

## Republicans delay balanced-budget vote

WASHINGTON — In an atmosphere of excruciating tension, Senate Republicans took an overnight delay Tuesday for a vote on the balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution. With Democratic Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota at the center of negotiations, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole sought the delay until Wednesday morning. He acknowledged the amendment could fail to win the necessary two-thirds majority needed to send it to the states.

"This is a sad spectacle," said the principle foe of the amendment, Democrat Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia. "This has every appearance of a sleazy tawdry effort to win a victory at the cost of amending the Constitution."

The centerpiece of the Republican revolution in Congress, the proposed amendment to the Constitution is designed to end the run-up in federal debt that exceeds \$4.8 trillion. It calls for a balanced budget by 2002 and requires a three-fifths vote of both houses to run a deficit in future years. A similar measure cleared the GOP-controlled House in January. Senate passage would

mean the House would have to vote on the newly modified version before submitting it to the states for ratification.

At the White House, President Clinton renewed his objections. Pressed on whether Clinton would campaign to defeat ratification in the states, press secretary Mike McCurry said the president would make sure state legislators "have the information they need to judge the merits."

Beyond its politically potent symbolic value — polls show 70 percent public support — Republicans said the measure would enforce discipline. "If we don't pass this amendment, we don't balance the budget," said GOP Whip Trent Lott of Mississippi. "This is it."

Democratic foes said it would lead to devastating spending cuts in social programs, permit Social Security trust-fund money to be used for deficit reduction and cripple efforts to soften the impact of future recessions.

Democrat Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas said in a rising voice, "I pity an unsuspecting nation if we vote yes."

As if to remind opponents of

the potential consequences, the 11 newly elected GOP senators whose victories created a new Republican majority sat together on the Senate floor. Said Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, at 36 the youngest among them, "The people who will stand in the way of this balanced-budget amendment today will not be around long to stand in the way the next time."

In a series of votes leading to a final roll call, Republicans turned aside numerous proposed Democratic changes. One, by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., would have banned a president from impounding funds to enforce the amendment.

Privately, some Democrats worried the measure would fail by a single vote, exposing all senators to a campaign charge that they were responsible for the death of the politically popular provision.

Still, Republicans had their own holdout, five-term Mark Hatfield of Oregon. He cited "enduring protections of the Constitution" in reaffirming his opposition.

## Series of abortion clinic fires in California may be connected

SAN FRANCISCO — An arsonist scorched an abortion clinic Tuesday in the fifth such attack in California in less than three weeks. Federal investigators say the blazes may be linked.

The FBI was trying to determine if Tuesday's blaze was part of a national conspiracy against abortion providers, spokesman Rick Smith in San Francisco said.

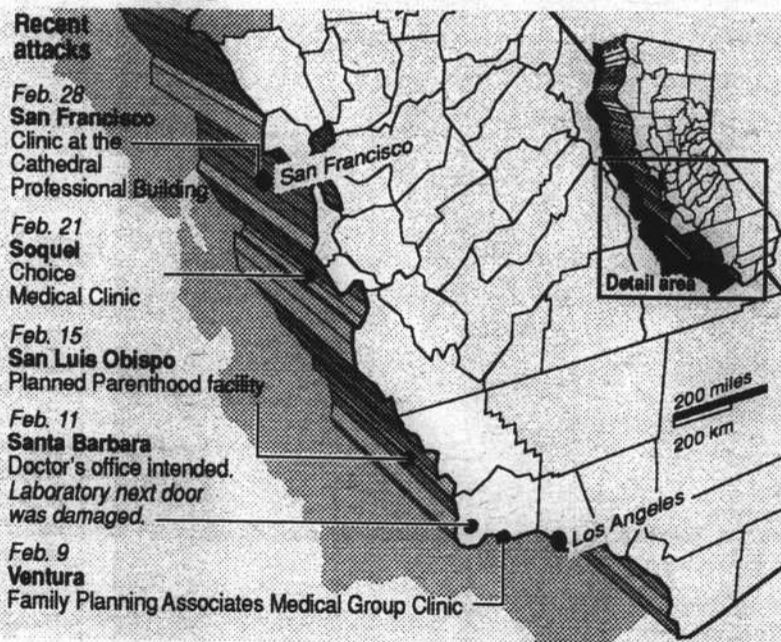
The string of arson fires has moved northward along the coast, hitting clinics in Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz and now San Francisco. No one has been injured.

The first two attacks involved flammable liquids placed in automobile tires, and were almost definitely linked, said Larry Cornelison of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms bureau in Los Angeles.

That method was also used in the latest fire, Fire Department arson investigator Al Silvestri said.

The target was the Pregnancy Consultation Center, which offers abortions and other reproductive health services.

Mayor Frank Jordan, who called his city "an island of sanity" in the abortion battle, said that city would



not allow interference with a woman's right to an abortion.

