

Casualties of
War in Iraq
4,228
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Obama's Journey

JANUARY 20TH 2009

By David Maraniss

Barack Obama saw his future

home for the first time a quarter-century ago. He was a year out of Columbia, working in Harlem



as a community organizer, when he rode to Washington with a scrum of college undergraduates protesting proposed cuts in student aid. After a long day on Capitol Hill, they walked west along the Mall, then circled around to Pennsylvania Avenue and paused in front of the White House. Beyond the fence, past the northwest gate, lived Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States.

Ambitious political thoughts would enter the young traveler's mind soon enough, but not yet. The year was 1984. Obama, a study of cool on the outside, burned inwardly with what he once described in young black men as a "knotted, howling assertion of self." At age 22, he was just emerging from a few lonely years in New York, a lost period even in his memoir, "Dreams From My Father." He had not yet figured out the life course that would take him from then to now — to this historic day, Jan. 20, 2009, when he enters that same White House to live and work as President Obama.

There is improbability in the making of any president, some more than others, none comparable to Obama. From Lincoln to Truman to Clinton, the cast of American presidents who came out of nowhere, with no connections, is as conspicuous as the well-born lineage of Adams and Roosevelt and Bush. And there were some intimations of fame, real or imagined, along the way with Obama, dating to his toddler days in Honolulu when his grandfather told camera-toting tourists that the chubby, tan little boy at his side was the progeny of a great Hawaiian king. In later years, men of a more serious mien, from the constitutional law professor Laurence Tribe at Harvard to the federal judge Abner Mikva in Chicago, were sufficiently impressed to proclaim that young Obama had the wherewithal to become the first black president.

But it is common to find bits of predictive bread along the trail of a prominent life when retracing it. Who knows how many sure-bet future national leaders have slid instead into anonymous careers? In the 47 years since he was born in Hawaii to a white teen-age mother and a black African father, as distant from the White House figuratively and physically as it is possible to get in the United States, the Obama story has unfolded as a triptych of the unlikely. The biography of his family, the sociology of his skin color and the geography of his political rise — these three panels of his story combined to make the end result all the more vivid, if implausible.



The first president to enter the White House with a literate and introspective memoir behind him, Obama is his own book of firsts. He is the first president with a foreign father. He is the first president to grow up in Hawaii, the 50th state. He is the first president whose parents earned

doctoral degrees. He is the first president who once could speak the Indonesian language. He is the first president who was president of the Harvard Law Review. He is the first president who was a hapa, as they are called in Hawaii, with parents of different races. He is the first president who has a sister from Asia and a sister from Africa and a wife from the black working-class South Side of Chicago. And he is the first African-

American president, yet one with no slaves but a few slaveholders in his ancestry. Obama is the creation of restlessness, searching, odd connections. He springs out of this wide world, defined by disparate locations that together enfold many of the central themes and movements of modern times.

Obama grows up without a father and often apart from his mother, wrestling with feelings of abandonment while trying to resolve perplexing questions of race and identity. After attending Honolulu's elite prep school, he leaves the faraway island for the cosmopolitan areas of Los Angeles, New York and Boston before settling in Chicago, building a family, a network of close friends and a political life in a city that has served as a social and cultural haven for so many black Americans who migrated there before him.

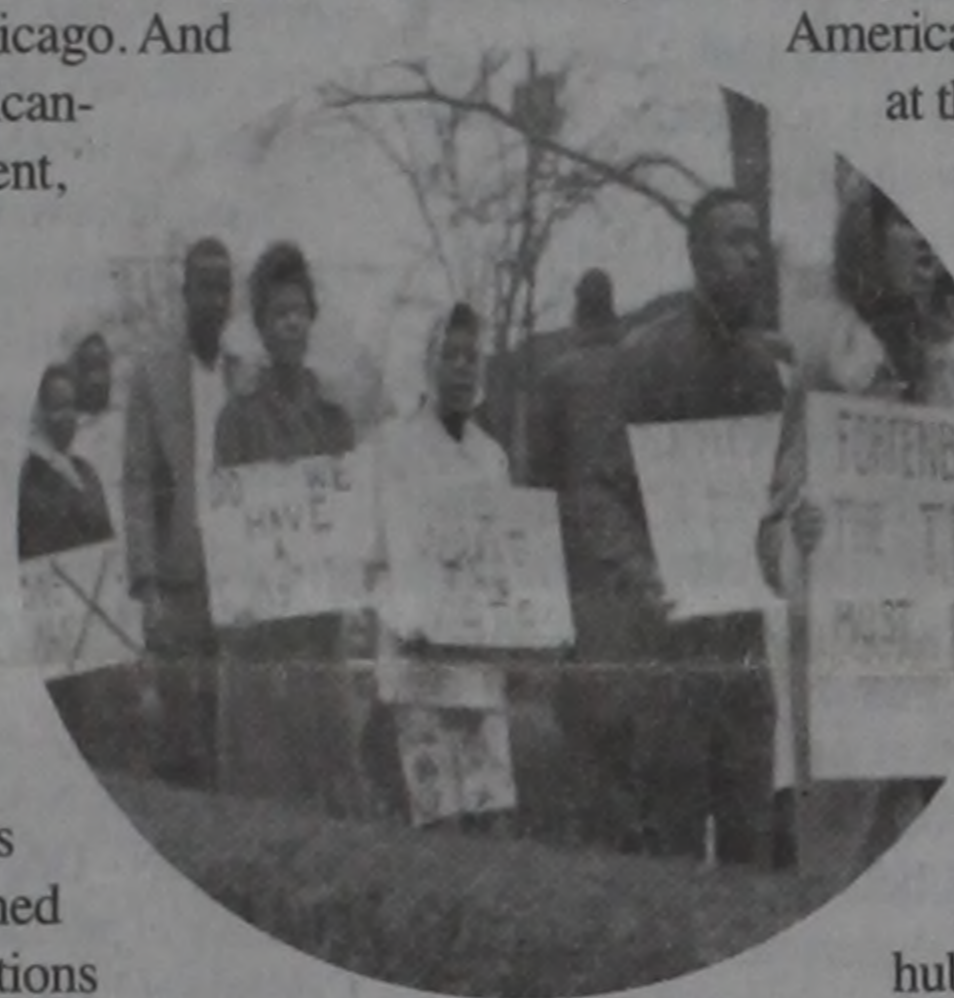
The traits that might define President Obama arise from this history: his blend of idealism and pragmatism, his intellectualism and ego, his calm aggressiveness and seeming lack of neediness, his determination not to be boxed in, his open-minded guardedness and aversion to naivete, his capacity to view himself from outside as a character in his own story, alternately dramatic and ironic. Coming of age as a "mutt like me," as he said at the first news conference after his election, at once set him apart, making his journey often a lonely one while also making him seem accessible to the world.

