

Originally Processed With FOIA(s):

S

FOIA Number:

S

FOIA MARKER

This is not a textual record. This is used as an administrative marker by the George Bush Presidential Library Staff.

Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Speech File Backup Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1993

OA/ID Number: 13804
Folder ID Number: 13804-006

Folder Title:
Budget Deadline Research--Deadline Memos 3/20/92 [OA 7570] [1]

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	26	22	4	1

FEBRUARY 26, 1992

MEMORANDUM FOR SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS

FROM DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN *DC*

RE POTUS AND CONGRESS

The POTUS' continuing frustrations with getting legislation through Congress may be caused mostly by the fact that he is forced to play on an unlevel field. Here is an interesting fact:

When President George Bush took office in 1989, he became the only elected Republican President in history to start his first term with such a one-sided Democratic Congress.

101st. Congress	House:	D-259, R-174	(difference= D-85)
	Senate:	D-55, R-45	(difference= D-10)

However, President Bush has not faced the most lopsided Democratic Congress of any Republican President at any time during a Presidency. President Gerald Ford had it worse as did President Dwight Eisenhower.


102nd. Congress (Bush)	House:	D-267, R-167	(difference= D-100)
	Senate:	D-56, R-44	(difference= D-12)

94th. Congress (Ford)	House:	D-291, R-144	(difference= D-147)
	Senate:	D-60, R-37R	(difference= D-23)

86th. Congress (Eisenhower)	House:	D-283, R-153	(difference= D-130)
	Senate:	D-64, R-34	(difference= D-30)

President Eisenhower was in his final term in office when Congress managed to get so lopsided, and you can probably guess why President Ford had to face the biggest differential for any Republican President ever.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN 
DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

MAGIC NUMBER: 28

The Washington Post decided to write my memo today about the cat and mouse games going on over on Capitol Hill in regards to the deadline. See attached article.

Meanwhile, we research interns have been busy monitoring Congress' work habits since the SOTU. A calendar for each chamber is attached showing the vital information. Take for example Tuesday, February 11, 1992: The Senate called it a day after a thirty-eight **second** pro forma session on their ninth day in session since the SOTU. The House topped that performance by clocking-in a forty-seven minute session with no legislative business on their seventh (out of a possible fourteen) day in session since January 28. We will continue updating this calendar until March 20.

THE FEDERAL PAGE

Graphically, Senators Make Their Points Floor Becomes Stage for Assigning Economic Blame, but Many Deplore Lack of Substance

By Helen Dewar
Washington Post Staff Writer

On and off for the past couple of weeks, Republicans have dragged a large chart onto the Senate floor and deposited it in a convenient spot for the television cameras that record the chamber's proceedings. The chart shows the number of days—declining by one every day—that remain before President Bush's March 20 deadline for Congress to act on his economic recovery program.

Democrats, never to be outdone when it comes to charts and cameras, have responded with strategically located graphics of their own, including one with giant-sized numbers—far larger than the Republican numbers—to remind viewers how long it had been since the "Bush recession" started: 585 days.

For Americans who cannot get enough of finger-pointing, scapegoating and partisan posturing by politicians in Washington, the Senate is the place to watch these days.

But for those who are fed up with what they regard as politics-as-usual in Washington—a majority of their constituents, many lawmakers say, pointing to the New Hampshire showings of former senator Paul E. Tsongas and commentator Patrick J. Buchanan—the scene in recent days will only reinforce their dissatisfaction.

"This is what people back home don't want to hear from us. It really does confirm their worst impressions. . . . I think they probably just tune out," said Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-Kan.).

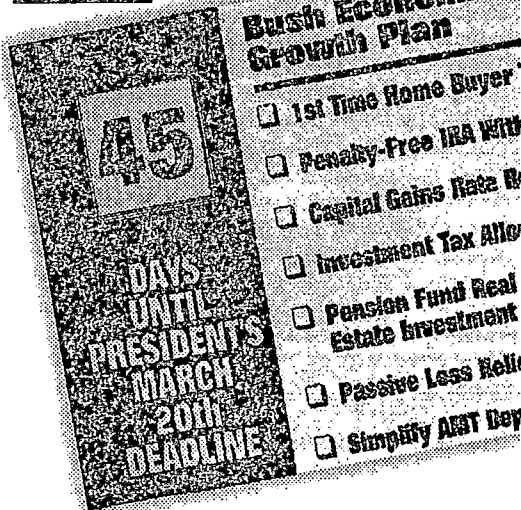
"It demonstrates the type of conduct that people are so antagonistic and hostile toward. . . . It reminds me of kids playing marbles," said Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.).

"There really is a thirst for substance and an appreciation for it by people when they see it," said Sen. John C. Danforth (R-Mo.), speaking of Tsongas's victory.

But any thirst for substance would not be quenched by the Senate debate over which party is more to blame for inaction on the nation's economic problems.

"It is 44 days and counting," said Senate Minority Leader Robert J.

REPUBLICANS



Dole (R-Kan.) after introducing the president's economic program—and the countdown-to-deadline chart—on Feb. 5. "Forty-four days to make a difference for every man, woman and child in America—44 more days to decide if Congress will be part of the solution or part of the problem," he added.

"The president says he wants us to act within 44 days on this economic growth plan," responded

For Americans avid for finger-pointing, the Senate is the place to watch these days.

Budget Committee Chairman Jim Sasser (D-Tenn.). "It took him 548 days in this 18-month recession, the longest recession since the Second World War, to come forward and even propose some sort of fig-leaf economic growth plan to this Congress" in his State of the Union address Jan. 28, Sasser added. And now "he wants us to act on it within 44 days."

