

Bush veto overwhelmingly dumped by House

Bill would extend Chinese visas

By Jim Drinkard
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to override President Bush's veto of legislation protecting Chinese students from deportation, while Bush appealed to Republican senators to resist and help him keep open ties to the world's most populous nation.

The House vote of 390-25 sent the matter to the Senate, where both sides said the outcome of Thursday's scheduled vote was in doubt.

"We've got a fighting chance," Bush said Wednesday night at a state dinner for the president of North Yemen.

House Speaker Thomas S. Foley declared, "I don't think what's most on the minds of the members of Congress is the sensitivities of the present Chinese leadership. ... This is a leadership that has in our judgment failed to respect the rights of its own citizens."

"On the issue of China, the president has lost his credibility," said Rep. Stephen Solarz, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Asia subcommittee.

Bush pinned his hopes on the Senate, where both Democratic and Republican senators predicted a cliffhanger. The president, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and Secretary of State James A. Baker III all were telephoning senators through the day.

Bush was appealing publicly to GOP senators to support him in the face of what he termed "crass politics" played by some supporters of the override.

But the chief House sponsor of the legislation, California Democrat Nancy

Pelosi, said she hoped senators would resist the "full-court press" by the White House.

"Why would he ask a senator to vote against human rights and principles?" she asked after the House vote.

The legislation would affect as many as 32,000 Chinese students now in the United States on "exchange visitor" visas. The bill would waive a legal requirement that those students return home for two years after their visas expire before returning to the United States or going elsewhere.

In addition, the bill would permit any Chinese student whose visa has expired — as many as 8,000 others — to remain in the United States as long as danger exists at home, and would allow Chinese students to work while in this country.

Bush vetoed the measure on Nov. 30 after it had passed unanimously in the House and by a voice vote in the Senate. Chinese student groups have lobbied hard for an override of the veto, saying many of them would face political persecution at home because they supported the pro-democracy demonstrations that brought a violent government crackdown last June.

A group made up of Chinese students hailed the House vote as "an historic victory for human rights in China."

"We are hopeful that the strong support in the Senate will be enhanced by the House vote," said Haiching Zhao of the Independent Federal of Chinese Students and Scholars, which represents 42,000 Chinese students at more than 200 U.S. colleges and universities.

At the time Bush vetoed the bill, he ordered government agencies to adopt

what he contends are essentially the same safeguards. The veto was simply an effort to preserve executive branch foreign policy prerogatives, he said, and to keep open the door for future student and cultural exchanges.

"I will not break faith with the Chinese students here. ... They were safe then, and they are safe now, and they will be safe in the future," Bush told a White House news conference Wednesday.

To the 37 GOP senators who attended a breakfast at the White House, Bush hit hard on his contention that a veto override would mean a total cutoff of the flow of students to the United States, and he appeared to be winning a few converts.

"The price of the Pelosi bill is lost opportunity for the Chinese scholars of tomorrow," the president told reporters later.

"The bill is totally unnecessary. The long-term policy consequences are potentially great. And Congress, in my view, will have only itself to blame."

Bush listed steps the Beijing government has taken which he said justified his policy toward China: the lifting of martial law in the capital; the release of jailed dissidents; a promise not to sell medium-range missiles to Syria; acceptance of Peace Corps volunteers, Fulbright scholars and a Voice of America correspondent back into the country; and the muting of anti-U.S. propaganda.

But critics have countered that the missile promise was nothing more than a repeating of assurances given months before the crackdown, that the effects of martial law remain in place and that arrests, harassment and secret trials of pro-democracy agitators continue.

They also contend that Bush's admin-

istrative actions to protect the students can be revoked at any time and could be subject to a court challenge.

Three Republican senators who attended a White House meeting with Bush on other matters late in the day said afterward they stood with the president on the China question and predicted his veto would be sustained.

Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., said, "We expect to see that veto sustained."

Asked if Bush already had the support of 34 GOP senators, Sen. John Warner, R-Va., said, "We're closing the gap on that question right now."

"I'm going to support the president," said Sen. David Durenberger, R-Minn.

All 25 House members who voted against the override were Republicans: Bob Stump, Arizona; John Paul Hammerschmidt and Tommy Robinson, Arkansas; Porter Goss, Andy Ireland and C.W. Bill Young, Florida; Dennis Hastert, Ed Madigan and Robert Michel, Illinois; Richard Baker, Clyde Holloway and Jim McCrery, Louisiana; Norman Lent, New York; Paul Gillmor, Ohio; Larry Coughlin and George Gekas, Pennsylvania; James Quillen and Don Sundquist, Tennessee; Larry Combest, Tom DeLay and Lamar Smith, Texas; James Hansen, Utah; Herbert Bateman, Virginia; Thomas Petri and James Sensenbrenner, Wisconsin.

Not voting were: Ronnie Flippo, D-Ala.; Don Young, R-Alaska; Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz.; Bill Nelson, D-Fla.; Michael Bilirakis, R-Fla.; Brian Donnelly, D-Mass.; Bob Carr, D-Mich.; Guy Vanderjagt, R-Mich.; Gerry Sikorski, D-Minn.; Floyd Flake, D-N.Y.; Mary Rose Oakar, D-Ohio; Les AuCoin, D-Ore.; Joe Kolter, D-Pa.; Austin Murphy, D-Pa.; Joseph McDade, R-Pa.; and Charles Wilson, D-Texas.

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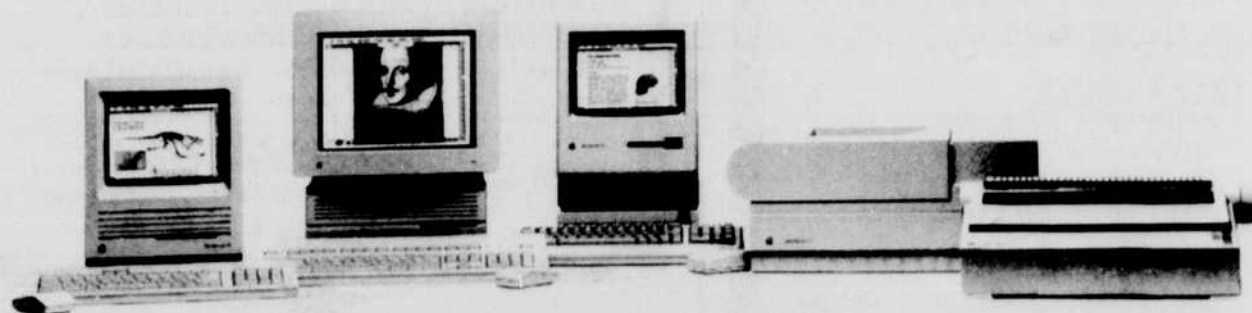
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