It is a modern-day version of the classical odyssey, leaving home for a long journey in search of home. In his memoir, Obama's search takes him back to the place that was least familiar to him during his childhood, to his father's roots, in the village of Alego in the central Nyanza district in the country of Kenya. The African saga is so chaotic and exotic — the sights, smells and tangle of relationships with various relatives from different marriages — that it tends to overwhelm the other side of the family, which has its own measure of color and racial significance.

He was born on Aug. 4, 1961. On that day in Alabama and Mississippi, an early voting rights battle was waged, with lawsuits filed in three counties where voting officials imposed prohibitively rigid standards on black applicants. In one Mississippi county, there were 2,490

blacks — and none was registered to vote. In New Orleans that day, a federal appeals court ruled on the expulsion of six black students from Alabama State College who staged a sit-in at the Montgomery County Courthouse lunch grill, where African-Americans could not eat. In Washington, five blacks who had been arrested by security police for trying to integrate the Glen Echo Amusement Park in the Maryland suburbs were asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case.

And in Shreveport, La., on the day Obama was born, a squadron of policemen assembled in the Continental Trailways bus depot to uphold local and state laws prohibiting black people from stepping foot in a waiting room reserved for whites. Across the Deep South that summer, black and white Freedom Riders had encountered violence and arrests as they challenged Jim Crow laws by trying to integrate buses and bus stations. At 5:20 that August morning, four African-



Americans arrived at the Trailways depot with tickets to take the 5:45 from Shreveport to Jackson, Miss., the hub of protests where hundreds

of Freedom Riders had been arrested in previous months. When the four attempted to enter the white waiting room, they were met by the Shreveport police chief and 40 officers. The riders refused orders to leave and were arrested for disturbing the peace, along with two compatriots who had driven them to the bus station and were accused of "counseling and encouraging" them.

Aug. 4, 1964, the day Obama turned 3, was one of the seminal tragic dates in civil rights history. It was on that day that FBI agents in Mississippi, at the end of a two-month search, discovered the bodies of Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney after bulldozing a partly constructed earthen dam in the woods outside the town of Philadelphia. The three men — Goodman and Schwerner white, Chaney black, all voting-rights organizers during what was known as Freedom Summer — had been murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan with the implicit acquiescence of racist local authorities.

Seven months later, President Lyndon B. Johnson traveled along Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the U.S. Capitol to urge a joint session of Congress to pass legislation that would remove every barrier discriminating against blacks and their right to vote. The National Voting Rights Act of 1965 moved swiftly through Congress, with the Senate giving final approval to the conference report — on Aug. 4, Obama's fourth birthday. "We've lost the South for a generation," Johnson told Bill Moyers, his aide, after he signed the measure two days later. Perhaps so, as it turned out, but without Johnson and voting rights, the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president might not have been possible 44 years later.

One popular account that spread in the aftermath of Obama's election, mostly told through the Internet, is that Robert F. Kennedy predicted in 1968 that the United States would elect a black president in 40 years. Close, but not quite. Kennedy did once state that the nation might



someday elect a black president, but he was speaking on May 27, 1961, in a Voice of America broadcast. "There's no question that in the next 30 or 40 years, a Negro can also achieve the same position that my brother has as president of the United States, certainly within that period of time," Kennedy said. History, in any case, tends to move in 20-year cycles, and so does the story of Obama and race.

On the evening of April 4, 1968, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated as he stood on the balcony outside his room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis.

Twenty years later, in 1988, Jackson sought the Democratic presidential nomination for a second time. He received nearly 7 million votes and won primaries in Southern states that had been at the heart of the long political struggle for voting rights: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Virginia. And 20 years after that, the television cameras seemed transfixed by the sight of that same Jesse Jackson, back in Chicago, standing in the crowd on election night 2008, tears streaming down his cheeks as he watched Barack Obama step onto the stage as the president-elect of the United States and evoke the words of the two great martyred figures of America's difficult racial history, Lincoln and King.

Seeking, and Striking, Gold But of course the coming of this black president was not preordained. By the time Obama entered elective politics in 1996, he had channeled his inward churning into a strong-willed ambition to reach the White House.

He might not have been elected to the Illinois Senate in 1996 if Alice Palmer, the incumbent from his South Side district, had not been sidetracked by an unsuccessful bid for a congressional seat and had not failed to round up the required number of signatures when she petitioned to get back in the race. That was good fortune; Obama deciding to challenge her petitions was competitive will. He probably would not have been elected to the U.S. Senate eight years later if not for the collapses of two formidable opponents: first the demise in the primary campaign of Democrat Blair Hull when it was revealed that he had beaten his former wife, then the implosion of Republican Jack



Ryan after unsealed divorce records detailed his fondness for sex clubs. That was all luck. Obama deciding to run in the first place, after losing a congressional primary in 2000 and feeling the increasing impatience of his wife, Michelle, who would grant his political obsession only one last chance — that was burning will.

It was luck for Obama to be chosen to deliver the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention at a time when he was virtually unknown outside his home state. It was outside confidence that

led him to boast to friends as he walked to Boston's Fleet Center that pivotal day, as recounted by Chicago writer David Mendell, that he was as cool and self-assured as LeBron James and would nail the speech just like the NBA star would nail a game-winning shot. He was lucky that Hillary Rodham Clinton's presidential campaign was overconfident and believed the primary contest would be over by February last year, but it was skill and will for Obama and his team to prepare for the long slog and organize in caucus states that the formidable Clinton ignored. That same cycle of luck and would be repeated over and over until the historic Election Day in November.

The essence of Barack Obama has been his capacity to avert life's roadblocks and disappointments during his journey. The first could have been his unusual family biography, with the challenges it presented in terms of stability and psychology. The second could have been the sociology of race in America,

with its likelihood of rejection and cynicism. And the final was the geography of elective politics, with all the variables of ideology and luck. In each case, Obama kept moving, finding his way around dead ends, avoiding the traps.

Today, a quarter-century after his first glimpse of the White House, he retraces the route from the U.S. Capitol west along Pennsylvania Avenue, this time ensconced in the back of a presidential limousine, the whole world watching, as he glides toward his new home.