Sen. Donald W. Riegle Jr. (D-

Mich.) expanded on that view. "First Reagan-Bush, and then Bush-Quayle, has been in office now 11 years," he said. "That is over 4,000 days. They have had 4,000 days to construct an economic growth plan for America, and they have not done it."

When the Democrats started rolling out their charts, they noted, among other things, that it took 502 days from the start of the recession for Bush to agree to extended economic benefits and 533 days from its start before the president acknowledged that it had started.

Others, such as Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R-N.M.), ranking minority member of the Budget Committee, weighed in with yet another set of numbers. "Tomorrow, if I am here," he said the day after Dole kicked off the rhetorical exchanges, "I will come to the floor and I will borrow the chart that says 494 days. I will make it 493. But I will put under it, 'Democratically-led Congress has done nothing about the recession for 493 days.'"

Domenici also started passing out peanut-butter cups, costing 54 cents a pair, to illustrate the daily value of the Democrats' proposed \$200 tax reduction for middle-income Americans. "Frankly, if I had a plan like that I would wait 494 days, too," he added.

In a variation on the earlier

DEMOCRATS

DAYS OF RECESSION BEFORE PRESIDENT BUSH:

- acknowledged the recession... **533 days**
July 1, 1990 - December 16, 1991
- provided extended UI benefits... **502 days**
July 1, 1990 - November 16, 1991
- announced an economic plan... **576 days**
July 1, 1990 - January 28, 1992

THE WASHINGTON POST

themes, Dole arrived on the Senate floor Wednesday, the day after the New Hampshire primary, with a new chart twitting the Democrats for the success of Tsongas, who opposed the Democrats' proposals for middle-income tax cuts. It read: "Bob Dole Gift Certificate: To Paul Tsongas. One free trip to Washington (all expenses paid). Purpose: Convince fellow Democrats to abandon class warfare strategy; give up anti-growth, anti-business, anti-consumer agenda."

If voters are not impressed by this kind of thing, why do senators keep on doing it?

No one is really sure.

"Dole started it" with his countdown-to-March 20 chart, and "we had to respond," said a Democratic aide.

"Actually, the Democrats started early in January with criticism of the president, and then our side answered, and it started going back and forth and it keeps on going," said Kassebaum. "Both parties want to get out their side of the story. One thing leads to another, and then it's a, well, it becomes a moveable feast."

"The leaders should be willing to stand up and say, 'Stop, no more, cut it out,' but they won't do it," said a senator who asked not to be identified. "I'm not sure they get it," he added.

S E N A T E

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1/29 In Session 11:00AM-7:05PM Magic #: 51 DIS/DSS= 1/1	1/30 In Session 10:00AM-8:09PM 50 2/2	1/31 In Session 8:30AM-2:37PM 49 3/3	2/1
2/2	2/3 In Session 2:00PM-5:40PM 46 4/6	2/4 In Session 9:10AM-7:22PM 45 5/7	2/5 In Session 10:30AM-7:28PM 44 6/8	2/6 In Session 8:30AM-10:23PM 43 7/9	2/7 In Session 9:00AM-5:12PM 42 8/10	2/8
2/9	2/10 NOT IN SESSION	2/11 In Session *Pro Forma 11AM-11:00:38AM 38 9/14	2/12 NOT IN SESSION	2/13 NOT IN SESSION	2/14 In Session *Pro Forma 11:00:32AM - 11:01:10AM 35 10/17	2/15
2/16	2/17 NOT IN SESSION	2/18 In Session 9:30AM-7:31PM 31 11/21	2/19 In Session 9:00AM-8:11PM 30 12/22	2/20 In Session NLB HAM	2/21	2/22

K E Y

DIS/DSS=Days in Session
Days Since SOTU

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

			1/29 In Session *Pro Forma 2:00PM-3:52 PM Magic #: 51 DIS/DSS=1/1	1/30 In Session *Pro Forma 11:00AM-3:08PM 50 2/2	1/31 NOT IN SESSION	2/1
2/2	2/3 In Session No Legislative Business 12:00PM-1:18PM 46 3/6	2/4 In Session 12:00PM-6:20PM 45 4/7	2/5 In Session 1:00PM-10:37PM 44 5/8	2/6 NOT IN SESSION	2/7 In Session *Pro Forma 42 6/10	2/8
2/9	2/10 NOT IN Session	2/11 In Session No Leg. Business 12:00PM-12:47PM 38 7/14	2/12 NOT IN Session	2/13 NOT IN Session	2/14 In Session No Leg. Business 11:00AM-11:05AM 35 8/17	2/15
2/16	2/17 NOT IN Session	2/18 In Session 12:00PM-1:43PM 31 9/21	2/19 In Session 2:00PM-4:59PM 30 10/22	2/20 In Session NLB	2/21 NIL	2/22
2/23	2/24 15 NLB 12-?	2/25 15 12-?	2/26	2/27	2/28	2/29

KEY

DIS/DSS=Days in Session
Days Since SOTU

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN *DC*
DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

(correct) MAGIC NUMBER: 35

Even though Speaker Thomas Foley had said that "[a] recess cancellation would achieve nothing," the House last week decided not to take the President's Day recess, also called a "district work period," as originally planned.

