

Committee approves Norton

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Gale Norton, whose nomination by President Bush as interior secretary prompted sharp protest from environmentalists, received bipartisan endorsement Wednesday from a Senate Committee.

Barring any new, serious revelations, Norton's confirmation by the full Senate is all but assured.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee voted 18-2 to advance Norton's nomination with only two Democrats — Sens. Ron Wyden of Oregon and Charles Schumer of New York — opposing her.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, the panel's ranking Democrat, acknowledged "many still harbor doubts" about Norton's past criticism of the Endangered Species Act and other environmental laws as well as her views on land stewardship.

But he said Norton's two days of testimony and her assurance she would enforce environmental laws swayed him to support her nomination. Most of the other

Democrats on the panel said they concurred with Bingaman's assessment.

"If I felt we were going to vote for another James Watt, I wouldn't vote for her in a million years. But that is not the case," said Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., referring to the Reagan administration interior secretary who had gained the enmity of the environmental community.

Norton, 46, a former attorney general of Colorado, formerly worked for Watt and shared many of his views on property rights, criticism of federal regulations and the shared use of federal lands for both economic development and preservation.

Norton distanced herself from Watt during her confirmation hearing and said at one point, "I mean no disrespect to him, but I am my own person."

She also said some of her past comments on states' rights, criticism of federal regulations and a suggestion property owners have the "right to pollute" had been misinterpreted and distorted.

"Some of the things said about her are simply not correct," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., adding she too had been convinced by her testimony and 227 written responses to questions put by committee members that Norton should be confirmed.

Wyden said Norton had "genuinely moved away" from some of her past positions such as arguing that the Endangered Species Act was unconstitutional. But he said he remained troubled about damage she might do to the environment as interior secretary.

"I reluctantly vote no ... I hope she proves me wrong," said Wyden.

Schumer said Norton did not have "a balanced view" of conservation and development.

President Bush's selection of Norton attracted bitter opposition from environmentalists.

Police nab last two convicts

■ The final Texas escapees peacefully surrendered at a hotel in Colorado after a short standoff with authorities.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Ending one of the nation's biggest man-hunts without bloodshed, the last two escaped convicts from Texas left a hotel bare-chested and in handcuffs Wednesday after railing against the Texas criminal justice system in a TV interview.

Patrick Murphy Jr., 39, and Donald Newbury, 38, gave up after each was granted a five-minute telephone interview with KKTU.

The surrender ended a frantic search that began exactly six weeks ear-

lier when the pair and five others broke out of a Texas prison 800 miles away.

"They had their say by telephone and then we had them back out of the room, shirtless, hands in the air, no weapons on them," FBI agent Mark Mershon said. Inside the room, authorities found 10 handguns, two shotguns and ammunition.

Of the other inmates, four were arrested peacefully Monday in nearby Woodland Park and a fifth committed suicide as authorities closed in. Police said they had accounted for all 60 guns they believed the convicts had obtained since their Dec. 13 escape.

Texas authorities have said they would seek the death penalty against the men for the Christmas Eve slaying of a Dallas-area policeman during a holdup at a sporting goods store. His loaded gun was recovered from the con-

victs on Monday.

The last two convicts had checked in at the Holiday Inn on Monday evening, paying in cash and showing possibly false identification, hotel officials said. A suspicious employee called authorities.

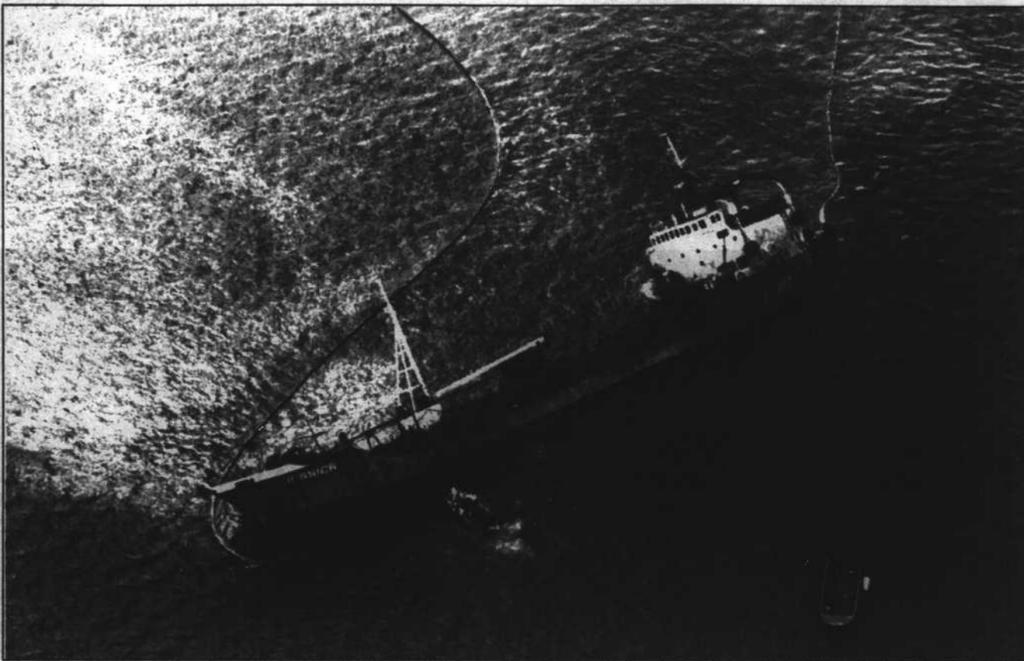
Officers checking out the tip telephoned one room around 10 p.m. Tuesday and Murphy answered.

