

After gaffe, Democrats planning to redo farm bill
(Associated Press, DC)

Democrats are picking up the pieces after an embarrassing technical gaffe that delayed a triumphant rejection of President Bush's veto of a massive farm bill.

Members from both parties hoped to bring the \$290 billion bill, which includes election-year subsidies for farmers and food stamps for the poor, back to their districts over Memorial Day. But that is looking less likely now that the legislation will have to be passed all over again due to a printing error.

The House voted overwhelmingly, 316-108, on Wednesday to override Bush's veto of the legislation earlier in the day.

The Senate then was expected to follow suit quickly, but action stalled after the discovery that a 34-page section of the bill had been omitted from the printed bill sent to the White House. That means Bush vetoed a different bill from the one Congress passed, raising questions that the eventual law would be unconstitutional.

In order to avoid a partisan dustup, House Democrats hoped to pass the entire bill, again, on Thursday under expedited rules usually reserved for noncontroversial legislation, and the Senate was expected to follow suit. The correct version would then be sent to Bush under a new bill number for another expected veto.

Lawmakers also will have to pass an extension of current farm law, which expires Friday.

Bush says the legislation is too expensive and would send too much government money to wealthy farmers. A bipartisan group of negotiators on the bill made small cuts to subsidies to appease the White House, but Bush said it wasn't enough.

The veto was the 10th of Bush's presidency, but Congress had overridden him only once before, on a water projects bill.

Congressional Republicans overwhelmingly abandoned Bush in voting to override the legislation Wednesday, overlooking its cost amid public concern about the weak economy and high gas and grocery prices. GOP lawmakers are anxious about their own prospects less than six months before Election Day.

About two-thirds of the bill would pay for nutrition programs such as food stamps, about \$40 billion is for farm subsidies and additional \$30 billion would go to farmers to idle their land and to other environmental programs.

The farm bill also would:

--Boost nutrition programs by more than \$10 billion over 10 years and expand a program to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to schoolchildren.

--Cut a per-gallon ethanol tax credit for refiners from 51 cents to 45 cents. The credit supports the blending of fuel with the corn-based additive. More money would go to cellulosic ethanol, made from plant matter.

--Require that meats and other fresh foods carry labels with their country of origin.