

NEWS/OBITUARIES

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Lawmakers balk at travel ban

Legislators criticize House speaker's proposal to halt privately sponsored trips

By JIM ABRAMS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

The 17 members of Congress who went to Dublin, Ireland, on an Aspen Institute-paid trip last summer got a walking tour of the city.

The lawmakers, including Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, R-Ind., also spent six or seven hours each of the four days in discussions with scholars and policymakers about U.S. relations with Europe and Russia.

It was not quite the same as the itinerary for trips arranged by disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff, when golf at St. Andrews' famed course in Scotland was the highlight.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, seeking cover for Republicans in a growing influence-peddling scandal, has proposed banning all such trips, whether they are intended to improve lawmakers' knowledge of an issue or their putting skills. His idea is running into resistance, even from his second in command.

The new House majority leader, Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, defends privately funded travel as essential and suggests continuing to allow the trips if they meet House rules.



"We can't lock members up in a cubbyhole here in Washington and never let them see what's going on around the country and around the world."

U.S. Rep. John Boehner
R-Ohio, opposing a proposed ban on trips for lawmakers funded by private sponsors

Boehner, who also discounts several other proposals for overhauling lobbying rules, has taken more than three dozen privately funded trips at home and abroad since 2000.

"We can't lock members up in a cubbyhole here in Washington and never let them see what's going on around the country and around the world," Boehner said on "Fox News Sunday."

"Members need to be educated, they need to be kept up to speed on what's happening, and these trips, to a large extent, help educate members," he said.

Hastert's proposed changes, including restrictions on gifts to and meals for lawmakers, were to have been released last week. They were postponed, however, when several GOP members balked at some of the measures during a private meeting.

"We are now in a long-term war against terrorism," said Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., who is con-

cerned about a total ban on travel. "If we think for a second that we are going to have cooperation from other freedom-loving countries in the world by isolating ourselves, we are kidding ourselves."

Current congressional rules permit lawmakers to accept payment from qualified private sponsors for necessary food, transportation and lodging involved in trips for speaking engagements or fact-finding. Lobbyists are not allowed to pay for such trips.

PoliticalMoneyLine, which tracks campaign spending, says that 638 members of Congress made 6,689 trips in the 2000-05 period, receiving just less than \$20 million.

The top foreign destinations were Israel, Mexico, Germany and China.

By comparison, the government spent about \$7.7 million in that period to send just House members overseas as official congres-

sional delegations. At least that much also was spent on trips by lawmakers' staff members.

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., is a senior member of the House International Relations Committee who travels extensively on human rights issues. He said he tries to avoid privately sponsored trips.

"Public trips are preferable," he said.

"It gives me a sense of independence. It gives you the freedom to pursue every aspect of an issue."

Wamp said citizens would balk at increased use of taxpayer money for foreign travel, and there is wide support for events arranged by groups such as the Aspen Institute, the leading private sponsor of overseas trips.

Former Sen. Dick Clark, D-Iowa, who founded the institute's Congressional Program in 1983, said the Dublin conference on Russia relations was the 86th of its kind.

The Dublin event, the Senate's second-ranked Democrat, Dick Durbin of Illinois, featured talks on nonproliferation, Russian democracy and the European Union constitution.

The institute is funded by such groups as the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

BROWN COUNTY

Dorothy M. (Harrison) Adams

Dorothy M. (Harrison) Adams, 78, died Friday, Feb. 3, 2006, at her residence in Brown County.

Survivors include a son, Donald L. Adams of Brodhead, Ky.; two grandchildren; and two great-grandsons. She was preceded in death by her parents, James and Emma M. (Brockman) Harrison; and her husband, Claude R. Adams.

The Rev. Darrell Miller will conduct a funeral service at 1 p.m. Tuesday at Meredith-Clark Funeral Home, Cremation and Personalization Center, 179 E. Mulberry St. in Morgantown. Friends may call from 11 a.m. until service time Tuesday at the funeral home. Burial will be at East Hill Cemetery in Morgantown.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.meredith-clark.com.

Information: (812) 597-4670

GREENWOOD

Charlotte Blevens

Charlotte Blevens, 71, died at 1:45 p.m. Friday, Feb. 3, 2006, at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

She was born in Terre Haute on April 28, 1934, to Albert Grubbs and Joy (Curtis) Grubbs Brown, who preceded her in death.

She was a 1952 graduate of Shelburn High School.

She was a homemaker.

She was married 53 years to Charles E. Blevens, who survives. Additional survivors include one son, Glenn Blevens of Greenwood; two daughters, Rita J. Blevens of Brownsburg and Tammy Blevens of Indianapolis; three sisters, Nancy Higgins of Bremen, Henrietta Blevens of Lawrence and Kay Ring of Schererville; two grandchildren, Bradley Blevens and Jennifer Jersan; and three great-grandchildren. She was also preceded in death by one brother, Donel Curtis; and one sister, Patricia Taft.

A funeral service will be conducted at 11 a.m. Wednesday at Wilson St. Pierre Funeral Service and Crematory, Greenwood Chapel, 481 W. Main St. Friends may call from 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday. Burial will be at Greenwood Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, friends may contribute to a charity of the donor's choice.

