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PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS ON EDUCATION BUDGET
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC
November 11, 1999

Acknowledgments: Sec. Riley; Bruce Reed; area teachers, some of whom were hired through our class size initiative.

Perhaps there is no more fitting way to honor our nation's veterans than by reaching agreement on a budget that honors the values for which they served -- opportunity, responsibility and a better future for our children. I am pleased to say that we have made important progress towards that end.

Last night, after many hours and days of discussion, Congress agreed to continue supporting our efforts to hire 100,000 new, highly-qualified teachers for our schools, to reduce class sizes in the early grades.

This is truly good news for our children, and for their future. We know school enrollments are exploding. We know record numbers of teacher are retiring. We know that the research is clear that students do learn more in smaller classes with quality teachers.

Every parent and teacher in America knows that if their child is in a second grade class with twenty-five students, that child will not get the attention he or she needs and deserves. And just this week, we learned that our class size initiative, which Congress agreed to last year, is working. Communities are using the funds from last year's agreement to hire more than 29,000 teachers and reduce the average class size for 1.7 million children from 23 down to 18.

That's why I have made the honoring of our commitment to reduce class size such a high priority in the budget negotiations.

The agreement we have reached has bipartisan support, and keeps us on track to hiring 100,000 teachers by the year 2005.

As I said in my State of the Union Address earlier this year, we don't just need more teachers, but better teachers. This agreement furthers that goal. All teachers hired under this program must be fully qualified. The program gives school districts the flexibility to use 25 percent of the funds from this program to train teachers and test new teachers. It increases flexibility, but it is not an open-ended block grant.

Through this plan, taxpayer dollars will go for reducing class sizes in public schools, not for vouchers for private schools. I want to thank members of Congress from both parties for coming together to support this agreement.

We have achieved a victory for America's children who will get smaller classes and better teachers as a result.

In addition to reducing class size, we have made progress on a number of other vital education initiatives: we have more than doubled funds for after school programs and increased funding for computers in our schools, ^{for slow up - or} mentoring to prepare kids for college, and Hispanic education programs. We are also making progress on other vital budget priorities, from hiring up to 50,000 new community police officers to setting aside ~~resources~~ ^{FUNDS} to ~~preserving~~ ^{and} our natural resources and ~~protecting~~ ^{and} our environment for future generations.

I am committed to continuing to work with Congress to reach agreement on the remaining issues, including ensuring assistance to those who have suffered from the devastating effects of Hurricane Floyd, and paying our dues to the United Nations.

If we continue in this bipartisan spirit of progress, we can very soon complete our work on a budget that honors our values, lives within our means, and looks to the future.

Thank you.

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In addition to education, we are making progress on other vital budget priorities, from hiring up to 50,000 new community police officers to setting aside resources to preserve our natural environment for future generations. I am committed to continuing to work with Congress to reach agreement on the remaining issues, including ensuring assistance to those who have suffered from the devastating effects of Hurricane Floyd, paying our dues to the United Nations, and rejecting special interest riders that endanger our environment.

If we continue in this bipartisan spirit of progress, we can very soon complete our work on a budget that honors our values, lives within our means, and looks to the future.

Thank you.

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White House, GOP Meet to Try to Bridge Gaps on Budget Issues

By ERIC PLANIN
Washington Post Staff Writer

With both sides eager to conclude budget talks this week, the White House and congressional Republicans met yesterday in an unusual weekend session to try to narrow their differences over interior spending and a handful of other key issues that are blocking a final deal.

While conflicts about overall spending are fast evaporating, Republicans and the administration remained far apart over hiring additional teachers and police officers, paying nearly \$1 billion of back United Nations dues and the details of President Clinton's "Lands Legacy" initiative to acquire environmentally and culturally significant land that is threatened by development.

White House Budget Director Jacob "Jack" Lew left the meeting last night saying he was disappointed that more had not been accomplished. "We're a long ways from everything being decided right now," he said.

The dispute over Clinton's demand for another installment in hiring 100,000 new teachers and his land acquisition program were the most contentious issues.

White House Chief of Staff John D. Podesta yesterday angered Republicans by declaring during a televised appearance that Clinton would not budge in his demand that Congress spend \$1.4 billion to hire 30,000 more teachers. And Clinton refuses to agree to the GOP's approach of giving local school boards the option of using the money for other purposes. The White House contends that hiring more teachers to reduce the average class size is the most important thing that can be done to improve the quality of education.

"Realistically, I think we are not prepared to go home until we do get more teachers and lower class size," Podesta said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over education spending, warned that White House intransigence might force the Republicans to dig in their heels. "That makes me pretty determined to keep what the Congress has done," Specter said before entering the negotiating room in the Capitol.

