

Packwood talks, wants court trial

BAKER CITY (AP) — Sen. Bob Packwood said Monday he'd rather be tried in court than have his case before the Senate Ethics Committee because the statute of limitations would have run out on the sexual misconduct allegations against him.

Packwood broke his pledge not to discuss the allegations by answering a question at a Chamber of Commerce forum in Baker City.

Chris Collins, 36, a reporter for the *Baker City Herald* who was not representing the newspaper at the time, asked Packwood to discuss the issue.

"I can't believe you'd come here to Eastern Oregon and not expect to answer our questions about sexual harassment," she said. "You've lost my trust, and I think you should resign."

Packwood replied that the matter would be taken up by the Ethics Committee, which has become his standard answer to questions about the allegations.

"I'd much rather be tried in court. There's a two-year statute of limitations," he said. "If I were tried in court instead of the Senate, any allegations over two years old would not be tried."

Others in the crowd of about

60 quickly changed the subject back to issues Packwood covered in his remarks on balancing the federal budget.

Earlier in Ontario, Packwood refused to discuss new reports saying he made unwelcome sexual advances against women, saying it was more important to talk about the need to consider cuts in Social Security and Medicare to balance the budget.

About 150 people attending a Chamber of Commerce luncheon in the farming town near the Idaho border were happy to oblige, limiting their questions to Packwood's speech about the federal budget deficit.

"It doesn't affect us," Steve Long, an accountant who attended the luncheon, said of the sexual misconduct accusations. "We're interested in the budget deficit, Social Security spending and line item vetoes and issues that make a difference."

"It is on everybody's minds," said Manny Alvarada, president of the local chamber. "We would ask him about it, but we don't see what good that would do with the news media following him everywhere."

Rae Ann Hollingsworth, a legal assistant, said she came to the luncheon out of curiosity



Bob Packwood

about what he would say.

"At some point in time, he needs to make direct comments about the allegations," she said. "The people are a little concerned about whether they can trust him."

Packwood's visit to Eastern Oregon comes on the heels of a Washington Post report that 13 more women said he made unwanted sexual advances toward them.

The latest reports bring to 23 the number of women who told the newspaper that Packwood kissed and touched them against their will between the late 1960s and 1990.

Clark back working at statehouse

SALEM (AP) — A former state representative who did not seek re-election after being convicted of sexual abuse is back at the Legislature, this time as head of a public policy think tank.

Former Rep. Kelly Clark of West Linn was accused last summer of going to the home of a legislative employee in the middle of the night and subjecting her to hours of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

He pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges. He said he and the woman had a previous relationship and that he went too far in trying to repair it.

On Monday, Clark was at the Legislature for a discussion of land-use issues before a House panel.

House kills amendment about sexual orientation

SALEM (AP) — The Oregon House on Monday voted against amending its rules to forbid legislative meetings and hearings in places that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Rules already forbid meetings anyplace that discriminates on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, age or national origin. The vote against expanding the rules to cover sexual orientation and disability was 31-27.

Opponents said adding sexual orientation would reduce access to government for people in communities that adopt anti-homosexual ordinances such as those proposed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

Rep. John Schoon, R-Rickreall, said the rule change would amount to "ethnic cleansing of communities we don't approve of."

But supporters said the question was broader. "This is not a political issue. This is a human rights issue," said Rep. Margaret Carter, D-Portland.

Carter, one of two black members of the House, said she had endured racism and sexism.

"I know of the great divide," she said. "An ism is an ism is an ism, is it not?"

Carter wiped tears from her eyes after the vote. Sitting through it, she said, reminded her of being in the South and having white people decide where she could eat and from what water fountain she could drink.

A proposal to amend the rules to include disability, but not sexual orientation, was made and could come up for a vote Tuesday.

The only openly homosexual member of the House, Rep. Gail Shibley, D-Portland, said she did not expect to win Monday's vote.

But Shibley said the vote was the beginning, not the end, of discussions of gay rights in the 1993 Legislature.

"What does the Nike poster say? There is no finish line," Shibley said.

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