

Administration cuts border crossing fee proposal in half

Local businesses are concerned they will experience a loss in profits due to border fee.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Clinton administration has modified yet again a much-disliked proposal to levy border crossing fees on people entering the United States by land from Mexico and Canada.

The White House's immigration control package, which was forwarded Wednesday to Congress, includes a crossing fee that is half the size first envisioned.

Now, the administration wants to provide extra funding for land border inspectors in states that agree to levy a \$1.50 federal crossing fee per car and 75 cents per pedestrian. Discounts would be available for frequent crossers.

In February, the administration proposed a \$3 per car, \$1.50 per pedestrian fee that would have been mandatory along the northern and southern borders. After an outcry from border states, Canada and Mexico, the White House made the proposal voluntary, linking additional border funding to states' willingness to levy the fee.

The offer tendered appears to hold scant appeal for border law-

makers who have vowed to derail the proposal on Capitol Hill.

They contend a fee would depress trade and drive away Mexican and Canadian consumers accustomed to shopping in U.S. border communities. Additional costs to cross the border would be especially harmful at a time when Southwestern border businesses are reeling from Mexico's economic turmoil, they add.

"[Gramm] is going to double the size of the Border Patrol and it's not going to require a fee."

— Larry Neal, Gramm press secretary

"All the businesses in Brownsville and other (border) communities have lost 75 percent of their business — and this is without a fee," Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, said Thursday. "There is no way I can support something like this."

Added Ortiz: "I am for some type of enforcement to keep illegal aliens from coming in, but not at the burden of people who have already paid through their noses."

Money derived from the crossing fee would be placed in a Border Services User Fee Account,

which the attorney general could tap to increase the number of Immigration and Naturalization Service land-border inspectors at crossing points.

A spokesman for Sen. Phil Gramm, a crossing fee critic, said the proposal wouldn't survive review by the senator's subcommittee. Gramm chairs the Senate panel that funds the Justice Department and INS budgets.

"A fee is a fee is a fee," said Gramm press secretary Larry Neal. "He is going to double the size of the Border Patrol and it's not going to require a fee."

Gramm is proposing adding 5,000 Border Patrol agents over the next five years, funding the manpower additions with cuts in other programs.

The White House immigration plan would add at least 2,100 Border Patrol agents over the next three years, speed up illegal alien deportations, increase alien smuggling penalties and fund employment verification pilot projects. The package was introduced in the Senate by Democrats Barbara Boxer of California, Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Paul Simon of Illinois.

Search for bodies nears end

Eighteen people remain missing in the federal building ruins.

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Attorney General Janet Reno insisted Thursday the trail hasn't gone cold in the hunt for John Doe 2. At the bombed-out building, crews moved closer to giving up the search with 18 of the dead still missing.

Workers began sifting through the last 6-foot pile of unsearched rubble. They planned to work through the night if necessary and then finally accept that some victims may never be found.

"I had wanted to find everybody," said fire Capt. Richard Bell. "But I realize now a lot are just gone."

The death toll climbed to 152, including 16 children.

Once the rescuers quit, families will be allowed to gather at the site for one last, private remembrance.

In Washington, Reno admitted disappointment that John Doe No. 2, the second suspect in the bombing, has not been identified or taken into custody.

But she said the FBI is following thousands of leads in the April 19 bombing, the deadliest domestic terror attack in U.S. history.

The arrest and release of two drifters originally believed linked to bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh, the only person charged so far, demonstrate that "it is also important that people who are not guilty, who are not implicated, are quickly



Reno

clarified as such," Reno said.

"And so I'm glad that that process worked where those very unusual coincidences took place," the attorney general.

With the government offering a \$2 million reward, a hot line has gotten more than 36,000 calls, from which more than 14,800 substantive leads have been written up and sent to FBI offices around the nation to check out, a federal official said on condition of anonymity.

Despite their release, Gary Alan Land and Robert Jacks have been subpoenaed to testify before a federal grand jury investigating the bombing, a Justice Department official said in Washington.

That was done as a precaution, said the official, who demanded anonymity. The penalties for lying to a grand jury are greater than those for lying to the FBI, and the grand jury can issue warrants to search any of the men's possessions or property, the official noted.

A law enforcement source said the FBI is studying videotape from an Oklahoma trooper's car to check a witness report that a brown pickup truck stopped ahead of McVeigh's car when the suspect was arrested after the bombing.

The Dallas Morning News reported that authorities were trying to enhance the image of the film, saying the truck's license plate was captured by the videotape. The camera showed the pickup pulled over when McVeigh stopped, the paper said, quoting an anonymous source.

A Highway Patrol spokesman said he knew nothing about the tape, and the FBI refused to comment.

On a sunny and warm day, about 50 firefighters worked through one last pile of rubble in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.



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