

Wilson veto sparks protests

NORTHWEST (AP) — Gov. Pete Wilson's weekend veto of a homosexual rights bill triggered violent protests by thousands of gay activists in San Francisco on Monday and filled the streets of Los Angeles with anti-Wilson protesters.

The San Francisco demonstration turned violent Monday night when some 5,000 protesters converged on two state buildings in the Civic Center and began breaking glass windows and doors and spray painting "Wilson is a Basher" and "Gay Rights Now" on the facades.

Angry protesters threw a burning flag through a broken window in one of the buildings.

Police and demonstrators sprayed one another with mace. Officers ultimately doused demonstrators with a hose from inside the buildings, but the low-pressure spray did little to push back demonstrators.

In Los Angeles, the mood was equally confrontational.

"Wilson is a liar! Equal rights now!" shouted demonstrators outside the Federal Building in Los Angeles, condemning Wilson's veto of legislation to outlaw job discrimination against homosexuals.

A second protest outside the governor's office in downtown Los Angeles drew about 300 people Monday afternoon.

On Monday night, thousands of protesters gathered in West Hollywood. They vented their anger at Wilson's action by blowing whistles and screaming protest chants as they blocked several streets in the

city known internationally for its large, gay populace.

Those protesters poured into the streets surrounding the Los Angeles County Museum of Art where Wilson was meeting with the Mexico President Arturo Salinas de Gortari.

In the San Francisco demonstrations, protesters chased mayoral candidate Frank Jordan, who was police chief during a controversial sweep of a protest by ACT UP, from the predominately gay Castro neighborhood.

Several hundred protesters broke away from the crowd and forced Jordan out of the neighborhood where he was picked up by a police car.

Jordan was police chief when gay protesters alleged the unnecessary use of force to clear a 1989 demonstration in the Castro organized by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power.

"Gay and lesbian people are not just disappointed, they're angry. Pete Wilson is going to have hell to pay," said Torie Osborn of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Community Services Center.

She said Wilson proved himself a "liar and a coward" for vetoing the type of gay rights measure he had previously indicated he would support.

In vetoing AB101 on Sunday, Wilson said it would burden employers by adding to the "flood-tide" of litigation which he called a threat to the state's economic well-being.

The bill's author, Assemblyman Terry Friedman, D-Sherman Oaks, called the veto "a victory for bigotry. He (Wilson) has caved in to the right-wing extremists and the religious fundamentalist fringe groups."

REGIONAL BRIEFS

'God Squad' may convene

WASHINGTON (AP) — Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan Jr. is expected to convene the "God Squad" to decide if timber sales should continue despite the threat to the northern spotted owl. *The Oregonian* reported.

Sources indicated Lujan would make the announcement today.

The God Squad — formally the Endangered Species Committee — acquired its nickname because it decides whether a species lives or perishes. It has the power to decide if the economic necessity of selling federal timber outweighs the Endangered Species Act's mandate to protect the owl.

The owl was listed as a threatened species in June 1990, largely as a result of excessive logging in the old-growth forests in which it lives.

The Cabinet-level committee has acted only twice since 1978, when Congress added the exemption to the Endangered Species Act. On one of those occasions, both in 1979, Congress overruled it.

Cy Jamison, director of the Bureau of Land Management, asked Lujan on Sept. 11 to convene the committee in hopes it would allow the BLM to make 44 timber sales barred by the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the owl.

The BLM had planned to sell 750 million board feet of timber in the fiscal year that ended Monday, but restrictions to protect the owl drastically reduced the area available for logging on BLM and Forest Service lands in Oregon and Washington.

Lawyer calls move 'ploy'

(AP) — Calling the "God Squad" over the spotted owl appears to be a political ploy to help Sen. Bob Packwood get re-elected, an environmental lawyer alleged Tuesday.

Vic Sher, of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund in Seattle, contended the government hasn't fulfilled two conditions that are required before the Endangered Species Committee, also known as the God Squad, can grant any exemptions to the Endangered Species Act.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management hasn't accepted alternatives to its timber sales, as suggested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and hasn't prepared an environmental impact statement, Sher said.

The BLM is seeking exemptions for 44 timber sales in spotted owl habitat in its Roseburg and Coos Bay districts in western Oregon.

"The BLM is not able to sell the timber it is offering now, so there isn't a timber crunch," Sher said. "There are alternatives available which were pointed out by the Fish and Wildlife Service, which primarily depend on BLM adopting an adequate long-range plan to protect the owl."

"It seems to be largely a political ploy for Sen. Packwood's re-election campaign."

"That is an insult," responded Packwood spokesperson Lauri Reed. "It's not only an insult to Sen. Packwood, but also an insult to the people involved."

Packwood has been pushing his own bill to guarantee adequate levels of timber to keep Northwest mills running. Last year, he tried to amend the Endangered Species Act so that the BLM and Forest Service could bring entire 10-year logging plans before the God Squad, rather than individual timber sales.

Packwood said he welcomed Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan Jr.'s decision to convene the committee.

"The God Squad will take into account all species, whether they are owls or people," Packwood said. "I have worked for a long time to bring balance to this process, and I like to think today's decision is due in some small part to my efforts."

Environmentalists said they were confident that the scientific evidence that the spotted owl is in danger of extinction would prevail in the committee, as it has in previous court battles.

"If the members of the Endangered Species Committee follow the law, there is little doubt they have to find in favor of the scientific evidence that the old growth that they propose to cut here will substantially harm the survival of the owl," said Larry Tuttle, Oregon director of the Wilderness Society.


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