

# NEWS DIGEST

By The  
Associated Press  
Edited by Michelle Garner

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Page 2

## Congress passes bills to combat deficit

### Clinton to approve line-item veto

WASHINGTON—Congress gave the president power Thursday to cut government spending by scrapping specific programs with a line-item veto, although President Clinton will have to win re-election before he can use it.

Fulfilling a GOP "Contract With America" promise, the House followed the Senate in approving the measure, which marks a historic shift in the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches.

Since the nation's founding, the president has been forced to approve or reject legislation in its entirety.

"The Republican Congress has done something that no previous Congress has been able to accomplish since the first line-item veto proposal was introduced in the 1870s," said House Government Reform and Oversight Committee Chairman William Clinger, R-Pa., who helped forge the House-Senate compromise plan.

House Democrats later complained about the parliamentary tactics used by majority Republicans in sending the bill to the White House.

Opponents characterized it as a dangerous ceding to the executive

branch of Congress' power of the purse. "This is fundamentally unwise and it manifests a fundamental disrespect of our own duties," Rep. David Skaggs, D-Colo., said.

But constitutional considerations that have blocked passage in the past were overcome by the demand for new tools to combat the federal deficit.

Giving the president authority to pencil out individual items from spending bills allows him to kill low priority or pork-barrel projects.

"The buck will finally stop at the president's desk," said Rep. Jim Bunning, R-Ky. "We are going to give him the opportunity," he said, "to end the era of pork-barrel spending."

The bill also allows the president to cancel tax benefits targeted to groups of 100 or fewer beneficiaries and eliminate spending for new entitlement programs that Congress might establish or additions to the food stamp program.

Clinton, like previous presidents a strong supporter of the line-item veto

concept, said the bill would "ensure that our public resources are put to the best possible uses during these times of tight budgets."

But the president wouldn't be able to use this new power until Jan. 1, a result of an agreement between Clinton and his certain opponent in the presidential elections this fall, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan. In a telephone conversation last week, the two decided that the law should not go into effect until the new year, so it wouldn't become an issue during the political campaign.

The House defeated, 256-159, an attempt to make it effective immediately.

Dole, too, voiced strong support for the bill: "Line-item veto seems to be the one thing that all modern presidents agree on," he said shortly before the Senate voted 69-31 to pass it Wednesday. "The president, regardless of party, should be able to eliminate unnecessary pork-barrel projects from large appropriations bills."

### Debt-limit legislation clears

WASHINGTON — Legislation raising the ceiling on the national debt to \$5.5 trillion — enough for another year and a half of deficit spending — cleared Congress on Thursday.

GOP leaders packaged the politically distasteful measure with several planks of their "Contract With America" and it passed the House by a 328-91 vote. The Senate later OK'd it with an unrecorded voice vote.

President Clinton's signature is needed by midnight Friday to avert a first-ever federal default. The Treasury Department has been juggling accounts since the government bumped against the present \$4.9 trillion last fall.

"The president's prepared to act... the minute the legislation's available," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

Meanwhile, House and Senate lawmakers reported progress — but no overall deal — as they worked in marathon sessions for a compromise on spending legislation appropriating roughly \$160 billion to dozens of federal agencies and departments for the six months remaining in fiscal 1996.

The unrelated provisions in the debt-limit bill include an increase in Social Security benefits for working recipients and new authority for small businesses to challenge federal regulations in court.

The Social Security measure raises the current limit on outside earnings from \$11,520 to \$12,500 this year and to \$30,000 by 2002. Recipients between the ages of 65 and 69 lose \$1 in benefits for each \$3 they earn above the limit.

Democrats delayed the debt bill for several testy hours with an effort to attach a 90-cent increase in the minimum wage.

Republicans defeated them on a procedural motion. They argued an increase in the minimum wage would violate the unfunded mandate law enacted last year. It bars the federal government from imposing rules or regulations on local governments without compensating them for their cost.

"We're going to bring it back and back and back and back until we finally prevail for America's families and workers," said House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo.

## News in a Minute



### Israel examines security agency

JERUSALEM — Putting the internal workings of the Shin Bet under a rare spotlight, a government inquiry said Thursday that mismanagement and carelessness at the top-secret security agency exposed Yitzhak Rabin to attack by Jewish extremists.

In a scathing report bound to fuel efforts to make Shin Bet more accountable, the inquiry found that the organization was primarily to blame for failing to prevent the prime minister's Nov. 4 assassination.

Issued a day after assassin Yigal Amir was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, the report confirmed the widespread impression that the assassination was the result of a security breakdown that could have been prevented.

The Shin Bet failed to translate abundant intelligence warnings of a possible Jewish extremist attack on the prime minister into better security at the rally where Rabin was shot, the commission said. The parking lot where Rabin was murdered was not properly secured and bodyguards were not looking for an Israeli attacker.

