Thursday, February 12, 2004

EXHIBIT 13

Exclusive Report

Smith: Heavy arm-twisting, no money offered

Congressman details pressure for 'yes' vote on drug bill, says he's cooperating with probe.

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Smith

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Nick Smith, the Michigan Republican under fire for suggesting he was promised money for his son's Congressional campaign in exchange for a vote, reaffirmed Wednesday he was offered "aggressive and substantial" support that he interpreted to include finances.

"Nobody mentioned any dollar amount," Smith said. "Members of Congress are really too smart to come up to you on the floor and say, 'We'll give you so many dollars for this.' "

In his first extensive comments on the matter since shortly after he refused to vote for a controversial Medicare prescription drug benefit in late November, Smith told The Detroit News that he would cooperate with a House ethics committee inquiry that may be the subject of a closed-door hearing today.

The case has become a political hot potato, with some Democrats and other critics calling for an investigation into whether the incident strayed beyond intense but normal legislative arm-twisting into the realm of bribery.

The case could have broad impact for Smith and the U.S. House.

Smith, due to retire this year, could find his six-term career and reputation as a lawmaker of high integrity overshadowed by the controversy.

Politically, the flap already is adding fuel to the Democrats' election-year pitch to voters to return them to control over the House, arguing that Republican stewardship has deteriorated into a hardball game heavily influenced by business interests.

Republicans counter that the Democrats, also skilled arm-twisters, are bitter about having been voted into the minority and are merely trying to gain political advantage.

Meanwhile, congressional watchdog groups are seizing on the incident to call for a sweeping overhaul of how the chamber polices itself.

Smith, a farmer from the south central Michigan town of Addison, last

year announced he wouldn't seek re-election this November. One of his sons, Brad, launched a bid to replace him.

A longtime fiscal conservative who frets over matters like the national debt limit and the long-term solvency of Social Security, Smith decided to vote against President Bush and many of his fellow Republicans because he thought the prescription drug benefit for senior citizens was underfunded.

"I had researched and studied this bill I suspect as well as any member who was on the committees that put it out," he said.

Because the legislation was so important, Smith said he decided to stay on the House floor after casting his no vote. "I took a lot of heat," he said.

Smith estimated that between 40 and 60 lawmakers pressured him the night of Nov. 21 and into the morning of Nov. 22, as Republicans held the vote open for about three hours to collect enough votes for the final 220-215 passage.

First, lawmakers offered help getting his son elected, Smith said.

"I was told we could give Brad aggressive and substantial campaign support," he said. "I interpreted that as to include financial support for his campaign. Nobody actually said there will be financial support for Brad."

Made two mistakes

Smith said he made two mistakes after the vote. In a column he wrote the next morning for a Michigan newspaper, he used the word "financial" when he wrote that "members and groups made offers of extensive financial campaign support and endorsements for my son, Brad."

In the same column, he wrote that "bribes and special deals were offered to convince members to vote yes."

He said his second mistake was repeating on the radio a figure he read in syndicated columnist Robert Novak's column, which claimed Smith had been offered $100,000.

Smith insisted nobody had attached a dollar figure to their support. Nonetheless, he reportedly told colleagues at dinner that the amount was offered to help his son.

Under federal bribery law, it is illegal if anyone "directly or indirectly, corruptly gives, offers, or promises anything of value to any public official" to influence an official act.

When Smith wouldn't change his vote, his son was "threatened," Smith said. He wouldn't elaborate on what was said or name those who did so, saying, "I'm going to leave this up to the ethics committee."

However, he did tell of money-tinged threats. "One person came by and said 'We've got some money collected already to make sure your son doesn't get here,' but that was after the vote," he said.

Dems aggressive, too

Smith said he regretted that the issue had become politicized by Democrats he claims were leaning just as heavily on their own members to oppose the bill.

"This is where $20 million bridges get built, when leadership is pushing votes like this," he said of the negotiating that goes on during close votes.

"Democrats and Republicans know no side is less guilty in the pressure and the arm-twisting they put on members. Part of the question this is bringing up as far as us examining ourselves is what's reasonable. The

Democrats were just as aggressive."

Smith said he's been on the receiving end of high-pressure tactics before, but this case was different for one reason:

"With me personally they crossed the line when they threatened my son," he said.

"I'm very insulted. I was angry. There's no question when they start using my family and threatening my son," he said.

'New level of hardball'

Former House Minority Whip David Bonior, D-Mount Clemens, said what he has heard of the Medicare vote suggests the arm-twisting had reached "a new level of hardball."

Before leaving Congress in 2000, Bonior served as a whip, a leadership role whose job it is to gather votes to pass party-backed legislation.

Arm-twisting is part of good politics, he said, and lawmakers are sometimes rewarded with pet projects for their district, plum committee assignments or fund-raising visits by high-profile lawmakers to their district to return the favor of a much-needed vote.

Threatening a member would be counter-productive, Bonior said, as would be offering money, which could raise ethical and legal questions.

"You make your best case," he said of what he considers acceptable arm-twisting. "You would hurt your case by threatening people in an adult world. It is not worth doing for practical or moral purposes.

"You give it your best shot, with your best argument. And when they are in a tough situation, that's the kind of person you will want to help."

Bonior said holding a vote open for three hours to get enough support is unheard of.

The House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct said it has begun a fact-finding inquiry into the case, and has a meeting scheduled today. But because it conducts its business behind closed doors, it's unclear whether Smith is on the agenda.

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