

## Congressional Closeup by Carl Osgood

### Welfare reform conference report clears House

On Dec. 21, the House passed the conference report on welfare reform by a vote of 245-178. The bill, which is the Republican plank on welfare reform, converts many welfare programs (Aid to Families with Dependent Children being the most prominent among them) into block grants to the states.

William Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee, praised the block grant system, saying that it "will give states more flexibility in how they can best use these funds." He claimed that the bill maintains "federal oversight as to how the funds are used, and seeks to ensure, through certifications which the state must make in order to receive funds, that states have effective child protection systems."

Sam Gibbons (D-Fla.) called it simply a "lousy bill." He said the idea of block grants is like "putting money where the problem was a couple of years ago, not where the problem is today."

Bob Matsui (D-Calif.) also attacked block grants. The 50 states "have in fact messed up the education system of this country. Now you [Republicans] want to put AFDC and welfare into that mess as well," he said.

### Holbrooke assures Senate: Bosnia mission has teeth

On Dec. 19, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke told the Senate Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), that Adm. Leighton Smith, who officially took command of the Implementation Force (IFOR) on Dec. 28, will have the authority, under the terms of the Dayton agreement, to use force to implement the disarmament terms

agreed to by the three signatories.

"If heavy weapons were not withdrawn from an exclusion zone," Holbrooke said, "and Admiral Smith ordered the Serbs to withdraw them, and they refused, I think the Serbs would learn very, very fast what a huge mistake they've made; that this is not the U.N.; this is not Unprofor [U.N. Protection Force]. And I expect the Serbs, perhaps, to test Admiral Smith very early on. And I think when they—if they test him, they will be very sorry they did so." He added that it is not the mission of IFOR to disarm the Serbs.

Holbrooke said that the State Department has appointed a coordinator to deal with equipping and training the army of the Bosnian-Croat federation. Holbrooke also reported that an assessment of Bosnian military needs is under way, which is being carried out by a civilian contractor agency.

Holbrooke stressed that he wasn't talking about the government in Sarajevo, but rather, the Muslim-Croat federation, because "the greatest threat to stability in the region today would be the resumption of Muslim-Croat friction. . . . We will conduct our commitment to ensure that the federation forces are brought to military parity, at the same time we insist on the implementation of the arms-control, arms-stabilization agreements."

### Abraham defends legal immigration

Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), in remarks on the Senate floor on Dec. 19, sharply criticized an immigration reform bill that was passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee a few weeks earlier, because "this bill would combine measures aimed at reducing illegal immigration with dramatic re-

ductions in legal immigration."

Abraham described illegal immigration as "a significant national problem, one that should be dealt with by discussing ways to deal with people who cross our borders illegally." In contrast, he said, "legal immigrants are overwhelmingly law-abiding and hardworking people who contribute to our economy and our society."

Abraham attacked some of the deeply held axioms of the anti-immigration lobby. "Immigration is not a zero-sum game in which every job that goes to a foreign-born worker means one less job for an American worker," he said. "Immigration is a positive-sum gain for Americans in terms of jobs, living standards, and economic growth. . . . Lowering the legal immigrant quota will lower the benefit we can gain from hard-working and highly skilled immigrants."

### Byrd blasts 'insolence' of certain Republicans

On Dec. 20, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.), in a 45-minute speech liberally sprinkled with quotes from the New Testament, excoriated certain Republican senators for their incivility on the floor of the Senate. He singled out Connie Mack (R-Fla.) and Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) for remarks during debate on the budget on Dec. 15.

Mack had accused the Democrats of lacking the "guts" to put an alternative budget proposal on the table; Santorum had accused President Clinton of not knowing "how to tell the truth anymore," and Democratic senators of lying about the Republican tax cut proposals. Byrd said that in his 37 years in the Senate, he had never seen such "insolence" from another senator, especially one "who has not yet held the office of senator a full year."

"It is one thing to criticize the policies of the President and his administration," he continued. "But it is quite another matter to engage in personal attacks that hold the President up to obloquy and opprobrium and scorn. . . . The bandying about of such words as liar, or lie, can only come from a contumelious lip, and for one, who has been honored to serve in the high office of United States senator, to engage in such rude language arising from haughtiness and contempt, is to lower oneself in the eyes of his peers, and of the American people generally, to the status of a street brawler."

Byrd added that "there have been giants in this Senate," but "little did I know when I came here, that I would live to see pygmies stride like colossuses while marveling, like Aesop's fly sitting on the axle of a chariot, 'My, what a dust I do raise!'"

A short while later, Mack apologized, but he said, "for me to stand here and imply or allow others to conclude that I am the only one that might have pushed the envelope with respect to words used would, in fact, be a tragic mistake." Santorum, however, has yet to be heard from.

David Pryor (D-Ark.) suggested that a videotape of Byrd's remarks should be required viewing for the orientation of all newly elected senators.

## Securities litigation reform veto overridden

The House voted 319-100 on Dec. 20 to override President Clinton's veto of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act. The Senate followed suit on Dec. 22, by a vote of 68-30. The stated purpose of the bill is to end frivolous lawsuits and reduce the litigation risk to firms that make "forward looking" statements. President Clinton, in his

veto message, said that while he supports the goals of the legislation, he wasn't "willing to sign legislation that will have the effect of closing the courthouse door on investors who have legitimate claims," which, he said, several provisions in the bill will do.

Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) cautioned against a "rush here to the floor to override the President's veto without any real deliberation as to the substantive issues which were raised in his message."

Rep. Chris Cox (R-Calif.), on the other hand, called the bill "one of the most bipartisan, carefully crafted pieces of legislation in congressional history." Cox was formerly a partner in the California law firm of mergers and acquisitions specialist Latham and Watkins, which is second only to Skadden Arps in importance in the most junk bond-infested area of U.S. finance. Cox also served as a senior adviser on deregulation, which rewards looters and punishes productive industry, to President Ronald Reagan.

## Defense Authorization bill faces likely veto

On Dec. 19, Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, warned that President Clinton will veto the 1996 Defense Authorization bill, because the House "was unwilling to make the compromises necessary to get a bill that is likely to be approved by the Clinton administration. The bill contains a military pay increase and changes in procurement procedures, but, on balance, "this bill's bad policy outweighs its good policies in its current form," Nunn said.

Among the provisions that Nunn objected to was a requirement to sell

the Naval Petroleum Reserve, and a "buy American" provision, which, Nunn said, would damage "the export sector of the United States that currently has a very strong trade surplus," because of anticipated retaliation by foreign countries unable to bid on U.S. defense contracts.

John Glenn (D-Ohio) said that the missile defense provisions should also be reason for rejecting the bill. The language in the conference report on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty gives "the appearance that the United States intends to unilaterally violate the ABM Treaty," he said.

## Lugar would expand NAFTA to Trinidad and Tobago

Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) introduced a resolution on Dec. 19 to express the sense of the Senate that Trinidad and Tobago should be "deemed ready, willing, and able to undertake all of the general obligations imposed by the North American Free Trade Agreement," and that negotiations should begin immediately to bring them into NAFTA.

Lugar made various ludicrous claims about the supposed benefits of NAFTA, in the face of mounting evidence, repeatedly presented by Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) and others, that NAFTA is not living up to the promises made for it, especially in terms of increased economic activity and job creation.

Lugar gushed that growth in Trinidad and Tobago's oil and gas industry "presents excellent opportunities for United States companies interested in conducting operations in the Caribbean." He praised Trinidad's "aggressive economic reform policy provisions," which have reduced the government's annual deficit as well as its external debt load.