

Bush hopes to ease voter anxiety with budget

Proposal addresses increasing energy, medical costs

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON

President Bush, trying to regain momentum after a tough political year, is sending Congress a budget that seeks to address

the public's anxieties about global competition, energy prices and health care.

Missing from the spending blueprint Bush was submitting today is his signature issue from last year, an overhaul of Social Security that would have introduced private accounts for younger workers.

That proposal generated intense opposition and never came for a vote in the House or Senate. So this year, the president is trying to address more immediate concerns: high gasoline prices, the rising number of people without health insurance, job losses from global competition from such emerging powers as China and India.

Bush's budget proposes spending \$2.7 trillion in the budget year that begins Oct. 1; big increases are planned for defense and homeland security.

The plan seeks savings across a wide swath of the rest of government and includes eliminating or deeply cutting more than 140 government programs. It also proposes saving \$36 billion in Medicare over the next five years.

The budget plan lays out a path to achieving two of the president's chief domestic goals: making permanent his first-term tax cuts, which are set to expire after 2010, and cutting the deficit in half

by 2009, the year Bush will leave office.

The budget's arrival on Capitol Hill will set off months of intense debate, made even more contentious by congressional elections in November in which Democrats want to wrest congressional control from the Republicans.

The budget proposal's release comes only weeks before the national debt will hit the current limit of \$8.18 trillion, requiring Congress to vote for an increase to keep the government operating.

The administration has said the deficit for this year will top \$400 billion, compared with last year's \$319 billion.

Bush is promoting his "American Competitiveness Initiative," which would extend an expired business tax break for research and development, double the government's commitment to basic scientific research and train thousands of new science and math teachers.

For health care, Bush wants to expand current health-care savings accounts that provide tax advantages for the uninsured to buy health coverage.

His energy initiative seeks, by 2025, to replace three-fourths of the oil the United States now imports from the Middle East, partly by boosting ethanol production.

BRIEF NATION

WASHINGTON

Specter seeks answers about spying program

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has not adequately justified why the Bush administration failed to seek court approval for domestic surveillance, said the senator in charge of a hearing today on the program.

Sen. Arlen Specter said Sunday he believes that President Bush violated a 1978 law specifically calling for a secret court to consider and approve such monitoring. The Pennsylvania Republican branded Gonzales' explanations to date as "strained and unrealistic."

Specter said he would have the Senate Judiciary Committee consider subpoenaing the administration to obtain internal documents that lay out the legal basis for the program if the attorney general does not go beyond his prior statements and prepared testimony that the spying is legal, necessary and narrowly defined to fight terrorists.

BRIEFS

WORLD

UNITED NATIONS

Security council divided about Iran dilemma

The campaign to stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon has now moved to the U.N. Security Council, but countries there have vastly different ideas of what the council should do.

The five permanent council members are split, with the United States, Britain and France hoping to pressure Iran into backing down with the ultimate threat of sanctions.

However, China and Russia do not want to incite Tehran and would prefer that the council play a limited role, with the International Atomic Energy Agency keeping the lead in handling Iran.

The Iranian government on Sunday ended all voluntary cooperation with the IAEA, saying it would start uranium enrichment and reject surprise inspections of its facilities. Uranium enriched to a low degree can be used for nuclear reactors, while highly enriched uranium is suitable for warheads.

SAFAGA, Egypt

Ferry passengers' families say rescue was botched

Family members of passengers on a ferry that sank in the Red Sea protested on Sunday as they waited in vain for news of their loved ones, accusing Egypt's government of mishandling the rescue after the ship went down with more than 1,400 people on board.

Only a handful more passengers were pulled from the sea, dashing hopes for some 800 people missing and feared dead.

Egyptian officials said the captain was missing, and some survivors reported he had jumped into one of the first lifeboats out rather than stay with the crippled ferry. A lawmaker said ships operated by the same company had been involved in past tragedies, including one that sank last year.

A total of 195 bodies have been recovered.

THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM



A protester waves a green Islamic flag in front of a burning building, which houses the Danish Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. The building

was set on fire Sunday during a protest against publication of caricatures of Islam's revered prophet Muhammad in European newspapers.

Fiery demonstration

Protesters set fire to Danish Embassy; uproar escalates

By JOSEPH PANOSSIAN

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT, Lebanon

Muslim rage over caricatures of the prophet Muhammad grew increasingly violent Sunday as thousands of rampaging protesters, undaunted by tear gas and water cannons, torched the Danish mission and ransacked a Christian neighborhood. At least one person reportedly died and about 200 were detained, officials said.

Muslim clerics denounced the violence, with some wading into the mobs trying to stop them. Copenhagen ordered Danes to leave the country or stay indoors in the second day of attacks on its diplomatic outposts in the Middle East.

