

Bush prepares for State of the Union address

President's speech will focus on Iraq, alternative fuels, Social Security

By DEB RIECHMANN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President Bush, already facing fierce opposition to his decision to send more U.S. troops to Iraq, will confront a tough audience next Tuesday when he delivers his State of the Union address to the first Democratic Congress in 12 years.



BUSH

Reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil and supporting alternative fuels are expected to be prominent themes of his speech. Bush also will challenge Congress to fix Social Security's long-term solvency problem, find a way to compromise on immigration and preserve tax cuts. Lawmakers also will be listening for hints of what he might veto.

Republicans see the speech as a chance for Bush to put a wide-angle lens on the nation's problems, taking the focus away from Iraq. Still, the war's shadow will hang over the joint session of Congress when Bush speaks.

Democratic Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia, whose upset victory over Republican Sen. George Allen was the decisive race that gave Democrats control of Congress in last year's midterm elections, will give the Democratic response to Bush's address. The selection was made Tuesday by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, said Webb spokeswoman Jessica Smith.

During the nationally televised address, Bush will be flanked by Vice President Dick Cheney and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, sitting like symbolic bookends of the political divide over the war and other issues.

"Probably the most interesting part of the speech is going to be the tone," said presidential speech expert Kathleen Hall Jamieson,

"(Nancy) Pelosi is going to be signaling to the Democrats by when she applauds and when she doesn't, and (Dick) Cheney is going to be signaling the Republicans."

Kathleen Hall Jamieson
Expert on presidential speeches on how Democrats and Republicans will react to the president's address

who directs the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

"Pelosi is going to be signaling the Democrats by when she applauds and when she doesn't, and Cheney is going to be signaling the Republicans," she said. "In parts where Bush seems more accommodating than Cheney might like, what are Cheney's nonverbal cues going to say to the public?"

Bush could use his speech to challenge war critics to propose a plan of their own. But he'll leave room to cover domestic issues and other foreign policy concerns such as North Korea and Iran's nuclear programs. The costs of the war and the deficit will likely preclude him from announcing expensive new initiatives.

While one team of writers was working on the Iraq speech Bush gave last week, those charged with crafting Bush's sixth State of the Union address were continuing the work they began months ago. White House officials say Bush has met with the speechwriters and given them direction, but the staff is not yet editing drafts of the address.

"President Bush will use the State of the Union to unveil a positive, comprehensive agenda that will improve the daily lives of the American people and explain how our actions in the world will make our nation safer and better," White House counselor Dan Bartlett said.

'SCOOTER' LIBBY CASE CIA leak trial begins

Judge asks jurors' feelings about Bush administration

By MICHAEL J. SNIFFEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Two potential jurors who expressed negative views of Bush administration officials were dismissed on the opening day of the perjury trial of former White House aide "Scooter" Libby.

The start of jury selection in the CIA leak case provided a potentially crucial victory for Lewis Libby's defense lawyers. They were allowed to ask potential jurors in detail about their opinions of the Bush administration, Vice President Dick Cheney, a group of high-profile reporters and whether the administration had lied to push the country into war with Iraq.

Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald objected repeatedly, but to no avail, that Libby's lawyers were going beyond the more general opinion questions that U.S. District Judge Reggie Walton asked the entire jury pool when the proceedings began Tuesday morning.

Fitzgerald complained that defense attorneys Theodore Wells and William Jeffress were turning jury selection into "an open-ended Rorschach (ink-blot) test into how you feel about the Bush administration, Vice President Cheney" the Iraq war and various reporters. "They're trying the case" in jury selection, he argued.

But Walton ruled the defense lawyers have a right to know if "somebody has a very negative attitude to the Bush administration."

Libby, who served as an adviser to President Bush and chief of staff to Cheney, is accused of lying to investigators about his conversations with reporters regarding the public disclosure



The trial for Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff, started Tuesday. He is facing charges of perjury and obstruction of an investigation.

of CIA officer Valerie Plame's name.

Her identity was leaked to reporters in 2003 after her husband, former ambassador Joseph Wilson, accused the Bush administration of trying to push the nation into war by knowingly repeating a false story about Iraq trying to obtain uranium in Africa for nuclear weapons.

The biggest defense success Tuesday came during extended questioning of a young financial analyst who had read about the case and said he didn't have the highest opinion of Cheney and "if I had to rank people as to credibility, I wouldn't put him at the top of the list."

Wells, Fitzgerald and Walton each repeatedly tried to see if he could put those views aside in weighing trial evidence, but finally the financial analyst acknowledged Cheney would have a strike against him in a credibility dispute with other witnesses. So Walton excused him for cause.

Six jurors were qualified to serve on Tuesday. Once that number reaches 37, the judge will allow lawyers to exercise their preemptory strikes. The defense has 12 such challenges and prosecutors eight. Walton intends to seat 12 jurors and four alternates.

Walton said the trial should last four to six weeks.

CIA leak case goes to trial

L. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, former chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, is being tried on five counts related to the leak of CIA operative Valerie Plame's name in 2003.

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<p>Jan. 28: President Bush cites British intelligence that Saddam Hussein sought uranium from Africa in speech.</p>	<p>May 6: New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof reports a former ambassador, unnamed, investigate the uranium report in 2002 and found story to be false.</p> <p>July 6: The Times publishes an opinion piece by Wilson titled "What I Didn't Find in Africa."</p> <p>14 and 17: Columnist Robert Novak and Time Magazine's Matthew Cooper identify Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame.</p>	<p>Sept. 26: A criminal investigation is authorized to determine who leaked CIA operative's name.</p> <p>Oct. 14 and Nov. 26: Libby is interviewed by FBI agents.</p>	<p>Sept. 7: Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage admits he leaked Plame's identity to Novak and to Bob Woodward of The Washington Post.</p>	<p>Jan. 16: Jury selection begins for Libby's trial in U.S. District Court.</p>

Charges reduced in factory shootings

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

A man accused of shooting four co-workers at a factory after apparently being teased about his size will not face attempted murder charges, prosecutors said Tuesday.



BURNAM

Jason J. Burnam, 24, instead faces four counts of felony aggravated battery and a misdemeanor count of carrying a handgun without a permit stemming from Thursday's shootings at Crossroads Industrial Services on Indianapolis' east side.

"I don't think he attempted to kill these people," Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi told an Indianapolis newspaper on Tuesday after a hearing in the case was postponed.

Burnam told officers he shot his co-workers over issues of "respect," police said.

His mother, Judy Burnam, said her son, who weighs more than 300 pounds, had complained that some of his co-workers had been teasing him about his size.

She said he once tried to commit suicide because of taunting while in high school.

All four workers shot at Crossroads, which employs mostly disabled people as part of the Easter Seals program, were recovering from arm and leg

wounds. None of the injuries were considered life-threatening.

Judy Burnam said her son suffered from bipolar disorder and was once diagnosed with schizophrenia.

He was taking medications, including Prozac, and seeing a mental-health counselor.

Burnam bought the handgun used in the attack at a pawn shop Jan. 5 in compliance with federal law, which does not specifically prohibit people with mental health conditions from buying firearms, authorities said.

However, he did not have a required permit to carry the gun outside his home.

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