

House says no

Consumer agency bites bullet

Here's how area members of Congress were recorded on major roll call votes Feb. 2 through Feb. 8.

HOUSE

CONSUMER AGENCY—Defeated, 189 for and 227 against, a bill to create an Office of Consumer Representation to represent the consumer interest in policy-making by other federal agencies. Although the bill (HR 6805) has not been voted upon by the Senate, rejection in the House eliminated any chance of it becoming law.

Establishment of the agency, the first of its kind, was favored by Ralph Nader, President Carter and consumer and "public interest" groups, and opposed by the Republican leadership and business organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers and U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Rep. Robert Drinan (D-Mass.), a supporter, said: "Simple justice requires that such a consumer advocate be created. . . businesses are thoroughly represented before federal agencies while all too often consumers lack the organization and resources to press their own interests effectively."

Rep. Bill Alexander (D-Ark.), an opponent, said "the public interest is already sufficiently protected through federal agency and consumer offices and . . . the establishment of this new layer of bureaucracy is unnecessary."

Members voting "nay" were opposed to establishment of a federal agency for consumers.

Reps. David Bonior (D-Mt. Clemens), William Ford (D-Taylor), William Brodhead (D-Detroit), James Blanchard (D-Pl. Ridge) and Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth) voted "yea."

Rep. William Broomfield (R-Birm.) voted "nay."

CONSUMER AGENCY—Rejected, 138 for and 274 against, an amendment to include the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) among the federal agencies that could be targets of the proposed consumer protection agency. The amendment sought to eliminate the two labor-oriented agencies' exemption from the bill to create an Office of Consumer Representation (see vote above).

Rep. Dan Quayle (R-Ind.), the sponsor, said the NLRB and FMCS should not be exempted because "in all fairness, any labor dispute or labor agreement could in fact affect the consumers that this bill is so inherently interested in."

Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal (D-N.Y.), an opponent, said neither labor nor management favored the amendment because "those who are concerned with public policy have recognized that it is extraordinarily injurious for any outside forces to tamper with or to interfere with the labor-management relations."

Members voting "yea" were opposed to the exemption granted the NLRB and the FMCS federal mediation service.

Roll Call Report

Broomfield voted "yea."
Bonior, Ford, Brodhead, Blanchard and Pursell voted "nay."

JUDGESHIPS—Passed, 319 for and 80 against, a bill creating 145 new federal judgeships, 110 in U.S. district courts and 35 in appellate courts. The bill (HR 7843) was sent to conference with the Senate. It sets up non-binding procedures for the merit selection of district court judges, in an effort to make judicial ability more important than political connections in the selection of judges. However, the procedures are unlikely to be put into use, because senators are unwilling to give up their prerogative to pick federal judges.

Rep. Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), a supporter, said more judges are needed because the district court caseload increased from 52,000 to 127,000 between 1950-77 and the appellate court caseload from 3,226 in 1953 to 19,000 in 1977.

Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), an opponent, said "the docket is not as imposing as the statistics they cite may indicate. In too many instances, judges simply need to be more efficient."

Members voting "yea" favored the bill.

Bonior, Brodhead, Blanchard and Pursell voted "yea."
Broomfield voted "nay."
Ford did not vote.

SENATE

NUCLEAR POLICY—Adopted, 47 for and 44 against, an amendment to make it easier to bring spent nuclear fuel from a foreign reactor into the U.S. for storage. Such a policy seeks to diminish the chance of the spent fuel being diverted from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons. The amendment was generally opposed by the nuclear power industry. It was attached to a bill (S 8638) to control the exporting of peaceful nuclear technology, in order to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The bill was later passed and sent to conference with the House. This amendment required votes by both houses of Congress to block an agreement for bringing spent nuclear fuel into the United States. It replaced language requiring only a one-house veto.

Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio), the sponsor, said the amendment was a necessary part of the Senate's "attempt to curb a growing specter of potential nuclear holocaust around the world."

Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), an opponent, said additional nuclear waste should not be brought into the U.S. at a time when the "country itself has no—and I repeat no—plan for the disposition of waste in this country at all—no plan whatsoever."

Senators voting "yea" favored the Glenn amendment.
Sen. Donald Riegle (D) voted "yea."
Sen. Robert Griffin (R) voted "nay."

Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.), a supporter of tabling, said the amendment "now starts to invade our ability to keep the nonproliferators in charge rather than the nuclear salesmen."

Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), an opponent of tabling, said that without his amendment to simplify licensing by the NRC, suppliers in the U.S. will lose business.

Senators voting "yea" favored the stricter licensing policy.
Riegle voted "yea."
Griffin voted "nay."

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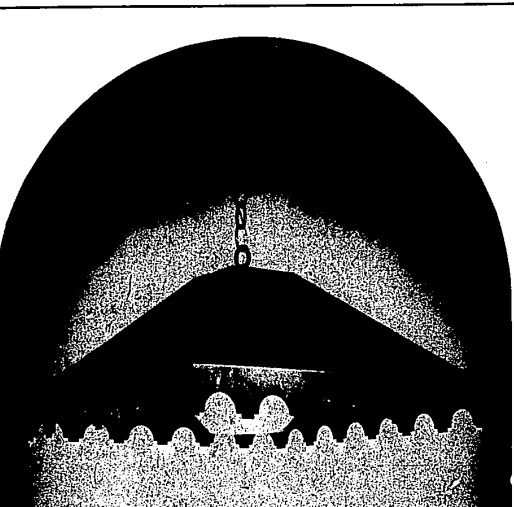
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