

Arizona recall attempt faces difficult times

PHOENIX, Ariz. (AP) — After starting off with a bang, the Mecham Recall Committee now says it may have trouble raising enough petition signatures to force controversial Gov. Evan Mecham to face a recall vote.

The four-month petition campaign marked its halfway point dur-

ing the holiday weekend, and both the Republican governor and the recall backers have had their ups and downs.

— Mecham, still in his first year of office, has been refurbishing his image by making fewer of the off-the-cuff comments that have gotten him in trouble in the past. He also has held

several meetings with Arizona's political pros and minority groups to seek their advice.

— The Recall Committee won an Arizona Supreme Court ruling that said it is not subject to strict limits on campaign contributions. But it was stung by another court decision that shopping malls may bar recall sup-

porters — a crucial blow to people trying to gather signatures in the blistering Arizona heat. The second ruling is being appealed.

Mecham, 63, was targeted for a recall campaign even before he took office in January. His opponents claim he is insensitive to women and minorities.

They also say his appointees often have been unqualified or worse: a tax chief who hadn't filed his return on time, and a utility watchdog chief who was accused of being anti-consumer. More recently, the two doctors he named to the state's Board of Medical Examiners

were found to have been scolded by that very panel earlier.

Mecham, an auto dealer who won the governorship on his fifth try, is still most well-known for rescinding a Martin Luther King holiday for state employees on grounds its creation by his predecessor, Democrat Bruce Babbitt, was illegal.

Recall backers say he has harmed the state government and has been an embarrassment to Arizona's image: at least two national magazines have labeled him "dumb." Mecham's foibles have been so many that some — such as violations of the Open Meeting Law — have largely escaped public attention, said Ed Buck, founder of the Recall Committee.

The Recall Committee needs 216,746 valid signatures of registered voters by Nov. 3 to force Mecham to face an election in spring 1988. The committee began work on July 6, and after a month announced that it had 103,379 signatures.

However, Buck said the number of signatures gathered had dwindled during the "dog days" of August. That was pretty much expected, he said, but added, "If they don't pick up after Labor Day we're in trouble."

Buck said the court battles hurt his group's signature-gathering and cut into financial contributions. "It seems like everybody is thinking, 'Well, the recall is going so well they don't need my help,'" he said.

Just a month ago, Buck had boasted that the petition process was going so well his group might have by mid-September the 350,000 signatures he figures are needed.

Now, asked whether his warnings of trouble might be an effort to whip his troops up, the recall founder said, "I wish we were sophisticated enough to use tactics Grassroots efforts are always so grungy."

Mecham has been on a summer image-building binge, making a series of speeches to outline his accomplishments in office. He also has sought to avoid controversy by using a phrase new to him — "no



Exhibit opens Friday

The Second Annual Purchase Prize Award Exhibit opened Friday night in the Grant County Art Guild's gallery in the Hearst Methodist-Episcopal Church in Pinos Altos. Among those exhibiting were Richard Maitland (center) from Santa Fe and Greg Whipple (right) of Silver City. In the above picture Maitland

displays a 60 year old snapshot of the Silver City house he lived in as a child. Much to his surprise he learns that fellow artist Greg Whipple is now the owner of the house. Sam Pilgreen, exhibit judge from Ruidoso, looks on amused as the two compare notes.

(Photo By Ed Werner)

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Gomez: Rate hike won't hurt the state

By The Associated Press

Consumers in New Mexico will see little effect from the Federal Reserve Board's increase of the prime lending rate, bankers say.

The fed on Friday raised the discount rate, the interest rate it charges the top financial institutions in the United States, from 5.5 percent to 6 percent.

The rate last was raised in April 1984.

The fed's action prompted most banks in the country to raise their prime lending rates from 8.25 percent to 8.75 percent.

"It will generate some increase in long-term rates, but I don't think it will be a significant increase," said

the mortgage banking department of Sunwest Bank in Albuquerque.

"There was a lot of pressure for the prime to be increased because of its relationship to rates," he said. "The spread between the discount and the prime had been considered to be quite wide, so we were expecting there would be an increase."

Analysts predicted Friday that nationally, interest rates on everything, including home mortgages and credit cards, would go up.

C.B. "Pete" Edmonds, who is executive vice president of retail banking for Albuquerque Federal Savings & Loan Association, said people with adjustable rate mortgages probably would see the most difference.

Purchase prize exhibit