

On February first, the Senate voted to confirm

John Ashcroft's



for U. S. Attorney General by a slim margin of 58-42, ending a sharply divided debate. The role of the Attorney General is an important one, dealing with the enforcement of U.S. civil rights laws and assuring justice for all Americans. In addition, the Attorney General plays a major role in deciding what kinds of judges will precede over the federal courts.

The controversy over Ashcroft's long standing conservative political and religious views has aroused concern for his ability to adequately serve his position. Democrats, with only a few exceptions, said Ashcroft was not fit for the post due to his record on civil rights, labor, gun control, women's rights and gay rights. Republicans disregard the accusations, saying Ashcroft's qualifications for the job make him one of the best ever for the position. Prior to his six years in the Senate, Ashcroft was the twice-elected governor of Missouri, and also served as the state's attorney general.

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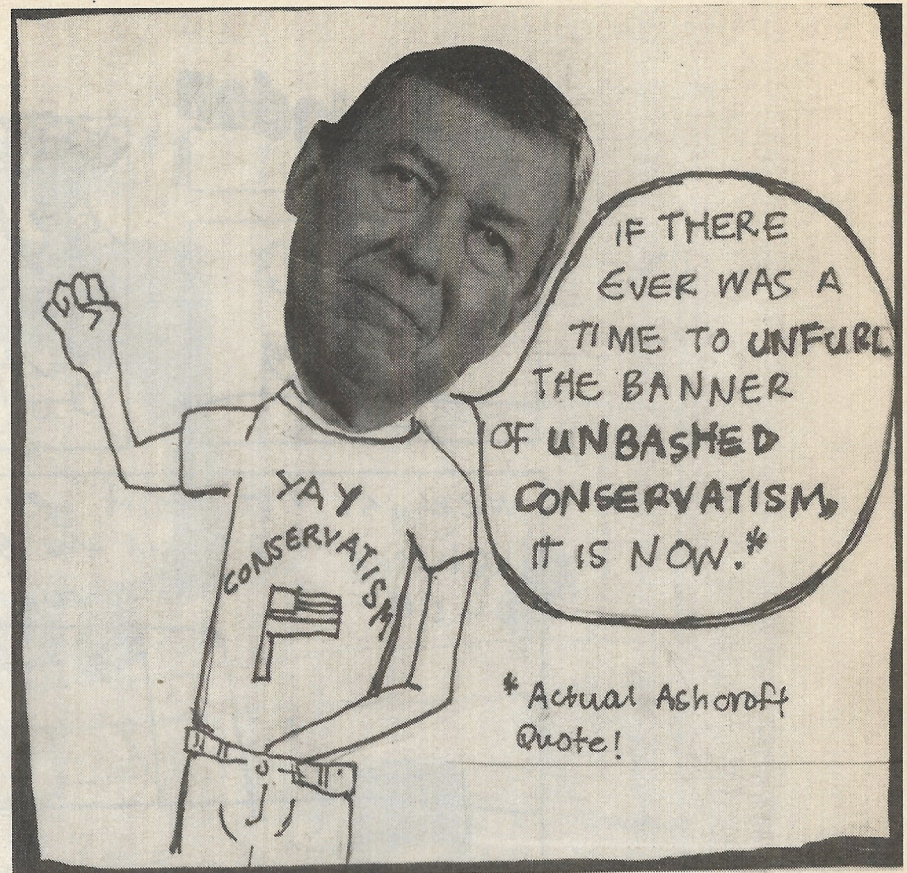
Civil Rights- In 1999, Ashcroft delivered the commencement address at and accepted an honorary degree from Bob Jones University, which is infamous for its racially discriminatory policies.

In 1998, Ashcroft praised the magazine Southern Partisan, which has been a major forum for neo-Confederate views, including the recurring theme that slavery was beneficial to the slaves. Ashcroft praised the magazine for "help[ing] to set the record straight" against what he called "attacks the revisionists have brought against our founders."

In 2000, Ashcroft voted against the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which would have amended federal law to recognize hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender and disability, and would have strengthened federal jurisdiction over hate crimes.

In 1999, Ashcroft led a deceptive campaign to block the federal judicial nomination of Judge Ronnie

by allison cole



White, the first African American judge on the Missouri State Supreme Court.

1st Amendment-Ashcroft is the author and primary promoter of "charitable choice," a campaign to turn federal dollars and social programs over to churches and religious organizations that would not have to comply with anti-discrimination requirements or other forms of public accountability.

He supports vouchers to divert tax dollars from public schools to religious schools.

He backs a constitutional amendment that would allow public schools to subject students to captive audience prayer.

He has strongly supported a constitutional amendment to allow Congress to impose a ban on the destruction of the American flag as part of a political protest.

He has helped lead campaigns to abolish funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

He supports limits on free speech over the Internet. He supported legislation, later held unconstitu-

opposed state-level legislation requiring equal pay for equal work.

Gay Rights-In 1996 then-Senator Ashcroft voted against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would have prohibited workplace discrimination, based on sexual orientation. Ashcroft said he opposed ENDA because homosexuality "is clearly a choice - a choice that can be made and unmade."

