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Senate approves 'war on drugs' bill, calls for mandatory testing

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved a \$9.4 billion plan to pay for the war on drugs and called for mandatory drug and alcohol testing of millions of transportation workers in safety-sensitive jobs.

"This proposal represents the strongest first step we can make to win the war against drugs." Sen. Robert C. Byrd. D-W.Va., said as Senate voted 97-2 to couple the drug plan to an \$11.9 billion transportation bill.

The Senate then passed the transportation bill with the drug plan attached and sent it to a House-Senate conference committee.

Also included in the transportation bill is a measure last week that would ban smoking on all domestic airline flights.

The drug plan represented a compromise produced in week-long negotiations between the White House and senators of both parties.

The negotiations began after Democrats sought to add \$2.2 billion to the \$7.9 billion war on drugs announced by President Bush on Sept. 5 in a nationally televised address. They said the administration's blueprint failed to earmark enough for prevention and treatment.

The compromise contains the \$7.9 billion plus \$400 million in anti-crime funds, \$200 million for juvenile justice. \$800 million in additional prevention and treatment money and \$100 million for law enforcement grants. The additional funds would be gained through a 0.43 percent cut in federal spending.

Before approving the transportation bill, the Senate attached on a voice vote a provision offered by Sen. John C. Danforth to require drug and alcohol tests in the industr

It would require random, pre-employment, post-accident and for-cause testing of an estimated 3.292,000 employees in safety-sensitive positions in the airline, rail, bus and trucking industries

Danforth and a number of lawmakers have been pushing for several years for testing of transportation workers, citing repeated fatal accidents traced to employees under the influence of drugs and alcohol. A measure applying only to rail workers is part of the House version of the transportation bill.

The Transportation Department said Tuesday 15,352 random drug tests of its own employees during 16 months in 1988 and 1989 turned up 99 indications of drug use, or 0.64 percent of those tested. Seventeen tests of suspected users turned up eight positive indications.

The central transportation provisions of the bill call for \$11.9 billion in new spending plus \$15.9 billion in already collected fuel and passenger taxes. The measure envisions \$12.2 billion for highways projects, \$7.3 billion for aviation programs and \$3 billion for mass transit assistance.

Smoking already is banned on domestic airline flights of two hours or less. The Senate measure would extend that to all flights.

It was adopted last week over the objections of tobacco-state senators.

Voting against the \$9.4 billion drug funding plan were Republicans Jake Garn of Utah and Steve Symms of Idaho. Sen. Jim Sasser, D-Tenn., did not vote. Not voting was Sen. William Armstrong, R-Colo.

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of diced ham, served with home fries, toast or English muffin

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IN A HURRY...

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