

Roll Call Report

Mental health units mandated

Here's how area members of Congress were recorded on major roll-call votes during the week ending Jan. 31.

HOUSE

THE MENTALLY ILL — The House passed, 290 for and 84 against, a bill creating a new categorical grant program under which states would be virtually required to set up agencies to advocate the rights of the mentally ill, at a cost of \$33 million over three years.

The bill (HR 4055), which was sent to the Senate, also expands federal programs in behalf of victims of Alzheimer's disease and their families.

In much the way that mentally retarded persons now enjoy protections set by federal statute, the mentally ill would see their legal clout strengthened by this bill. The advocacy groups could sue in behalf of recently released as well as institutionalized patients, and they would be required to operate independently of existing mental health agencies.

Sponsor Stewart McKinney, R-Conn., said the bill "establishes a long-overdue advocacy system to prevent the abuse and neglect of the mentally ill."

Opponent William Dannemeyer, R-Calif., said "apparently in the eyes of the proponents of this legislation, an annual deficit of \$200 billion is not high enough, a national debt of \$1.8 trillion is not big enough to deter them."

Members voting yes wanted to set up a new federal program for the mentally ill.

Voting yes: Purcell, Hertel, William Ford, Levin, Broomfield.

POLL CLOSING — By a vote of 204 for and 171 against, the House passed and sent

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to the Senate a bill requiring the 48 contiguous states to close their polls simultaneously in presidential election years.

Beginning in 1988, polls every fourth November are to close at 9 p.m. In the east, 8 p.m. local time in the central zone, and 7 p.m. local time in the Pacific and Mountain zones. During presidential election years only, daylight-saving time in the Pacific zone would be extended two weeks to include Election Day, thus making the simultaneous closings mathematically possible.

The purpose of uniform poll-closing is to minimize the perceived effect of network news projections on voter turnout in states where voting has not yet ended.

Sponsors say that with all polls closing at once in the 48 states, calls of winners and losers based on early voting patterns stand no chance of discouraging turnout in western areas of the country.

Supporter William Thomas, R-Calif., called the bill a constitutional and "very modest attempt to deal with this advancing technology" of network newsgathering, such as exit polling.

Opponent Bill Frenzel, R-Minn., said the bill invaded states' rights to address an overstated problem, and that it was "social tinkering with the most precious right of

the American people . . . the election franchise."

Members voting yes favored uniform nationwide poll-closing in November of presidential election years.

Voting yes: Dennis Hertel, D-Harper Woods, William Ford, D-Taylor, Sander Levin, D-Southfield.

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

SENATE

CONRAIL — By a vote of 53 for and 39 against, the Senate tabled (killed) an amendment clearing the way for the government to sell Conrail to a group led by the Morgan Stanley & Co. investment house.

Under the \$1.4 billion Morgan Stanley offer, Conrail was to be continued as its own entity rather than as part of a merged railroad.

The apparent removal of Morgan Stanley from the picture greatly increased chances that Norfolk Southern Corp. will succeed in its bid to acquire the government-owned rail freight service for \$1.2 billion. A bill approving the sale to the Norfolk Southern railroad (S 638) was headed for final passage.

John Danforth, R-Mo., who voted to table the amendment, said the Morgan Stanley group had no interest in running a successful railroad, that it only wanted "to bleed Conrail of cash" and that Conrail has to be merged to survive.

Arlen Specter, R-Pa., said selling Conrail to Morgan Stanley would bring more money to the U.S. Treasury and avoid "the very serious anti-trust problems" posed by the merger of Conrail and Norfolk Southern.

Most senators voting no wanted Conrail sold to the Morgan Stanley investment group.

Voting no: Carl Levin, Donald Riegle.

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