

A10-Star-Tribune, Casper, Wyo.

Wednesday, September 15, 1993

## Grazing plan: 59-40 vote kills money needed for Clinton package

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The bill, a final vote on the issue will not occur until the bill moves to a House-Senate conference committee later this month.

U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt told reporters several hours before the vote that he would ask members of the House of Representatives to thwart the Senate action, if the Senate approved the amendment.

Babbitt also announced Tuesday that the public comment period for the reform portion of the environmental impact statement on grazing reform has been extended to additional 30 days.

Wyoming GOP Sen. Malcolm Wallop was one of the chief proponents of the amendment, along with New Mexico GOP Sen. Pete Domenici and other western lawmakers.

Wallop declined to comment on his amendment Tuesday afternoon but did release a written statement after the vote Tuesday evening.

In his statement Wallop said "the administration's proposal is a cluster bomb that will devastate all facets of rural western communities. It should not be implemented until Congress has the opportunity to evaluate the pros and cons of such reform."

Wyoming GOP Sen. Alan Simpson spoke in favor of the amendment on the Senate floor, stating that the administration's imposed to permit Congress to

plan amounts to little more than a complicated disguise for an anti-rural social agenda. He pointed to the removal of cattle from public lands.

Said Simpson, "People ought to get up to the plate and hit the ball, and just say we don't want to give the public lands. They're up to us and they're up to us."

Several western lawmakers who spoke in favor of the amendment on the Senate floor Tuesday afternoon said the administration's plan would have been in vain without the support of the House.

Domenici led the charge, criticizing the administration for attempting to use its executive authority in an attempt to impose sweeping change on the western livestock industry and rural economies.

Although the existing formula used to calculate grazing fees was implemented by executive order of President Reagan, Domenici said there is no comparison between that decision and the Clinton proposal because Clinton's plan is much more comprehensive.

"This is not the grazing issue of last year," he said. "That issue has been modified and blown up until now it is a giant that will change all the ways ranching families have depended on it."

Western senators argued that the funding mechanisms should be changed to permit Congress to

hold hearings on grazing reform. In particular they argued for hearings on the issue of a federal grazing fee, which should be \$1.86 per animal unit month (AUM) or \$2.33, while meeting a new formula.

As AUM is the amount of forage required to sustain one cow and a calf or five sheep.

The vote Tuesday evening included some surprise supporters, such as Daniel P. Moynihan, D-N.Y., Sen. Danie Fritts, D-Calif., and Sen. John Chafee, R-I.

Opponents of the amendment were severely in evidence.

Ohio Democratic Sen. Howard Metchum was the only opponent to speak on the floor during the first hour of debate.

Metchum said virtually every co-sponsored amendment has been an outgrowth of the problem of the federal budget and deficit reduction.

When it comes to fiscal responsibility in their own states, he said, they change their tune.

New Jersey Democratic Senator Bill Bradley expressed a similar opinion, stating that "for all those who made big speeches about cutting the deficit — this is the time."

Dale Bumpers, D-Ark., said even single westerners should be state changes more for grazing permits.

But the federal government, if these states are willing to tax their own people to the extent of grazing fees, why should we do less?" he said.

Whether the Senate amendment will survive the conference committee is open to speculation but Domenici started his campaign to block the amendment Tuesday afternoon after the Senate vote.

He said in interview, stating that the administration should adjust to life under the amendment because the Senate will not pass an appropriations bill without it.

**Audit**

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term Labor, Health and Social Services Committee.

The Ernst & Young audit also shows that workers were not blame for the workers' compensation problem's woes, Fausch said.

The preliminary report of a huge \$363 million unfunded liability, however, surprised him, Fausch said.

"I didn't think it would be (as much as) \$150 million," he said, including more than \$100 million in the Legislature partially referred to the workers' compensation program in 1986.

Those reforms included dropping the old flat rate method for as-

## Middle East

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litical and financial support "to the Palestinians."

The official aid approach had earlier been made by the European Community, Japan, Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states.

At the State Department, the agreement signed by Israeli and Jordanian officials kept the peace movement going. Presiding at the ceremony, Christopher said the document was "a very important step toward that very comprehensive peace" between Israel and the Jordan.

He noted that it came just a day after "we witnessed the historic signing of the Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles, an event that really has forever altered the contours and chemistry of the entire region."

The earlier accord gives the Palestinians immediate administrative control over Gaza and Jericho and calls for negotiations within two years on the future of Jerusalem and Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Israel's quest for a state on Israeli-held land.

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## Business: Continuing rate caps for risky industries unfair, some say

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the present, according to actuarial projections.

Earlier estimates had put the liability at some \$150 million, but the first complete actuarial audit of the program — just now being finished — has produced a preliminary estimate of the liability at \$381 million.

Some officials, meanwhile, said they hope the effect on economic development of the subsequent 12 percent hike in workers' compensation rates can be offset by effective public relations.

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Wyoming's rates would still be lower than those of surrounding states, even after the 12 percent hike is imposed, according to Scott.

The rate increase, the second since major hike in many years, could cover the message that the program is out of control, he said.

People will want to know if the problem is taken care of before they decide to relocate businesses here, Scott said.

Letting people know the problem is being taken care of is the approach Division of Economic and Community Development director George Gault wants to take.

"That's more than most states do," he said.

Now that the division has a properly estimated estimate of the unfunded liability, it can raise rates to cover that and promote business here, he said.

He has in the past promoted Wyoming's low rates as a reason for businesses to relocate here because they offer low costs and stability.

Charles Scott, SDH, R. Casper, the committee chairman, said Monday that the 12 percent rate increase could scare off prospective businesses from re-

locating to Wyoming, or even drive through the Wyoming's rates are higher than those of surrounding states.

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Lee Rhodes, vice president for finance at Defense Technology Corporation of America in Casper, said a 32 percent increase would substantially affect his company's growth.

"It scares the hell out of me," Rhodes said.

"The cost of employing people goes up, we have fewer employees," said Rhodes, who added that Defense Technology's rates are low because few employees are injured on the job.

Businesses new to Wyoming that relocated for lower workers' compensation rates such as Defense Technology and Woodworker Supply, Rhodes said, "are going to get hurt."

He and briefed said that industries generate numerous claims and high-cost claims should be the ones facing the full force to stop adding to the unfunded liability.

The system of capping the rates paid by some higher-risk industries than others has been effectively prevented from paying for the entire burden of the industry's place on the state, critics say.

"It seems so unfair to say 'you share in the cost of an accident,'" of a hazardous industry, Rhodes said.

But Cheryl Fernald, associate di-

rector of the Petroleum Association of Wyoming, said it's unfair to single out her industry, even if factoring in state records is made.

Out and an extraction company already pay as much as the cap allows — \$5.50 for every \$100 in payroll, according to Division of Workers' Compensation rate charts.

Department of Employment Director Frank Galante said Monday that a 5 percent to 7 percent of other businesses' workers' compensation rates to subsidize industries whose rates are capped.

The projected 32 percent increase in rates will mean that 12 industrial classifications will be at the cap, meaning more will be paying more by the way to stop adding to the unfunded liability.

Fernald said the size of the unfunded liability and rate or even eliminate the rate cap.

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