

221

WASHINGTON MEMO

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FOR RELEASE WEEK OF OCTOBER 26, 1969

CONGRESSIONAL ROUNDUP: A LEGISLATIVE BOX SCORE

The legislative mill of this 91st Congress has ground slowly indeed. Congress now faces a hectic schedule, despite considerable debate and amidst a lot of finger-pointing from both Republicans and Democrats.

A major reason lies in an unusual situation in Washington. Not since 1849 when Zachary Taylor became President has a Chief Executive come into office facing opposition majorities in both the House and the Senate. This situation has slowed activity in Congress because both Republicans and Democrats have been cautious in considering new programs or major changes in old ones.

-Status of President's Proposals-

Although the President has been criticized for not issuing legislative recommendations, he has delivered 31 messages, each backed by bills introduced in the Senate or House at Administration request or in the President's behalf.

To date (Oct. 23), only three of these major bills have become law, and two of those -- the debt ceiling extension and the anti-inflationary surcharge extension -- barely resemble original Nixon proposals.

Slowest pace has been in the appropriations process. Only two fiscal 1970 appropriations bills have become law, although several have passed either the Senate or House.

Basic tax reform proposals of the Nixon Administration passed the House last summer, but the Senate Democrats chose to delay repeal of the seven percent investment credit and the plan to remove about five million poor persons from the income tax rolls, pending Finance Committee action on their version of reform.

-12 Legislative Priorities-

Urging a politically-divided Congress to cooperate and act in an Oct. 13 message to Congress, President Nixon cited 12 legislative priorities for Congress. "The country is not interested in what we say, but what we do," he added. "We are co-equal branches of government, elected not to maneuver for partisan advantage, but to work together to find hopeful answers to problems that confound the people all of us serve."

At the top of the President's priorities is the draft, followed by the welfare system, tax structure, revenue sharing, post office, manpower training, Social Security, grant-in-aid system, Electoral College, District of Columbia government, Office of Economic Opportunity and foreign aid. Particularly lengthy debates can be expected over at least three of these subjects -- electoral reform, welfare and Social Security.

Other key measures include malnutrition, farm legislation, mine health and safety, transportation, drugs, organized crime and obscene mail.

-Needed: Cooperation, Action-

There are encouraging signs of a surge in bipartisan cooperation on most of these important issues. Senate Democrat Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) and Senate Republican Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) have pledged their support. The need now is to translate the pledges into specific, affirmative action.

The task ahead is monumental, but I am confident there are legislators on both sides of the aisle who will work together to find workable, effective solutions to the pressing needs of the nation.