



**CREATIVE
FACES**

Deshaunda Means uses her artistic touch to paint Selena Skeete's face during the inaugural Arts in the Park program at North Las Vegas' Eldorado Park.
Photo by Ramon Savoy

House works on minimum wage hike

WASHINGTON (AP)— House Democrats are in the midst of a push to force their minimum wage bill to the floor as a bipartisan effort on the same issue is moving forward.

"We have the votes to pass a higher minimum wage.

The only question is ... when will the legislation come up? When will the

Republican leadership stop trying to avoid the issue?" said Rep. David Bonior of Michigan, the House Democratic whip.

The measure backed by mostly congressional Democrats and the White House would increase the minimum wage, now \$5.15 an hour, by 50 cents an hour in each of the next two years.

Bonior filed papers that allow rank-and-file lawmakers to petition for a vote on the floor.

A bipartisan measure taking shape calls for increases totaling \$1.30 over four years.

But it also is expected to include a variety of tax breaks and other provisions designed to mollify Republicans who

customarily oppose minimum wage increases.

The tax breaks include a provision making health care costs deductible for the self-employed, an increase in the deductibility of meals for certain businesses; a credit to partially offset the cost of wages paid to certain low-wage workers; and a series of pension improvements.

Democrats decry GOP social spending cuts

WASHINGTON (AP)— A \$316 billion social spending bill that Republicans pushed through a House subcommittee last week would cut many of President Clinton's education, health and labor priorities, setting up a sure clash between Congress and the White House.

Though the measure equals or exceeds Clinton's requests for educating handicapped students, treating AIDS patients and the Job Corps, Democrats denounced it for cuts it would level elsewhere, including the president's plans for hiring teachers, job training for teen-agers, and Head Start.

Education Secretary Richard Riley said he would urge Clinton to veto the legislation.

The bill's reductions raised questions about

whether it would ever be approved by Congress, let alone reach his desk.

The likeliest scenario was that it would join a parade of other spending bills that, with or without vetoes, would reach final form only in negotiations between lawmakers and White House officials.

Republicans defended the measure, saying they paid for it while honoring their pledge to not use Social Security surpluses in the coming fiscal year.

"We are committed, all of us, to stop bleeding Social Security reserves," said Rep. John Porter, R-Ill., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee subcommittee that approved the bill. "That takes some discipline."

Porter did not mention the bookkeeping devices Republicans used to let them

claim they would leave Social Security alone.

This included delaying billions in spending until 2001, declaring \$1.4 billion in a decades-old home-heating aid program for the poor to be an "emergency," and reclaiming \$3 billion in unspent welfare funds from the states — a move that governors lambasted.

"This bill is a fantasy," said Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee.

"If it were to be considered real, it would do real damage to the country's future," he said.

The measure — the biggest of the 13 spending

bills for the coming fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 — was approved by Porter's subcommittee on a party-line 8-6 vote.

The full committee considered it this week.

Most of the measure covers automatically paid benefits such as Medicaid. Of the remainder — money for every other federal education, health and labor program — the GOP would provide \$89.4 billion.

That is \$2.2 billion less than Clinton requested, and \$300 million less than is being spent this year.

The bill would provide \$17 billion for biomedical (See Cuts, Page 5)

California's GOP trying to appeal to women, minorities

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP)— California Republicans always talk about reaching out to women and minorities at their biannual convention, but this year they're getting serious about it.

Last year's devastating elections saw every Republican but two swept out of statewide office as many minorities and women voted Democrat.

That added a sense of urgency to the task, and the GOP took concrete action on several fronts at its gathering here over the weekend.

They held one seminar after another on how to reach out to specific minority groups, including Hispanics, Asian Americans and Blacks. The party chairman, John McGraw, convened a private meeting in his hotel with Hispanic community leaders.

Party activists formed a special political action committee that will help finance black candidates.

Others unveiled a new effort to showcase women Republicans to those outside the party fold.

And the rank-and-file passed a resolution Sunday that calls on the party to take specific actions to address through legislation issues of concern in inner cities.

The resolution calls on the party to make "urban reinvestment and inner-city development a top priority in the year 2000 and beyond" and to educate party members on urban issues.

"I'm tired of brothers and sisters who've known me all my life questioning my blackness because I'm a Republican," said Shannon Reeves, head of Oakland's National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

"The Republican Party has got to begin to articulate some issues in our community," said Reeves, who ran unsuccessfully for Oakland mayor last year, during a workshop on how the GOP can win the black vote.

Mike Madrid, who ran a session on courting Hispanic and other "nontraditional" GOP voters, said focus groups in California and Texas showed many minorities have an aversion to his party.

That illustrated the need for strategies that "softened the electorate" by highlighting values shared by candidates and minorities, he said.

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