The Senate took its recess as planned, but Sen. George Mitchell cancelled another recess scheduled for March 9 to 16. Last week, Sen. Mitchell rejected Sen. Arlen Specter's request that the President's Day recess be cancelled in order to meet the President's deadline. Sen. Mitchell also declared that votes will be held every Friday the Senate is in session to prevent Senators from skipping town every Thursday. "We cannot tolerate a situation in which the Senate simply cannot transact business on those relatively few days when we are, in fact, in session..." said the Senate Majority Leader.

Meanwhile, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Bentsen warned that "[i]f [the President] makes any more changes [in his proposals], in fact, he may be unable to meet the deadline himself."

Editorials

ROLL CALL

2/13/92.

Buckle Down

The House leadership last week decided to cancel the scheduled Lincoln/Washington Birthday recess. Instead, leaders agreed not to meet Monday, meet pro forma on Tuesday, not meet yesterday and today, and meet pro forma tomorrow. Next week, the House will be out of session on Monday and return to work on Tuesday. Good thing recess was cancelled.

An aide to Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash) called the compromise "a midway point between recess and no recess." But the truth is that when the House meets pro forma, there are no scheduled debates, no votes, and no legislative business. In effect, the House floor is shut down for the week.

Clearly, the compromise was hatched between high-pressure Republicans, led by Minority Whip Newt Gingrich (R-Ga), who wanted simply to go on record fighting to cancel recess, and Democrats who wanted to avoid an embarrassing vote on the issue.

But all of this is just partisan antics surrounding the President's economic growth package: Republicans want Democrats to look like they're stalling on the March 20 deadline, while the Democrats actually are saying they will vote on the plan by then.

But the bickering over this week's recess is eclipsing the bigger issue: The House has not accomplished a thing in months. The first session of the 102nd Congress effectively adjourned Nov. 27. The second session officially reconvened nearly six weeks ago on Jan. 3. Since then, the House has been in session for a total of 11 days, including pro forma sessions. In that time, there have been only 13 votes, including nine on Feb. 5 dealing with the post office scandal and October Surprise. Still awaiting action: the education bill, Family and Medical Leave Act, a crime bill, campaign finance reform, and, of course, the economic growth plan.

We're in an election year, and charades like last week's move to "cancel" the recess are insulting to the public and harmful to the institution. And at the moment, Congress can't afford more bad feelings.

Meanwhile, Members on both sides of the aisle flew out of DC last weekend for scheduled trips abroad. This newspaper has long defended so-called fact-finding missions, and we still find them noble voyages. But if Members are not careful, Congress soon will join President Bush as the victim of accusations that domestic issues are playing second fiddle to foreign affairs.

Upon its return Tuesday, the House does not have a scheduled "District Work Period" until Easter recess begins on April 13. We think it would be a good idea to use this time wisely, to buckle down and get to work.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN *DC*
DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

MAGIC NUMBER: 28

Talk about the deadline has died down quite a bit. Here is a compilation of comments gathered from the past few days:

In an exchange with Samuel Skinner on NBC's "Meet The Press," John Cochran said, "[O]f course, Congress will not [pass the President's economic package] by March 20."

Campaigning in New Hampshire, Patrick Buchanan said, "When [Ronald Reagan] came to Washington, he buckled on his sword and he went out and fought from Day One for what he wanted. He did not wait until March 20 of his fourth year in office."

Sen. Bob Packwood said Thursday that it was unlikely Congress would meet the March 20 deadline the President set.

Roll Call reports that the deadline is slowing the movement of a campaign finance reform bill. They state that Speaker Thomas Foley and Sen. George Mitchell have "concern that President Bush's March 20 deadline for action on his economic growth package could interfere with the timetable [for campaign finance reform legislation]."

Roll Call also reports that Republicans see Senate procedures generating over 100 amendments onto a tax policy that would bog things down as March 20 approaches. Sen. Mitchell "says he wouldn't put it past Republicans themselves to slow the process down, then point the finger at Democrats."

ROLL CALL

2/10/92.

• Miss Deadline, Lose \$355/Day, Seymour Urges

By Karen Foerstel

Sen. John Seymour (R-Calif) wants his colleagues to be docked one day's pay, every day starting March 21, if they fail to pass an economic growth package by the deadline set by President Bush during his State of the Union message last month.

Seymour introduced legislation Thursday night calling for the Secretary of the Senate to withhold \$355 from each Senator's paycheck for each day past the President's March 20 deadline that a package is not passed.

The amount of \$355 was derived from the annual Senate salary of \$129,500. If the

*Senators would have
to pass Bush's
economic plan, or some
other, by March 20.*

package were not passed until June 1, for example, the delay would cost each Senator \$25,560.

"Either we produce or we do not get paid," Seymour, who faces a tough election race this year, said on the floor Thursday. "No package, no pay. That is the challenge."

Under the legislation, S.J. Res. 253, the docked pay would be transferred daily to the Unemployment Trust Fund.

"[It] may be the first time that our penchant for inactivity would be put to good use," Seymour said.

The legislation does not require that the Senate approve the exact economic growth package called for by Bush, but simply that some package addressing the matter is passed by the Senate. Members would not get their missed pay returned to them after an economic growth package was passed.

So far, the joint resolution has received no co-sponsors, but a Seymour aide said several offices have been contacted and have expressed an interest.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN *DC*
DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

MAGIC NUMBER: 44


Rep. Dan Rostenkowski said today that he is "drop-dead" serious about getting tax cuts passed quickly to get the economy out of its slump and that he is "ready to cooperate with any good-faith effort to get this economy moving" and to meet the deadline. "There will be only one tax bill this year, and it's going to be written in the next few weeks as the President has demanded." Meeting the President's timetable is a "tall order," he said, but he pledged that his Ways and Means Committee would act swiftly, "not because of the President's demand, but rather because there's a lot of pain in America today." They will begin drafting a bill next Wednesday and work through the weekend if necessary.

