LISTERIA

# Some Republicans Seek to Attach Riders to the Agriculture Budget

By DAVID ROGERS
*Staff Reporter of* THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—From Cuban trade to egg safety, farm-state Republicans are jumping on next year's agriculture budget to attach legislative riders that could spell trouble for the GOP's broader goal of moving spending bills quickly through Congress this summer.

Coming amid the controversy stirred by the Elian Gonzalez case, the Cuba provision rekindles a fight that badly split Republicans and stalled the same bill last year. Still, an amendment opening the

***The GOP faces criticism for using the budget process to advance special interests.***

door to U.S. shipments of food and medicine to Havana won initial approval from the House Appropriations Committee, and there appears to be strong sentiment among farm-state senators to follow suit.

"This is critically important to our farmers," said Republican Rep. George Nethercutt of Washington, rejecting the appeals of Appropriations Committee Chairman Bill Young of Florida to forestall any legislation on the $75 billion-plus budget bill. Invoking the market spirit of the Republicans' "Freedom to Farm" agriculture reforms, Mr. Nethercutt seemed to tweak his own leaders, saying, "Lifting sanctions on food and medicine lets the market work better."

While less high-profile, President Clinton's new egg-safety initiative took a beating on the same bill on both sides of the Capitol. At the urging of egg producers, Republicans on the House panel pushed through an amendment imposing legislative conditions on any new rules to address salmonella illnesses stemming from eggs. The Senate Appropriations Committee, meeting hours later, attached less-restrictive language but also cut out all of $5 million for the program within the Center for Food Safety budget at the Food and Drug Administration.

restrictive lang

While the Republican leadership is more sympathetic to the egg amendment, offered by GOP Rep. Jack Kingston of Georgia, the administration will want changes. The partisan skirmish exposes the GOP to criticism again for using the budget process to advance special interests. Speaker Dennis Hastert has sought to avoid this image and define the budget battle with the White House clearly as a matter of dollars and cents, not murky legislative riders. But he and Majority Whip Tom DeLay face a struggle in trying to maintain this discipline going into the fall elections.

A case in point is a massive budget bill funding the departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services. In recent weeks, Mr. DeLay already has expended political capital by facing down antiabortion forces who want to attach restrictions on family-planning programs or stem-cell research. Business interests are pressing for additional language to curb what they regard as excessive proposed rules to protect workers against job injuries resulting from poor ergonomics or repetitive motion. But the leadership hopes to move ahead with a relatively clean bill that keeps the focus on its budget priorities.

This is quite the opposite of the approach taken a few years ago, when Republicans made wholesale cuts in domestic spending and added legislative riders across the board to buy political support. This year, the GOP believes it is better able to withstand budget scrutiny since it is allowing modest increases in spending in many areas. In a time of budget surpluses, the fight is less over cuts than how much to increase spending. By avoiding riders, the leadership hopes to avoid controversy and cast itself as a party of prudence, compared with what it says are the excesses of the White House.

While less than the administration's request, both the House and Senate versions of the agriculture budget avoid drastic reductions. Total funding is up modestly from the current year, and apart from the egg-safety measure, both the FDA and the Food Safety and Inspection Service in the Agriculture Department receive increases.

blocked fund

imposed restr. on new proj to attach salmonella. pushed this week

failed to fully fund.

~~failed~~

FDA no money

egg safety

→ refused to fully

across board

neither H or S did not get full

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# House Approves Africa Trade Measure

By HELENE COOPER
And DAVID ROGERS
Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—The House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to approve compromise legislation to promote commerce with sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Central America.

The 309-110 vote means the long-running push to approve the Africa trade bill may finally be coming to an end. The Senate is expected to approve the bill next week.

The legislation would lower tariffs and quotas on products from sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Central America. Clinton administration officials said it could boost U.S. imports of African-made apparel to $4.2 billion in 2008 from $250 million in 1999.

Supporters of the bill, who have been struggling for its enactment for the past four years, were jubilant. Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel of New York said it marked the first time Africa was treated "the way we treated the rest of the world."

But the bill's opponents, including textile-state lawmakers and a variety of free-trade foes, complained it would siphon jobs away from the U.S. and offer few benefits to African countries.

Police arrested eight activists from Act Up who chained themselves to chairs in the House gallery during the vote, upset by the defeat of a proposal in the bill they said would have made it easier for HIV patients in poor countries to get treatment.

President Clinton hailed the measure as one that would "strengthen our economic partnership with these nations" and help developing economies "lift their people out of poverty."

Coming after more than five years of trade-bill defeats, the measure is a much-needed boost for Mr. Clinton's trade agenda as Congress prepares to take up the far more controversial proposal to permanently normalize China's trade status later this month. The China vote is expected to be far closer than the Africa tally, and the administration is pulling out all stops to muster as many supporters as it can get.

The administration announced 10 new converts to its list of lawmakers who have promised to support the China bill, including six Democrats and four Republicans. The Democrats included David Price of North Carolina, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ralph Hall and Charles Gonzalez of Texas, Darlene Hooley of Oregon and Brian Baird of Washington.

Administration officials are hoping to get 70 to 80 Democrats to vote for the bill, which needs 218 for passage. Republicans are expected to produce 150 votes for the measure, meaning the Democrats would have to come up with at least 68.

In trying to win over Democrats, the White House has made the argument that trade with China is good for American national-security interests. But lawmakers briefed by the Central Intelligence Agency often come away with a more skeptical view of Beijing's behavior, and Mr. Clinton faces opposition from one of his staunchest defense allies, Rep. John Murtha, a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee.

In a letter to fellow lawmakers, the Pennsylvania Democrat wrote yesterday that "The more I study the issue of PNTR for China, the more concerned I become with national-security issues relating to China." In interviews, he has been blunt in comparing his CIA briefings with arguments from the White House. "When the CIA lays out the facts, I come to the conclusion that it is not in the interest of the country."

Opponents of the measure were dubious about claims that the new converts among the ranks of supporters were a signal that the tide has turned in its favor.

"The members who allegedly just announced support have been supporters all along," said Lori Wallach, head of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

Clinton administration officials concede privately that they still don't have the votes to pass the bill. But they remain hopeful that they will get them before the week of May 22, when the vote is scheduled to occur.

The Africa bill's provisions include duty-free, quota-free benefits for that continent's poorest countries. It also would remove existing quotas on imports from Kenya and Mauritius.

The bill also includes a provision that lawmakers put in as a benefit to Carl Lindner, chief executive of **Chiquita Brands International** Inc., that would direct the U.S. trade representative to rotate imported products subject to retaliation in WTO cases. The provision is intended to allow the U.S. to target more European products for sanctions in the long-running banana trade war.

House Republicans backed the Africa trade measure by a better than 6-1 margin; Democrats split 126-78 in favor of the bill. The most notable opponent was Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D., Mo.), who not only bucked the administration but the majority of his party on the issue.