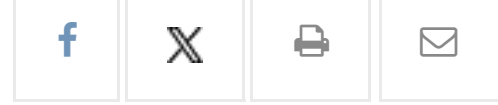


UPI ARCHIVES

JUNE 2, 1993

A legal boy wonder who served eight years as...

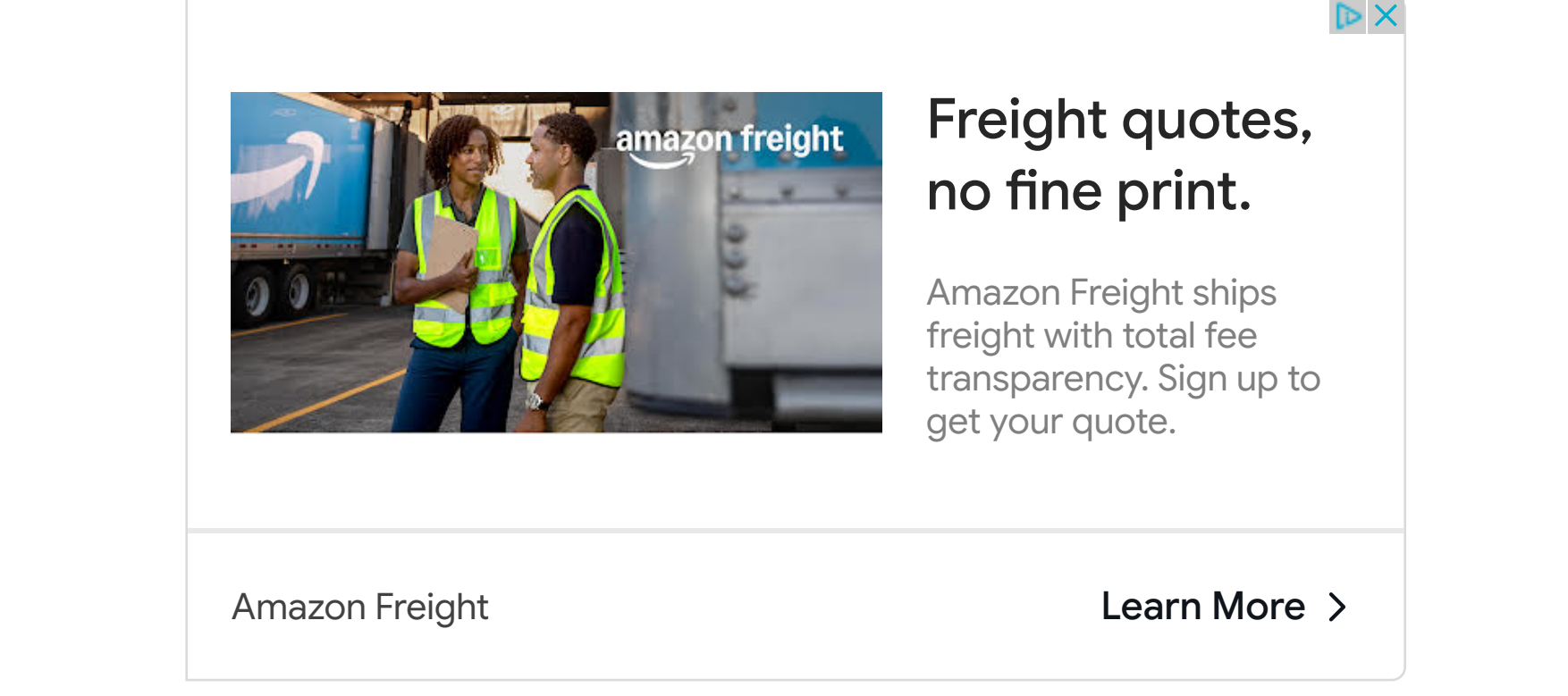


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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- A legal boy wonder who served eight years as Missouri's attorney general pleaded guilty to political corruption charges Wednesday in federal court in Kansas City.

