

Index keeps tabs on Congress

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When members of Congress last year approved the fiscal 1984 budget for the legislative branch, they reached a new high in spending on themselves and what appeared to be a new low in accounting to constituents for what they had done.

Despite a parliamentary strategy by congressional leaders to hold down the number of amendments offered to politically embarrassing measures, a few record votes were held in each chamber.

Most of those votes are included in the accompanying Comfort Index chart, which reveals to constituents how their lawmakers stood on issues relating to pay, staff support, expense accounts and other elements of "the good life" on Capitol Hill.

Here are details on votes that make up the 1983 Comfort Index:

HOUSE

EXPENSE ACCOUNTS — The House rejected, 158 for and 180 against, an amendment to cut \$6.9 million from the \$57 million earmarked for members' office expense accounts. These accounts are for computers and other equipment in members' offices, travel to and from the district, telephone costs, rental of district offices and related costs. The \$67 million figure increased spending by \$10 million over the 1983 level.

A yes vote was in favor of the \$6.9 million cut.

Voting yes: William Broomfield, R-Birmingham.

Voting no: Dennis Hertel, D-Detroit; William Ford, D-Taylor; and Santer Levin, D-Southfield.

Not voting: Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth.

MAILING COSTS — The House rejected, 134 for and 173 against, an amendment to cut \$9.3 million from the \$97.8 million reimbursement to the Postal Service for members' use of the franking, or free-mailing, privilege. While the frank is supposed to be used only for official business, critics said that in 1984 — an election year — House members will double the 422.8 million pieces of mail they sent to constituents in 1983.

A yes vote was in favor of cutting mailing costs.

Voting yes: Broomfield.

Voting no: Hertel, Ford and Levin.

Not voting: Pursell.

COMMITTEE EXPENSES — The House rejected, 133 for and 189 against, an amendment to reduce outlays for committees from \$44 million to \$38 million. Most of the committee budget is for the payroll, travel and basic operations costs of the House's 28 standing and select committees and their scores of subcommittees.

Voting no: Hertel, Ford, Levin and Broomfield.

Not voting: Pursell.

ELEVATOR OPERATORS — The House rejected, 101 for and 193 against, an amendment to delete nearly \$170,000 for paying the salaries of 14 operators of automatic elevators in House buildings. These are patronage positions.

A yes vote was to eliminate the outlay.

roll call report

Voting no: Hertel, Ford, Levin and Broomfield.

SENATE

SENATORS' PAY — The Senate adopted, 49 for and 47 against, an amendment to raise senators' base salary to the same \$89,800 level House members were receiving, and to limit on honoraria to 50 percent of salary. Honoraria comes chiefly from speeches to special interests.

A yes vote supported the pay hike and limit on honoraria.

Michigan Democrats Carl Levin and Donald Riegle both voted no.

LIMITING HONORARIA — The Senate adopted, 51 for and 41 against, an amendment limiting senators' hono-

rary to 30 percent of their pay. In 1982, 19 of the 100 senators supplemented their public salary with \$40,000 or more in honoraria.

A yes vote supported the curb on honoraria.

Levin and Riegle voted yes.

DAY-CARE CENTER — The Senate passed, 50 for and 31 against, a measure to establish a day-care center that will serve up to 60 children of senators and other senators' employees. A lottery will be used to select children for admission.

Taxpayers are providing \$20,000 in start-up costs and rent-free space in the Senate building, and parents will pay operating costs. Critics said it was wrong for the Senate to open such a facility in view of its votes to cut day-care funding for the rest of the nation, and Sen. Jim Sasser, D-Tenn., said the center "symbolizes special privileges."

A yes vote was in favor of the day-care center.

Levin and Riegle voted yes.

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