

Senate confirms Ashcroft's nomination

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Sen. John Ashcroft won confirmation as attorney general on Thursday, completing President Bush's Cabinet and overcoming a ferocious Democratic assault on his conservative views and personal integrity. The Senate vote was 58-42.

"The president of the United States, George W. Bush, is entitled to have his selection as attorney general," Majority Leader Trent Lott said a few moments before the roll was called on the most contentious confirmation fight in a decade.

Vouching for the nominee's honesty and integrity, he brushed aside weeks of attacks by Democrats, including many of Ashcroft's former Senate colleagues. "I don't know that person they're depicting," said Lott, R-Miss.

Democrats claimed a consolation prize, saying the 42 votes against the nomination would be enough to sustain a filibuster against future Bush administration nominations they deemed too conservative. The votes in opposition were the most against any attorney general in the nation's history.

"He's wrong on civil rights, wrong on a woman's right to choose, wrong on needed steps to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children," argued Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., who led the fight against confirmation. "And he's the wrong choice to be attorney general of the United States."

Within hours of the vote, Ashcroft was sworn in at the Supreme Court by Justice Clarence Thomas, a longtime friend who survived a brutal confirmation struggle of his own a decade ago.

In a statement, the new attorney general pledged he would "confront injustice by leading a professional Justice Department that is free from politics, that is uncompromisingly fair."

Even with Democrats claiming success, the result was a victory for Ashcroft and the president. All 50 Senate Republicans and eight Democrats voted for confirmation of the former Missouri senator, whose long political career seemed over when he lost a re-election bid last November.

All the votes in opposition came from Democrats. They included not only liberal stalwarts such as Kennedy, but also the roster of po-

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U.S. senator

Sen. Jean Carnahan, D-Mo., opposed Ashcroft in her first high-profile vote since taking the seat that her late husband won from Ashcroft last November. Ashcroft, she said, "was just too divisive for our country."

Republicans bristled at the attacks. "I have absolute, total, complete confidence that he is going to be one outstanding attorney general of the United States," said Sen. Don Nickles of Oklahoma, the GOP whip.

And Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, scoffed at Democratic claims. "If that's the way you've got to send a message, by trashing a person's reputation, distorting his record... that's pretty pathetic," he said.

Liberal opponents, he charged, "want a litmus test society."

Even before the vote, Republican sources circulated the names of likely top-ranking officials in a Justice Department headed by the Ashcroft. These included Larry D. Thompson as deputy attorney general, the No. 2 spot in the agency, and Theodore Olson as solicitor

general, the lawyer who runs the administration before the Supreme Court.

Thompson, a black lawyer who was U.S. attorney in Atlanta during the Reagan administration, an adviser to Clarence Thomas, his bitterly fought confirmation to the Supreme Court justice in 1991.

Ashcroft's conservative views, including his opposition to abortion and gun control and his fight against a desegregation plan in St. Louis more than a decade ago, were in doubt during the confirmation process. In four days of hearings, the former state attorney general, governor and senator sought to reassure his critics, saying he would serve "all the people" and defend the nation's laws despite his personal preferences. In particular, he pledged not to seek a Supreme Court reversal of a woman's right to an abortion, said he would defend the constitutionality of gun control laws proposed in the Senate, and said the rights division was of particular importance to him.

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BIRDS

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time in March. Despite what evidence would suggest, Sippial said the Physical Plant cleans up affected areas on "a very frequent basis."

Parking Area 56, the lot across from the Rec Center, is scheduled to be cleaned Monday. However, the parking lot will have to be closed, potentially exacerbating parking problems.

Student complaints have raised the University's attention, and officials have started to look deeper into the situation.

"At a meeting this afternoon, officials met and began developing a plan to gently urge the birds off campus," King said.

Many University departments attended the meeting, including the University Police Department; the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; Residence Life; and Parking Traffic and Transportation Services. Sippial also attended the meeting.

Birds living in an agricultural region tend to feed heavily in the day and roost at dusk, and apparently, the live oak trees on campus are a popular location for the birds. Most of the major fecal activity occurs af-

ter the birds roost. If they were frightened away from campus before they settled in for the evening, the excrement would not be as heavy, King said.

Gary Jackson, manager of Bus Operations, acknowledged that the bird feces are a problem, but said no students have voiced their concern to him. "So far, we haven't had any complaints from the students," he said.

Sippial said that in the five and a half years he has been with A&M, there have "always been complaints off and on," about the fecal material. Even though there have been more complaints this year, the issue is "not a new problem."

REC

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adjust student fees within that cap without asking for the Texas Legislature's consent.

Problems with equipment at the Rec Center are not included in the bill, Corrington said. Rec equipment is fixed, but recent delays in shipping have kept needed parts from arriving at the Station. Corrington hopes to stockpile equipment parts in the future, the "out of order" signs posted on various machines in the weight room.

During its lifetime, exercise equipment is cycled through the Rec Center. Older machines are placed on the second and third floors, while newer machines arrive first in the weight room. Equipment on its last legs goes to the surplus for scraps or for other state institutions' use, Corrington said.

The bill to raise the Rec Center fee cap will be placed on the agenda of the Higher Education Committee of the Texas Legislature for consideration this session. Brown, a vice chairman of the committee, expects the bill to pass.

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