

Senate vote makes abortion campaign issue, Lott says

By JIM ABRAMS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate upheld President Clinton's veto of a bill Thursday that would ban a procedure for late-term abortions. The bill's supporters promised to keep the issue alive during the election campaign.

The 57-41 vote was 10 shy of the two-thirds margin needed to overturn a presidential veto. An override vote in the House succeeded 285-137 last week.

Opponents of abortion have made the prohibition of the procedure they call partial birth abortion their main goal this legislative year. The bill's demise moves the focus to the campaign, where it presents a vulnerable issue for abortion-rights candidates.

"It will immediately become one of the most powerful issues of the fall election," said Trent Lott, R-Miss., the Senate majority leader.

Democrats, aware of polls showing popular opposition to the procedure,

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SEN. BARBARA BOXER
D-Calif.

said they'd support a ban that included exceptions for the life and health of the mother.

"Everyone involved in this debate opposes late-term abortion," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.

The bill does allow doctors to perform the procedure if there is no other way to save the life of the mother, but Republicans rejected a health exception saying it would be exploited to continue the procedure at will.

Clinton vetoed the bill last April over the health issue.

The bill, which would mark the first time Congress has outlawed a specific abortion procedure since the 1973 Supreme Court decision guaranteeing a

woman's right to an abortion, passed the Senate last December by 54-44.

It would make doctors who illegally perform the procedure subject to up to two years in prison and civil lawsuits.

The issue was one of the most divisive to come before Congress this year. Opponents of the procedure claim it amounts to infanticide, and those against the bill charge that its authors are playing politics with the lives of mothers.

The two sides were equally divided on how often the procedure is used. Abortion rights groups say only about 600 third trimester abortions are performed annually.

ValuJet returns to skies after full investigation

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Transportation Department gave ValuJet permission today to return to the skies.

"After a thorough review of objections ... as well as (comments) in support of ValuJet's recertification, the department concluded that the company met" the qualifications to operate safely, the department announced.

It said it approved the airline's management and financial condition and concluded that it has "demonstrated a positive disposition to comply with all applicable laws and regulations."

John V. Coleman, director of the Office of Aviation Analysis, said the airline is authorized to resume service "virtually immediately."

ValuJet, the low-priced Atlanta airline, was grounded in June because of doubts about its maintenance programs.

A ValuJet spokesman did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Employees responded jubilantly.

"I am so excited," said Christie Wright, a flight attendant. "We never expected it to go on this long. Relieved is the best word right now."

Attention focused on the airline after a May 11 crash in Florida's Everglades that killed all 110 aboard the Atlanta-bound jet from Miami.

The Federal Aviation Administration has already approved the airline to begin flying, and new flights were awaiting the second approval from the parent Transportation Department.

The airline was operating with more than 50 planes when it was shut down. It plans to return only to limited routes at first with a dozen or so planes.

The FAA returned ValuJet's license Aug. 29. It reported that after close inspection it concluded the airline was in compliance with safety regulations.

Returning to the air, however, had to await a similar Transportation Department finding.

Lucid returns to Earth, able to walk off shuttle

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Astronaut Shannon Lucid, NASA's space superwoman, returned to Earth on Thursday after six debilitating months of weightlessness and to everyone's amazement, walked off the shuttle Atlantis.

Doctors had met her inside the space shuttle with a stretcher, figuring the 53-year-old biochemist would be too weak and wobbly to stand, let alone walk. But she surprised them, insisting, "I can stand up."

Two workers assisted her during the short walk onto an airport-style moving sidewalk and into a reclining chair.

After a record-shattering 188 days in space - most of that time aboard the Russian space station Mir - she was thrilled to be home.

"We could hear her laughing all the way up to the flight deck, I'll tell you, she was just so tickled," said Atlantis' commander, William Readdy.

She was still laughing when she met her family a few hours later.

"It was just a great mission and I just had a great time," said Lucid, who rocketed away in March and spent a longer stretch in space than any other American and any other woman.

Lucid was welcomed back to Earth with a 10-pound box of red, white and blue M&M's from President Clinton and an offer for 188 cases of potato chips - one for every day she spent in orbit. She had craved both while living aboard Mir.

Clinton called from the Oval Office to congratulate her. "I couldn't believe you walked off the shuttle," he said.

Lucid, who traveled 75 million miles and circled the Earth 3,008 times, faces weeks of rehabilitation to recover from the effects of prolonged weightlessness, which include weak muscles, fatigue, vertigo, anemia and deteriorating bones. She could be dragging for months to come.

Unaccustomed to the pull of gravity, she said she felt heavy, but noted that was normal. She also was wobbly, almost falling over when she got up from a chair at NASA's crew quarters.

"It will take just a little bit to get fully adapted back to living in one-G (gravity) again," Lucid said.

Lucid was taken to the crew quarters building for a battery of medical tests. She was reunited there with her husband, Michael, and their three children, all in their 20s.

Lucid was able to enjoy fruit juice and a soft drink. But a shower - her first in six months - had to wait until the most pressing tests were completed.

