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Ritchey gets commitment from athletes, fans
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TUESDAY
AUGUST 28, 2007



VOLUME 102, NUMBER 234

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County to vault rollback rate

Cites Alon USA's tax litigation with appraisal district as the reason

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Howard County commissioners voted unanimously Monday morning to move forward with a tax rate that includes a 6.38-cent increase over the rollback rate, thanks, according to the court, to ongoing tax litigation with Alon USA, owner of the Big Spring Refinery.

"It's a situation where Alon USA is refusing to pay its taxes, and we're having to raise taxes for county residents to make up the difference. That's it, pure and simple."

—Commissioner Bill Crooker



According to Commissioner Bill Crooker, Alon USA's ongoing lawsuit concerning its tax appraisal values from last year — coupled with expected litigation concerning this year's val-

ues — has made it necessary for the county to go above the rollback rate of 42.3974 cents per \$100 valuation.

"It's a situation where Alon USA is refusing to pay its taxes, and we're having to raise taxes for county residents to make up the difference," said Crooker. "That's it, pure and simple."

Commissioners agreed to move forward with a proposed

tax rate of 48.787 cents per \$100 valuation, more than 6 cents over the proposed rollback rate of 42.3974 cents the court had decided on approximately two weeks ago.

The proposed rate is identical to the rate used last year, according to County Auditor Jackie Olson, which is expected

See **ROLLBACK**, Page 3A

Jail cost still elusive

Commissioners have until Sept. 5 to place bond up for election in November

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Poised to place a multi-million dollar bond issue before the voters to fund the design and construction of a new county jail, Howard County commissioners were missing only one ingredient during their meeting Monday afternoon — an estimated cost for the project.

Commissioners were forced to hold off on a vote to place the issue before voters during the

November election, as project architect Jeff Heffelfinger struggles to get the court an estimated cost for a new jail.

"Jeff will have us that number by Sept. 4, which is when we expect to call for the bond election," said County Judge Mark Barr.

And while the lack of a solid price tag for the planned facility wasn't available for commissioners Monday, Vince Viaille, senior vice president of investment



HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

Vince Viaille, left, senior vice president of investment bankers First Southwest Company, goes over the procedures for presenting a bond election to county voters with Howard County commissioners during a special meeting Monday afternoon.

bankers First Southwest Company, was present to answer questions concerning the impending election, and what happens if the bond issue passes.

"September 5 is the last day to consider placing a bond issue before the voters during the November election," Viaille told commissioners. "So taking that vote Sept. 4 will

put you on the mark."

Viaille, who served as advisor to county commissioners this time last year on a similar bond issue to fund a new jail, said the court can expect

to things as it moves forward on the issue: Higher construction costs and higher interest rates.

"Unfortunately, interest

See **JAIL**, Page 3A



HERALD photo/Jonathan Hull

Emergency medical personnel treat this Big Spring man for minor cuts and scrapes following a motorcycle accident near the intersection of Gregg and Sixth Street Monday afternoon. The rider suffered only minor injuries and damages to the cycle and an automobile were minimal.

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HC trustees OK budget package

\$10 million jump includes voter-approved renovations

By **STEVE REAGAN**
Staff Writer

Howard College trustees ended one of the most difficult budget building processes in recent memory when they approved a financial package for the coming fiscal year Monday afternoon.

At first glance, the new budget features a whopping \$10 million increase in expenditures from the previous year, but there are good reasons for such a figure, officials said.

College Vice President Terry Hansen said the \$35



Hansen

million in expenditures budgeted for the new year includes both first-year costs arising from renovations at the Big Spring campus and debt service to pay for those renovations.

"Other than that, the budget is essentially the same as last year," Hansen said.

Hansen and other col-

See **HC**, Page 3A

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Sports

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Do you have an interesting sports item or story idea? Call Jonathan Hull at 263-7331, Ext. 237. Email results to: sports@bigspringherald.com

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Tuesday, August 28, 2007

IN BRIEF

Area high school sports calendar

Here's a listing of this week's area high school varsity sports calendar:

Today
Big Spring volleyball at San Angelo Central, 6:30 p.m.

Friday
Big Spring football at Odessa High, 7:30 p.m.
Coahoma football at Reagan County, 7:30 p.m.

Forsan football at Kermit, 7:30 p.m.
Grady football vs. Sanderson, 7:30 p.m.

Stanton football at Grape Creek, 7:30 p.m.

Big Spring volleyball at Seminole Tournament. First game vs. Monahans, 11 a.m.

Saturday
Sands football vs. Spur at the Jayton Classic, 1:30 p.m.

Garden City football vs. Calvert in Hico, 1:30 p.m.

Forsan season passes available

Forsan ISD is selling Football Family Season Passes until Sept. 7.

The passes are good for any junior high, junior varsity or varsity home game and covers all immediate family members.

The cost is \$40. Tickets may be purchased through the superintendent's office from 8-12 and 1-4 Monday through Friday.

Contact Judy Park at 457-2223, ext. 2, with any questions.

Howard College schedules Battle of the Cheerleaders

Howard College is the place to be Sept. 15.

The Battle of the Cheerleaders will take place at 5:30 p.m. at Dorothy Garrett Coliseum.

All area high schools have been invited to compete. There will be both cheer and dance competitions.

Top cheer, dance and mascot awards will be presented.

Admission is free for the public, who is invited to stick around after the Battle for a community pep rally.

All area schools and communities are invited to participate. Each school will be given the opportunity to recognize their student athletes.

A spirit stick will be awarded to the community/school showing the most spirit.

QB Club meeting set for Monday

The Big Spring Quarterback Club will hold its weekly meeting at 7 p.m. Monday at the Athletic Training Center.

Contact Denise Carillo at 816-1685 or Frank Stiles at 270-3041 for more details.

Crossroads Youth Football sign-ups

The Crossroads Youth Football Association have begun their sign-ups for the 2007 season.

While there will be no more early registration dates, a late registration day will be held Sept. 1.

See **BRIEFS**, Page 2B

Vick pleas guilty to dogfighting charges

By **LARRY O'DELL**

Associated Press Writer

RICHMOND, Va. — First, Michael Vick apologized to all the people he lied to. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell. Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank. Coach Bobby Petrino. His teammates.

"I was not honest and forthright in our discussions," the star quarterback said Monday, somber and deliberate and not speaking from notes.

Then he apologized to "all the young kids out there for my immature acts."

"I need to grow up," he added. And so began a public act of contrition from Vick, who pleaded guilty to a federal dogfighting charge and then stood behind a podium to say his job now was "bettering Michael Vick the person, not the football player."

There he was, a QB so deft and nimble he pulled off any number of amazing scrambles on the field. Now he was scrambling to save himself and his football future because of his role in a gruesome dogfighting ring.

Saying he was speaking "from the heart," Vick said he took full responsibility for his actions.

"Dogfighting is a terrible thing, and I did reject it," he said.

Acceptance of responsibility is one of the factors U.S. District Judge Henry E. Hudson will consider in handing down Vick's sentence Dec. 10. The federal sentencing guideline range is projected at a year to 18 months, but Hudson can impose up to the five-year maximum.

Vick was suspended indefinitely by the NFL after his written plea agreement was filed in court Friday.

"So I got a lot of down time, a lot of time to think about my actions and what I've done and

how to make Michael Vick a better person," said Vick, who grew up in Newport News.

"I will redeem myself. I have to," he vowed.

In Atlanta, the Falcons said they would not cut Vick immediately because of salary-cap issues. The team intends to pursue the \$22 million in bonus money that he already received in a \$130 million contract signed in 2004.

"We cannot tell you today that Michael is cut from the team," Blank said. "Cutting him today

See **VICK**, Page 2B

Ritchey gets commitment from athletes, fans



Big Spring Athletic Director Mike Ritchey fires up the crowd and the athletes at the community pep rally held for all Big Spring High School sports Monday night at Memorial Stadium. Ritchey led the athletes and crowd in a chant of "Count me in. Count us in."

HERALD photo/Jonathan Hull

Cowboys getting healthier

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**

AP Sports Writer

IRVING — Dallas Cowboys starting cornerback Terence Newman still hopes to play in the season opener even though his painful right heel is "not getting better yet."

Newman said Monday that he has a small tear in his plantar fascia, or tissue in the bottom of the foot.

"It's something that is going to be bothering me for the whole year," said Newman, who has started all 64 games since he was a first-round pick in 2003. "Right now, the problem that I have is that I can't plant on it. There is no way I can plant on my foot."

While Newman met with team trainers about how to treat his foot, linebacker Greg Ellis was in Alabama to have his Achilles tendon examined by noted orthopedist Dr. James Andrews.

The team also said linebacker Kevin Burnett would have bone chips removed from his foot, though he should be able to play in the regular season opener. Kicker Martin Gramatica has a slightly pulled right hamstring, but hasn't been ruled out for Thursday's preseason finale against Minnesota.

Coach Wade Phillips said receiver Terry Glenn, who had arthro-

See **COWBOYS**, Page 2B

Astros clean house, axe general manager, coach

By **CHRIS DUNCAN**

AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON — Less than two years ago, the Houston Astros were celebrating their first National League pennant. On Monday, they were starting over.

Manager Phil Garner and general manager Tim Purpura were fired by owner Drayton McLane, who said the franchise "needed a fresh start" after a plunge to the bottom of the NL Central.

