1994 Legislative Activities

Lobby Disclosure. Levin led the effort to reform and strengthen lobbying disclosure laws. Levin's bill would have made public special interest lobbying in Washington. The measure, which passed a conference committee but was stymied on the Senate floor by the GOP, contained the toughest disclosure requirements in history.

The conference agreement would have required anyone who is paid to lobby Congress or the Executive Branch to register and disclose the fees they are paid or the amount they spend to lobby. They would also have been required to disclose the issues on which they lobby, the person who is paying them to lobby and which committees and agencies they are lobbying. The statute would have been administered by a new agency called the Office of Lobbying Registration and Public Disclosure which would also have had the power to fine violators of the law.

Gift Ban. The Senate passed a Levin bill to ban gifts and travel paid for by lobbyists, although the measure was later killed in a GOP effort to sidetrack numerous reform bills at the close of the 103rd Congress. Under the current gift rules, Members of Congress can accept gifts, meals, tickets to entertainment and sporting events and free trips from lobbyists. Levin voluntarily uses his gift ban bill as a model for a code of conduct for his own office.

Federal Acquisition Reform. Levin continued his leadership in federal acquisition reform, authoring provisions to ease the ability of all federal agencies to buy products from the commercial marketplace instead of specially ordering virtually identical products at inflated prices. Levin has been fighting for this reform -- beginning with the Pentagon -- for a decade, on the grounds that off-the-shelf products are less expensive and easier to purchase than government-unique items. Estimates of potential savings run into the billions of dollars.

Fighting Procurement Waste. Levin exposed abuse of the federal procurement process by publishing the results of a year-long investigation into the use of "off-loads" -- a contracting practice where one federal agency contracts for goods or services through another agency in order to avoid competition. Levin called contract off-loading a government-wide, systematic end-run around standard procurement rules.

Taxpayers lose tens of millions of dollars in unnecessary and excess costs and losses could reach into the hundreds of millions of dollars. The Pentagon alone has off-loaded more than $3 billion in contracts through other agencies every year.

Levin won enactment of new rules to close this loophole. He also persuaded the Tennessee Valley Authority to return over $5 million to the U.S. Treasury which the TVA acquired as a result of off-loads. In doing so, the TVA is the first agency to voluntarily pay these overcharges back to the U.S. Treasury.

U.S./Japan Trade. Levin was a leading voice in Congress to push Clinton Administration trade officials toward a tough trade negotiation stance with Japan in the absence of concrete moves on their part to open their markets to U.S. made autos and auto parts. Along with 88 other lawmakers, Levin wrote the President to share his view that specific and meaningful objectives must be achieved in negotiations with Japanese trade officials.

He also obtained renewal of the Auto Parts Advisory Commission, an advisory group which makes policy recommendations about American auto parts trade with Japan to the executive branch during ongoing trade talks. From 1981 to 1993, the auto parts trade deficit skyrocketed from $1 billion to $11 billion. The chronic trade deficit translates into hundreds of thousands of lost American jobs.

Independent Counsel Reauthorization. The President signed into law legislation authored by Levin to reestablish the authority for a judicial panel to appoint independent counsels to investigate persons close to the President when there are allegations of criminal misconduct.

The legislation renewed the independent counsel law for five years, until 1999, and strengthened the law by imposing new controls on independent counsels, including restrictions on staff, travel and office expenses. The law also made clear that an independent counsel may be used to investigate Members of Congress when the Attorney General concludes it is in the public interest.

Strengthened Protections for Whistleblowers. Levin was the lead sponsor of the bill to reauthorize the Office of Special Counsel, a measure which strengthened protections for federal whistleblowers.

This law extended whistleblower protection to Veterans Affairs personnel who were not previously covered as well as to employees of federal corporations. It also expanded whistleblower protections against a broader range of retaliatory actions, including a decision to order psychiatric testing.

Midnight Bonus Ban. Levin authored a measure signed into law to ban last minute 'bonuses' to political appointees in the executive branch who are on the verge of leaving office. In the final days of the Bush Administration, certain appointees were approved for last minute, on-the-way-out-the-door "midnight bonuses". The ban prohibits such bonuses in the months immediately prior to and following a Presidential election.

Inter-Generational Mentoring Programs. Through Levin's efforts the Clinton Administration's major educational initiative, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, encouraged states across the country to take advantage of inter-generational mentoring in their strategies to revitalize the education process.

This builds upon a 1989 law authored by Levin which created a separate program within the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program for one-on-one tutorial program in reading, writing and arithmetic. Such

projects have had great success in Michigan and nationwide in increasing the learning abilities of educationally disadvantaged students. The inter-generational mentoring programs have also provided rewarding experiences to our most underutilized human resource -- our senior citizens.

Automotive Research & Development. Levin helped secure $25 million for research, development, procurement and commercialization of hybrid and electric vehicles for the Department of Defense. A significant portion of this work would be managed by the Army's Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC). Thanks to Levin's efforts, TARDEC and its National Automotive Center are the lead agencies from the Department of Defense for the President's Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles initiative.

