

SENATOR BLOCKS EPA NOMINEE STEPHEN L JOHNSON

Stephen L. Johnson, President Bush's nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, crossed an important hurdle on Wednesday when a Senate committee approved his nomination, although one committee member raised concerns that might block confirmation by the full Senate. Delaware Senator Tom Carper, a - what? - Democrat expressed concerns about the administration's policy on power plant pollution.

Senator Barbara Boxer, fellow Committee member and America's sweetheart, previously threatened to block Johnson's nomination based on an EPA program in which infants would be exposed to pesticides for a scientific study. Johnson canceled the controversial program on Friday and won Boxer's support. She said okay. Senator Carper, sir, um. Boxer said "okay." Boxer.

The winning combination of infants and pesticides was a program called the Children's Environmental Exposure Research Study or CHEERS. Clearly considered to be a bright and joyful plan complete with lemon drops and sunbeams, it proposed to pay 60 Florida families to record the effects of spraying pesticides in the rooms occupied by their infant children under age 3. The EPA had planned to give \$970 plus a camcorder and children's clothes to each of the families in Duval County, Florida, in what some critics pointed out was a low-income minority neighborhood. Hmmm. For the life of me, I can't imagine the resistance to this plan. Maybe the camcorder wasn't digital?

If confirmed, Mr. Johnson would be the first career scientist to take the post. Johnson is no relation to Gilligan's Island professor, Russell Johnson, but very well might know how to regulate industrial pollution with a bicycle and a pair of coconuts.

Mr. Johnson is considered a worthy choice by many environmental groups. Even Senator Carper has said Johnson would make a good administrator if the White House doesn't interfere with him politically. He also said Star War Episode 1 would have been a good movie if Jar Jar Binks weren't in it.

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER ARIEL SHARON VISITS U.S.

When President Bush downloaded his iPod with "My Sharona," perhaps he was preparing for this week's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, but soon he was humming a different tune

[CORNER SCREEN SHOWS PICTURE OF BUSH & SHARON WITH TITLE:  
"IRAN SO FAR AWAY."]

At President Bush's Crawford, Texas, ranch on Monday, Sharon laid out photographs of Iranian nuclear sites over the lunch table. It was an uncharacteristic move for the Israeli Prime Minister, since he had to make room for the photos by pushing aside his lunch plate.

[INSERT PHOTO OF A VERY CORPULENT SHARON.]

Look, the man can eat. And here he is, not going for the pecan-smoked beef tenderloin?

When Sharon urged President Bush to assert pressure on Iran to halt its nuclear program, Bush turned and asked "Are you done with your salad? Can I have a bite? I love me some arugula."

Vice President Dick Cheney, also in attendance, criticized the Israeli leader for eating five brownies but no vegetables. Hey Arik, time to eat heart smart. Do you want to have a stint like Cheney?

When the photos of the nuclear sites failed to persuade President Bush to take action, Sharon attempted to prove his point by building a model of a nuclear water tower using his mashed potatoes.

[INSERT PHOTO OF RICHARD DREYFUSS IN CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH SHARON'S FACE SUPERIMPOSED.]

Also on the President and Prime Minister's menu of Middle Eastern issues was the impending July 20 withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza. While Bush offered his support for withdrawal, he disapproved of Israel's plan to build new housing for the 8,200 soon-to-be-displaced settlers. You know, it occurs to me that the settlers might be able to relocate before July 20. I have a hunch there's going to be a vacancy at the Neverland Ranch. What? It's big enough for 8,200 men, women and... children.

FRIST USES RELIGION AGAINST FILIBUSTERS

In the latest move in the parliamentary procedure chess game over Filibusters, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist will be taking part in a telecast portraying Democrats as "against people of faith" for blocking President Bush's nominees.

In retaliation, Senate minority leader Harry Reid said "God does not take place in partisan politics." It's just the Senators who think they're God.

[INSERT PHOTO OF FRIST, THEN KENNEDY, THEN SANTORUM, THEN SCHUMER, THEN A RAPID FIRE SUCCESSION OF AS MANY SENATORS AS POSSIBLE.]

Religion really has nothing to do with politics, right? Frist should know better - he swore on the Bible to uphold a Constitution that forbids the imposition of religious views on Americans. Every Senator, Congressperson, President, Judge all swear on a Bible to uphold the first amend... wait, they swear on a Bible. A book that some might argue has a little bit of religion inside. Just a little bit.

Senator Dick Durbin echoed Senator Reid, saying he "cannot imagine that God - with everything he has or she has to worry about - is going to take the time to debate the filibuster in heaven." Clearly, God's been too busy trying to protect heavenly soldier Tom DeLay.

Some Senate Republicans are urging Frist to back down from his war against the filibuster, including Senator John McCain. Incidentally, Senator McCain was recently named the best connected legislator by a study conducted by a professor at the University of California at Davis. He was also named cutest senior boy.

Another recent study conducted by the American Enterprise Institute discovered that religious views might not have as much to do with a Judge's confirmation as being a good student. Economist John Lott, no relation to warm and fuzzy Trent, claims that if a presidential nominee to an appeals-court post has attended one of the nation's top 10 law schools, served on that school's law review, and clerked for a US Supreme Court justice, it takes twice as long to win Senate confirmation than an appeals-court nominee with none of those qualifications. In short, Lott concluded "Pretty much the dumber you are, the easier it is to get on the court." It's a shocking revelation, that, oh, a C-student would have a better chance to serve our country.

[INSERT PHOTO OF PRESIDENT BUSH.]

BULLY LOSES LAWSUIT AGAINST EMINEM

A US court ruled yesterday in a very important landmark decision.