The administration is equally adamant about funding for the Lands Legacy program, which would buy New Mexico ranch land, California

desert and parts of the Florida Everglades. The White House has sought about \$700 million for land acquisition and related activities, but Congress approved only \$266 million. Yesterday, the Republicans offered to boost overall interior spending by \$338 million—or a total of about \$14.8 billion—for land acquisition and other Interior Department programs. But they rejected a last-minute administration proposal to make the Lands Legacy program a trust with dedicated funding.

"We're closer on numbers, but we are not going to authorize a new entitlement," declared Sen. Slade Gorton (R-Wash.), a senior appropriator with jurisdiction over interior spending.

Republicans and the administration reported some progress in resolving their differences over the interior bill, which Clinton vetoed last month. However, they have yet to settle differences over a number of environmental "riders" dealing with the dumping of mining waste, royalties paid by companies that extract oil and natural gas from public land and grazing on federal lands.

GOP leaders appear prepared to water down some of those provisions that affect mining, grazing

and other industries in the West, which the administration contends would harm the environment. GOP leaders also are likely to break the impasse over the unpaid U.N. dues by requiring that antiabortion forces relent on their efforts to link the dues to restrictions on international family planning programs.

A deal worked out late last week that provided Clinton with \$2.6 billion more for foreign aid and to underwrite the Wye River Middle East peace accords raised hopes that that Republican leaders and the White House could resolve many of the remaining issues over the weekend, with an eye to a final deal by midweek.

Clinton is scheduled to depart at the end of the week on a 10-day trip to Central Europe, and members of Congress are anxious to adjourn by Wednesday or Thursday—producing what an administration official last night described as a "natural deadline."

"We could have it worked out by then," said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), who hosted yesterday's sessions in his committee office.

"These guys have the smell of jet fuel in their nostrils," said a House

GOP appropriations aide in describing congressional eagerness to leave for the Veterans Day holiday.

However, the talks are complicated, and yesterday's session to discuss three of the five unresolved spending bills for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 produced only modest progress. Until now, the Republicans have been reluctant to engage in closed-door meetings with administration officials, fearing a repeat of last year's talks that ended with Clinton extracting billions of dollars in concessions.

Lew, the White House budget chief, noted recently that the two sides made the most progress on the foreign aid bill when they didn't talk face to face but instead exchanged offers over the telephone or by fax.

"Some progress was made today; but we are a long ways from a done deal on any of the bills we're talking about," said Linda Ricci, a spokeswoman for the Office of Management and Budget. "We certainly hope this can be resolved quickly, but on the other hand, we're also prepared to do week-to-week continuing resolutions if that is necessary to resolve these important differences and to get a commitment to reducing class sizes."

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Labastida Wins Mexico Primary

Ruling Party Opens Presidential Politics With First Public Election of Candidate

By JOHN WARD ANDERSON
AND MOLLY MOORE
Washington Post Foreign Service

MEXICO CITY, Nov. 8 (Monday)—Francisco Labastida Ochoa, a former state governor and cabinet minister seen as the favored candidate of Mexico's ruling party establishment, won a landslide victory in the country's first presidential primary Sunday, according to preliminary official returns and independent exit polls.

The win makes Labastida the immediate front-runner in the July 2000 general election, provided the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) does not fracture in the aftermath of a divisive, negative primary campaign. After decades of allowing sitting presidents to handpick their successors in private, the party adopted the primary as part of an effort to revive its tarnished image and extend its 70 years of uninterrupted rule in the face of growing opposition.

With 58 percent of the vote counted early today, PRI officials said Labastida was winning in 272 of 300 electoral districts over challenger Roberto Madrazo, who portrayed himself as a party maverick and attacked Labastida as a creature of an obsolete, anti-democratic political machine. Party officials said Madrazo was leading in 21 districts. An independent survey of voters in 5,600 polling locations by the National Chamber of Radio and Television Industries showed Labastida the winner in 270 districts, compared with 22 for Madrazo. "We're winning," Labastida said in a victory speech before boisterous supporters this morning. "Today is a new PRI, born of the power of the vote."

Madrazo campaign officials disputed those results and insisted that their candidate had won at least 204 districts. The winner of the primary will be determined not by a direct popular vote but on the basis of who receives the most votes in each of Mexico's 300 congressional districts.

The conflicting vote tally is precisely the sort of dispute that the PRI had hoped to avoid. Irreconcilable claims by the two campaigns could lead to charges of vote rigging and the loser's defection from the party. It could also reinforce the PRI's reputation for electoral fraud, a legacy that has driven voters to opposition parties in recent years and that the primary was designed to repair.

