

Amendment helps welfare program

The Senate rejects a move to end aid for children born to mothers on welfare.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Heeding warnings that a national welfare "family cap" would drive up abortions and punish poor families, the Senate derailed a conservative push Thursday to deny additional cash payments to single mothers who have more children. Twenty Republicans sided with every Democrat as the Senate approved an amendment by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., to strip a family cap policy from the Republican blueprint to overhaul the nation's welfare programs. Conservatives said the government must stop subsidizing the "reckless, irresponsible" behavior of single women who ask taxpayers to support their children. GOP moderates and Democrats said there was no evidence to suggest that slicing a small amount from a family's welfare check would discourage poor women from having children.

ing that the family cap could increase abortions and add to the misery of the poor. The family cap has divided Republicans as Bob Dole, the Senate's majority leader and top contender for the GOP presidential nomination, tries to win approval for historic legislation to turn responsibility for welfare over to the states, cut spending by \$70 billion, and require recipients to go to work. Dole has said he hopes to pass the bill, the centerpiece of the GOP's social agenda, by Thursday. Several issues remain to be settled, among them demands that spending on child care be dramatically increased. The White House applauded the passage of Domenici's amendment. "It does by no means satisfy all the president's concerns," said White House spokesman Mike McCurry, "but they are beginning to move this legislation in the direction of real reform of our welfare system. ... We're going to continue to encourage them to improve this bill ... but we're getting closer."

Conservative Republican Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, one of Dole's rivals for the presidential nomination, said Wednesday's vote marks "the unraveling of our consensus" on welfare. "It puts a lot of us in the position of trying to decide

what we want to do." Speaking against Domenici's amendment Wednesday, Dole warned lawmakers that "if we don't deal with out-of-wedlock births then we're really not dealing with welfare reform." Dole, R-Kan., added the family cap to his welfare bill late last week, heeding the demands of Senate conservatives and forces in the Christian right, who have made reducing illegitimate births one of their priorities. His decision angered the GOP's moderate wing. Addressing the Senate late Tuesday, Domenici said he did not want on his conscience a vote for a welfare bill that says to teen-agers: "Maybe you ought to get an abortion." "Can we really believe that with the problems that teen-agers are having, and the societal mix-up they find themselves in, that cash benefits are going to keep them from getting pregnant?" he added. "I cannot believe it. Frankly, there is no evidence of that."

Domenici also argued that at a time when the Senate is moving to give states maximum flexibility to experiment with welfare reform, it is wrong to impose such mandates on governors and legislatures. Conservative strings, he said, are no better than liberal strings.



Amy Browning, THE BATTALION

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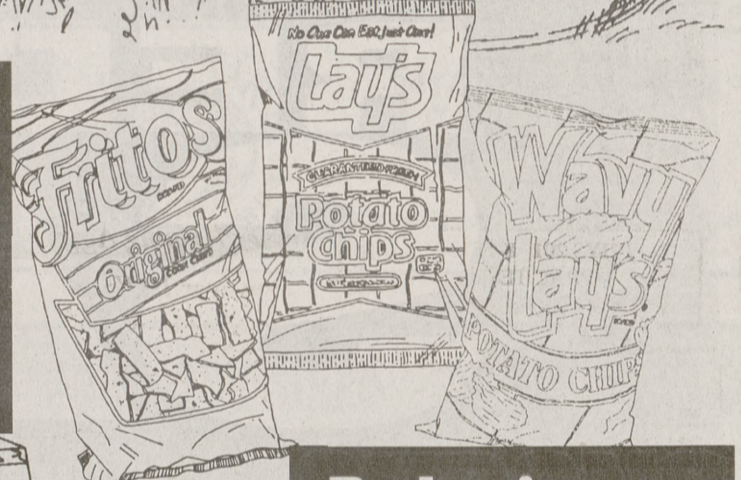
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