

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS THIS WEEK



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CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY
98th CONGRESS

Room 204, Cannon House Office Building, (202) 225-4001

Week of August 1, 1983

IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

- Legislation of Major Concern to the Black Community Scheduled for House Floor Action

LEGISLATION OF MAJOR CONCERN TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY SCHEDULED FOR HOUSE FLOOR ACTION

Monday, August 1 (suspensions)

H.R. 3345

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. LEGAL PUBLIC HOLIDAY

(Hall, D-IN). Consideration of this measure on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives represents a major victory for members of the Congressional Black Caucus, led by Colleagues John Conyers and Katie Hall, who have worked arduously for enactment of this long overdue testimonial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s monumental contributions to the cultivation of the Civil Rights Act. Passage of this measure will show a national commitment to the achievement of equality for Black Americans.

As reported from the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, this measure amends section 6103 (a) of title 5 of the U.S. Code to designate the third Monday in January of each year as a legal public holiday in commemoration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Testimony in support of this measure, was heard from numerous persons including the widow of Dr. King, Senator Edward Kennedy, and Stevie Wonder. The measure was reported from the Post Office and Civil Service Committee on a vote of 20 to 1. Ms. Hall Serves on the Post Office Committee along with her CBC colleagues Mickey Leland and William (Bill) Clay.

S.272

SMALL BUSINESS ACCESS TO FEDERAL PROCUREMENT INFORMATION CONFERENCE REPORT

(The House version of this measure was originally introduced by CBC colleague Parren Mitchell, D-MD as H.R. 1043.) This bill would amend the Commerce Business Daily provisions of Section 8(e) of the Small Business Act to require procuring agencies to give small businesses fifteen days from the appearance of a notice in the Commerce Business Daily to request copies of a solicitation.

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Small Business Access to Federal Procurement Information Conference Report....continued

Language in the conference report stipulates that competition on a solicitation cannot be foreclosed until at least thirty days have elapsed from the date of publication of the notice. Enactment of this legislation will encourage competition and afford more small firms ample time to monitor solicitations in Commerce Business Daily and prepare bids or proposals. Mr. Mitchell chairs the House Small Business Committee and CBC colleague Gus Savage serves on the Committee.

H.R. 3409

AMENDMENTS TO FEDERAL SUPPLEMENTAL COMPENSATION ACT

(Shannon, D-MA). The Federal Supplemental Compensation Program (FSC) provides additional weeks of unemployment compensation to individuals who have exhausted State benefits and any extended benefits to which they are entitled. The Social Security Act Amendments of 1983 (enacted into law this past March) provided for an extension of the FSC compensation program for six months, (4/1/83 through 9/30/83).

Under the original Department of Labor (DOL) interpretation of the FSC provision (in the new Social Security bill) which limited the loss of FSC weeks, States were instructed that the maximum number of FSC weeks payable by the State could not be more than four weeks less than the maximum number that was paid the week of March 27, 1983.

DOL applied the four week loss limitation to all States for nearly two and a half months, resulting in the payment of benefits that would not otherwise have been paid as well as creating an expectation on the part of FSC claimants that they were eligible for a certain number of weeks.

Because of the DOL misinterpretation, on June 10, 1983, thousands of workers in Arizona, Kansas, Massachusetts, and North Carolina were cut off the FSC rolls. Since that time 21 other states have experienced a drop in the number of FSC weeks payable, and as many as seven additional States may lose more than four weeks between now and 9/30/83.

The long term unemployed (especially persons in the Black community) are faced with continuing hardships because of the high level of unemployment in this country. Although there has been some reduction in the total unemployment rate, job prospects for the long term unemployed remain bleak. Enactment of this bill is necessary to provide essential help to these jobless workers.

The measure was reported from the House Committee on Ways and Means. CBC colleague Harold Ford is Chair of that Committee's Subcommittee on Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation. Colleague Charles Rangel Chairs the Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight.

H.Con.Res.40

FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

(de la Garza, D-TX). As reported by the House Committee on Agriculture, this measure expresses the sense of the Congress that funding for Federal nutrition programs should be protected from further budget cuts and that the Congress should continue to respond effectively to the urgencies of unemployment and food prices and that the supplemental food program for women, infants and children (WIC) should be funded at a level to maintain the 1983 fiscal year-end case load.

Adoption of this continuing resolution should be considered in the context of legislation enacted in the 97th Congress with numerous provisions that resulted in a drop in school lunch participation of about 3 million children a day and removed 500,000 children in 1982 (from low income areas) from the rolls of the summer free lunch program. During testimony on this measure before the Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations and Nutrition, there was overwhelming documentation that the incidence of poverty related hunger has risen significantly in many areas of the United States. Members of the Black community will want to note that, in his letter to Agriculture Committee Chairman de la Garza dated July 26, 1983, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block stated that "although the Department of Agriculture shares the Congress' deep concern about the nutritional well being of all Americans.....the Department, however, does not support enactment of H. Con. Res. 40."

