd Hospital in nearby Barrington, where some victims were taken.

Jason Kedrok, 16, was wearing a hospital bracelet and had bruises on his face and arm when he showed up at the accident scene in the afternoon to look at the wreck he had survived.

"Just looking at it now, I can't believe I got out of it," he said.

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GOP gathers support for budget

WASHINGTON (AP) — Brushing aside a strongly worded veto threat, Republican congressional leaders methodically lined up support Wednesday for legislation to balance the budget, cut taxes and reshape government.

"We have been waiting 40 years for this moment," said Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole.

As debate opened in both houses, Dole announced he was restoring about \$8 billion to Medicaid, which provides health care to the poor, to satisfy senators concerned their home states were being shortchanged.

Speaker Newt Gingrich spread additional Medicaid funds around, as well. He also won critical support from more than a dozen farm state lawmakers who had been threatening to bolt over a proposal to phase out the government's traditional system of crop subsidies.

"There's a bigger picture out there," said one of them, freshman Rep. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., in reference to the Republicans' overall goal of balancing the budget.

Outnumbered Democrats didn't dispute the measure was likely to pass, but Clinton made it clear he would veto it. The budget would threaten Medicare, education and the environment, he told a news conference at the White House, adding, "If the Republicans plunge ahead and pass this budget, I will veto it and demand a budget that reflects our values."

He also accused the GOP leadership of "economic blackmail, pure

"If the Republicans plunge ahead and pass this budget, I will veto it and demand a budget that reflects our values."

President Clinton

and simple" for saying they would refuse to extend the government's borrowing authority if the White House didn't agree to sign the budget bill.

With final votes scheduled for later in the week in both houses, GOP leaders exuded confidence the measure would pass, even though Senate moderates were still pressing their demand for more money for education and other changes.

"The issue now is unanimity" among Republicans, said Gingrich. "I think we're going to pass the bill on both sides."

The measure was the centerpiece of the Republican revolution launched last January, and the party's leaders said it heralded a once-in-a-generation shift in American government.

"It is not quite comparable to the New Deal, but it is certainly on the same scale as the Great Society" said Gingrich, R-Ga., the first Republican speaker in four decades.

Democrats conceded the sweeping nature of the legislation but judged it harshly and hoped Republicans would pay a heavy political price in next year's elections.

Republicans want to "squeeze the elderly" to finance "lavish tax breaks

for the wealthiest individuals," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., criticizing the GOP-proposed Medicare overhaul that would raise premiums and gradually increase the age of eligibility from 65 to 67.

"These cuts in Medicare were not what the election in 1994 were about, but they are what the 1996 elections will be about," he added later. Focused, in part, on next fall's campaigns, Senate Democrats prepared a strategy designed to force Republicans into a series of risky votes on amendments relating to Medicare, Medicaid, education cuts and other politically potent issues.

The legislation would affect virtually everyone in the nation. Hundreds of billions of dollars would be carved from Medicare, Medicaid and welfare, and federal strings would be loosened on the states in a variety of social programs.

The Commerce Department would be abolished in the House bill; both versions called for higher fees for visiting national parks.

The proposed tax cuts would total \$245 billion over seven years, and include a \$500-per-child break on income taxes and a reduction in the levy on profits from investments.

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Corrections & CLARIFICATIONS

Correction: A story in Tuesday's Daily Nebraskan gave the incorrect location for today's 6:30 p.m. Cockroach Combat Workshop. The workshop will be at the Lancaster County Co-op Extension Conference Center on Cherry Creek Road. Call the extension office for registration.

Correction: A story in Tuesday's Daily Nebraskan incorrectly identified the home state of the band Phish. The rock band is from Vermont, not the Boston area.