

Senate reaches compromise on limits

■ The vote to raise hard-money donations is the first step of many for McCain supporters.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - The Senate voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to raise the limits on contributions to candidates and political parties, hoping to strike a balance on campaign finance legislation one day after moving to flush millions of dollars out of the nation's political system.

The 84-16 vote on a hastily crafted compromise cleared the latest - but not the last - hurdle blocking passage of legislation pressed by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and his allies to curtail the influence of big money in politics.

"Money is not evil in and of itself," said Sen. Fred Thompson, R-Tenn., shortly before the Senate agreed to increase donation limits enacted in the wake of the Watergate scandal a quarter-century ago.

Donors would be permitted to give \$2,000 a year to any candidates of their choice, and \$37,500 overall to candidates and political parties for use in direct campaign expenses.

These limits would rise with inflation in the future. The current limits are \$1,000 and \$25,000.

The compromise called for smaller increases than Thompson originally wanted, but more than Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., proposed in an alternative that caused a legislative stand-off and prompted closed-door negotiations in a meeting room a few paces off the Senate floor.

Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, the leading Democratic supporter of the bill, emerged to say he would give his support reluctantly to the increases.

"We have to make this move," he said, or else risk the unraveling of a coalition that has been painstakingly put together in nearly two weeks of floor debate.

Even with the compromise, other obstacles remain, including a thorny question of whether the Supreme Court should be directed to consider the measure one provision at a time or render a verdict on its constitutionality as a whole.

Lawmakers on all sides of the bill have raised questions about the constitutionality of a variety of its provisions.



Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., gets an escort from an unidentified man as he leaves the White House on Wednesday in Washington, D.C. Thurmond was attending a meeting between President Bush and Republican leaders.

Mark Wilson/Newsweek

Abortion Web hit-list case thrown out

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO - A federal appeals court threw out a record \$109 million verdict against anti-abortion activists Wednesday, ruling that a Web site and wanted posters branding abortion doctors "baby butchers" and criminals were protected by the First Amendment.

A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously said the activists could be held liable only if the material authorized or directly threatened violence.

The ruling came two years after a jury in Portland, Ore., ordered a dozen abortion foes to pay damages to Planned Parenthood and four doctors. They had sued under federal racketeering law and the 1994 federal law that makes it illegal to incite violence against abortion doctors.

The case was widely seen as a test of a recent Supreme Court ruling that said a threat must be explicit and likely to cause "imminent lawless action."

"If defendants threatened to commit violent acts, by working alone or with others, then their (works) could properly support the verdict," Circuit Judge Alex Kozinski wrote. "But if their (works) merely encouraged unrelated terrorists, then their works are protected by the First Amendment."

Planned Parenthood and the doctors were portrayed in the Old West-style wanted posters as "baby butchers," and a Web site called the "Nuremberg Files" listed the names and addresses of abortion providers and declared them guilty of crimes against humanity.

The anti-abortion activists said their posters and Web site were protected under the First Amendment because they were merely a list of doctors and clinics - not a threat.

House passes Bush's budget plan

■ The bill will have a tougher time passing through the evenly-divided Senate next week.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - Republicans overwhelmed the Democrats and pushed a \$1.94 trillion budget for 2002 through the House on Wednesday, as President Bush's blueprint for tax cuts and curtailed spending cleared its first major congressional hurdle.

The vote was a near party-line 222-205. Though devoid of suspense because of the GOP's thin but unified majority, Republicans hailed their victory as a triumph for their view of government.

"The choice is between two visions," said House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas. "A vision of bigger and bigger government, a choice between larger and larger taxes or a choice of smaller government that trusts the people."

The House roll call, though, was but a warmup for a rougher test next week in the evenly divided Senate. There, the GOP not only faces near-lockstep Democratic opposition, but some moderate Republicans have said Bush's 10-year, \$1.6 trillion tax cut was too big and his proposed spending restraints too stingy.

Even so, Bush said the House action made Wednesday "a big day" and said the budget's centerpiece - an across-the-board cut in income tax rates - would help all Americans.

"We need to cut all rates so that there's certainty in our economy when people plan, and I'm confident we can get this done," he said before meeting with GOP congressional leaders at the White House.