H.R. 3394

STUDENT LOAN CONSOLIDATION AND TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS

(Perkins, D-KY). Enactment of this legislation is necessary to ensure the orderly and on-going operation of the major Federal student educational assistance programs. Specifically the measure:

- extends the loan consolidation authority of the Student Loan Marketing Association (Sallie Mae) and provides loan consolidation authority to state agencies and private lenders. During consideration of the Student Financial Assistance Technical Amendments Act of 1982 (Public Law 97-301) the issue of extending loan consolidation to the states was discussed. State agencies and banks contended that allowing only Sallie Mae to consolidate loans caused a hardship because of Sallie Mae removing the larger loans from their portfolios and leaving state agencies and banks with smaller, more costly loans.;
- establishes by statute Pell Grant and Guaranteed Student Loan family contribution schedules for the 1984-1985 and 1985-1986 academic years;
- revises the statutory provisions governing "truth-in-lending" type disclosures to student borrowers at the time a loan is made and when the borrower enters repayment;
- mandates the continued use of the current definition of "independent student" through the next two academic years or until reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

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Members of the Black community will note that Section 6 of the measure ensures that lenders will not engage in discriminatory practices in making Guaranteed Student Loans. On May 4, 1983 the Department of Education issued an announcement in the Federal Register redesignating the GSL program as a program for the disadvantaged. This means that the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) provisions requiring non-discriminatory lending practices would no longer apply to GSLs. Enactment of Section 6 of H.R. 3394 is necessary to guarantee that those non-discrimination provisions (similar to ECOA) still apply to Guaranteed Student Loans. Also this section would limit the ability of state agencies to discriminate against higher education institutions and students in their lending requirements. Regulations established by some states which allow secondary loan markets to refuse to purchase loans if those loans were made by lenders with default rates in excess of 10 percent, or if the loans were made to students who attend institutions with GSL default rates in excess of 15 percent, have the effect of discriminating against poor and minority students. CBC colleagues Augustus Hawkins, William Clay and Major Owens serve on the House Committee on Education and Labor.

H.R. 1646

RAILROAD RETIREMENT SOLVENCY ACT

(Dingell, D-MI). This measure was reported from the House Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means. The purpose of the measure is to improve the financial status of the Railroad Retirement System both to assure the future solvency of the system and to preclude the need for the substantial benefit reduction that would otherwise be required on October 2, 1984. It is believed that enactment of this measure will represent a significant step in the direction of assuring the solvency of the Railroad Retirement System. The measure makes numerous changes in the benefits and taxation of railroad retirement benefits. Although the entire measure impacts a significant segment of the Black community, one of the most important provisions of the measure, found in sections 231 and 232 of the bill, authorizes the Railroad Unemployment Compensation system to borrow from the Federal Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund in the same manner in which States borrow from this Fund. This will allow the Unemployment Compensation system to repay its debt to the Railroad Retirement System and also prohibit future borrowing from the Railroad Retirement system.

CBC members Mickey Leland and Cardiss Collins serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee and CBC members Charles Rangel and Harold Ford serve on the Committee on Ways and Means.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1984

(Lehman, D-FL). This measure makes appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1984. Provisions in the conference agreement of particular significance to the Black Community include:

- \$650,000 for transportation research grants for historically black colleges and universities under the DOT Research and Special Programs Administration;
- expansion of the Minority Business Resource Center's authorization to include all modes of transportation. (Formerly, the MRC's activities were limited only to assisting minorities with Federal Railroad Administration procurements).
- DOT's Minority Business Resource Center is responsible for providing minority businesses assistance in finding venture capital, bonding, as well as providing technical assistance to MBE's. The MRC is expected to play an important role in the implementation of the 10% set-aside, which will have a profound economic impact on the minority community with a potential of over \$1.5 billion in new contracts for minority and disadvantaged firms in FY 1984

CBC colleague, William H. Gray, III, a member of the House Appropriations Full Committee and Subcommittee on Transportation served on the DOT Conference committee. CBC Chair Julian Dixon and colleague Louis Stokes are also members of the House Committee on Appropriations.

H.R. 2957

INTERNATIONAL RECOVERY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY ACT

(St. Germain, D-RI). This is an omnibus measure which extends the authority of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, authorizes an \$8.37 billion increase in the U.S. line of credit to the International Monetary Fund lending fund, strengthens the supervision of international lending by U.S. banks and continues U.S. participation in various multi-lateral development banks - the Inter-American Development Bank, the ASIAN Development Bank and the African Development Fund. The House began consideration of this measure during the week of July 27. For detailed information please refer to "CBC This Week" dated 7/27/83.

Wednesday, August 3 and the balance of the week

H.R. 3021

HEALTH CARE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED ACT

(Dingell, D-MI). This measure amends the Social Security Act to address the urgent needs of the 9.6 million jobless Americans and their dependents (approximately 9.5 million) who have no health insurance protection. This bill authorizes a three-year Federal-State entitlement program targeting assistance on those unemployed who have no other public or private insurance coverage and who are not eligible for Medicaid. The program would be authorized through October 1, 1986. For further details, see CBC This Week dated June 27).

**AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WILL ADJOURN UNTIL MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12. "CBC THIS WEEK" WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED DURING THE AUGUST RECESS.