Sen. Lloyd Bentsen said that every effort will be made to meet the deadline, but added, "We're not going to rubber-stamp what the President proposed." He said his Finance Committee will begin action on a bill Feb. 19.

Speaker Thomas Foley predicted "a very early vote" on an economic package and said it would come well before March 20. Foley said Friday that "I'm satisfied we'll bring both [a budget and tax reform package] by the March 20 deadline."

Sen. Arlen Specter urged fellow Senators to forego their Feb. 8 to 17 recess and instead work on solving the nation's economic problems. "I believe it is incumbent on us, Mr. President, to tackle these problems right now, Friday afternoon, Jan. 23 [sic], almost 2 p.m. . . . I don't think we ought to be in recess in February, Mr. President, and I don't think we ought to be in recess in March, and I think this Congress ought to respond to this President's challenge of a March 20 date."

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN 
DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

MAGIC NUMBER: 45

Not much noise today about the deadline except from CBS's Susan Spencer who last night said, "I think [the POTUS's plan] has absolutely no chance of passing before this artificial deadline. Parts of it probably will get through because the Democrats don't want to be blamed for everything. What we all have to keep in mind, of course, is that this plan is now five days old, and suddenly there's this urgency about it that didn't exist before."

The attached article from the latest issue of Congressional Quarterly is worth reading.

CQ

2/1/92.

Congress' Latest Deadline

"I submit my plan tomorrow. And I am asking you to pass it by March 20. And I ask the American people to let you know they want this action by March 20. From the day after that, if it must be: The battle is joined."

—President Bush

With these words, President Bush demonstrated in his State of the Union address on Jan. 28 how easy it is for a president to set Congress' agenda and even establish the terms for its consideration.

The deadline is a particularly effective tool, and this is the second time in a year the president has used it. Last year, after the Persian Gulf War, he challenged Congress to send him anti-crime and transportation legislation in 100 days. It took considerably longer than that for the transportation bill to arrive at the White House. As for the crime bill, it still hasn't arrived, held up, ironically, by Senate Republicans who don't like what's in it.

Congress generally bristles at such presidential interference. "The truth of it is, the president has taken two months to figure out what he wants to do, and he's just changed it," Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., said. "He is not giving Congress as long as he took himself. . . . The legislative process should be given, on average, at least twice as long as one man has to make up his mind."

Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell, D-Maine, said if Congress moves expeditiously, it will be because the times demand it. Speaker Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., has pressed House chairmen with jurisdiction over tax and budget legislation to move quickly, but he also has said the president's "swaggering" attitude isn't helpful. Even Senate Republican leader Bob Dole of Kansas has expressed doubt about a March 20 deadline.

But with the economy limping along and an election less than 10 months away, the Democratic majority in Congress will ignore the latest deadline at its own political peril. Indeed, the House Ways and Means and Budget committees plan to work through the February recess, to ready tax and budget legislation for floor action. Even so, the package Congress sends Bush probably will not be the one he requested; Democrats have their own ideas about tax relief. And the bill won't arrive by March 20.

Rep. Mickey Edwards, R-Okla., a member of the House GOP leadership, said the deadline isn't firm. "All we need by March is a commitment from the Democrats to have a vote on the president's tax package, or whatever Republican tax package emerges from Ways and Means," he said.

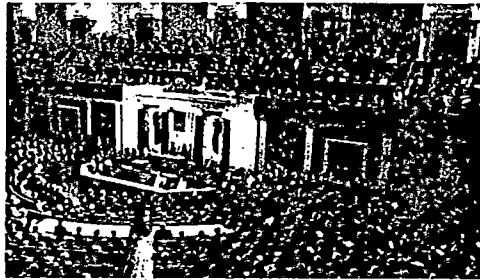
The White House probably never expected Congress to meet its deadline; there is no explanation for March 20, beyond the president's say-so. If anything, the deadline was selected because it won't be met; failure will transfer the heat generated by the recession from Bush to Congress.

"Now it's up to Congress to produce," White House Chief of Staff Samuel K. Skinner said. "And if they don't, they are going to go into the fall having failed the American people. And if they fail the American people, they won't be coming back in January."

This is the type of talk that leads Rep. Byron L. Dorgan,

D-N.D., to conclude that the "president's plan has a made-in-New Hampshire label on it." Any doubts disappeared Jan. 30. Bush's re-election campaign began airing a 30-second television spot that featured the president's challenge to Congress. The president, who acknowledged the recession only two months ago, urged voters "to send a real message to Congress to get this job done."

—Chuck Alston



R. MICHAEL JENKINS

A packed chamber listens to Bush's speech.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN DC
DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

MAGIC NUMBER: 46

Sen. Lloyd Bentsen said after the SOTU, "I think the President's decision to set an artificial deadline. . . will not be helpful." He added, "He's demanding that Congress approve in 50 days a proposal he's been working on for 90 days, and he's still fine-tuning it."

Speaker Thomas Foley said, "I'm satisfied we will move to a vote before the March 20 deadline, not because he set a deadline, but because we believe we should move quickly."

The Washington Post has reported that Rep. Dan Rostenkowski "also pledged to meet the deadline but complained that the administration has not presented a bill containing Bush's economic proposals. In an interview, Rostenkowski dismissed as 'silly speculation' suggestions that Bush set a deadline of March 20, three days after a rare primary challenge to the Chicago Democrat, to benefit him politically. He said his votes on the economic package would be cast before the primary, so there was no political advantage to be had."