Hoping to claim the economic stimulus argument as their own, House Democrats joined their Senate colleagues and said they wanted a \$60 billion tax reduction effective this year.

If moved as a separate bill - instead of attached to Bush's big tax cuts, as

Republicans insist - the measure could zip through Congress in a day, Democrats said.

"But they refuse to do it because they have an obsession with a year-old tax plan, like a dog after a bone," House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., said at a news conference, referring to Bush's plan.

Senate Republicans have said they favored a \$60 billion tax cut for this year, but had yet to determine all the details. House GOP leaders remain undecided on the size and shape of a package meant to stimulate the economy. A final figure will be set in the final congressional budget, which House-Senate bargainers hope to complete next month.

Besides its tax reduction, the House GOP budget envisions \$2.3 trillion in debt reduction over the coming decade, using parts of the Social Security and Medicare surpluses to overhaul both programs, and limiting many programs to 4 percent growth next year. That would be half this year's increase.

Besides drawing Democratic fire, Bush's fiscal plans have prompted calls from some Republicans for deeper tax cuts and added spending for defense, farms and special education. But participants in Wednesday's White House session said that while Bush seemed open to changing details of his budget and tax plan, he was sticking to its basic principles, including the \$1.6 trillion tax cut.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., described Bush's message to the lawmakers: "Stay the route. Get this thing done."

Democrats said the GOP budget would squander the \$5.6 trillion federal surplus projected over the next decade, largely to cut taxes for the rich. They said it would shortchange other priorities like schools and new prescription drug coverage, risk a return to budget deficits, and do nothing to buttress Social Security and Medicare for the retirement of baby boomers in the coming decade.

"That's not only a budgetary problem, I think it's a moral problem," said

"We need to cut all rates so that there's certainty in our economy when people plan, and I'm confident we can get this done."

George Bush
president

Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C.

Republicans said their plan was a sound use of federal resources and would lay the groundwork for overdue tax cuts.

"Clear and simple, it's about tax cuts," said Rep. John Sununu, R-N.H. He said that for years, Democrats "have found every reason under the sun to oppose budget resolutions that have tax relief in them."

Congress' budget maps broad tax and spending goals and does not need the president's signature. Tax cuts and spending changes are enacted in later, more detailed bills. This budget covers fiscal 2002, which begins Oct. 1.

Earlier, the House used a near party-line 243-183 roll call to reject an alternative by Democratic leaders that would have trimmed the tax cut to about \$750 billion and set aside more than Bush would have for domestic and defense programs and reducing the debt.

The chamber also defeated an effort by conservative Republicans to increase the tax cut to \$2.2 trillion while limiting spending growth to 2.9 percent.

Meanwhile, the House planned to pass a \$399 billion bill Thursday that would gradually reduce the extra taxes paid by millions of married, two-income couples, while doubling the \$500 child tax credit.

Another measure to eliminate the estate tax over the next decade, at a cost sponsors estimated at below \$200 billion, was likely to win approval Thursday in committee.

Vaccinations last resort for Britain

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON - As the army prepared to slaughter thousands of healthy animals, Britain won European Union permission Wednesday to vaccinate up to 180,000 cattle against foot-and-mouth disease in an effort to contain the epidemic.

British Agriculture Minister Nick Brown said Britain had not yet decided whether to vaccinate - seen as a last resort. But the government wants to have the option because of the scale of the livestock disease outbreak, which has now infected more than 700 farms.

EU officials said vaccination would be limited to the hardest hit English counties, Cumbria and Devon. EU governments have resisted calls for a wider immunization campaign, warning of disastrous consequences for livestock exporters, who would lose disease-free status on world markets.

"Vaccination is no easy solution," Prime Minister Tony Blair said in the House of Commons on Wednesday.

It is being considered, he said, because of the sheer number of potentially infected animals that moved around the country before the disease was first confirmed on Feb. 20.

"Probably around about 1.35 million sheep were exported or moved during the month of February," Blair said. "If this disease was incubating then, clearly it has been far more widespread than hitherto thought."

Brown said Tuesday Britain was ready if it decided to go ahead with vaccinations, with 500,000 shots lined up and access to 5 million more.

