

Plan to list House check abusers



WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican leaders proposed Wednesday publicly identifying all 355 current and former House members who wrote overdrafts at the chamber's bank during a 39-month period. Twenty-four would be labeled "abusers."

The plan also would identify House members who did not write bad checks during the period. It will be presented Thursday to all Republicans, who previously backed full disclosure, but could not agree on the details.

Sponsors of the full-disclosure resolution demand that Democrats permit a vote on the plan Friday, as an alternative to a much smaller public listing backed by the House ethics committee.

The House Democratic leadership is supporting the committee, which voted 10-4 last week to identify only 19 current and five former members as abusers.

All others who held accounts at the bank during the 39 months, which ended last Oct. 3, could request a letter showing their overdrafts and decide whether to make it public.

Rep. Nancy L. Johnson of Connecticut, one of the Republican sponsors, said it will be politically difficult for anyone to vote against full disclosure on the floor.

"How would you like to vote against full disclosure?" Johnson said she would ask any wavering lawmakers, referring to the explanations they would have to make to constituents. Johnson and three other Republicans supplied the four negative votes on the ethics committee.

The Republican plan would:

- Reveal the number of bad checks written by current and former members who had accounts at the bank during the 39-month period under review. The committee has said 296 current and 59 former House members wrote at least one rubber check during the 39 months, before the bank was closed for good late last year.
- Retain the ethics committee's "worst abuser" criteria for the

19 current and five former members. These account holders overdrew their balances by more than their next paycheck 20 percent of the 39 months. This amounted to eight months for those who had accounts the full period.

- Release the extensive information available on these 24 and 42 others. The 66 represent the group whose accounts were reconstructed in detail by congressional investigators. The information on the 66 includes the number of bad checks written, the number not honored and returned to the account holder, the dates of the first and last rubber checks, and the number of months the bad checks exceeded the member's next paycheck.
- Provide the number of bad checks and the dates of the first and last checks for the remainder of the account holders during the 39 months. The committee does not have the more

complete information on these members.

- Adopt the ethics committee proposal to allow 10 days after passage before public release of the list of 24. This would allow them to demonstrate in private that the information was faulty.
- Release all remaining names 20 days after passage.

Before the GOP leadership agreed to the plan, a meeting of all Republicans had failed to resolve differences over releasing information that was not uniform for all bank customers.

But the resolution sponsors said they decided the public had the right to timely disclosure, despite the uneven release of account information.

President Bush also weighed in for a complete list, telling reporters at the White House on Wednesday, "I think full disclosure of something of this nature is important. I agree that it's the way to go and I think, inevitably, it will happen."

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