Talking to a conference of House Democrats on Friday, Foley said, regarding passing an economic package, "Our first task, which has not been easy in the past, is to be both faster and clearer." The New York Times points to three important dates as to the task to be faster. "One is Mr. Bush's March 20, and all that anyone expects it to produce is a lot of speeches by him and Republican lawmakers about how the Democrats aren't meeting his reasonable expectations of tax legislation. . . . The real deadline is probably April 10, the Friday before Congress's scheduled Easter break. It will mean fewer Mondays and Fridays off, but it can be met. As long as Congress is working, Republican's complaints about Mr. Bush's March 20 deadline will carry little weight, but it would be another thing to miss a deadline and then take a vacation. The other important date is Feb. 18, when New Hampshire holds its primary."

Donald Lambro of The Washington Times says that Congress is not likely to act on any of the President's short-term economic growth proposals by March 20. "And not because it is impossible: If Congress can pass a pay raise in a matter of hours, surely it can come up with a recovery package in two months. But Congress won't because the Democrats do not want to engineer an economic turnaround this early in the presidential election year."

In the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll, just 17 percent approved Congress's handling of its job, while 71 percent disapproved.

Editorials

End the Delay

ROLL CALL

1/30/92.

In his State of the Union Address Tuesday, the President set another deadline for Congress: pass my economic recovery package by March 20, or else. We generally find such presidential threats obnoxious (and, judging by the last one, not particularly effective), but, in this case, Bush may have a valid point.

Is Congress truly working hard to resolve what most Members at least publicly call an economic crisis? Consider: The first session of the 102nd Congress was effectively adjourned on Nov. 27 — two to three weeks earlier than normal. The House and Senate returned for a few minutes on Jan. 3, then disappeared until last week. Since then, the Senate has been preoccupied with amendments to S.2, the education bill that's long overdue, while the House.... Well, what has the House been doing? Here, verbatim, is the schedule for this week, as published by the Democratic Study Group:

"Monday, January 27: House not in session. Tuesday, January 28 (House meets at noon): Suspensions — Five bills are scheduled for consideration under suspension of the rules.... Wednesday & Thursday, January 29 & 30 (House meets at 2 p.m. on Wednesday and at 11 a.m. on Thursday): Pro forma sessions. No legislative business. Friday, January 31: House not in session."

Not a particularly taxing schedule, and don't forget the long-awaited "Lincoln/Washington District Work Period" coming up in mid-February.

This newspaper has long been a defender of Congressional work habits, but in this instance the delays are unjustified. The President has given Congress 52 days (including weekends and district work periods) to pass his package — that's a shorter time than the holiday recess just past. There may well be partisan reasons for dilatory tactics, but it would serve the institution far better either to pass the package, or reject it. The delays must end; the battle must be joined.

MR. BRODER: --is seriously in trouble. Will the Congress act by the March 20 deadline that the president has set?

SEN. MITCHELL: The Congress will act promptly because it's the right thing to do, not because of any deadline.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that there has been a 21-month delay in action, caused entirely by the president. For 18 months, he's said there's no recession, there's no problem, therefore he offered no solution. When it was finally obvious to every American and the president admitted it, he then asked for three more months to figure out what to say.

So we've had a long delay--21 months--induced entirely by the president. We're going to act, and we're going to act promptly, but not because of a deadline.

MR. BRODER: Excuse me, Senator, you say "induced entirely by the president."

SEN. MITCHELL: Yes.

MR. BRODER: The president last January--a year ago--asked for a highway bill which would have put money into states and local government to create jobs. Congress didn't pass that highway bill until the very last day of the session. That was not caused by the president, was it?

SEN. MITCHELL: Not the highway bill's final passage. The fact of the matter is, we pushed that. We passed it in the Senate prior to the deadline that (he proposed?).

MR. BRODER: Well, will the March 20 deadline be met?

SEN. MITCHELL: Well, it's my hope that we can do it before that. We may do it before then. We may do it on that day. It may be a little bit (after?). The deadline is a political ploy. It has no relationship to what actually occurs in government and in the process--

MR. BRODER: But you're prepared to sit here this morning and tell the American people that on your own, irregardless of anything the president may have said, you will have an economic package ready for the president to sign or veto by March 20?

SEN. MITCHELL: We're going to act as soon as possible. The deadline--

MR. BRODER: What does that mean, Senator?

SEN. MITCHELL: That means it may be before March 20. Why should we say--(inaudible)--

MR. BRODER: Also means it could be May 20 or June 20?

SEN. MITCHELL: I don't think it's likely to be that. I think it's going to be very soon. We're going to act promptly. We obviously have to proceed through the legislative process. These proposals must be considered and evaluated, some accepted, some rejected, constructive alternatives proposed.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN DC
DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

MAGIC NUMBER: 46

Sen. Lloyd Bentsen said after the SOTU, "I think the President's decision to set an artificial deadline. . . will not be helpful." He added, "He's demanding that Congress approve in 50 days a proposal he's been working on for 90 days, and he's still fine-tuning it."

Speaker Thomas Foley said, "I'm satisfied we will move to a vote before the March 20 deadline, not because he set a deadline, but because we believe we should move quickly."

The Washington Post has reported that Rep. Dan Rostenkowski "also pledged to meet the deadline but complained that the administration has not presented a bill containing Bush's economic proposals. In an interview, Rostenkowski dismissed as 'silly speculation' suggestions that Bush set a deadline of March 20, three days after a rare primary challenge to the Chicago Democrat, to benefit him politically. He said his votes on the economic package would be cast before the primary, so there was no political advantage to be had."

