

Thomas vote expected despite harassment charge



WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate struggled Monday with allegations that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas sexually harassed an assistant a decade ago. But Senate leaders indicated they would move ahead with a Tuesday evening vote as the White House decried an 11th-hour "smear" campaign.

Sen. J. James Exon, D-Neb., one of Thomas' earliest supporters, withdrew his support and joined a handful of senators calling for a delay on the Thomas vote. Opponents said more time was needed to assess the allegations by Anita Hill, now a University of Oklahoma law professor.

"If the vote were 7 o'clock tonight, I would not vote to confirm because I would not have the opportunity to make a judgment," Exon said.

The vote can be postponed only when all 100 Senators agree to do so. "If as many senators have the questions on their minds that this senator has right now, that (Tuesday vote) might be a rather hasty action," Exon said.

He urged a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing with testimony from both Thomas and Hill. But the Senate made no move toward that.

Democratic Leader George Mitchell of Maine said he expected the vote would proceed as scheduled at 3 p.m. PDT Tuesday, even though "a num-

ber of senators who had previously expressed their intention to vote for Thomas have asked for a delay."

Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del., who voted against Thomas in committee, said there was no reason to delay the vote.

Another early supporter, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., said he would reconsider his vote because the allegations were

"troubling in light of their gravity."

In all, eight of the 13 Democrats who had previously announced support for Thomas said they wanted to read the FBI report of Hill's allegations.

"It seems to me a person shouldn't have to violate the law in order for his character to be called into question," Hill told reporters in Norman, Okla. "I want to focus on behavior,"

which she said undermined his ability to enforce the law.

The allegations, which surfaced over the weekend, threw the Senate into tumult on the eve of the vote. Thomas kept out of the public eye, and the Supreme Court opened its fall session minus one justice.

Thomas, who is black, would succeed retired Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first black to be a member of the court.

In statements to the Judiciary Committee and the FBI, Hill said Thomas made explicit remarks to her about pornographic movies and his sexual interest in her while she worked for him at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

President Bush says he's not worried about the allegations. "I think he will be and should be confirmed — quickly."

HORSES

Continued from Page 9

tive and get to look down on everything instead of always looking up at the world, as wheelchair users usually do, she said.

"You as the rider have total control. The whole mental thing changes. They lose their disability once they get on," McCarty said, adding that they also enjoy feeding and grooming the animals.

"How often do these people get a chance to take care of something? Someone is always taking care of them," she said.

All of the riders at Saturday's fund raiser echoed McCarty's sentiments, saying what they enjoy most about the program is that it is a family-oriented interaction with animals and the outdoors.

Kathy Jenness, a single mother with three daughters ages 6 to 12, said she enjoys the fact that she and her children can do an activity together, year round.

And even if family members do not participate in the actual riding, they clearly find it a worthwhile experience to watch, knowing that their disabled relative is having a good time.

"It's good for her to do some stuff because she's bored a lot," said Ila Kriegh, 7, about her 11-year-old sister Rena. "I think it's fun for her."



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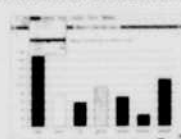
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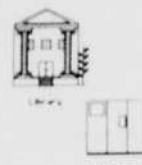
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