

In Senate, Flip-flops Come Easy for Both Parties

By Emily Pierce
ROLL CALL STAFF

Just as Republicans did in 1995, Democrats took over Congress this year pledging to change the way that Washington, D.C., works. But listening to debate on the Senate floor over the past month, it's clear that no matter who runs the place, the script is largely the same.

Consider this scenario: The Senate Majority Leader takes to the floor decrying the death of an ethics and lobbying reform bill, blaming the minority party for insisting on an amendment that is not germane to the under-

lying measure.

"This amendment has nothing to do with lobbying reform or ethics reform of this body — something that is important, something that is the business of the Senate right now on the floor," the Majority Leader said. He added, "We had a totally unrelated amendment injected, I believe, for partisan purposes."

That may sound a lot like what Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said during debate on a lobbying and ethics bill two weeks ago when Republicans demanded a vote on an amendment to give the president

limited line-item veto authority.

But the quote is actually from former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) on March 8, 2006, when — during debate on the exact same ethics and lobbying bill — Democrats insisted on a vote on an amendment to stop a Middle Eastern-owned company from taking over management of many of the nation's ports.

While Frist pulled the bill to avoid a vote on the ports issue, Reid negotiated with Republicans to postpone the line-item veto debate. But Reid's rhetoric was no less accusa-

tory.

"They hate this bill, and this is their excuse to kill it," Reid said at a press conference Jan. 18.

It seems that no matter who is in the majority in the Senate, the ruling party bemoans the "obstructionism" of the minority, while the minority bristles at the majority's efforts to limit the number of amendments and debate time.

The irony of this sudden and wholesale shift in rhetoric hasn't been completely lost on Sen-
See **FLIP-FLOP**, page 17



Morning Business

Union Correspondence. Comptroller General **David Walker** said Monday that general counsel is expected to respond by the end of the week to a letter he received Friday accusing him of interfering in unionization efforts at the Government Accountability Office.

Specifically citing "disparaging and questionable statements" made by Walker against the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, attorney **Gregory McGillivray** wrote that Walker is in violation of the legal requirement of the agency to stay quiet during unionization efforts.

The group is leading a unionization effort at the GAO. In the letter, McGillivray specifically cited an article published on govexec.com, in which Walker is quoted as saying the union is "way ahead of themselves" in the campaign, and that he will present his "views on the advantages and disadvantages of unionization."

This could constitute an unfair labor practice, McGillivray wrote.

Walker dismissed the claims.

"We haven't violated any laws or rules," Walker said. "We are very aware of the laws and rules and we are in compliance with them."

Page Board Completed. The last Congressional Member of the newly revamped House Page Board was named Monday when the office of House Minority Leader **John Boehner** (R-Ohio) announced that **Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite** (Fla.) would serve as the second Republican on the panel.

Brown-Waite joins fellow GOP **Rep. Shelley Moore Capito** (W.Va.) and Democratic **Reps. Dale Kildee** (Mich.) and **Diana DeGette** (Colo.) on the board after **President Bush** signed the House Page Board Revision Act on Friday. Among other changes, the bill added a second minority spot to the panel to make it a partisan-neutral body.

Brown-Waite said she approached Boehner about joining the page board in the wake of last fall's scandal involving former **Rep. Mark Foley** (R-Fla.).

At the time, she said, "there were some Members that wanted to get rid of the page program. I wasn't one of them. I said 'Let's improve it.' So I guess this is following up on my views on whether or not to continue the page board."

— **Elizabeth Brotherton and John McArdle**

PETITIONING PELOSI



Tom Williams/Roll Call

Students and parents from D.C.'s Oyster Bilingual School greet Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Monday. The students presented a petition to end genocide in Darfur.

GOP Ethics Roster Gains Counsel, 4 New Members

By Rachel Van Dongen
and Susan Davis
ROLL CALL STAFF

A month into the 110th Congress, the Republican roster on the House ethics committee is finally taking shape, as ranking member Doc Hastings (Wash.) has chosen a new counsel and four lawmakers have been picked to serve on the panel.

The House Republican Conference is

scheduled to ratify the four new members of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct at its weekly meeting today.

Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) has asked GOP Reps. Gresham Barrett (S.C.), Jo Bonner (Ala.), John Kline (Minn.) and Mike McCaul (Texas) to serve on the investigative panel under Hastings. Members of the committee are leader-appointed and general-

See **ETHICS**, page 18

New Rules For New Democrats

By Jennifer Yachnin
ROLL CALL STAFF

Buoyed by record membership, the New Democrat Coalition is working to solidify its growing influence in the House, and is sharpening its organizational structure in the process.

"We really were looking at three main areas to improve, and to add value to Members and to the Caucus," said NDC Chairwoman Ellen Tauscher (Calif.), who listed those goals as administrative organization, fundraising and compiling a legislative agenda. "We had to organize ourselves in a responsible, predictable way."

Among the significant changes, the centrist New Democrats, who count 63 members in the 110th Congress, approved new bylaws, including terms of office for executives and guidelines on how lawmakers may join the group, as well as establishing an internal whip post, filled by Rep. Joe Crowley (N.Y.), who also serves as one of the group's four vice chairmen along with Reps. Adam Smith (Wash.), Ron Kind (Wis.) and Artur Davis (Ala.).

In addition, the coalition has hired its first-ever executive director, employing Matthew Schumaker, a former aide in Rep. Darlene Hooley's (D-Ore.) office, where he served as both communications director and senior leg-

See **NEW DEMOCRATS**, page 18



By John McArdle
ROLL CALL STAFF

While Alan Hantman's term as Architect of the Capitol has ended, his influence was still felt on Capitol Hill on Monday in the form of the AOC's budget request for fiscal 2008, in which the agency is seeking \$34 million for the Capitol Visitor Center.

Submitted as part of President Bush's \$2.9 trillion budget proposal, this year's request by the AOC seeks \$20 million next year to finish physical work on the new facility and \$13.9 million in operational funding to run the center.

While operational funding in the past has never been approved above \$2 million, the

almost \$12 million jump in the current year's budget request shows the AOC expects to have the new facility open and running sometime in the next fiscal cycle. (Though the AOC is predicting a late-2007 opening, the Government Accountability Office, which Congress has asked to help monitor the project, has said that early 2008 is more likely.)

As of November 2006, about \$531 million had been provided for the construction of the massive underground visitor center and the AOC said then that total cost would be about \$556 million. But the fiscal 2007 continuing resolution

that was introduced last week included some \$44 million in CVC funding (to be split between operational and construction costs at the discretion of the AOC and its oversight committees), so it appears the final construction price tag for the largest addition in the history of the Capitol likely will come out to be closer to the almost \$600 million that the GAO estimated last fall.

CVC Project Executive Bob Hixon, who has overseen CVC construction since joining the AOC in 2004, said last week that with most of the major construction work on the project finished, CVC crews are shifting their focus to completing the installation of new fire and life safety systems and getting those systems tested and approved. Hixon said some of the construction funding that Hantman requested would go toward paying CVC contractors who have been impacted by unexpected delays caused by various de-

See **CVC WATCH**, page 19

AOC Projected Opening Date:
Late 2007

GAO Projected Opening Date:
Early 2008

AOC Cost Estimate:
At least \$557 million

GAO Cost Estimate:
At least \$592 million