Bench coach Cecil Cooper was appointed interim manager, and team president Tal Smith will serve as interim general manager.

"I felt for a number of reasons, we needed new direction, invigoration, to play with more enthusiasm and play more like a champion," McLane said.

The Astros slumped to 58-73 this year, nine games behind the division-leading Chicago Cubs. They've lost five of their last seven home games, to lowly Washington and Pittsburgh.

"We had really fallen into a pattern of so-so ball," Garner said during a telephone interview with The Associated Press. "We were never able to put together the run, like we made in the pre-

vious two seasons. I think there were a number of reasons for that."

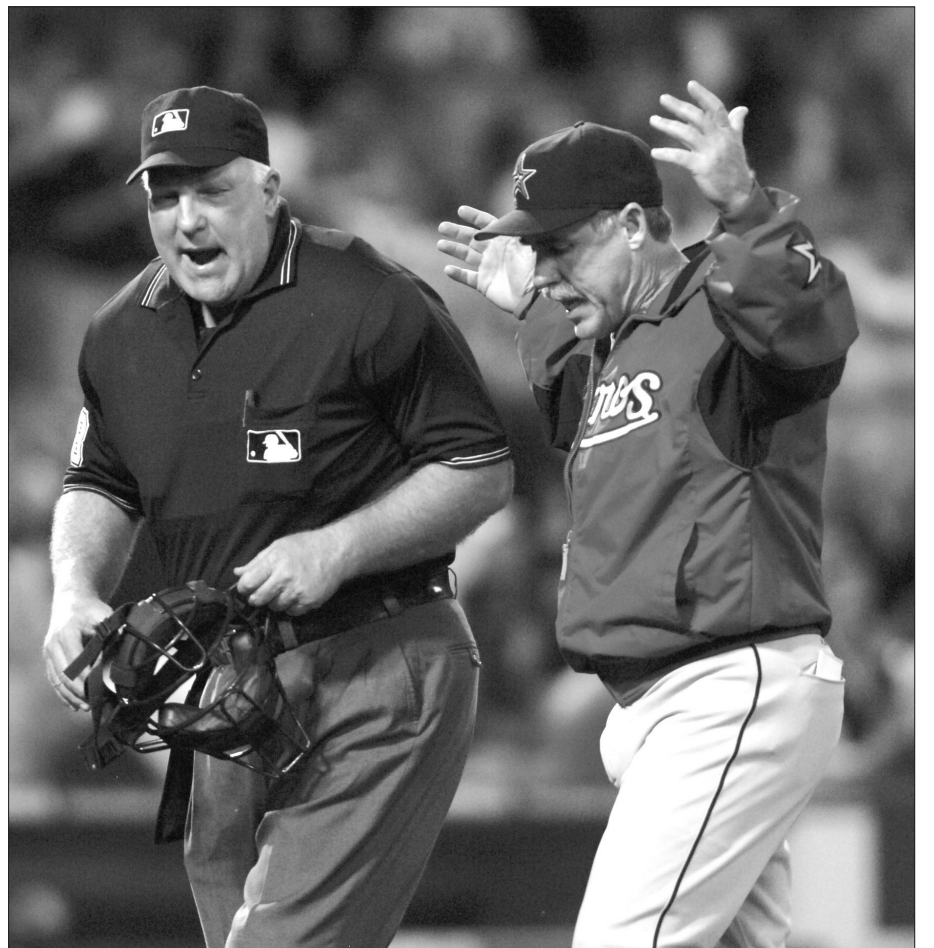
Houston became the fourth team to switch managers this season. Baltimore fired Sam Perlozzo on June 18 and Cincinnati fired Jerry Narron on July 1, the same day Mike Hargrove resigned as Seattle's manager.

The 57-year-old Cooper becomes a major league manager for the first time. The five-time All-Star and two-time Gold Glove winner was the bench coach in Milwaukee in 2002 and managed Triple-A Indianapolis in 2003-04.

Cooper was taking his mother-in-law to a doctor's appointment on Monday when Smith and McLane called to offer him the job.

"It's been kind of a whirlwind tour this morning," he said. "Drayton asked me if I was OK and all of a sudden, in the pit of my stomach, I felt sick. It really was a shock to me. I kind of got a little emotional, but I'm also excited about the opportunity. I've been the World Series as a player and a coach. Now, I want to try it as a manager."

See **FIRE**, Page 2B



Houston Astros manager Phil Garner (right) argues with home plate umpire Larry Young May 24, 2006. Garner was fired by the Astros Monday.

MCT photo/Steve Deslich/KRT

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News at a glance

Suspect in Texas murder arrested in New York

AUSTIN (AP) — A man wanted in the shooting deaths of four people at a home near Austin has been arrested in New York on a murder charge in the case and may be connected with the Pennsylvania slaying of an elderly woman, law officers said.

Inmate to die Tuesday for death of woman in Kilgore robbery

LIVINGSTON (AP) — DaRoyce Mosley doesn't deny walking into a Kilgore bar intending to hold up the place with a partner but says he fled when his uncle fired a shot that crippled the woman bartender and wasn't responsible for the four other people who were gunned

down execution-style. "After the first shot, I ran," he said recently from Texas' death row. "I turned around and ran out." Mosley, however, confessed to the slayings after he was picked up by police, and the confession he said he wrongly gave to officers after long intense questioning helped convince a jury in Gregg County in East Texas to convict him in the death of Patricia Colter, 54, and decide he should die.

Whole Foods says it has enough shares to buy rival Wild Oats

DALLAS (AP) — Whole Foods Market Inc. said Monday it had support from enough shareholders of Wild Oats Markets Inc. to complete the purchase of its rival, putting a successful end to a takeover opposed by federal antitrust regulators.

acquire all the remaining outstanding Wild Oats shares. Austin-based Whole Foods announced its \$565 million offer for Wild Oats in February, but the Federal Trade Commission and some consumer groups opposed the deal, arguing it would result in less competition and higher prices for premium groceries.

Texas health centers get \$7.1 million in funds

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government awarded \$7.1 million to 13 Texas community health centers to provide medical care to the poor and people in areas where hospitals and doctors are few.

Mississippi ranked fattest in the nation

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Experts say Mississippians need to skip the gravy, say no to the fried pickles and start tak-

ing brisk walks to fight an epidemic of obesity. According to a new study, this Deep South state is the fattest in the nation. The Trust for America's Health, a research group that focuses on disease prevention, says Mississippi is the first state where more than 30 percent of adults are considered obese.

Idaho Sen. Larry Craig's political future in question after arrest

WASHINGTON (AP) — Idaho Sen. Larry Craig is a conservative Republican who has voted against gay marriage and opposes hate crimes legislation that would extend special protections to gay and lesbian crime victims.

ROLLBACK

Continued from Page 1A

to generate approximately \$700,000 in additional funding, which — when coupled with more than \$300,000 in budget cuts — will barely make up the shortfall created by Alon USA. "This will just cover that," said County Judge Mark Barr.

what Alon officials described as the "uncontested appraisal amount" of \$80 million, according to Commissioner Jerry Kilgore. How Alon USA arrived at the \$80 million figure after presenting the county's appraisal review board with what company officials say they should pay taxes on — \$152 million — is still unclear, according to county officials.

thing area residents should keep in mind. "I think they should think about that the next time they go to a 7-Eleven," Condray told the court. Alon USA owns all of the 7-Eleven convenience stores in Big Spring, and more than 150 others across West Texas.

on the tax rate will be slated for Sept. 4 and Sept. 14, with final adoption of the rate expected Sept. 24. Commissioners also voted unanimously during the meeting to adopt the proposed budget for 2007-2008, which includes cutting six part-time and eight full-time positions, leading to several expected layoffs.

Clerk's office. Barr said the adopted budget — which totals \$13.08 million in expenditures while only expecting \$12.04 in revenue — could end up in serious trouble if any unexpected expenses pop up.

JAIL

Continued from Page 1A

rates are higher this time around," Viaille told the court. "You're looking at around 5.5 percent interest on the bond, which will be for approximately 25 years. The current bonds the county has are at 3.5 percent.

any funds left over after construction, those funds can either be used for software, computers or other necessities for the operation of the jail, or they can be applied to debt service, which will help bring the bond's effect on the tax rate down."

"You basically have four methods you can use," Viaille told the court. "The first is general obligation bonds, which have to be voted on. The second is certificates of obligation, which don't require a vote."

nanced the balloon out over several years, which doesn't require a vote because you're simply refinancing. "The fourth method, which is by far the most costly, is a lease bond agreement. The problem with this route is you'll pay anywhere from 8 to 9 percent interest on the bond, and if the county should default, they will lose title to the facility. This is a lot more risky."

have told county commissioners if the court doesn't pass the bond — or find another avenue of financing a new jail facility — the existing jail will be shut down, possibly throwing the county "into bankruptcy," according to Barr.

