

Washington Report

by Congressman Walter B. Jones

As this report is being written on Friday, December 10, it concludes the second week of the so-called "lame duck" session of this Congress. The main objective in ordering this session by President Reagan was to complete, if at all possible, several appropriation bills for fiscal year 1983, which began on October 1, 1982. As of this date the House has done fairly well in attacking this problem by passing the following appropriation bills: District of Columbia, Treasury and Postal Service, Defense, Interior and Labor-Health and Human Services. By the same token, on this date the United States Senate has not passed a single appropriation bill, so in the remaining days between now and Christmas, there still remains much to be done if we are going to try to enact as many appropriation bills as possible, in order to avoid what I consider the very questionable practice of Continuing Resolutions, which has been explained in previous columns.

As it relates to appropriation bills, by far the largest was the Defense Appropriation in which the House approved in round figures, \$230 billion. This was \$20 billion less than the Administration had asked for. A bill which created a great amount of Administration pressure was the House consideration of the basing of the MX Missile in the State of Wyoming in what is known as a "dense pack." The House rejected the funds in the amount of some \$900 million plus to further this particular activity much to the disappointment of the President and this Administration. After the House defeat it then developed that of the five Chiefs of Staff, three had offered some reservation or opposition to this approach, but this was not known at the time of the vote. This split among military leaders has caused many charges and counter-charges as to who said what, but the fact remains that three out of five Chiefs of Staff were not enthusiastic about supporting the Wyoming based operation. It might well be that the Senate will restore the almost \$1 billion funds for this purpose, but I am extremely doubtful that the House will sustain or agree with such action.

Also during the week the House approved by a rather wide margin the Administration's as well as the Democrat's support of the 5¢ tax on gasoline to provide funds to reduce our unemployment rolls by some 300,000, plus provide much needed relief for our interstate highways as well as our bridges. This was not an easy vote to cast but with the unemployment rate being what it is, and with the highways and bridges becoming increasingly dangerous to the health and safety of the American public, then I feel this rationale is what carried the vote by such a wide margin. However, although the bill passed the House by such a rather large margin, there seems to be more opposition in the Senate.

In addition, during this so-called "lame duck" session, the Administration has come up with a tentative plan to cut grain surplus and something must be done to relieve the plight of the American farmer. So, the Administration through the Secretary of Agriculture, John Block, has come up with the idea of providing that the government would ask the American farmer to plant a smaller percentage of these excess commodities for 1983 and in turn would give to the farmer out of the massive surpluses which we now have, the same amount of grain which he had failed to plant. The idea has some merit but is being questioned as the being the answer to the agriculture problems we now face. The proposal has not been debated enough as to form an opinion as to its merit or lack of merit.



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