

But that confusion did not stop the House Republicans from ramming the bill through with minimum debate.

Well, since the President was going to veto the debt limit bill anyway, we agreed to let it go through the Senate, and I spoke about one version of this amendment on the Senate floor that night. I can tell you that if I thought this regulatory reform bill was going to become law, I would still be here talking these many days, almost. I feel that strongly about it.

Mr. President, I have now examined the version that passed the House, and it turns out that my comments of November 9 require no major revision.

I claimed that the amendment had a supermandate. They changed the language, but the supermandate is still there. How do I know that? Well, besides reading the language, I have the word of the chief sponsor, Representative WALKER. In describing the amendment, he stated that current statutory standards can be "superseded—the so-called supermandate".

Let us be clear about what that means. It means that 25 years of health-based environmental standards for clean air and clean water could be overturned if this amendment became law.

Representative WALKER also describes his amendment as "not as tough as the House bill, nor as loose as the Senate bill". That is one way of putting it. Here is another. The original House bill, H.R. 9, was as reactionary an antienvironment, antihealth, and antisafety legislative instrument as I have seen during my entire 20 years in the U.S. Senate. The Senate bill referred to is the Dole-Johnston bill, S. 343, which is a seriously flawed bill that has failed three cloture motions in the Senate this year.

So, according to the chief sponsor of the amendment, the amendment is a cross between the reactionary H.R. 9 and the not-so-moderate version of S. 343 that failed on three cloture votes. Is this a moderate compromise?

No, it is not. It is an example of what we can expect in a conference with the House on regulatory reform if we go into it with a Senate bill like S. 343.

I think the Walker amendment is extreme. It is reckless, extreme in the burden it places on agencies to defend themselves from the unlimited litigation that would be unleashed by the judicial review provisions of this amendment. It is reckless in the jeopardy that it causes our laws concerning health, safety, and the environment.

We passed it in the U.S. Senate and sent it as part of the debt limit bill over to the President. It is a good thing that he vetoed it.

Mr. President, I am for regulatory reform, but not at the expense of the health and the safety of the American people. I worked hard all year with both Republican and Democratic colleagues to produce a moderate bill, and we came within two votes of passing it. I am still interested in producing a

moderate bill that provides real regulatory reform but owes its provenance to no special interest group, and above all protects the American people.

I am for a balanced budget, too. I am for all the things we are trying to do to get the Federal Government on the right track for the American people. But this game playing that is going on, that is largely coming from the House with literally poor and onerous pieces of legislation hooked on as amendments to an essential bill like the debt limit; this is something we cannot tolerate.

The President was absolutely right to veto that bill, and I think we can still pass legislation here to benefit all of the American people.

We can still do that in this Congress but not if the legislative process is treated with the literal contempt that has been evinced this past week by the way in which reg reform was attached to the debt limit bill.

I thank my colleague for yielding, and I yield the floor.

COMMERCE FUNDS LOBBYISTS

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to call my colleagues' attention to a woeful misuse of the taxpayers' money.

As we have debated the so-called Istook amendment banning taxpayer subsidies for lobbyists, those opposed to reform have argued that current law already prohibits using grant funds for advocacy.

But there has come to my attention a blatant example of just this phenomenon.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration, a part of the Commerce Department, has provided \$200,000 to HandsNet, Inc., a California group which operates an on-line computer service focused on lobbying and available on the Internet. According to its own Internet-based documents, HandsNet links "5,000 public interest and human service organizations across the United States." Among the services offered: "the latest Action Alerts," a weekly digest summarizing the alerts, and daily updates on key issues.

Mr. President, NTIA's own description of the grant award specifically mentions that the grant will allow "National organizations [to] help local ones keep up to date by publicizing action alerts. . . ."

And what are these action alerts? Allow me to offer a few recent examples:

"ISTOOK AMENDMENT—CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVES"

The message? "Now is the time to turn up the heat. . . . So Call, E-Mail, or Fax Your Representative Today!"

"GIVE PRESIDENT CLINTON A WAKE-UP CALL."

The message? "If President Clinton signs immoral welfare and Medicaid 'reform' bills, the 60-year-old guaranteed safety net for children will be destroyed."

"CONGRESS YIELDS TO TRADITIONAL VALUES COALITION"

The message? "The hearing, dubbed 'Parental Involvement in Social Issues in Education'. . . Is likely to become a tax-funded platform for gay bashing."

I could go on, Mr. President, but my point is clear. These action alerts are intended to facilitate and increase the effectiveness of lobbying on this Congress. "HandsNet" has a clear political agenda, and it is using Commerce Department funding—the taxpayers' money—to further that agenda.