HC

Continued from Page 1A

lege officials said they have labored especially hard in crafting this budget in order to pay for sharp increases in fixed costs while keeping the package balanced. Howard College will face more than \$300,000 in increased utility costs this year, Hansen noted.

includes 6 cents per \$100 valuation in debt service to start paying down the \$21.6 million bond issue approved by district voters earlier this year. "The maintenance and operations tax rate actually went down this year, because of the increased valuations," Hansen said. "Our values went up, so our tax rate went down."

district up and running in case of fiscal emergencies, stand at \$8.3 million for all Howard College campuses. Hansen admitted he was not sorry to see this year's budget preparations come to an end. "This budget year has been a difficult one," he said. "We experienced significant increases in utility and other fixed costs that had to be absorbed into the budget."

budget to absorb the shortfall." Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331, ext. 234 or by e-mail at reporter@bigspringherald.com.

and subsequently, a bond election — that would once again put the matter in the hands of Howard County voters, according to county officials. The existing county jail was shut down by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in November 2006, after the facility's smoke evacuation system failed to meet requirements during a pair of tests in 2006.

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MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL 24th & Johnson 267-8288 June Rhoades, 64, died Sunday. Graveside services were at 11:00 AM Tuesday at Trinity Memorial Park.

StarTek 264-2700

EDITORIAL

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

-FIRST AMENDMENT

DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

RELEASE: SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2007, AND THEREAFTER

Ron Midkiff
Publisher

John A. Moseley
Managing Editor

Paralyzing Fog of Uncertainty
on Climate

Bill McClellan
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

Symphony needs our support during season ticket sale

Here's the long and the short of it. The long — For almost a quarter of a century, the Big Spring Symphony has been performing some of the best classical music that West Texans have had an opportunity to hear. The short — the 2007-2008 season opens in less than two weeks.

Tickets to the concerts are inexpensive — \$50 for the four-concert season or \$15 a performance for adults. Tickets for seniors and youth are even less — \$10 for senior citizens and \$5 for students. Obviously then, the symphony relies on interest in the community and strong attendance to keep it strong financially.

And that's the purpose of this editorial: To encourage local businesses, groups and individuals to consider making sure they have season tickets purchased for this season's concert run.

Season tickets went on sale today here at the Herald's offices and at First Band of West Texas, Faye's Flowers, Blum's Jewelers, the Heritage Museum and the Big Spring Chamber of Commerce.

The symphony's season will debut Saturday, Sept. 8, with Maestro John Giordano serving as guest conductor and featured pianist Sijing Ye, a 15-year-old Chinese prodigy currently studying at the Julliard School of Music in New York.

Ye recently won the Aspen Music Festival piano competition, the youngest to ever win the event. She will be performing Franz Liszt's First Piano Concerto, the same piece she played in winning the Aspen competition.

And don't forget the Symphony Association's annual season kickoff dinner set for 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 6, at the Big Spring Country Club. Giordano will be the guest speaker for the evening. A social time begins at 6:30 p.m. and the public is invited to attend.

That evening's meal will be \$8.95 plus drinks. Please RSVP by calling 267-7210.

It promises to be a very exciting and musically rewarding season.

To help ensure that our symphony will continue to perform, make sure to get your tickets for this season's concerts and support this fine organization.

HOW TO CONTACT US

The Herald is always interested in our readers' opinions. In order that we might better serve your needs, we offer several ways in which you may contact us:

- In person at 710 Scurry St.
- By telephone at 263-7331
- By fax at 264-7205
- By e-mail Managing Editor John A. Moseley at editor@bigspringherald.com or News Editor Bill McClellan at newsdesk@bigspringherald.com.
- By mail at P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721

LETTER POLICIES

- The Herald welcomes letters to the editor.
- Limit your letters to no more than 300 words.
- Sign your letter.
- Provide a daytime telephone number, as well as a street address for verification purposes.
- We reserve the right to edit for style and clarity.
- We reserve the right to limit publication to one letter per 30-day period per author.
- Letters that are unsigned or do not include a telephone number or address will not be considered.
- Letters should be submitted to Editor, Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721. They can also be e-mailed to editor@bigspringherald.com

A SMALL PRAYER

by K. Rae Anderson

May you be the centered point, Lord, of our life.

Amen

Making sure no fad is left behind

"Many Americans do not believe that the success of our students or of our schools can be measured by one test administered on one day, and I agree with them. This is not fair," Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., told the National Press Club last month.

As the House Education and Labor Committee he chairs is expected to roll out a draft for legislation to reauthorize the 2001 No Child Left Behind bill, Miller and fellow Democrats want to change NCLB testing.

Currently, the law requires that students be tested in math and reading every year between third-grade and eighth-grade, then once in high school. Miller explained he would add "multiple measures of success. These measures can no longer reflect just basic skills and memorization, but rather critical thinking and the ability to apply knowledge to new and challenging contexts."

On the one hand, Miller is right to push to improve NCLB. He wants to allow states to apply graduation rates toward their yearly NCLB progress scores and also would have states include history and science test scores.

On the other hand, when the education establishment touts testing for "critical thinking," that can be code for: Maybe the kid

can't read, but look at the bright side, he's smart.

And when educrat groups — such as the Forum on Educational Accountability — recommend that NCLB add "comprehensive assessments systems," which would include portfolios (essays, drawing, reports) in order to offer "rich and challenging educational goals," beware. What sounds like more sophisticated testing could end up being more confusing and inconclusive. A kid who can draw does not mean a kid who can multiply.

"The great danger here is that it clouds the accountability system," noted Amy Wilkins, vice president of Education Trust, a nonprofit group that advocates for higher standards in K-12 education.

No Child Left Behind's mission — to help all children read and compute at grade level — puts basics first so that children have the fundamentals in place to tackle more challenging subjects. Testing for problem-solving and critical thinking skills would only allow children who don't know the basics to score higher than they should.

Miller spoke to me on the telephone Wednesday about "drill and kill" and "teaching to the test." That's the standard line against standardized multiple-choice tests.

"It's goofy, they (the anti-test crowd) talk out of both sides of their mouth," Wilkins noted. Some educators complain that NCLB tests are confined to low-level skills and that they have to spend all their time teaching to the test. But: "If they're such low-level

skills, why do you spend so much time teaching them?"

Besides, Wilkins noted, the NCLB tests "should not be comprehensive and test every standard." She likened NCLB testing — which can consume from a couple hours to a day per year per student — to "a dipstick" that allows educators to see if kids are making adequate progress toward mastering grade-level skills, and then hopefully move on.

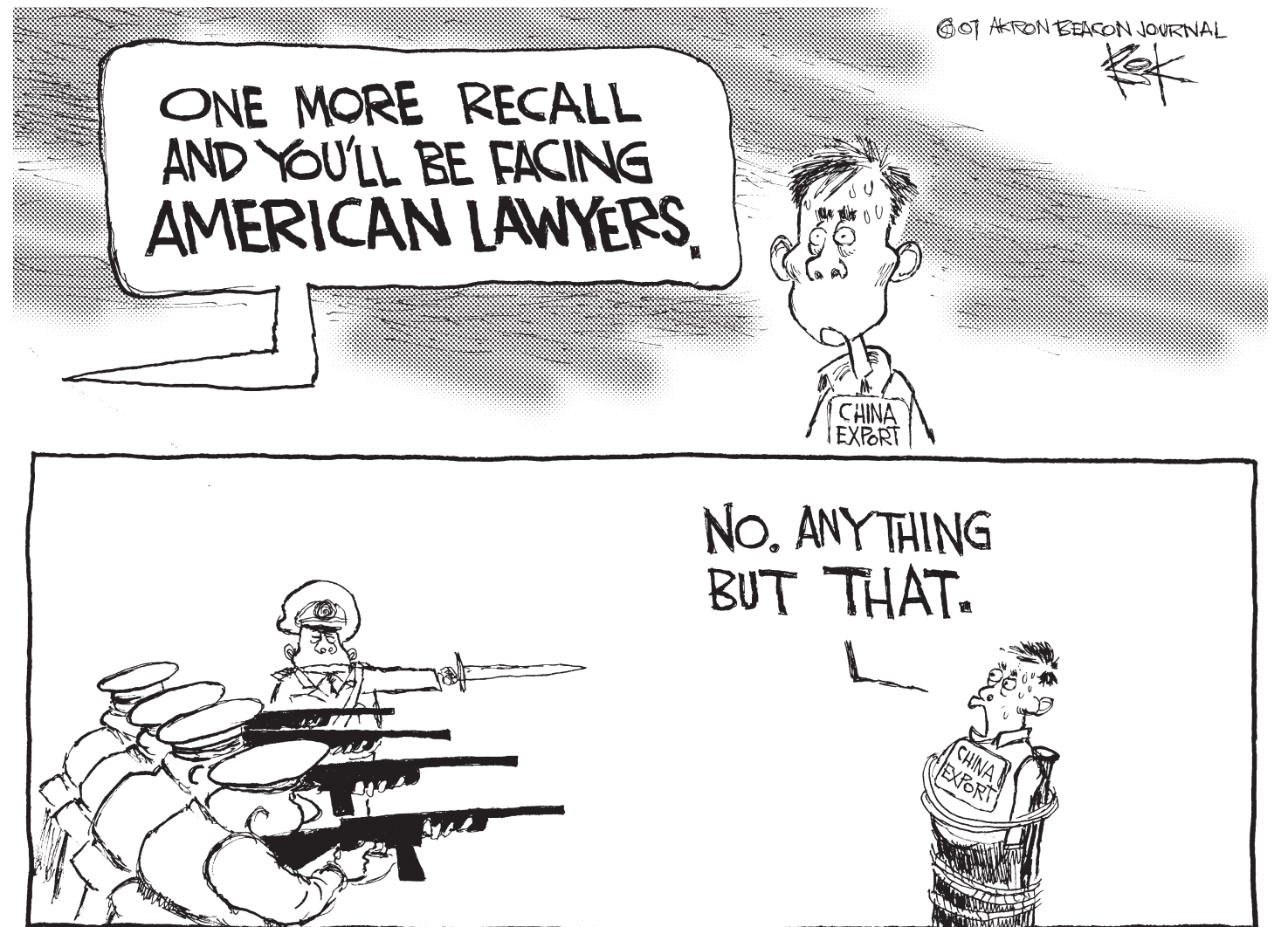
Will the new NCLB draft include portfolios? Miller told me that a state might be able to include portfolios for English-language learners — if the state has no valid test for that group, and thinks it can put together a good package and if the U.S. secretary of education approves. If the House education committee limits portfolios to that narrow area, so be it.

