Senate yea, House nay on D.C. voting rights

A resolution to ratify the constitutional amendment which would give the District of Columbia full voting rights was defeated in the House of Delegates Thursday morning, Feb. 22.

The resolution received 60-94 vote, falling short of the required constitutional majority by only one vote. The additional favorable vote would have meant passage of the controversial resolution.

Later Thursday, in the Senate, a similar resolution was approved 26-20 and will now be passed to the House for approval.

Legislative sources report that Delegate Wendell Phillips was in favor of the resolution and could have been the one vote that was needed.

At AFRO presstime, Rev. Phillips could not be reached for comment.

Several delegates who were present decided not to vote and "took a walk" when the measure came up for a vote. However, Paul Weisengoff, one of those delegates, told the AFRO he would be voting on Tuesday. Sources report that his vote may be against the resolution.

However, Charles Blumenthal, the resolution's sponsor, immediately asked that a vote on reconsidering the D.C. amendment be scheduled for next Tuesday.

Delegate Larry Young, who supports the bill stated that although some of the amendment's supporters were absent, waiting until next Tuesday might give opponents time to change the minds of measure's proponents.

If the vote fails on Tuesday, the issue would be dead for the rest of this session.

Because passage in the Senate now seems certain, the decision on whether the controversial measure will be approved this year will apparently be made in the House, which is now considering an identical resolution.

Efforts to amend the resolution in the Senate were put off until last Friday, and a final vote may not take place sometime this next week.

What had shaped up to be a protracted debate on a measure that has been on the Senate floor for nearly two weeks dissolved into a lackluster half-hour exchange between Denis and Sen. Robert L. Douglass, D-Baltimore.

Their comments and the vote in favor of ratification followed a 90-minute battle over another bill that would have required a non-binding referendum by Maryland voters before the General Assembly could take final action.

Their effort failed, 31-16, when supporters claimed that a straw vote was only an attempt by opponents to either stall for more time or to abnogate their responsibility to make difficult decisions.

"If you make that decision, you ought to go back to (your constituents) and tell them you don't have the guts to vote on the tough ones because it makes you stand out," said Sen. Douglass.

Douglass said the 690,000 district residents deserved ratification of the amendment because they have been denied a right extended to every other American.

But Sen. John A. Cade, R-Anne Arundel, warned, "If you throw the lever, it's final. If you makea mistake, you can't go back."

Sen. John J. Bishop Jr., R-Baltimore County, who believes the District should seek statehood before securing congressional representation, added, "I don't understand how we can create an entity that is not constitutional and not covered by the Constitution and still have a Republican form of government."

After the straw vote issue was settled, most other Senators apparently decided further debate would be a waste of time as supporters had obviously cornered the necessary votes for passage.

The resolution was strongly supported by labor lobbyists who believe it likely that the District's two new senators and at least one new representative would be black, Democratic, liberal and pro-labor.

Said Denis, "'Big Labor' is watching us. They want two U.S. Senators even if they have to break the Constitution in half."

Six of the seven Republicans in the Senate voted against the bill with only Sen. Aris T. Allen, R-Anne Arundel, who is black, joining the Senate's other five blacks in the majority.

In addition to Denis, opposition came from four Prince George's county Senators, two from Anne Arundel County, two from the Eastern Shore and most of the remainder from the more rural central and western counties.

Courses on sex, dying offered

"Sex Roles in America" and "Death in American Society" are two of the sociology courses that are being offered by Anne Arundel Community College as part of the institution's new Demand Scheduling program.

These two courses, along with "Introduction to Sociology," are being offered at the College's Glen Burnie Center at a time thatis to be convenient to the students.

This Demand Scheduling project is an attempt to AACC to meet the needs of part-time and full-time college students by providing flexible scheduling for both traditional and special topic credit courses in the social sciences.

Call 647-7100, ext. 355 for more information.

Hughes, Kamka accept Watts panel recommendations

Task force nixes new city prison

ANNAPOLIS — Governor Harry Hughes and State Prisons Chief Gordon Kamka officially put an end Thursday to plans for an 800-inmate prison in Baltimore.

Hughes, Kamka and members of a special task force established by Hughes to study prison overcrowding unveiled a report that said the proposed prison would be too large and too costly, its planning was based on inaccurate data, and may not serve to reduce crime.

"As far as I'm concerned, it will not be built," Hughes said of the prison first proposed in 1976 for the Continental Can Co. site in Baltimore and two years later, switched to Fort Armistead.

But the report also said the state's two major maximum security prisons, the penitentiary in Baltimore and the House of Corrections in Jessup, "are clearly inadequate."

The report said the two prisons, which house the state's most dangerous criminals, must either be torn down or modernized.

Listed as possibilities were development of alternatives to the criminal court process, greater use of probation and parole programs, expanded programs for more compensation or restitution to crime, establishment of community adult rehabilitation centers, and implementation of sentencing guidelines for judges.

Kamka said alternatives to traditional incarceration of criminals could greatly reduce the state's cost of handling criminals.

It costs about $8,000 annually to house a single prison inmate, while an inmate on supervised parole in the community would cost about $210.

Hughes said he was "satisfied with the report. It's an indication — like a lot of people already thought — that something is wrong with our system."

The governor referred specifically to the report's conclusion that Maryland imprisons twice as many criminals as any of its neighboring states and four times as many as Massachusetts, a state of similar size and population.

"Just building prisons doesn't solve our crime problems," he said.

Judge Robert B. Watts of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore, who headed the task force, said, "We're trying to show that 'get tough' as a policy is a myth."

Bethlehem Steel still looking for carbon monoxide source

Officials at Bethlehem Steel Corp. Sparrows Point yard are trying to find the source of carbon monoxide that sent three bricklayers to the hospital over the weekend.

The three workers were taken to the University of Maryland hospital late Saturday for inhalation of carbon monoxide fumes. They were treated and released Sunday.

Company officials and union safety representatives said that monitoring instruments indicated the gas was gone, but the source of the carbon monoxide had not been determined.

Joseph Kotelchuck, president of the United Steelworkers of America Local 2610, said the three men had gone into what is called the soaking pit to make repairs to brickwork.

They left the pit when they started feeling faint and walked to the plant infirmary, where an examination indicated they had a 29 percent level of carbon monoxide in their blood.

The workers - Travis Robinson, 17, Vincent Berna, 49, and Carmel Eiardo, 38, were treated in University Hospital's decompression chamber.

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