Talking to a conference of House Democrats on Friday, Foley said, regarding passing an economic package, "Our first task, which has not been easy in the past, is to be both faster and clearer." The New York Times points to three important dates as to the task to be faster. "One is Mr. Bush's March 20, and all that anyone expects it to produce is a lot of speeches by him and Republican lawmakers about how the Democrats aren't meeting his reasonable expectations of tax legislation. . . . The real deadline is probably April 10, the Friday before Congress's scheduled Easter break. It will mean fewer Mondays and Fridays off, but it can be met. As long as Congress is working, Republican's complaints about Mr. Bush's March 20 deadline will carry little weight, but it would be another thing to miss a deadline and then take a vacation. The other important date is Feb. 18, when New Hampshire holds its primary."

Donald Lambro of The Washington Times says that Congress is not likely to act on any of the President's short-term economic growth proposals by March 20. "And not because it is impossible: If Congress can pass a pay raise in a matter of hours, surely it can come up with a recovery package in two months. But Congress won't because the Democrats do not want to engineer an economic turnaround this early in the presidential election year."

In the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll, just 17 percent approved Congress's handling of its job, while 71 percent disapproved.

Editorials

End the Delay

ROLL CALL
1/30/92.

In his State of the Union Address Tuesday, the President set another deadline for Congress: pass my economic recovery package by March 20, or else. We generally find such presidential threats obnoxious (and, judging by the last one, not particularly effective), but, in this case, Bush may have a valid point.

Is Congress truly working hard to resolve what most Members at least publicly call an economic crisis? Consider: The first session of the 102nd Congress was effectively adjourned on Nov. 27 — two to three weeks earlier than normal. The House and Senate returned for a few minutes on Jan. 3, then disappeared until last week. Since then, the Senate has been preoccupied with amendments to S.2, the education bill that's long overdue, while the House.... Well, what has the House been doing? Here, verbatim, is the schedule for this week, as published by the Democratic Study Group:

"Monday, January 27: House not in session. Tuesday, January 28 (House meets at noon): Suspensions — Five bills are scheduled for consideration under suspension of the rules.... Wednesday & Thursday, January 29 & 30 (House meets at 2 p.m. on Wednesday and at 11 a.m. on Thursday): Pro forma sessions. No legislative business. Friday, January 31: House not in session."

Not a particularly taxing schedule, and don't forget the long-awaited "Lincoln/Washington District Work Period" coming up in mid-February.

This newspaper has long been a defender of Congressional work habits, but in this instance the delays are unjustified. The President has given Congress 52 days (including weekends and district work periods) to pass his package — that's a shorter time than the holiday recess just past. There may well be partisan reasons for dilatory tactics, but it would serve the institution far better either to pass the package, or reject it. The delays must end; the battle must be joined.

"MEET THE PRESS" - FEBRUARY 2, 1992

MR. BRODER: --is seriously in trouble. Will the Congress act by the March 20 deadline that the president has set?

SEN. MITCHELL: The Congress will act promptly because it's the right thing to do, not because of any deadline.

The fact of the matter is, of course, that there has been a 21-month delay in action, caused entirely by the president. For 18 months, he's said there's no recession, there's no problem, therefore he offered no solution. When it was finally obvious to every American and the president admitted it, he then asked for three more months to figure out what to say.

So we've had a long delay--21 months--induced entirely by the president. We're going to act, and we're going to act promptly, but not because of a deadline.

MR. BRODER: Excuse me, Senator, you say "induced entirely by the president."

SEN. MITCHELL: Yes.

MR. BRODER: The president last January--a year ago--asked for a highway bill which would have put money into states and local government to create jobs. Congress didn't pass that highway bill until the very last day of the session. That was not caused by the president, was it?

SEN. MITCHELL: Not the highway bill's final passage. The fact of the matter is, we pushed that. We passed it in the Senate prior to the deadline that (he proposed?).

MR. BRODER: Well, will the March 20 deadline be met?

SEN. MITCHELL: Well, it's my hope that we can do it before that. We may do it before then. We may do it on that day. It may be a little bit (after?). The deadline is a political ploy. It has no relationship to what actually occurs in government and in the process--

MR. BRODER: But you're prepared to sit here this morning and tell the American people that on your own, irregardless of anything the president may have said, you will have an economic package ready for the president to sign or veto by March 20?

SEN. MITCHELL: We're going to act as soon as possible. The deadline--


MR. BRODER: What does that mean, Senator?

SEN. MITCHELL: That means it may be before March 20. Why should we say--(inaudible)--

MR. BRODER: Also means it could be May 20 or June 20?

SEN. MITCHELL: I don't think it's likely to be that. I think it's going to be very soon. We're going to act promptly. We obviously have to proceed through the legislative process. These proposals must be considered and evaluated, some accepted, some rejected, constructive alternatives proposed.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN 
DATE: JANUARY 31, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

THE MAGIC NUMBER IS 49

More comments regarding the deadline from the past few days:

Rep. Dan Rostenkowski commented that Congress is not bound by the POTUS' March 20 deadline and said, "we might have a package by March 20 or not."

Sen. Daniel Inouye said, "The President has asked us to wait for three months to hear his plan, and now he says he wants us to act in 45 days. . . . It's rather unreasonable."

Jay Buchert, chairman of the National Association of Home Builders, said, "We think the March 20 deadline is very, very important."

Sen. Jim Sasser said, "The President has given us 50 days to send him a solution, when it took him 480 days to notice we had an economic problem."

