

Ashcroft Nod Narrowly Passes Committee

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans pushed John Ashcroft's attorney general nomination to the Senate floor Tuesday by a narrow 10-8 Judiciary Committee vote. All but one Democrat voted against him.

While the committee vote was close, a leading Democratic opponent, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, abandoned any idea of trying to stop the nomination with a filibuster. That means Senate approval for the strongly conservative former Missouri senator is all but assured.

As expected, all nine Republicans on the committee enthusiastically endorsed Ashcroft. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin was the only one of nine Democrats to support him.

Senate Republican leader Trent Lott, asserting Ashcroft has the support of all 50 GOP senators, said he would like to see the full Senate vote on confirmation by Thursday, completing President Bush's Cabinet. It was uncertain that would happen.

Feingold called his support "an olive branch" to the new GOP White House but "not a white flag."

He urged Bush to renominate for a U.S. judgeship Ronnie White, a black Missouri Supreme Court judge whose nomination to the bench was quashed by Ashcroft.

White, a witness against Ashcroft during hearings two weeks ago, accused the former senator of grossly distorting his record on the death penalty. Other Ashcroft critics argue he did that for political gain.

Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota announced his opposition to Ashcroft in a harsh denunciation of the former senator's views on women's and workers' rights, civil rights and separation of church and state.

"Because of his enormous authority and discretion, the attorney general, more than any other Cabinet member, has the power to protect or erode decades of progress on civil rights in America," Daschle said.

"John Ashcroft has shown a pattern of insensitivity throughout his career."

Meanwhile, Kennedy indicated he would not object to fixing a time for a final vote, saying he hoped to focus public attention not on a Senate process, but on Ashcroft's positions.

Kennedy said he had already decided

against a filibuster when Missouri Sen. Jean Carnahan spoke against it during a Democratic caucus meeting Tuesday. Daschle had said earlier he would not support a filibuster.

Carnahan, whose husband posthumously defeated Ashcroft's re-election to the Senate after dying in a plane crash during their Senate campaign, has not said how she will vote.

Former N.J. Gov. Christie Whitman and ex-Colorado Attorney General Gale Norton won Senate approval Tuesday to direct the nation's environmental and natural resources policies.

The Senate voted unanimously to confirm Whitman as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency after voting 75-24 minutes earlier to accept President Bush's choice of Norton to be secretary of the interior.

Federal Budget Surplus Projections Increase

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Congressional Budget Office has boosted its projection of the federal surplus to \$3.12 trillion over the next decade, giving new momentum to President Bush's calls for a big tax cut.

The huge new figure, which excludes additional surpluses from Social Security, adds to the political muscle that Alan Greenspan provided last week to Bush's push for a \$1.6 trillion, 10-year tax cut.

The influential Federal Reserve chairman said he believes surplus projections are now large enough to cut taxes, altering his previous preference for debt

reduction.

The latest CBO estimate, contained in budget office documents and described Tuesday by congressional aides on condition of anonymity, is nearly \$1 trillion higher than the \$2.17 trillion the nonpartisan budget office envisioned just last July.

The new projection covers fiscal years 2002 through 2011, while last summer's estimate was for 2001 through 2010.

The latest CBO figure also is \$670 billion larger than the \$2.45 trillion surplus that President Clinton projected shortly before leaving office earlier this month. His projection covered the years 2002 through 2011.

Despite recent signs of an economic slowdown, budget analysts expected CBO's surplus estimates to grow because the agency envisions a healthy long-term performance by the economy.

Even so, before word of the projections spread across Capitol Hill, jubilant White House aides said the new figures would reaffirm that taxes could be cut without fear of eroding budget resources needed for other priorities.

"We're seeing just an explosion in the size of the surplus," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters, adding later, "There's plenty of room for cutting taxes."

House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said in a written statement that

the new CBO numbers mean "Congress should provide tax relief beyond the level currently being discussed." He provided no figures.

And in comments prepared for delivery on Wednesday, when CBO officials formally present their projections to Congress, Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici, R-N.M., lauded the budget's continuing strong showing. After four decades of annual deficits, the government has now run overall budget surpluses every year since 1998.

Many Democrats prefer a smaller tax reduction of less than \$1 trillion and say Bush's far larger proposal would eat up too much of the expected surpluses.

WEB SITE

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Kitchen said she supported the Web site because freshmen often have questions and don't know where to find

answers.

Interested students can find Freshmen Central at <http://www.unc.edu/freshmencentral>.