But on a larger scale, forget it. Teachers, parents and students already complain that there are too many tests. So the answer is: Another test? I don't think so.

The time it would take for teachers to grade portfolios is prohibitive. Most important of all, subjective grading defeats the whole purpose of NCLB. Washington passed this law because schools have graduated too many students who were not performing at grade level. The remedy is not a test that would allow graders to paper over the sorry fact that children cannot read.

E-mail Debra J. Saunders at dsanders@sfchronicle.com.

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Why isn't Texas in the Top 10?

The University of Texas football team is gearing up for the 2007-08 season. One preliminary poll ranks the team as high as third in the nation, much to the delight of Longhorns fans across the state.

Another set of rankings, released last month, paints a much more dismal portrait of Texas-Texas kids, that is. According to the 2007 KIDS COUNT Databook, Texas ranks 37th — just 13 from the bottom-in overall child well being.

If UT were consistently ranked near or at the bottom of Division I football on offense, defense, and in the overall rankings, Texans would be up in arms. Could you imagine the outcry if football rivals Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska, and Iowa were always better than us?

In the case of children, this reality is the case.

According to the KIDS COUNT report, Texas ranks last in the nation with the highest rate of children without health care.

In fact, Texas has been at or near the bottom of the health care rankings since 1998. By contrast, Michigan and Nebraska are tied for No. 2 — with the second highest rate of kids with health insurance. Iowa is at No. 8 and Ohio ranks No. 14. Having a high num-

ber of uninsured kids doesn't just sound bad; it is bad for the state's economy and our children's futures.

Uninsured kids often turn to high-cost emergency rooms for treatment, or delay care until medical conditions are more serious and expensive. These charges are passed on to the community through higher hospital charges, higher private health insurance premiums, and higher local taxes.

Imagine if we were as committed to ensuring the health of our youngest and most vulnerable as we are the health of our offensive and defensive lines.

Texas also ranks at the bottom on births to teens, with the highest rate of babies born to teens (ages 15-19) in the country. Iowa ranks No. 13, Michigan is at No. 17, and Nebraska ranks No. 20. Babies born to teen mothers are more likely to live in poverty, drop out of school, have a child while in their teens, and rely on public assistance.

Imagine if we were as committed to preventing pregnancy as we are turnovers.

The report also finds that when it comes to lowest high school dropout rates, Texas ranks No. 27. Iowa and Nebraska are tied for No. 4, Ohio ranks No. 9, and Michigan is No. 16.

Dropouts cost Texas millions of dollars. According to a Center for Public Policy Priorities report, if every 16-19 year old who is not in

school and does not have a high school diploma simply graduated, Texas' combined earnings could increase by \$3 billion in income in just four years. Not only that, but study after study shows that an educated workforce is the primary reason why businesses relocate to states and expand current facilities.

Dropouts also have a greater need for government assistance. According to a national study by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 40 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds lacking a high school diploma received some type of government assistance in 2001. In addition, a dropout is more than eight times as likely to be incarcerated as a high school graduate.

Imagine if we were as committed to scoring high graduation rates as we are points per game.

Forget being No. 1; it's like we don't even make it to a bowl game when it comes to our children.

Children are 27 percent of our state but 100 percent of our future. Yet, we market our college players to win national awards and be top NFL draft picks but consistently let a potential group of All-Americans go without medical care or a quality education.

Come on, Texas. We can do better.

Lynsey Kluever is the communications director for Center for Public Policy Priorities in Austin which is home to Texas Kids Count.

Bird Poop:

Broken leg leaves greater yellowlegs needing rescue



Courtesy photo

An adept wader, the greater yellowlegs is a member of the sandpiper family. Migrating by day or night, the bird easily reaches speeds of 40-45 mph.

From the state park, it was visible. To try to see it from Interstate 20 was impossible. Sunken by centuries of erosion caused by the rushing runoff from seasonal thunderstorms, the salt lake offered a year round haven. Masked by tall range grasses, acres of mesquite and the rise and fall of the surrounding terrain, this oasis for waterfowl was, in essence, nature's secret.

Thirty-one years ago, we had approached the eastern edge of the lake to view the nightly ritual of wintering sandhill cranes. With the setting sun turning the western sky a vivid orange, the silhouettes of some 35,000 birds threatened to darken the evening



BEBE MCCASLAND

sky. At that time we had no idea that such a phenomenon would only be a memory.

When a ranch foreman called about a bird he had found, we headed to another area of Natural Dam Salt Lake. To the north, after a lengthy, slow drive on one of many dirt roads, we met the gentleman. "It's one of those birds you see along the shore," he added after welcoming us for coming. "Seems kind of funny to find a live bird on Buzzard Creek!"

A major artery for incoming water from the north, the creek was a vital habitat for this migrating, shallow water

bird. Often seen along coasts, small pools in salt marshes, mud flats and along meandering creeks, the bird had found minnows, aquatic and other insects, larvae and worms to its liking. As it had hunted the isolated edges of the creek, it had swung its long, slightly upturned bill from side to side. By this method of skimming the water, the bird had been able to pick up food during its long journey to the south. Its daily struggle for survival had been jeopardized by a broken leg.

As it lay as comfortably as possible on a pile of rags, the three of us

Parent's Corner:

A brief history of Labor Day as a holiday

Labor Day is fast approaching! To me Labor Day has always been special, because when I was a kid, the day following would be the first day of school. I enjoyed school. School was a time of reunion with all my classmates whom I had not seen since the end of May. I also enjoyed the first day of school because I knew



DARRELL RYAN

I was entering a new grade or a new school. Today I get excited about Labor Day because it's the first holiday of the school year and we get to take that first break before we get down to the work at hand. However, Labor Day is a special day in America. It is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well-being of our country.

Samuel Gompers, founder and longtime president of the American Federation of Labor is quoted as saying, "Labor Day differs in every essential way from the other holidays of the year and in any country. Labor Day is devoted to no man, living or dead, to no sect, race, or nation." The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, Sept. 5, 1882, in New York City, in accordance with the plans of the Central Labor Union. The Central Labor Union held its second Labor Day holiday just a year later, on

Sept. 5, 1883. In 1884 the first Monday in September was selected as the holiday, as originally proposed, and the Central Labor Union urged similar organizations in other cities to follow the example of New York and celebrate a "workingmen's holiday" on that date. The idea spread with the growth of labor organizations and in 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in many industrial centers of the country. The first governmental recognition came through municipal ordinance. See **RYAN**, Page 6A

Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

Good Things Come in Small Packages

South dealer.
East-West vulnerable.
NORTH
♦ Q 8 3
♥ 9 8 7 5
♦ K J 6 2
♣ Q 5
WEST
♦ A K 10 7 4 2
♥ Q J 10
♦ 7 3
♣ J 6
EAST
♦ 9 6
♥ 6 2
♦ 8 5 4
♣ 10 9 7 4 3 2
SOUTH
♦ J 5
♥ A K 4 3
♦ A Q 10 9
♣ A K 8

The bidding:
South West North East
2 NT Pass 3 ♦ Pass
3 ♥ Pass 4 ♥
Opening lead — king of spades.
There are many players who, upon picking up the East hand, would decide that this was a good time to review their plans for the rest of the day, or perhaps just take a short nap. They would reason that they were unlikely to do much bidding or contribute anything to the defense if, as seemed likely, the opponents wound up playing the contract.
But they would be dead wrong, because there is a card in the East hand that will help sink South's four-heart contract, but only if East is paying full attention at the critical

moment. It is a card that would not carry much weight in most deals, but it makes all the difference in this one. **North-South reached four hearts** after a Stayman inquiry disclosed the 4-4 heart fit. West led the king of spades and continued with the ace, East and South following to both spades. West then led another spade. **If East thought** at this point that South must have another spade for his two-notrump opening, or if he had simply lost interest in the proceedings, he might have woodenly ruffed with the deuce. If so, declarer would have overruffed with the three, played the A-K of trumps, conceded a trump to West and claimed the remainder to make his contract. **But a more alert East** might realize that with the 9-8-7-5 of trumps in the dummy, ruffing with the six could do some serious damage to the contract if West held the A-10-x, K-10-x or Q-J-10 of trumps and declarer had actually started with a doubleton spade. In all of those cases, ruffing with the six would promote an extra trump trick for West and so set the contract. **The deal occurred** in a 2006 regional pairs championship, and to the credit of all those present, not a single declarer made four hearts. This means that no East was asleep at the switch at the critical moment, and that every East fully appreciated the potential value of the "lowly" six.

