

Youth groups target candidates

Medill News Service
Northwestern University

WASHINGTON (U-WIRE) — Calling the 2000 presidential election a critical time in our democracy, a coalition of more than 50 youth groups Wednesday urged presidential candidates to take part in a debate moderated by young people and devoted to youth-related issues.

Within hours, a spokesperson from Vice President Al Gore's campaign said Gore would participate if he wins the Democratic nomination.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the Republican front-runner, was noncommittal at a weekend college students' forum.

A debate among the major party's presidential nominees targeted at Americans under 30 would encourage young people to vote and encourage candidates to address young people's

concerns, said Julia Cohen, executive director of the Youth Vote 2000 coalition.

"Young people are disconnected with politics and politicians," Cohen said. "Campaigns don't target youth because they believe that youth won't vote. Youth don't vote because they believe politicians don't listen to them. A youth presidential debate will break this chicken-and-egg cycle."

Cohen said that young people have been more valued for their purchasing power than their political clout.

"Corporate America has done a great job at targeting young people," she said. "I don't think politics has caught up."

Youth Vote 2000's proposal seeks to reverse an increasing trend of voter apathy.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, only 32.4 percent of Americans aged 18-24 voted in the 1996 presiden-

tial election, down from 49.6 percent in 1972, the first year that the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18.

"We are becoming a nation of non-voters," Cohen said.

Volunteers for Youth Vote 2000 hand-delivered letters requesting participation in the debates to campaign headquarters of 10 announced or possible presidential candidates, ranging from Bush to Gore to Donald Trump, the unannounced Reform Party candidate.

Gore said in a statement Wednesday that he would definitely participate in a youth debate if he wins the Democratic nomination for president.

Kristen Ludecke, a spokesperson for the Bradley campaign, said Youth Vote 2000's letter had not reached campaign headquarters yet.

"We haven't seen the letter, but it sounds like a good idea," Ludecke said. At a forum in New Hampshire last

"Campaigns don't target youth because they believe that youth won't vote."

Julia Cohen

Youth Vote 2000 executive director

Sunday, several Republican presidential candidates were asked directly about participating in a youth debate. Arizona Sen. John McCain, Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch and magazine publisher Steve Forbes enthusiastically supported the idea. Bush sounded a more cautious note, saying, "I will give it serious consideration."



ELIAN GONZALEZ sprays party string at people as he and his great uncle Lazaro Gonzalez watch Miami's annual Three Kings parade Sunday.

Cuban boy's father lashes out at relatives

WASHINGTON (AP) — Flashing anger at those responsible for keeping his son in Miami, the father of Elian Gonzalez said Thursday he feels like "breaking the neck" of politicians fighting the boy's return to Cuba.

Repeating previous statements that he has no intention of coming to Miami to pick up the boy, Juan Miguel Gonzalez told ABC's "Nightline" that Elian's U.S. relatives don't "have any feelings."

The interview was conducted as Attorney General Janet Reno sought the return of the 6-year-old child.

"The issue is a father who wants his son home and grandparents who want their grandson home, and these are bonds that should be honored," Reno told her weekly news conference Thursday.

Gonzalez asked whether, if he went to Miami, his son would be handed over. "No," he said, answering his own question. "Miami Cubans would just entangle me in their political games."

In a transcript released by the network, translated from Spanish, the father grew angry when he was asked about a news report that he didn't work anymore, didn't live in his own home and was under psychiatric treatment.

He called the report "a lie," and added: "Perhaps I might be a little bit crazy

because I would feel like breaking the neck of all those SOB's" opposing Elian's return. He cited "the politicians in Miami and those who ... have behaved in a manner that is contrary to what our relatives should have done."

At another point, Gonzalez said he "what I would like to do is go down there with a rifle." Told by interviewer Chris Wallace the remark was inflammatory, the father responded: "Isn't it inflammatory what they are doing with my son?"

An attorney for Elian's Florida relatives said they would go to federal court next week to challenge the Immigration and Naturalization Service's ruling that he must be returned to his father in Cuba.

The INS, meanwhile, rejected a second asylum petition filed this week on behalf of Elian by his Florida relatives. Justice Department spokeswoman Carole Florman said that only the boy's father could represent his son before the agency. Florman said the new petition contained "no new information."

To allow time for a federal court challenge, Reno said Wednesday the INS indefinitely would extend its Friday deadline for turning the boy over. She brushed aside a state court ruling delaying the boy's return and said any challenge to the INS would have to come in federal court.

