

Privacy limits nixed from bill

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congress voted unanimously Monday to kill a provision making it easier for lawmakers and aides to peruse people's income tax returns in a vote Republicans hoped would end a political tempest.

The House, back for a pre-holiday session this week, voted to withdraw the provision by 381-0. The Senate gave its assent Nov. 20 to the same measure, which does not need President Bush's approval.

The language in question was a single sentence in a gargantuan \$388 billion bill financing almost the entire domestic side of government that the GOP-run House and Senate also approved Nov. 20. Monday's vote to withdraw the tax return provision cleared the way for lawmakers to send the overall spending bill to Bush for his signature.

Democrats, who noticed the provision the day Congress passed the spending bill, have ridiculed it as a potential invasion of privacy. They were instantly joined by Republicans expressing outrage and promising its repeal, but that didn't stop Democratic criticism.

"Our citizens expect and deserve a government that respects their privacy and does not discriminate against them on the basis of their political beliefs," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Monday during a brief House

debate.

The language would have let leading members of the House and Senate Appropriations committees sign letters authorizing people to enter Internal Revenue Service facilities and see tax returns there.

Republicans have said the provision was intended to give Appropriations Committee members better access to IRS offices. The Appropriations panels oversee the IRS budget, but under current law must get approval from the House Ways and Means or the Senate Finance committees to send aides to agency facilities where returns might be viewed.

"The Appropriations Committee has never had any intention to review or investigate individual tax returns," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bill Young, R-Fla.

Democrats also used the incident to criticize the hectic process by which the spending measure, exceeding 3,000 pages, was written.

It was completed over several days during which aides had little sleep and lawmakers had only a few hours to peruse it before voting. Democrats said the House should follow its own rules and give lawmakers at least three days to study bills before voting on them.

"The only people who don't know how this happened are members of Congress," said Rep. Charles Rangel of New York, top Democrat on the Ways and Means panel.

Diversity group to eye survey questions

BY CLAIRE DORRIER
STAFF WRITER

Officials said the Chancellor's Task Force on Diversity is on schedule examining all aspects of diversity on campus, with plans to submit a report to the chancellor in April.

During today's task force meeting, three subcommittees will present research questions examining how diversity is embraced among faculty, staff and students.

The questions will be used for collecting data during the next few months.

"I've been very pleased with the thought they've put into the questions they want to ask," said Cookie Newsom, director of diversity education and research for the Office of Minority Affairs.

Using the University's mission statement as a guide, the task

force is looking at what aspects of campus are meeting diversity standards and which are falling behind. The task force also is assessing how UNC measures up to peer universities.

Initially, five core research questions were presented to each of the subcommittees, which were challenged to interpret and specifically tailor the questions for their groups.

The initial questions related to the general climate of diversity at UNC.

One question asked whether the University is welcome, inclusive and supportive for all faculty, staff and students.

Other questions address the task force's vision and commitment, asking about the educational benefits of diversity and how UNC targets efforts to recruit and

retain a diverse faculty, staff and students.

"We've also been working on our core value statements, the framework of diversity and what it means," said Archie Ervin, director of minority affairs and chairman of the task force. "We are doing the nuts and bolts stuff that has to be done."

By the beginning of January, the task force will have most of its initial work completed and will establish research instruments.

"Institutional research will put (the questions) into instruments for research such as surveys, focus groups and interviews," Newsom said.

"We imagine there will be a combination of methods."

Deans at the University's various schools also were asked to submit reports by February regarding

how diversity stands within each school.

After data is collected and analyzed this spring, the task force will hold a town meeting providing the public an opportunity to voice opinions.

After the meeting, the committee will send a finalized report to Chancellor James Moeser.

Both Newsom and Ervin said they have been pleased with the amount of work put into the task force and its subcommittees so far and think it is moving progressively along toward its end goal.

"You've got to design the way to collect data, organize it and put it into understanding," Ervin said. "Then you just draw inferences on what you see."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

UNC committee to address safety, environment

BY LAUREN HARRIS
STAFF WRITER

A University committee plans to grapple with safety, the environment and health Thursday.

The University Safety and Security Committee will discuss a possible draft policy to update the campus' automatic external defibrillators, which help measure a heart attack victim's heart rate, and to ensure their safe use, said Peter Reinhardt, UNC's director of environment, health and safety.

He said the machines, which administer an electric shock to the heart, have become less expensive

and more compact.

"The technology is now available that ... they're all small," Reinhardt said. "They tell you how to use them in an emergency."

Reinhardt said the draft proposal would provoke a safety assessment of the purchase and the use of the devices for campus facilities.

"Different units on campus have been buying them, and we want a policy to make sure that people stay responsible for them," he said.

Reinhardt said the committee also will discuss revising its policy on health and training require-

ments for employees in health-related fields on campus.

"One of the reasons we've updated is because (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration) has discontinued their (tuberculosis) standard," he said.

According to OSHA's Web site, the administration is withdrawing its previous standard on occupational exposure to tuberculosis.

"We want to make sure our policy is in compliance (with OSHA) for training and health surveillance," Reinhardt said.

The committee also will discuss replacing eight aging underground

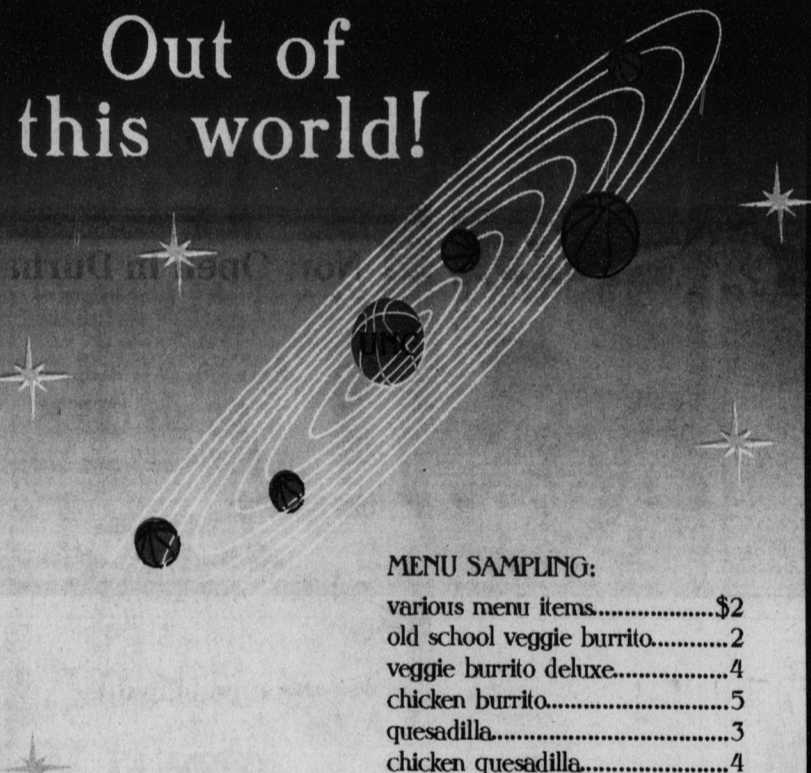
petroleum tanks on campus with above-ground tanks.

"With time they wear out," said Rich Miller, environmental affairs manager for Environment, Health and Safety. "There's no problem that we can determine with them now, but sooner is better than later."

Miller said the goal of EHS is to protect the environment — he sees this move as a step in the right direction. "It shows the positive direction the University has always taken."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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