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ELLIE ELEPHANT AND THE ZOOKEEPER

Have you ever been to a zoo? I'll bet you have. Do you like the zoo? Did you see lots of birds and animals while you were there? Did you learn anything about any of these creatures? All of them are fun to watch, aren't they? Which bird or animal was your favorite? One of my most favorites is the elephant. Do you like elephants, too? They are really big, aren't they?
Did you see the person who helps feed the animals and care for them? They are called zookeepers. They love the animals too, don't they? They are nice people. I like them. This story is about a zookeeper who had been helping the animals for a very long time. His name is Waldo. The story is also about an elephant named Ellie. They had been friends for a very long time. They dearly loved each other.
The story begins just a few weeks ago. Everything had been so peaceful and calm at the city zoo where Ellie lived. Waldo had come to the zoo that day to help the animals just as he had done

for so many years. But Waldo was getting very old now. He still loved the animals and wanted to care for them just as he always had. Ellie and all of the other animals looked forward to seeing Waldo each day. Today was no different, at first.
Waldo went to the monkey house and told all of them, "Good Morning" just as he had done so many times before. All of the monkeys would laugh and screech and swing from vine to vine. That was their way of saying "Good Morning" to Waldo. He just loved to watch the monkeys swinging through the trees on their vines. He often wished he could do that too. He watched them doing their backflips and tried to do that once, but he decided to never try that again! He would leave that up to the monkeys. He

could never be a monkey no matter how hard he tried. He went to the aviary where all of the little birds lived. Do you know what an aviary might be? Will you promise to look in your dictionary tomorrow and see what this big word means? Waldo had lots of birdseed in his pockets. He loved to hold the seeds in his hands and let the little birds eat the seeds right from his hand. The little birds liked that, too.
The only thing wrong was that Waldo did not do something he usually did every day. He always went to visit

Ellie before he visited anyone else. Why did he not do this? Ellie did not know at that time! She did not get mad at Waldo because she had come to love him long ago, and she was sure Waldo loved her! But, why did he not visit her first? He did not visit Ellie at all that day! He did not visit many of the other animals that day, either. He had never done this before! What was wrong.
The head zookeeper learned of this and was not happy. He told Waldo that he would have to find another job. He couldn't work at the zoo anymore! This made poor Waldo very sad. It made all of the other animals sad, too. They all loved Waldo so much! The new zookeeper would come soon.
He was a young, handsome zookeeper. He would

someday love all the animals and birds just as Waldo had done for so many years. They would love him too, but it would take time. The very first few days the new zookeeper was getting to know all of the animals, and it was not easy for anyone. None of the animals would eat, or sleep. They missed Waldo! Ellie knew what she could do to help Waldo. He had helped her so many times. She remembered all of the times when she wasn't feeling very well and Waldo stayed right by her side the whole time. He would never leave her side until she was well again. He did this for all the animals. Ellie remembered everything!
Ellie told the head zookeeper that if he would let Waldo come back to help the new young zookeeper, she could fix all the problems at the zoo. Ellie knew that the problem with Waldo was that he was getting very old and forgetful. She could help him. She never forgot anything! The head zookeeper agreed to let Waldo come back. Just as soon as all of the



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animals and birds saw Waldo, the whole zoo became alive again! The monkeys started swinging on their vines. The birds started singing. Waldo started singing too! He started on his rounds of feeding the birds and animals. Ellie would remember which ones to feed first and told Waldo. Waldo was so happy. The birds and animals were so happy. The head zookeeper was happy. The new, young zookeeper was happy.
The whole zoo was alive again because of Ellie! She has just been fed by Waldo. He made sure her bed was ready for her too. He even tucked her in for the night. Before he left Ellie's room, he turned and softly said to her, "Thank you, Ellie. I love you. I am very happy because of you. Good Night!"

★★★



Courtesy photo

Eight members of this year's graduating class of the Western Texas College vocational nursing program received certifications during graduation and pinning ceremonies Aug. 23 at the First United Methodist Church in Snyder. Front row, from left, are: Cati Fleming of Mansfield, Tiffany Owens of Colorado City and Kristen Perez of Snyder. Back row: Tres Jones of Aspermont, Kristie Munoz of Big Spring, Victoria Rios of Big Spring, Monica Lopez of Colorado City and Leslie Christian of Colorado City.



Courtesy photo

Nine students in the Western Texas College vocational nursing program received their pins during graduation and pinning ceremonies Aug. 23 at the First United Methodist Church in Snyder. Front row, from left, are: Tiffany Evans of Snyder, Joshua Kerns of Big Spring and Monica Hernandez of Snyder. Back row: Susan Barrios of Big Spring, Layne Froman of Gail, Leslie Gaona of Colorado City, Magdalena Harty of Hermleigh, Kim Lane of Snyder and Melissa Rivera of Colorado City.

Laura on Life: Handling things without complaining

I'm not complaining. I actually got out of the house for a while this weekend and a bad day outside the house still beats a good day inside the house. A good day inside the house may mean that all of the socks that came out of the dryer matched up or that all the drains were draining without a hitch. It might mean that I didn't burn our dinner or it might simply mean that I actually thought of something for dinner that everyone would like.



LAURA SNYDER

some furniture to our college-aged kid's new apartment. Okay, so it wasn't the highlight of

Yes, I live on the edge. A bad day outside of the house means that I have something to write about. This time it was a short weekend trip to the mountains to deliver

our year, but it was something different. So I'm not complaining. It took about a split second for my son to give us the grand tour of his cozy apartment. Then he and my husband hauled the furniture we'd brought into a now even cozier apartment. He and his roommates had more food than they had furniture, but at least they won't starve. You can't eat furniture, after all. We had stopped at a gas station just before we arrived and I had picked

up a brochure for what I thought would be a relaxing way to spend the rest of the afternoon. It was a "Float Trip" down a river named by some Native Americans that I can't pronounce. I thought it sounded perfect. We could relax and the kids would be entertained. When we got there, they handed us life jackets and paddles and gave us a safety lesson. That's when I knew there was something wrong with this picture. In my head, I had us floating lazily

down a quiet river taking in the scenery and watching the kids splash each other. Paddles, life-jackets, and a safety lesson didn't add up to a relaxing afternoon. But we didn't know that until after we had already paid. But I'm not complaining. They had us wait for 45 minutes in 90-degree heat with our life jackets on. That's the equivalent of wearing a parka in the desert. When our "safety instructor" finally showed up, I could have

taught him a little something about safety and it didn't have anything to do with falling out of the raft. Then he herded about 40 of us into a ten-passenger van and left us to broil while he went to get something he forgot. One of the passengers had to turn on the van to allow us some air-conditioning so that we didn't pass out. But I'm not complaining. We got dropped at a

See LAURA, Page 7A

BIRD

Continued from Page 5A

its long, bright yellow legs. Although the bird was a dark grayish-brown to black above, and whitish underneath, the speckling of white on its head, long slender neck, back, wings and breast was a predominant feature. Carefully handing the greater yellowlegs to us, the foreman was relieved when we told him it

looked like a good break. If there is one. Because of where the break had occurred, there was an opportunity to set the leg. Asking how he found it, we learned that the bird's movement on the ground had caught the man's attention. Fortunately for the yellowlegs, when it saw the foreman's approaching vehicle, its struggle to stand had led to its discovery. From its nest site in Alaska or Canada, the greater yellowlegs had

made its way to West Texas before ending its trip to Central or South America. Often mistaken for a plover or snipe, it would be spending its winter in another locale. After a veterinarian splinted the leg, the shore bird was taken to a wildlife center to recover. Months later, it was released on a conservation lake site. Protected from ground predators, the yellowlegs could walk and hunt the muddy shoreline. With its toes webbed at their base, the

bird easily kept from sinking in the wettest of conditions. When it was fully recovered and sensed the urge to migrate, the bird would be able to leave on its own. The ranchers,

who had provided an environment for recovering waterfowl, no longer would hear its whistle. One morning, when the yellowlegs heard its own specie, the swift flyer flapped its wings, extend-

ed its colorful, long legs beyond its tail and soon was lost in the clouds. *Bebe McCasland is federally and state licensed to rehabilitate wild birds.*

RYAN

Continued from Page 5A

nances passed during 1885 and 1886. The first state bill was introduced into the New York legislature, but the first to become law was passed by Oregon on Feb. 21, 1887. During that year four more states — Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York — created the Labor Day holiday by legislative enactment. By the end of the decade Connecticut, Nebraska and Pennsylvania had followed suit. By 1894, 23 other states had adopted the holiday in honor of workers, and on June 28 of that year, Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and

the territories. Labor Day is special and a special word of congratulations is due to all American workers. Enjoy the holiday.

Darrell Ryan is director of federal programs for the Big Spring Independent School District.

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Notice of Public Hearing on Tax Increase

The HOWARD COUNTY will hold a public hearing on a proposal to increase total tax revenues from properties on the tax roll in the preceding tax year by 24.14 percent (percentage by which proposed tax rate exceeds lower of rollback tax rate or effective tax calculated under Chapter 26, Tax Code). Your individual taxes may increase at a greater or lesser rate, or even decrease, depending on the change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in taxable value of all other property and the tax rate that is adopted.

The public hearing will be held on September 4, 2007 at 10:00 AM and September 14, 2007 at 10:00 AM at Howard County Commissioners Court Room, 2nd Floor.

