

As trial wears on, partisanship on rise

■ Democrats voice strong opposition to Republican plans for live witnesses and a controversial 'finding of fact' document.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats threatened Wednesday to turn President Clinton's impeachment trial into a party battle if the Republicans go through with plans to vote on a declaration of wrongdoing before deciding his fate.

As House GOP prosecutors questioned the third of three witnesses in the case, Democratic leader Tom Daschle said his party's rank-and-file lawmakers were solidly opposed to any live trial testimony on the Senate floor. He also raised objections to the immediate public release of Monica Lewinsky's videotaped deposition.

But what sparked the Democrats' sharpest criticism was a GOP proposal

Clinton under fire

for a formal finding of wrongdoing, a measure that would require a simple majority for passage rather than the two-thirds needed for conviction on impeachment.

"If Republicans persist in demanding live witnesses and demanding more depositions, and demanding extra legal devices like findings of fact," Daschle told reporters.

The White House also renewed its objections to the proposal, at the same time spokesman Joe Lockhart pledged a restrained response if — as expected — Clinton is acquitted on the two articles of impeachment.

"I now declare in a post-impeachment era, this is a gloat-free zone," he said.

Republican senators met privately late in the day, pondering their next

moves in the trial, which is scheduled to resume today.

John Czwartacki, a spokesman for Majority Leader Trent Lott told reporters he expected a vote today on a proposal to release the depositions of Lewinsky and two other witnesses, both the written transcripts and the videotapes. He suggested they could remain under seal for a limited period of time.

For their part, House prosecutors met to weigh the results of the three depositions. They said an attempt would be made to have witnesses testify in the Senate in person. But GOP aides conceded it would be difficult to secure enough votes to prevail on that issue, particularly with public opinion in favor of a swift end to the proceedings.

The Democratic maneuvering came as Sidney Blumenthal, a White House aide, was questioned in a heavily secured room in the upper reaches of the Capitol.

A source familiar with the deposi-

tion, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Blumenthal repeated the testimony he had given a grand jury last year concerning a conversation he had had with Clinton about the president's relationship with Lewinsky. The president lied to him, Blumenthal said.

Republicans have been working in recent days on a "finding of fact" that would formally declare that Clinton had "willfully provided false and misleading testimony" to Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's grand jury.

The draft document also alleges the president engaged in a course of conduct designed to "alter, delay, impede, cover up and conceal the existence of evidence and testimony" in the sexual harassment lawsuit that Paula Jones filed against him.

The document does not allege he committed perjury or obstructed justice, but Democrats attacked it sharply during the day as an unconstitutional move designed to inflict damage on Clinton.

World and Nation DATELINES

■ United Nations U.S., British nationals ordered out of Iraq

The Associated Press — The U.N. security chief ordered the last remaining American and British nationals working for the United Nations to leave Iraq because the Iraqi government says it cannot guarantee their safety, officials said Wednesday.

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the order involves only two Americans, because all other Americans and all Britons working for the United Nations have already left Iraq.

■ Russia Official: Fixing Y2K bug could cost up to \$3 billion

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia needs up to \$3 billion to tackle the Year 2000 computer glitch — six times the original estimate — a top official announced Wednesday as he appealed to the United States and NATO to help fix computers that control Russia's nuclear weapons.

While many countries have been working on the so-called Y2K "millennium bug" problem for years, some key players, including Russia and China, have been slower to address it.

■ China Authorities begin crackdown in China

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese authorities have arbitrarily detained scores of people and tortured suspects in a crackdown on separatism in China's Muslim far west, according to Amnesty International.

Two religious teachers, many farmers rounded up after security forces killed six youths, and a doctor accused of giving medical treatment to separatists are among those detained in recent months in the western Xinjiang region, the London-based group said in a report today.

■ South Africa Executive found dead after suspected shooting

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — A South Korean auto executive was found shot to death in his car Wednesday — the latest victim in a nationwide crime wave that has rattled investors and tourists in South Africa.

Police were investigating whether the killing of Yong Koo Kwon, president of Daewoo Motor's South African operations, was a carjacking attempt or a professional hit. Opposition parties have criticized President Nelson Mandela's government for not doing enough to combat an increase in killings, carjackings and robberies.

■ Washington, D.C. Federal Reserve refuses to raise interest rates

The Associated Press — Despite exuberant U.S. economic growth that showed no sign of slowing as the year began, Federal Reserve policy-makers decided against raising short-term interest rates Wednesday.

Confronted with the continuing spread of world financial turmoil and the renewed risk it could spillover into the United States, they concluded a two-day, closed-door meeting by leaving the benchmark rate on overnight loans unchanged at 4.75 percent.

It's been at that level — a four-year low — since Nov. 17.

Forces may remain in Kosovo for 3-5 years

WASHINGTON (AP) — A NATO-led peacekeeping force could be needed in Kosovo for three to five years to enforce any peace accord and might include up to 4,000 American troops, the Clinton administration told Congress on Wednesday.

