

AOL, Time Warner merger approved

■ The FCC's approval will allow the media giants to enhance Internet access through TV sets.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Communications regulators have voted to approve the \$106 billion deal between America Online and Time Warner, allowing the two companies to seal their massive media merger, sources familiar with the review said Thursday.

Federal Communications Commission Chairman William Kennard was expected to announce the decision Thursday evening, after a day of trying to end a deadlock over the conditions the agency would

attach to the deal.

A resolution will enable the commission to give final clearance to the combination, which European and U.S. antitrust regulators already have approved.

Kennard had the backing of Susan Ness, a Democrat, in voting to go ahead with the deal with certain enforceable conditions, but he needed at least one other member to support that position.

The chairman was engaged Thursday in talks with the other Democratic commissioner, Gloria Tristani, who had tentatively voted against the deal because she felt the conditions did not go far enough, sources said.

Tristani has wanted the agency to impose broader requirements forcing AOL to

open its popular instant messaging service to all competitors.

Kennard and Ness have favored a more tailored approach that would require AOL to make its instant messaging product operate with offered rivals, but only for advanced services, such as video conferencing, delivered over Time Warner's high-speed cable lines.

The chairman's office also was reaching out to a Republican commissioner, Michael Powell, for any possible common ground on conditions, sources said.

Powell and his GOP colleague, Harold Furchtgott Roth, support approving the deal but have concerns about the agency going beyond its jurisdiction in imposing any requirements on

the companies.

Most believe Furchtgott-Roth cannot be swayed to support conditions on the deal. But an agreement potentially could be reached with Powell by making the language of the conditions looser, sources said.

A commissioner can switch his or her vote if other members make changes to the deal.

All five members must vote for a final decision to be reached.

As part of its merger review, the FCC is also weighing broader rules that would ensure that cable companies will not steer viewers away from competing content in the emerging market for interactive television.

The combined AOL Time Warner is expected to get a foothold in the new market that

allows consumers to access the Internet from their television sets.

Kennard's intense work with his colleagues comes on what is likely his last major project as the agency's chairman. He is expected to resign after the FCC renders its verdict on the merger.

As Kennard presided at his final open meeting Thursday, his colleagues credited the first black chief of the agency for bringing the benefits of the telecommunications revolution to more Americans, including Native Americans and those with disabilities.

Powell, son of Secretary of State-designate Colin Powell, is seen as the leading contender to fill the chief's role under President-elect Bush.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

■ Northern Ireland Offices of Catholic party bombed, no injuries

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — A bomb damaged offices of the main Northern Ireland Catholic party Thursday night, but caused no injuries, police said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but legislator Alban Maginness of North Belfast accused the outlawed Protestant Ulster Defense Association of staging the attack on the office of the moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labor Party.

The bomb caused extensive damage to the hallway and reinforced door in the building. Maginness said he had no doubt the attack was linked to his comments earlier in the week when he welcomed the parole board's decision to keep notorious anti-Catholic militant Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair in jail.

Protestant legislator Cecil Walker of the Ulster Unionist Party said he and his colleagues in North Belfast "unreservedly condemn this attack."

■ Colorado

McVeigh denies opportunity to appeal bombing case

DENVER — Convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh let expire a Thursday deadline for resuming his appeals, and his attorneys said he now wants a date set for his execution.

McVeigh had until 5 p.m. to file a notice with U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch, who presided over his trial. District Court Clerk Jim Manspeaker said McVeigh didn't act before the close of business but his attorneys still could do so before midnight Thursday.

"If they deliver it to my house, I would file it, and it would be up to Judge Matsch to determine if it was timely," Manspeaker said.

Nathan Chambers, McVeigh's attorney, said that during a meeting at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind., McVeigh ordered there be no more appeals on his behalf.

"He made it clear this was his decision. I tried to talk him out of it and get him to resume his appeal, but it was his decision not to file," Chambers said.

■ Oregon

Researchers create first genetically altered primate

PORTLAND, Ore. — Pushing science to the brink of altering humans, researchers have created the world's first genetically modified primate — a baby rhesus monkey with jellyfish DNA that glows green in the dark.

The Oregon Health Science University researchers who created ANDi — for "inserted DNA," spelled backward — said their goal is not to tinker with the human blueprint but to use monkeys in the laboratory to advance medical research and wipe out diseases.

The researchers hope to introduce other genes in rhesus monkeys that could trigger diseases like Alzheimer's, diabetes, breast cancer or HIV. Then, those monkeys could be used in experiments aimed at blocking diseases at the genetic level.

■ Georgia

Turner sells WCW after failing to compete with WWF

ATLANTA — Ted Turner gave up his attempt to take Southern-fried wrestling nationwide Thursday, selling World Championship Wrestling, whose aging, balding stars couldn't compete with the lurid storylines and catchphrase-spouting youngsters of the World Wrestling Federation.

WCW, once a Southern-only circuit with stopovers in places like Augusta, Ga., and Greenville, S.C., became the No. 1 pro wrestling brand after Turner spent millions to lure away established WWF wrestlers like Hulk Hogan.