The members of the governing body voted on the proposal to consider the tax increase as follows:

FOR: Judge Mark Barr, Commissioner Emma Brown
Commissioner W. B. (Bill) Crooker Commissioner Jerry Kilgore
Commissioner Gary Simer

AGAINST:
PRESENT and not voting:
ABSENT:

Comparison of Proposed Budget with Last Year's Budget

The applicable percentage increase or decrease (or difference) in the amount budgeted in the preceding fiscal year and the amount budgeted for the fiscal year that begins during the current tax year is indicated for each of the following expenditures categories:

Maintenance and operations	2.5% increase
Debt service	1.4% increase
Total expenditures	2.4% increase

Total Appraised Value and Total Taxable Value as calculated under section 26.04, Tax Code

	Preceding Tax Year	Current Tax Year
Total appraised value* of all property	\$1,881,152,697	\$2,335,543,104
Total appraised value* of new property**	\$8,805,862	\$4,805,462
Total taxable value*** of all property	\$1,510,640,943	\$1,871,593,236
Total taxable value*** of new property**	\$6,447,020	\$4,473,626

Bonded Indebtedness

Total amount of outstanding and unpaid bonded indebtedness \$970,000

Tax Rates

Adopted tax rate for the preceding tax year	\$0.487870 per \$100 in value
Proposed tax rate for the current tax year	\$0.487870 per \$100 in value
Difference in the proposed tax rate and the adopted tax rate for the preceding tax year	\$0.000000 per \$100 in value

Percentage increase or decrease in the proposed tax rate and the adopted tax rate for the preceding tax year \$0.00% Increase

These tax rate figures are not adjusted for changes in the taxable value of property.

Comparison of Residence Homestead Values

Average appraised and taxable values on residence homesteads are compared from the preceding tax year and the current tax year.

	Preceding Tax Year	Current Tax Year
Average residence homestead appraised value	\$34,847	\$39,838
Homestead exemption amount for the taxing unit (excluding special exemptions for persons 65 years of age or older or disabled)	\$7,769	\$7,968
Average taxable value of a residence homestead (excluding special exemptions for persons 65 years of age or older or disabled)	\$27,078	\$31,870

Comparison of Residence Homestead Taxes

The taxes that would have been imposed in the preceding tax year on a residence homestead at the average appraised value (excluding special exemptions for persons 65 years of age or older or disabled) are estimated to be \$132.11. The taxes that would be imposed in the current tax year on a residence homestead appraised at the average appraised value in the current tax year (excluding special exemptions for persons 65 years of age or older or disabled), if the proposed tax rate is adopted, are estimated to be \$155.48. The difference between the amount of taxes on the average residence homestead in the current tax year, if the proposed tax rate is adopted, and the preceding tax year would be an increase of \$23.37 in taxes.

* "Appraised value" is the amount shown on the appraisal roll and defined by Section 1.04(8), Tax Code.
** "New property" is defined by Section 26.012(17), Tax Code.
*** "Taxable value" is defined by Section 1.04(10), Tax Code.

TUESDAY

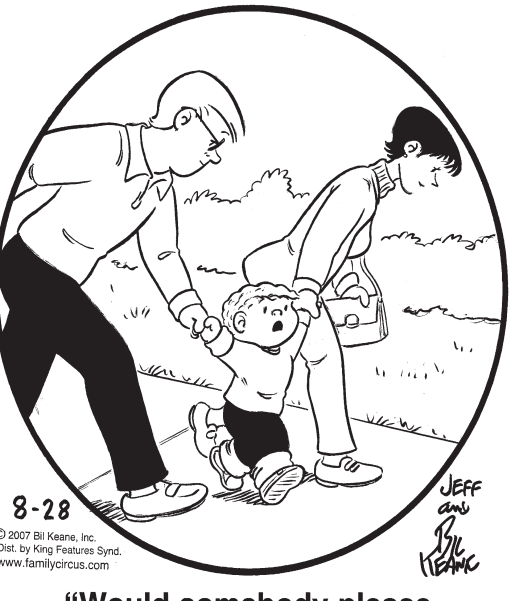
	WFAA (2) Dallas	KMID (3) Midland	UNI (4) Spanish	KPEJ (5) Odessa	KOSA (7) Odessa	KTLE (8) Telemundo	KWES (9) Midland	WTBS (11) Atlanta	KMLM (12) Odessa	KPBT (13) Odessa	DISC (20) Discovery	AMC (21) Classics	SPIKE (22) Spike TV	TNT (23) Atlanta	BET (26) Black Ent.	DISN (27) Disney	ESPN2 (28) Sports	ESPN (29) Sports	SCIFI (64) Science Fic.
6 :PM	News (CC)	News Wheel-Fortune	Yo Amo a Juan	King of the Hill The Simpsons	News Entertainment	Dame Chocolate	News Be a Millionaire	Raymond Raymond	Dr. Young John Hagee	News-Lehrer	Lobster Wars		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Live (CC) Hell Date	Han. Montana Zack & Cody	WNBA Basketball:	NFL Live	Dead Like Me
7 :PM	Just Laughs	Just Laughs	Amar sin Limites	Bones (CC)	Power of 10 (CC)	Madre Luna	Live From New York: 1st 5	Raymond Raymond	Update/Israel Booker	Nova (CC) (DVS)	Dirty Jobs (CC)	Movie: Raising Helen	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Movie: Next Friday (CC)	Movie: The Emperor's New Groove (CC)	First Round -- Teams TBA	2007 World Series of Poker	Eureka (CC)
8 :PM	i-Caught (CC)	i-Caught (CC)	Destilando Amor	House (CC)	Big Brother 8 (CC)	La Esclava Isaura	Years of SNL	Bill Engvall Raymond	Light of the Southwest	Wide Angle (CC)	Dirty Jobs (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Emperor New	WNBA Basketball:	2007 World Series of Poker	Eureka (CC)	
9 :PM	Primetime: Crime (CC)	Primetime: Crime (CC)	S.O.S. Sexo y Otros Secretos	Becker (CC) Friends (CC)	NCIS (CC)	Amor Mio	Law & Order: SVU	Raymond Raymond		P.O.V. (CC)	Build It Bigger	Movie: City of Angels	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.	The Closer (CC)	Baldwin Hills Life Derek	That's-Raven	First Round -- Teams TBA	The Bronx Is Burning (CC)	ECW
10 :PM	News (CC)	News Nightline	Primer Impacto	70s Show Raymond	News Late Show-	Noticias 12 Corazones	News Tonight Show	Bill Engvall Sex and-City	Update/Israel N. McBride	PBS Previews	Dirty Jobs (CC)		CSI: NY (CC)	Law & Order (CC) (DVS)	Take the Cake (CC)	Zack & Cody Han. Montana	Basketball: FIBA Americas	SportsCenter	Want to Be a Superhero?
11 :PM	The Insider Jimmy Kimmel	Jimmy Kimmel Live (CC)	La Hora de la Risala	King of the Hill Malcolm-Mid.	Letterman Late Late	¡Al Rojo Vivo!	Late Night-	Sex and-City Friends (CC)	Joe McGee Biblical Israel	Sign Off	Dirty Jobs (CC)		Murder	Without a Trace (CC)	Hell Date Jamie Foxx	Replacements Kim Possible	Championship -- Teams TBA	The Bronx Is Burning (CC)	Eureka (CC)
12 :AM	Live (CC) News (CC)	Express Media	Salome (SS)	My Wife-Kids Malcolm-Mid.	Show The Insider	Programa	Conan O'Brien News	Movie: EDtv (CC) (DVS)	Update/Israel J.R. Church		Dirty Jobs (CC)	Movie: Hoosiers	Star Trek: Voyager	Without a Trace (CC)	Movie: Next Friday (CC)	Emperor New American Drgn	Baseball NFL Live	SportsCenter (CC)	Twilight Zone Twilight Zone

DENNIS THE MENACE



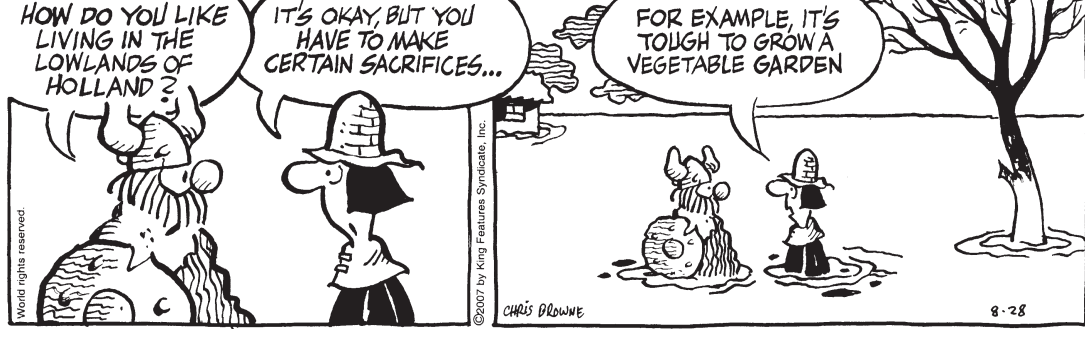
"I GUESS I SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE THAT LAST COMMENT TO MOM."

