

The Legislative History

of

U.S. Senator Jim Exon

1979-1984

Abortion

Senator Exon has always been an opponent of abortions. As a U.S. Senator in 1980, Exon offered and gained Senate approval of an amendment to limit federal funding for abortions except in cases when the mother's life is in danger or in promptly reported cases of rape and incest.

Agriculture

Coming from a rural state, Exon has always been a champion for the American farmer. On the Senate Budget Committee, Exon fought for agriculture and rural America. In 1984, Exon worked to increase the lending authority of the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to help farmers survive the agriculture depression of the early 1980s.

Exon also fought for the international rights of the American farmer. By mandating credit programs for agriculture exports and forcing the President to resume grain negotiations with the then-Soviet Union, Exon made it easier for American farmers to compete in important international markets. He also pushed for Senate passage of a measure he cosponsored to limit selective embargoes

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imposed by the President on agriculture products. He won Senate approval for his proposal to reform grain elevator bankruptcy laws to help farmers more easily recover their grain when an elevator goes out of business.

Budget

Exon gained Senate approval in 1980 for an amendment establishing a pilot program for a new "tradeoff" concept in General Revenue Sharing for the states. The amendment would allow each state government to decide how to spend its money, eliminate another level of federal bureaucracy, and reduce pressures for more spending. The amendment set up a pilot project to test the concept involving five volunteering states. The states would give up categorical federal grants in exchange for an equal amount of federal funds to be used at the state's discretion.

Exon also began his crusade for balancing the budget by introducing his first attempt at a balanced budget constitutional amendment. While the amendment failed, Exon continued to use his influence to work toward a balanced budget by other means.

Children

Senator Exon has long been a strong supporter of the protection

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of our nation's children. In 1983 the Senate approved Exon legislation to protect children from sexual exploitation and pornography. The legislation would make distribution of pornography through the mail a federal crime and would increase the fines for producing and distributing pornography.

In 1984, Exon also successfully secured Senate passage of legislation preventing parents of illegitimate children who file for bankruptcy from escaping their obligation to make child support payments. The law would make natural parentage the determining factor in protecting child support payments, thus ensuring all parents who file for bankruptcy will remain obligated to make child support payments.

Education

Fighting to protect the nation's education system, Exon worked to preserve the Impact Aid program which protects the financial stability of public school districts which have large numbers of federally-connected students.

Energy

In Exon's first term, the nation was in the midst of an oil crisis. Exon co-sponsored a resolution calling for a special

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energy investigator and also an energy summit conference, both an effort to investigate the cause of the energy crisis. Many of the measures Exon supported would ensure that the President would have a plan in the case of future crises and also help protect the nation's farmers in such cases.

In an effort to conserve oil and help the Midwest farmer, Exon introduced and the Senate approved important legislation to promote the increased production of gasohol. Always a strong supporter of synthetic fuels, Senator Exon helped increase federal assistance for the production of alcohol-based fuel.

Environment

Exon successfully included a provision in the 1984 Interior Appropriations Bill to provide \$84,000 to keep the Crawford Fish Hatchery open until the state assumes its operation.

Foreign Relations

In his first term in the Senate, Exon gained House-Senate approval of a resolution he introduced that kept the costs of implementing the 1979 Panama Canal Treaty to a minimum in order to save \$400 million over the original House-passed bill; co-

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sponsored an amendment, which passed the Senate, that would make a 3% across-the-board cut in the Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill to save taxpayers \$252 million; and co-sponsored another Senate-approved amendment to cut the United States contribution to the United Nations by more than \$484 million. Exon said this fiscal responsibility is the realization that the U.S. needs to "cut down on excessive government expenditures."

In 1983, Exon co-sponsored an amendment calling for the return of Cuban criminals in U.S. prisons to Cuba. He also blocked U.S. participation in the multilateral foreign aid group, InterAmerican Investment Corp. The group would have cost an additional \$13 million to fund. The Senate also approved legislation co-sponsored by Exon that created the U.S. Academy of Peace. The Academy would be an independent, nonprofit corporation providing information on international affairs and peace studies.

