

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### Cabinet status for EPA meets stiff opposition

The House voted on Feb. 2 against taking up legislation which would elevate the Environmental Protection Agency to cabinet-level status unless members were allowed to debate amendments designed to control the EPA's regulatory apparatus.

Numerous amendments have been introduced designed to limit the power which would accrue to the EPA if it attained cabinet-level status. One would require the EPA to demonstrate that every new regulation which it institutes is worth its costs. Another would seek compensation for landowners deprived of the unrestricted use of their property by environmental restrictions.

A wide array of farm groups, state legislators, chemical manufacturers, and others concerned about the stringent restrictions on productive activity being mooted by the EPA were mobilized against the legislation. The vote on Feb. 2 was a rejection of the House leadership's attempts to limit the scope of the debate, in which it hoped to sabotage these amendments. The legislation will now be reconsidered by the Rules Committee before any action on it can be taken.

### Banking deregulation clears another hurdle

A House Banking subcommittee on Feb. 3 took the first steps toward banking deregulation which would undermine what remains of the healthy portions of the U.S. banking sector. Legislation was unanimously approved which would permit banks to operate branches across state lines.

The bill would permit healthy banks to acquire any bank in any state

within one year of enactment of the legislation. After 18 months, banks with subsidiaries around the nation could combine those units into a single branch network. This provision would immediately benefit multi-state institutions such as Citicorp, Bank-America Corp., and NationsBank Corp.

States would have three years to adopt laws exempting themselves from the plan. Meanwhile, banks could establish branches in any state that specifically allows such a move. The bill, which has the support of the Clinton administration, now goes to the full House Banking Committee; a vote could occur in early March. A similar measure is tentatively set for a vote in the Senate Banking Committee in late February.

The outlook for the legislation in the full Congress is far from certain. Lawmakers are likely to try to attach amendments that would curb banks' power to sell insurance, as well as measures on behalf of consumers, such as requiring banks to cash government checks. However, on Feb. 3, Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) said he had decided not to offer an amendment regarding banks' power to sell insurance, claiming he did not want to hold up the overall bill. It was such an amendment which prevented similar legislation from passing in 1991.

### AID bill calls for population control

Speaker of the House Tom Foley (D-Wash.) transmitted to Congress on Feb. 2 the Clinton administration's proposed Peace, Prosperity, and Democracy Act of 1994, which would replace the prevailing norms of foreign aid as defined by the Foreign As-

sistance Act of 1961. The new legislation would be determining in the formulation of U.S. foreign aid policy.

The measure establishes four guideposts as fundamental in U.S. foreign assistance: a) "sustainable development," which the legislation mistakenly defines as "broad-based" economic growth; b) protecting the global environment; c) supporting democratic participation; and d) stabilizing world population growth. The bill would set specific goals to stabilize the world's population at less than 10 billion people by the year 2050, to reduce child mortality rates by one-third over this decade, and to reduce maternal mortality rates by one-half during the same period. The new legislation will also attempt to make U.S. aid policy a handmaiden for the promotion of U.S. business interests abroad.

Countries which are supportive of this environmentalist, zero-growth agenda will be entitled to receive aid. Countries which are not would be hit with a reduction or cutoff of U.S. foreign assistance.

### 'No pray, no pay' added to Goals 2000

The U.S. Senate passed on Feb. 4 by a 75-22 vote an amendment offered by Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to the Goals 2000 education bill, which would deny federal funds to state or local agencies that bar constitutionally protected prayer in public schools.

Helms commented during the debate, "You can pinpoint when the decline of this country actually began," referring to the 1962 U.S. Supreme Court decision prohibiting prayer in public schools. "Morality has been all

but forgotten and scoffed at in some circumstances," he said. Students "can't pray in school, but you can hand out condoms to them. . . . What kind of message does this send?"

On Feb. 8, another Helms proposal seeking to prohibit the use of federal money to distribute contraceptives to minors without parental consent, restrictions that would apply to all federal money administered by the departments of Education and Health and Human Services, was defeated in a 59-34 vote.

## **G**ermany, Japan pushed into peacekeeping role

By a vote of 96-1, the Senate passed a non-binding amendment to a State Department bill on Feb. 1 calling on Germany to take a full role in U.N. peacekeeping operations around the world. The amendment is aimed at influencing a German internal debate on its military role in the world.

The vote occurred the day after Chancellor Helmut Kohl completed a visit to Washington that included talks with President Bill Clinton. The amendment said that Congress believed "an appropriate response under current circumstances to Germany's past would be for Germany to participate fully in international efforts to maintain or restore international peace and security." It called on the President to encourage Germany to assume full participation in international peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-enforcing operations. Germany should "take the necessary measures with regard to its constitutional law and policy" to enable this participation, it said.

In a related amendment adopted

on Jan. 28 without a recorded vote, the Senate supported "in principle" German and Japanese permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council. But, in an effort to pressure them to participate in U.N. peacekeeping missions, it added that neither country should be admitted "until each is capable of discharging the full range of responsibilities accepted by all current permanent members."

The non-binding amendment was sponsored by Sen. William Roth (R-Del.), who said that the Germans and Japanese had traditionally interpreted their Constitutions as barring full participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations. But "with power and influence comes responsibility," he said.

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, noted approvingly that Germany had sent troops to Somalia and that Japan was participating in the U.N. operation in Cambodia.

## **T**ougher action sought against North Korea

A number of measures introduced as amendments to the State Department Appropriations bill on Feb. 1 would significantly increase tensions on the Korean peninsula. One measure calls on President Clinton to seek an international consensus to isolate North Korea economically until it halts its nuclear weapons program and agrees to inspection of its nuclear facilities.

The sponsor of the amendment, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), said that North Korea had refused to allow inspections for nearly a year and the dispute was at an impasse. Charging that an American "accommodationist policy" would only embolden Pyong-

yang, McCain told the Senate: "Now is the time to reverse our image abroad as vacillating." McCain said he believed the President should consider all means, including military force, if other methods did not work. The McCain amendment, which was co-sponsored by Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole (Kan.), was adopted without a recorded vote.

Another measure, a non-binding amendment, called for deployment of Patriot anti-missile missiles in South Korea and urged President Clinton to support joint military exercises between U.S. and South Korean forces. The Senate also adopted an amendment sponsored by Sen. Charles Robb (D-Va.), which called on the President to "enhance the defense capability of United States forces by preparing to reintroduce tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea" if North Korea continued to resist nuclear inspection.

Sen. William Cohen (R-Me.) complained about "the uncertain trumpet blowing from the White House" on the Korea dispute. The administration, however, has attempted to temper its handling of the situation.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Feb. 2, Secretary of Defense-designate William Perry said that the United States aims to prevent North Korea from building more nuclear weapons, if it in fact already has any such weapons, but hopes not to have to use force. When McCain asked Perry whether the United States should not also be ready to use "sticks" against North Korea, Perry replied, "There are sticks downstream also. I'm not anxious to precipitate the use of sticks. . . . This is a big, important problem. If we get it wrong, the carrots will seem small in comparison with the price."