



Legislative Bulletin.....March 16, 2005

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Summary of the Bill Under Consideration Today:

Total Number of New Government Programs: 0

Total Cost of Discretionary Authorizations: \$0

Effect on Revenue: No effect beyond what was already in the baseline

Total Change in Mandatory Spending: \$0

Total New State & Local Government Mandates: 0

Total New Private Sector Mandates: 0

Number of Bills Without Committee Reports: 1

Number of Reported Bills that Don't Cite Specific Clauses of Constitutional Authority: 0

H.R. 1270—To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund financing rate (Thomas)

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on Wednesday, March 16th, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.R. 1270 would extend through September 30, 2005, the excise tax that funds the leaking underground storage tank (LUST) trust fund. This LUST excise tax, which is 0.1 cents-per-gallon on motor fuels, is set to expire on March 31, 2005. Money from the LUST trust fund is used for detection, prevention, and cleanup of leaking underground oil tanks.

Additional Background: Other motor fuels excise taxes are already set to expire on September 30, 2005.

Committee Action: On March 14, 2005, the bill was referred to the Ways & Means Committee, which did not officially consider the bill.

Cost to Taxpayers: According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, H.R. 1270 would have no revenue effect because extension of the excise tax is already assumed in the budget baseline.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

Constitutional Authority: A committee report citing constitutional authority is unavailable.

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H.Con.Res. 98—Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the recent passage of the anti-secession law by the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (Hyde)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled to be considered on Wednesday, March 16th, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.Con.Res. 98 would resolve a sense of Congress that:

- “the anti-secession law of the People’s Republic of China provides a legal justification for the use of force against Taiwan, altering the status quo in the region, and thus is of grave concern to the United States;
- “the President of the United States should direct all appropriate officials of the United States Government to reflect the grave concern with which the United States views the passage of China’s anti-secession law in particular, and the growing Chinese military threats to Taiwan in general, to their counterpart officials in the Government of the People’s Republic of China;

- “the Government of the United States should reaffirm its policy that the future of Taiwan should be resolved by peaceful means and with the consent of the people of Taiwan; and
- “the Government of the United States should continue to encourage dialogue between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China.

Additional Background: The National People’s Congress of the communist People’s Republic of China passed an anti-secession law on March 14, 2005, which creates a legal framework for possible use of force against Taiwan and mandates Chinese military action under certain circumstances, including when “possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted.”

H.Con.Res. 98 notes that section 2(b)(6) of the Taiwan Relations Act declares that it the policy of the United States “to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”

Committee Action: Yesterday, the resolution was referred to the International Relations Committee, which did not formally consider the resolution.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution would authorize no expenditure.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

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H.Con.Res. 32—Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the occupation of the Republic of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic (Ros-Lehtinen)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled to be considered on Wednesday, March 16th, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.Con.Res. 32 would resolve a sense of Congress that:

- “the Republic of Lebanon is a captive country;
- “the occupation of Lebanon represents a long-term threat to the security of the Middle East and United States efforts to promote political and economic liberalization in the region, and this issue should be raised by the President and the Secretary of State in all appropriate bilateral and multilateral forums;

- “the President should direct the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations to present and secure support for a United Nations Security Council Resolution classifying Lebanon as a ‘captive country’ and calling for the immediate release of all Lebanese detainees in Syria and Lebanon;
- “the President should freeze all assets in the United States belonging to Lebanese Government officials who are found to support and aid the occupation of Lebanon by the Syrian Arab Republic;
- “all countries should fully and immediately implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559;
- “it should be the policy of the United States to--
 - (A) support independent human rights and pro-democracy advocates in Lebanon; and
 - (B) seek the full restoration of sovereign democratic rule in Lebanon; and
- “the United States should provide assistance through the Middle East Partnership Initiative and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative for broadcasts and civil society efforts to assist individuals, organizations, and entities that support Lebanese sovereignty and the promotion of democracy in Lebanon.”

Additional Background: The Syrian Arab Republic invaded and occupied the Republic of Lebanon in 1976. Syria is the only country currently occupying another country that is a full member of the United Nations. The Syrian occupation became complete on October 13, 1990, when the Syrian troops launched aerial and ground attacks and occupied the Lebanese presidential palace and the ministry of defense, ousting the constitutional government of Prime Minister Michel Aoun of Lebanon. Various human rights organizations and the U.S. State Department have reported that Syria continues to oppress the Lebanese people, violate their human rights, and suppress their civil liberties.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 calls for the “strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon,” the withdrawal from Lebanon of “all remaining foreign forces,” “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias,” and “the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory.” To read more on UNSCR 1559, visit this webpage: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sc8181.doc.htm>

Committee Action: On March 2, 2005, the Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee marked up and forwarded the resolution to the full International Relations Committee, which marked up the resolution one week later and approved it for House floor consideration under suspension of the rules.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution would authorize no expenditure.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

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H.Con.Res. 18—Expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian and Lebanese people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic (Ros-Lehtinen)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled to be considered on Wednesday, March 16th, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.Con.Res. 18 would resolve that Congress:

- “condemns the consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic;
- “calls on the international community to adopt a resolution at the upcoming session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which details the dismal human rights record of Syria;
- “expresses its support for the people of Syria in their daily struggle for freedom, respect for human rights and civil liberties, democratic self-governance, and the establishment of the rule of law;
- “encourages the President and the Secretary of State to reach out to dissidents, human rights activists, and the nonviolent democratic opposition in Syria, and to assist them in their efforts; and
- “urges the adoption and pursuit of these and other policies to seek a democratic government in Syria that will--
 - (A) bring freedom and democracy to the people of Syria;
 - (B) cease the illegal occupation by Syria of the Lebanese Republic;
 - (C) abandon support for terrorism by Syria;
 - (D) not pursue research, development, acquisition, production, transfer, or deployment of biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons, will provide credible assurances that such behavior will not be undertaken in the future, and will agree to allow United Nations and other international observers to verify such assurances; and
 - (E) live in peace and security with the international community.”

The resolution also notes that, “the Syrian Arab Republic is governed by an authoritarian regime which continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including the use of torture and arbitrary arrest and detention.” Various examples of these abuses are outlined in the resolution.

Additional Background: The Syrian Arab Republic invaded and occupied the Republic of Lebanon in 1976. The Syrian occupation became complete on October 13, 1990, when the Syrian troops launched aerial and ground attacks and occupied the Lebanese presidential palace and the ministry of defense, ousting the constitutional government of Prime Minister Michel Aoun of Lebanon. Various human rights organizations and the U.S. State Department have reported that Syria continues to oppress the Lebanese people, violate their human rights, and suppress their civil liberties.

The State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 states that Syria “significantly restricts freedom of speech and of the press,” that “freedom of assembly does not exist under the law,” and that “the Government restricted freedom of association.”

Committee Action: On March 2, 2005, the Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee marked up and forwarded the resolution to the full International Relations Committee, which marked up the resolution one week later and approved it for House floor consideration under suspension of the rules.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution would authorize no expenditure.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

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