



Politics / Government

GOP wage bill faces veto threat

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Another major piece of Republican-supported legislation is drawing a veto threat, this one a bill to raise the hourly minimum wage by \$1 over three years while cushioning the impact on businesses with \$30 billion in selected tax cuts.

Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers and Labor Secretary Alexis Herman told House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., in a letter Monday that they and other senior advisers to President Clinton would recommend a veto if the legislation isn't modified drastically.

The House could take up the measure in coming days, but Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, told reporters today that the votes aren't yet there to pass it. "We aren't going to put it on the floor if it doesn't have the votes," he said.

The two Cabinet members made it clear they prefer Clinton's version of a higher minimum wage, which would raise the \$5.15-an-hour rate by the same \$1, but over two years instead of three. And it wouldn't include the tax breaks for businesses.

Summers and Herman complained that the tax cuts sought by House Republicans were not supported by offsets in other programs.

"The president has stated repeatedly that, before we consider using projected surpluses to provide a tax cut or for new spending, we must put first things first and address the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare," Summers and Herman wrote.

The principal version headed for expected House consideration is sponsored by Rep. Rick Lazio, R-N.Y., and is co-sponsored by nine others, including five Democrats.

It would raise the minimum wage by 33 cents in April 2000, another 33 cents in April 2001 and by 34 cents on April 1, 2002.

Rep. Bill Archer, chairman of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, today released a new version of the tax relief that would cost \$30 billion over five years using projected budget surpluses beginning in 2001.

That package includes a five-year reduction in the estate tax, an expansion in the low-income housing tax credit, expanded pensions, making self-employed health insurance premiums 100 percent deductible in 2001 instead of 2003, delayed taxation of federal farm production payments and increasing the business meal deduction from 50 percent to 60 percent.

"This modest tax relief for those who create jobs will provide an effective antidote to the job-threatening potential of a government-imposed minimum wage increase," said Archer, R-Texas.

Summers and Herman said the estate-tax relief "is expensive and provides no benefit to average working Americans."

"Moreover, the relief is poorly targeted to its purpose of providing relief for small business owners and family farms," they wrote.

Candidate George W. Bush seeks safer schools

The Associated Press

George W. Bush, challenging the "moral chaos" that he said is threatening America's schools, today called for legislation to protect teachers from lawsuits resulting from disciplinary actions against students and for a lifetime ban on gun ownership for juveniles found guilty of a serious gun offense.

"No child in America, regardless of background, should be forced to risk their lives in order to learn," the Republican presidential candidate said in remarks prepared for delivery today in Gorham, N.H.

The Texas governor called for a zero-tolerance policy for disruptive behavior in America's classrooms, and said teachers should have the right to remove persistently violent and unruly students. Those children, he said, should only be allowed to return with the teacher's consent.

He proposed a Teacher Protection Act to protect teachers and school officials who enforce reasonable rules from "a junk lawsuit."

He also called for strengthening enforcement of federal laws making it a crime to bring a gun into a public school. "For any juvenile found guilty of a serious gun offense, there will be a lifetime ban on carrying or purchasing a gun - any gun, for any reason, at any age, ever," he said.

If schools remain unsafe, he said, states and districts should be required to give children the option of transferring to a different school.

"When children and teen-agers go to school afraid of being bullied or beaten or worse, it is the ultimate betrayal of adult responsibility," he said. "It communicates the victory of moral chaos."

In his third major education speech, Bush called for increased spending on character education so schools can teach "the moral landmarks that guide a successful life." He listed these as respect, responsibility, self-restraint, family commitment, civic duty, fairness and compassion.

Today is Bush's seventh day of campaigning in New Hampshire, which holds the nation's first primary. Though the Texas governor leads in the polls, Sen. John McCain of Arizona has been gaining.

In recent weeks, Bush was criticized by his opponents for skipping two candidate forums in New Hampshire because of schedule conflicts. But a close call when a truck-trailer overturned near his jogging path in Austin, Texas, Monday didn't keep him away this time. Bush suffered minor injuries to his right leg and hip. Bush started today at a breakfast in tiny Dixville Notch, whose two dozen voters traditionally are the first to cast their ballots in New Hampshire's

leadoff primary. He talked about fostering entrepreneurship, and cited as examples Neil and Louise Tillotson, the owners of the luxury hotel and resort where he stayed Monday night.

In earlier education speeches, Bush called for making schools more accountable for poor performance and for giving parents more information on school performance and then offering them alternatives such as charter schools.

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Supreme Court won't halt executions

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Supreme Court will not allow an international treaty to block executions of death row inmates who were not yet 18 when they committed their crimes.

The justices, acting without comment Monday, rejected the appeal of a convicted Nevada killer who says his execution would violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty the United States ratified in 1992.

Michael Domingues was convicted and sentenced to death for the 1993 murders of Arjin Chanel Pechpo and her 4-year-old son, Jonathan Smith, at their Las Vegas home.

Police said Domingues forced his way into the home, strangled the woman and fatally stabbed her son after trying unsuccessfully to electrocute him.

Domingues, now 22, was 16 when he committed the crimes.

After losing his first round of appeals, Domingues invoked the international treaty in an attempt to have state courts strike down his death sentence as illegal. The treaty prohibits the execution of people who committed their crimes before age 18.

Past Supreme Court rulings have barred as unconstitutionally "cruel and unusual punishment" the execution of anyone who was under 16 when committing a crime. But the court has upheld capital punishment for killers who were 16 or 17 at the time of their crimes.

The Nevada Supreme Court ruled, by a 3-2 vote, that the treaty permits Domingues' execution. The state court noted that when President Bush proposed the treaty's ratification, he stated a "reservation" under which

the United States retained the right to impose capital punishment on any person for crimes committed while under the age of 18.

The Senate ratified the treaty as presented by Bush, including that reservation.

Domingues' appeal to the Supreme Court argued that the Senate was not authorized to make a reservation that had "the effect of materially altering" the treaty. The appeal also argued that private citizens should be allowed to force the government to comply with the treaty.

Asked for its views, the Clinton administration urged the court to reject the appeal. But human rights groups in California and Minnesota urged the justices, in a joint friend-of-the-court brief, to "enforce the (treaty) to prevent the imposition of the juvenile death penalty."



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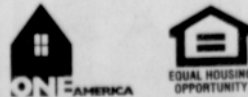
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