Exon co-sponsored an amendment attached to International Monetary Fund Bill calling for reports on how lending practices would affect oil prices, and urging the IMF to use its \$40 million in gold assets before seeking an increase in funding from American taxpayers. The amendment was approved in the Senate.

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Government Waste

In a battle to control government waste the Senate adopted an Exon co-sponsored amendment in 1979 that curbed the excesses of Federal Agencies. The amendment would eliminate the presumption that federal regulations and agency determinations are valid and places the burden of proof on the bureaucracy instead of the citizens to prove otherwise.

Housing

The Senate approved an Exon amendment that would reduce waste in HUD's Section 8 Housing Program by assuring that only the most needy benefit from it. The original amendment, which was co-sponsored by Sen. William Armstrong (R-Colo.), proposed that rent subsidies for the program be limited to families whose income is no more than 50% of the median income for the area. Those numbers were changed to 65% in the modified version which passed the Senate.

Immigration

Exon is a long-time supporter of preventing illegal immigrants from receiving federal benefits. In his first term as Senator, Exon introduced two pieces of legislation that would limit funds that illegal immigrants could receive. In 1981, Senator Exon introduced legislation that would prohibit illegal aliens from receiving federal housing assistance. The legislation, which was

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incorporated into the bill to authorize funds for fiscal year 1982, would provide HUD with the authority to inquire into the citizenship status of persons applying for federal housing assistance, and denies such assistance to illegal immigrants.

Line Item Veto

As a member of the Senate Budget Committee and former governor of Nebraska, Senator Exon has always been a strong supporter of the line item veto. He co-sponsored legislation to grant the President line item veto powers. Even though the legislation failed, Exon supports such legislation because it is effective in controlling government spending and eliminating waste.

National Defense

Another of the Committees that Senator Exon served on in his first term was the important Armed Forces Committee. One of the first things Exon fought for on this committee were benefit improvements for our Armed Forces personnel. In 1980, as a member of the Manpower Subcommittee, Senator Exon successfully pushed for increased expenditures for housing, special pay for Navy personnel while at sea, increased moving allowances and increased flight pay. In 1981, the Senate approved the Jepsen-Exon Military Pay Bill. Jepsen-Exon allocated pay raises to all military personnel, continuation of the recruiting momentum, and targeted increases to career officers and enlisted personnel to

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help solve manpower problems. The bill targeted more pay increases to those ranks which suffer from severe retention problems, such as noncommissioned officers and senior enlisted personnel. Jepsen-Exon was the first pay bill to target increases toward career military personnel since the beginning of the all-volunteer force. Exon received special recognition from President Reagan for his efforts.

In 1983, Exon also scored a victory for members of the Armed Forces when he worked to gain Armed Services Committee approval to extend a 4% cost-of-living increase in military pay as part of the 1984 Defense Authorization Bill.

Senator Exon worked hard throughout his first term to help Offutt Air Force Base and make sure the Strategic Air Command continued as the focal point of the U.S. nuclear defense posture.

Exon was also a co-sponsor with Senator John Warner (R-VA) of a Senate-approved anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) amendment in 1984. The ASAT amendment laid out guidelines for the President in testing anti-satellite weapons -- a key deterrent during the Cold War.

POW-MIA

In 1984, Senator Exon proposed an amendment to renew the effort

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to find out the fate of missing servicemen in Southeast Asia. At the time, 2,489 servicemen were not accounted for -- 25 of them Nebraskans. The Exon POW/MIA amendment called on the President to secure a full accounting of Americans captured or still missing and shows the Congress' commitment to remain involved in the POW/MIA issue. Working in a conference committee, Exon secured final approval for the amendment as part of the 1985 Defense Authorization Bill and was passed by a House-Senate Conference.

Rural Nebraska

Exon worked to cut federal red tape for the Mitchell, Nebraska School District by successfully attaching an amendment to the 1984 Senate Interior Appropriations Bill. The amendment allowed the federal government to sell 20 acres of federal land to the district at fair market value. At the time, the Interior Department did not have legal authority to sell the land. The legislation allowed the school district to legally dispose of the property once it closed a school that occupied the site.