INDIANAPOLIS

Clifford 'Cliff' Connerley

Clifford "Cliff" Connerley, 84, died Sunday, Feb. 5, 2006. He was a resident of Indianapolis.

His wife, Belma F. (Lewis) Connerley, survives.

Arrangements are pending at G.H. Herrmann Greenwood Funeral Home, 1605 S. State Road 135.

Information: 787-7211

Franklin

Betty L. Morris, 65

Greenwood

Charlotte Blevens, 71

Indianapolis

Clifford "Cliff" Connerley, 84

Elsewhere

Dorothy M. Adams, 78

Russell A. Johnson, 66

Claude C. Terrell, 74

HOPE

Russell A. Johnson

Russell A. Johnson, 66, died Saturday, Feb. 4, 2006, at his residence in Hope.

His wife, Martha (Hanlin) Johnson, survives.

Arrangements are pending at Norman Funeral Home in Hope.

Information: (812) 546-4770

FRANKLIN

Betty L. (Witt) Morris

Betty L. (Witt) Morris, 65, died Sunday, Feb. 5, 2006, at Johnson Memorial Hospital in Franklin. She was a resident of Franklin.

Arrangements are pending at Flinn and Maguire Funeral Home in Franklin.

Information: 736-5528

PARAGON

Claude C. Terrell

Claude C. Terrell, 74, of Paragon and formerly of Indianapolis, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2006, at Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis.

He was born March 29, 1931, in Tacoma, Wash., to Claude E. and Gladys (Kenny) Terrell.

He was a lifelong self-employed contractor and was also associated with Justus Contractors in Indianapolis for several years.

He was a former member of the Meridian Church of God in Indianapolis.

Survivors include three daughters, Kathryn I. Frank of Beech Grove, Lynne M. Waltz and Carol L. Olson, both of Bargersville; and seven grandchildren. He was also preceded in death by a stepmother, Helen Terrell.

A memorial service will be conducted at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Mount Pleasant Christian Church, 381 N. Bluff Road in Greenwood, with the family receiving friends from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the church.

Memorial contributions may be made to Veterans of Foreign Wars Men's Auxiliary, Attn. Todd O'Neal, 850 State Road 39 Bypass, Martinsville, IN 46151.

● Road

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

The new three-year payment would bring about the same amount of money to what local governments received in the late 1990s, allowing them to complete road projects neglected because of a lack of funds, Abell said.

Here's how the new money works: All 92 counties and the cities and towns within them will split \$150 million for road projects over the next three years. Funds would come from the state's plan to lease the toll road in northern Indiana to a private company.

Other funds from the \$3.85 billion bid for the northern Indiana highway would go to state road projects, including extending Interstate 69 and upgrading U.S. 31, according to a release from the governor's office.

State officials also marked some money for local road projects.

Officials from local highway and street departments complained for years that they were strapped for cash and unable to fix their local roads, Abell said.

Local governments receive mo-

ney for road repairs from property taxes and other funds, such as fuel taxes. But the counties also used to receive money from a state surplus until about four years ago when the reserve ran out, Abell said.

With the \$165,000 per year Greenwood would get, more roads could be fixed and repaved, such as subdivision streets that don't get as much attention as they should, Greenwood Mayor Charles Henderson said.

Several roads in Franklin, even some downtown, could use attention, Mayor Brenda Jones-Matthews said.

The city could receive about \$90,000 per year. Jones-Matthews discussed possible projects with the street department but hasn't made any decisions yet since the money isn't a sure deal, she said.

Local governments would get money for the next three years under the proposal.

Officials at the state department of transportation are looking ahead for money counties and cities could use after the new fund runs out, Abell said.

No guidelines or restrictions will be given to local governments for what types of road work the money should be spent on, he said.

● Store

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

now question the building's future after Rhoades' death.

"Those dreams pretty much died with him," said Mark Ploss, who has worked weekends at the store for about seven years.

"I don't know what else to say but this is always a sad thing, especially in a small town like Franklin."

A lease sign sits out in front of the building, which is east of the railroad tracks and surrounded by two other downtown business buildings with lease signs on them.

One employee, who has worked at the store fulltime for about six years, said he did not know what he would do after the store closes.

He did know that Rhoades' wife, Jayne, wanted to sell the building where she and Jim met, he said.

Jayne worked at the store part time, and Rhoades' father set the couple up.

They married in 1983. Throughout the years, daugh-

ters Molly, 21, and Jayme, 17, practically grew up in the hardware store.

From the time they were old enough to count change, they helped out at the store, they said previously.

Family members were not at the store Sunday afternoon and could not be reached for comment.

Shortly after the store opened Sunday, May and her husband, Andrew, went to the store to look for doors and drawers for cabinets they are redoing in their home.

Over the years, the couple has found a niche at the hardware store when they needed keys made, stains or paint mixed, Margie May said.

"We thought we'd stop by here one last time before going to a Lowe's," she said.

"The big hardware stores aren't the same, but that's all we have anymore."

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