

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

Cranston introduces 'vote early, vote often' bill

California's ultraliberal Sen. Alan Cranston has introduced a bill that would undoubtedly increase the incidence of fraud that has plagued U.S. elections for years.

Entitled the Universal Voter Registration Act of 1987, the measure, introduced Nov. 20, would permit same-day voter registration, as well as mail-in registration for federal elections.

The legislation could well be called the Walter Mondale Memorial Act. Just prior to Election Day, 1976, Mondale, then running for vice president on the ticket headed by Jimmy Carter, enjoined supporters to "vote early and vote often," an injunction that was apparently taken to heart, given the massive, documented fraud which put him and Carter in the White House. Once elected, Mondale vigorously supported legislation to establish universal same-day registration, but Congress had the good sense not to enact it—at least at that time.

Cranston has mustered a gamut of illogical arguments to justify his proposal. For example, he claims that the pitifully low voter turnout in most American elections, can be attributed to various obstacles to registration.

But this simply is not true: For one thing, both parties—and a host of other interest groups—run periodic voter-registration drives; in addition, 23 states already have registration by mail.

The real reason Americans don't vote, is that they have become so disgusted with the general quality of political leadership, that they've given up—for the time being.

Cranston is particularly incensed about the fact that the majority of states

require citizens to register 20 to 30 days before an election, because, he contends, this is "long before many people are even thinking about voting."

But the laws which have Cranston so upset were put on the books for good reason: to prevent the corruption of the electoral process. In the case of the 20-30 day pre-election registration requirement, the intent is to prevent an individual or group of individuals from voting more than once, by registering and voting at numerous polling sites—which same-day registration would facilitate.

Even if one were to accept Cranston's contention that registration difficulties contribute to the lack of voter turnout, making vote fraud easier, which his bill will do, is hardly the way to deal with the problem.

Carlucci gets enthusiastic Senate confirmation

The Senate gave Frank Carlucci an enthusiastic endorsement Nov. 20, confirming his nomination as Defense Secretary by a 91-1 vote.

This was not necessarily a good omen for American national security, especially as those senators who seemed most elated about Carlucci's replacement of Cap Weinberger, are among those most committed to slashing the defense budget, emasculating the Strategic Defense Initiative, and turning back toward the MAD-crisis management regime.

Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), a key saboteur of the SDI, praised Carlucci for his "common-sense pragmatism," and called on his colleagues to confirm him by unanimous vote. Other members lauded Carlucci for being more willing to accept the supposed need

for deep cuts in military spending, and more open to compromising with Congress, than his predecessor.

The only dissenting voice was raised by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who charged that, during his career in the foreign service, Carlucci "was deeply involved in implementing policies which I believe are reprehensible." Helms said that during his stint as U.S. ambassador to Portugal, Carlucci "directed himself with considerable energy to the election of the Socialist candidate, Mario Soares."

Helms also hit Carlucci's track record as CIA deputy director during the latter part of the Carter administration, citing the overthrow of the Shah of Iran as a "massive CIA intelligence failure," and the CIA's "chronic underestimate of Soviet military capability," as a prime cause for the Carter administration's negotiation of the "fatally flawed" SALT II pact.

Budget summit produces mouse

The vaunted budget summit reached an eleventh-hour agreement Nov. 20, to cut the federal budget deficit by \$76 billion over the next two years. The pact calls for \$30.2 billion in deficit reductions in this fiscal year, with the remainder to kick in next. In addition, the plan stipulates a \$9 billion tax hike in the first year, and \$14 billion in 1989.

The agreement will gouge domestic spending, taking \$4 billion out of entitlement programs in the first year. Among those programs targeted for cuts are Medicare, which will suffer a \$2 billion loss, at the same time that medical costs are skyrocketing and more Americans are entering the over-65 age bracket.

Farm subsidies will be reduced by \$900 million; and \$250 million will be pared from already reduced student loan coffers.

The pact, which has already run into problems from some Hill Republicans who don't like the tax hikes provided for, is an absurd response to the economic crisis which exploded on Black Monday, Oct. 19.

The budget cut/tax hike philosophy guiding the agreement is guaranteed not to solve the country's underlying economic program. The fact that \$100 billion in revenue flows were wiped out by the stock market crash underscores the stupidity of this approach. To compensate, taxes would actually have to be increased by \$100 billion—leaving most Americans with no money to live on.

That did not stop either the White House, nor the vast majority of the House and Senate leaderships, from patting themselves on the back for the agreement. House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Tex.) proclaimed that the agreement "is a demonstration in times of stress" that the White House and Congress "can work together." House Majority Leader Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) called it a "milestone in our effort to bring about a reduction of the deficit."

What the agreement actually shows, is that in times of stress, the current leadership of the country is inclined to either take the easy way out—the consequences be damned—or do exactly what Wall Street demands.

Is Senate opposition to INF collapsing?

Early in November, Sen. Alan Cranston warned on national television that

the INF treaty faced deep trouble on Capitol Hill. The pro-INF senator predicted that opponents of the treaty might be able to muster the 34 votes needed to defeat the pact, and called on the White House to bring the Senate into line.

Now, that opposition appears to be collapsing. A number of senators who were expected to play a key role on the anti-INF side, have reportedly decided, for various reasons, either to withdraw from the battle, or give their support to the agreement.

According to a Nov. 27 Evans and Novak column, the latest verification procedures agreed to by the Soviets have so "surprised" Senate conservatives, that instead of launching their expected "bitter-end struggle" against INF treaty ratification, "they may move to a fallback strategy: Wait for next year's START accord."

The columnists reported that four of the most important anti-INF senators—James McClure (R-Ida.), Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), Pete Wilson (R-Calif.), and Dan Quayle (R-Ind.)—have suddenly changed their tune, and may end up voting for the treaty. McClure, Evans and Novak noted, is one of seven national co-chairmen of the George Bush's presidential campaign.

The columnists wrote that if this trend holds, opposition to the INF treaty "may be limited to fewer than a dozen Republicans, headed by Sen. Jesse Helms, with one or two Democrats possibly joining them."

A source at a leading conservative lobbying organization confirmed the essence of the Evans and Novak story. He reported that the line has circulated in conservative layers that it makes no difference whether the INF treaty is ratified, since "those Pershings are going to come out of Europe no matter

what." If the United States rejects the treaty, the line goes, "Gorbachov will just go to Western Europe," where governments "will bend over backward to make the same deal."

Thus, the source reported, conservatives in and out of the Senate, have decided that opposing INF "isn't worth the political capital," and will instead concentrate on deterring a potential START agreement.

The source also disclosed that President Reagan met recently with Wilson and Wallop, and promised them he would make no deals with Gorbachov on the SDI. Soon after, the two senators began to soften their stand on INF.

Capital Crimes

The House voted Nov. 18 to ban the sale of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to any country that is not a member of NATO or a formal U.S. defense ally. The measure would bar Stinger sales to Bahrain and other Persian Gulf countries, as well as to the Afghan resistance. . . . **Sen. Pat Moynihan** (D-N.Y.) has jumped on board the "I love Russia" bandwagon. He placed an article in the Nov. 10 *Congressional Record*, written by Donald Blinken of Warburg, Pincus & Co., promoting the idea that joint ventures between the United States and the Soviet Union would prove an economic boon to both nations. . . . **House Armed Services** Committee chairman Les Aspin led the fight to cut the FY 88 defense budget, but managed to allocate money for twice the number of trucks requested by the Pentagon—each costing between \$170,000 and \$200,000. It turns out that the trucks' manufacture is based in Aspin's home state of Colorado. . . .