### Seattle officials to shoot sea lions

SEATTLE — Like gluttonous courtiers around a medieval banquet table, fat California sea lions have been lolling about at Seattle's Ballard Locks, gorging themselves on the steelhead salmon struggling to make their way upstream.

Now the state is going to put an end to the royal pig-out.

With the fish runs depleted, and much of the blame put on the portly pinnipeds, the state got federal approval earlier this month to shoot two of the more voracious sea lions, a move that has drawn animal-rights protests and pleas to the governor.

"Nobody wants to kill sea lions, but this is just a matter of priorities," said Kathleen South of the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. "It's just reached a very critical point."

The sea lions are protected by federal law but are neither a threatened nor endangered species.

### Ibuprofen may prevent Alzheimer's

SAN FRANCISCO — Ibuprofen, the drug contained in such pain relievers as Advil, Motrin and Nuprin, may reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by up to 60 percent, researchers reported Thursday.

Aspirin and acetaminophen, which is in pain relievers such as Tylenol, appeared to have no effect on preventing the disease, according to the 14-year Johns Hopkins University study of 2,065 elderly people.

The study is the latest and one of the largest suggesting that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, help the brain fight the effects of amyloid protein deposits linked to Alzheimer's.

Researchers and the Alzheimer's Association cautioned people against rushing out and buying the drugs. The drug can cause gastric bleeding and chronic use may be related to other diseases.

## Investigators find nothing wrong with billions of recalled cigarettes

ATLANTA — Nothing unusual was found in the 8 billion cigarettes recalled last year by Philip Morris that isn't wrong with all cigarettes, government health investigators said Thursday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention investigated more than 70 complaints from people in 27 states who said they became ill after smoking the cigarettes. They complained of coughing, wheezing, watery eyes and nose and throat irritation.

The cigarettes contained nothing out of the ordinary, said Michael Ericksen, director of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

"The single greatest cause of death in this country is lighting organic material and sucking it into your lungs,"

Ericksen said. "This episode could be characterized as misplaced concern on behalf of Philip Morris — that they acted on a quality control issue that they were concerned about, but failed to act on the obvious health problems associated with smoking."

Philip Morris said it recalled the 8 billion Marlboros, Virginia Slims and other brands last May because they tasted and smelled bad and because an irritating chemical used in making pesticides, methyl isothiocyanate, turned up in filters.

The CDC said it did find methyl isothiocyanate in the recalled cigarettes, but researchers also found it in Philip Morris cigarettes manufactured after the recall and up to a year before the recall. It also was found in ciga-

rettes from other manufacturers.

"There was no additional problem that we could detect from the contamination," Ericksen said.

It's not against the law for the chemical to be in cigarettes, Ericksen said.

Philip Morris initially reported the methyl isothiocyanate was created in very small amounts by contaminants in a material used to strengthen filters. The company later concluded trace amounts of the chemical found in its cigarette filters were absorbed from paperboard packaging materials, said Karen Daragan, a company spokeswoman in New York.

The company switched to a different supplier for the strengthener and hasn't had any more taste or smell problems, Daragan said.

## House bill to guarantee health insurance coverage

WASHINGTON — Looking for success where President Clinton failed, the Republican-controlled House passed legislation Thursday night to guarantee access to health insurance to millions of Americans who lose or leave their jobs.

The vote was 267-151.

Passage sent the measure to the Senate, where Majority Leader Bob Dole, the GOP presidential nominee-in-waiting, has scheduled debate for next month on a more modest measure. That narrower bill enjoys substantial bipartisan support and has the backing of the White House, as well.

"After years of talking about health care reform we are now, with a new Republican majority, going to enact health care reform," said Rep. Bill Archer, R-Texas, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He said the measure provides for "availability and affordability" of insurance for millions who now go without it.

But the bill also contains several provisions that drew fire from the White House and Democratic critics, including ceilings on medical malpractice awards and a system of tax-deductible, individual savings accounts to cover medical expenses.

Republicans "loaded up a very good bill with a lot of goodies for special

interests," including the American Medical Association, said Rep. Joseph Moakley, D-Mass. Other Democrats said these measures might doom the bill, taking insurance reform down with it.

Democratic efforts to strip out many of these provisions and substitute a more limited measure, failed, 226-192.

Republicans hope to showcase election-year passage of the measure as one of the major accomplishments of the 104th Congress, the first one under GOP control in four decades. Clinton's plan for universal coverage failed in 1994 after Republicans attacked it as a government takeover of the nation's health care system.

In a recent speech, House Speaker Newt Gingrich described the current effort to reform health insurance as a major step toward "relieving one of the major anxieties of working Americans."

In remarks before a final vote, Gingrich also signalled a willingness to back down on some of the more controversial items "if the president sends up a veto signal." He mentioned the Medical Savings Accounts and malpractice provisions, although he also said the trial lawyers who oppose them "should not be ripping America

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