

Bush signs civil rights legislation

President retracts order to ban government hiring preferences

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush signed a civil rights bill Thursday that he said would "fight the evil of discrimination," and tried to silence a new furor over race by withdrawing a tentative order to end government hiring preferences for blacks and women.

"For the past few years the issue of civil rights legislation has divided America," Bush said. "No more."

The political divisions that sustained a two-year congressional fight over the civil rights bill and prompted Bush to veto a similar measure last year, remained sharp.

The new law negates Supreme Court decisions that made it more difficult for minorities to win lawsuits charging job discrimination

by employers. It also expands the rights of women and religious minorities to sue and collect damages for job discrimination, including sexual harassment.

It was Bush's agreement to support a modified version of the bill and drop his potent political argument that it would prompt employers to resort to racial quotas, that brought overwhelming congressional passage.

Bush signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991 in a Rose Garden ceremony that was overshadowed by the storm of controversy over a proposed presidential affirmative-action order circulated Wednesday evening to government agencies. Most Democrats stayed away from the signing in protest.

The order would have ended preferential hiring and promotions for women and minorities, and dropped federal guidelines for hiring practices that the courts apply to private businesses.

White House spokesmen said Bush had never seen the document. They said it was written by his legal counsel, C. Boyden Gray and circulated without Bush's approval.

After the signing, the White House released a new statement in Bush's name replacing the earlier

one and deleting the termination orders for affirmative action programs.

But presidential press secretary Marlin Fitzwater refused to rule out the possibility that Bush would later order such changes.

"We support preferences and set-asides as long as they're consistent with the law," Fitzwater said.

A senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there is strong support among Bush's advisers for proceeding with the dismantling of some affirmative action programs.

That official predicted more activity in that area and said Bush decided to remove the language proposed by Gray because "he thought this was not the right time."

DOE agrees to release documents on collider

WASHINGTON (AP) — A House panel backed off from its threat to subpoena top-level records on the super collider after the Department of Energy agreed to release the documents, officials said Thursday.

The compromise Wednesday averted a showdown brewing for months between a House science oversight subcommittee scrutinizing the \$8.25 billion project and the Energy Department, which is responsible for the superconducting super collider.

The panel, chaired by an ardent critic of the collider, was seeking correspondence between Energy Secretary James Watkins and Joseph Cipriano, the DOE project manager, said Bob Roach, a subcommittee spokesman.

When the documents were first requested seven months ago, DOE delayed compliance then said the correspondence had been destroyed, Roach said. Last month, the agency admitted the memos existed but said they would not be released because they constituted "privileged communications," he said.

DOE officials did not immediately return telephone calls for comment.

"We wanted these communications because they seem to present the most concise, most complete set of status reports and updates on the condition of the project," Roach said.

But a Texas congressman on the Science, Space and Technology Committee said the request by subcommittee chairman Rep. Howard Wolpe, D-Mich., for all DOE files pertaining to the collider could be construed as a "witchhunt."

"I don't believe the Congress has the right to see the confidential, eyes-only memos," said Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis, in whose district the collider is being built.

Project to restore Capitol draws criticism, warnings from officials

AUSTIN (AP) — The \$186 million overhaul of the Capitol was thrown into controversy Thursday as state leaders criticized the restoration project amid warnings of delays and cost overruns.

As members of the State Preservation Board, Gov. Ann Richards and Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock succeeded in having bids rejected for the interior restoration of the 103-year-old building. House Speaker Gib Lewis had wanted to accept the low bid.

The board directed its staff to redraw the bids to take into account the bidding companies' experience and financial background. The decision could delay awarding a bid by up to six months.

Bullock described the project as a mess. Richards said, "The action today was nothing more than to reassure all of us that whatever is done on this interior is done by the very best people in the very best interest of this state."

Both state leaders also expressed frustration about the management of the project, which is

headed by the Preservation Board staff.

"I really question this project at this point," Bullock said. "In Texas right now we have so many problems with money and public schools and all, I'm down to the point where I'd almost rather see them do the extension of it and not the rest of it."

But Preservation Board executive director Dealey Herndon disagreed with the criticism, saying, "My personal opinion is that we have done an outstanding job." She added, "We're completely supportive of what the board determines is the best thing for the state."

The project consists of two basic parts — construction of a four-story underground building connected to the north side of the building, and restoration of the outside and inside of the Capitol.

Originally the state pegged the project's cost at \$149.5 million with completion scheduled for 1994.

Troops will remain in S. Korea

U.S. delays withdrawals to pressure N. Korea, Cheney says

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States will delay withdrawals of U.S. troops from South Korea to pressure North Korea to stop making nuclear weapons, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney announced Thursday.

The announcement underscored growing U.S. concern about Communist North Korea's nuclear capability and its refusal to allow inspection of its nuclear and reprocessing facilities.

North Korea denies any nuclear weapons program, but South Korean officials say the secretive nation could manufacture weapons-grade nuclear bombs in two or three years. U.S. officials say it could be sooner.

Speaking at the end of two days of security talks with South Korea, Cheney said that troop cutbacks will be postponed "until the dangers and uncertainties of the

North Korean nuclear program have been thoroughly addressed.

"We are convinced that North Korea is developing the capability to build a nuclear weapon," said Cheney, whose talks with South Korean officials focused on the North's nuclear weapons development.

He spoke at a joint news conference with his South Korean counterpart, Lee Jong-koo.

Under the new troop withdrawal plan, U.S. forces will be cut from 43,000 to 36,000 by the end of 1992 as planned, but further reductions designated for 1993-1995 will be postponed.

Fewer than 10,000 troops will be affected.

North Korea, a bitter enemy of the South since the peninsula was divided in 1945, for years has demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops. U.S. forces came to the aid

of Seoul in the 1950-53 Korean War.

Cheney called on North Korea to publicly forswear the development of nuclear weapons or the ability to produce enriched or reprocessed nuclear fuel that could be used in producing such weapons. He said North Korea must also allow verification of such changes.

He and Lee said they would "pursue all available means" to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons development program.

They said they would step up diplomatic pressure on North Korea through the United Nations and major powers, including neighboring China and Japan.

North Korea joined the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in 1985 but has failed to sign a mandatory safeguards accord to open its facilities to inspections.

Visitation of Kennedy murder site increases

DALLAS (AP) — Surging interest in John F. Kennedy on the 28th anniversary of his assassination is prompting an increase in attendance at a sixth-floor exhibit from where it is believed a sniper fired the fatal shots.

The Sixth Floor Exhibit, in the well-known Texas School Depository overlooking the route that Kennedy's motorcade took Nov. 22, 1963, attracted 22,100 visitors last month, with November's attendance projected at about 24,600.

"We do have a spike in the October-November period that peaks in November and coincides basically with the anniversary date," said Bob Hays, executive director of the Dallas County Historical Foundation, which operates the exhibit.

"Attendance is picking up right now," he said, adding that the foundation is considering plans to expand the project.

By comparison, September attendance at the exhibit was 19,400. Last year's attendance for September-November was 19,000, 22,400 and 24,600, Hays said.

Total attendance so far this fiscal year is up about 10 percent. About 280,000 people visited the Sixth Floor from September 1990 through October of this year.



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