Guest Commentary

WILL OBAMA PLAY SANTA CLAUS TO HISPANICS?

By James E. García
Hispanic Link News Service
PHOENIX — A local bilingual publication recently featured a cover illustration of Barack Obama with a headline that posed a provocative if indelicate question: "Could he be a Santa Claus for us?"

The "us" referred to the U.S. Latino community.

The short answer to that question is "no." Latinos will not wake up this year and find a pile of shimmering, gift-wrapped public policy initiatives that will suddenly make everything alright. Politics, like life, doesn't work that way.

The question that we should ask ourselves is whether Mr. Obama will routinely take into account the needs and interests of Latinos as he pursues his administration's already crowded agenda?

To that question, I offer an enthusiastic if indelicate "probably."

I don't mean to sound cynical. These times demand a certain guarded optimism. For one thing — and I hope you're sitting down — politicians don't always keep their promises. Also, running for president is very different than being president. Simply put, you don't always get what you want.

For the record, here's some of what Obama pledged to Latino voters during the campaign: more jobs; economic stability; middle class tax cuts; worker protections; a quick end to the Iraq War; greater access to affordable health care; more investment in public education; broader access to higher education; and an immigration reform plan that penalizes employers who hire illegal immigrants and provides millions of undocumented immigrants with a path to citizenship.

If a lot of that sounds like the pledges he made to most of the nation's voters, there's a good reason for that: most Latinos are not unlike everyone else. We tend to care about the same basic issues. We just happen to care about some of those issues in slightly different ways.

Consider the following: Latinos are among the least likely to have health insurance. Our young people

quit high school at alarmingly high rates. During economic downturns, Latinos are often the first to lose their jobs and the last to be rehired. The rate of foreclosures among Latino homeowners since 2006 was 6.7 per 1,000 homes as compared to the national average of 4.5 per 1,000, according to a recent report published in the Wall Street Journal. And many of us have relatives who are recent immigrants.

The key to ensuring that the so-called Latino agenda is part of Obama's White House agenda will depend on our ability to gain and maintain access to the new president. Obama's announced nominations to his Cabinet were a good start. U.S. Sen. Ken Salazar, U.S. Rep. Hilda Solis and Gov. Bill Richardson were picked to lead the Interior, Labor and Commerce departments respectively, though Richardson has withdrawn his name in the wake of a potential scandal in New Mexico.

Other key Obama moves include the selection of Cecilia Muñoz, one of the smartest policy wonks in Washington, as White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Our access to the president also is secured by the fact that Obama's team will not soon forget the important role Latinos played in electing the new president. In Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico, states that all went for Bush in 2004, Latino voters helped decide the win for Obama. Nationwide, two-thirds of Latino voters picked Obama over Republican John McCain. Latino voters will account for a growing percentage of overall turnout in years to come.

Latinos have earned a role in White House decisions that will determine our nation's future. In 2010, will Latino voters look back and say that Obama kept his promises?

To that question, I offer an enthusiastic if indelicate "I hope so."

(James E. García is a journalist and senior research fellow at the ASU Center for Community Development and Civil Rights. Email: james.garcia@asu.edu.) ©2009

Government is the Answer says Obama

By: Ysidro Gutierrez

In his inaugural speech, President Obama said, "... America has carried on ... because of the skill or vision of those in high office ..." This statement suggests that President Obama believes Government is the solution to what ails America.

National polls indicate that 80% of the American people feel positive about Barack Obama's style of "Change." If the polls are to be believed, that would be about 160 million of us, excluding children and those who believe that "Government is the Problem — not the Answer."

The current recession and collapse of the US financial system with its accompanying home foreclosures, closed businesses, and 12 million unemployed Americans was "In large part; caused by Government Meddling."

This commentator believes it is a mistake to look to the people that created the problem for the solution to the problem. Americans would be better served to hold those in Government who created the problem — accountable. It is wrong for America to reward them by giving them \$1 Trillion tax payer dollars to waste senselessly.

In the last 12 months the American people have witnessed one failed Government effort after another. Last summer's stimulus package failed to stimulate the economy. Instead the economy got worse and the recession was officially acknowledged. Billions were borrowed and wasted. Our children and grandchildren, the future tax payers, will have to repay the Billions with interest. This generation is wrong to allow Government to burden our progeny. It is wrong to mortgage their future.

When it became obvious that the stimulus program failed; the Government spent \$350 Billion more to pay for "Toxic Mortgages." Again, the Government effort failed. The Billions were supposed to keep families in their homes: Instead we saw thousands of new foreclosures with projections for thousands more in 2009. The \$350 Billion were supposed to help families on Main Street but instead went to pay dividends and bonuses to corporate executives on Wall Street: the same corporate executives who created the problem. Rewarding bad behavior is un-American. There is no greater insult to Americans who work hard and pay their own way.

So what exactly "DO!" Americans have to look forward to? Are the 80% aware that the Obama administration has asked for \$380 Billion more for the same purpose.

How sweet — American tax payers will be saddled with more Government waste on top of the waste of the last 12 months. Do they not realize that every dollar wasted by Government will have to be paid with interest by tax payers. Why do 160 million Americans view closed businesses, foreclosures, higher unemployment, and more Government meddling as positive?

On Tuesday, Barack Obama invoked the Founding Fathers saying, "... we the people have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears, and true to our founding documents." The problem with this is that the founding Fathers were pretty clear about the role of the Federal Government. They prescribed the powers of the Federal Government in the US Constitution. In that same venerable document there is absolutely no power or authority given to the Federal Government to loan money to anyone for any reason whatsoever. In fact the Founding Fathers specially indicated that it was not a function of the Federal Government to make loans.

President Obama didn't stop with the war and the economy. He indicated that Government will solve problems in health care and education. If Government really is the answer — why is our economy in shambles?

This commentator wishes the new President success. But, there are two policies that Mr. Obama has hinted at that are alarming. As a Catholic I am deeply troubled by the possibility of an Executive Order for "Fetal Stem Cell Research." Pro-life Catholics view the destruction of innocent life as wrong. It is a grave sin for Catholics to knowingly and of their own free-will to support the destruction of innocent human life. Adult stem cells are a great option for American health care. This science will protect human life.

This commentator is also troubled by Mr. Obama's soft approach to the war on terror. As a 20-year Army veteran, I believe that Islamic terrorists will pursue every opportunity to attack America. Most experts agree that the terrorist enemy is determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction and are equally determined to use them to strike on American soil. The Osama Bin Laden doctrine is motivated by what he perceives as America's weak resolve.