Sen. Lloyd Bentsen said, "I think when the President talks about getting it all done by March 20, he knows it can't be done that quickly. And that's to try to set up a political confrontation."

Budget Committee Chairman Leon Panetta said that his panel and the House Ways and Means Committee are "planning to move quickly" on the budget proposal and will try to meet the deadline. He also said, "The speaker has asked [us] to meet through the Presidents Day break and to try to report a budget resolution to the floor by late February or early March, and we intend to do that."

A Washington Post-ABC News Poll conducted Wednesday night found that, by 2 to 1, most Americans supported Bush's Call for Congress to act on his economic proposal by March 20. The survey also found that 8 in 10 expected Congress will fail to meet the deadline.

Speaking about the deadline, Rep. George Mitchell said, "We don't operate that way. . . . [The deadline] has no meaning in terms of what and how we act [sic]."

Bill Pascoe of the Washington Times says that the 50-day time limit is "egregiously hypocritical. Mr. Bush's first 'wait for the [SOTU]' response to a question about what he planned to do about the recession came as far back as Nov. 15 -- 10 weeks ago. If the recession is so serious a problem that he believes a remedy must be written into law by March 20, why did he make us wait 10 weeks to hear his plan? The logic escapes me." Pascoe adds that "to believe that George Bush will actually declare war on Congress is to believe in the tooth fairy and little green men on the moon."

Will Bush Fight?

George Bush stopped the hemorrhaging from conservative supporters with an address he should have delivered last Nov. 15, but the new question is whether he will confront Congress by sticking to his March 20 deadline for action.

Republican congressional cloakrooms are permeated with fears that President Bush's new line in the sand will vanish, as did his 1991 demand for results in "a hundred days." Such apprehension is justified by backstage events at the White House.

■ The popular limitation of congressional terms, nominally supported by Bush, was not included in his speech. The reason: concern that it might offend Congress.

White House Chief of Staff Samuel Skinner is trying to "compartmentalize" Richard G. Darman as director of the Office of Management and Budget. That means "limiting" Darman, always an advocate of compromise with Congress, to one of the government's most powerful jobs.

■ Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, reflecting his department's permanent bureaucracy, resisted the size of the capital gains cut and killed any bigger reduction. He has been fighting staff restructuring at the White House that might reduce his power.

These three factors, while raising doubts about the future, also help explain Bush's current difficulty. His State of the Union, well written (by Peggy Noonan, called on for the first time

since 1988) and adequately delivered, would have saved the president 60 days of political devastation had it been given when Congress adjourned. It was not because of caution, Darman and Brady.

Bush's residual desire to avoid provoking Congress with term limits contradicts reality. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell runs a take-no-prisoners ship. Easygoing Republican elder Howard Baker, a former Senate majority leader and White House chief of staff, has told the Bush high command he has never seen the Democrats more blood-thirsty.

The president, in laying down a gentlemanly gauntlet Tuesday night, represents a compromise between Hobbesian reality and Bush's kinder, gentler preferences. His demand for a capital gains cut, though three years late, defied Mitchell. But the 15.4 percent rate faced opposition from Brady's Treasury (which wanted 19 percent) and came only after a guerrilla raid by Dan Quayle.

The vice president and his chief of staff, William Kristol, pressed on Brady an idea by supply-sider Paul Craig Roberts to reduce capital gains taxation without congressional approval—by ordering the Internal Revenue Service to plug in inflation when calculating profits. Recoiling in terror, Treasury bureaucrats bought the 15.4 percent.

Darman's current sins are less obvious, and in fact, he was helpful in writing the speech's final draft. But he is so unpopular with Republicans as an

advocate of dealing with the Democrats that the cost of retaining him is reduced congressional backing for the president.


That was shown when Darman and Skinner faced the House GOP conference just before the president's speech. Darman encountered Rep. Dick Arme, a feisty Texas conservative who had excoriated the budget chief in a New York Times article. "Thanks for helping me with my moderate base," Darman cracked to Arme, who was not amused. Later, when Skinner asked for suggestions from the floor, Arme said, "Get rid of that guy sitting next to you."

Skinner defended Darman then, but subsequent news leaks from the White House depicted the chief of staff countermanning the OMB director. The White House has put out word it wants Darman in his own "compartment," with his power curtailed.

That would be done by bringing in Republican National Chairman Clayton Yeutter as an augmented domestic policy adviser. Darman claims he doesn't mind, but Brady has bitterly resisted the threat to his chairmanship of the Economic Policy Council. He considers the Yeutter scheme a personal affront and has told Bush as much.

No wonder the president is in a fix. No wonder he didn't deliver a radical State of the Union stressing welfare, budget and tort reform, demanding term limits and calling for a zero capital gains tax. No wonder there are doubts he will confront Congress on what he did propose.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SPEECHWRITERS AND RESEARCHERS
FROM: DOUG CHIA, RESEARCH INTERN 
DATE : JANUARY 30, 1992
RE: COMPLAINTS ABOUT MARCH 20 DEADLINE

Here are the highlights of today's complaints from the Hill and elsewhere about the deadline:

Thomas Foley said "there's a sense in the [SOTU] of combativeness and challenge that I think creates some sense of concern" about the POTUS's political motives.

Foley also said there was an "almost swaggering suggestion that after the 20th of March, well, if there is going to have to be a fight, then you know how I welcome fights. . . . And I'm not sure that meshes with his call for cooperation."

George Mitchell said that Bush's deadline "doesn't mean anything." He also said "We want to act, we intend to act, we will act, not because of any so-called deadline, but because it's the right thing to do."

