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A Congressional review

Legislators divided about record as session comes to end

By Adam Clymer

New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — The 103rd Congress quit for the elections on Saturday, leaving behind a bitterly disputed record of legislation passed, defeated and put off.

As it closed its books, the Senate overcame the 28th Republican filibuster in two years and voted to protect millions of acres of California desert. Some senators who had already returned to their states to campaign had to fly back to the capital to vote.

The vote on the California desert sent President Clinton the first significant environmental bill of this Congress. Clinton and congressional Democrats looked back over 21 months that began with high hopes that a new president and more than



Dole

100 new members could solve dozens of problems they said had been ignored in 12 Republican years. But they were dogged by defeats on health care and campaign finance and by long, frustrating delays on many issues.

Still, they found several points of pride and argued that accomplishments in trade, education, crime and deficit reduction had earned a respected place in history.

In listing accomplishments, Republicans agreed with Democrats only on trade — an issue both sides managed to leave unfinished until Congress returns after the elections to vote on the global trade agreement. Last year's vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement was indeed one of only a handful of truly partisan lawmaking efforts, repeatedly praised by Republican leaders like Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas as the kind of Democratic leadership they wanted to see more of.

On Saturday, Dole ridiculed what he called "photo-op bipartisanship" instead of real consultation.

Democrats were also keenly aware of the session's failures. Sen. George Mitchell of Maine, the departing majority leader, told the Senate on Saturday of his unhappiness with the failure of health care and campaign spending legislation. "The disappointments of recent months are real," he said, but "we made a significant difference in the economic direction for the better — more jobs, lower inflation, declining deficits — than the country has seen for a dozen years."

On education, Democrats always had significant Republican help, especially in the Senate. But the Republican Party does not praise measures like shifting aid for poor children away from rich suburbs, easing the loan terms of college students, and establishing national educational goals, perhaps because they were handled by Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the most prominent Democratic incumbent they hope to defeat.

Where Democrats claimed this summer's \$30-billion crime bill as an accomplishment, providing more money for police, prisons and crime prevention, Republicans scoffed, calling it too soft. Dole said the legislation was filled with pork-barrel projects, calling it "big pig."

The deficit issue remains perhaps the sharpest division of all. Fourteen months after it passed without a single Republican vote, Democrats say it has spurred economic growth and confidence; Republicans continue to blast it as no more than a tax increase.

Generally, Republicans saw congressional success only where the Democrats saw failure, most of all on national health insurance.

On that issue and many others, the Republicans were remarkably unified, while the Democrats, with solid-looking majorities, were really too shaky to let them push more than one measure at a time.

That made the variety of bills passed in 1993 a legislative tour de force. But it also made 1994, with its yearlong focus on health care, seem even more a failure, with attention significantly diverted from that defeat and others only by passage of the crime bill.

Indeed, the Democrats' most famous victory, the August 1993 vote to pass the budget measure that reduced the deficit by raising taxes and cutting spending, sowed the seeds of their most grievous defeat. The need to concentrate on the budget slowed work on health care, let its opponents define the issue and left the 1994 record flat.

Whatever historians may say, there was no doubt that this Congress disappointed the voters.

In January 1993, a New York Times/CBS News Poll indicated that most Americans expected the government to work better now than one party controlled the White House and Congress, and about half believed that more than 100 new members would help Congress improve. By last month, only 19 percent said Congress had accomplished more than it does in a typical two-year period.

Republicans counted on that disappointment to lead voters to punish the Democrats next month. When they voted to kill measures they had

once supported, like greater regulation of lobbyists, Democrats charged them with no motive beyond what Rep. Richard Gephardt of Missouri, the House majority leader, called "dissent for the sake of legislative destruction."

But some Republicans, like Sen. John McCain of Arizona, warned that the public mood imperiled incumbents, regardless of party, and that stalling measures like control of lobbyists was bad policy and bad politics.

Republicans were careful to say they opposed the lobbying bill because it might hurt grass-roots lobbyists, not the Gucci-shod, K Street professionals who stood outside the

Senate chamber and cheered Thursday's vote to prolong the filibuster. But on other issues, Republicans have veered back and forth between claiming credit for obstruction and denying they were dragging their feet. As Sen. Bob Packwood of Oregon said about killing health care legislation: "We've got to make sure our fingerprints are not on it." But more often they take credit. Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas said proudly on Friday that this Congress

will "be remembered most as the Congress that, at the critical moment, when we were going down the wrong road at 100 miles an hour headed toward socialized medicine, we had a few members who were willing to stand up and say 'no.'"