The University Editor can be reached at udeck@unc.edu.

FAITH

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Phillips, a minister with UNC Baptist Campus Ministries, said he opposes the plan because he fears it would be difficult to divide funds among the nation's many religious groups.

"I've heard the stories (about Bush's plan) and have 'serious' reservations about the entire move," Phillips said.

Federal money is sometimes used to fund building projects on campus but funding religious-based organizations might prove difficult, he said.

"(The proposal) seems different and doesn't seem feasible," Phillips said. "As a Baptist, it doesn't appeal to me."

Phillips is not the only one opposed to the move. Rabbi John Friedman with the Judea Reform Congregation said Bush's plan has the potential to seriously weaken religion in America.

Friedman said it gives the government control over what religions get funded, which violates the First

Amendment. "I'm deeply concerned about (the proposal)," Friedman said. "It's unwise and signifies an unprecedented action by the government."

Deborah Ross, the local spokeswoman for the American Civil Liberties Union, said religion is not a good way to assess the quality of a program for the purposes of handing out money. "It's always a bad thing to assume that somebody does something better than somebody else based on religious preference."

Religious organizations are exempt from many civil rights laws — a practice that Ross said allows them to discriminate against certain individuals when they hire staff.

She said she thinks federal funds should not be given to any organization practicing discrimination in its hiring policies. "If the proposal as we understand it goes through, there's going to be an effort to prefer religious charities over nonreligious charities."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stndesk@unc.edu.

TUITION

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increases, said he would probably vote no again unless he was greatly impressed by the proposals.

"Unless (the institutions) present a better case than the institutions did last year, I would be opposed to (tuition increases)," he said.

But BOG member J. Addison Bell, who supported last year's tuition increases, said the issue of faculty salaries is one that will not go away.

"We're going to lose the good faculty we've got (if we don't do something)," Bell said.

UNC Association of Student Governments President Andrew Payne said many in ASG favor tuition hikes.

Payne opposes the increases but said he is skeptical of the outcome. "Unfortunately, because of what happened last year, I think they're going to go through," he said.

Last year, the board voted in favor of tuition increases for five UNC-system schools, including UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University.

Bell said if a forthcoming UNC-sys-

tem General Administration report shows past increases negatively affected accessibility, he will have a hard time voting for more.

Because of a looming budget deficit, the legislative committee recently withheld financial support from the Excellent Universities and Community Colleges Act, part of which was designed to raise the salaries of UNC-system faculty.

But Bell said state lawmakers knew of the impending deficit last session. He added that if the board passes the proposals, the large budget deficit should not affect tuition increases.

Payne said the ASG has no strategy to combat the proposals but that members will formulate one once they receive the proposal information.

If the proposals pass, they will then be reviewed by state legislature.

Payne said the BOG must put its foot down on tuition increases before it gets out of control.

"This isn't positive for the (UNC-system)," he said. "(The board) has opened Pandora's box, and they've got to try to close it."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stndesk@unc.edu.

Ga. Flag to Showcase Smaller Rebel Emblem

The Associated Press

On the new flag, it will be reduced to one of five historic flags displayed along the bottom edge, below the state seal.

On a standard 3-by-5-foot flag, the small flags are little bigger than a dollar bill.

"I'm mad as a hornet," said Bill Cawthon, a member of the Southern Heritage League. "Our flag will always remain our flag. We will never accept the new flag."

It wasn't immediately clear when the new banners would fly at state buildings. The design was unveiled just last week.

A fight over the Confederate flag that flew over the South Carolina statehouse led to an economic boycott by civil rights groups, something Barnes wanted to avoid.

The flag in South Carolina was moved to a spot on the Capitol grounds last summer.

In Mississippi, the only state besides Georgia with the Confederate emblem in its flag, voters will decide in April whether to remove the symbol.

SHORTAGE

From Page 3

teacher shortages. "We're fortunate that the area itself attracts families and individuals," Gunderson said.

Ward said the state stands to benefit from the flexibility of recalling retired teachers. "It's time to open (the policy) up to other categories. So far it appears to have been a very successful policy."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

TOWN COUNCIL

From Page 3

Carrboro and Orange County, not just for what we build but how we maintain it," said Town Council member Kevin Foy.

In the interim, Town Council member Flicka Bateman said she would like to investigate cooperation from the University as a means to alleviate overcrowding in local lap pools.

"UNC has two 50-meter pools," Bateman said, adding that she thought it would "not be too much to ask."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

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