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World and Nation

Tax bill could end some returns

Taxpayers with simple finances may be able to avoid filing

WASHINGTON (AP) — The compromise tax overhaul bill awaiting final action in Congress opens the door for a bold experiment that by the early 1990s could allow 30 million people to avoid filing a federal income tax return.

The bill calls on the Internal Revenue Service to report within six months on the feasibility of launching a return-free system.

Should the IRS find the system workable, taxpayers with the simplest returns — all income from wages and interest and no itemized deductions — would be offered the option of not filing a return and allowing the IRS to calculate their tax from documents supplied by employers and banks.

Although members of Congress like the idea, which President Reagan proposed as part of his tax bill in May 1985, House and Senate negotiators insisted that the IRS issue a detailed report on the cost and benefits before putting the plan into effect.

The compromise also recommends that the IRS first fully test the proposal without involving taxpayers.

The compromise includes these other provisions on which both houses were in full or essential agreement:

- Repeal income averaging, a tax-saving device used by about 5.4 million taxpayers whose incomes fluctuate sharply from year to year. The Senate wanted to save it for farmers but the House refused.
- Tax all unemployment compensation. Under present law, benefits of single people with total incomes under \$12,000 and couples under \$18,000 are tax free and a share of benefits for people with higher earnings can be exempt.

- Require all persons 5 and older to have Social Security numbers.

- End the \$100-a-person exclusion for dividends.

- Tax scientific and literary awards, such as the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes, unless they are given to charity.

- Require any person who must file a tax return to list any tax-exempt interest received.

- Require that a person whose income is not subject to withholding make quarterly estimated tax payments totaling at least last year's tax liability or 90 percent of the current year liability, up from 80 percent under present law.

- Raise to 1 percent a month the penalty for not paying taxes when due.

- Require that every real-estate transaction be reported to the IRS.
- Reduce to \$70,000 (from

\$80,000) the tax-free yearly amount an American may earn abroad.

- Cut to 10 percent the tax credit for restoring non-historic buildings at least 30 years old, and to 20 percent the credit for certified historic structures.

- Renew solar energy credits for business at rates of 15 percent in 1986, 12 percent in 1987 and 10 percent in 1988.

- Travel would no longer be deductible if the expenses were claimed solely on grounds a trip itself was educational.

- It would be more difficult to claim tax deductible hobby losses against wages and other earnings. The law now considers an activity is not a hobby (and thus is engaged in for profit) if it is profitable in two out of five consecutive years; that would be changed to three out of five.

Federal deficit may exceed legal target by \$20 billion

WASHINGTON — The deficit in the new budget year starting this fall will exceed the legal target by nearly \$20 billion, and could require new across-the-board slashes in spending by government agencies, according to a report released Tuesday.

The report issued jointly by the Office of Management and Budget and Congressional Budget Office estimated that the deficit in fiscal 1987 would be \$163.4 billion, requiring \$19.4 billion in spending cuts to reach the \$144 billion deficit target for fiscal 1987 under the Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction law.

"More than a couple hundred thousand" soldiers and Pentagon employees would have to be dismissed and many other programs would have to be sharply curtailed, said Rudolph G. Penner, director of the CBO.

OMB Director James C. Miller III

cautioned, however, that it was "really hypothetical" to describe the effects of the cuts now. "I think Congress will respond to this," he said. Miller said the administration would be proposing new user fees for government services, including higher charges for federally-backed mortgages, to raise about \$14 billion next year.

The report would serve as the blueprint for automatic spending cuts if Congress restored enforcement powers under the Gramm-Rudman Act, authority for which was voided earlier this year by the Supreme Court. Congress also could vote to impose the cuts even without an automatic trigger scheme, subject to presidential veto.

Democratic and Republican leaders alike have vowed to reduce the deficit to within \$10 billion of the Gramm-Rudman target, the point at

which the automatic cuts would be required.

But Tuesday's report reflected the fact that Congress has so far failed to enact any of the money-saving features of the budget for fiscal 1987, which takes effect on Oct. 1.

If Gramm-Rudman were restored beginning in October, for example, the Pentagon would have to cut its spending by half the total cut required, \$9.7 billion, or 5.6 percent of the defense budget, and domestic programs would have to be slashed by 7.6 percent to absorb the other \$9.7 billion.

Civil Service and military retirees would lose their cost-of-living raises for the second straight year. However, the law protects Social Security recipients from the cutbacks, along with major poverty programs and veterans compensation.

Soviets say Israeli talks 'a failure'

MOSCOW (AP) — Talks with Israel were a failure, the Israelis were "arrogant" in bringing up the issue of Soviet Jews and the Kremlin refusal to resume diplomatic relations remains firm, a government spokesman said Tuesday.

Israeli officials in Helsinki expressed surprise at Gennady Gerasimov's sharp tone. The talks were held in the Finnish capital Monday, scheduled to last two days, but the

Soviet delegation broke them off after 90 minutes.

