

## WASHINGTON IN BRIEF:

### TODAY'S HOT TOPIC

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## **Body**

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**SPENDING WATCHDOG:** National Taxpayers Union Foundation releases a survey on spending legislation sponsored by each member of the House and Senate.

Highway bill is stuck in the slow lane

Congress missed a deadline, and state highway departments have run into a roadblock. Sept. 30 came and went, then Congress recessed for a week with House-Senate conferees still fighting over a highway bill that must be passed before \$ 6.5 billion in transportation money can be released to the states.

The funds were authorized in a 1991 law and were supposed to be available to states beginning Oct. 1, as long as legislation designating a 160,000-mile National Highway System had been enacted. It wasn't, and the delay could jeopardize construction schedules in Northern states where bad weather sets in early.

The competing bills go beyond designating the new highway system and opening the spigot of highway funding. Both would repeal all federal motorcycle helmet laws and allow states to decide their own speed limits. And the Senate version would allow highway trust fund money to be spent on Amtrak for the first time.

**GORE FAMILY MATTER:** It is distressing for a parent to have a teenage child cited by police for drinking. It's worse for a high-profile family like Vice President Al Gore's because it gets played out in public. Tipper Gore said their daughter Sarah, 16, who got a citation for holding an open beer outside a party last weekend, is wrestling with the public attention as well as "the severe disappointment of her family and friends and herself." Last year, Mrs. Gore said she was concerned about the prevalence of teenage drinking, and urged parents to teach their children not to drink and to forbid drinking at teen parties.

**CLOSURE FOR PACKWOOD:** After casting his final vote Friday night, Bob Packwood (R-Ore.), now an ex-senator, repaired to his old watering hole, the Irish Times, where he wrote much of the 1986 tax reform bill. He drank a nonalcoholic beer straight from the bottle, according to The Associated Press. After some initial hand-shaking and well-wishing, his staffers kept most people away. "There was closure," said the saloon's manager.

**VIEW FROM AFRICA:** If retired Gen. Colin Powell can seem to do no wrong in this country, he's running into trouble overseas. Nigerians are furious over comments made by Powell in his recent New Yorker magazine interview. Powell said, "Nigerians tend not to be honest. Nigerians as a group, frankly, are marvelous scammers. I mean, it is in their national culture." A joint statement issued by two Nigerian groups and reported by Reuters news service called Powell's comments an "irresponsible tirade of a man who has abandoned his African heritage."

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FDR DONORS' WALL: Donors who contribute \$ 500,000 to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorial, slated for completion in 1997, will get their names inscribed on a Recognition Wall nearby. Some who already kicked in that much are ITT Corp., Archer Daniels Midland Corp. and the Dwayne O. Andreas Foundation. Congress allocated \$ 42 million; another \$ 10 million must be raised privately for the 7.5-acre park, statues and displays near the Jefferson Memorial. The Washington Post noted that FDR himself wanted nothing showier than the small stone marker "plain, without any ornamentation, with the simple carving 'In Memory of . . . ' " that now sets between the Capitol and National Archives.

ONLY ONE MINORITY PAGE: Republican leaders are under fire from black and Hispanic lawmakers for appointing a nearly all-white class of congressional pages. The 64 pages this year include no blacks, no Latinos and just one Asian-American. Republicans control 54 of the page slots and Democrats 10. Under Democratic-controlled congresses, page classes averaged about 15 minority students. House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) has promised to take steps to increase the number of minorities.

## POLITICAL WARS

Kansas Sen. Bob Dole earmarked 48,000 of the first 85,000 copies of his video biography for voters in Iowa, scene of the first caucuses and a state where Texas Sen. Phil Gramm is showing considerable drawing power. . . . Conservative commentator Pat Buchanan won a straw poll of delegates and party activists run by the California College Republicans at a state GOP convention.

## ELSEWHERE

Hillary Rodham Clinton will start a five-day visit next Thursday to Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Nicaragua to assess efforts to eliminate poverty and improve social services. . . . The Congressional Accountability Project, an ethical watchdog group affiliated with Ralph Nader, asked the House ethics committee to investigate Rep. Barbara-Rose Collins (D-Ill.) for spending and other irregularities. . . . The Postal Service said it improved its rate of on-time overnight first-class mail delivery to 87 percent last year (but it was 84 percent in Atlanta). . . . Ex-Sen. Bob Packwood (R-Ore.) looking for a book contract to tell his side of the sex harassment story, warned friends that the names the Senate Ethics Committee blacked out when it released his diaries would be laid bare in the retelling. . . . When Rob Reiner's film "The American President" - about a president who falls in love with a lobbyist - is released in November, Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.) will review it for the magazine *George*, and former White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers and Republican operative Ed Rollins will write separate reviews for *Premiere*. . . . Last year, Rep. Michael Flanagan (R-Ill.) spent \$ 7,102 for the Republican nomination and the right to take on the Democratic incumbent, Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, but he estimates his 1996 re-election bid will cost more than \$ 1 million.

## IT'S A FACT

California Gov. Pete Wilson's 32-day presidential campaign may have been brief, but Democratic Colorado Sen. Gary Hart's effort in 1987, torpedoed by the Donna Rice scandal, lasted only 25 days. Hart did, however, make a re-entry in December 1987 that lasted three months.

## DULY NOTED

"We had a conversation where I told him he had to run, that even if he didn't succeed, it would be defeat in a noble cause. And he just looked at me and said, 'But I like to win.' " - Joseph Persico, co-author with Colin Powell on "My American Journey," describing a conversation with the presidential question mark.

## COMING UP

TODAY: Supreme Court expected to hear Seminole tribe gambling case.

## Graphic

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Photo: Mug shot of Tipper Gore REFERENCE NOTE: 'Today's Hot Topic' and 'Coming Up' did not appear in the Journal version.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION LAW (90%); LEGISLATION (90%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (79%); DRIVING & TRAFFIC LAWS (78%); TRANSPORTATION LAW (78%); TAXES & TAXATION (78%); TAX REFORM (75%); VEHICLE HELMET REGULATION (73%); SPEED LIMITS (73%); INTERVIEWS (70%); TRUST ARRANGEMENTS (70%); CHILDREN (66%); CHILD & TEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE (64%)

**Company:** NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORP (AMTRAK) (55%); NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORP (AMTRAK) (55%); NATIONAL TAXPAYERS UNION (84%); NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER CORP (AMTRAK) (55%); NATIONAL TAXPAYERS UNION (84%)

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**Person:** AL GORE (79%)

**Geographic:** NIGERIA (94%)

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