

Gore hopeful; Democrats' loyalty wanes

■ If the vice president doesn't win with the high court, some say he should concede.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Al Gore suggested Tuesday that even a rejection of his Florida Supreme Court appeal might not drive him from the presidential race, though many Democrats said that would be the limit of their loyalty. George W. Bush confidently declared himself ready to "seize the moment" as the nation's 43rd president.

"I don't feel anything other than optimistic," the vice president told reporters, his tone a stark contrast from the sense of foreboding expressed by Democrats across the country.

Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh, a finalist in Gore's summertime search for a running mate, was among those warning that Gore had one last chance.

"The Florida Supreme Court

is going to rule in two or three days, and if he's unsuccessful on that, then I think that is the end of it," he said.

Four weeks into America's election limbo, the courts still held the keys to the White House: The Florida Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal of Gore's historic election challenge to Bush's certified Florida victory; briefs were filed in reaction to the U.S. Supreme Court decision; and oral arguments were heard at a federal appeals court in Atlanta.

The flurry of activity came one day after Circuit Judge N. Sanders Sauls rejected Gore's request to order hand recounts of disputed ballots and overturn Florida's official election results. Gore appealed, and oral arguments will be heard by the Florida high court Thursday.

The could-be presidents responded in different ways, Gore by rallying Democratic troops for his last stand and Bush by acting as if his presiden-

cy was only a matter of time.

"We've got a lot of work to do," the Texas governor told reporters outside the state Capitol in Austin, Texas, promising an efficient transition to power. "I think it's going to be important to show ... the American people that this administration will be ready to seize the moment."

An NBC News poll suggested that 60 percent of Americans think Gore should concede, but the vice president showed no sign of surrender.

He dispatched running mate Joseph Lieberman to Capitol Hill, where Democrats pledged their support - at least until the Florida high court rules on Gore's appeal.

"Al Gore and Joe Lieberman enjoy strong support with our caucus for what they're doing to try to get every vote counted in Florida," said House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt.

Lieberman said Sauls was "wrong on the law" and noted

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Evan Bayh
Indiana senator

that the Democratic ticket narrowly won the national popular vote. Neither candidate can top the required 270 electoral votes without winning Florida's 25, which Bush's certified 537-vote victory would give him.

Gore advisers said privately they made the Florida high court their final destination to calm Democrats who were clamoring for an end to the race. Many Democrats said they understood the appeal of Sauls' decision to be Gore's last-ditch bid for the presidency.

But the vice president seemed to be rolling back from that end game scenario, telling reporters that he was concerned about allegations of favoritism

toward Bush in the handling of absentee ballot applications in two Florida counties.

"That doesn't seem fair to me," Gore said outside the White House.

Democrats filed lawsuits in Seminole and Martin counties over the ballot applications. A trial in the Seminole case is scheduled for Wednesday, and Gore's advisers said there might be a ruling by the end of the week - perhaps before the Supreme Court rules on the Sauls appeal.

"I do think it's likely that all of the current controversies will end up being resolved, one way or another, in the Florida Supreme Court," Gore said.

Posts aim to boost ratings

■ The Japanese Prime Minister's Cabinet appointments are an attempt to gain support.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO — Hoping to give his government a renewed sense of legitimacy, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori put two former leaders of the nation in his new Cabinet and cut the number of posts.

But with his popularity plummeting - under 20 percent in recent opinion polls - and deep divisions in his Liberal Democratic Party, doubts remained over Mori's ability to lead the nation. Two weeks ago, he barely survived a rebellion within his own party to beat a no-confidence motion.

"I don't have any hopes that the new Cabinet will bring any changes," said Masaki Nagase, a 35-year-old office worker, outside a Tokyo coffee shop. "What we need is to remove that prime minister."

In an unprecedented move, Mori assigned key posts to two former prime ministers - Kiichi Miyazawa and Ryutaro Hashimoto, who both have legions of loyal followers in Parliament.

Mori said the former premiers will deal with the key issues for his government - economic recovery and government reform. Miyazawa, the finance minister, will tackle the economy; Hashimoto will be minister overseeing administrative reform.

Sen.-elect Clinton to be 'a workhorse'

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Sen.-elect Hillary Rodham Clinton made the short trip Tuesday from the White House to Capitol Hill for "Senate School" and promised to be a consensus builder in a chamber where she once was derided. One Republican said she deserves a fresh start.

The first lady joined 10 other freshman senators for a whirlwind day of seminars, tours and class photos, capped with a formal dinner at the Supreme Court building.

But that's where the similarities ended. She was the only newcomer with a Secret Service detail and a media entourage and her dinner date was none other than the president.

The Senate's most famous new face kept a decidedly low profile most of the day, seemingly intent on ensuring she wouldn't overshadow other freshmen. Capitol Police kept reporters away as she moved between meetings.

"I'm absolutely hoping to build relationships and create consensus with every senator," Clinton said.

The first lady will serve side by side with lawmakers who voted to remove her husband from office, scuttled her ambitious health care plan and held highly partisan hearings on her ill-fated Whitewater land deal.

One GOP senator said Clinton won't be judged by her past run-ins with Republicans, some of whom still harbor suspicions she's using the Senate as a steppingstone for the presidency.

"I think she certainly comes with more awareness and notoriety than most incoming freshmen senators, but I think she will be accepted for what she decides to be, and I don't think any of her past differences will be an issue," Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said.

"I think she will go forward with a blank slate, and she will make her career."

Clinton made a point of deferring questions to New Jersey Sen.-elect Jon Corzine during a late-day news conference.

"She hopes to be a workhorse, not a showhorse," said Corzine, a Democrat who spent a record \$65 million to win his seat.

Sen.-elect Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., said Clinton was already off to a good start.