"You got us. I don't know how you guys did it, but you got us," Deputy Police Chief Luis Velez quoted Murphy as saying.

Lt. Skip Arms added: "I think the officers were equally surprised when the individual said you found us."

After five hours of negotiations, the inmates gave up at 3:45 a.m.

During the interviews with a KKTU news anchorman, Newbury said the break-out was a statement against the Texas judicial system.



TANKED: The disabled Ecuadorian tanker, Jessica, lists more than 45 degrees where it ran aground off the coast of San Cristobal on Tuesday near Ecuador. The tanker, carrying diesel fuel, ran aground Jan. 16 with some 170,000 gallons of fuel pouring into the water off the coast of the Galapagos Islands.

Courtesy of U.S. Coastguard/Newsweek

Supremacist gunman gets plea bargain

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — The white supremacist accused of killing a mailman and wounding five people at a Jewish community center pleaded guilty to murder and hate crime charges Wednesday in a deal that spares him the death penalty.

Under the plea bargain, Buford O. Furrow, 39, will be sentenced to life in prison without parole.

He pleaded guilty to 16 federal charges stemming from the Aug. 10, 1999, rampage across the San Fernando Valley. The slaying of the mailman was a federal offense because he was a government employee.

Handcuffed and shackled, Furrow was thin and clean-shaven — a far cry from the pudgy, mustachioed man who was arrested last year. He answered softly, "Guilty, your honor," 16 times.

Furrow sprayed the North Valley Jewish Community Center in the San Fernando Valley with more than 70 bullets, wounding three boys, a teenage girl and a woman. Hours later, he killed Filipino-American Joseph Ito, shooting him nine times as the man was delivering mail.

Furrow surrendered in Las Vegas the next day, Furrow, of Olympia, Wash., had a long history of involvement with anti-Semitic groups operating in the Pacific Northwest, among them the Aryan Nations.

Authorities said he told them he shot up the community center to send a "wake-up call to America to kill Jews."

Prosecutors said he shot Ito because the man appeared to him to be Hispanic or Asian.

Prosecutors had planned to seek the death penalty. But U.S. Attorney Alejandro Mayorkas said prosecutors changed their mind after the defense submitted extensive evidence of Furrow's previous mental problems.

Mayorkas said the material showed Furrow sought psychiatric help for 10 years before the crime and complained of being plagued by homicidal and suicidal thoughts. Furrow's lawyers had planned to make his mental condition an issue at his trial.

In a statement, Furrow's lawyers said: "The crimes committed by our client ... were tragic in their consequence to many, many people. ... Together with the government's lawyers, we believe this is the appropriate resolution to this case."

Mayorkas said Furrow's attempt to spread a message of hate had been thwarted. "The only statement he made is he is a pathetic, cowardly man. What he did was remind us that we are all one," the U.S. attorney said.

Bush, Democrats tackle tough issues

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush met with Democratic congressional leaders for the first time Wednesday, worrying anew that the economy "is not as hopeful as we'd like" and discussing the need for a panel to look into election procedures following his disputed victory.

In his sixth meeting with groups of lawmakers since taking office Saturday, Bush sought backing for his tax-cut plan and declared reaching out to Congress "a habit I intend to keep." He met separately with Sen. John McCain of Arizona, his rival for the Republican presidential nomination, to discuss their differences over campaign finance reform.

The No. 2 House Democrat, Rep. David Bonior of Michigan, emerged from the meeting of Democratic and GOP congressional leaders saying Bush "understood and appreciated" the concerns Democrats raised about election reform. The American people feel deeply about "this election problem that we have, and how disenfranchised they feel, how disconnected they feel and how important it is," Bonior told reporters after the meeting.

Even though elections are run by the states: "The federal government has a stake in this, and the whole country is interested in it," said House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo.