WEATHER	
TODAY	TOMORROW
Partly cloudy, high 56, low 37	Partly cloudy, high 65, low 31

Swiss plane crashes in Mediterranean Sea

BERN, Switzerland (AP) — A twin-engine plane carrying employees of a Libyan oil company to a refinery crashed in the Mediterranean Sea on Thursday with 41 people aboard.

There were unconfirmed reports of fatalities.

Eighteen on board the Swiss plane were rescued, according to state-run Libyan television, and search and rescue efforts were continuing.

"The plane hit the water just off the Libyan coast and sank," said Hugo Schittenhelm of the Swiss Transportation Ministry. "A search for survivors and for the aircraft is under way. Nothing can yet be said about the exact number of victims."

All 38 on board were employees of a Libyan oil company, said Franz Fassbind, chairman of Avisto AG air services company, which is based near Zurich and owns the plane. There were also three crew members, he said.

Schittenhelm earlier said the ministry had unconfirmed reports that 15 people were killed. Fassbind told a Zurich television station that he had

information there were up to 15 dead, but did not elaborate.

Seventeen people on board were Libyans and the others were foreigners, the Libyan television report said. It did not give their nationalities, but Fassbind told a Zurich television they were citizens of four different countries.

The British Foreign Office later confirmed that 13 Britons were aboard the plane, but officials did not know if any had died.

About six miles before the airport, the pilot reported both engines had stopped working, and he was going to try landing on the water.

Fassbind said his company has been working in Libya for the past 15 years and had never had an accident before. The pilots were trained in Switzerland and were very experienced, he added.

It was the second air crash involving a Swiss-owned plane this week. Crash investigators had closed their office to work on the site of the first crash, in which 10 people died when their Crossair Saab 340 came down shortly after takeoff from Zurich airport.

— WORLD/NATION —

■ Georgia

Rhesus monkeys to be grown in laboratory

ATLANTA (AP) — Researchers using a technique called embryo splitting hope to grow genetically identical rhesus monkeys in the laboratory.

The breakthrough would enable experiments such as growing organs from stem cells to be tested on monkeys rather than mice. Monkeys are closer to human biology.

The technique has so far produced one living rhesus monkey, a female named Tetra, but officials said that four more twinned infants are on the way.

The goal is to produce identical monkeys that could be used to perfect new therapies for human disease.

■ Michigan

Eleven-year-old spared life in prison for murder

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — One of the youngest murderers in U.S. history — a boy who shot a stranger at age 11 — was spared life in prison Thursday and sent away to a juvenile detention center until he turns 21.

Judge Eugene Moore said that the 1997 Michigan law that allowed Nathaniel Abraham to be prosecuted as an adult is fundamentally flawed and the boy needs a chance to be rehabilitated.

Abraham, now 13, was the first youth to be charged with first-degree murder under the law, which allows children of any age to be prosecuted as adults for serious offenses.

Abraham was convicted in November of second-degree murder for shooting Ronnie Greene Jr., 18, outside a Pontiac convenience store in 1997 with a stolen rifle.

Prosecutors said Abraham had told a friend that he was going to shoot somebody, practiced his aim on stationary targets, shot Greene in the head and bragged about it the next day.

■ Washington

Oil pipeline company agrees to penalties for leaks

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of the country's largest oil pipeline operators, Koch Industries, agreed Thursday to pay \$35 million in penalties for leaking 3 million gallons of oil into lakes and streams in six states.

The government said it was the biggest civil fine ever levied under the Clean Water Act.

The settlement resolved lawsuits charging that Koch's pipeline subsidiary had left thousands of miles of pipeline in disrepair, leading to hundreds of oil leaks.

The spills polluted waterways in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Alabama, Louisiana and Missouri, according to the EPA.

■ Washington

Bill to make intercollegiate bets illegal to be introduced

WASHINGTON (AP) — Betting on intercollegiate sports should be outlawed, say two senators who plan legislation banning it, arguing that it has contributed to the growing number of gambling scandals on campuses nationwide.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association this week urged its 1,031 member colleges and universities to lobby members of Congress to support the bill, which Sens. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., and Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., plan to introduce Jan. 26.

The NCAA says illegal attempts to influence collegiate sports are increasing.

The Brownback-Leahy bill would bar wagering on college sports, and high school and Olympic competitions.

Daily Nebraskan

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Fax number: (402) 472-1761
World Wide Web: www.dailyneb.com
The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year, weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.
Subscriptions are \$60 for one year.
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.
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