William L. Webster, 39, admitted to charges that he used the state's top legal office to further political goals.

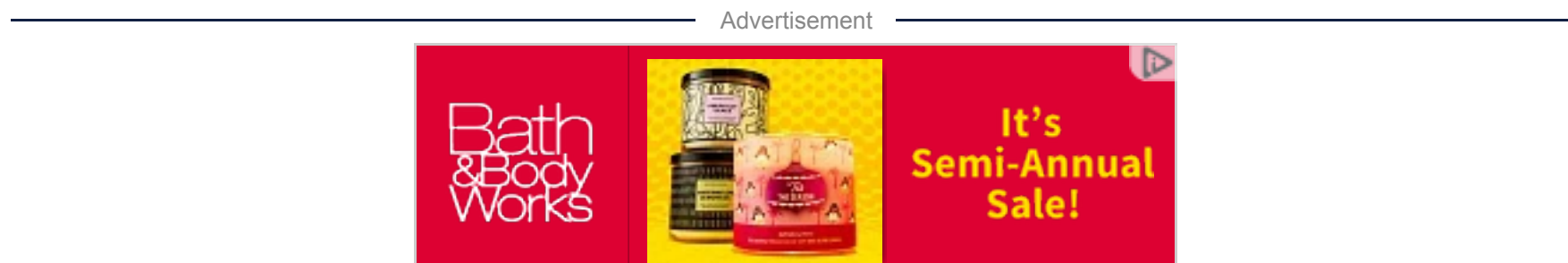


Webster waived grand jury indictments before a federal magistrate and several hours later pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court to separate charges of misusing and conspiring to misuse state funds. The felony charges stem from his activity while in elected office between 1985 and 1992.

He could be sentenced to a total of 15 years in prison and receive \$500,000 in fines. A sentencing date has not been set.

Webster, a Republican, was the target of a closed-door probe by a federal grand jury for the past two years. The jury studied allegations that he rewarded political supporters with money from the state's Second Injury Fund, a special fund set aside to cover the legal costs of workman's compensation cases.

Ever since the grand jury convened in Springfield, Webster has insisted he did nothing wrong and claimed that political enemies were plotting against him. He had to defend himself frequently during an unsuccessful bid for governor last year and appealed for public support during a statewide tour early this year.



Wednesday's appearances before a magistrate and later in district court -- a process arranged as part of a plea bargain with acting U.S. Attorney David Jones -- was the first time Webster acknowledged wrongdoing.

The conspiracy charge said Webster offered to trade state contracts for legal services in exchange for political contributions. The contracts for the workman's compensation cases went to lawyers who helped with political fund-raising.

The charge also said that before leaving office early this year, Webster conspired to destroy computer files that contained evidence of graft.

The second charge said Webster used state property for campaign fund- raising and improperly used a state employee as a babysitter for his three children.

U.S. District Judge Brook Bartlett questioned Webster closely for several hours before accepting the guilty pleas.

Webster was the Republican Party choice to succeed John Ashcroft as governor. He was also a vocal supporter of the death penalty and contributed to his opponent's defeat in last year's election to Gov. Mel Carnahan, a Democrat.

Webster and Ashcroft are stalwart supporters of conservative causes such as gun rights, opposition to abortion restrictions and the right for a state to overrule families in right-to-life cases.

Webster's political rise- looking Webster rose quickly in Missouri politics. He was the attorney general in the nation when first elected in 1984. Before that, he served in the state legislature for two terms as the youngest member of the state Legislature.

Webster gained national fame as an adept attorney before the U.S. Supreme Court, where he defended Missouri's abortion laws and fought to keep alive Nancy Cruzan, a brain-damaged woman whose family wanted to disconnect her feeding tube. He also led national campaigns for consumer rights against manufacturers of unsafe all-terrain vehicles and ambulances.

