

World and Nation

Bush officials lead anti-abortion plea

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Abortion opponents led by the Bush administration urged the Supreme Court in a long-awaited courtroom showdown Wednesday to overturn its landmark 1973 ruling that women have a constitutional right to end their pregnancies.

Outside, police arrested 27 abortion-rights activists among a noisy crowd of people demonstrating on both sides of one of the nation's most divisive issues. Those arrested were charged with crossing a police line.

In sharp contrast, the hour-long argument session took place in a packed but hushed courtroom.

"The United States asks this court to reconsider and overrule its decision in Roe vs. Wade," said Harvard law professor Charles Fried, referring to the ruling that legalized abortion.

But Frank Susman, a St. Louis lawyer representing those who suc-

cessfully challenged an abortion-limiting Missouri law in lower courts, argued, "There can be no ordered liberty for women without control over their... childbearing."

Missouri Attorney General William Webster urged the court to restore the state's abortion regulations even if it does not reverse the broader 1973 decision, which was based on women's privacy rights.

Fried, a former Justice Department official called back to government duty for Wednesday's session, argued, "We are not asking the court to unravel the fabric of... privacy rights which this court has woven. We are asking the court to pull this one string."

Susman responded, "It has always been my personal experience that when I pull a thread my sleeve falls off." Only justices Thurgood Marshall, a strong supporter of abortion rights, and Harry Blackmun, author of the 1973 decision, remained silent.

The justices, who do not necessarily have to reconsider Roe vs. Wade in resolving the Missouri dispute, gave little indication as to how broad their decision will be. They are expected to announce their ruling by July.

At one point, Justice Antonin Scalia — a potential "swing vote" along with justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony M. Kennedy — asked whether the court must consider the nature of a fetus.

"Can you derive (a fundamental right to abortion) without making a determination as to whether the fetus is human life or not?" Scalia asked.

"It is very hard to say... it must be a fundamental right unless you make a determination that the organism that is destroyed is not a human life," Scalia suggested.

Susman said an assertion that "life begins at conception," as stated in the Missouri regulations, is not a verifiable fact. "It is a question verifiable only by reliance upon faith."

Fried said the Bush administration was not asking the court to end all protections for women whose lives might be endangered by childbirth.

"We are not here suggesting that the court allow bloodthirsty regulations," he said.

When asked by O'Connor whether he thinks there is "a fundamental right to decide whether to have a child or not," Fried said, "I would hesitate to formulate the right in such abstract terms."

Even if the court rules on the Missouri abortion regulations narrowly, the decision will be viewed as a barometer of the current justices' commitment to the 16-year-old ruling in Roe vs. Wade.

The three justices appointed by former President Reagan — O'Connor, Scalia and Kennedy — are conservatives generally considered skeptical about the legitimacy of the earlier decision.

'I Love Lucy' namesake dies following April 18 surgery

From Associated Press reports

LOS ANGELES — Lucille Ball, the daffy comedian whose harebrained schemes drove her television family crazy but delighted viewers for four decades, died Wednesday of a ruptured abdominal artery. She was 77.

The actress, star of the hugely popular "I Love Lucy" and related situation comedies seen in more than 80 countries, had undergone major heart surgery April 18.

She had been recovering steadily, getting out of bed and joking with the staff, but shortly before dawn Wednesday, she went into cardiac arrest due to internal bleeding and could not be revived, said Cedars-Sinai Medical Center spokesman Ronald Wise.

She suffered a complete heart failure at 5 a.m., and 47 minutes of resuscitation efforts proved fruitless, Wise said. "There was nothing to indicate this would happen. The heart itself apparently was not involved in Miss Ball's sudden death."

Japanese leader seeks successor

TOKYO — Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, shattered politically and shaken by the suicide of his longtime aide, worked Wednesday to find a successor untouched by the money scandal that ruined his career.

An aide to former Prime Minister Takeo Miki said senior politician Masayoshi Ito was "certain" to be chosen by Takeshita and other governing party leaders. Ito, 75, has a clean reputation and served briefly in 1980 as acting prime minister.

Takeshita met with Shintaro Abe, secretary general of the governing Liberal Democrats, and agreed to choose a new party leader and prime minister after Japan's April 29 to May 6 "Golden Week" holidays end.

