

House rejects attempt to end station funding

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House rejected the attempt to end NASA's space station funding yesterday as Congress began a hectic autumn of sorting through heretofore pending bills.

As lawmakers returned from their summer recess, House members voted 298-121 to defeat an attempt by Rep. James Walsh, R-N.Y., and Mark Sanford, R-S.C., to end the funding for the space station, one of NASA's highest priorities.

A spending bill the House is debating would provide \$2.4 billion next year for the station, whose first components are already orbiting the Earth. Construction is expected to take five years.

Roemer, who has been trying to terminate the program since 1992, cited its cost overruns and pressures on the rest of the federal budget. One estimate for the station over its lifetime is nearly \$100 billion.

But with space station contracts spread among many congressional districts, the program has broad support in Congress.

The funds were included in a \$92 billion measure for fiscal year 2000, which begins Oct. 1.

Aides to President Clinton have threatened to veto the bill because it contains less than the White House wants for many programs. Congress has sent Clinton only two of the 13 spending measures for the coming fiscal year, bogged down by disputes over how much to spend and how to pay for the expenditures.

Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo, House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo. and other Democrats criticized GOP housing cuts. Cuomo said the measure would cut funds "that help people work their way out of poverty" and were designed by Republicans to help finance a tax cut for the rich.

But Republicans said Clinton proposed unrealistic increases for housing based on proposed higher taxes and fees with no chance of congressional approval.

"We have done our very best to prioritize limited federal dollars in a responsible way that takes care of our neediest citizens," Rep. James Walsh, R-N.Y., chief author of the veterans-housing bill, said.

The Senate resumed considering a \$14 billion measure financing the Interior Department and cultural programs.

New military plane unveiled

AV-22 Osprey combines helicopter, fixed-wing craft

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a helicopter. And judging the cheers from Pentagon brass members of Congress, it could be something of a Superman of military aircraft.

Looking oddly old-fashioned as a fixed-wing plane, with two oversized propellers, the Marines' MV-22 Osprey transforms itself into the helicopter of the future.

After a swift pass up the Potomac River past the Washington Monument yesterday, the rotors on the latest production model smoothly tilted up, setting it down easily on a patch of grass at the Pentagon.

Basically, the Osprey converts from a helicopter into a speedy fixed-wing plane in 20 seconds, offering new capabilities for troop deployment, drug interdiction and search and rescue, including hostage rescue.

"It's going to change the way in which we approach everything from assault operations to disaster relief humanitarian aid and peacekeeping," Defense Secretary William Cohen said, welcoming the Osprey before a crowd of Pentagon officers,

members of Congress, diplomats and other guests.

"The V-22 is going to cut our response time from weeks down to days and days down to hours," Cohen said.

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— William Cohen
U.S. defense secretary

The twin-turbine, vertical-lift, tiltrotor aircraft, also known as a convertiplane, had its first test flight a decade ago but is being touted by the military as a key warfare and peacetime military technology for the future.

"This is the revolution in military affairs," Cohen, describing the aircraft as the "epitome of

what our forces will need and what they will become in the 21st century," said.

Cohen compared the potential impact of the tiltrotor with that of the aircraft carrier in World War II and the use of modern bombers and jet fighters in Kosovo.

The aircraft flies at twice the speed, has four times the range and carries twice the payload of the aging CH-46 helicopters it will replace. A CH-46 landed alongside the Osprey and a tiltrotor prototype, the XV-15.

The Marines have plans for 360 of the MV-22s by 2013. The Air Force is expected to order 50 of another version, the CV-22, and the Navy 48 HV-22Bs for special warfare, logistics support and search and rescue.

Jointly produced by Bell Helicopter Textron of Fort Worth and Boeing Co., in Ridley Park, Pa., the world's first production model tiltrotor aircraft can achieve speeds over 400 miles per hour and an altitude of 25,000 feet. It is designed to carry up to 24 troops or external loads of 15,000 pounds. It can fly 2,000 miles and land on a dime.

Sega readies for release of Dreamcast

NEW YORK (AP) — Sonic the hedgehog runs faster than ever. Sega's new Dreamcast video game system challenges Sega Enterprises' struggling company back to top of the U.S. market.

The super-powerful machine is the first 16 games designed to hit the shelves today, and Sega is bracing for Christmas-crowds through the weekend.

Before today's launch, Sega tallied more than 300,000 pre-orders for the \$199 machine — three times more than anticipated. The machines will sell for about \$50 each.

Many retailers, surprised by the heavy demand, planned to open their stores early today and have added extra staff to keep up with expected crowds.

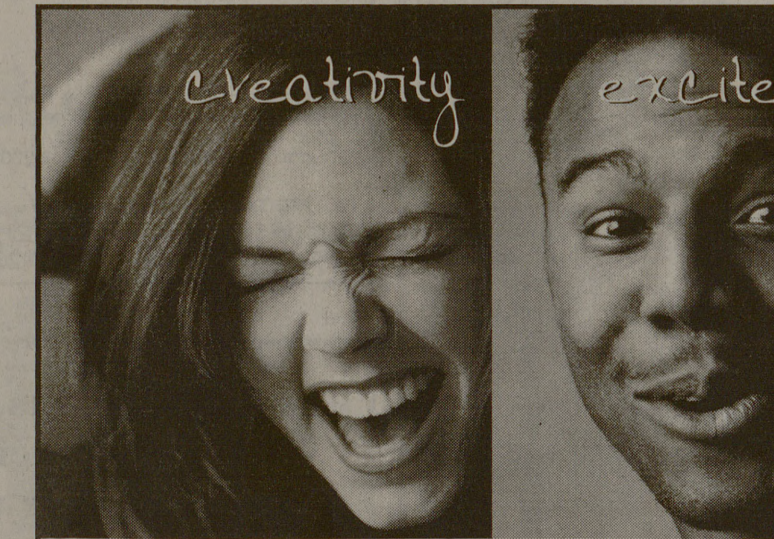
By 10 p.m. yesterday, stores reported lines of people anxious to buy the game, which was to go on sale at midnight.

"I had to have it immediately. I wouldn't wait," Ken Grose, a 21-year-old college student who headed a group of 30 people at the Electronics Boutique store at the University City mall outside Philadelphia, said.

"As soon as I get the machine home, I'm going to play it," he said.

But big hype and a strong launch will not guarantee long-term success, especially with Sony's PlayStation 2 due to introduce new machines and Dreamcast sales dropping in Japan, where the game was introduced a year ago.

Industry watchers warn that Sega will need to keep introducing new games for Dreamcast to succeed in the United States.



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