

FRIDAY BRIEF

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A Shake in the Balanced Senate

Senator James Jeffords (R-Vt.) announced that he will leave the Republican party to become an independent. This switch will have a negative impact on the Republicans in the 50-50 Senate. Consequently, the Senate will become a 50 -49 Democratic majority and one independent vote, which hinder President Bush's legislative agenda and the confirmation of his executive and judicial nominations. Jeffords, however, will leave the GOP after the signing of the tax bill.

When the Senate was evenly divided, Sens. Trent Lott (R-Miss.), the Republican leader, and Thomas Daschle(D-S.D), Democrats leader, shared power in the Senate with Sen. Lott controlling the Senate floor action because of VP Dick Cheney's vote which breaks a tie vote. With Sen. Jeffords move, Sen. Daschle will become majority leader, with the ability to bring bills to the floor. Democrats will take over as chairmen of most committees.

The Tax-Cut Bill Passes the Senate

On Wednesday afternoon, by a vote of 62-38 with 12 Democrats joining all 50 Republicans, the Senate finally approved the tax-cut bill of \$1.35 trillion over 11 years proposed by President Bush. The Senate's Democrats proposed many amendments, on Monday and Tuesday, to the bill, which delayed the final voting process.

After the Senate's approval, the bill will be sent to a House-Senate Conference Committee which will reconcile the House and the Senate versions of the bill and bring a final version for vote and signature by the President.

Bonior Will Run for Governor of Michigan

After 12 terms in Congress, Rep. David E. Bonior (D-MI) announced his intentions to seek the Democratic nomination for governor of Michigan in the next elections to be held in 2002. Rep. Bonior, the minority whip, currently holds the next most senior position in the Democratic party in the House of Representatives. Rep. Bonior also stated that he intends to finish out his current term in Congress. By law, the current governor John Engler (R) cannot seek fourth term.

Along with Rep. Bob Barr (R-GA), Rep. Bonior is a co-sponsor of the Secret Evidence Repeal Act currently in the House Judiciary Committee.

The House Extends a Vital Provision of the U.S. Immigration Law

The House of Representatives voted 336-45 to extend the deadline for section 245(i) of the U.S. immigration law for undocumented immigrants seeking visas by four months. The Bush administration has already stated that it would support an extension of more than four months. The bill will now make its way to the Senate where it is expected to pass without much problem. Under the law, undocumented immigrants who were in the country before December 2000 were eligible to apply for visas by April 30, 2001 without returning to their home country. It is estimated that over 600,000 immigrants applied for visas under this program. Still, it is estimated that there are more than 500,000 immigrants who were eligible but did not apply.