

LAME DUCK: ON EACH OF HIS KEY INITIATIVES, BUSH FACES MAJOR RESISTANCE WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY

Today, President Bush called on Congress to act without delay on his top four priorities – passing a budget that digs the deficit \$4 trillion deeper over the next 10 years, an energy plan that forces gas prices higher, a Social Security plan that cuts benefits for 70 percent of American workers, and a new trade agreement that fails to protect American jobs. On each of these initiatives, President Bush faces significant Republican opposition. Will today’s press conference be enough to get Congressional Republicans back in the fold, or is President Bush really a lame duck?

Republican Opposition to Bush’s Fiscally Irresponsible Budgets

Five Senate Republicans Supported the Doomed Paygo Efforts Over Bush and Conservative Republican Objections. Five fiscally-responsible Republicans—including Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), George Voinovich (R-OH), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Olympia J. Snowe of Maine (R-ME)—voted in favor of paygo rules to instill fiscal responsibility in federal spending. The measure was killed by the Senate Republican leadership on March 16. [[Denver Post](#), 3/20/05; [Los Angeles Times](#), 3/16/05]

Key House Conservatives Supported Paygo Despite Republican Leadership’s Opposition. Despite the best efforts of a group of Republican conservatives, Speaker Dennis Hastert and Majority Leader Tom DeLay killed eight proposed Paygo changes in the House rules in January that would have made it more difficult to run up the deficit. The conservative Republican Study Committee demanded stronger tools to enforce the budget resolution’s ceiling on spending in the 14 annual appropriations bills. Study Committee Chairman Mike Pence (R-IN) said, “We want a budget, not a mirage. I will not vote for the budget if we cannot enforce the budget.” Nearly 100—mostly Republican—of the House’s 435 members are members of the committee. [[Denver Post](#), 3/20/05; [Los Angeles Times](#), 3/16/05]

Republican Opposition to the Energy Bill

22 House Republicans Voted Against Bush’s Energy Bill. Twenty-two House Republicans—one in 10 House Republicans—voted against the Energy bill touted by Bush. Reps. Chris Shays (R-CT), Jim Leach (IA), Jim Gerlach (R-PA), Mike Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and other key Republicans voted in opposition to the energy bill. [H.R. 6 Final Passage Roll Call # 132, 4/20/05]

Republican Opposition to Social Security Privatization

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA): “Strongly Opposed” to Benefit Cuts. According to the [Associated Press](#), “Sen. Arlen Specter, a prominent Republican moderate, has expressed his opposition to cuts in promised Social Security benefits for future retirees. “I strongly oppose this approach,” Specter says in a letter on his official Web site.” [[AP](#), 1/7/05]

Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-RI): Massive Borrowing to Pay for Privatization is “Ill-Timed.” “Republican Sen. Lincoln Chafee said that Bush’s plan for private accounts in Social Security and the trillions in borrowing that would accompany the program was “ill-timed.” “I regret that we’re looking at this in the context of huge deficits,” Chafee said. [[AP](#), 12/7/04]

Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME): Is Against \$2 Trillion in Borrowing. “Snowe expressed reluctance to tinker with the basics of a system that has provided a stable monthly income and kept seniors out of poverty for 70 years. ‘I don’t think we want to erode the principles of that system,’ she said. ‘I’m certainly not going to support diverting \$2 trillion from Social Security into creating personal savings accounts,’ she added.” [[USA Today](#), 1/24/05]

House Budget Chairman Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA): Social Security Does Not Face a “Crisis.” “Bush has called Social Security’s finances a ‘crisis.’ But Thomas, appearing on NBC, said ‘I think ‘problem’ is really what we’re dealing with.’” [[USA Today](#), 1/24/04]

Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO): Social Security Reform Not Necessary. “I cannot support any plan to allow workers to place any portion of their Social Security taxes in risky investments, especially those that depend upon the stock market to appreciate in value. ... It remains my opinion that Social Security reform is not necessary at all if Congress would seriously address Medicare reform, balance the budget, erase the trade deficit, and make pension reform a real priority.” [[Washington Post](#), 2/12/05]

