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Jobs bill may get battle in Congress

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The lame-duck Congress entered its second week Monday with President Reagan's 5-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax hike sailing toward passage and his MX missile plan streaking toward a showdown.

At the same time, Reagan and congressional Democrats are on a collision course, with the Democrats seeking a public works jobs program that Reagan has threatened to veto.

The House began debate on Reagan's proposed gas tax hike that would raise an estimated \$5.5 billion a year to repair deteriorating roads, bridges and mass transit systems.

It would also create about 320,000 jobs. But with unemployment rate at 10.8 percent — with about 12 million Americans out of work — Democrats want public work programs enacted to create several hundred thousand more jobs.

Today, the House intends to begin what is expected to be a stormy debate over the \$231 bil-

lion fiscal 1983 defense appropriations bill, particularly a provision providing nearly \$1 billion in funding for 100 MX nuclear missiles.

Many critics oppose the funding because they question the vulnerability of Reagan's proposed "dense pack" basing mode in which the missiles would be placed in silos close together in a field in Wyoming. The basing scheme is not at issue, however, just production money.

Both Democrats and Republicans expect a major battle in the full House, with the outcome uncertain. The funding was approved by the House Appropriations Committee on a tie vote last week.

Reagan is sure to use his influence to lobby House members to keep the funding intact. But should he lose, he could still recoup in the GOP-dominated Senate.

The proposed gas tax hike is expected to easily win approval and cost motorists an average of

\$30 more a year. But while there is wide bipartisan support, portions of the overall legislation such as shifting the burden of highway maintenance taxes toward heavy trucks, have generated some opposition.

Another issue expected to be raised is how to assure states a fair return on the money they contribute to the highway fund.

A battle is also expected to emerge over a proposed \$1.1 billion Democratic jobs program that would put 350,000 people to work repairing public buildings and facilities.

House Democrats intend to attach that proposal to a continuing resolution, a piece of legislation needed to keep the government from lapsing past Dec. 17, when Congress plans to adjourn.

Reagan has threatened to veto the measure if it contains such a jobs provision, pushing for a government shutdown.

Pregnancy benefits for men at issue

United Press International
WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed Monday to consider a new twist on reverse discrimination that affects fathers across the country — a conflict over who receives pregnancy benefits.

The court announced it will decide whether companies can legally deny male workers the unlimited health insurance benefits covering pregnancy that are provided to female employees. Challengers say the difference in treatment violates federal anti-bias laws.

If the court rules in favor of equalizing benefits, there are potentially heavy costs for American business. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimated the cost of giving men the same pregnancy benefits would cost each company more than \$450,000.

The pregnancy benefits case was brought by a Newport

News, Va., shipbuilding firm contesting a ruling that it is unlawful to limit insurance for disabilities arising from pregnancy for spouses of male employees.

The case involves the meshing of two federal laws. One is the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 barring discrimination because of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions. The other is Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that prohibits sex discrimination.

At issue is whether discriminating because of pregnancy automatically becomes illegal sex discrimination.

In rules implementing the pregnancy law, the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said that "if an employer's insurance program covers the medical expenses of spouses of female employees, then it must equally cover the medical expenses of spouses of

male employees, including those arising from pregnancy-related conditions."

In 1979, a shipbuilding worker complained that the company had discriminated by refusing to provide full insurance for his wife's hospitalization while she was having a baby. The insurance, however, would have covered all the pregnancy-related expenses of a female employee.

Before the federal agency acted on the complaint, the company filed suit in federal court to block enforcement of the guidelines.

A trial court ruled the company's refusal to provide pregnancy-related expenses was not discriminatory. But the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed, holding that pregnancy disabilities fell under the definition of sex discrimination.

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