"She has been really sensitive to the fact that a lot of focus comes with her being here, and I think she's really working hard to be a member of the team and not to be the center of attention," said Stabenow, who is now a member of the House.

Still, reminders of past battles remain. The bookshelves still contain copies of the Senate Whitewater report that concluded the first lady and president "established a pattern of concealing their involvement" in a failed Arkansas savings and loan.

And the Congressional Record is filled with statements from Republicans like Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas who helped defeat her universal health care plan in 1994 by deriding it as "socialized medicine."

Gone, however, are two of her bigger nemeses, ex-Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, who conducted



U.S. Sen.-elect and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks to reporters at the U.S. Capitol during an orientation day for new senators Tuesday in Washington, D.C.

the Whitewater hearings, and ex-Sen. Lauch Faircloth, R-N.C., who during the Monica Lewinsky scandal called her "an angry, frustrated, distraught lady."

Clinton is among a record four women in this year's 11-member freshman class. The class includes nine Democrats, two Republicans, three millionaires, three governors and a widow.

Clinton is likely to get one of the least desir-

able offices in the Senate because of the strict seniority guidelines that regulate the distribution of space.

The governors and House members in her freshman class will all get to choose office space ahead of Clinton, Senate officials said. Tenure as first lady doesn't count, but the population of a senator's state does. New York is the most populous state to elect a new senator this year, and in that category she will do well.

Weather

TODAY
Mostly cloudy
high 30, low 24

TOMORROW
Partly cloudy
high 45, low 30

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DAILY NEBRASKAN

Texas executions beat record

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — A man convicted in the rape and murder of a 7-year-old girl was executed by lethal injection Tuesday in Texas' 38th execution of the year - the most by any state in U.S. history.

Two more killers have execution dates this week, so the record could reach 40. They are the last executions scheduled in Texas this year. Texas carried out 37 executions in 1997, the previous U.S. record.

Garry Dean Miller, 33, was condemned to die for the 1988 slaying of April Marie Wilson, who was raped, choked and beaten to death. Her body was dragged through clumps of cactus, then left in a cluster of brush outside Abilene. A blanket and a Raggedy Ann doll were found nearby.

"I've got no mercy for this guy," Jones County District Attorney Gary Brown

said. "Too bad they can't draw and quarter him. Too bad they can't put him up here on the sand and skin him for a couple of days and let him be tortured like she was."

Miller, a former bartender and laborer, confessed and then ordered his lawyers to not pursue appeals after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review his case. He repeatedly refused reporters' requests for interviews.

According to Michael Radelet, chairman of sociology at the University of Florida and the keeper of a database on U.S. executions, Texas' total would be the highest number of executions carried out by a state in American history.

No request for clemency was made to Gov. George W. Bush, who had authority to grant a one-time 30-day reprieve. Since the state resumed carrying out capital punishment in 1982, 236 condemned murderers preceded Miller to the death house, 147 of them during Bush's tenure.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

■ Washington, D.C.

President accompanies wife to senate dinner

WASHINGTON — President Clinton officially entered the realm of political spouses Tuesday, accompanying his senator-elect wife to a dinner for incoming members of the U.S. Senate.

Clinton joined First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton for dinner at the Supreme Court for senators who will serve in the 107th Congress, which convenes in January. They were among 250 guests invited to the dinner, which is a Senate tradition.

White House spokesman Jake Siewert said Tuesday's dinner was Clinton's first official event as the husband of the junior senator-elect from New York. The president was attending in his capacity as a spouse and did not plan to speak or, for that matter, to be overly presidential, Siewert said.

■ Florida

Motorist daims O.J. Simpson scratched him in dispute

MIAMI — A motorist told police O.J. Simpson reached into his car and grabbed his glasses, scratching his face, after they pulled over during a traffic dispute. No charges have been filed.

Jeffrey Pattinson, 55, said he "flicked his lights" at a black Lincoln Navigator after he saw the SUV drive past a stop sign about 7 p.m. Monday in suburban Kendall.

The Navigator stopped, and Simpson got out and walked toward Pattinson's car and the two men argued briefly, Pattinson told police.

Simpson then reached inside the car and pulled the glasses off Pattinson's face, causing a small scratch, police said.

Pattinson told police he heard a young girl shouting, "No Daddy, no Daddy, no!"

Simpson denied wrongdoing. He called WSVN-TV Tuesday morning, saying he told Pattinson: "You got your bright lights on me, sitting on my heels. I've got two kids in this car, guy. What are you doing?"

■ Cuba

Footage with Castro, Elian aired in Cuba

HAVANA — Fidel Castro played benevolent grandfather to a timid 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez as state television on Tuesday broadcast for the first time images of the leader with the little castaway whose fate divided Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straits.

The surprise airing of the images recorded in July, just weeks after Elian was repatriated following a seven-month custody battle, came on the eve of the child's 7th birthday - expected to include a celebration attended by Castro himself.

It was unclear why the government decided to broadcast the images after months of making a conscious effort to keep the boy out of the public eye. Castro had promised that Cuba would avoid a media circus upon Elian's return to Cuba and was conspicuously absent at the boy's airport homecoming on June 28.

Castro's detractors had predicted that after Elian returned, the Cuban leader would parade the child around like a poster boy for his political ideology.

■ Washington, D.C.

Stamps to see one-cent increase

WASHINGTON — It's official: It will cost a penny more to mail a letter starting Jan. 7.

The increase to 34 cents was accepted by the Postal Service's board of governors Tuesday. It will be accompanied by changes in many other rates, including international mail.

But the wide-ranging set of rates approved last month by the independent Postal Rate Commission fell well short of what the post office wanted, prompting protest.

"We will implement the recommended decision, but are returning it to the commission for further consideration," said Board Chairman Einar V. Dyhrkopp.