

# National News

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## Supreme Court: Jury ignorance is no problem

In a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, upheld the death penalty in the case of a man who said that the jury did not understand that they could have imposed a sentence of life imprisonment instead, newspapers reported on Jan. 20.

Lonnie Weeks was convicted of murdering a Virginia state trooper. Weeks contended that the jurors never fully considered mitigating factors, and that they were confused about the jury instructions with regard to the weight of mitigating evidence, and whether they had to impose a death sentence. When they asked the judge for guidance, he refused to tell the jurors outright that they could choose life imprisonment, but only referred them to the written instructions—which they were obviously confused about.

Rehnquist said that the judge was not obligated to clarify matters for the jurors. The dissenting justices said, “Tragically, there is a reasonable likelihood that they acted on the basis of a misunderstanding of [their] duty.”

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## Controversy continues over Confederate flag

Since GOP Presidential pre-candidate George W. Bush created an uproar on Jan. 7 by refusing to call for the Confederate flag to be removed from the South Carolina capitol building, other politicians have been weighing in on this issue. (Bush said that this is a states’ rights question—the same argument that South Carolina used to secede from the Union in 1860.)

President Clinton believes that it is wrong for the Confederate flag to fly over the South Carolina capitol, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said in Boston on Jan. 18. “He’s not saying the Confederate flag per se doesn’t have some historical meaning to it,” Lockhart said of the President. “But in this case it’s wrong and it shouldn’t be flown.” Lockhart added that the

President had reminded him that South Carolina began flying the flag in 1962 as a gesture of “defiance” against racial desegregation.

Former Education Secretary and conservative Republican author William Bennett said on Jan. 17, on the CNN “Inside Politics” program, that Republican candidates should advocate the removal of the flag. “That flag was put up not in 1862, but 1962,” Bennett said. He said that if people want to fly a flag in their homes or their cars, that’s fine. “But when you put up a flag in a state capitol, it’s a symbol of approbation. It’s a symbol of what the state stands for. And although there were great individuals who fought for the Confederacy, and their memory should be honored, what that flag stood for was slavery and the separation of the Union.”

When asked about the argument that for candidates to take a stand on the issue would constitute interference in state matters, Bennett ridiculed that idea: “The candidates have not been reluctant to talk about what they’d do about education in a state. They haven’t been reluctant to talk about the Vermont Supreme Court decision on gay marriage.”

Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr.’s statement on the matter was reported in “LaRouche Draws Battle Lines: Nation-State vs. Confederacy,” *EIR*, Jan. 21.

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## McCain rips New York GOP on ballot access

Speaking before the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations on Jan. 19, Republican Presidential pre-candidate John McCain denounced the New York State Republican Party for stacking the process of ballot access against him, in favor of George W. Bush. The latter has virtually unlimited funds to hire petitioners to meet the stringent requirements. “I keep trying to remind the Governor and [state party chair William] Powers that the Berlin Wall is down,” said McCain. “The days of one candidate appearing on a ballot disappeared when the Soviet Union collapsed in most parts of the world.”

At a New Hampshire fundraiser on Jan. 17, according to the *New York Post*, McCain exploded in rage against Powers, telling him

to “quit f—ing with me and let me on the ballot.” Bush has smirked his way through this nasty business, insisting that, like flying the Confederate flag, it’s a “states’ rights” issue as to whom New Yorkers want on their ballot. However, Steve Forbes, who thought he had a deal with Bush, now finds that he, too, is having his petitions challenged, so that the only candidate on the ballot might be Bush.

All GOP candidates were required to collect 15,000 valid signatures from registered voters in each of the state’s 31 districts, in order to qualify for the ballot. Forbes, according to a *New York Times* report, hired petitioners at a cost of \$750,000. The article did not say how much Bush paid. McCain ended up qualifying in only a few districts.

(In the Democratic Party, supporters of Lyndon LaRouche did what McCain’s staff thought was impossible: They gathered an astonishing 65,000 signatures—more than enough to qualify, and placed their candidate on the ballot. The Democratic Party required 20,000 valid signatures.)

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## Secessionists are coming out of the woodwork

Llewellyn Rockwell, the president of the ultra-conservative Ludwig von Mises Institute, wrote on his website on Jan. 13 that the merger of Time-Warner and America Online, and the huge rally in support of the Confederate flag in South Carolina, “both are glorious signs that the nation-state as we know it is coming to an end.”

The merger shows that “the central state can no longer keep up with the private sector in terms of technology, social influence, or overall cultural and economic power,” while the Confederate flag rally “illustrates that the old loyalties to land, history, and tribe are far more powerful and lasting than the artificial allegiance to the central government that the feds have attempted to impose in the 20th century,” Rockwell proclaims. “Foreigners have noticed, but no one wants to talk about it here at home: America has its own home-grown secessionist movement that is vibrant and tenacious.”

