

House Approves FCC, NTIA Bills

(S1048, S828; WR 10/17/87 p. 2534; 50 lines)

The House Oct. 13 passed by voice vote separate measures reauthorizing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Both had been sent to the floor by the Energy and Commerce Committee and were debated under suspension of the rules - a procedure that does not permit any amendments.

The FCC bill, to which the Reagan administration had no objections, would authorize \$107.2 million for agency activities in fiscal 1988 and a slightly higher amount in the following fiscal year. The FCC received a \$97 million appropriation in fiscal 1987. The measure is similar to one (S1048) approved earlier this year by the Senate Commerce Committee. (1987 Weekly Report p. 1622)

At the request of Energy and Commerce Republicans, Democratic committee leaders deleted draft report language criticizing the FCC's recent abolition of the "fairness doctrine," which requires broadcasters to air matters of public importance and all sides of such issues. The bill was abruptly pulled from the floor calendar the week of Oct. 5 after Republicans protested the language. (1987 Weekly Report p. 2492)

Supporters of the doctrine, including Energy and Commerce Chairman John D. Dingell, D-Mich., have vowed to attach a plan restoring the doctrine to "must-pass" legislation, such as an appropriations bill, that the White House may feel compelled to sign. (1987 Weekly Report p. 1796)

The NTIA bill would authorize \$14.7 million in fiscal 1988 and \$15 million the following year. The current appropriation is \$13.2 million.

The administration opposed the bill, objecting to a provision that would require NTIA to establish goals for recruiting minorities and women, and to report to Congress on its success in achieving such goals. A bill (S828) approved in July by the Senate Commerce Committee does not contain this provision. NTIA is charged with developing federal telecommunications policies, among other tasks.