Senator overrides Bush veto of bill on abortion counseling

By Helen Dewar
WASHINGTON

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The Senate voted Thursday to override President Bush's veto of a bill that would reverse the abortion counseling ban at federally funded clinics and approve several major foreign-policy initiatives, including aid for Russia and loan guarantees for Israel.

While the Senate vote on abortion counseling was unexpectedly close, the real test for the legislation is expected to come Friday in the House, which has never mustered enough votes to override a veto on the issue.

The Senate vote was 73 to 26, seven votes more than the two-thirds necessary to enact legislation over a president's veto.

Two communities, including many who are involved in close re-election contests this fall,พล automáticamente all three Democrat in voting to override.

The vote came on the day that the administration's curb on abortion counseling took effect, threatening family-planning clinics with loss of federal funds if any staff members other than physicians continued to offer counseling on termination of pregnancies. Opponents of the rule are taking an injunction to delay implementation, and a decision is expected shortly.

While the Senate vote was viewed as a boost for the bill's chances in the House, the measure's backers say they saw only an outside chance of winning. It would take a switch of at least a dozen votes, which is difficult to achieve after repeated roll calls on an issue.

There were three other major developments as lawmakers, eager to return home for a month of re-election campaigning before the Nov. 3 election, struggled to finish business of the 102nd Congress by early next week.

Foreign aid bill

The foreign-policy initiatives — including aid to the republics of former Soviet Union, $2.5 billion in loan guarantees for Israel and a $12.3 billion increase in the U.S. commitment to the International Monetary Fund — were included in a foreign-aid bill that passed the Senate, 71 to 12.

The bill, which includes $14.1 billion for foreign aid and other international operations, now goes to a House-Senate conference, which is expected to clear the way for final passage before Congress adjourns.

The package of aid to the former Soviet republics is part of a $24 billion commitment on the part of Western countries to strengthen democracy and free markets in the republics, and part of the new line of credit to the IMF is intended for the same purpose.

The Israeli loan guarantees, delayed for nearly a year until the new government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin slowed the pace of new settlements in occupied Arab territories, are expected to help Israel absorb hundreds of thousands of immigrants from former Soviet republics and Ethiopia.

START treaty ratified

As expected, the Senate also gave final approval to a resolution of ratification for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which the United States and Russia agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals by nearly one-third.

The Israeli loan guarantees, a $2.3 billion defense spending bill that cuts $1 billion from Bush's request for the Strategic Defense Initiative but provides for a 20-plaque fleet of B-2 "stealth" bombers, continued development of the V-22 Osprey and $2 billion in defense contracts and industries adjustment to a reduced Pentagon budget.

Conflicts avoided

House Democrats backed down from appropriations fights with the Bush administration, which could have kept members from returning home to campaign or give ammunition to Bush's re-election campaign.

"We don't want the president's Tax Reduction Task Force to detract from the principal issues of the campaign," said Rep. Step Hoyer, D-Md.

The three bills provide funds for the fiscal year that started Thursday for the departments of Commerce, Justice and State, for treasury and joint operations and for transportation.

The Senate completed action on the Commerce-Judice-State bill and sent it to the White House.

Somalia Crisis Deepening Beyond Aid Groups' Abilities

By Keith B. Richburg
NEW YORK

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Nearly two months after the international community mobilized against the catastrophe in Somalia, the crisis is deepening, surpassing the ability of aid agencies to cope, and the death toll rate continues to climb each day, according to President Bush's special coordinator for Somalia.

"The aid is getting in," she said. "But also the situation is getting worse. Both those statements are true."

"We're seeing a lot more disease," said Roy Williams of the International Rescue Committee. "There's no shortage of resources," he said. "It's a matter of where those resources are going."

In August, when the world first turned its attention to Somalia, the United Nations estimated that some 1.5 million people were at risk of starvation. The United States, Canada, Great Britain, France and Belgium launched emergency food airlifts and U.N. and private agencies expanded distribution efforts.

The United States alone has supplied more than 5,000 metric tons of food to Somalia since its airlift began Aug. 28 — enough food, aid officials say, to feed 300,000 Somalis for an entire month.

But while the remarks of the aid officials Thursday suggested a mood of deepening pessimism in the relief community about any short-term alleviation of the Somali people's plight.

The death rate in some towns, like Bardera and Baidoba, has increased not only because of disease but because of a lack of clean water and outbreaks of fighting among rival clans.

Baidoba, said Nacise, the death rate in early August was about 45 each day, but relief efforts had brought that toll down to about 20 daily. This week, he said, the death toll climbed again to about 40 per day as the rains have set in. Adults are dying "of the TB, pneumonias, dysentery," he said. "Measles is killing the children." He said dirty water may be responsible for 60 percent of the child deaths in Bardera.

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