

Clinton starts selling budget

WASHINGTON — The White House began unveiling its new seven-year budget-balancing proposal to congressional Democrats on Wednesday, even as President Clinton delivered his long-promised coup-de-grace to a Republican plan he said bore "wrongheaded cuts and misplaced priorities."

Clinton dispatched Leon Panetta, his chief of staff, to the Capitol to brief House and Senate Democrats about the package, which the administration plans to present to Republicans when budget talks resume Thursday.

Compared with a proposal Clinton made in June, the new plan will have deeper cuts in welfare and many domestic programs and additional limits on business tax breaks. It will call

for the same savings of \$124 billion from Medicare and \$54 billion from Medicaid that he had sought earlier, and about the same \$98 billion tax cut for families he had proposed.

In addition, it would contain a mechanism for forcing the federal deficit to reach zero, Panetta told reporters. He would reveal no details. But another administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the White House might suggest that some of the tax cuts — including the president's proposed \$500 per child tax credit — be withheld in any year that annual deficit targets were not achieved.

The new proposal was a concession to GOP demands that the president propose a detailed, seven-year package, rather than working with the

broad-brush, 10-year outline he unveiled six months ago. Republicans had mixed reactions.

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., said he wanted to see if Clinton's proposal will be "warmed over" or "a step toward a balanced budget in the next seven years."

And House Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich, R-Ohio, warned, "They'd better lower the rhetoric if they want to get this done."

The new plan was drafted chiefly by administration officials. Democratic support for the measure was broad, but there were objections. Numerous congressional Democrats want the tax cuts eliminated altogether, and many think its reductions in Medicare and Medicaid are too high.

Republicans try to agree on Bosnia peace mission

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans moved closer to agreement Wednesday on a response to President Clinton's plan to deploy 20,000 U.S. troops in Bosnia as part of a NATO peacekeeping force. "I think it will come together," said Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.

At the same time, Clinton sought to build bipartisan backing for the hazardous mission, telling a White House gathering: "Leadership is not a spectator sport."

McCain and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole were backing a resolution that supports the deployment but insists on a U.S. commitment to arm and train the Bosnian

army and prohibits U.S. troops from becoming involved in civil administration.

Dole has said Congress has little choice but to support the president, but some Republicans flatly oppose.

McCain said those backing deployment with conditions will meet Thursday with opponents.

But he also indicated that he would agree to a strategy in which the Senate would vote on a resolution opposing deployment. If that is defeated, the Senate would then vote on the Dole-McCain resolution.

No Senate vote on the issue is expected before next week.

School bus accident kills 2 kids

LOS ANGELES — A malfunctioning hydraulic trash compactor blasted through the side of a garbage truck Wednesday and ripped open the side of a passing school bus, killing two children.

A third child was hospitalized in critical condition.

The bus, taking 48 youngsters to an elementary school, was eastbound and the municipal garbage truck was coming from the opposite direction on a busy thoroughfare, police said.

The truck was in use despite a trouble report.

A 12-foot arm, which pushes a ram to compact trash inside the truck, punched

through the side of the vehicle with a force of 1,500 pounds per square inch, said Roland Silva, spokesman for the Sanitation Department.

"It was like a missile coming out of a launch pad," Silva said.

The arm raked the side of the bus, smashing windows and bending frame posts, said Officer Rhett Price of the California Highway Patrol.

"We've never had something like this happen to one of our trucks," Silva said. "It was a very freakish thing."

City officials were investigating why the truck was in use after a different driver reported problems with the hydraulic system on Tuesday.

Counsel to investigate Gingrich

WASHINGTON — The House ethics committee Wednesday approved an outside counsel to investigate a college course taught by Speaker Newt Gingrich and found he violated standards of conduct in three instances. The vote was 10-0.

The decision ensures an investigation extending well into the 1996 election year. Democrats have been demanding an outside counsel for months, while they planned their 1996 House campaigns as a referendum on Gingrich's personality and conservative legislative program.

A committee letter to Gingrich questioned whether the Georgia Republican tried to "capitalize" on his office for "personal gain" in his publishing deal with a company owned by media magnate Rupert Murdoch.

The committee did not vote to punish Gingrich for the three violations. But it recommended that curbs be placed on income from book deals and that rules for floor

speeches be clarified.

In finding violations, while recommending no punishment, the committee said that Gingrich:

- Allowed a trusted political adviser, Joseph Gaylord, to use his congressional office, violating a rule prohibiting use of official resources for unofficial purposes.

- Misused his floor privileges in House speeches, by giving out a toll-free number to order Gingrich political materials. This amounted to an "improper solicitation" for commercial purposes.

- Committed a similar violation by using floor speeches to publicize a nationwide town meeting sponsored by the Gingrich-led political action committee, GOPAC.

Gingrich, noting that several complaints were dismissed, said in a written statement that he was "pleased by the unanimous bipartisan action of the ethics committee" and confident the remaining charge, too, will be dismissed.

Death row inmates will go to work

PHOENIX — Arizona this week will begin shackling the 109 convicted killers on death row and marching them out to a prison garden where they will be forced to work 40 hours a week.

"The alternative is for them to sit in their cells or do nothing — or file frivolous lawsuits against the state that cost taxpayers millions of dollars," said Doug Cole, a spokesman for Gov. Fife Symington.

"Arizona law requires that each able-bodied prisoner engage in hard labor at least 40 hours a week. We're just following the law."

The death row work detail begins today at the state prison in Florence.

Four days a week, the inmates will be shackled hand and foot while working in groups of 20 in the vegetable field inside the prison, said Mike Arra, a Corrections Department spokesman.

They'll be supervised by a minimum of four armed guards, at least one on horseback.

It's the latest in a series of "get-tough" measures in a state that already has chain gangs and tent jails. Last May, Arizona became the second state to reinstitute chain gangs, after Alabama. Florida also has instituted chain gangs, as has Tennessee's Cheatham County.

The attitude extends to some county jails; Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Phoenix makes inmates wear pink underwear, to

discourage smuggling of the garments, and he banned cigarettes, pornographic magazines, television and coffee.

Every able-bodied inmate of the state's death row will be required to work, for 10 cents an hour. Anyone who refuses will be taken to the field and made to stay for the entire shift, and be subject to disciplinary action, such as loss of privileges.

Richard Dieter, director of the Death Penalty Information Center in Washington, said death row inmates are allowed to work in some other prison systems, but he knows of no state that requires it.

"I'm not sure how you would punish people in that situation who refuse to work," he said. "If you force them, there may be some resentment. But given the opportunity to spend years in isolation or getting out and doing something, they may jump at it."

Donna Hamm, head of the Phoenix-based inmate rights group Common Ground, worries that inmates already facing death sentences will be too violent to put out on work details, even shackled hand and foot.

"Sure, they were sentenced to die, but they weren't sentenced to die at the end of a hoe or rake," Hamm said. There already have been several injuries from inmate fights on chain gangs, she said.




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