The ordinarily unflappable prime minister appeared shaken following the suicide Wednesday of Ihei Aoki, 58, an aide since 1958 and the man who handled Takeshita's scandal-tainted political donations.

"I strongly regret (his action)," Takeshita told reporters. "We walked side by side for over 30 years."

News in Brief

Violence in Israel claims 3

JERUSALEM — Israeli soldiers reportedly shot and killed three Palestinians and wounded at least 63 during a general strike Wednesday in the occupied lands, and masked attackers killed an Arab accused of collaborating with Israel.

Also Wednesday, more than 80 Palestinian leaders in the occupied lands rejected a government proposal for elections leading to an interim peace plan. The leaders, many of them pro-PLO, said the elections were a ploy "calculated to appeal to the media, to end the (Palestinian) uprising and to win time."

They said only an international peace conference with PLO participation could solve the Middle East conflict. Their signed statement was the first formal response by local Palestinians to Shamir's proposal.

The violence occurred mostly in the Gaza Strip, a stronghold of the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas, which called the strike on the anniversary of the capture of Mecca in Saudi Arabia by the Prophet Mohammed in 630.

Afghans mark coup date

KABUL, Afghanistan — Soldiers accompanied by tanks, missiles and rockets paraded through Kabul on Wednesday to mark the 11th anniversary of the communist coup, but fears of guerrilla attacks kept celebrations to a minimum.

The parade was held a day early to avoid attacks. As it passed through central Eidgah Square, insurgents fired a rocket into the capital.

Later, as the parade was ending, Moslem guerrillas who had moved into an abandoned village about 15 miles from the capital fired on troops along the Salang Highway, which leads from the city to the Soviet border.

The two sides exchanged fire for nearly eight hours, with helicopter gunships attacking the village and soldiers firing artillery on the mud-and-stone compounds.

There were no reports of casualties.

House ends hopes for Democratic bill

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — The House, in the first big battle over the budget in Congress this year, embarrassed its Democratic leaders on Wednesday by crushing a major amendment and forcing them to pull a \$4.7 billion domestic spending bill off the floor.

Leaders wanted to pay for the domestic spending in the bill by

slashing defense and other programs. But, by a 252-172 margin, with minority Republicans joined by enough Democrats seeking to protect their favorite programs, the House rejected a Democratic amendment that would have made \$1.4 billion in cuts spread over most government programs.

The bill's backers then took the

entire spending measure off the House floor. House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, said he believed the House Appropriations Committee would "perform certain corrective surgery" on the bill before the House considered it again.

House Majority Leader Thomas Foley, D-Wash., who offered the spending-cut amendment, said the vote was a sign of the divisiveness of budget issues and not a signal that the Democratic leadership was weakened by the controversy surrounding Wright and his personal finances.

"I don't think it reflects on leadership problems," he said. "This is not a vote of confidence issue."

Rep. Robert Roe, D-N.J., was one of the 92 Democrats who voted against their leaders' plan. "From our point of view, we were battling the loss of about \$100 million from science and space."

Foley's proposal would have produced \$1.4 billion in savings by shaving .57 percent off most government programs. The provision would have produced cuts this year of \$1 billion in defense, \$353 million in domestic programs and \$43 million in foreign aid.

White House budget director Richard Darman had sent lawmakers a policy statement in which he said he would urge President Bush to veto the "fiscally irresponsible" measure.

And in a letter to House Minority Leader Bob Michel, R-Ill., Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said the defense cuts would force the Pentagon to stop paying re-enlistment bonuses, reduce training hours, eliminate five to 10 construction projects, lay off scientists and engineers and curtail weapons testing.

"This would have very serious consequences for the manning of our forces," he wrote, adding that he, too, would seek a veto.

But loyal Democrats countered that the spending cuts were slight and could be dealt with by federal agencies.

"All we're talking about are revisions of .57 percent so we can cover some of the priorities we in Congress think are needed," said Rep. Neal Smith, D-Iowa.

Looming over the battle was the veto threat from the Bush administration, which labeled the overall bill "fiscally irresponsible" and said the Democrats' proposed \$1 billion in defense cuts would be too harsh.

The legislation, deemed a "dire emergency" by its supporters, would provide money for the 1989 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.



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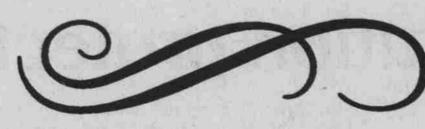
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