We cannot afford to fund this kind of political activism. It is a waste of taxpayers' money in times when the Government already taxes too much and spends even more than it takes in. It is also counterproductive, in times of budgetary downsizing, to fund the interest groups that seek to continue Government's expansion.

The sum of \$200,000 may not sound like a lot of money Mr. President, but it is the taxpayers' money. What is more, this practice is entirely too widespread. NTIA also has funded on-line activities for a number of other groups engaged in lobbying activities.

Mr. President, HandsNet members include several special interest groups lobbying against the Istook-McIntosh-Ehrlich reform effort. Not surprisingly, these groups are more than happy to use taxpayer funds to lobby against having taxpayer funds cut off from their lobbying efforts.

This brings up the problem of the Commerce Department itself. I say the problem of the Commerce Department because that agency itself is an invitation and a source of funds for lobbying activities and subsidies against the interests of America's taxpayers.

The General Accounting Office has noted that the Commerce Department is duplicative and so unnecessary. It shares its missions with over 71 Federal departments, agencies and offices. It controls at most 8 percent of funding devoted to actual trade issues in our Government and has no unified purpose for its existence.

What, then, do we get for our \$3.6 billion in funding for the Commerce Department? Corporate welfare and subsidies for lobbying organizations.

The HandsNet example proves how counterproductive Commerce Department grants really are. These grants encourage a growth industry of special-interest lobbying, distort our deliberations here, and push us toward overspending and unbalanced budgets. We must stop this blatant self-interested lobbying for the sake of our Nation and for the sake of our own independence as a legislative body.

I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the Heritage Foundation's Government Integrity Project Report titled "Commerce Department Funds Blatant Lobbying" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

COMMERCE DEPARTMENT FUNDS BLATANT
LOBBYING

(By Marshall Wittman and Charles P.
Griffin)

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any . . . printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, to favor or oppose . . . any legislation . . . 18 USC 1913

Opponents of the effort to end 40 years of political corruption manifested in a system of taxpayer-subsidized lobbying often state that existing federal law already prohibits using grant funds for advocacy. They cite the above section of the U.S. Code to defend this view.

It appears, however, that the law is irrelevant. In recent weeks, the Department of Commerce has provided \$200,000 to HandsNet, Inc., a California group which operates an online computer service focused on lobbying and available on the Internet. According to its own Internet-based documents, HandsNet links "5,000 public interest and human service organizations across the United States." Among the services offered: "the latest Action Alerts."

A description of the grant award prepared by the grant provider, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (part of the Commerce Department), specifically mentions that the grant will allow "National organizations [to] help local ones keep up to date by publicizing action alerts. . . ." A recent selection of alerts includes:

"Istook Amendment—Call Your Representatives 10/30/95—Now is the time to turn up the heat. . . . So Call, E-Mail, or Fax Your Representative Today!"

"Give President Clinton a Wake-Up Call—If President Clinton signs immoral welfare and Medicaid 'reform' bills, the 60-year-old guaranteed safety net for children will be destroyed."

"Stop English-only Proposals in Congress 10/24/95—Call and write to your Representative and Senator. Ask to meet with them directly."

"Congress Yields To Traditional Values Coalition—The hearing, dubbed 'Parental Involvement in Social Issues in Education' . . . is likely to become a tax-funded platform for gay bashing."

Each of the alerts is supported by information to describe what action needs to be taken and what arguments can be used to lobby Congress most effectively.

ABOUT THE GRANT TO HANDSNET

The \$200,000 awarded to HandsNet, Inc., of California was to be used for the nationwide training of public interest organizations on how to use the Internet more effectively. The NTIA award summary states that HandsNet "will train 250 organizations in Internet skills, so that they can publish information on the new system." In addition, HandsNet will "conduct a national outreach campaign" to introduce human services groups to the Internet.

The major component of the grant appears to be a new training center in Washington, D.C. The center will be fully functional around January 1, 1996, according to HandsNet documents, but is housed temporarily at the headquarters of Families USA (funder of the 1994 Clinton health care bus caravans). The national center will be operated in conjunction with the Institute for Global Communications, also of California.

ABOUT HANDSNET

In reviewing the HandsNet site on the Internet, it appears that its principal pur-

pose is explicit political advocacy. The site has been used in recent months to fight welfare reform and the Istook-McIntosh-Ehrlich Amendment, among many other issues. The three key information components provided are Action Alerts, a Weekly Digest (a summary of the alerts) and daily updates on key issues. According to its Internet site, HandsNet is affiliated with the Institute for Global Communications, an arm of the Tides Foundation. Members of HandsNet include the major opponents of the Istook-McIntosh-Ehrlich reform effort, including OMB Watch and the Alliance for Justice.

