roll call report

Dems' House muscle changes Reagan's budget

Here's how area members of Congress were recorded on major roll call votes March 17-23.

HOUSE

BUDGET: By a vote of 229 for and 196 against, the House approved a fiscal 1984 budget blueprint that sharply contrasts Democratic and GOP priorities in areas such as defense, taxation and social spending. It goes to the Senate.

The victory margin showed that House Democrats now can effectively challenge President's mastery of Capitol Hill on fiscal issues.

The $863.5 billion Democratic-drafted budget projects a $174.5 billion deficit, $14.3 billion less than Reagan's budget envisions. It calls for $30 billion in additional tax revenue, probaly through cancellation of the final year of the administration's three-year supply-side tax cut.

It cuts the president's defense request by $10 billion, and it raises spending for food stamps, welfare and many other social programs the administration wants to cut.

The measure (HCR 91) is a master plan to guide later work on individual spending bills.

Supporter Jim Wright, D-Tex., said, "The American people in opinion poll after opinion poll have indicated that . . .they would prefer to forego the third year of the tax cut."

Opponent Ed Bethune, R-Ark., said any member voting yes is "a 100 percent, full-blown, unadulturated practictioner of national liberal Democratic policies which mean more and more central government and more and more economic planning."

Members voting yes favored the Democratic budget. Voting yes: Dennis Hertel, D-Detroit, William Ford, D-Taylor and Sander Levin, D-Southfield.

Voting no: Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, and William Broomfield, R-Birmingham.

TARGET: By a vote of 132 for and 277 against, the House rebuffed Senate attempts to target less jobs money to areas of highest unemployment.

The vote came during debate on HR 1718, the anti-recessión bill that appropriates $4.6 billion for hurry-up public works construction and other projects aimed at creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in upcoming months.

On this vote, the House stuck by its plan to target some $1.8 billion to areas situated mostly in the Midwest and Northeast.

For example, the House wanted most of the $389 million earmarked for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects to be spent in the most destitute areas rather than in the sunbelt.

On a later, non-record vote, the House kept much of its targeting but accepted part of the Senate plan to spread a large chunk of the jobs money evenly throughout the country. The bill, which also provided money to help certain states pay unemployment benefits, was sent to the White House.

Members voting no wanted to target a large share of the jobs outlay to areas where unemployment is highest. Voting no: Hertel, Pursell, Ford and Levin.

Not voting: Broomfield.

Voting yes: none.

SENATE

BANKS: By a vote of 54 for and 43 against, the Senate shelved an amendment to delay from next July 1 until Jan. 1 the date on which financial institutions are to begin collecting for the Treasury 10 percent of the interest and dividends paid depositors.

The vote removed the issue from the Social Security rescue bill that later was passed and sent to the White House.

Senators voting no wanted to delay or repeal the withholding provision. Michigan's Democratic senatos, Carl Levin and Donald Riegle, voted no.

Opposed by millions of complaining constituents and such lobbies as the American Bankers Association, the new withholding law is to be debated again by the Senate in mid-April.

It is a tax collection device aimed at raising an estimated $4 billion now lost to tax cheaters. It would cost the average saver liquidity of about 50 cents for every $1,000 in a savings account.

Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kans., who voted to shelve the delay attempt, said the banking lobby "ought to lay out the facts and should not try to deceive the American people. They should not say it is a tax when it is not a tax."

Opponent John Melcher, D-Mont., said, "People feel it is harassment. People feel it is just some more red tape. People do not really believe . . .it nets out to much revenue gain. I agree."

COVERAGE: The Senate rejected, 45 for and 50 against, an amendment dealing with whether new federal employes should be required to join Social Security.

Most senators voting no were opposed to including new federal workers in Social Security without first legislating a supplemental civil services retirement plan. Levin and Riegle voted no.

The amendment was opposed by federal workers' unions and other lobbies that want civil servants to keep their present retirement system, which is partly funded by all taxpayers.

The amendment advocated mandatory Social Security for federal workers hired after the beginning of next year. But in a bow to civil servants, it let them defer contributions to the existing civil service retirement system until Congress has replaced the latter with a new supplemental pension system.

The supplemental system is seen as necessary to provide federal workers pension benefits comparable to those in the private sector. The Social Security rescue bill (HR 1900), later sent to the White House, makes participation mandatory for new federal workers but is vague on the new supplemental system.

Sponsor Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, said his amendment would insure that federal workers get a sound supplemental system at the same time they are participating in Social Security.

Opponent John Glenn, D-Ohio, said, "It is not fair to include new federal employees under Social Security without providing in advance how pension benefits will be protected."