In testimony at a Senate hearing, and in private briefings with lawmakers, President Clinton's national security team sought to prepare Congress for the possibility of a second U.S. ground commitment in the Balkans. U.S. troops have been in Bosnia for the past three years.

The Clinton team encountered considerable skepticism.

The administration also shared with lawmakers a draft of a U.S.-sponsored peace plan that would dramatically reduce Serbian control over Kosovo and give the province considerable self-government powers — while allowing some continued Serbian military presence.

The administration pledged to provide a series of benchmarks to be used as a basis for extricating U.S. troops once they are introduced, congressional and administration sources said.

Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels have agreed to participate in weekend peace talks demanded by the United States and NATO allies as pressure increased on Serbia's hard-line government to join the talks. NATO has threatened airstrikes if Serbia and the rebels aren't talking by Saturday and closing a peace deal by Feb. 19 under talks organized by the United States and five European powers.

Some U.S. ground presence

could be crucial to any peace accord because Kosovo's Albanians "would not feel confident of having a NATO force that doesn't have some representation by the United States," Defense Secretary William Cohen told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said the administration had wide support in Congress for airstrikes, if necessary, to force both sides to the bargaining table. But, he said, a U.S. ground presence was another issue — one for which the administration would have to make a persuasive case if a peace plan is put in place.

One crucial issue is whether the U.S. forces would be under U.S. or NATO command.

Warner proposed that U.S. ground contingent be placed under the command of a British commander, while the overall operation remain under a U.S. commander.

Cohen said that any agreement leading to U.S. troops in Kosovo would have to be accepted by all the rival factions, including a commitment on the part of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbs.

Lawmakers expressed skepticism.

"As we have seen in Bosnia, we have been there for more than three years, and it wasn't just one deadline lapse — it was three," said Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine. "We are now running up to \$20 billion and going. And I don't think anybody really knows exactly when the end point will come."

Legislators prepare for long school aid debate

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resources equals aid. Based on past legislation, both needs and resources were fixed, he said. The variable is the amount of state aid.

Now, senators and the governor must find a way to replace the variable with the right amount of state aid.

"It is our obligation to balance, and in 149 we do that," he said.

But not everyone was convinced LB149 would bring predictability and stability to the complex formula.

Omaha Sen. Pam Brown said she approved of the bill's changing the recertification date from Dec. 1 to Feb. 1, but she remained unconvinced the bill would prevent future violent swings in aid.

"I haven't heard anything that tells me what this bill is going to do absolutely," she said. "I believe that LB149 is just a totally reactionary piece of legislation."

Brown said she was concerned that no one knew for certain if the \$22 million figure was accurate. The same problem might recur, she said.

"Aren't we always going to be in a position of reacting?" she asked.

Bohlke said revenues from motor vehicle taxes might affect the \$22 million figure. She does not expect to bring the bill to the floor for the second round until mid-March, she said. By that time, she said, the Department of Education would have more accurate numbers, including eight months of motor vehicle tax revenues.

Gov. Mike Johanns has proposed a \$22 million reduction in state aid,

"I believe that LB149 is just a totally reactionary piece of legislation."

PAM BROWN
Omaha senator

which would help pay for \$25 million in property tax rebates. He also has supported legislation to keep property tax levy limits at \$1.10 instead of dropping them to \$1.

Omaha Sen. Pam Redfield had a change of heart during debate. In her first statement, she said she was looking at Johanns' proposal and others.

"My heart is with you," she said to Bohlke. "My head will not be, and neither will my vote."

But after a discussion with Wickersham, Redfield said she could support the bill.

Bohlke said her bill was "not in conflict" with Johanns' proposal.

Stanton Sen. Stan Schellpeper agreed. If they have to take cuts, he said, some schools would have only three options — raise property taxes, merge or close.

"This is probably one of the most important bills this session to a lot of small schools."

Underage drinking bill passes in committee

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test. Possession is defined in an amendment as an alcoholic beverage within arm's reach of a minor. The current statute does not define "possession," but Costello said most officers already use that definition.

Liquor license holders would also face higher penalties for breaking the law under LB126.

Currently, liquor license holders can "buy out" a suspension by paying a fine of \$50 a day for as long as a suspension would have lasted for a first offense of selling to a minor, and \$100 a day for a second offense. Under the bill, these fines would double.

The amendment would allow the Liquor Control Commission to elect not to allow licensees buy out a sus-

pension after a third offense if they were flagrant in selling to minors.

Carey Potter, executive director of the Nebraska Retail Federation, was against tougher fines for liquor license holders at the bill's hearing last week. But she said current penalties did not give license holders enough incentive not to sell to minors.

"Penalties are not substantial and do not hit the licensee where it counts," Potter said.

In other legislative news: ■ LR14, a constitutional amendment that would allow gubernatorial candidates to choose their running mates, was advanced from the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee 7-0, with one person abstaining. The Nebraska constitution allows voters to elect the governors and their running mates separately.

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