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

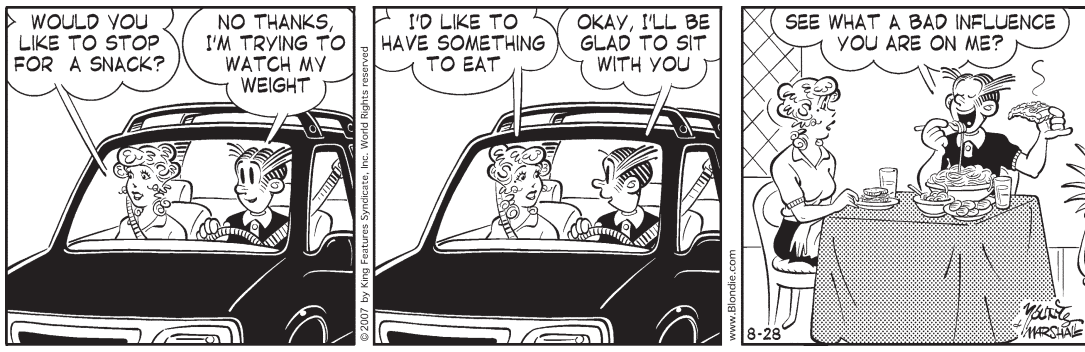


"Would somebody please scratch my nose?"

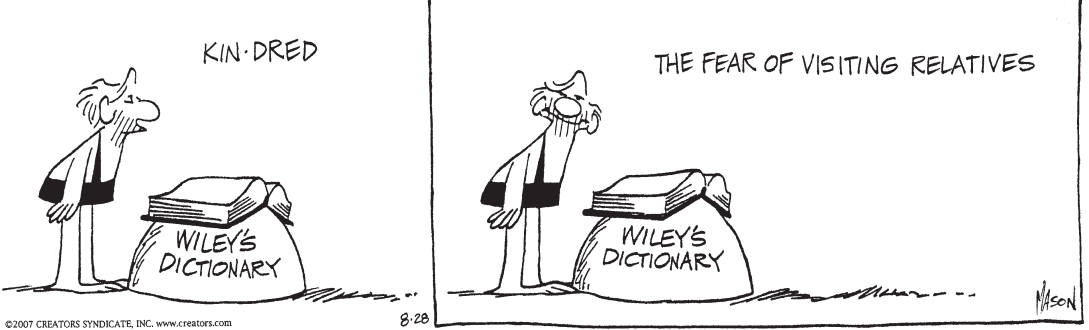
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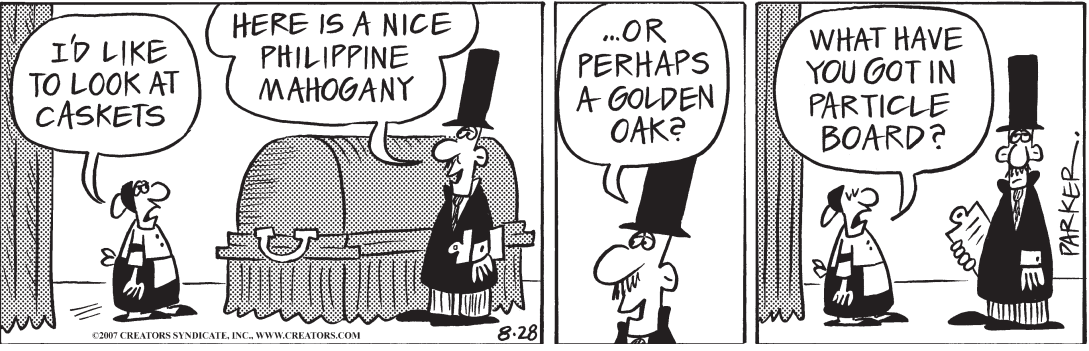
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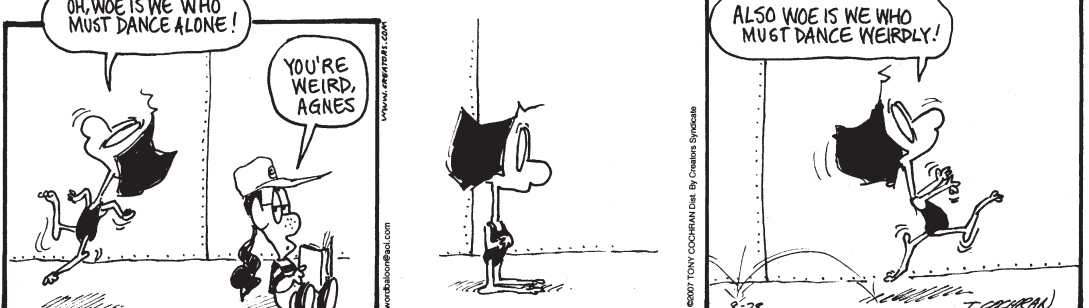
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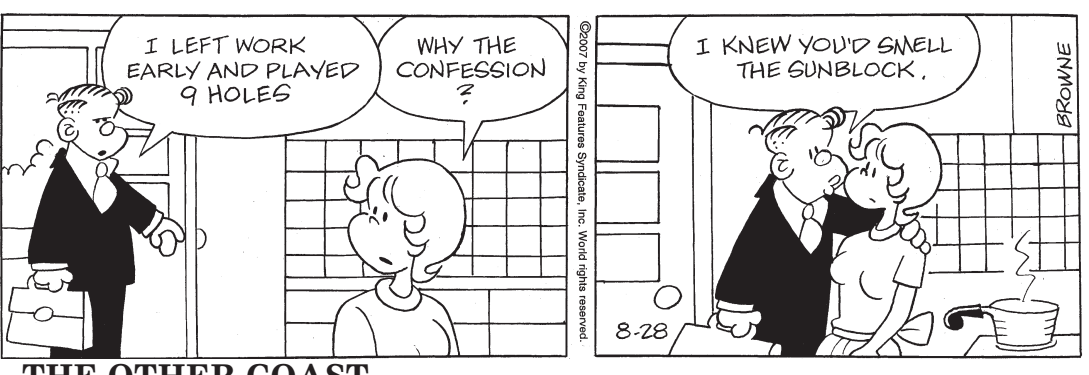
WIZARD OF ID



AGNES



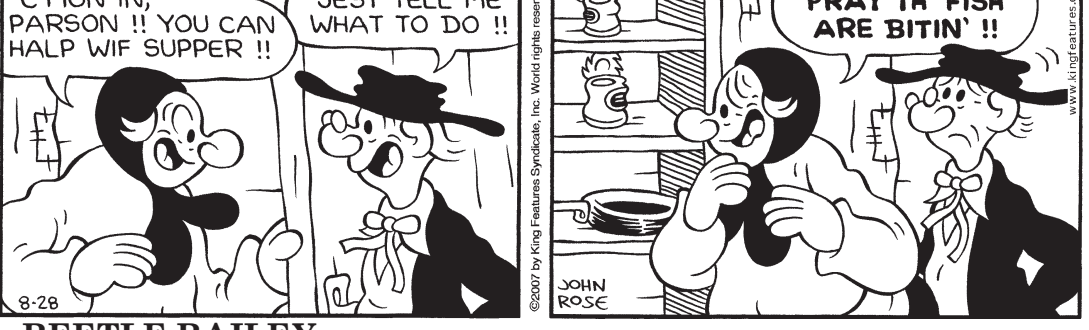
HI AND LOIS



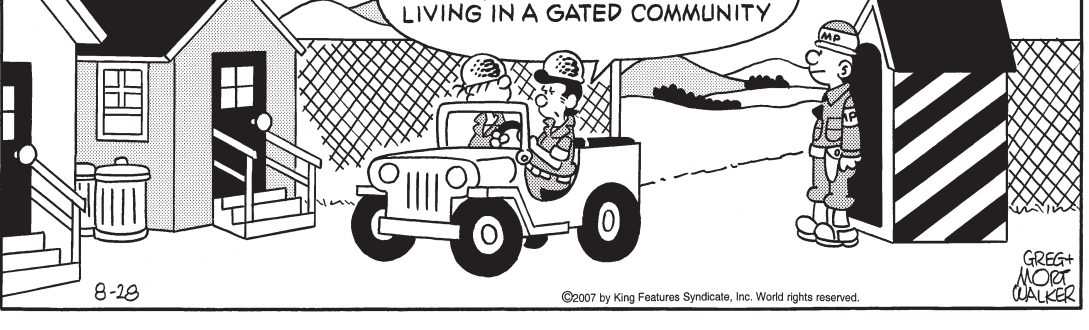
THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BETLE BAILEY



This Date In History

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Aug. 28, the 240th day of 2007. There are 125 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 28, 1963, 200,000 people participated in a peaceful civil rights rally in Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

On this date:

In 1609, Henry Hudson discovered Delaware Bay.

In 1774, Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint, was born in New York City.

In 1907, 100 years ago, United Parcel Service had its beginnings as the American Messenger Co. of Seattle.

In 1947, legendary bull-fighter Manolete was mortally wounded by a bull during a fight in Linares, Spain;

he was 30.

In 1955, Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago, was abducted from his uncle's home in Money, Miss., by two white men after he had supposedly whistled at a white woman; he was found brutally murdered three days later.

In 1968, police and anti-war demonstrators clashed in the streets of Chicago as the Democratic national convention nominated Hubert H. Humphrey for president.

In 1973, more than 600 people died as an earthquake shook central Mexico.

In 1987, Academy Award-winning movie director John Huston died in Middletown, R.I., at age 81.

In 1987, a fire damaged the Arcadia, Fla., home of Ricky, Robert and Randy Ray, three hemophiliac brothers infected with the AIDS virus whose court-ordered school attendance sparked a local uproar. (The Ray family moved to Sarasota, Fla.)