In their session, Bush and McCain discussed campaign finance reforms the Arizona senator plans to push through Congress this year. During their fiercely fought primary race, Bush opposed key components of McCain's plan, and now the White House is concerned campaign finance reform could overtake Bush's agenda.

Despite promises of a cordial meeting, their differences were stark.

McCain wants to ban unregulated, unlimited "soft money" donations from corporations, unions and individuals that can-

"The federal government has a stake in this, and the whole country is interested in it."

Dick Gephardt
House Minority Leader

not be used to directly aid candidates.

Bush supports a ban on donations from corporations and unions but not individuals, an exception McCain calls a big loophole. Also, Bush wants a provision letting union members designate that their dues do not go to politics. McCain does not want that in his bill because including it would cost him support from Democrats.

Senior advisers said Bush did not expect to bridge the gap with McCain, but he wanted to show the public he was willing to listen to the maverick senator. They said the president hoped he could eventually embrace a GOP alternative from Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb. or others.

Hagel has filed a measure that would limit but not prohibit soft money donations. It would also raise the limits on hard money limits from \$1,000 per donor to a candidate to \$3,000.

Asked what he intended to tell McCain, Bush said simply: "Welcome."

In advance of the meeting, McCain's advisers said he would tell Bush he would insist his bill be put to a vote no later than March and, if that did not happen, he would try to attach it to the first available piece of legislation. The bill died last year in the face of stiff Republican opposition, but McCain picked up support in November's congressional elections.

Congressional sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said McCain, Lott and others were near agreement to bring the bill to the Senate floor in the run-up to Congress' Easter recess.

World/Nation

The Associated Press

Illinois

Changing flights will cost travelers a bit more

CHICAGO — Want to change that flight reservation? Get ready to shell out more cash.

Airline watchdogs say major carriers are likely to follow Continental Airlines in raising fees for flight changes on nonrefundable, advance-fare tickets to \$100.

American Airlines followed suit Wednesday, raising their processing fees for changing or canceling many nonrefundable tickets to \$90.

"They're nickel-and-diming us everywhere we go," said Tom Parsons, an airline watcher and CEO of Bestfares.com.

The "change fees" most often apply when a traveler buys a ticket in advance and then wants to change a date of travel or cancel the trip and apply the money paid for the ticket to future flights. Experts say these fees usually affect leisure travelers, since business travelers tend to book more expensive refundable tickets — often at the last minute.

Some airline experts say it's simply a way for airlines to generate revenue without increasing fares in the price-conscious leisure market.

"It's an annoyance fee that started at about \$25 a few years ago that has gone to \$100," said Joe Brancatelli, a columnist for Biztravel.com who tracks air travel. "Why? Because they can do it."

Washington, D.C.

Study: Hispanic females suffer from high dropout rates

Hispanic girls have a higher high school dropout rate than girls in any other racial or ethnic group and are the least likely to earn a college degree, according to the American Association of University Women.

Schools must do more to recognize cultural values that saddle Hispanic girls with family responsibilities, such as caring for younger siblings after school, that take away from educational endeavors, researchers said in a report Wednesday.

"If we want Latinas to succeed as other groups of girls have, schools need to work with and not against their families and communities and the strengths that Latinas bring to the classroom," said Angela Ginorio, the study's author.

The report, citing Census Bureau statistics, reported the dropout rate for Latinas ages 16 to 24 is 30 percent, compared with 12.9 percent for blacks and 8.2 percent for whites.

New York

Ecstasy ring leader faces trial in Netherlands

The alleged mastermind of a major Ecstasy smuggling ring that used Hasidic Jews as couriers to get past customs inspectors at Kennedy Airport will be brought to Brooklyn from the Netherlands to face drug charges.

Sean Erez — accused in a federal indictment of heading a ring that flooded the East Coast with more than 1 million pills — has exhausted all extradition appeals in the Netherlands, authorities said Wednesday.

Erez, 30, and his girlfriend, Diana Reicherter, 22, were arrested in Amsterdam in 1999 and "opposed extradition on the grounds of their alleged psychiatric condition," prosecutor Linda Laceywell said in court papers.

A spokesman for the Dutch Ministry of Justice, Victor Holtus, said Erez and Reicherter would be sent to Brooklyn "very shortly."

Corrections

■ Brent Stanfield is the chairman of the Committee for Fees Allocation. He was misidentified in Wednesday's Daily Nebraskan.

■ The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska presented its fees request for 2001-2002 on Tuesday. ASUN's budget will be voted on at CFA's Tuesday meeting.

■ Barrymore's Bar and Grill, 124 N. 13th St., was closed for remodeling the first week of January, but it is now open for business. In a Jan. 18 article, the Daily Nebraskan misstated the length of time the bar was closed.

Weather

TODAY	TOMORROW
Partly cloudy high 36, low 29	Light snow high 33, low 17

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