The Israelis said they thought the meeting was positive and suggested the Soviet Union was trying to belittle it to forestall Arab criticism.

Soviet and Israeli delegations met to discuss a Soviet proposal to send a delegation to Israel to check holdings of the Russian Orthodox Church, functioning of the Soviet interest section at the Finnish Embassy and the status of Soviet citizens liv-

ing in Israel. Many of the Soviet residents are Russian Orthodox priests and nuns.

Although the talks were ended abruptly, the Israeli officials said they were not disappointed and the contacts would continue after both sides reported to their governments.

Gerasimov, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said no further contacts were discussed.

Leader calls list of detainees 'callous'

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — Identifying detainees with a non-alphabetical list of more than 8,500 names shows callousness toward relatives who must search it for days to find loved ones, an opposition leader said Tuesday.

The government presented Parliament on Monday with the list, which names people being held under the state of emergency imposed June 12. It does not include addresses, ages or where the people were arrested.

"Even in the releasing of these names, the government displays insensitivity to its own citizens and toward the families of detainees," said David Dalling, the opposition Progressive Federal Party spokes-

man on justice and the media.

"This 8,500-long list is not even alphabetical and it will take people days, if not weeks, to locate names of specific people who have been detained," he said.

"Detention without trial is bad enough, but allowing people to be on a disappeared list for months on end without police confirmation displays a horrendous lack of compassion towards ordinary human beings and their rights," Dalling said. "It also makes the job of the press totally impossible."

President P.W. Botha's government said Tuesday it will give Parliament weekly lists of people detained for more than 30 days under the

state of emergency, supplementing the original list.

Several groups that monitor detentions said Tuesday they knew of detainees who were not on the list revealed Monday, when Parliament began a special session. It was the first time the government had identified the people detained under the state of emergency. The list was drawn up to comply with the Public Safety Act, on which Botha based the emergency declaration.

The act requires that Parliament be given the identities of people held for more than 30 days without charge. No list was presented until Monday because Parliament had not been in session.

According to the Detainees' Par-

ents Support Committee, more than 12,000 people have been detained during the emergency but many were released before the report to Parliament or had been held for less than 30 days.

Two newspapers in Cape Town, where Parliament sits, published the government list in Tuesday editions.

The report to Parliament by Louis le Grange, minister of law and order, listed 8,551 detainees' names, newspapers reported Tuesday. The South African Press Association had reported 8,501 Monday, but changed the figure to 8,551 Tuesday. Le Grange did not provide an official count.

Agreement sought before orbit

Star Wars 'needs arms talks'

LIVERMORE, Calif. (AP) — Scientists designing Star Wars say it may be impossible to orbit the weapons until a detailed arms agreement with the Soviet Union is worked out.

Space-based weapons can be extremely vulnerable to attack, especially at the moment they are put into orbit, said Robert Perret, chief of a unit at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory which is assigned to examine and test weapons policy.

"In a historical perspective, the Soviets have demonstrated the national will to oppose in an active and violent way actions which they find threatening, if they can," said Perret, citing the Russian destruction of a civilian Korean airliner in 1983 and the downing of an U.S. U-2 spy plane flown by Gary Powers in 1960. "If some kind of agreement can

be reached that protects the deployment phase for both sides, then you can get past a fairly hard point," said Perret, who acknowledges that his troublesome questions may have "been a thorn in the side" of the Pentagon in the early stages of other weapons systems.

President Reagan has strenuously denied that he will allow the Soviets to have a veto over Star Wars research or deployment, and maintains that the program is not a bargaining chip to be traded away for a cut in offensive weapons.

An official speaking on condition of anonymity said, "It would be vastly more desirable if we could reach an agreement to amend the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty and reduce offensive weapons before we deploy space-based defenses."

The State Department official

considered it unlikely that the Soviets would, as Perret suggested, shoot down orbiting defenses as America sends them up, but the prospect clearly upset him. "It would be a provocation," he said. "We would have to respond."

In recent speeches, Reagan has emphasized that strategic defenses must go hand in hand with arms control, and a team of senior American negotiators went to Moscow this month to talk with the Russians about linking Star Wars with reductions in nuclear arsenals.

However, the Strategic Defense Initiative is still in the research stage, and administration officials have not publicly outlined how an agreement would be structured to allow deployment of missile defenses.

Reagan has resisted pressure

from conservative critics pushing for immediate deployment of ground-based anti-missile missiles capable of shooting down warheads as they approach their target.

Much of the research on the space leg of strategic defense is being carried out at Livermore, a Department of Energy lab administered by the University of California.

Perret and other Livermore scientists who back Star Wars go further than administration officials in stressing the link between negotiations and strategic defense.

George Miller, director of weapons development at Livermore, objects to viewing strategic defense "as a bargaining chip to be thrown in when the Soviets agree to cuts in strategic arms."

"The research program has got to continue," Miller said.