

Democrats to set new agenda

By Alan Fram
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Patients' rights will surge past President Bush's energy plan to the top of the agenda when Democrats grab control of the Senate Wednesday.

Investigators will probe why gasoline prices have soared. Hearings will be held on rising electricity rates and on the FBI, too.

Democrats are also contemplating putting their imprint on the chamber with early efforts to boost the minimum wage, create prescription drug coverage for Medicare recipients and revamp election procedures.

But their power will be held in check by their paper-thin majority and the Republicans' ability to use filibusters to hinder legislation. So the Democrats will be unable to shove their priorities through the Senate at will when they become the majority Wednesday morning.

And as far as enacting law, Democrats will still have to contend with a Republican-dominated House — not to mention a GOP White House under President Bush.

"There will be a different agenda and a different focus," Marshall Wittmann, senior fellow for the conservative Hudson Institute, said Monday. "But there won't be a radical lurch to the left because Democrats are in charge."

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., who will become majority leader, has said the Senate will first complete its work on a bipartisan education bill backed by Bush. After that, it will turn to a bill expanding patients' rights co-sponsored by Democrats and Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

Democrats will also craft their own energy legislation, focusing more than Bush did on enhancing conservation, energy efficiency and short-term help for consumers.

"There will still be some pro-

duction incentives, but it won't be so dominant," said Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., who will be chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Tom Donohue said that while the Democrats' ascendancy won't change any votes in the Senate, Daschle's ability to control the agenda will be the most telling change.

"The real challenges are going to be on health care and energy" as far as business is concerned, Donohue said.

Marking Daschle's new clout, he and Bush planned to have dinner at the White House on Thursday, said a senior White House official and a Daschle aide.

Other Democratic plans include:

— The new Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman, Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., envisions hearings this month on whether the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has adequately overseen electricity prices.

— Incoming Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said he wants hearings on recent FBI mishaps, including spying allegations against former agent Robert Hanssen and the recently discovered evidence in the Timothy McVeigh bombing case.

— An investigations subcommittee headed by Carl Levin, D-Mich., will examine rising gasoline prices.

— Max Baucus, D-Mont., who will head the Finance Committee, is less interested than many Republicans in a future tax bill, but will consider including "modest" tax breaks for small business in minimum wage legislation, said Baucus spokesman Michael Siegel.

The Democratic takeover will become official Wednesday, when James Jeffords, R-Vt., formally leaves the GOP and becomes an independent who will vote with Democrats to organize the Senate.

Jeffords timed his move to become official at the close of business Tuesday or when Congress sent the recently approved tax bill to Bush for his signature, whichever occurred later. GOP aides said the legislation reached the White House on Monday, and Bush planned to sign it at a ceremony on Thursday.

Bush was upbeat at a "tax relief celebration" Monday in Tampa, Fla., where he marked the largest achievement of his presidency with a rally before thousands of area residents. "I have the honor of signing the largest tax relief bill in 20 years," Bush said, pumping his fist as the audience erupted in cheers.

Jeffords' switch will give Democrats a 50-49 edge, and it will be the first time Senate control has ever shifted in a meaningful way during a session of Congress. The only exception occurred this past January, when Democrats held the majority for 17 days when Al Gore was vice president and the Senate was still divided 50-50. Little work was done then.

Despite the historic nature of the transition, the Democrats' moment will arrive with little fanfare in the chamber.

Under current plans, Robert Byrd of West Virginia, the longest-serving Senate Democrat, will gavel the body into session. He will recognize Daschle to speak as majority leader, and the Democrats' reign will begin.

At the moment Daschle is recognized as majority leader, the top Democratic members on each committee will become chairmen.

But until the Senate approves a resolution revamping panels' rosters to reflect the Democratic majority, memberships on committees will revert to the end of the last Congress, when the GOP had control. Because of vacancies caused by retirements and election defeats, that will give Republicans majorities on eight major committees and Democrats one, with seven tied.

Physics professor to share his vision

■ Physics Professor Amit Goswami's latest book explores the balance between science and spirituality

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

It is possible to keep in touch with one's spiritual side while taking part in today's scientific advancements. At least that is the new way of thinking explained in physics Professor Amit Goswami's latest book, which he will discuss today at 7:30 p.m. in the Browsing Room of the University's Knight Library. "The Visionary Window: A Quantum Physicist's Guide to Enlightenment" explains how separate ideas behind science and spirituality actually relate.

The discussion is sponsored by the University Bookstore.

Goswami, who has written several other books, including "The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World," said that today's scientific thinking often means believing that spiritual ideas, such as God, cannot exist. He said this is often a dilemma for spiritual people who also enjoy science.

"Up until now, people have been very divided," he said. "They want to believe in science, but many can't help but believe in their spirituality, too."

Goswami said his book explores a variety of ways the two disciplines affect each other, such as how consciousness creates biological order and how the body acts as a creative being. The book also looks into issues surrounding how to integrate science and spirituality, such as the idea of whether or not science should replace religion.

"Science tells us spirituality is wrong," he said. "But most people like to go to church and have religious experiences."

Goswami said the integration of science and spirituality can help people understand the theory of evolution.

What: A discussion of physics Professor Amit Goswami's new book, "The Visionary Window: A Quantum Physicist's Guide to Enlightenment"

When: Today at 7:30 p.m.

Where: The Browsing Room of the University's Knight Library

Cost: Free

"Usually people think we have solved the problem of evolution," he said. "In truth, biologists are not sure if we have answered all the questions."

Because God may have intervened in the process of evolution, it's important to understand both, he said.

"Both sides have to equal each other to better understand these phenomena," he said.

Tom Gerald, author events coordinator at the University Bookstore, said the store tries to support faculty members' writings as much as possible. He said he has particularly enjoyed working with Goswami to set up tonight's event.


"He's dealing with some heavy topics and presents them all so well," he said.

Gerald, who is familiar with some of Goswami's other writings, said the author is enjoyable to hear, although the material may be complicated.


"I don't read a lot in this area, so to hear someone who understands as intimately as he does is wonderful," he said.

Dietrich Belitz, physics professor and department head, said he's delighted when a faculty member writes a book. He said unlike other fields, where book writing is common among faculty members, physics professors often write technical articles for scholarly journals instead of books.

"It's nice to see our faculty being engaged in scholarly activities," he said. "It's good for the department and good for the University."



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