

ROLL CALL REPORT

House votes to let program continue indefinitely

Here's how Observer & Eccentric-area members of Congress were recorded on a major roll call votes in the week ending May 7

HOUSE

Sunset provision: By a vote of 201 for and 221 against, the House refused to put a six-year limit on public funding of proposed Department of Commerce centers to help U.S. companies develop advanced technologies. The sunset amendment was offered to a bill (HR 820) authorizing \$1.5 billion over two years for programs enabling American firms to compete better against Japanese, German and other rivals. The bill remained in debate.

Supporter Robert Walker, R-Pa., said "the ugly truth . . . of this bill is that we are going to perpetuate the idea that a federal program, once created, is never-ending." Opponent Tim Valentine, D-N.C., said, "The last thing we need is for this program to have to experience the planned uncertainty of sunset provisions."

A yes vote was to limit the years of taxpayer support of competitiveness centers for U.S. industry.

Area representatives voting yes were: Joseph Knollenberg, R-Birmingham. Voting no: Bob Carr, D-Portland; Dale Kildee, D-Flint; Sander Levin, D-Southfield; and William Ford, D-Ypsilanti.

Voter registration: By a vote of 259 for and 164 against, the House approved the conference report on a bill (HR 2) requiring states to make voter registration a voluntary part of applying for a driver's license and certain other public certificates. To accommodate non-drivers, states also must provide for registration by mail and at welfare and disability agencies. Military recruitment offices also must offer a place to sign up to vote.

Supporter Charlie Rose, D-N.C., said the bill "could result in up to 90 percent of the eligible public registering to vote."

Opponent Tillie Fowler, R-Fla., objected that it "places mandates on our states with no federal dollars to pay for them . . ."

A yes vote was to pass the bill. Area representatives voting yes were: Carr, Kildee, Levin. Voting no: Knollenberg. Not voting: Ford.

Registration issue: By a vote of 170 for and 253 against, the House rejected Republican language in HR 2 (above) that sought to remove any doubt that states can require proof of citizenship from voting registrants.

Sponsor Bob Livingston, R-La., called the bill "an inducement to illegal aliens" to commit electoral fraud.

Opponent Al Swift, D-Wash., said the bill already provided tough criminal penalties for illegal aliens who would defraud the registration process.

A yes vote was to specify in the bill that states can request proof of citizenship from registrants to vote. Area representatives voting yes were: Knollenberg. Voting no: Carr, Kildee, Levin. Not voting: Ford.

SENATE

To regulate lobbyists: By a vote of 95 for and two against, the Senate passed a bill (S 349) for increased federal regulation and public scrutiny of the estimated tens of thousands of paid lobbyists who deal with Congress. Twice a year they would have to publicly list clients, issues, payments and

other information. A new Justice Department office would administer the program.

In part, the bill requires public reporting of the financial favors lobbyists extend to lawmakers and staff, such as meals in Washington and vacations at resorts. Benefits of at least \$20 per occasion or \$50 annually must be reported, with the congressional recipient identified. Lobbyists currently are regulated by a 47-year-old law that all sides agree is ineffective.

Supporter William Cohen, R-Maine, said the bill is needed because "cynicism and disillusionment of the American public about the . . . integrity of public officials

has reached historic heights." Opponent Bob Smith, R-N.H., said, "The sort of information that the bill requires from ordinary citizens simply exercising their constitutional rights (to petition) is far too intrusive."

A yes vote was to pass the bill. Michigan Sens. Carl Levin, D, and Donald Riegle, D, voted yes.

Gifts policy: By a vote of 98 for and one against, the Senate endorsed the concept of making the congressional gifts policy as strict as the executive branch's. If this advisory language becomes law, it will virtually prohibit lawmakers from accepting gifts worth more

than \$20. Existing rules on congressional gifts are regarded as vague and toothless. This sense-of-the-Senate language was added to S 349 (above).

Sponsor Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., said, "The need to tighten the gift rules is especially urgent because the public's trust in the Congress is at an alarmingly low point."

Opponent Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., objected to the inference that a free meal would win his support.

A yes vote supported the concept of a stricter congressional gifts policy. Levin and Riegle both voted yes.

Senator's bill would wipe out party preference requirement

By TIM RICHARD STAFF WRITER

Michigan voters could see a two-tiered 1996 presidential primary under a bipartisan bill that recently cleared the state Senate.

"This will insure that no one will have to declare their party preference in order to vote in the presidential primary," said the sponsor, Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham.

Bouchard's SB 168 was born as a bill to create a totally "open" presidential primary in which voters wouldn't have to declare a preference at all. Michigan's last "open" primary occurred in 1976.

But Democrats complained that total openness violated national party rules limiting participation only to declared party members. Federal courts say national party rules take precedence over state law in selecting party

convention delegates. Bouchard cut a deal with Sena. John Kelley, D-Grosse Pointe, and Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, allowing: ■ An open primary to vote for presidential candidates.

■ A closed primary for Democrats to vote for national convention delegates.

"Voter turnout numbers in recent years indicate that citizens were turned off by the party preference requirement," said Bouchard. In 1992 the state used a closed system. In the 1980s, Democrats used a caucus system. The primary system would be available only to the three parties which received more than 5 percent of the 1992 vote — Democratic, Republican and Ross Perot's United We Stand.

"This is a compromise," said Stabenow. "It's an effort to address a multitude of concerns."

Bouchard said it would give voters a choice while not barring them from voting if they didn't want to pick a party.

Senators gave the bill 32 to 0 approval and sent it to the House. All area senators voted yes.

Sen. Chris Dingell, D-Trenton, complained that the statewide primary would cost \$5 million — "awfully expensive for a beauty contest."

Chris Thomas, state elections director, said the two-tiered election could be handled by state and local elections officials.

But he doubted the value of an election "if it's just used in newspaper stories the next day about a beauty contest and not used in any fashion to affect the selection of delegates."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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