History teaches — that the enemy will strike when they think you are

"Freedom of Expression"

An Open Forum Where Readers Express their Views and Opinions Immigrant Worker at Latino Inaugural Ball Shares Hopes for Obama Era

By Anthony D. Advincula

Maria Perez speaks little English. For more than 20 years now, she has worked as a cleaner at Union Station here, six days a week, earning slightly more than the minimum wage. She is proud to be among the millions of Latinos who voted for Barack Obama and helped to make him the 44th U.S. president.

On the night of Jan. 18, at a celebrity-studded Latino Inaugural Ball held at the station, Perez was dressed in a gray sweater over her cleaning uniform — red shirt and black pants — as she swept litter with her broom and dustpan and snaked through the upscale crowd of more than 3,000 women in gowns and men in tuxedos.

Despite the disparities between her and the party-goers around her, Perez, 35, said that she felt united with them, at least that night, by Obama's presidency.

"I am a Latino. My soul is a Latino, and I am happy I am support Barack," Perez said in broken English. "Tonight I like it. All people here is happy and beautiful."

On one side of the hall, the crowd roared each time a celebrity, like Jennifer Lopez, Marc Anthony, Rosario Dawson, Geraldo Rivera, Paulina Rubio and David Archuleta, came in and walked on the red carpet. Cameras flashed and wine glasses clinked.

"I am hope that Barack Obama fix the economia, give more jobs, give better health programs for all the people in America," she lamented. "Of course, I am hope to hear about immigration."

An immigrant from El Salvador, Perez is concerned about the future of her three kids, ages nine, seven and five. The two older ones go to a public elementary school on Georgia Avenue, one of the economically depressed neighborhoods in the Washington, D.C. area.

"My heart want Obama to give my children a very good education. They good kids," she said. "I want to keep my job because I can save some money. Just little, not mucho dinero."

There are 15 cleaners at Union Station, Perez said. Most are Latinos. Some are assigned to clean the floor and hallways and others to clean the bathrooms. When they learned that the Latino Inaugural Ball was going to be at the station, she added, they all got thrilled. "We will see the Latino American actors and actresses," she said. "For me, no chance to see the actors and actresses with my eyes, only in television."

With the economic recession, Perez believes that there are no work guarantees for every American — and for most immigrants. Her husband, who is a dishwasher in a Chinatown restaurant, feels the pinch as more and more workers there get laid off.

As the hall filled with community leaders, sponsors, funders and supporters, Perez looked around, expressing her hopes that influential Latinos, mostly those who have political connections, would support immigrant workers.

"We Latinos, we must support Obama. He's black, but I am dark, too," Perez said smiling. At one point, she held the broom and dustpan in one hand and, with her cell phone, took a quick photograph of the band playing on the stage. "Tonight, I'm excited I will see Hor-heh," she added, referring to actor George Lopez.

DROGAS, ARMAS Y AGALLAS

José de la Isla

Hispanic Link News Service
HOUSTON — Después de reunirse Barack Obama y el presidente de México, Felipe Calderón el 13 de enero, Obama prometió que los Estados Unidos tomaría acciones más contundentes con el fin de contener el flujo de armas de contrabando que entran a México y llegan a manos de los capataces narcotraficantes.

No es la primera vez que se han hecho tales promesas. Fluyen más dólares a detener el problema, siguen más muertes, y no cesa la actividad criminal.

Calderón y George W. Bush ya habían concordado sobre un paquete de asistencia para la seguridad de \$1.4 mil millones, conocido como la Iniciativa de Mérida, para que México recibiera aviones, equipos de alta tecnología y de seguridad y capacitación para la lucha contra los carteles de narcotraficantes y crimen organizado. El año pasado el Congreso aprobó los primeros \$400 millones y Obama apoyó la medida.

El enfoque convencional de Calderón contra los carteles, parecido al de Colombia, resultó en más de 5,400 muertes en México el año pasado, aproximadamente doble el número de muertes del año anterior.

Evidencia neurocientífica nos da razones para frenar el uso de drogas de alteración mental sin fines médicos. Las evaluaciones cerebrales indican que el cerebro de un drogado termina nudoso, muy similar al de un paciente anciano que padece de Alzheimer.

No obstante, la Guerra contra las Drogas que se inició durante la administración de Nixon hace unos 35 años ha llevado a políticas y programas que también parecen originar de cerebros nudosos.

El 6 de enero, el consejo municipal de El Paso, Texas, aprobó una enmienda a una resolución de su comité fronterizo "que apoya un debate nacional honesto y abierto sobre acabar con la prohibición de los narcóticos".

La intención original de la resolución, que presentara representante estatal Robert O'Rourke, fue la de expresar solidaridad con Ciudad Juárez, municipio vecino, que sufre de una guerra criminal entre dos o más carteles que quieren controlar el corredor de narcotráfico que entra a los Estados Unidos.

Fuerzas del orden mexicanas locales, estatales, federales y militares están todas en plena batalla con los criminales. Las agencias antidrogas estadounidenses no dan más con querer involucrarse en peleas desde el lado de acá, también.

La resolución pidió que el Congreso considerara una política narcótica desde una perspectiva que no fuera la que enfatiza la interdicción narcótica y el encarcelamiento de personas que venden y consumen drogas ilegales.

El alcalde de El Paso, John Cook, vetó la resolución. El consejo intentó sobrepon-

erse a la objeción del alcalde.

La resolución trae a colación una pregunta justa sobre la crisis en aumento. En algún momento tenemos que comenzar a hacernos la pregunta, ¿cómo les quitamos las drogas de las pandillas criminales a la vez que disminuimos la demanda desde los EE.UU.? Nuestro hábito de consumo de drogas ya ha causado estragos sobre algunas naciones y está amenazando a otras.

Aquí en Texas la discusión pública choca las sensibilidades políticas de algunos. El congresista Sylvestre Reyes, presidente del Comité sobre Inteligencia de la Cámara de Representantes y cuyo distrito incluye El Paso, pidió que el consejo respetara el veto del alcalde y asegurara que su esfuerzo no impidiera el enfoque federal en la región. Cinco representantes estatales del área expresaron preocupación que las agencias y legisladores comprenderían la resolución como una que respaldara la legalización de las drogas. Agregaron que las fuerzas del orden locales e intereses programáticos se verían "perjudicados, en particular durante un momento en el que hay escasez de recursos del estado".

