

# Campaign reform legislation stalls

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans steered campaign finance legislation toward defeat in the House on Monday, ignoring outrage from Democrats and dissident GOP lawmakers who were denied a vote on their own plan to clean up a scandal-ridden system.

"I think that's an abomination," said Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn., who has clashed sharply with his own party's leaders in recent days.

"Let's come back with a real vote on campaign finance reform and allow the vote on bipartisan reform," added Rep. Martin Meehan, D-Mass., who has worked with Shays and other lawmakers on a measure to overhaul the current political finance system.

Republican leaders, maneuvering to maintain control of the issue, were unrelenting.

Despite the protests, they decided to bring the issue to the floor in a package of four bills, with debate limited to 40 minutes per measure, no amendments allowed and a two-thirds vote required for passage. Such rules are customarily reserved for non-controversial bills.

The first measure, originally crafted as a comprehensive GOP

response to calls for campaign finance reform, would curtail union political activity and ban large, loosely regulated "soft money" donations to the national political parties.

It also would let local election officials seek federal help to verify prospective voters' citizenship and permit individuals and political action committees to donate larger sums to candidates than current law allows.

Democrats and some Republicans criticized the union provision. And advocates of a more comprehensive effort to reduce the money in campaigns said the soft-money ban included a gaping loophole that would let donations continue to state parties, which could funnel them to congressional campaigns.

The GOP leadership also was bringing three smaller bills to the floor.

One would tighten the prohibition on non-citizens making donations or expenditures in connection with federal elections.

A second would require stronger disclosure of contributions.

The final one, dubbed "pay-check protection," was identical to a portion of the broader bill.

It would require unions to obtain written consent from individual members before using their dues for political activity.

Shays, Meehan and others pressed the GOP leadership to permit a vote on their own alternative approach.

It includes a soft money ban for federal and state parties and controls on late-campaign attack ads that use a candidate's name or face but aren't covered by existing law.

It also would allow non-union workers who pay agency fees to control the use of their own fees for political purposes, but that would not cover union members.

The prospects for campaign finance legislation seemed brighter a year ago, given the reports of apparently illegal donations from overseas to President Clinton's campaign and the revelations of Clinton hosting White House coffees for influential supporters.

Given the GOP leadership's position, lawmakers seeking to overhaul the system could prevail only by gathering the 218 signatures needed on a petition to force their own measure to the floor.

They are 30 votes shy and need more support from Republicans to succeed.

# West Bank violence, troops remain

JERUSALEM (AP) — U.S. envoy Dennis Ross made one last attempt Monday to get Israel to agree to a troop withdrawal from 13 percent of the West Bank — but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu indicated Ross would leave empty-handed.

The American mediator's fourth and final meeting with Netanyahu ended Monday night with no decisions, Israel Television said.

Ross suggested that American patience was running out and the Clinton administration would not keep up the mediation effort indefinitely. "At some point we have to bring this effort to a conclusion," he said.

In the West Bank, Palestinians chanting "Death to America!" stoned Israeli troops as frustration grew over Washington's inability to break the deadlock in the peace talks.

Israeli troops fired tear gas and metal pellets to disperse hundreds of protesters in the West Bank towns of Bethlehem, El Bireh and Ramallah. Several Palestinians were injured.

Palestinian police, meanwhile, rounded up several supporters of the Islamic militant group Hamas to question them about the explosion of a car reportedly rigged with 110 pounds of TNT.

The car bomb, apparently intended for use in an attack in Israel, went off prematurely Sunday in an industrial zone of the West Bank town of Ramallah, killing one Palestinian.

The blast reduced the car to a ball of twisted metal and leveled the garage it was hidden in.

A gun and a hand grenade were found nearby, Israel's Channel Two television said.

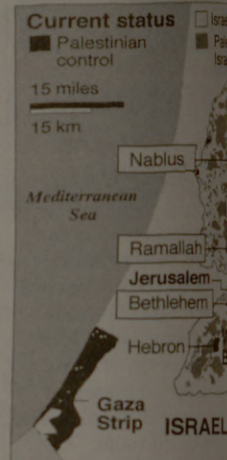
Ross was meeting with Netanyahu to try to get his backing for Washington's proposal that Israel withdraw from 13 percent of the West Bank in several stages over 12 weeks.

The Palestinians would meet each stage with new efforts to prevent terror attacks in Israel.

The Israeli leader said he did not expect a last-minute breakthrough. "I doubt whether such a short schedule will iron out all the issues," Netanyahu told reporters.

Netanyahu denied Israeli media reports that a compromise was being worked out and that he had increased his initial withdrawal offer from 9 percent to 11 percent of the West Bank.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat blamed Israel for the deadlock and asked the United States to use "its international and regional weight" to find a solution.



Palestinian officials were concerned the U.S. was ready to modify its position under Israeli pressure.

"We feel this is a real American political inability to withstand insistence," said Hamad, a Palestinian Cabinet member.

Monday's marches in the West Bank were held to mark a commemoration of protest against land expropriation in which six Israeli soldiers were killed by Israeli troops.

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