

# National

## Reagan stirs laughter with strip-mining joke

United Press International  
NEW YORK — President Reagan, while presenting a check for the Westway highway project to Mayor Edward Koch in New York, explained why Interior Secretary James Watt wasn't there.

"He's working on a lease for

strip-mining for the Rose Garden."

The remark, which sparked a roar of laughter from the audience at Gracie Mansion, was a reference to heavy criticism of Watt for his support of various mining and oil-leasing projects in the country's wilderness areas.

## Spending and taxes top priority

# Congress faces heavy workload

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — Summer vacation ended Tuesday for Congress, too, and members returning to their desks today will find an assignment schedule that may keep them busy until Christmas.

The single-minded devotion to cutting spending and taxes that occupied the administration and Congress during President Reagan's first seven months in office resulted in a dearth of action on almost everything else.

Now, Congress must pass 13 appropriations bills that will set the level of actual spending in the fiscal year starting Oct. 1.

Although the main budget battle seemed to be over with adoption of stringent spending ceilings

earlier this year, administration concern that the cuts might not be enough could result in battles over additional reductions as each of the money bills reaches Senate and House debate.

Although the specifics are not yet clear, some cuts are due to hit the military, a move certain to enrage congressional hawks who feel a need to beef up the armed services.

Two of the most visible Senate issues will involve personalities.

Reagan's first Supreme Court nominee, Sandra O'Connor, appears before the Senate Judiciary Committee later this week, and Sen. Harrison Williams, D-N.J., faces possible expulsion if an appeals court upholds his Abscam

conviction. The biggest controversy, and potentially the administration's first setback in Congress, will be over the proposed sale of AWACS radar planes to Saudi Arabia.

The sale is opposed by Israel and its corps of supporters in both houses. It would take a majority vote in both the House and Senate by Oct. 30 to ban the sale.

Domestic issues, lost in the glare of budget and tax fireworks earlier this year, are expected to appear — noisily — this fall.

The Senate will find itself immediately immersed in a filibuster over school busing that was under way for weeks before the August recess. A new attempt to cut off the talkathon is scheduled. Three

previous attempts failed.

Led by Sen. Lowell Weicker, R-Conn., the filibuster has blocked action on measures that would prevent the courts from ordering busing of pupils more than 10 miles and 30 minutes roundtrip from their homes and would prevent the government from filing suits to require more busing.

Abortion, another politically explosive issue that could detonate around the O'Connor nomination, could further tie up Congress if action is sought on a bill to define life as beginning at conception, or enactment of a constitutional amendment, or on provisions in appropriations bills banning government-paid abortions.

Congressional leaders already

have dropped early guidelines for the first session in November. But even that could prove too optimistic, as Congress could be in session again, on Christmas Eve.

Leading Republicans are committed to action on some overhaul of the system to keep it solvent. But Democrats contend there may not be time this session.

Other issues that could be before Congress in the next months include an extension of the Voting Rights Act, a continuation of the administration's new initiative proposals, the siting of MX missile, extension of the Clean Air Act and a farm



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