En otras palabras, que el problema empeore es en realidad mejor para los empleos y la financiación que ver si hay otras formas de resolver una realidad mortal. Estas son las aseveraciones más claras hasta el momento que dicen que siga fluyendo el dinero a financiar un enfoque fracasado porque es eso más importante que el costo en términos de vida y efectividad.

El consejo votó 4 a 4 sobre el veto del alcalde.

El tema se reduce a drogas, armas y agallas.

Se está haciendo cada vez más obvio que una gran parte de nuestro liderazgo sólo sabe echarle dinero a un problema y que no tiene la voluntad de considerar un "diálogo nacional abierto y honesto sobre terminar con la prohibición de los narcóticos" como intentaba la resolución, para quitarle la ganancia al criminal.

El dilema en El Paso sugiere que después de 35 años de fracaso, vamos camino a anexar un estado más a la unión. El Estado de Negación.

[José de la Isla, autor de "The Rise of Hispanic Political Power" (Archer Books, 2003) redacta un comentario semanal para Hispanic Link News Service. Comuníquese con él a: joseisla3@yahoo.com]. © 2009

DRUGS, GUNS & GUTS

By José de la Isla

Hispanic Link News Service
HOUSTON — After Barack Obama and Mexico president Felipe Calderón met on Jan. 13, Obama promised that the United States would take stronger action to stem the flow of weapons smuggled into Mexico that find their way into the hands of drug lords.

This is not the first time such promises have been made. More dollars flow into the problem, more deaths follow, and there is no decline in criminal activity.

Calderón and George W. Bush had already worked out a \$1.4-billion security aid package, known as the Mérida Initiative, for Mexico to get aircraft, high-tech scanning gear, safety equipment and training in their fight against drug cartels and organized crime. Congress approved the first \$400 million last year. Obama supported the measure.

Calderón's conventional approach to taking down the cartels, much like that in Colombia, led to more than 5,400 deaths in Mexico last year, about double that of the previous year.

Neuroscience evidence gives us reason to stem the use of mind-altering, non-medical drugs. Brain scans show that a druggie gets a gnarled brain, much like that of an elderly Alzheimer's patient.

Still, the War on Drugs initiated during the Nixon administration nearly 35 years ago has led to policies and programs that also seem to come from gnarled brains.

On Jan. 6 the city council in El Paso, Texas, approved an amendment to a resolution by its border committee "supporting an honest, open national debate on ending the prohibition on narcotics."

The original intent of the resolution, introduced by member Robert O'Rourke, a state Representative, was to express solidarity with neighboring Ciudad Juárez, which is suffering a crime war involving two or more cartels for control of the drug corridor into the United States.

Mexican local, state and federal police forces and their military are all engaged in battles with criminals. U.S. enforcement is itching to get involved into some skirmishes from this side also.

The resolution asked Congress to consider a U.S. drug policy from a point of view other than emphasizing drug interdiction and the imprisonment of people who sell and use illegal drugs.

El Paso Mayor John Cook vetoed the resolution. The council tried to override the mayor's objection.

The resolution raises a fair question about the spreading crisis. At some point we have to begin asking, how do we take drugs away from criminal gangs and diminish U.S. demand? Our national drug habit has already wreaked havoc on some nations and is threatening others.

Over here in Texas public discussion jars some political sensibilities. Congressman Sylvestre Reyes, who chairs the U.S. House Intelligence Committee whose district includes El Paso, asked the council to uphold the mayor's veto and assure that its effort wouldn't impede the federal approach in the region. Five state representatives from the area expressed concern that state agencies and legislators would understand the council's resolution as supporting drug legalization. Local law enforcement and program interests, they added, would see themselves "in jeopardy, especially during a time when state resources are scarce."

In other words, worsening the problem is actually better for jobs and funding than looking into alternative ways to solve a deadly reality.

These are the clearest statements yet saying that keeping the money flowing into a failed approach is more important than the cost in lives and effectiveness.

The council split 4-4 on the mayor's veto. The issue boils down to drugs, guns and guts.

It's becoming increasingly obvious that too much of our leadership only knows how to throw money at a problem. It is unwilling to consider, an "open, honest, national dialogue on ending the prohibition of narcotics" as the resolution called for by taking profit out of crime. The El Paso dilemma suggests that after 35 years of failure, we are headed toward annexing the next state into the union. The State of Denial.

[José de la Isla, author of "The Rise of Hispanic Political Power" (Archer Books, 2003) writes a weekly commentary for Hispanic Link News Service. E-mail joseisla3@yahoo.com.]