Dole denies gridlock charge

Senator: GOP not motivated by politics

By CURT ANDERSON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, long known as a pragmatic and able dealmaker, was fairly or not labeled the chief obstructionist by Democrat frustrated by their lack of success in Congress the last two years.

Dole, R-Kan., calls the label a "smoke screen" used to "cloud important policy reasons for our opposition."

In some ways, Dole says, gridlock is good.

"Our party's opposition has been motivated by honest differences in philosophy, not partisan petty politics," Dole said. "We make no apologies for parking in the political intersection to protect the American taxpayers from bad legislation."

But for moderate Republicans like Sen. Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas, the partisan lines in the sand are much clearer and harder to cross than ever before.

"There is something I've not seen before in our Republican caucus, the question of marching in lock-step," Kassebaum said. "It's a lot more assertive. It's not necessarily Senator Dole, but others who want to pursue a sort of scorched-earth policy."



Kassebaum



Dole

Kassebaum found herself on the wrong side of that policy when she broke ranks with the Republican leadership to vote for the crime bill, derided by the GOP as containing too much pork-barrel spending.

Since then, she has endured jabs from GOP colleagues and been the subject of rumors that her status as ranking Republican on the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee could be jeopardized.

"I think, on the whole, if we're going to take a position, we have to debate it in our caucus and be willing to recognize that some are going to vote differently," Kassebaum said.

As the 103rd Congress came to a close last weekend, Dole took to the Senate floor to rebut charges by President Clinton and other Democratic leaders that their bills were blocked simply to prevent any victories prior to the Nov. 8 election.

Dole said the GOP supported Clinton in some areas, most notably the North American Free

Trade Agreement that was opposed by most Democrats.

But on health care, the crime bill, campaign finance reform and lobbying reform, to name a few, Dole said the GOP had honest differences with Democrats. And he blamed them for thinking they could roll over Republicans because they controlled the White House and Congress.

"This is not a gridlock Congress. This is a lockout Congress," Dole said.

Still, Kassebaum said the more conservative Republican senators tended to push Dole away from compromise, particularly as Clinton became weakened by low standing in polls, the Whitewater affair and the failure of health care reform.

"I know that Senator Dole has gotten a bum rap, being viewed as the chief leader of obstructionism. It's not a role he feels comfortable with," Kassebaum said.

If the Republicans pick up seven Senate seats in next month's elections, Dole will become majority leader. And he said the GOP will have a positive agenda ranging from health care reform to cutting government spending to combating crime.

"Whether we are in the majority or the minority next session, Republicans remain committed to our principles of less government, less taxes, more freedom and more opportunity," Dole said.

Dole found it difficult to let go of campaign's nitty-gritty details

Candidate also tended to push himself too hard, and fatigue worked against him.

The themes of hard work, surprising disorganization and raw nerves run through the 1988 campaign of Bob Dole in the new biography of the Senate minority leader written by Jake Thompson.

The first of the following excerpts comes from before Dole's win in the 1988 Iowa caucuses; the other just after his defeat in New Hampshire.

Thompson, Washington correspondent for The Kansas City Star, currently is reporting Dole's current careful preparation for a third possible run for his party's nomination for president next year.

Dole also approached Bill Brock, Reagan's secretary of labor and a friend of Dole, for a key role in his campaign. The two eventually agreed that Brock would come in as chairman. Everyone in the Dole inner circle wanted Brock... Brock, in (Robert) Ellsworth's parlance, was a "Bigfoot," a big name, someone the cynical national media could latch onto and say, "Well, now Bob Dole is serious."

"Everyone thought it would be a ten-strike," Ellsworth said. "Everybody thought to have a sitting member of Reagan's Cabinet — even if it was Bobo the Clown — resign from the Reagan Cabinet for the purpose of becoming chairman of the Dole campaign would be a big blow to the Bush campaign."

Brock first sent a SWAT team to Dole's headquarters. They wandered around asking staffers exactly what they did for Dole. Dole's hierarchy flabbergasted them... "If he has a problem, it's that he listens to too many people," acknowledged David Keene (a conservative and Dole campaign lieutenant). "I joked once his organizational chart for his 1988 campaign was Dole at the top, then there's this long, long line below him with everyone from Bill Brock to his chauffeur. And Dole might have called anybody at any moment and acted on anything he heard."

