CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — HOUSE

January 31, 1985

Member of the Congress of the United States. I am proud to be a politician. Gillis Long had been a member of the Virginia delegation to Congress since 1871, and had served in both the House and Senate. He was first elected in 1870, and was re-elected in 1874. He died in 1885, aged 67.

Copies of the bill under consideration by the committee are customarily sent to the executive offices of the House and Senate, and any member of the committee may be consulted at any time. The committee proceedings are open to the public, and the committee reports are made publicly available from the committee offices. Quite frequently, a majority of the committee may wish to offer additional, supplemental or minority views to accompany the majority committee report. The committee report, accompanying the bill, is viewed by the courts and the administration of the bill, setting forth the nature of the proposals for amendment.

The transcript of the testimony taken is available for inspection in the individual committee offices. Quite frequently, a member of the committee may have a copy of the bill or the committee report.

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ATKINS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. MICHE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICHE. Mr. Speaker, those of us in Congress are so close to the legislative process that we sometimes forget that the way in which a bill becomes law is not clearly understood by many of our fellow Americans. I receive inquiries from time to time about this question. I have prepared a brief summary of the process in the hope that it may be useful to anyone who is interested in the machinery of government.

Ours is a Government of the people, by the people, for the people. It is not a pure democracy. It is a representative democracy.

The embodiment of the wishes and wants, the ideas and ideals of the American people as expressed through the representatives of the Congresses is the process of legislation. Any Member of the House or Senate may introduce a bill embodying a proposed law or revision of existing laws, at any time when the House or Senate is in session. When introduced, the bill will be entered in the Journal of the House and the title and sponsors of the bill are printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of that day.

Each bill introduced is assigned a number by the Clerk of the House and referred to the committee having jurisdiction over the subject matter by the presiding officer, that is, the Speaker of the House or the President of the Senate. Copies of the bill are printed by the Government Printing Office and made publicly available from the congressional document rooms.

Acting through its chairman, the committee decides whether a bill should be taken up by the full committee or referred to a subcommittee for its initial consideration.

REACHING CONSENSUS

While there are differences between the House and Senate procedures, in general, proponent and opponents present their views to the membership, as well as the general public, with the issues involved and with a view to arriving at the consensus. Amendments are frequently offered to the measure more in conciliation with the majority. In the case of consideration of the bill there are various parliamentary motions, in both the House and Senate, which may be offered to determine the Bills and legislation without delay. The measure may be postponed to some future date or referred back to the committee of origin.

With the conclusion of general debate and the reading of the bill for amendments, the measure becomes the bill or Senate, as the case may be, will pass the bill to the President with the request that he sign it. The measure becomes law with the President's signature of approval. With the passage of a bill by either body it is messaged to the other with the request that it be concurred in. If no action has been taken on the like measure by the body receiving the message the bill is usually referred to the appropriate committee of that body for consideration. Hearings are then held and the bill reported for floor action. On relatively minor or noncontroversial matters the Senate or the House accepts the measure as transmitted by the other body.

If there are substantial differences between the House and Senate versions of a bill, the measure is sent to a conference committee which is appointed by the Speaker and the President of the Senate from the ranking committee members of each body having original jurisdiction over the bill. The object of the conference committee is to adjust the differences between the two bodies, and to report back to each chamber. The conference committee must be in writing and signed by those agreeing thereto and must have the signature of the majority of the members of each House.

CONFERENCE REPORT

The report of the conference committee cannot be amended and must be accepted or rejected by each House as it stands. If the House accepts the report of the conference committee report a further conference is usually requested.

When the bill has been agreed to in identical form by both Houses, the bill becomes law. If the President is to sign the bill he must do so within 10 days of its presentation to him. If he does not return the bill, with his objections, to the Congress within 10 days of its presentation to him, the bill becomes law without his signature.

If the President returns the bill, with his objections, to the originating body of the Congress, his veto may be overridden by two-thirds of both the House and Senate. If the President vetoes the bill, it must be reconsidered by the Congress. The report of the conference committee is usually requested.

FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT: MAKING A GOOD INDUSTRY EVEN BETTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. ANNUNZIO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ANNUNZIO. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 237 is a bill to amend the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act to provide...