ALIENS' BENEFITS: By a vote of 34 for and 58 against, the Senate refused to table (kill), and thus kept aliv, an amendment denying Social Security benefits to illegal aliens who have worked in the Uunited States.

Senators voting no wanted to prevent illegal aliens from collecting Social Security benefits. Riegle voted no.

Levin voted yes.

The amendment was knocked out later, however, in House-Senate conference. The bill (HR 1900) was sent to the White House.

Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., supported killing the amendment, saying, "Never before. . .in the Social Security system have we provided that those who pay in do not get their benefits." Hearings should be held later to determine if the idea is valid, he added.

Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., who sponsored the amendment, said it was wrong to try to keep illegal aliens out of the country and then "turn around and support those aliens that break immigration laws with Social Security benefits."

Great Lakes states join political forces

By Tim Richard
staff writer

"We've got a lot of problems in common," said Jack Licate as he gave southeast Michigan businesspeople their first look at the Great Lakes Economic Policies Council.

Licate, once a faculty member at Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, will be chief staff man of the organization set up by chambers of commerce in Detroit, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland and Milwaukee.

Top priority, he said, will be the "urban infrastructure" — streets, public transit, bridges, water and sewers in the major, older urban centers.

LICATE (pronounced LI-cott) spoke Friday to a government relations roundtable of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce in Troy. As acting executive director, he will work out of the Cleveland Growth Association office, which provided the thrust for the Great Lakes group.

Other regions of the country for years have been successful at developing agendas of regional needs and working in Congress to get them, Licate said.

He cited the Northeast, which went after Amtrak service and public transit; the Southern Growth Policies Council, which has brought home lucrative defense contracts; and the West, whose most serious need — water — has been aided by federal reclamation money.

The South gets $1.10 of federal spending for every $1 of taxes it sends to Washington, the West $1.06, the eight Great Lakes states 79 cents, he said.

Among individual states, he said, energy-rich New Mexico receives $1.72, oil-rich Alaska $1.58, Ohio 77 cents, and Michigan 68 cents.

"WE WANT to lobby for the doable," said Licate, emphasizing building friends to win specific regional goals. Among specific goals:

- Appropriating defense dollars to areas of high unemployment.
- Retaining the right to issue industrial revenue bonds.
- Winning investments in infrastructure of cities.

Added Frank E. Smith, president of the Greater Detroit Chamber: "Of concern to the council is the basis of federal funding, eligibility for funding, formulas, flexibility for administration and the future of funding grant programs for community and urban development."

Licate reported the Great Lakes governors agreed to hold an "economic summit" in Cleveland the last week of May. They will concentrate on short-term measures to revitalize the regional economy.

Good news in price drop

Manown (Buck) Kisor Jr., executive vice president of Comerica, Inc., spotted good news in the recent 0.2-percent drop in consumer prices in February.

In an economic analysis for the bank holding company, Kisor said the "month-to-month change lowered the inflation rate for the past 12 months to 3.5 percent, the lowest since 1972.

"Over the next 12 months, inflation should run at roughly the same rate — something in the order of 3 to 5 percent if oil prices remain around present levels, lower if they break below $25 per barrel. This means increases in consumer prices of 0.2 to 0.4 percent per month over most of the rest of 1983 — faster than the pace of recent months, but nothing to be overly concerned about.

"At this stage of the business cycle, we should expect a gradual firming of prices throughout the economy. Indeed, further declines in consumer prices beyond the next month or so would not be welcomed because, unless they result from another round of OPEC oil cuts, they would be a sign of a weakening of the recovery."

OU prof will talk on robots


Donald Falkenburg

"Robots That Think?" is the topic of a free public lecture at 8 a.m. April 13 in Room 203 of Dodge Hall on the Oakland University campus, Avon Township.

Donald Falkenburg, OU engineering professor, will present the lecture. He is acting director of the university's Center for Robotics and Advanced Automation.

Falkenburg also is a member of the Industrial Technology Institute, created by the state to coordinate high-technology information from the public and private sectors.

The program is part of the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce Morning Seminar Series. For reservations, call the chamber, 651-6700.

Area airport gets $86,500

The Oakland-Troy Airport will spend $86,500 for improvements this year using state and federal governments, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Improvements will include runway lighting, a beacon and a wind cone.

Half the money comes from state funds generated through the aviation fuel tax. The other half is federal money generated through user fees. The federal grants are administered through the Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Jobs Program.

The project is one of 14 — costing $17.5 million — approved by the Michigan Aeronautics Commission.