"There's no room for violence of this nature in San Francisco," he said. "This sinister act of cowardice must be condemned in the strongest terms possible."

Investigators said someone entered a basement through window well and set the fire in a janitor's office around dawn. It did about \$600 worth of damage. The clinic was able to open for business.

## Clark says OJ defense coached witness

LOS ANGELES — An investigator "handed a script" to a key O.J. Simpson witness and "coached" her through an interview, an incensed prosecutor contended Tuesday after listening to a tape-recording belatedly handed over by the defense.

Deputy District Attorney Marcia Clark also said the interview, taped July 29, was inconsistent with a second statement Rosa Lopez gave the defense Aug. 18.

"I have never heard anything like it," Clark said after listening to the interview in Superior Court Judge Lance Ito's chambers. "I have never

heard a witness basically coached and told what to say through every bend and turn."

The 15- to 20-minute interview of Lopez, a maid for Simpson's next-door neighbors, was conducted by defense investigator William Pavelic. In it, according to Clark, Lopez never mentions seeing Simpson's white Bronco parked in the street outside his estate shortly after 10 p.m.

She did say in the interview, however, that she had seen the Bronco earlier that night.

The dispute over the interview

delayed resumption of Lopez's videotaped testimony, which began Monday after two days of fighting about when and how her testimony should be taken.

Lopez has threatened to flee to her native El Salvador because reporters were hounding her but agreed to stay briefly to testify. Her testimony is being videotaped, over defense protestations, so it doesn't interrupt presentation of the prosecution case. It will be up to the defense whether to show the videotape to jurors later in the trial.

## News... in a Minute

### Foster nomination sent to Senate

WASHINGTON — A month after President Clinton chose Henry Foster to serve as surgeon general, the White House formally forwarded the doctor's nomination to an uncertain future in the Senate on Tuesday.

After drawing strong reviews initially, Foster's selection attracted intense opposition from anti-abortion groups and conservatives when he acknowledged performing a limited number of abortions as an obstetrician-gynecologist. Foster also has been criticized for giving varying answers about the number of abortions he performed.

In addition, a conservative group has claimed he was aware of a government study from the 1930s to the 1970s in which black men with syphilis were left untreated. Foster says he did not learn of the study until 1972, when he worked to ensure the men received proper treatment.

The White House maintains Foster's critics are anti-abortion extremists from the right wing of the Republican Party.

While senators from both parties say Foster faces difficulty in the Senate, the White House has insisted it will not pull back the nomination.

### Rain on Mardi Gras parade

NEW ORLEANS — Skimpily feathered and beaded costumes gave way to plastic ponchos and slickers as New Orleans' Mardi Gras celebration turned into a huge, sloppy party in the rain.

Intermittent, driving rain flooded streets, drenched floats and parade-goers and pushed hard-drinking Bourbon Street revelers indoors or under awnings and balconies.

"The only bad thing is it waters down my beer," said Ron Edmund, 38, of Chicago.

Hotel and bar employees in the French Quarter shoveled plastic cups and other debris from clogged drains to help empty shin-deep water from the narrow streets.

An estimated 300,000 tourists were in town. The rain appeared to have kept the crowds well below the projected 1.2 million.

Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, falls on the day before Ash Wednesday and the start of 40 days of Lenten sobriety in this heavily Roman Catholic city. It wraps up 11 days of bawdy Carnival parties and parades.

Tuesday's storms came after a beautiful weekend of mostly dry, mild and sunny weather.

## Republicans revise welfare reform bill

WASHINGTON — In a concession to GOP moderates and governors, House Republicans on Tuesday stripped their welfare reform legislation of a lifetime ban on cash assistance to unmarried teen-age mothers.

Republicans also rewrote their overhaul of the welfare system to push far more recipients into a work program than first planned. But Democrats said the changes were merely "illusory" and could easily be circumvented by the states.

The revisions come as the House Ways and Means Committee takes up the bill, which would reverse New Deal social policies and end the automatic guarantee to cash welfare for poor single mothers and children.

The bill collapses several cash welfare and foster care programs into two block grants, caps spending and cuts off cash benefits to families after five years.

It also ends cash payments to

children and kicks most legal immigrants off welfare. A new provision, announced Tuesday, prohibits publicly funded adoption agencies from discriminating against prospective parents whose race, religion or national origin does not match the child's.

GOP leaders had been under pressure from moderates and governors to back off their campaign promises to deny cash assistance to any single woman who gives birth to a child before her 18th birthday. The children would have been banned from welfare until adulthood.

The compromise announced Tuesday would bar these mothers, and their children, from receiving cash welfare until the mother turns 18, although they would still be allowed to collect food stamps and Medicaid.

The original ban was backed by conservatives who encourage welfare subsidizes and encourage the rising rate of out-of-wedlock births.

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