In January of 1988, a month before the Iowa caucuses, the Brock camp struggled to get control of the Dole presidential campaign. Brock wanted to get rid of Dole's "one of us" theme after Iowa.

"Why is that?" Keene said to Brock at an early meeting.

"It's fine for Iowa, because it's right next door, but that not going to play in the country," Brock responded.

"Bill, that theme has nothing to do with geography and everything to do with where you're coming from," Keene told him. "Of course, you wouldn't understand that, because you're one of them."

Dole could not let go of the nitty-gritty details.

From Bob Dole: The Republicans' Man For All Seasons, © 1994 by Jake H. Thompson. Published by Donald I. Fine, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.



Dole campaigned hard in the New Hampshire primary, and his loss there to George Bush was dispiriting.

He continued to read fund-raising letters, made and revoked decisions on an hourly basis. He would order sudden changes in scheduling and complain when the hastily-thrown-together events seemed disorganized. Instead of careful planning with field staff for Dole's trips, said Fred Asbell (lieutenant to Brock), "It came to, 'Holy mackerel! He's going to be here tomorrow. What can we do?' It really got to be just a frantic deal."

And Dole tended to push himself too hard. "When I work long hours, I just get really tired and eventually fall asleep," said Asbell. "Bob Dole shifts onto either or something. I don't know what he runs on. The tireder he gets, the harder he pushes. We all recognized fairly early that he was tired and the tireder he got, the grouzier he got. We would beg and Brock would beg, 'Please take the weekend off. Go to Florida, lay in the sun, rest and do something.' Dole would say, 'Plenty of time to rest after this is over.' Believe me, the problem was not lack of enthusiasm on the part of the candidate. If anything, it worked against us because we figured out that a number of the reporters were sitting around knowing that if this thing just pushed itself hard enough and long enough, this darker side of Dole would come back out again."

The (New Hampshire) debate didn't go well for Dole. At one point Pete du Pont brandished a piece of paper, saying it was a no-tax pledge and urged Dole to sign it; he refused. Later (Dole's communication director, Mari) Maseng speculated

why: "Bob Dole is probably more ideologically opposed to raising taxes than Bush. But Dole is pragmatic. And there was no way he could physically take that piece of paper. There was no table and no one to hold it on the table. His right hand is not available to him. Plus there's just: 'I'm Bob Dole. You're not going to tell me what to do.'"

On primary day, Bush handily defeated Dole, winning 37.6 percent of the vote to Dole's 28.4 percent. Kemp came in third with 12.8 percent. "The Dole organization failed to campaign as long and hard as they could," said Robert Ellsworth in his explanation of the defeat. "It was a combination of incompetence and hubris."

In an interview, Dole said: "I think down deep most of the people around me knew if we didn't win Iowa and New Hampshire we were in trouble. We had bad polls. In the last week we sort of sat on our poll lead. And we had a big snowstorm. Bush was out there shoveling snow and driving trucks, things I couldn't do. So he had all the news coverage. We were wandering around grocery stores shaking hands. I think Bush and Sununu did a superior job. We got up that morning to visit the polling places and there were George Bush signs solid, everywhere we went. And if you need any last-minute reminders who really has it in the campaign, that was it. I must say, I probably thought about it every night for a year afterwards to figure out what happened myself. One thing that happened, nobody could or would make a decision. We

Dole campaigning for GOP — and self

By JOHN KING
The Associated Press



Bob Dole

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In a turbulent election season, Bob Dole may be the most enviable politician in America — campaigning for himself, perhaps for two jobs at once, without the nuisance of being on the ballot. And he is enjoying himself.

Take the other day in South Carolina, where the GOP's nominee for governor,

David Beasley, mockingly noted that President Clinton was never around to help state Democrats. Without missing a beat, Dole quipped: "We'd be glad to pay his way."

Or Wednesday in Nashville, when the Senate GOP leader said he was declining Clinton's invitation to accompany him to the Middle East next week. "I can get invited to go other places,"

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Confident Dole campaigns for Republicans — and self

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he said, smiling the kid-in-a-candy-store grin he sports quite often these days. "He invited me to go, but I said I've got invitations to travel in THIS country."

Indeed he does.