In 1988, 70 people were killed when three Italian stunt planes collided during

an air show at the U.S. Air Base in Ramstein, West Germany.

Today's Birthdays:

singer Billy Grammer is 82. Actor Ben Gazzara is 77. Actor Sonny Shroyer is 72. Actor Ken Jenkins is 67. Former Defense Secretary William S. Cohen is 67. Actor David Soul is 64. Baseball manager Lou Piniella is 64. Actress Alice Playten is 60. Singer Wayne Osmond (The Osmonds) is 56. Actor Daniel Stern is 50. Olympic gold medal figure skater Scott Hamilton is 49. Actress Emma Samms is 47. Country singer Shania Twain is 42. Actor Billy Boyd ("The Lord of the Rings") is 39.

Answer to previous puzzle

S	T	A	G	L	A	S	S	O	S	C	A	M
A	U	T	O	O	R	I	O	N	E	A	S	E
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Newsday Crossword

ANIMAL ACTS by Sally R. Stein
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ACROSS | 64 Helper | 10 Santa __, CA | 37 Hair-grooming tool |
| 1 Wood-cutting tools | 65 Like a desert | 11 Shirking work | 42 Bit of parsley |
| 5 Retired fast jets: Abbr. | 66 Burglar, for one | 12 In __ of (instead of) | 44 Ruckus |
| 9 Soup-serving utensil | 67 Got taller | 13 Right-angled letters | 48 Time rival, for short |
| 14 Coup d'__ | 68 Home loan: Abbr. | 21 Where New Delhi is | 50 Start the day |
| 15 Winter outerwear | 69 Sharpshooter Oakley | 22 "Famous" cookie man | 52 Dutch cheeses |
| 16 How some tuna is packed | 70 Large bodies of water | 26 Run amok | 53 Somewhat, slangily |
| 17 Singer Fitzgerald | 71 Fresh talk | 28 "___ your life!" ("Forget it!") | 54 Tiny tree branches |
| 18 Poker-pot starter | | 29 Hang around for | 55 Chile's mountains |
| 19 Roll with a hole | | 30 "The Wizard of ___ Park" (Edison) | 56 Community center: Abbr. |
| 20 Chattering | | 32 Pinball infraction | 57 Have coming |
| 23 Gloomy __ (glum one) | | 33 Merely | 59 Falls behind |
| 24 Give the OK | | 34 Judge's gown | 60 Cannoneer's command |
| 25 Star of Bethlehem followers | | 35 Imitative sort | 61 Brainstorm |
| 27 Very energetic one | | 36 Having relevance to | 63 "There's ___ in 'team!'" |

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News in brief

U.S., Iraqi forces kill 33 Sunni insurgents near town of Khalis

BAGHDAD (AP) — Hundreds of U.S. and Iraqi forces backed by helicopters and jet fighters attacked and killed 33 Sunni insurgents who were holding back the water supply to the Shiite town of Khalis, the American command said in a statement Tuesday.

The assault began before dawn on Monday when a joint force was landed by helicopter in the village of Gubbiya, 10 miles east of Khalis. The assault force killed 13 fighters and attack aircraft killed 20 others, the military said. The area is known to be controlled by al-Qaida in Iraq. Khalis, 50 miles north of Baghdad, has been the scene of repeated Sunni insurgent bombings and mortar attacks.

“The objective of the mission was to open the spillway, which regulates water flow to the town of Khalis, restoring the essential service of water,” the statement said.

The assault uncovered three weapons caches, led to the capture of three men and “water is currently flowing unimpeded to Khalis,” the military said. The statement did not say if any U.S. or Iraqi soldiers were killed or wounded.

A Bradley Fighting Vehicle was seen engulfed in flames at the side of the road leading to Baghdad Airport Tuesday morning, but there was no immediate report about the incident from the military. It appeared to have been hit by a huge explosion. The stretch of highway is one of the most heavily guarded in Iraq.

Next attorney general nominee could face a nasty hearing

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' replacement — whoever that may be — faces a potentially nasty Senate confirmation and a beleaguered Justice Department badly in need of leadership.

Gonzales' resignation, announced

Monday, cheered his critics who for months had demanded the attorney general quit over questions about his credibility.

Filling his job could lead to a new standoff between White House Republicans and the Democratic-led Congress, experts said, even as names of possible successors began to surface.

“Selecting a successor to Gonzales will be a challenge because the Senate is unlikely to confirm anyone as aggressive as Gonzales in the defense of executive power and the practice of secrecy,” said Peter Shane, professor at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law.

But the White House is unlikely to let Congress dictate who gets the job.

Foreign firefighters join battle against blazes in Greece

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Foreign firefighters and aircraft joined the battle Tuesday against blazes in southern Greece, and officials expressed optimism that wildfires burning some of the country's lushest landscape could be brought under partial control.

The fires, which began about five days ago, have killed at least 64 people and burned olive groves, forests and orchards. Beyond the loss of life and environmental damage, Greece braced for the economic impact of the worst wildfires in memory, with the government budgeting upward of \$410 million for immediate relief. The bill was expected to be much higher, the finance ministry said.

The fire department said 56 fires broke out from Monday to Tuesday. The worst were concentrated in the mountains of the Peloponnese in the south and on the island of Evia north of Athens, spokesman Nikos Diamandis said.

He said most of the efforts would be concentrated in those two regions, with most of the firefighters that have arrived from 17 countries operating in the Peloponnese.

A group of 55 Israeli firefighters would be used to assist in combatting one of the worst fires in Krestena, near Ancient Olympia. Large parts of the world heritage site, which was the birthplace of the Olympic Games, were burned over the weekend.

U.S. Army turns to National Guard for recruiting help

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Army is turning to the National Guard for help recruiting would-be soldiers in hometowns across America.

Army leaders, struggling to meet recruitment goals in the midst of a long and unpopular war in Iraq, are quietly working out final details of a program that would give bonuses of \$2,000 per recruit to any National Guard soldier who brings somebody into the active duty Army.

Army Secretary Pete Geren disclosed the plan in an interview with The Associated Press, calling it an innovative effort to get broader reach into local communities.

The Guard members, Geren said, are “much more in contact with the civilian population than the active duty soldier is. So they give us reach into a larger

segment of the community on a personal level, a one to one basis, than we get through our recruiting relationships.”

Foreign Minister Gul poised to become Turkey's president

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul was poised to become Turkey's president on Tuesday, which if accomplished would make him the first head of state with a background in political Islam in a country with strong secularist principles.

Gul's election is widely acknowledged as all but certain, even by his opponents — an ascendance that would mark a major triumph for his Islamic-rooted government over the secular establishment.

His initial bid for president was blocked over fears that he planned to dilute secular traditions.

Gul failed to win the presidency in two rounds of voting last week because the ruling Justice and Development party lacked the two-thirds majority in Parliament needed for him to secure the post. But the party — which holds 341 of the 550 seats — has a far easier hurdle on Tuesday, when only a simple majority is required.

LAURA

Continued from Page 6A

spot further upriver with our rafts and paddles and for the next two hours we fought to keep ourselves off the rocks. We quickly learned that if you got stuck on the rocks, it was going to take superhuman effort to get back off of them. I worked harder than I have since giving birth. The “relaxing” part never happened. But I'm not complaining.

The next morning we started to drive home and got stuck in a traffic jam where the traffic was stopped dead for three hours on an uninhabited section of the Interstate. If we had a cooler full of drinks, we could have made a bundle of cash.

As it happens, we were parked in the middle lane, right next to the only toilet within a ten mile radius. It was in a humongous motor home

driven by a guy named Rocky and his wife, Ellen. Obviously, since my children have bladder the size of peanuts, we became fast friends with them. They also had paper towels, water and air-conditioning. Thank

you Rocky and Ellen! You're the best! See? There wasn't anything to complain about, now, was there?

Laura Snyder can be e-mailed at lsnyder@lauraonlife.com.

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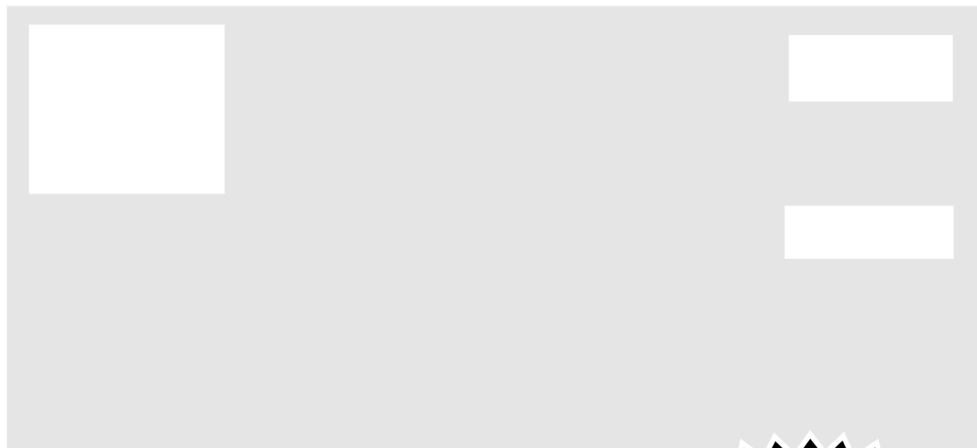
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