But the WWF, which airs on UPN and TNN, wrenched the top spot back by promoting young stars like The Rock and salacious plots involving everything from a wrestler marrying the owner's daughter to a wrestler impregnating an elderly woman.

Clinton bids adieu, thanks the people

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DOVER, N.H. — Like the scrappy politician of a decade ago, President Clinton returned to New Hampshire on Thursday to promise anew that after he leaves the White House he will still stand by the people "until the last dog dies."

"After eight years, and with almost exactly nine days to go, the last dog is still barking," Clinton proclaimed to a crowd of about 2,000 in the Dover High School gymnasium.

Clinton's visit was the latest round of his farewell tour, allowing him a chance to talk about what he did for the country during his eight years in office.

He plans to visit Arkansas, his home state, before turning the presidency over to George W. Bush — son of the incumbent president he defeated — on Jan. 20.

"It was a tough time, eight years ago, for our country when I came here," Clinton said. "It was also a fairly tough time for me. I was taking a whipping in the press, and I was dropping in the polls. But I said then, and I would like to say again, that was nothing compared to the punishment that the people of this state and this nation were enduring."

It was in Dover in 1992 that Clinton, dogged by criticism of his deferred Vietnam draft status, his purported affair with Gennifer Flowers and his Whitewater real estate dealings, delivered one of his best-known campaign speeches.

He argued that the elder Bush had ignored social decay in America and pledged that, if given the White House, "I won't be like George Bush."

"I'll never forget who gave me a second chance, and I'll be there for you 'til the last dog dies," Clinton said then. He used a strong second-place finish in New

"I'll never forget who gave me a second chance, and I'll be there for you 'til the last dog dies."

Bill Clinton
President

Hampshire's primary — 6 percentage points behind Paul Tsongas' 34 percent — to reinvigorate his campaign.

He declared himself "the Comeback Kid" and went on to defeat Bush in the general election.

On Thursday, Clinton was awash in the memories of that speech. "The place was packed. And I didn't have any notes, and all the experts said I was dead," he recalled.

"But I said what we really needed was to think about what we were going to do as a people."

He said after that speech, he told his wife Hillary — who now serves in the Senate — that he believed he had a chance.

"By the way, my wife said to tell you hello and thank you and, when you really need it, you might have a third United States senator now," Clinton said.

Under his watch, Clinton said, more than 22 million new jobs have been created, American homeownership is at an all-time high, unemployment is at its lowest level in 30 years, welfare rolls are shrinking, poverty is at a 20-year low, the infant mortality and teen-age births are down considerably.

"I came here ... to thank you for making me the Comeback Kid, and far more important, to thank you for making America the Comeback Country," Clinton said.



Seán Gallup/Newsweek
Demonstrators on Prague's Wenceslas Square applaud the announcement that controversial director of Czech Television Jiri Hodac resigned earlier Thursday. Approximately 100,000 demonstrators again filled central Prague to voice support for independent media.

Prison employees charged in scandal

■ Thirteen accused of allegations involving inmates having sex at governor's residence.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Gov. Jim Hodges angrily fired South Carolina's prisons chief Thursday after two guards were charged with letting inmates have sex at the governor's residence.

The charges deepened a prison sex scandal that began last summer when child killer Susan Smith told investigators she had sex with two guards.

A total of 13 guards and other

prison employees have been charged since the investigation began.

"I am mad as hell, for the sanctity of my home has been violated," Hodges said in firing William "Doug" Catoe and appointing former FBI agent Dodge Frederick to head the Corrections Department.

Hodges, who re-appointed Catoe in 1999, had stood by the prisons director even as the state investigation into sexual favors and drugs behind bars widened.

But reports that inmates who work in and around the Governor's Mansion and the governor's temporary residence had sex while he was not home

were "the straw that broke the camel's back," Hodges said.

"We've got to get confidence back in the Department of Corrections, but the first and most important thing to me is to get these folks out of my house," the governor said.

Catoe, a 30-year veteran of the Corrections Department, first was appointed to the \$122,404-a-year job by then-Gov. David Beasley in December 1998. He said Hodges called him Thursday with the news he was fired.

"I've always tried to do my best," Catoe said. "I can look in the mirror and know I did a good job."

Bush fills labor, trade positions

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President-elect Bush, completing his economic team and re-concluding his Cabinet, chose former Peace Corps Director Elaine Chao as labor secretary and Robert Zoellick, a diplomat in two previous Republican administrations, to be U.S. trade representative.

Two days after his first labor nominee withdrew under fire, Bush also mounted a spirited defense of two other nominees who have generated opposition: former Sen.

John Ashcroft, R-Mo., as attorney general and former Colorado Attorney General Gale Norton as interior secretary.

"You know, what happens in this town is, the voices of the special interests like to tear people down," Bush said, showing irritation.

Chao, the wife of a Republican senator, was Bush's second selection for Labor and appears likely to be confirmed. He picked her after his first choice, Linda Chavez, withdrew following disclosures that she provided shelter and cash to an illegal immigrant who did household chores.

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Weather

TODAY
Partly cloudy
high 48, low 39

TOMORROW
Showers
high 42, low 35