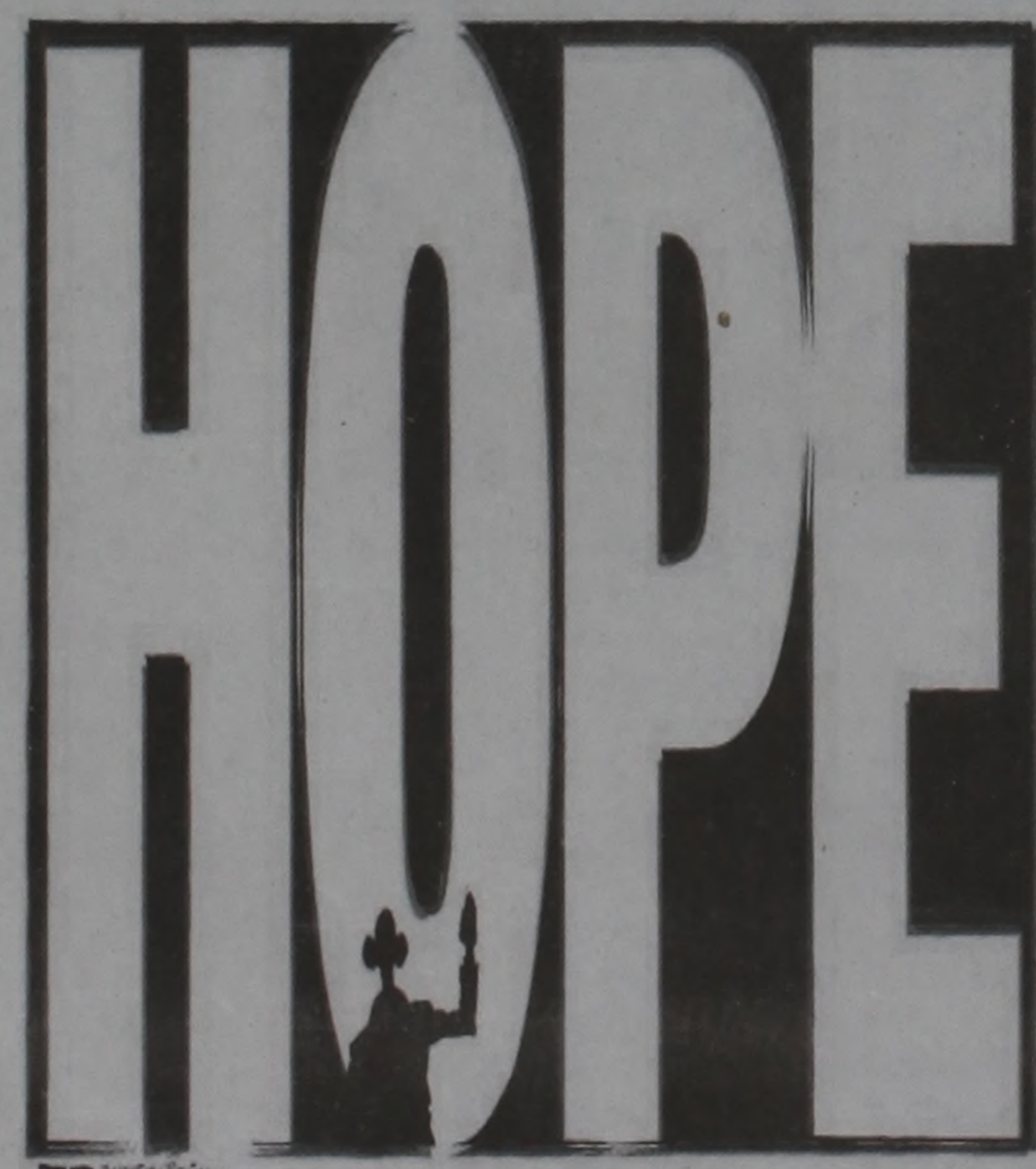
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Banks Received Bailout Money With No Strings

At the Ritz-Carlton in Palm Beach, Florida, last November, John Hope III, the chairman of Whitney National Bank in New Orleans, stood before a ballroom full of Wall Street analysts and explained how his bank intended to use its \$300 million in U.S. government bailout money.

"Make more loans?" Hope said. "We're not going to change our business model or our credit policies to accommodate the needs of the public sector as they see it to have us make more loans."

As the incoming Obama administration decides how to fix the economy, the troubles of the banking system have become particularly vexing.

Congress approved the \$700 billion rescue plan with the idea that banks would help struggling borrowers and increase lending to stimulate the economy, and many lawmakers want to know how the first half of that money has been spent before approving the second half.

But many banks that have received bailout money so far are reluctant to lend, worrying that if new loans go bad, they will be in worse shape if the economy deteriorates.

Indeed, as mounting losses at major banks like Citigroup and Bank of America in the past week have underscored, U.S. regulators are still searching for ways to stabilize the banking system. The Obama administration could be forced to come up early with a systemic solution, getting bad loans off balance sheets as a way to encourage banks to begin lending, which most economists say is essential to get businesses and consumers spending again.

Individually, banks that received some of the first \$350 billion from the Treasury's Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, have offered few public details about how they plan to spend the money, and they are not required to disclose what they do with it. But in conversations behind closed doors with investment analysts, some bankers have been candid about their intentions.

Most of the banks that received the money are far smaller than behemoths like Citigroup or Bank of America. A review of investor presentations and conference calls by executives of about two dozen banks around the country found that a few cited lending as a priority.

An overwhelming majority saw the bailout program as a no-strings-attached windfall that could be used to pay down debt, acquire other businesses or invest for the future.

Speaking at the FBR Capital Markets conference in New

York in December, Walter Pressey, president of Boston Private Wealth Management, a healthy bank with a mostly affluent clientele, said there were no immediate plans to do much with the \$154 million it had received from the Treasury.

"With that capital in hand, not only do we feel comfortable that we can ride out the recession," he said, "but we also feel that we'll be in a position to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves, once this recession is sorted out."

The bankers' comments, while representing only a random sampling from the more than 200 financial institutions that have received TARP money so far, underscore a growing gulf between public expectations for how the \$700 billion should be used and the decisions being made by many of the institutions that have taken part. The program does not dictate what banks should do with the money.

That lack of specificity has led to calls for tighter restrictions on the next wave of disbursements, approved by the Senate last week as Barack Obama pledged to "change the way this plan is implemented and keep faith with the American taxpayer." The incoming Obama administration promises to create a system to track how the money is spent and place stronger limitations on executive pay.

The loose requirements in the original plan have also contributed to confusion over what the Treasury intended when it abruptly shelved its first proposal - to buy up bad mortgages - in favor of making direct investments in individual banks in return for preferred shares of stock.

The Treasury secretary, Henry Paulson Jr., said in October that banks should "deploy, not hoard," the money to build confidence and increase lending. He added: "We expect all participating banks to continue to strengthen their efforts to help struggling homeowners who can afford their homes avoid foreclosure."

But a congressional oversight panel reported Jan. 9 that it had found no evidence that the bailout program had been used to prevent foreclosures, raising questions about whether the Treasury had complied with the law's requirement that it develop a "plan that seeks to maximize assistance for homeowners."

The report concluded that the Treasury's top priority seemed to be to "stabilize financial markets" by simply giving healthy banks more money and letting them decide how best to use it.

"It is not enough to say that the goal is the stabilization of the financial markets and the broader economy," the report said, adding that it was not clear how giving billions to banks "advances both the goal of financial stability and the well-being of taxpayers, including homeowners threatened by foreclosure, and families unable to pay their credit cards."

For the banks, fearful that the economic downturn could deepen and wary of risking additional losses, the question of what to do with the bailout money comes down to self-preservation.

Mark Fitzgibbon, research director at Sandler O'Neill & Partners, which sponsored the Palm Beach conference, said banks seemed to be allocating the bailout money for four general purposes: increased lending, absorbing losses, bolstering capital and "opportunistic acquisitions." He said those approaches made sense from a business perspective, even though they might not conform with popular expectations that the money would be immediately lent to consumers.

"For the banking industry, this isn't a sprint, this is a marathon," Fitzgibbon said. "I think over time there will be pressure to lend that capital out and get a return for their shareholders. But they're not going to rush out and lend all that money tomorrow. If they did, they could lose it."

