

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Dannemeyer introduces two new AIDS bills

Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) introduced two new pieces of legislation on May 5, H.R. 2272 and H.R. 2273, designed to combat the AIDS epidemic. The bills were introduced with 48 cosponsors.

The first would mandate reporting of those individuals who are carriers of the AIDS virus. Currently, state laws and the guidelines of the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control (CDC) only require the reporting of individuals who show symptoms of AIDS illness, even though all can infect other persons. Dannemeyer criticized the fact that while "persons with a curable, communicable disease, venereal disease" must be reported to health authorities, "persons with a noncurable, communicable, fatal disease are not reportable to public health authorities and, in fact, are not accountable for their acts at all."

The second bill would require mandatory testing of certain categories of individuals, including federal prisoners, immigrants, applicants for marriage licenses, persons convicted of prostitution and IV drug use, hospital admittees between the ages of 15 and 49, and persons being treated for venereal disease. Dannemeyer said it is essential to give "public health authorities the tools to estimate the magnitude of the problem we now face and assess the proper response to control what is now an uncontrollable problem."

Dannemeyer proposed this narrower testing approach because "these groups represent persons who have routine interaction with health authorities and cases in which it would be economical and efficient to perform a test for presence of the AIDS anti-

body. In other cases, the groups represent high-risk populations which should be tested to protect those who may unknowingly interact with these HIV positive individuals."

These bills were introduced as the House Health and Environment subcommittee began hearings May 1 to determine whether national legislation was required for testing and reportability. Subcommittee chairman Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) is pushing for voluntary testing programs with strict confidentiality, arguing that mandatory reporting would drive carriers underground.

Dannemeyer condemned this approach. "In my view this is an irresponsible and irrational reaction to a deadly, infectious disease and is contradicted by data," he said. Comparing Colorado, which has mandatory reporting, to California, which does not, Dannemeyer pointed out that Colorado has done 25% more testing per hundred thousand population.

Complaints voiced on immigration law

Rep. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) attacked the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, on May 4. "I voted for this bill with a lot of reservations, as did many others" last year, Richardson said. "What the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] is doing is not what the Congress intended, and not what many of us voted for."

Complaints cut across the spectrum, from discrimination, overly burdensome requirements on employers and aliens who are seeking permanent residency and citizenship, to farmers unable to get help. The

administration's definition of "perishable commodities," which determines whether or not many foreign workers can get into the United States, Richardson charged, "excludes many deserving grower groups and farmworkers."

Richardson added that "by charging close to \$700 per family after all expenses, the INS is trying to finance this program on the backs of the immigrants. That was not the intent of Congress."

In a letter to INS Commissioner Alan Nelson on April 21, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus made its views known on several regulations, including what would constitute a continuous residence for aliens applying for status; the documents required to establish such residence; that courses be established to give applicants the knowledge required for citizenship, and that the same standards apply as for someone seeking naturalization through the normal procedure; and that employers' hiring forms indicate what documentation they are relying on for hiring.

Project Democracy facing vote in House

The National Endowment for Democracy, the public side of the "secret government" operation known as Project Democracy, is expected to face another vote to delete its funding on or about the third week in May.

NED funding is directed through the U.S. Information Agency, and is part of the Department of State authorization bill which is currently being considered by the House Rules Committee. An earlier attempt to bring the bill to the floor was met with objections from the Reagan administration,

that the funding level was too low. The NED receives roughly \$30 million per year, which is funneled to the AFL-CIO, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Democratic and Republican National Committees.

Funding for the NED was deleted by the House in 1984, only to be approved by the Senate and restored in conference. In 1986, an amendment by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) was defeated 121 to 228.

But since then, the Iran-Contra scandals have determined that some NED-funded organizations aided the private arms-supply operation.

Congress opts for strategic vulnerability

Congress is moving toward final adoption of restrictions on strategic systems, especially the Strategic Defense Initiative, which will ensure that the United States and the West will become vulnerable to Soviet nuclear blackmail.

The House, which is still considering the Defense Authorization bill H.R. 1748, adopted a provision banning the use of funds for the development, testing, or deployment of any Anti-Ballistic Missile system that is sea-, air-, space-, or mobile land-based.

Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) offered an amendment to delete these restrictions, charging that it was an effort to reaffirm only one of 17 ABM Treaty provisions, useful to the Soviets, but which ignores "Agreed Statement D," allowing testing and development of systems based on new physical principles. It is "piecemeal enforcement of agreements," Hunter charged. But his amendment went

down to a 159 to 262 defeat on April 6. The House voted for this restrictive interpretation, despite voting the very next day 418 to 0 for an amendment by Rep. Weldon (R-Pa.) declaring that the Soviet Krasnoyarsk radar puts them "in violation of their legal obligations" of the ABM Treaty.

The Senate Armed Services Committee, chaired by Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) also voted 12 to 8 on May 5 to restrain the SDI program to the narrow interpretation, unless a resolution passed by both houses stipulates otherwise. Offering a trade-off, Nunn said that the \$4.5 billion SDI funding approved by the committee, much higher than the House-passed \$3.6 billion level, would be jeopardized if the administration balked at the testing and development restrictions. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee also included a similar provision, sponsored by Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), in the Department of State authorization bill, by an 11 to 8 vote on May 6.

Senate Republican leaders drafted a letter to President Reagan immediately after the Armed Services Committee action, urging a veto if this restriction remains. Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), ranking member on the committee, charged that the restriction would "represent a unilateral concession by the U.S. at a critical juncture in the arms control negotiations in Geneva."

The House also approved an amendment sponsored by Rep. Norman Dicks (D-Wash.), by a 245 to 181 vote, to ban the use of funds for the deployment of weapons that exceed the numerical limits of the unratified SALT II accord. Rep. William Broomfield (R-Mich.) sponsored an amendment that would abrogate this provision unless the Soviets were in full compliance with SALT II and not

just selective provisions of the Treaty. This was defeated 231 to 189.

Budget dictates defense priorities

On May 5, the House passed a substitute, sponsored by Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), to the Defense Authorization bill, by a 249 to 172 vote, which made clear that the budget process, not national security considerations, is determining the level of spending.

The Aspin substitute provided \$289 billion for defense, conforming with the House-passed Budget Resolution, replacing the bill put forward by the House Armed Services Committee of \$306 billion. Roughly \$302 billion is needed to cover inflation with zero real growth.

While claiming that he wanted a higher spending figure for defense, Aspin insisted that the budget resolution with its lower figure take precedence.

Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-Conn.), a member of the Budget Committee, said that the committee never considered national defense needs. "I regret to say that we did not debate the issue of the defense number in the context of the needs of our nation's defense structure or our long term defense interests in the international community."

The House action came as Senate Democrats were forced to come up with a second budget resolution, nicknamed "Chiles II" after Budget Committee chairman Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.), which brought defense up to \$302 billion from their earlier \$289 billion proposed figure. A House-Senate compromise, therefore, will mean a defense budget that suffers another year of real cuts.