

# THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA

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## Sanctions Wrap-Up

After House passage of H.R. 1580, the Dellums sanctions bill on August 11 by a vote of 244-132, all sanctions lobbying efforts shifted towards the Senate. S. 2756, sanctions legislation nearly identical to the House-passed Dellums bill, was introduced into the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA). The legislation passed in Committee by a party-line vote of 10-9. This was the first time disinvestment legislation had ever passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Although a party-line vote, it is significant to note that Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) Chairman of the Committee, who is a lukewarm sanctions supporters, helped to maintain party discipline within the Committee, in spite of strong internal resistance to the legislation by Senator Terry Sanford (D-NC). The fact that presidential candidate Dukakis supported the measure, was also significant in forcing Democratic support for the measure in Committee.

The cost of obtaining disciplined Democratic voting on the sanctions measure was not without casualties. The crucial oil provision, which prohibited any oil company selling to South Africa from obtaining new federal oil leases, was deleted. This was one of the most significant sanctions measures ever passed by the House. Senate sanctions leaders agreed to delete the oil provision in order to gain the support of certain southern Democratic Senators, like Senator Bennett Johnston (D-LA), whose support would be critical in a full Senate vote.

The key roadblock to full Senate consideration of the sanctions bill was Senator Robert Byrd (D-WVA). As Majority Leader, Senator Byrd, who opposed the bill, had the authority to decide which bills would come to the floor for a vote. Aside from his own strong opposition to the bill, several other Senate Democrats were also not in support of the disinvestment provision within the measure. For the Democrats, bi-partisan opposition to sanctions legislation while Governor Dukakis supported it, could have had an embarrassing impact on the already troubled presidential campaign.

Furthermore, there was no clear indication that there was even a simple majority in support of the measure. Because of a certain Reagan veto and the threat of a Republican filibuster of a sanctions bill, at least 60 votes were needed for Senate passage of the measure. With 60 votes, a cloture petition to end a probable filibuster of the measure would be guaranteed. That amount of Senate support would also have assured an override of the President's veto. However, throughout the process of lobbying the Senate, less than 40 Senators actually committed to support the measure.

As it became clear that Senator Byrd would not schedule the bill and 60 votes could not be secured, Senate supporters moved to attach S. 2756 as an amendment to another bill already scheduled for consideration by the Senate. By this time, legislation which addressed the drug situation in the U.S. (the drug bill) was the last politically popular measure scheduled for immediate consideration.

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But, without majority support for the sanctions bill, there was no pressure on Senator Byrd to support it as an amendment. This was the last breath of life for the sanctions bill.

### Strategy Analysis

After the passage of the sanctions bill in the House, there were just under 2 months until Congress adjourned to get the measure through the Senate. The enthusiastic support that existed in the House and forced passage of the strongest sanctions legislation ever, was not present in the Senate. Because of a reluctance by Senate staff to seriously lobby internally around comprehensive sanctions until after House action, important mobilization time was lost. Moreover, the kind of outcry from a broad-based coalition of Americans in support of sanctions, which succeeded in passing limited sanctions in 1986, was missing this time.

### Conclusion

The progressive agenda for southern African legislation will be difficult, but not impossible to achieve. Although there is a Democratic majority in the Senate, there is no solid Democratic majority for sanctions. Moreover, the South Africans are preparing for their struggle against sanctions by stroking the U.S. media with stories of "reforms" to the apartheid system. The Pretoria regime is allowing the international media to cover the wave of decisions regarding the release of some political prisoners while still prohibiting most press coverage of the pillars of the repressive apartheid system including the thousands of other political prisoners who continue to languish in South African prisons. The South African public relations blitz is trying to depict President P.W. Botha as a beleaguered moderate trying to make significant changes, trapped between "right-wing extremists" and "left-wing radicals" who want to overthrow the government. The South Africans have been receiving additional media attention on the ongoing negotiations for the Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola and Namibian independence. With most legislators unwilling to take leadership on the sanctions issue and indications that conservative legislation to repeal the existing selective sanctions laws may be introduced, the need for effective political mobilization for sanctions is immediate.

One of the most important ways to overcome the anti-sanctions sentiment in the U.S. Congress and media, and national apathy on the South African issue, is massive grassroots education and mobilization in support of comprehensive sanctions. Anti-apartheid organizers must continue to remind legislators and the public that the continuation of apartheid laws such as those allowing forced removals, mandating racially segregated living areas, continuing the detention of thousands of anti-apartheid activists, church leaders, student organizers and others, without trial and prohibiting Blacks from participation in the national government are still in existence inside South Africa. Those concerned about justice in southern Africa must reject window dressing "reforms." Apartheid, is alive and thriving in southern Africa destroying lives and devastating property daily. This evil cannot be reformed, it must be removed.