In 2000, Ashcroft voted against the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which would have amended federal law to recognize hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender and disability, and would have strengthened federal jurisdiction over hate crimes.

Ashcroft and Senator Jesse Helms were the only two votes in committee against Senate confirmation of James Hormel, an openly gay philanthropist who was nominated by President Clinton to be U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. Ashcroft said of Hormel, "He has been a leader in promoting a lifestyle... And the kind of leadership he's exhibited there is likely to be offensive to ... individuals in the setting to which he will be assigned."

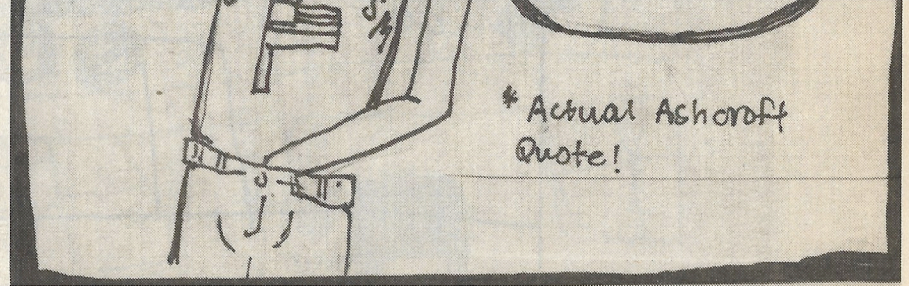
He opposed the federal assault weapons ban and voted against the ban on importation and sale of high-capacity ammunition magazines.

In 1999, Ashcroft recorded radio ads urging Missouri voters to support a NRA-sponsored ballot initiative that would have allowed almost anyone to carry concealed guns in Missouri.

As Attorney General, Ashcroft may decide how vigorously to enforce environmental regulations and various gun control laws and agreements, including a Clinton administration deal with Smith & Wesson that required the firearms company to install safety features on guns and not patronize gun shows that did not conduct background checks. The department faces antitrust issues, including the ongoing Microsoft case and various pending airline mergers. In the coming months, the Attorney General will also get to weigh in on a few pieces of tobacco legislation. He can also decide whether to join other lawsuits, such as those seeking to weaken abortion rights or to guarantee the voting rights of minorities.

Civil rights activists will be keeping a close

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Women's Rights-As a U.S. Senator, Ashcroft promoted a constitutional amendment and sponsored federal legislation to ban all abortions except those medical procedures "required to prevent the death of either the pregnant woman or her unborn offspring, as long as [the law authorizing such procedures] requires every reasonable effort be made to preserve the lives of both of them."

Ashcroft supports no exception for victims of rape or incest, nor any exception for abortions necessary to prevent serious or permanent injury to a woman's health.

Ashcroft opposed the Equal Rights Amendment. As state attorney general, he sued the National Organization for Women for boycotting Missouri when the state would not ratify the ERA. He also

opposed state-level legislation requiring equal pay for equal work.

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Environment- Ashcroft introduced legislation to undercut efforts to limit emissions of man-made greenhouse gases.

Ashcroft voted to allow chemical manufacturers to avoid compliance with community "right to know" laws so they would not have to report on emissions of some toxic pollution.

Ashcroft voted against additional funding for environmental programs including the Clean Water Action Plan and toxic waste cleanups at Superfund sites.

Gun Control-Ashcroft was ranked as one of the National Rifle Association's most reliable votes in the Senate.

Ashcroft was one of only 20 Senators to vote against an amendment to prohibit the sale or transfer of guns without safety locks.

He voted against closing the gun show loophole, which allows criminals and juveniles' easy access to guns.

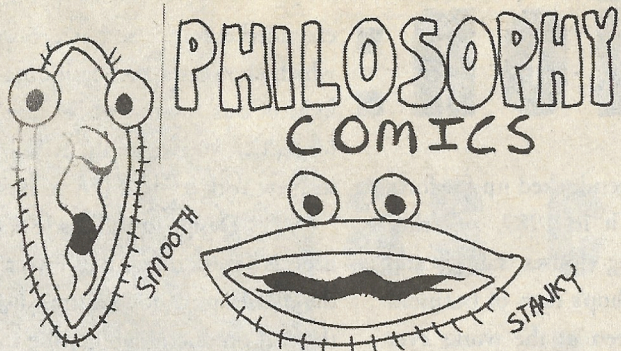
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Civil rights activists will be keeping a close watch on the Justice department and the Bush administration as a whole. Symbolically, Ashcroft's nomination raises a very important question- if Ashcroft's views are not considered to be too far to the right, then what is? Bush seems to be forgetting that he LOST the popular election by half a million votes and therefore the majority of the voting population does not support far right wing causes. What ever happened to his pledge to close the gap in the party lines, promising to be a "uniter, not a divider?"

If you are interested in obtaining more information, there is a really great website put together by People for the American Way- www.opposeAshcroft.com- click on the Reports and Fact Sheets link. They will also be launching a site, www.eyeonbush.org, which will hopefully be up soon.



STARRING: THE ONTOLOGICAL PUSSIES!