ABOUT THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TIAP

The Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program is operated by NTIA in the Commerce Department. Under the Clinton Administration, this program has mushroomed in cost, from \$10 million in FY 1994 to \$25 million in FY 1995. In 1994 there were 92 grants; in the most recent round (to be announced in mid-November, has already awarded), there are 120. There also are indications that the TIAP may subsidize other lobbying activities, in addition to those of HandsNet, Inc.

According to NTIA documents, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America received \$300,000 in 1994 to set up a "nationwide on-line information system" for itself and all 164 affiliates. Also in 1994, a California organization called LatinoNet received funding to "establish a network of regional field representatives" and "demonstrate a model for building a national grassroots information system," among other things.

Organizations that filed proposals and applications for funding in the FY 1995 process include Families USA, ACORN (which led noisy demonstrations in Congress earlier this year), the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, and Citizens Fund (an affiliate of Citizen Action, an active grassroots lobbying organization). It is unclear which, if any, will receive funding.

CONCLUSION

The Commerce Department, through NTIA, has awarded a grant to an online lobbying organization for the specific purpose of engaging more groups in its Internet advocacy efforts. The \$200,000 gift to HandsNet, Inc., to train people in the publishing of action alerts and other lobbying materials represents a blatant misuse of taxpayer funds.

Supporters of taxpayer-funded political patronage argue that the current system is designed to prevent abuses. The case of the Commerce Department and HandsNet, Inc., provides a serious test of this claim. The fact that such a significant grant could be made with no effort to hide the fact that it directly funds lobbying activities clearly demonstrates the need for Congress to reform this costly and irresponsible form of political corruption.

SAMPLE ACTION ALERT FROM HANDSNET

Help Stop Medicaid and Medicare Cuts! Call Your Legislators and Mail a Card to the President TODAY!

Unless we all pitch in, Congress may demolish the Medicaid and Medicare programs. During September, the House and Senate will be working out the details of their budget plan, which includes huge cuts in Medicaid and Medicare. If we don't stop them, the health care and long term care needs of millions of Americans of all ages will be in jeopardy. We need your help to stop this madness.

Campaign launched to send a message to Washington! The Save Our Security (SOS) Coalition, headed by Dr. Arthur Flemming, is spearheading a major campaign to put leg-

islators on notice: Don't cut the heart out of Medicaid and Medicare! The SOS Coalition is made up of a wide range of children's, disability, and senior groups.

Special "fight back" action cards are available. These cards are addressed to President Clinton and ask him to use his veto power to stop cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. SOS and its member groups are circulating thousands of these cards. If you would like a card for yourself, or a quantity for your organization to circulate, call 1-800-593-5041 and leave us a message saying how many you need (be sure to give your name and address slowly and clearly!).

What you can do: Read over the card. Call your Senators and your Representative using one of the toll-free numbers. Then put your name and address on the postcard to the President; use the space provided for a personal message to emphasize your concern about Medicaid, or attach a family photo to personalize your card.

Here are a few good places to find people who may be willing to participate: senior centers, day care centers, clinics, union halls, churches or synagogues.

Call the above 800 number to order cards! Provided by: Families USA.

THE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, we should not lose sight of the fact that we need a Continuing Resolution because Congress has not completed its work on the fiscal year 1996 appropriation bills. The fiscal year began on October 1st and, yet, today, 6 weeks later, Congress has sent only three of the thirteen appropriation bills to the President that he signed. Congress sent a fourth one, the legislative appropriation bill, which the President, in mid-July, very unwisely vetoed.

Be that as it may, in addition, congressional action on the transportation and legislative appropriation bills has been completed and they are ready to go to the President. Of the eight remaining bills, seven are still in various stages of the legislative process: Defense, Interior, Foreign Operations, Treasury-Postal Service, Commerce, Justice, VA-HUD, and the District of Columbia appropriation bills. The Labor-HHS bill has not even been brought up in this Chamber—6 weeks after the fiscal year began.

One of the major causes of this failure to complete congressional action on these eight appropriation bills is the fact that virtually all of them contain controversial legislative riders, issues such as public housing reform, EPA regulatory issues, mining law reform, California desert protection, National Endowment for the Arts, prison reform, abortion, and rewriting the 1994 crime bill.

In other words, instead of completing our necessary appropriations work, Congress has chosen instead to load up our appropriation bills with items from the Republicans' so-called "Contract With America."

Now, Mr. President, this is my "Contract With America." I keep it in my shirt pocket in all of my waking hours, Sundays included. It is the Constitution of the United States. It is pretty