The Kansan has visited more than 30 states since August, and has, with just a few breaks, several stops a day on his itinerary from now to the Nov. 8 elections.

If things go as he predicts and the GOP wins enough seats to gain control of the Senate, Dole will once again be the majority leader, meaning he will have worries about a transition and legislative agenda for Senate Republicans. Then there is another tough decision — whether to run for president again.

But Dole treats such prospects as blessings, not burdens, and is campaigning with confidence for GOP candidates — and himself.

To his audiences, Dole offers this simple message: "If President Clinton said two years ago that it was time for a change after 12 years of Republican presidents then it certainly is time for a change after 40 years of Congress dominated by liberal Democrats."

And Dole takes time everywhere to debunk Democratic arguments that Republicans are obstructionists.

"We are not a negative, obstructionist party," Dole told a luncheon for Tennessee GOP Senate nominee Fred Thompson. "But we were not going to

approve a big socialized health-care bill and we are not going to approve spending in a crime bill that's not related to crime and we are not going to make apologies for that."

Nor does he make apologies for taking steps necessary should he decide to seek the presidency. In addition to earning chits by attracting large crowds to fund-raisers, Dole is showering money from his own political action committee, Campaign America, on GOP candidates.

Campaign America has contributed more than \$260,000 this year to 86 House and Senate GOP candidates. And that doesn't include the tens of thousands more given to state and local Republicans — or the thousands in contributions Dole's PAC is making in the final stretch.

He readily concedes such generosity should bring valuable allies if he decides to run for president. He is adding seasoned campaign hands to Campaign America just in case, and slowly becoming more combative with a potential rival within the GOP caucus, Texas Sen. Phil Gramm.

Dole said the "most worrisome" factor in deciding whether to run for president is the "very delicate line you would have to keep" if he is majority leader next year and also a candidate for the GOP nomination.

In an interview, Dole exudes confidence Republicans will gain the seven seats needed for a Senate majority. Winning the 40 needed to seize the House, too, is "a bit of a stretch," he says, but not impossible.

had lots of different ideas, but somehow it didn't happen."

Primary day, demoralized by the Sunday night debate, deflated by Bush's unfolding victory in New Hampshire, the Dole powder keg that was lit in Iowa blew. NBC captured a moment during the day when a du Pont supporter walked up to Dole at an event and challenged him, "You voted for tax increases six hundred times in your career. Well, can you defend that?"

Dole's voice rumbled like low thunder. He scuffed his toe around in the snow and muttered, "Go back in your cave."

Just in case viewers didn't hear, NBC reporter Lisa Myers helped out: "Dole said, 'GO BACK IN YOUR CAVE.'"

That night in an NBC primary election special, anchor Tom Brokaw bantered with George Bush about his win. "I've got Sen. Bob Dole who's standing by in his headquarters," Brokaw said.

Sitting in a darkened room staring at the black hole of the television camera pointed at him, Dole felt lousy. He had the flu. He managed a small smile. He had no television monitor in front of him to see what viewers at home would see. Brokaw turned to Bush: "Anything you'd like to say to him at this point?"

"Nope," Bush said with an uncomfortable smile, "just wish him well, and we'll meet him in the South."

"And, Sen. Dole, is there anything you'd like to say to the vice president?" Brokaw said. On his earphone Dole heard the conversation, but did not realize they were on live with Brokaw. He thought it was the usual chitchat that went on between producers, anchors and those being interviewed before the real thing.

"Yeah, stop lying about my record," Dole said, glaring into the camera. Maseng, who also had the flu, sat bolt upright. Dole walked over after the interview. "How bad was it?"

Bad. The national media seized the story: "Bob Dole's mean streak returns." "The dark side of Bob Dole attacks George Bush." News shows replayed the videotape of Dole's outburst. The day after New Hampshire, Dole flew to Oklahoma. The Bush camp already had lined up Gov. Henry Bellmon ahead of time for a 10 a.m. press conference (to attack Dole). Bellmon used Dole's "stop lying about my record" statement to complain about how mean and vicious Bob Dole was.

"We were prepared to attack him on other things," James Shearer, Bush's regional political director, said... "I can't remember what they were, because when I saw this on live television it was like a gift from God. We truly did as much as we could to help set the mood of the press, and in effect, get them to write the stories we wanted. We wanted Dole on the defensive..."

The third of three installments of book excerpts will appear next Sunday.