

REGARDING THE HOUSE  
ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM

(Mr. THOMAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, among my duties in my capacity as chairman of the Committee on House Administration is to oversee the officers of the House and the Office of the Clerk. In the 105th Congress, we changed our voting devices. Many folks have known that for years we have used electronic, as they say, voting cards, with the board visible behind us. The old system was an analog one in which the cards were physically punched and a reader read the holes in the cards. In the 105th Congress, we installed, going from an analog, as the world is going, to a digital system. The new cards have a chip embedded in them. Since the 105th Congress, we have cast almost 1 million votes, and there have been no concerns or problems or anomalies, as we say, about the votes.

It is my institutional responsibility to inform the Members that on Wednesday, June 21st, an anomaly occurred. A Member who was not here, who had possession of their voting card, was recorded as voting. It is not analogous to any of the situations in the past about the confusion of "I didn't think I voted" or as we found, unfortunately, the potential of someone else using the card. It is a true anomaly. Members might imagine the concerns that the staff and we had about this. It was the fact that a 64-bit string of digital numerals was somehow at a particular terminal read wrong, and ironically the wrong reading coincided with another set that was in fact a card set.

You may have heard of the analogy of an eagle carrying a fish flying over the Sahara, they drop it and it hits you on the head. A billion to one, but it happened. Since Wednesday, we have tried to re-create the event in terms of dirtying up the cards, playing with the boxes, repeating a process. We have now gone through 500,000 cycles. We will continue as a fallback to cycle this to see if we can re-create the anomaly.

It is one of those situations in which you really have to say it is a statistically improbable anomaly, but it occurred. As this majority has done from the very beginning, instead of not talking about it, instead of just letting it slide, we feel it incumbent upon us to come to the floor and announce there was a statistically improbable anomaly. We cannot explain it at this time; we will do everything in our power to explain it if it is explainable. Obviously, everyone is on the alert to make sure that notwithstanding that statistically improbable anomaly, we will make sure that every vote that is recorded is recorded accurately.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BONIOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) for the purposes of inquiring about the schedule for the remainder of the week and next week.

Mr. ARMEY. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the House has completed its legislative business for the week.

The House will next meet on Monday, June 26 at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and at 2 p.m. for legislative business. We will consider a number of measures under suspension of the rules, a list of which will be distributed to Members' offices later today. On Monday, no recorded votes are expected before 6 p.m. As agreed last night, we will return to CJS appropriations at 4 p.m. on Monday. Members should expect to work late on Monday until we finish that appropriations bill.

On Tuesday, June 27, and the balance of the week, the House will consider the following measures:

H.R. 4717, the Full and Fair Political Activity Disclosure Act;

Energy and Water Appropriations Act;

H.R. 4680, the Medicare Rx 2000 Act;

H.R. 4461, Agriculture Appropriations Act, 2001;

H.R. 1304, the Quality Health-Care Coalition Act.

We also expect that the conference report to Military Construction Appropriations Act will be ready for consideration in the House next week.

Mr. Speaker, we have just completed another very productive week in the House. I want to thank my colleagues for all their hard work. Next week will also be a very busy week on the floor, so I would advise my colleagues to be prepared to work late nights throughout the week.

I wish my colleagues a restful weekend back home in their districts.

□ 1400

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, if I might inquire of the distinguished majority leader what day he anticipates bringing the prescription drug bill to the floor of the House.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for that inquiry. It is a very important piece of legislation, and we would expect that to be on the floor Wednesday morning.

Mr. BONIOR. Wednesday morning. Let me just also ask the gentleman if it will, indeed, be the case that the minority, fully within their rights in this institution, will have the ability to offer a substitute with waivers to this bill as outlined in the letter that the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) sent the Speaker?

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that inquiry. The Committee on Rules has already announced they will meet at 5:00 on Monday, and I am sure that they will, if not already be in receipt of that letter, will have it made available to them as will

the requests that will be formally presented before them at that time.

Mr. BONIOR. Having heard the answer, let me be just very blunt and honest with the gentleman this afternoon, and tell the gentleman in a heartfelt way, but in a very strong way, how seriously we regard our opportunity to offer a substitute on this bill.

We consider this issue, as many on your side, as being one of the most important issues that we will have debated in this Congress; and if rumors are accurate and true that we will not get a substitute, there will be a serious, immediate angry reaction on our side of the aisle.

This is an issue that deserves a full debate by this House with adequate time. I know we are in an appropriation period, and it is difficult to finish these bills within a time frame, but this issue I think, above many that we discuss here in this Congress, deserves the full attention of the membership, the full options at least of providing us with the opportunity to offer our proposal in a substitute form.

I say again with respect, but also with concern, that we need to protect the rights of the minority here; that we will look very, very negatively and very seriously and react in a very negative and angry way if, in fact, we were shut out from having an opportunity to discuss this issue next week.

Mr. ARMEY. The gentleman's point is well made, and I want to thank the gentleman for that.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague, and I wish him a good weekend as well.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, if I might ask the majority leader, I noticed that H.R. 4717, the political disclosure measure has been added to the schedule since your original tentative schedule was posted at noon. I am so very pleased to see the leader honoring the pledge that he made to the House in June that that matter will be scheduled.

Can the gentleman give us an approximate time when he thinks that will be reached on Tuesday?

Mr. ARMEY. Again, if the gentleman from Michigan will yield.

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding and to the gentleman from Texas, I would say that the only thing I can say with any certainty right now is that it will be on the floor. As soon as we have made a scheduling decision, we will inform the minority.

Mr. DOGGETT. If the gentleman will continue to yield, we can count, as the gentleman said in his words, with certainty that it will be up on the floor on Tuesday. Has the Committee on Rules made any announcement about when it will convene on that bill?