

DeLay's Pleas for GOP Discipline Fall on Deaf Ears

Shadegg Will Use 'Every Mechanism Available' to Fight Supplemental

By Susan Crabtree

Despite a lecture by House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Texas) aimed at imposing voting discipline on the Conference, conservative House Republicans said they are prepared to use every mechanism necessary to contain the \$29.4 billion supplemental spending bill.

"I'm going to have a hard time voting for the bill or the rule on the bill," said Rep. Jeff Flake (Ariz.), a member of the conservative Republican Study Committee. "We keep being told to wait to know what the [final version] is, but I haven't seen anything that's not worthy of criticism yet."

Republican Study Committee Chairman John Shadegg (Ariz.) was not as specific about his plans but said he is equally committed to whittling down the total supplemental by finding other areas to cut. The bill is expected to come to the floor Wednesday.

"We have made our support for offsets very well known," he said, adding that if the leadership and appropriators do not find the necessary cuts, conservatives will use "every mechanism available" to them.

In a closed-door Conference meeting last Wednesday, DeLay emphasized the danger of voting against rules and other procedural votes, reminding Republicans that they control the majority by only six seats. DeLay was echoing statements made by Rules Chairman David Dreier (R-Calif.), who delivered the same message to the Conference just minutes before.

Despite the apparent willingness on the part of conservatives to defy House GOP leaders,

DeLay spokesman Stuart Roy argued that conservatives are actually following his boss' advice by trying to work through the problem before the bill comes to the floor this week.

"DeLay was saying that we can't confuse a bend in the road with the end of the road," said Roy.

In his remarks to the Conference, DeLay also stressed the need for House Republicans to show the White House that Congress still controls the power of the purse, according to several GOP sources present.

The Texas Republican was referring to a dust-up during the welfare reform debate when President Bush called on Congress to allow states greater flexibility to decide how to use federal money for welfare, food stamps, job training and housing programs. Appropriators immediately cried foul and put a stop to Bush's plan.

House Republican Conference Chairman J.C. Watts (Okla.) — still smarting from the White House's decision to yank the Crusader artillery program, which has operations in his district — hammered home the same message about making sure the administration understands that Congress is responsible for deciding what gets funded.

Conservatives generally approve of relinquishing federal control to the states and were supportive of the White House's welfare reform request. But Appropriations Chairman Bill Young (R-Fla.) told the Conference in a gathering Thursday to consider the consequences of giving up some powers of the purse. He cautioned the group to consider the



File Photo

Rep. John Shadegg said the Republican Study Committee is committed to trimming the supplemental.

situation if former Attorney General Janet Reno were the Democratic governor of Florida and former Vice President Al Gore occupied the White House.

That particular message may have hit home, but it did not do anything to alleviate the right flank's angst over the supplemental. So far, conservatives have been successful in their drive to find offsets for roughly \$2 billion in the bill which exceeds the President's original request of \$27.1 billion. They have yet to find offsets for an additional \$200 million added to the measure to provide extra military support for Israel and \$50 million for humanitarian aid to Palestine.

"My main focus is on the offsets," said Rep.

Pat Toomey (R-Pa.). "It should be very easy to find offsets for \$250 million."

Flake also stressed the need for a guarantee from the spending panel about the order of appropriations bills. Conservatives do not want to see the massive defense bill arrive last, right before the November elections. They argue that every other bill will become bloated and Republicans will have little leverage to hold the line on spending at the end of the year, especially on defense.

In order to control the spending floodgates, Toomey and other fiscal conservatives are also developing legislation to force Congress to contain spending within the levels outlined in the House budget blueprint.

An effort to add language to the supplemental bill to increase the debt ceiling could become thorny ground. According to knowledgeable aides, GOP leaders want to add "sense of Congress" language, which would provide general Congressional support for increasing the debt limit.

The tactical move would allow the issue to be taken up when the bill goes to conference.

"It basically punts [the issue] for a while," one aide conceded.

Despite the conservative uproar, appropriators predict the supplemental spending bill will pass overwhelmingly.

"I think the bill now gets 350 to 380 votes," House Appropriations spokesman John Scofield said.

Scofield called the current conservative opposition to the bill "unfortunate" and noted that any Member can offer amendments to cut the size of the bill.

"The bottom line is the House leaders are OK with it, the appropriators are OK with it and the White House is happy with it," he said. "We can't please everybody."