

House hikes '88 committee probe money

Here's how members of Congress were recorded on major roll call votes in the week ending March 18.

HOUSE

Roll Call Report

COMMITTEE BUDGETS — By a vote of 302 for and 104 against, the House authorized a \$49.4 million budget (H Res 388) for some of its committee operations in calendar 1988. This is an increase of about \$1.5 million, or 3 percent, over the comparable 1987 resolution.

The \$49.4 million is expected to fund roughly half of the cost of the House committee system this year, with the remainder provided by the legislative branch appropriations bill. This "investigations and studies" budget covers domestic travel, consultant, miscellaneous and salaries for more than half of the nearly 2,000 House committee employees.

Supporter Joseph Gaydos, D-Pa., termed the measure "the best possible agreement" on committee funding levels.

Opponent Robert Walker, R-Pa., estimated only about 2 percent of the population feels "there is absolutely no place in the Congress that we can cut."

Members voting yes supported the committee funding resolution. Voting yes were: Dennis Hertel, D-

Lakes and New York Harbor outlays violated restrictions on new federal programs contained in the 1987 "budget summit" agreement between Congress and the White House.

Opponent Toby Roth, R-Wis., said the erosion control grants "will provide vital relief" along the 365-mile Great Lakes shoreline.

Members voting yes wanted to strip the Great Lakes and New York Harbor programs from the bill. No one from Michigan voted yes.

Voting no were: Pursell, Hertel, Ford, Levin and Broomfield.

SENATE

NUCLEAR LIABILITY — By a vote of 53 for and 41 against, the Senate tabled (killed) an amendment making private operators of federal nuclear weapons plants financially liable for accidents caused by their gross negligence.

The vote preserved the system whereby the U.S. Treasury rather than contractors must pay damages in such instances.

It occurred during debate on legislation (HR 1414) to reauthorize the Price-Anderson Act, which limits the damages paid to victims of a catastrophic accident at a nuclear power plant or weapons facility.

Bennett Johnston, D-La., voted to table the amendment because, he said, it would "drive away the best of our nuclear contractors."

William Proxmire, D-Wis., said the government now "has no way of punishing (nuclear weapons) contractors who mismanage its facilities, so it comes as no surprise these facilities have serious safety problems."

Senators voting yes were opposed to making nuclear weapons contractors financially liable for their accidents.

Michigan Democrats Carl Levin and Donald Riegle voted no.

time is of the essence." It is a response to a scandal that developed after the administration failed to tell Congress about its sale of arms to Iran and diversion of profits to Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Supporter George Mitchell, D-Maine, said the bill makes it less likely "that oversight laws will be broken or manipulated in the future."

Opponent Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., said the fact that the Iran-Contra misadventure eventually came to light is proof of the intelligence community's accountability to Congress.

Senators voting yes favored the bill. Levin and Riegle voted yes.

10-DAY DELAY — By a vote of 60 for and 32 against, the Senate tabled (killed) an amendment to S 1721 (above) lengthening from 48 hours to 10 days the deadline by which presidents must inform congressional leaders of covert actions already undertaken.

Under the bill, the 48-hour notification deadline is to apply except when the White House must give congressional intelligence oversight committees advance word of planned operations.

Senators voting yes wanted intelligence agencies to be put on a tighter reporting leash. Levin and Riegle voted yes.

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Senate bill attacks porn phone calls

AP — Access to services providing smutty talk would become more difficult in Michigan under a bill introduced in the state Senate.

The bill (S 770), sponsored by Sen. Doug Carl, R-Utica, and co-sponsored by every other member of the chamber, would require those who wanted "dial-a-porn" to subscribe to it in writing. If they didn't, they couldn't dial it.

"I'm here to issue a plea to perverted porn peddlers," Carl said. "This dramatic support highlights how out of hand this has become."

Dial-a-porn now is available to all phone customers, and parents have complained that some children have run up thousands of dollars in bills

listening to the sexually explicit chatter.

"I have heard enough horror stories about young children passing these phone numbers around in school and then running up sky-high phone bills," Carl said. "These calls should be restricted if not outlawed."

Carl's bill would cover all 976-pre fix calls, including sports, religious, weather and stock messages. Customers would have to provide written consent to receive such services.

Michigan Bell Telephone Co. says it will propose a free "blocking" service to let customers bar dial-a-porn from their phone line.

"We don't think it (Carl's bill) is necessary," said Dave Bassett, a

spokesman for Michigan Bell. "Blocking is something that's available now. I have no idea how we'd have people subscribe to these services."

"It could take several years to put subscription in place," he said. "Free blocking is the most practical solution now available to a difficult problem."

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