In Beirut, a day after violent protests in neighboring Syria, the thousands-strong crowd broke through a cordon of troops and police that had encircled the embassy. Security forces fired tear gas and loosed their weapons into the air to stop the onslaught.

The protesters, armed with stones and sticks, seized fire engines, overturned police vehicles and garbage containers for use as barricades, damaged cars and threw stones at a Maronite Catholic church in the wealthy Ashrafieh area, a Christian neighborhood where the Danish Embassy is located.

Flames and smoke billowed from the 10-story building, which also houses the Austrian Embassy and the residence of Slovakia's consul.

Protesters waved green and black Islamic flags from the broken windows of the building and tossed papers and filing cabinets outside.

Witnesses said one protester, apparently overcome by smoke, jumped from a window of the embassy and was rushed unconscious to hospital. Security officials said he died.

Thirty people were injured, half of them members of security forces, officials said, making it the most violent in a string of demonstrations across the Muslim world. All the injuries were from beatings and stones.

The Danish Foreign Ministry urged Danes to leave Lebanon quickly. The violence Saturday in Damascus prompted a similar warning.

"The government has no intention to insult Muslims," Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller said on public radio in Copenhagen. "We are trying to explain to everyone that enough is enough."

The Syrian state-run daily newspaper Al-Thawra said Denmark was to blame because its government had not apologized for the September publication of the caricatures in the Jyllands-Posten.

The drawings, including one depicting the prophet wearing a turban shaped as a bomb with a burning fuse, have since been republished in several European and New Zealand newspapers as a statement on behalf of a free press.

Islamic law is interpreted to forbid any depictions of the Prophet Muhammad for fear they could lead to idolatry.

"It is unjustifiable under any kind of personal freedoms to allow a person or a group to insult the beliefs of millions of Muslims," the Al-Thawra newspaper said.

'Major Moves' among bills still alive at session halftime

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

Property tax relief. Local telephone deregulation. New checks on eminent domain. More restrictions on convicted child molesters. Moving statewide ISTEP testing to the spring.

Bills on those and many other issues have advanced during the first half of the legislative session. But they have all been overshadowed by Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels' "Major Moves" highway plan and the authority it would give him to lease the Indiana Toll

BILLS IN LEGISLATURE

Some other bills that have cleared one chamber at the legislative session's midpoint would:

Give homeowners some modest property tax breaks this year. Same bill would eliminate property taxes after 2008.

Free phone companies from state regulations and let them set their own rates.

Create a legislative committee to review past BMW branch closings and scrutinize future ones.

Road to help fund several highway and other transportation projects.

House Republicans passed the plan without a single vote by Democrats, who say the proposed 75-year lease of the highway to a foreign venture in exchange for \$3.85

billion is a bad financial deal and a leap into uncharted territory that needs more study than is possible in a session to end by March 14.

Republicans control the Senate 33-17, and Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton says the pro-

posal's prospects in his chamber are good.

But Daniels said he is not taking passage of his top priority and the projects and tens of thousands of jobs he says it will create for granted.

"I've learned that nothing is easy ... and so I'm ready to ... answer every question and visit every legislator and continue to make the case publicly," Daniels said.

Democratic House Minority Leader Patrick Bauer, meanwhile, is holding out hope that the Senate will put the brakes on the plan.



Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin pays tribute to Coretta Scott King on Sunday at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

ATLANTA

Hundreds mourned the loss of Coretta Scott King at the Sunday services of Ebenezer Baptist Church, where her late husband preached in the 1960s and the civil rights matriarch remained a member until her death.

"Praise God for Coretta Scott King; let the heavens rejoice for the witness of our sister," the Rev. Raphael Warnock said after a rousing rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" stirred the congregation.

Later in the church's Heritage Sanctuary, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference/WOMEN also honored the widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. for her quiet and courageous strength as a leader, wife and mother.

Atlanta's Mayor Shirley Franklin thanked King and others who worked "so that someone who was African-American and female could lead this great city."

Mrs. King's body will lie in honor today in Ebenezer's Heritage Sanctuary in the historically black Atlanta neighborhood where her late husband was born.

Across the street in the church's Horizon Sanctuary, several civil rights leaders — including the Rev. Jesse Jackson, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, Ambassador Andrew Young and the Revs. Joseph Lowery and Al Sharpton — will attend a service remembering Mrs. King tonight.

"It's the least we can do for the many sacrifices she made," Warnock said. "It is fitting for us to honor her. We join with people all over the world in celebration of her life."

King died Monday at age 78. On Saturday, thousands of mourners poured into the Georgia Capitol rotunda to pay tribute to Mrs. King, the first woman and the first black person to lie in honor in what once was once a seat of segregation.

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