The European Commission must still formally approve the measure before vaccinations in Britain can go forward, but that is regarded as a formality. The EU official who confirmed the veterinary experts' decision spoke on condition of anonymity.

Since vaccinated animals carry similar antibodies as those infected with the disease, countries that vaccinate would lose markets in nations that require a "foot-and-mouth free" trading status for imports.

That status is only restored three-months after the last vaccinated ani-

mal is slaughtered, but the EU fears it could take years before its exports would fully recover from a long-term ban.

Another question is the effectiveness of the inoculation.

Officials in Wales said they didn't want vaccination.

"It takes two to three weeks to work, and is not 100 percent effective, and animals have to be slaughtered anyway. It just buys time," said Welsh Rural Affairs Minister Carwyn Jones.

But farmers in Cumbria said the government's current strategy of livestock quarantine and mass slaughter in areas close to heavily infected sites was not working.

"You cannot really blame the government; it has escalated beyond anything they expected," said William Young, whose farm lies within the Cumbrian cull zone.

Some 705 cases of foot-and-mouth have been identified in Britain since Feb. 20, and almost 700,000 animals have been earmarked for slaughter.

Britain's Ministry of Defense said army butchers would join the cull Wednesday at an unused air base in Great Orton, Cumbria, where thousands of animals are being buried in a giant pit.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

Washington, D.C. Train derailments increase 20 percent in four years

The number of train derailments - like the recent Amtrak accident in Iowa that killed one person and injured 96 others - have increased by nearly 20 percent over the past four years.

Both the Federal Railroad Administration and the Department of Transportation's inspector general have found poorly maintained track and inadequate inspections by the railroads could be partly to blame.

The number of railroad industry inspectors has been reduced and the federal and state governments have only 550 people to make sure that the industry is adequately checking 230,000 miles of track.

FRA's associate administrator for safety, George Gavalla, said the agency had focused its efforts on heavily used tracks and rail yards, and all tracks that carry passengers and hazardous materials. On those tracks, accidents are down, he said. Many of the derailments occur in yards when crews assemble train cars.

"We concentrate on where we think the risk is," Gavalla said.

Overall, FRA statistics show that the number of derailments on all tracks and rail yards rose by 18 percent between 1997 and 2000, from 1,741 to 2,059.

Illinois Governor ready for toll-booth overhaul

LOCKPORT - Gov. George Ryan has proposed converting Illinois' toll roads into freeways over the next 20 years, with the first toll booths coming down next year.

Under the proposal announced Wednesday, tolls would rise gradually until the entire toll system was eliminated.

State lawmakers would have to agree to restructure more than \$800 million in tollway debt.

"By 2021, the toll roads will be safer, they will be less congested and they will be free," Ryan said.

Senate President James "Pate" Philip - whose brother is the tollway chairman - criticized the plan, questioning how the state would pay for it and how drivers would react to higher tolls.

"It's going to be difficult" to pass, Philip said. "Can the governor do it? Yeah, he probably can."

China

China sees population increase, growth slows

BEIJING - China's population has grown to 1.26 billion people and is getting older, better educated and more urbanized, according to figures announced Wednesday from its first nationwide census in a decade.

The population has grown by 132.2 million or 11.7 percent since 1990, said Zhu Zhixin, director of the National Bureau of Statistics.

Birth-control policies held population growth to 1.07 percent a year, down 0.4 percentage points from the 1990 rate, Zhu said.

Urban couples and many rural families have been restricted to just one child since the late 1970s to ease the strain on food supplies and resources.

"The results of the population census fully prove that the family planning policy of China is very effective," Zhu said at a news conference. "The natural growth rate of the population declined."

Clarification

Because of a reporting error, the purpose of a resolution passed by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents was misstated in Friday's Daily Nebraskan.

The regents passed a resolution earlier this month calling for the NCAA to look into setting spending limits nationally for all athletic programs.

Correction

Because of a reporting error, Sen. Patrick Bourne of Omaha was misidentified in Wednesday's edition of the Daily Nebraskan.

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Weather

TODAY	TOMORROW
Showers High 55, low 37	Showers High 55, low 39