Lucid will make the final leg of her journey, back home to Houston, on Friday. Clinton promised to meet her there.

Lucid rocketed away March 22 to the Mir station, expecting a 4 1/2-month mission and an early August homecoming. But booster rocket problems and two hurricanes delayed the shuttle's trip to get her, leaving her in orbit an extra seven weeks.

NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin said Lucid "never, never flinched once" despite all the setbacks.

"This is a tough, brilliant, determined human being," Goldin said. "She's my hero."

Polly Klaas killer gets death sentence

Richard Allen Davis enrages family by claiming father molested victim

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — The killer of Polly Klaas enraged her family even as he was being condemned to death Thursday with a wild claim that the 12-year-old girl told him before he killed her that she had been molested by her father.

Marc Klaas cried "Burn in hell, Davis!" and lunged at his daughter's killer as he was hustled out of the courtroom. Polly's grandmother wailed aloud and wept, leaning against her husband in shock.

Richard Allen Davis was sent to California's death row at San Quentin Prison for killing Polly after kidnapping her from a slumber party in the bedroom of her Petaluma home Oct. 1, 1993. A nationwide search for Polly ended when Davis led police to her body in December.

Moments before his formal sentencing, the 42-year-old career criminal criticized his investigators and lawyers in a rambling speech.

Then, Davis started talking about the one charge he had always steadfastly denied — that he had tried to sexually molest Polly.

"The main reason I know I did not attempt any lewd act that night," Davis said, "was because of a statement the young girl made to me while walking up the embankment: 'Just don't do me like my dad.'"

"Burn in hell, Davis!"

MARC KLAAS,
to the man convicted of murdering his daughter, Polly

Spectators gasped and a long-drawn out moan of "Ohhhhh!" echoed in the courtroom as Klaas shouted, jumped toward his daughter's killer and had to be escorted outside.

Prosecutor Greg Jacobs, who said he was "nauseated" by Davis' allegation, said no such claim had ever been leveled during the case, nor was there any evidence to support it.

The accusation was reminiscent of Davis' contemptuous action in court the day he was found guilty, when he thrust both middle fingers at a courtroom camera.

Outside the courtroom, Klaas called Davis' statement a "vile and sinister and evil act," and that he had expected trouble from the "gutless coward."

"I brought him down," said Klaas, who wants to be present when Davis is executed. "He knows that as well as

everybody else. We have been pursuing the death of Richard Allen Davis for three years. I am his worst nightmare."

After the outburst, Superior Court Judge Thomas Hastings confirmed the sentence of death the trial jury recommended Aug. 5. He could have reduced it to life in prison without parole, but said Davis' conduct Thursday made sentencing him to death "easy."

Davis served eight years for kidnapping and assaulting a woman before he was paroled. He kidnapped Polly three months later.

"He victimizes little girls and little women," Klaas said. "He does it under the veil of darkness, at night, when there's nobody else present."

Before the ruling, Klaas spoke, at times movingly, at times angrily, remembering his daughter as a loving child who "deserves peace."

As he ended his comments, he snapped, "Mr. Davis, when you get to where you're going, say hello to Hitler, say hello to (Jeffrey) Dahmer and say hello to (Ted) Bundy."

After the sentencing, Polly's grandfather also lashed out at Davis.

"My wife became hysterical because this man succeeded in what he was trying to do, which was pierce my son through the heart and pierce the rest of the family," Joseph Klaas said.

Ethics committee votes to continue investigating Gingrich records

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House ethics committee voted unanimously Thursday to expand an investigation of Speaker Newt Gingrich, to include whether he provided "accurate, reliable and complete information" to the committee on the college course he taught.

Reading the carefully worded text of the committee statement, Rep. Pat Schroeder, D-Colo., offered her translation: "That says they think he lied," she said.

In a case steeped in election-year politics, the subcommittee running the probe said it also will examine whether Gingrich used resources of a private, tax-exempt foundation for official purposes, which is prohibited by House rules.

In the last two weeks, Democrats have trooped to House microphones to denounce Gingrich as unethical and demand that the committee release a summary of evidence prepared by James M. Cole, the outside counsel hired for the investigation.

If the subcommittee of two Democrats and two Republicans files charges, the remainder of the ethics committee — three more members from each party — would decide whether Gingrich violated House rules.

Cole, hired last December, has been investigating whether the course Gingrich taught from 1993-95 was a political activity that violated tax laws.

The course — and a satellite hookup that beamed the lectures to Gingrich's financial backers — was

financed through tax-exempt foundations.

"Certain facts have been discovered in the course of the preliminary inquiry, which the subcommittee has determined merit further inquiry," said a written statement prepared by the subcommittee.

The committee had already alerted reporters it would have an announcement in connection with the 20-month Gingrich investigation when the speaker released a letter asking the panel to make its decision public.

"The issuance of this interim report is evidence that the subcommittee process is working," Gingrich said. "I am confident that at that time the charges against me will be found to have been groundless."

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