For City National Bank in Los Angeles, the Treasury money "really doesn't change our perspective about doing things," said Christopher Carey, the bank's chief financial officer, addressing the BancAnalysts Association of Boston conference in November. He said that his bank would like to use it for lending

and acquisitions but that the decision would depend on the economy.

"Adding \$400 million in capital gives us a chance to really have a totally fretted balance sheet, in case things get a lot worse than we think," Carey said. "And if they don't, we may end up just paying it back a little bit earlier."

In addition to wanting more lending, members of Congress have said TARP should not be used to fuel mergers and acquisitions, although Treasury officials say the financial system would be strengthened if healthy banks absorbed weaker ones. To that extent, bailout money has been useful for improving capital ratios - the amount of money available to absorb losses - for banks that merged.

On Friday, Bank of America said it would receive \$20 billion more from the Treasury to help it digest losses it had taken on by acquiring Merrill Lynch, a process begun in September.

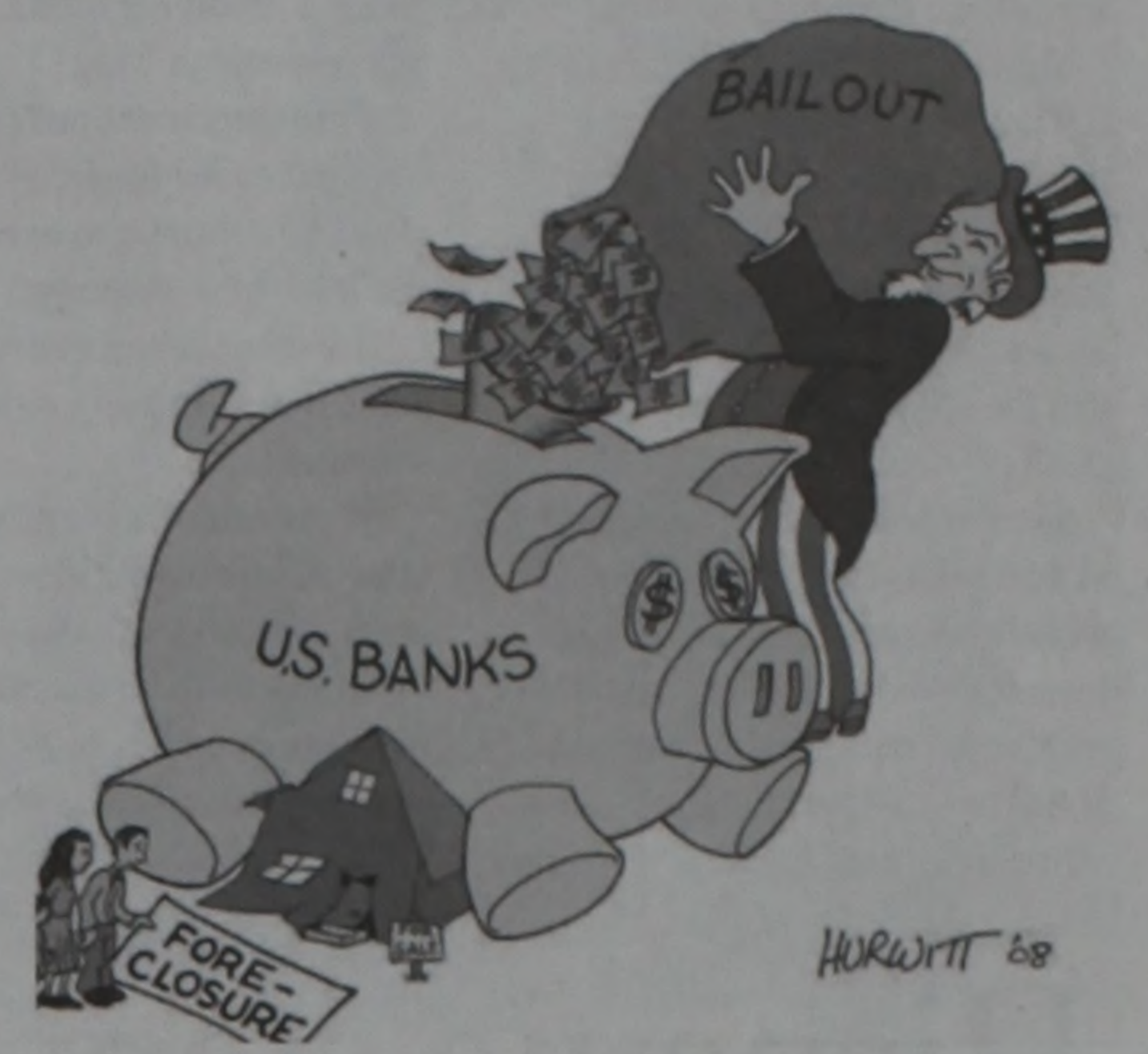
At least seven banks that received TARP money have since bought other companies, including one that had been encouraged to do so by federal regulators. That one, PNC Financial Services, took \$7.7 billion from the Treasury and promptly acquired the struggling National City Bank for \$5.2 billion in stock and \$384 million in cash.

Among the others, PlainsCapital Bank of Dallas announced in November, not long after the bailout program began, that it planned to merge with a healthy investment bank, First Southwest. PlainsCapital received \$88 million from the Treasury on Dec. 19, and the all-stock merger was completed two weeks later. PlainsCapital's chairman, Alan White, insisted in an interview that the two events were not con-

necting.

He said the bank had not yet decided what to do with its bailout money, which he called "opportunity capital." In-

John Buran, the chief executive of Flushing Financial in New York, said the government money was a way to increase the "ante for acquisi-



lending would be a priority, said White, who did not rule out using it for other acquisitions, adding that when regulators had invited PlainsCapital to apply for federal dollars, there were no conditions attached.

"They didn't tell me I had to do anything particular with it," he said.

None of the bankers who appeared before recent investor conferences offered specific details about their intentions, but recurring themes emerged in their presentations. Two of the priorities cited most often were hanging on to the money as insurance against a prolonged recession and using it for mergers.

At the Sandler O'Neill East Coast Financial Services Conference in Florida, bankers mingled with investment analysts at an oceanfront luxury hotel, where the agenda featured evening cocktails by the pool and a golf outing at a nearby country club.

During his presentation,

"We can get \$70 million in capital," he said. "So, I would say the price of poker, so to speak, has gone up."

