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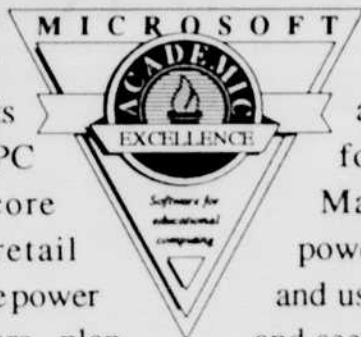
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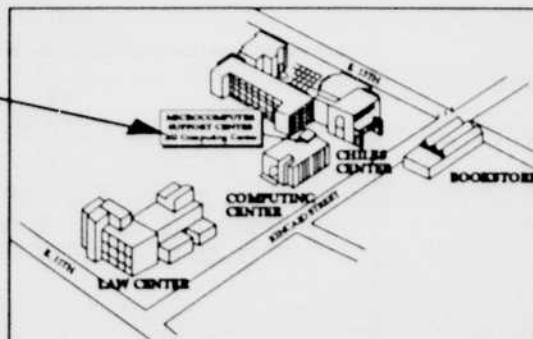
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House 'check-bouncers' still safe

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Thomas S. Foley said Thursday there would be no naming of names or other punishment meted out as a result of free overdrafts and other abuses at the House bank.

"I'm not going to correct the system that way," Foley said when asked to release the names of House members attached to the 8,331 checks bounced in the year ending June 30, 1990. The General Accounting Office said the members-only House bank covered the overdrafts free of charge.

A group of freshman House Republicans, at a news conference, said anything short of full disclosure would not satisfy the voters.

"If we're not up front about this... it looks like a whitewash," said Rep. Scott Klug, R-Wis.

Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, said if Foley doesn't identify the offenders, "every member of Congress gets tarred... We don't want to get tarred nor feathered."

The group sent a letter to Foley demanding "a listing of each insufficient fund check that was written and the name of the member who wrote each insufficient fund check." So as not to be exempted themselves, the group said the list should continue to the present time.

Although the House is not releasing a list, lawmakers have been notified they may request from the House bank their account statements and then release them publicly if they wish.

It seemed unclear, however, what those statements would prove. Charles Mallon, who manages the bank, said the statements would never show a negative balance.

In cases of insufficient funds, the bank covered the obligation with its operating funds and set the checks aside. It would not debit the members' accounts until enough money was deposited to cover them, he said.

A group called Americans for a Balanced Budget said it was asking all members who wrote no overdrafts to identify themselves in a survey.

Some lawmakers obtained letters certifying their purity from House Sergeant at Arms Jack Russ, the House officer who oversees the bank.

Foley on Thursday said he had complete confidence in Russ. Foley said the staff members who disobeyed his orders to crack down on that practice — and to stop cashing big checks for non-members — would not be disciplined.

"I have decided that we're going to make it clear that ... in the future I am going to hold members of the bank staff accountable," he told reporters. "But for the moment, we're going to start everybody with a clean slate."

Thomas vote to be close

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two more Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee said Thursday they oppose the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, setting the stage for a close — perhaps evenly split — vote by the panel on Friday.

Alabama Sen. Howell Heflin, often a pivotal vote on the committee, and Wisconsin's Herb Kohl said they had decided against Thomas. But Heflin and other critics conceded he is likely to be confirmed handily by the full Senate, even if he gets a worst-case, 7-7 tie and no recommendation from the committee.

Heflin took the Senate floor to deliver a harshly critical assessment of the nominee. Thomas displayed "deceptiveness at worst or muddleheadedness at best" when he tried to disavow past writings in which he had advocated using natural or higher law principles to interpret the Constitution, Heflin said.

While Heflin noted he had voted to confirm other conservative justices, "I am not for an extremist right-wing court that would turn back progress made against discrimination as well as progress that has been made for human rights and freedoms in recent years."

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