Rep. Virgil Goode (R-VA): Senior Citizens Should Not Be “Jerked Around.” “I can’t see establishing private accounts using Social Security funds... I want the benefits to be assured for our senior citizens so they’re not jerked around.” [[News and Record](#), 1/24/05; www.talkingpointsmemo.com]

Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-MO): “I Haven’t Seen Anything I Can Support Yet.” “U.S. Rep. Denny Rehberg, Montana’s sole House member and a Republican, says he’s a long way from feeling comfortable about ‘privatizing’ or allowing ‘personal accounts’ with Social Security funds, as suggested by the president. ‘I haven’t seen anything I can support yet,’ he says.” [[Great Falls Tribune](#), 11/17/04]

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY): “I Don’t Want to Gamble With Social Security.” “I’ve never been a gambler ... I don’t want to gamble with Social Security trust fund moneys. And so I am very, very skeptical of the so-called plans to privatize. And I think a disservice is being done to a great many Americans by sort of sounding the alarm that everything’s going to hell in a hand basket and we’re going to be broke by 2018. That simply is not so.” [WAMC/NPR affiliate, http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/wamc/news.newsmain?action=article&ARTICLE_ID=730252, 1/21/05]

Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC): Self Described “Bush Man” Is “Skeptical” of Bush Plan. Jones is among a number House Republicans “skeptical” about Bush’s Social Security plans. Visiting his congressional district, he told Powells Point Republicans that he sees Social Security as a problem, not a crisis, and said that he “does not favor changes that would add” \$2 or \$3 trillion to the deficit, but he “did not say he is against private accounts.” Jones is “worried about the pace” of federal spending: “I’m a Bush man, a Bush supporter, but we’ve got to be more prudent with the taxpayers’ money.” [[Raleigh News & Observer](#), 3/14/05]

GOP House Members Katherine Harris (R-FL), Candice Miller (R-MI) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV): All Three Members Have “Reservations.” “Republican House members such as Katherine Harris of Florida, Candice Miller of Michigan and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia have expressed reservations about Bush’s proposal to partially privatize Social Security by establishing personal investment accounts. ‘I’m not sure I’ve heard a solution I’ve agreed with,’ said Harris.” [[Bloomberg](#), 1/21/05]

Even Traditionally Conservative Business Allies Are Abandoning Bush’s Social Security Proposals. The Business Roundtable, the chief executives of 150 leading corporations with 10 million employees and \$4 trillion in yearly revenues, sent a letter to Bush in December 2004 that emphasized the importance to the economy of reducing the deficit and urged Bush to balance the budget. “We are very concerned that unless action is begun now, future growth in spending—especially in the three significant entitlement programs of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid—will overwhelm the federal budget and the economy.” The Roundtable includes financial giants Fannie Mae, Pfizer and State Farm. [[Washington Times](#), 12/15/04]

Republican Opposition to CAFTA

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA): “I Will Vote Against” CAFTA. “I am very concerned about the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). While I generally support free trade agreements and fully recognize the importance of exports to the agriculture industry, as Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, it is important that all producers share in the benefits of trade liberalization... free trade agreements should remain faithful to current U.S. policy and not restrict options available to Congress in future farm bills... I would like to support the CAFTA, but as it currently stands I will vote against the agreement when it comes to the Floor.” [Chambliss Statement, 3/22/05]

Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC): “We Need to Get Serious About What Is Happening to the Manufacturing Jobs in America” “I rise tonight, joining with many of my friends on the Democratic side, because I am opposed to CAFTA; and I would like to take just a few minutes to explain why I am opposed to CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement... Mr. Speaker, we need to get serious about what is happening to the manufacturing jobs in America, and I am very disappointed that this administration does not seem to get it.” [Congressional Record, 5/23/05]