[SCREEN SHOWS EMINEM. JON MAKES A GESTURE AS IF TO SAY "KINDA."]

A man who admitted to bullying rapper Eminem when they were schoolmates lost an appeal to sue Eminem for a song depicting the bully's vicious attack.

Sanitation worker DeAngelo Bailey took offense to the song "Brain Damage" from the rapper's 1999 "Slim Shady" album. The song contained the following lyrics

[JON RAPS.]

"Way before my baby daughter Hailey/I was harassed daily by this fat kid named DeAngelo Bailey."

[ON THE AUDIENCE REACTION, SHRUGS RE: HIMSELF]

Jews shouldn't rap, but...

[JON RAPS AGAIN.]

"He banged my head against the urinal till he broke my nose/soaked my clothes in blood grabbed me and choked my throat."

In an interview with the Detroit Free Press, Bailey said he chuckled when he first heard "Brain Damage," then added, "Damn, that must have scarred him for life," Yep. Eminem's a successful rapper with multiple Grammys and an Oscar, and Bailey is still a sanitation worker.

Bailey claimed the song damaged his reputation and impeded his ability to launch his own music career. Because...? Rap music and tough-guy behavior don't really go hand in hand?

The judge ruled that the lyrics are not to be taken literally, citing another place in the song where Eminem sings his "whole brain fell out" of his skull. It wasn't his whole brain, just a little bit, when Eminem pulled a gun on that guy who kissed Mrs. Eminem in 2001.

Judge Deborah Servitto ruled that

[JON RAPS AGAIN.]

"Bailey thinks he's entitled to some monetary gain/ Because Eminem used his name in vain/It is therefore this court's ultimate position/ That Eminem is entitled to summary disposition."

I feel it's my civic duty to let Congress know that the problem with the judicial system is not activist judges, but judges who rap.

TOPICAL CHAT: DEADLY VIRUS SENT TO LABS

JON: We recently reported on the deadly A/H2N2 flu virus that was accidentally sent to nearly 4,000 labs around the world. Was it a tiny mishap, one you might even call microscopic, or is there more to the story? Please welcome our resident virology expert Stephen Colbert.

[COLBERT APPEARS, IN A WHITE SURGEON'S MASK.]

COLBERT: Thank you, Jon. Well, we can all breathe a sigh of relief. The World Health Organization has announced two-thirds of the specimens of the killer influenza virus have been destroyed.

JON: Stephen, let me stop you. Why the mask?

COLBERT: Two thirds, Jon. There's still one more to go.

JON: But the Center for Disease Control has issued very detailed instructions for destroying the virus and that means we're pretty safe.

(COLBERT REMOVES THE MASK.)

COLBERT: Of course we are, Jon. For now.

JON: Well, how deadly is this virus?

COLBERT: It caused the pandemic of 1957 that killed 70,000 Americans and 30,000... you know, people in other places.

JON: What is the difference between a pandemic and an epidemic?

COLBERT: Speaking as an etymologist right now, not a virologist, I would say a pandemic is a widespread occurrence of the disease, say, oh, everywhere, and an epidemic is a widespread disease in, oh, not everywhere, but a pretty darn big area. Either way, we'd be F\*\*ed. Now, this A/H2N2 virus was sent to 18 countries including our own. But the good news is that many of these countries are not areas that pose a threat to our safety in the US or even areas where major international incidents occur, well, if you don't count Lebanon. Or Israel. Or Saudi Arabia.

JON: I understand it was a lab in Canada that detected the virus?

COLBERT: Yes, and I would like to say thank you, Canada. You're a good neighbor. Come over for a barbecue any time. We'll leave the door open. Except for the border patrol.

JON: Why is a virus sent out like this?

COLBERT: Well, it's a routine thing in the world of science, or, as we like to call it, pre-bioterrorism. The reason a virus is sent out

is for laboratories to detect these kinds of organisms. They'll receive unknown samples as a test to see: Can we detect it or not?

JON: And if it's dangerous or not.

COLBERT: I usually bank in the dangerous part. In the case of the A/H2N2 - and again, thank you Canada - it's a virus that has not been seen in humans since 1968. If the virus were to get out, anyone born after 1968 would not be immune and therefore susceptible to infection.

JON: That's horrible. That could wipe out millions.

COLBERT: Yes, Jon, it would kill our demographic.

JON: Let me go back. You said it's routine for these viruses to be sent to labs. How are they delivered?

COLBERT: Well, the A/H2N2 - and again, Canada, I love you. You complete me - the A/H2N2 was sent via Fed Ex from Cincinnati, where it's common to put cinnamon in chili and life-threatening viruses in the mail.

JON: So you can send a virus from, say, the nearest Kinko's?

COLBERT: Yes, and most Kinko's are open 24 hours.

JON: So these viruses can go out in the same trucks as, let's say, a fruit basket?

COLBERT: Of course. Which is why the World Health Organization is now instituting the Virus-of-the-Month Club. Each month, labs will receive a Pandora's Box containing the "It" bug of the moment.

[COLBERT PULLS OUT A BOX.]

JON: Are those actual -

COLBERT: Don't worry, Jon. No A/H2N2 here. Canada's got our back. This is a sample of the box that would contain a sample of a virus such as that tart but full-flavored and crisp A/H2N2. And then next month is the tropical and exotic H5N1. And you can receive it via Fed Ex. And sometimes DHL. Sorry, UPS won't ship.

JON: Thank you, Stephen.

COLBERT: You're welcome, Jon.

[COLBERT LOOKS AT THE BOX, AND OMINOUSLY PUTS HIS MASK BACK ON.]