Rockwell says that he bases his theory on *The Rise and Decline of the State* by Mar-

**TEXAS GOVERNOR** George W. Bush has set a modern-day record for the low number of pardons issued—only 16 since taking office. This compares to 70 issued by Gov. Ann Richards (D) before him. The governor can grant pardons only after a request from the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles; the Board has recommended 118 pardons while Bush has been in office.

**THE CLINTON** administration announced on Jan. 14 that it would not cut \$2.1 billion in Medicare payments to hospitals in eight states that provide extensive care to indigent patients. The policy change was announced by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, after what the *New York Times* described as “months of lobbying” by Sen. Charles Schumer, Sen. Daniel Moynihan, and Rep. Charles Rangel.

**JAMIE RUBIN**, the State Department spokesman, affirmed on Jan. 13 that the United States does not recognize any “government of Chechnya.” Chechen leader Ilyas Akhmadov, who arrived in Washington on Jan. 11, was received by a low-level State Department official. “We do not recognize Mr. Akhmadov as the foreign minister of an independent Chechnya, but as a private citizen of the Russian Federation,” Rubin said.

**JOHN MCCAIN**, in a speech to the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations in New York on Jan. 19, said that as President he would not release imprisoned Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard, a U.S. citizen. “He betrayed our nation and he betrayed his obligations to our government,” said McCain. “The evidence is overwhelming and abundantly clear.”

**THE JUSTICE** Department is investigating possible violations of the Voting Rights Act by the South Carolina Republican Party in the 1996 primary elections. At the time, a number of polling places in predominantly black districts were not opened to allow people to vote.

tin van Crefeld of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

*EIR* spoke to van Crefeld, who is currently in Germany. He affirmed: “There is a secessionist tendency in the U.S. The fact is, the Confederacy has never really died. I have been struck by the fact that Confederate flags are all over the South. What I know, is that some people foresee a ‘Civil War Two’ in the U.S. A couple of years ago, a book came out with that title. It foresaw a different kind of civil war than the last one. This one would be a war between the races. It would start in the South, for the reason that the number of Hispanics there is the largest. . . .

“I myself have been arguing that the one thing that can tear the U.S. apart, is Mexico. . . . If anything could endanger the U.S., it is not North Korea or Iraq—which are nuisances but not dire threats—but rather Mexico. This all links up with the Confederacy movement in the South.”

Internationally, he said, “the best candidate for break-up now, is Indonesia. I have been saying for the last couple of years, that it is a prime candidate for a major civil war.”

## Ranks of uninsured grow in California

“Ranks of Uninsured in State Expand” was the headline of an article in the *Los Angeles Times* on Jan. 20, reporting on a new study by the University of California at Berkeley Center for Health and Public Policy Studies. The number of Californians without health insurance has been increasing by 23,000 per month, and is continuing to grow. As of 1998, there were 7.3 million uninsured people, or nearly one out of every four in the state. In Los Angeles County, the rate is nearly one out of three.

The study shows that the increase in uninsured is driven by a decline in coverage through Medi-Cal, which is a state version of the Federal Medicaid program for the poor. From 1995-98, Medi-Cal coverage fell from 14% to 11% of the population. According to the study, this drop was due largely to welfare reform, and changes in the eligibility requirements. Further, the rate of employer-based coverage is about 58%, which is the lowest in the country. The national average is 69%.

## Clinton proposes increase in R&D funds

President Clinton on Jan. 21 announced a proposal for a \$2.8 billion increase in Federal research and development funding for FY2001, in a speech at the California Institute of Technology. The “Twenty-First Century Research” project includes \$675 million in increased funds for the National Science Foundation, the major source of university-based R&D funding outside the area of biomedical research. This would be the biggest one-year increase in NSF funding in history.

A separate “National Nanotechnology Initiative,” announced in a White House press release on Jan. 21, would provide \$227 million in additional funding (for a total of \$497 million), an 84% increase over the previous annual funding for this field. The President also announced that he will seek a \$1 billion increase in funding of biomedical research for the National Institutes of Health.

## Gore confronted on Dad’s ‘rights’ record

At a press conference following his address to the National Council of Senior Citizens in Concord, New Hampshire, on Jan. 15, Al Gore, Jr. was confronted by *EIR* reporter Andrew Spannaus, who asked: “The *Congressional Record* clearly shows that your father voted against the Civil Rights Act in 1964, so why do you keep insisting that he fought for civil rights?”

Gore replied, “I didn’t say he voted for that. As a matter of fact, that is the single vote that he most regretted in his career. And what news service are you from?” When Spannaus said, “*Executive Intelligence Review*,” Gore asked, “Isn’t that the Lyndon LaRouche publication?” “Yes, it is,” replied Spannaus. “Founded by Lyndon H. LaRouche.” He was then cut off, and was asked to show his press credentials by the Gore staff and Secret Service. When the credentials were found to be in order, no further action was taken against him.