

NATION & WORLD

ATTACKS

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parade before us an array of illegalities, improprieties, taking the Fifth Amendment, absentee witnesses, all the time the Justice Department was trying to keep a lid on it and keep the facts from the American people," Thompson said. "I don't mind good foxhole conversions, but there has to be accountability first."

In Florida, Bush said he is considering calling for suspension of a 4.3 cents-per-gallon gasoline tax passed in 1993 with Gore casting the tie-breaking vote in the Senate. A number of Republicans in Congress are thinking about such a move to counter rising gasoline prices brought on by an oil shortage stemming from production cuts put in place by the oil producing nations.

Gore said in his AP interview that getting the oil producing nations to increase supply is the way to go and Energy Secretary Bill Richardson said Sunday he is opposed to suspending the 1993 gas tax.

Bush's chief political strategist, Karl Rove, had even harsher criticism of Gore and a 1996 fund-raiser he attended at a Buddhist temple in California. A Gore

friend and political supporter recently was convicted of arranging illegal donations in connection with the event.

"Sometimes Vice President Gore has a big problem telling the truth," Rove said on "Fox News Sunday." "The Buddhist temple involved violations of law. Fifty-five thousand dollars in illegal contributions were funneled through that fund-raiser, and the vice president has consistently not told the truth about his involvement in that fund-raiser."

Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., appearing on the same program, said he hoped Bush and McCain will set aside the bitterness of the campaign and unite against Gore for the good of the party.

"If John McCain jumps on board, and he puts his heart into it, we be unto the Democrats," said Graham, who helped lead McCain's effort in South Carolina.

Bush made his comments after touring the Strawberry Festival, a carnival complete with Ferris wheels, conch fritters and strawberries everywhere.

The governor made himself a towering strawberry shortcake at a booth sponsored by St. Clement Catholic Church. McCain had criticized Bush for speaking at a South Carolina Christian school whose leaders have criticized Catholicism.

Sen. Hollings not showing up in committee

ASSOCIATED PRESS

If you're looking for U.S. Sen. Ernest "Fritz" Hollings, don't check the Senate's committee meeting rooms.

Records show that since he was re-elected two years ago, Hollings has made about 30 percent of the meetings held by the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Budget Committee and the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, *The State* reported.

Hollings, 78, said it wasn't necessary for him to attend most of the meetings and that much of his work is done outside such gatherings.

He expressed surprise that his attendance was as high as records showed. "That's more than I thought," Hollings, D-S.C., said.

During the same time, U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., made about half his committee and subcommittee meetings.

Hollings said the 97-year-old Republican is there more because "he's got nothing else to do."

It's nearly impossible to make all Senate meetings, which sometimes overlap or clash with other important events.

But Hollings serves on some of the most high-powered, coveted committees in the Senate.

As the ranking Commerce Committee member,

Hollings is part of all seven subcommittees and also serves on five Appropriations subcommittees. The Budget Committee has no subcommittees.

Thurmond serves on the Armed Services Committee and three of its subcommittees; the Judiciary Committee, leading one subcommittee and serving on three others; and the Veterans Affairs Committee, which has no subcommittees.

Charles Dunn, a former Clemson University political analyst now at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, said the committee process is where legislation is largely shaped.

Dunn said Hollings' attendance was a "low number."

Even if Hollings' staffers are at meetings, the senator's absence "sends a signal to his staff that he's not interested," Dunn said.

Hollings said voters shouldn't worry about his committee-attendance record. "It's the worst indication in the world" of a senator's performance, he said. In 1999, Hollings had a 97 percent floor-voting record.

Thurmond said the meetings are significant. "I attend all of them unless there's some conflict," he said. "That's what I'm up here for — to answer the people's business. You can't do it unless you attend the meet-

ings."

There are other areas where Hollings and his office have slowed. Since re-elected, he's gone from putting out up to four news releases a day to sending out only a few notices all 1999 touting his achievements.

Also, at least 12 staffers left Hollings' office. Some say Hollings remains one of the most formidable and effective lawmakers in the Senate. He can still draw money for projects like the U.S. Border Patrol School and the Hollings Cancer Center, both in Charleston.

During Hollings' last campaign against Republican Congressman Bob Inglis, the senator questions his opponents' voting record although the two had similar records for the 105th Congress.

"I thought it was an unwarranted attack" in the 1998 race, Inglis said. "I wonder what the senator thinks, having used that weapon when he's apparently quite guilty of a greater offense."

Hollings has faced some personal struggles in the past year — his house in Isle of Palms burned down, his wife had double knee-replacement surgery — although he said that nothing in his personal life has affected his committee attendance.

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**RUSSIAN TRIVIA**  
 QUESTION OF THE WEEK:  
 What was the most unpopular step among Russians that Vladimir Putin has taken during his service as the acting president of Russia?  
ANSWER: Putin has increased prices on vodka by 40%. While this step was unpopular and could cost him votes in the upcoming presidential election, this move was necessary from two perspectives. First, it helped to increase the inflow of taxes into the state budget. Second, it may reduce drinking even if by a fraction.

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 THE APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 2000.  
 Questions? Contact the Office of Community Service Programs @ 777-6688.

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