The Washington Post notes that "in further indication that Congress will rush to act on an economic package, even while complaining about Bush's deadline, members of the House Budget and Ways and Means committees have been notified to be ready to work through the Feb. 8-17 President's Day recess if necessary to hasten work on the plan."

Robert Byrd said "There is certainly no need to hurry and pass this plan. . . . It is the wrong course for America."

Robert Dole urged Republicans to "roll up our sleeves and help [the POTUS] meet his March 20 deadline."

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Will George Do It?

WST
1/30/92

Put a circle around March 20 on your calendar. If we understand what George Bush said in his State of the Union address, that should be the eve of Operation Domestic Storm.

"This will not stand," the President said twice of the "hard times" the nation's economy faces. "I pride myself that I'm a prudent man, and I believe that patience is a virtue, but I understand that politics is, for some, a game and that sometimes the game is to stop all progress and then decry the lack of improvement," he said. He asked the Congress to pass his short-term economic program by March 20. "From the day after that, the battle is joined. And you know, when principle is at stake, I relish a good fair fight."

George Bush, as they discovered in Iraq, likes deadlines. With this deliberate invocation of his Desert Storm rhetoric, he is putting himself on the spot. Unless he wants to go back on another "read my lips," on March 21 he'll have to do something dramatic about the economy and, more to the point, about the Congress. Can he? Will he? When President Bush gave Saddam Hussein a date certain for getting out of Kuwait, many people, including us, wondered whether he'd actually make good on the threat. Saddam assumed he wouldn't, but on January 16 there were cruise missiles over Baghdad.

The President's economic program, as it happens, is too timid for our tastes. Even the capital-gains proposal, the best of the lot, is encumbered with gimmicks on holding periods. Robert Barro details other shortcomings alongside. But in a certain sense the specifics are not the point. The economy is suffering most of all from a sour public mood, and the quickest way to break that mood would be for the administration to break out of the Depublican-Remocrat deadlock and offer the voters a clear choice on economic policy.

In any event, there is almost no chance that Congress will pass the President's proposals. The blood of election-year politics will be in the water, whether or not Bill Clinton defeats Gennifer Flowers in the New Hampshire primary. The virulent anti-incumbent mood in the land means the Members will be looking out for only their own parochial interests, not the common good, which is traditionally a presidential responsibility. Besides, the Senate voted down the education bill the very day Mr. Bush spoke (newspaper photos depicted a triumphant Ted Kennedy).

Jack Kemp's HOPE program to empower poor people with property, which the President asked for, was trashed last year. And of course, his capital-gains proposals have been filibustered and otherwise kept from even coming to a vote.

So the March 20 deadline will pass. Then what?

Then, we hope, George Bush will mount a unilateral campaign to liberate the American economy, and dare Congress to stop him.

As President, Mr. Bush has direct authority over the executive branch, which is to say all the departments, agencies and attendant bureaucrats who most directly affect the economic life of America's workers and employers. The President has the authority to issue executive orders, as he demonstrated Tuesday night with his 90-day moratorium on new regulations that "will hurt growth." When Congress refuses to act, he has the option of asserting his authority, leaving it to voters to approve or disapprove in November.

The President could, for example, unilaterally adopt indexation of capital gains via regulatory fiat. The argument for this action, which has been discussed at the White House, was described here Tuesday ("Presidential Indexation"). As we have also argued, he could also unilaterally assert the line-item veto; his signature messages have in effect already exercised this option against unconstitutional provisions in dozens of non-spending bills. Item-veto fans noted the President's pointed references to the Lawrence Welk museum and Belgian endive research, not to mention 246 programs that "don't deserve federal funding."

These assertions of executive authority would be controversial, and ultimately subject to Supreme Court review. But the most important verdict would be that of the voters. The inability of Washington to control the budget, the political deadlock, the anti-incumbent mood all argue for finding a vehicle to sharpen the debate, not for endless wheel-spinning over the terms of a deal. So it's significant that Mr. Bush strongly hinted going unilateral, "There are certain things that a President can do without Congress. And I'm going to do them."

The State of the Union has been delivered. The New Hampshire primary will be coming February 18. The preliminaries are already under way. We're buying box seats for March 20. The Deadline.

The Deadline: A Tactic With Political Roots

The March 20 deadline that President Bush set in his State of the Union address for Congress to pass his economic growth agenda is one firmly rooted in politics, not law.

There is no legal sanction if the deadline is missed, but, as Bush made clear Tuesday night, there will be a rhetorical one. "From the day after that, if it must be, the battle is joined," he said.

Bush used the same technique last year when he challenged Congress to pass highway and crime legislation in 100 days, the amount of time it took U.S.-led forces to drive Iraq from Kuwait.

When the date passed without final action on either measure, Bush traveled around the country assailing lawmakers for inaction, tapping the strong anti-Congress sentiment among the public.

Administration and Bush-Quayle campaign officials plan to do the same if Congress does not act on the economic legislation in the 50 days between yesterday's budget submission and March 20.

The deadline falls amid important primaries in the Democratic presidential race. According to congressional officials, the White House had considered March 15 as a deadline, but wanted to avoid allusions to the Ides of March, the date in 44 B.C. when conspirators led by Marcus Junius Brutus assassinated Gaius Julius Caesar.

Others noted that moving the deadline to March 20 put it beyond the Illinois primary, when House Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.) faces his first challenge in many years. "That might have been a consideration," one congressional official said.

—John E. Yang

WP 1/30/92