EXHIBIT 9

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Rep. Smith backpedals on claims of vote bribery

'No specific reference was made to money,' he says

By Katherine Hutt Scott
State Journal Correspondent

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Smith of Addison appeared to backpedal Thursday on his allegation that he was offered a bribe in exchange for voting for major Medicare legislation.

Smith, a six-term Republican who will retire next year, has said he was told that if he voted for the bill, his son would receive money for his 2004 congressional campaign. Brad Smith, also a Republican, is running to replace his father in Congress.

But in a statement Thursday, Nick Smith said, "No specific reference was made to money."

"I want to make clear that no member of Congress made an offer of financial assistance for my son's campaign in exchange for my vote on the Medicare bill," the statement said.

"I was told that my vote could result in interested groups giving substantial and aggressive campaign 'support' and 'endorsements.' Some (House) members said they would work against Brad if I voted no."

Smith did vote against the bill, which has since passed the House and the Senate and is awaiting President Bush's signature. Smith has not identified who made the offer.

Also Thursday, the Justice Department said it would review complaints from political watchdog groups about the alleged bribe, which is normal procedure.

Syndicated columnist Robert Novak wrote in a Nov. 27 column that Smith was told business interests would give $100,000 to his son's congressional campaign if Smith voted in favor of the bill.

What's next

- The Justice Department said Thursday it will review complaints from political watchdog groups that Republican House leaders tried to bribe Rep. Nick Smith, R-Addison, to vote for a Medicare bill.

- Justice Department spokesman Mark Corallo said the complaints were received and will be reviewed, which is normal procedure.

Source: Associated Press

Smith's chief of staff, Kurt Schmautz, said Smith told him Novak's account was "basically accurate."

In a column the day after the Nov. 22 House vote, Smith wrote, "Bribes and special deals were offered to convince members to vote yes.

"I was targeted by lobbyists and the congressional leadership to change my vote," Smith wrote. "Other members and groups made offers of extensive financial campaign support and endorsements for my son."

Brad Smith said his father told him the evening before the vote that a combination of "interest groups and key Republicans" had offered the congressman "financial contributions and endorsements" for Brad Smith's campaign.

Novak's column said fellow Republican House members told Smith that if he voted no, they would make sure Brad Smith never came to Congress. After Smith voted no and the bill passed, Rep. Duke Cunningham of California and other Republicans told Smith his son was "dead meat," according to Novak.

In a letter dated Thursday, a watchdog group called upon Smith to name the individuals he says tried to bribe him.

The letter was written by Melanie Sloan, executive director of the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, which describes itself as nonpartisan. Sloan said she once worked for Democratic members of Congress.

Thursday's letter also said "it appears likely" that House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert of Illinois or Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, or both, "attempted to bribe and extort you." The letter said that was based on accounts in the publication Congress Daily about which members clustered around Smith on the House floor as the Medicare vote neared completion.

Spokesmen for Hastert and Thompson denied that the two directed promises or threats at Smith.

Sloan's group, the Democratic National Committee and The Campaign Legal Center, a nonpartisan watchdog group on campaign and election law issues, have called for federal investigations of the alleged bribe.

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