

ate approved as an amendment to the annual military authorization bill, Washington would have the authority to step in provisions that President Bush favors. Existing law applies protection to victims only of crimes on the Senate floor, "whatever we think of their lifestyles." Kennedy, in a speech, said, "If America is to live up to its violent crimes should be prosecuted vigorously and that all people should be protected from violent crimes."

Stopgap funding bill clears Congress

Lawmakers also pass legislation to extend budget deficit financing

By Andrew Taylor
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress on Thursday cleared for President Bush must-pass bills to prevent a government shutdown and extend the Treasury Department's ability to finance the budget deficit.

The stopgap spending bill, which the Senate approved 94-1, was needed because Congress has not sent Bush a single spending bill. Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., cast the only no vote.

The debt limit increase measure, passed by a 53-42 vote,

comes as the government continues to leak red ink.

The bills will now be shipped to the White House for Bush to sign by Monday's deadline. That's when the new fiscal year starts and, coincidentally, when the government will hit its borrowing ceiling of \$8.965 trillion. The new debt limit would be \$9.815 trillion.

Congress has never failed to raise the debt ceiling and prevent default on U.S. obligations, but the vote nonetheless illustrates the fiscal failings of Bush and Congress since the U.S. recorded four straight years of surpluses ending in 2001, Bush's first year.

The lingering deficit is well below the \$413 billion set in 2004 and is now largely a product of increasing war costs. It is expected to reach \$158 billion for

the fiscal year about to end, about \$15 billion less than appropriated for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The stopgap spending bill would keep all 15 Cabinet departments running at current levels through mid-November, extend financing for a popular health insurance program covering children from low-income families, and dip deeply into a \$70 billion fund for Pentagon operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Passage of the stopgap bill most likely permits Democrats to put off until early next year a vote on Bush's \$189 billion request for Pentagon operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's what Democratic leaders are signaling they will do.

Such stopgap funding bills are routine and have been

needed every year since 1994. But for the first time in five years, none of the 12 annual appropriations bills have become law by the Oct. 1 deadline. Republican-led Congresses typically had made sure at least the defense and homeland security measures had passed by then.

Bush is plainly eager for a veto showdown with Democrats over their efforts to add \$23 billion for domestic programs to Bush's \$933 billion request for the approximately one-third of the federal budget funded by the yearly spending bills.

Beyond Bush's objections to the additional money — which he says would compound into \$205 billion over five years — Bush is looking to reclaim for Republicans the reputation with the public as the party of fiscal discipline.



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