

Impeachment inquiry raises questions for Democrats

House votes historic impeachment inquiry; 31 Democrats aboard

By David Espo
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House triggered an open-ended impeachment inquiry against President Clinton on Thursday in a momentous vote cast in the shadow of mid-term elections. Thirty-one Democrats joined majority Republicans in increasing the peril for the embattled chief executive.

The 258-176 vote opened the way for nationally televised impeachment hearings later this year, with possible witnesses ranging from Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr to Monica Lewinsky, Linda Tripp and other central characters in the sex-and-cover-up drama that has commanded the nation's attention for nine months.

"I do not think that we want to settle for less than the whole truth," said Rep. Henry Hyde, R-

Ill., the man at the controls of the inquiry. To the nation watching on television — as well as to openly skeptical Democrats sitting across the aisle in the House chamber — he pledged fairness in the months ahead.

"Too much hangs in the balance for us not to rise above partisan politics," said the Judiciary Committee chairman.

House Democrats argued in vain for an inquiry limited to Starr's evidence, to be wrapped up by Dec. 31.

"We're all profoundly hurt by what the president has done," said Democratic leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri. "But this investigation must be ended fairly and quickly. It has hurt our nation and it's hurt our children. We must not compound the hurt."

The visitors gallery was packed as the historic debate unfolded. Underscoring the gravity of the moment, Speaker Newt Gingrich presided throughout. And when one Democrat, Rep.

David Obey of Wisconsin, scanned the House chamber and saw many empty seats, he grabbed the microphone to urge that absent lawmakers drop whatever they were doing and "get their tails here."

There was plenty of partisanship on display.

When Rep. William Delahunt, D-Mass., complained that the committee had earlier released



thousands of pages of Starr's material that "none of us had read," Hyde pounced.

He said that during the days before the material was released, Republican members of the Judiciary Committee had spent 114 hours reviewing the evidence in the heavily secured room where the documents had been brought. Democrats, he said, had spent less than 22 hours — and only six of the panel's 16

members had ever entered the room.

Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, the senior Democrat on the committee, was quickly on his feet. "That really contributes to the comity of this body," he said with sarcasm. "And I'm sure it's an interesting statistic that everybody ought to know about."

But not all the speeches fell along partisan lines.

Rep. Paul McHale, a Pennsylvania Democrat who has called for Clinton to resign, declared that in testimony in the Paula Jones lawsuit, the president "attempted to cover up a sordid and irresponsible relationship by repeated deceit under oath."

The White House had mounted a vigorous effort to hold down the number of defections as it pursued a strategy of attacking the GOP for conducting a partisan campaign against Clinton.

White House aides circulated polls among the rank-and-file in recent days that indicated the nation was tired of the melodrama

and wanted it to end. The correct political vote, they argued, was to make it a partisan issue heading into the election, thereby casting Republicans as defying public sentiment.

But the turmoil within the Democratic caucus was evident as Gephardt struggled to craft an alternative that the party's lawmakers could rally behind. In the final hours before the vote, moderate lawmakers appealed unsuccessfully to the White House to drop its opposition to the GOP proposal. Their fear, they said, was that by voting with the Republicans they would offend the core Democratic voters whose support is essential to any victory. By voting against the GOP resolution, though, they risked alienating the independent voters whose support is also essential to re-election in swing districts.

In political terms, Republicans said their polling showed that the voters most likely to go to the polls were eager for an impeachment inquiry.

News Briefs

Black Student Union welcomes students

The Black Student Union is hosting its opening reception today in the EMU Fir Room from 7 to 9 p.m.

Representatives from the union will be present to answer ques-

tions about the BSU.

Co-director Jamila Singleton said this is an opportunity for students to find out about campus resources available to them and offer suggestions about upcoming events and programs they would like to see on campus.

Volunteers needed to repair Columns trail

The City of Eugene staff will be working with staff from Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI), volunteers from the community and River House staff and volunteers for the next two Saturdays to re-

pair the Columns trail at Skinner Butte Park.

The trail has eroded and is affecting the stability of the rock columns that form the west face of Skinner Butte. Volunteers will install better drainage and a trail landing, and they will clear brush and grass for a climbing turn.

Volunteers should show up on Saturday, Oct. 10, and Saturday, Oct. 17, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. to participate. For more information or to sign up, call Eugene Parks Volunteer Coordinator Marcia Peeters at 682-4845.

No experience is necessary, and trail tools will be provided.

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