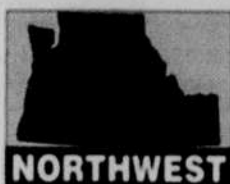


Packwood probe continuing



WASHINGTON (AP) — Critics of Sen. Bob Packwood appealed to every member of the Senate Thursday to block the Oregon Republican from becoming chairman of a key panel until the Ethics

Committee completes a probe of his alleged sexual and official misconduct.

Oregonians For Ethical Representation, which earlier called for Packwood's resignation, urged the Senate to appoint a temporary chairman of the Senate Finance Committee pending the outcome of the ethics inquiry.

"Sen. Packwood does not represent Oregonians. In his few trips to our state in the past two years, he has appeared only before carefully selected gatherings," the group said in a letter to all 100 senators.

"He has, by his own refusal to cooperate with the committee, delayed its investigations and actions for nearly two years," the letter said.

"We urge public hearings be held immediately and that another senator be appointed temporary Finance Committee chair until this matter is resolved. If Sen. Packwood still resists the Ethics Committee, court orders, and the Senate, we urge that he be held in contempt and expelled.

"The 29 women who have courageously come forward deserve no less," the letter said.

The letter was signed by the group's co-chairs: Ed Armstrong, chief of staff to three former Republican governors in Oregon, and Mary Nolan, founder of the Oregon chapter of the National Abortion Rights Action League.

Armstrong and Nolan said their group is a "broad-based coalition of men and women, Democrats and Republicans, representatives of organizations and thousands of Oregonians."

The Senate Ethics Committee is investigating sexual misconduct allegations from more than two dozen women who claim Packwood made improper sexual advances.

It also is looking into whether he sought job offers from lobbyists for his ex-wife in an effort to reduce alimony payments, whether he used his staff to intimidate women into keeping quiet about the alleged advances and whether he altered diary entries after they had been subpoenaed.

The allegations against Packwood first arose following his re-election to the Senate in late 1992.

Critics said Thursday the 1994 elections sent a message to Congress that voters are tired of politics as usual.

"We urge you to keep faith with these Americans by acting promptly in the more than 2-year-old Packwood matter," the group wrote.

As ranking Republican of the Finance Committee, he stands to become the chairman when the GOP takes control next Congress.

Mariners first team to offer Internet address, services

SEATTLE (AP) — The Seattle Mariners have a new address: cyberspace.

The first team to run its own "web site" on the Internet's World Wide Web, the Mariners expect between 5,000 and 10,000 people to tap in once the season gets going, said Kevin Mason, Mariner financial analyst.

The official version of the site became available Wednesday by the Mariners and Semaphore Corp., a small Seattle-based company that helped develop it.

Next year, Internet surfers around the world will be able to order Seattle Mariners tickets and merchandise electronically by just punching in their credit card numbers, team officials say.

The club may also extend electronic mail to individual players, so fans can communicate directly with their

favorite star. Mason conceded that players may not have the time or inclination to be involved in such an exchange.

Players with sound cards in their computer can hear audio of Mariner broadcaster Dave Niehaus calling big plays from games. By the start of next season, video clips from big games in club history will be added, said Garth Brown, president of Semaphore.

Major League Baseball is treating the Mariners as its test case, and Mason expects other teams to enter cyberspace under a league umbrella.

"If this thing gets hot and going, it's only a matter of time before all the teams join," Mason said.

The Mariners expect the web site to cost \$20,000 to \$40,000 to run the first year, Mason said.

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Threat of flood in Washington lessens when rain decreases

SEATTLE (AP) — The threat of flooding eased Thursday as cooler temperatures and lighter rain combined to decrease the deluge of water flowing into Western Washington streams and rivers.

By mid-afternoon, a flood warning remained in effect only for the Snoqualmie River, which was expected to fall below flood stage at Carnation at about 5 p.m., the National Weather Service said.

Flood watches and warnings for other streams and rivers were called off early Thursday.

The snow level dropped to 2,000 feet Wednesday night and was expected to drop below 1,000 feet Thursday night. Earlier in the week, it had been above 7,000 feet in the Cascades and as high as 9,000 feet in the Olympics, allowing some early snow to melt and add its runoff to the deluge of rain.

Some roads that had been closed by high water Wednesday were reopened, including Washington 109 near Moclips in Grays Harbor County and Washington 9 south of the Whatcom County town of Acme, where the Nooksack River spilled over its banks.

Crews were working to clear Washington 20 — the North Cascades Highway — which was closed near Newhalem on Wednesday by a mud slide and a snow slide, about a mile apart.

Flooding along the Skokomish River at the south end of Hood Canal forced residents to evacuate from several homes on Wednesday. Ernie Loertcher, acting director of emergency services for Mason County, said the river had dropped and he was not aware of any new problems Thursday.

High tides also contributed to flooding problems at Moclips, on the coast about 25 miles northwest of Aberdeen.

A Coast Guard helicopter evacuated two fishermen who were stranded along the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula when rising water turned the point from which they were fishing into an island.