"The stronger we are inside, the better for us," said Alejandro Valenzuela, Labastida's adviser for international affairs. "The weaker we are, the more difficult it's going to be for us to struggle for power next year."

The PRI primary was open to all eligible voters, regardless of party affiliation, but turnout was sporadic. Some potential voters expressed confusion about the concept of a primary, and PRI officials accused opposition party workers of using loudspeakers and leaflets to dissuade people from participating. President Ernesto Zedillo, who was widely seen to be supporting Labastida, had embraced the primary in response to calls for greater democracy and the growing strength of opposition parties in state and local elections.

In addition to Labastida, 57, and Madrazo, 47, two other candidates competed for the nomination: former Puebla state governor Manuel Bartlett, 63, and former PRI president Humberto Roque Villanueva, 55.

If the party holds together and unites behind Labastida, many analysts believe the PRI, the party of every Mexican president since 1929 and the world's longest-governing party still in power, could continue its winning streak next year in the election to replace Zedillo, who cannot run for reelection.

But if one of the primary losers bolts from the party, if the race is marred by credible complaints of fraud or if the fractured opposition parties unexpectedly unite, polls show that the PRI could lose next year.

Recent surveys indicate that the PRI nominee can expect a strong challenge from former Guanajuato state governor Vicente Fox, the candidate of the center-right National Action Party (PAN). The other main contender, former Mexico City mayor Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), trails badly in polls.

While the PRI is conducting the most open candidate selection process of the three major parties, its long history of ballot-box fraud and election rigging raised doubts about whether the party could run a clean primary. Because Mexico's new election laws have not kept pace with the transformation of the political system, the country's independent election commission did not oversee Sunday's primary, and many international observer groups declined to monitor it.

"We are the first who want it to be totally pristine," PRI President Jose Antonio Gonzalez Fernandez said in an interview. "If there is a failure, the future of the PRI will be at stake."

Each of the PRI candidates reported minor incidents of voting irregularities at a few of the country's 64,900 polling stations, although none of the candidates alleged any serious breaches of electoral ethics. Madrazo officials accused the Labastida campaign of blocking access to some polling stations in the vote-critical state of Mexico.

PRI officials said about 6 million of Mexico's 55 million registered voters cast ballots. Despite distrust of the system, many voters such as Laura Lara, a 43-year-old saleswoman, said participating was important. "I think it's part of the PRI's strategy for the candidates to attack each other. They already knew who would win," said Lara, who cast her ballot at a fast food stand in Mexico City.

Both Labastida, the former governor of the northern state of Sinaloa, and Madrazo, who is on leave as governor of the southern state of Tabasco, ran well in their regions, according to exit polls. That left a narrow, voter-rich belt across central Mexico as the main battleground of the campaign. Mexico City, the state of Mexico that surrounds it, and the Gulf Coast state of Veracruz contain 30 percent of the voting districts.

In another key primary, exit polls and preliminary vote counts indicated that former finance secretary and ex-ambassador to the United States Jesus Silva Herzog was the winner in the PRI nomination for mayor of Mexico City, considered the second most powerful elected position in the country. The other two parties have not yet selected their mayoral candidates.

The first presidential primary in Mexican history revolutionized electioneering here. Candidates took to the airwaves, and, with prominent U.S. political consultants and pollsters as advisers, in-

dividual personalities and public image-making overshadowed traditional attributes of party service and loyalty.

Madrazo rocketed ahead of Labastida in opinion polls in August when he launched ads attacking the incestuous and corrupt machinery of his own party, despite charges that he himself had engaged in electoral fraud to win the Tabasco governor's race in 1994.

That played well in a country where many have become fed up with the autocratic power of the party and its traditional leaders.

"I voted for Madrazo because he's said a lot of things nobody else has had the courage to say," said Amparo Martinez, 42, a single mother of two who works as a maid and voted in the chilly courtyard of the high school in the poor Mexico City neighborhood where she lives.

But surveys of potential voters showed that many people tired of the hard-hitting attacks. Labastida, whose campaign rebounded from a sluggish and disorganized start, moved ahead of Madrazo in the polls in recent weeks.

Labastida, who had the backing of most of the PRI establishment, was governor of the northern state of Sinaloa from 1986-92. After he left office his state attorney general was murdered, allegedly in retribution for fighting drug traffickers. The government dispatched Labastida to Portugal as ambassador, supposedly to help protect his life.

He has been a government functionary for most of his career, holding three cabinet positions, including most recently the powerful post of interior minister in the Zedillo administration.

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