Taxes

Exon worked to win Senate approval of legislation he co-sponsored to put a cap on the luxury auto tax deduction. Exon argued that by limiting the tax breaks for businesses purchasing luxury cars,

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the federal government would save an estimated \$2.75 billion over six years.

In an effort to save taxpayers money and cut down on congressional perks, Exon proposed an amendment in 1982 that would repeal the \$75 per day tax deduction for members of Congress. The Senate-approved amendment restored the original, lower living expense deduction of \$3,000 per year for members of Congress. Exon said the amendment would repeal the "pork barrel tax deduction Congress gave itself."

Telecommunications

In Washington, Senator Exon fought hard to secure the rights of telecommunication subscribers, especially those located in rural areas. In support of rural telecommunications, Exon supported a number of amendments in the Senate. The first was in 1981, when the Commerce Committee approved an Exon amendment to assure rural telephone users they will be able to receive basic telephone service at a reasonable rate. The amendment directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that rates charged by small carriers do not exceed 110% of the national average.

In 1983, The Senate Commerce Committee approved an Exon amendment to protect rural telephone subscribers from a \$24 per year access charge. The Exon proposal would put at least a two-year

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moratorium on any access charge by the FCC, and let state public service commissions set telephone charges. In the same year, Senator Exon successfully won Commerce Committee approval to nullify an FCC-mandated increase of \$2 per month in residential and small business telephone service nationwide.

Transportation

As a member of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Senator Exon began his career as a champion of transportation issues. He helped secure passage in the Senate of an Exon -Zorinsky amendment to give cities, such as Lincoln and Omaha, more flexibility to determine the type of method used to furnish transportation to the disabled.

Another measure proposed by Exon gained committee approval to help rural Nebraska airports. This measure was a provision in the Civil Aeronautics Board Sunset legislation of 1984, which gives rural airports the opportunity to investigate any changes in airline routes or airfare changes.

Amtrak

Amtrak has always been high on the list of issues which Senator Exon adamantly defends. This has always been the case, from his first days as a United States Senator. In his first term, Senator Exon was instrumental in continuing Amtrak Passenger

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service through Nebraska. The Senate-approved Exon amendment to the Amtrak Reorganization Act of 1979 kept the San Francisco Zephyr line running through Nebraska.

Odometer Fraud

In 1984, the Senate passed Senator Exon's bill to protect consumers from odometer fraud. Exon's bill would help ensure that the mileage of used cars is the actual mileage and that the odometer has not been turned back. It was estimated the legislation would save consumers between \$5 to \$10 million annually in Nebraska alone.

Veterans

Having always been a champion of veterans rights, Senator Exon began his first term in the Senate fighting to keep those services that veterans need. In his first year in 1979, Exon won congressional approval for a measure to avoid disrupting medical services for veterans with service-connected disabilities. The amendment provided for \$2.9 million over five years to continue essential services to our nation's veterans.

Exon also procured \$26 million in the 1984 Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill for construction of an outpatient addition to the VA Hospital in Omaha. The Senate Veterans Subcommittee approved legislation

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aimed at eliminating an inequity in disability payments made to hospitalized disabled veterans.

Water Projects

Exon worked to support many of Nebraska's irrigation projects. In 1984, he helped secure funding for the North Loup, Prairie Bend, Frenchmen-Cambridge, and Farwell irrigation projects, as well as the Papio Creek flood control projects. The Senate also approved Exon-proposed legislation that allows improvements in the repayment of water service contracts by the Hitchcock and Red Willow Irrigation District to the federal government.

In another water project important for Nebraska, the Senate approved the Groundwater Recharge bill initiated in that body by Senator Exon. The bill authorized \$20 million for studies in Nebraska and 16 other Western states. The legislation integrates groundwater recharge into existing federal water development programs and establishes a federal-state cooperative program for the testing and application of various artificial groundwater recharge technologies. Exon and Zorinsky also won Senate approval of \$250,000 to begin Phase One the High Plains Groundwater Recharge Project, the Nebraska portion of the Groundwater Recharge bill.