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July 8 (UPI) -- A message in a bottle launched by visitors to Newfoundland's Bell Island was found washed up on an Irish beach nearly 13 years later, after apparently crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

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July 8 (UPI) -- Lifeguards at a Florida beach rescued an unusual struggling swimmer from the Atlantic Ocean: a white-tailed deer.

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July 7 (UPI) -- A Spanish woman who has been collecting egg cups for over 50 years earned a Guinness World Record when her collection was tallied at 15,485 items.

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Trucker spending night in Maryland wins \$50,000 lottery prize

July 7 (UPI) -- A long-haul trucker from North Carolina spent the night in Maryland and ended up winning a \$50,000 lottery prize.

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July 7 (UPI) -- Authorities in Ohio shared photos of a deer spotted wandering with a bird feeder stuck on its antlers, but officials said it does not appear to be causing the animal any discomfort.

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July 7 (UPI) -- Fire crews in South Carolina were returning from a call when they came across a new situation -- an alligator in traffic.

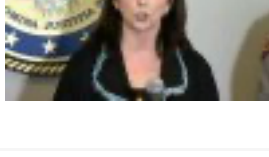
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July 7 (UPI) -- Wildlife officials in Connecticut said a mother bear and four cubs broke into a home, raided the pantry and left before police arrived.

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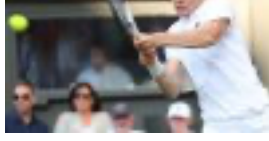
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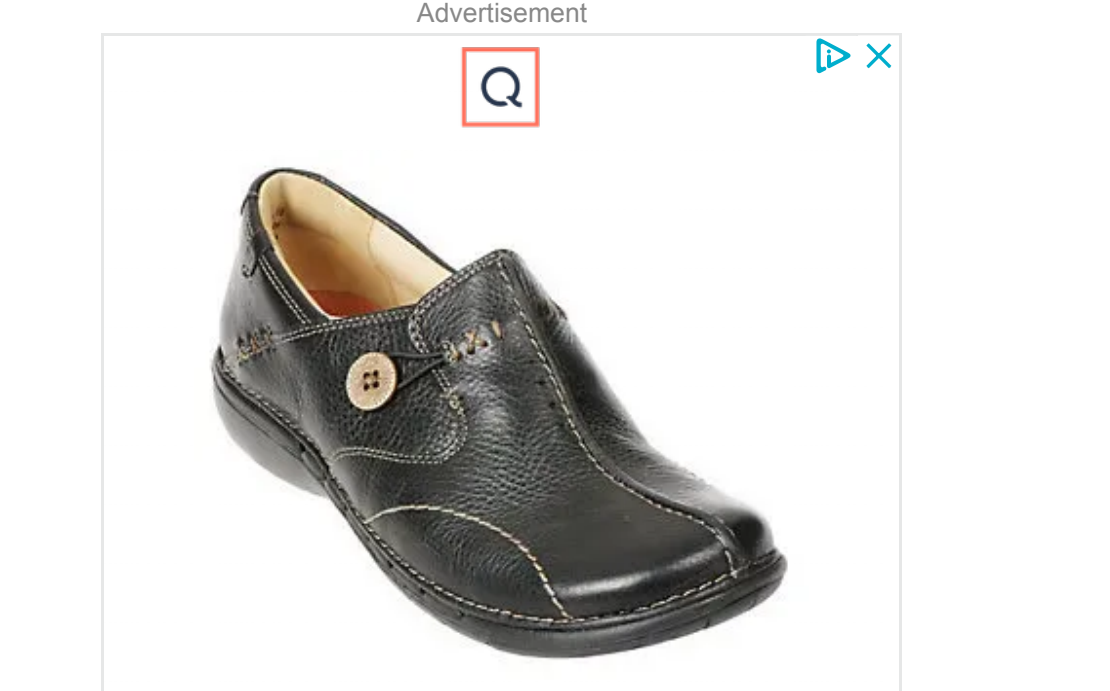
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