Focus:HOPE. Levin helped obtain $15 million for the Center for Advanced Technologies at Detroit's Focus:HOPE for the purchase of advanced flexible manufacturing equipment that can produce both commercial and defense products interchangeably.

The Center offers a unique training program involving both academic and hands-on learning, with a Masters degree granted by one of six universities associated with the Center. The Center educates men and women to build, operate, maintain and improve the most technologically advanced manufacturing equipment while they are meeting the demands of actual production contracts.

Peacekeeping. Levin led a winning floor fight to ensure that the U.S. would honor its treaty obligations and pay assessments it owes for United Nations peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. Levin urged U.S. leadership to improve the U.N.'s capability to conduct peace operations more effectively. He warned that opponents of multinational peace operations would leave the U.S. with two bad choices: acting alone or preventing action.

B-2 Bomber. Levin was a leader of a fight against additional production of B-2 bombers, offering an unsuccessful amendment to the Defense Authorization measure for fiscal year 1995 to delete millions added at the behest of the bomber's builders to keep it alive. Spending $150 million next year to keep the B-2 production line 'warm' is not a priority investment in additional security, according to Levin, who pointed out that this money was not requested by the Pentagon, President Clinton or President Bush when he was President. Moreover, he said, Congress has twice by law capped the B-2 production at 20 planes, in both 1992 and 1993, so there is absolutely no need to keep the production line ready to build more. Levin wanted to use the money to restore rescinded funds for speedy cleanup and reuse of 56 major closing bases in nearly 20 states and territories.

Bosnia. Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Coalition Defense Subcommittee, was a leading advocate in the Senate for NATO air strikes against the Bosnian Serb military. He broke with his party leaders to support a measure on the Senate floor calling for lifting

party leaders to support a measure on the Senate floor calling for lifting the Bosnian arms embargo, arguing that every nation under the charter of the U.N. has a basic right of self defense which Bosnia has been denied. Failing to act to lift the arms embargo is recipe for continued battle and bloodshed, he said.

Levin was also outspoken in favor of NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets in 1993, calling them long overdue. He criticized the UN for being passive and confused in the face of years of Serbian ethnic cleansing and conveyed his hopes that the air strikes would stop "this madness".

Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. Levin helped win for Detroit selection as one of six enterprise zones, a designation by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that will help steer $100 million to the city.

In addition, three areas of Michigan, with Levin's support, received the designation of enterprise community. Flint, Muskegon and Lake County will receive nearly $3 million in federal aid and tax incentives.

Job Corps Center. Levin helped win a Job Corps Center for Flint, Michigan, serving 300 students. The center, which should be completed in 1996, is expected to receive up to $20 million in federal funds.

Disaster Relief for Farmers. Levin was an original cosponsor of legislation to provide disaster relief for farmers adversely affected by severe weather conditions, including Michigan bean and orchard growers hard hit by the winter freeze and summer floods of 1994.

CAT bill to Restrict the Sale of Ephedrine. Levin authored a measure, signed into law by the President, to halt the spread of Methcathinone, a dangerous new drug known on the street as 'CAT'. This designer drug is a type of amphetamine that resembles crack cocaine and can be ingested by smoking, inhaling or injection. About 40 CAT-manufacturing labs have been 'busted', mostly in Michigan's UP and in Wisconsin.

The bill restricts the sale of a stimulant called 'ephedrine', the basic ingredient used to make the highly addictive CAT drug. Ephedrine, which is regularly advertised in an number of U.S. magazines, was readily available prior to the law, either over the counter or by mail order. **Compelled Better Data on Plant Layoffs.** In action on the congressional measure to fund the Department of Labor, Levin obtained the revival of the Mass Layoff Statistics Program. This program, which had been discontinued under the Bush Administration, is designed to help policy makers understand plant relocation trends and access the impact of trade agreements on our labor force.

This office is set to resume operations in April of 1995.

Ending Redlining Practices by Financial Institutions. Levin put the Senate on record against stereotyping consumer's credit worthiness based on where they live. A Levin amendment would have required a Federal Trade Commission study on whether and how the location of the residence of an applicant for unsecured credit is considered by

many companies and financial institutions in deciding whether an applicant should be granted credit. The study was never prepared because it was part of the Fair Credit Reporting Act amendments which was killed by the GOP.

Facilitating Voluntary Adoption Reunions. Levin has championed a proposal to establish a National Voluntary Reunion Registry to facilitate voluntary, mutual contact between adult adopted persons and birth parents who, on their own initiative, both seek such contact. Levin argued that the search for birth parents and adopted children who are looking for each other is often needlessly costly, cumbersome and futile.

Levin's amendment to the Disadvantaged Minority Health Improvement Act passed the Senate. It would have permitted the Department of Health and Human Services, at no net expense to the government, to facilitate such contact. The underlying legislation did not become law.