Using the money to go shopping for other banks also appealed to Maria Bouvette, the chief executive of Porter Bancorp in Kentucky, which received \$35 million.

"I think the main focus for us will be acquisition opportunities," she said. "I would hope we could find some good acquisitions with some great deposit base." For Hope, the Whitney National Bank chairman, "the main motivation for TARP" was not more loans, but rather to safeguard against the "possibility things could get a lot worse." He said Whitney would continue making loans "that we would have made with or without TARP."

"We see TARP as an insurance policy," he said. "That when all this stuff is finally over, no matter how bad it gets, we're going to be one of the remaining banks."

White House Expects Recession Through First Half of 2009

The White House expects the U.S. recession to continue through at least the first half of 2009 and unemployment to surge to 7.7 percent this year, according to a forecast issued Friday.

But the White House said the chips were in place for a strong recovery under president-elect Barack Obama, who takes office on Tuesday.

A "vigorous" recovery is forecast in 2010 and 2011, when growth should jump back to 5 percent, on a fourth quarter to fourth quarter basis. Unemployment should fall back down to 5 percent by 2012.

Some 2.6 million Americans lost their jobs in 2008 amid the worst economic crisis in decades. The US has been in recession since December 2007.

The White House forecast a 0.2 percent contraction of the

economy in 2008, ending six straight years of positive growth, but said the economy would grow by 0.6 percent in 2009.

The annual growth figures for any year include the final quarter of the previous year.

The White House's forecast was more positive than most independent economic think tanks have predicted.

Obama has been trumpeting an \$825 billion economic stimulus package to help get the economy back on track. Democratic lawmakers revealed the details of the package on Thursday.



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Mexican Billionaire Carlos Slim Indeed to Invest in New York Times

Mexican telecom magnate Carlos Slim has agreed to invest \$250 million in the New York Times as the famous newspaper urgently seeks cash to remain solvent.

Slim, 68, could raise his existing 6.9 per cent stake in the paper to 17 percent, making him the second-largest stakeholder after the Sulzberger family, which has 19 percent of the shares and control the company with a special class of voting shares.

Slim, whose fortune is estimated as \$60 billion is judged to be the world's second-richest man after investor Warren Buffet, but he will receive no representation on the board or any special voting shares. In announcing the deal the New

York Times Company said it plans to use the funds to refinance existing debt, including 400 million dollars borrowed under a revolving credit facility that matures in May.

"This agreement provides us with increased financial flexibility to continue to execute on our long-term strategy," Janet L. Robinson, chief executive of the Times Company, said in a statement.

"We continue to explore other financing initiatives and are focused on reducing our total debt through the cash we generate from our businesses and other decisive steps." The company slashed its



dividend last year and is pursuing asset sales to raise cash, as well as mortgaging part of its newly completed headquarters. Like other newspapers the New

York Times has been hard hit by the flight of readers and advertising dollars to the internet, and the steep fall in advertising caused by the recession.

Mexico turns to tourism in midst of crisis

It's got sun, white-sand beaches and better yet — a battered peso. Mexico is counting on its weakened currency against the dollar and its proximity to the U.S. to attract recession-shocked Americans and fuel its tourism industry — a major source of foreign income.

Tourism officials say Mexico saw 3 percent more visitors who spent an estimated 4 percent more in 2008, with tourists flocking to its beaches and cobble-stoned streets even during the global economic crisis.

And, unlike most tourist destinations around the world, there is no sign that this year will be any different.

Cancun, Mexico's top beach destination, had an occupancy rate of more than 90 percent during the holiday season and officials expect at least 85 percent of the Caribbean resort's 31,000 rooms to be occupied during the winter months.

Cancun remains the preferred beach spot in Mexico for spring-breakers, with some 30,000 revelers expected to visit this year. The same amount came to Cancun last year, according to Quintana Roo state's Tourism Department.

Erin Erwin, a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said she and five of her friends booked their spring-break trip to Cancun because it offered a good deal.

"The prices get so expensive, so I wanted to book my trip early, and my friends chose Cancun because it was really cheap out of all the destinations," Erwin, 21, said.

The group is paying about \$1,000 each for five nights at an all-inclusive hotel.

"It's basically the environment for college kids. There is drinking, and having fun and there's sun and it is warm and you lay out and not worry about anything," she said.

Jackie Lewis, managing director of studentcity.com, a Web site devoted to spring-break travel, said reservations for spring break in

Cancun and Acapulco remain strong, mostly because they can find good deals.

"We've seen students who are asking for packages that are cheaper, so they may not be staying at the five-star hotels and looking for seven-nights all inclusive.

They may be doing four or five nights at a four-star or three-star," Lewis said.

Mexico attributes the positive tourism trend to a tumbling peso, which lost 30 percent of its value in 2008. In August, it was trading at 10 to the dollar. Now it is 14 to the dollar.

Another advantage is the drop in jet fuel prices, which have made flying cheaper and Mexico more attractive to North Americans looking to save some money.

Brian Hoyt, a spokesman for Orbitz Worldwide Inc., which owns CheapTickets.com and Orbitz.com, said the company's hotel bookings in Mexico were up 25 percent in the first 11 months of 2008, compared to the same period the prior year.

"There's never been a better time to travel (to Mexico) from a value standpoint than right now," Hoyt said.

The Tourism Department says more than 18 million tourists, about 80 percent from the U.S., visited Mexico between January and October 2008 and spent about \$14 billion.

Mexico is counting on tourism to drive it through the global economic crisis, with more aggressive ad campaigns on the Internet, the construction of a \$7.5 billion resort in the Pacific Coast state of Sinaloa, and increased promotion in places like China, Russia and India, where the number of people with disposable income is rapidly growing.

That will likely pay off. With endless beaches, quaint colonial mountain towns, ruins, and booming cities filled with restaurants and museums, the industry employs some 2.25 million people.

Hispanic stars wow inaugural gala



Latino entertainers Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony graced "la alfombra roja" — the red carpet — at Union Station to give a Hispanic flair to the inauguration pre-celebration Sunday.

They posed quickly for cameras with no visible signs of the marital distress that tabloids have been buzzing about recently. The two were to entertain the crowd at the

end of the night. Anthony traded a hug with Miami-born Wilmer Valderrama, star of "That '70s Show," as he swiftly moved off the carpet.

Valderrama actively promoted registration and voting among young Latinos during the presidential election.

"All of us performers, not until this election did we really understand what we could do," Valderrama said.

Though focus of the night was entertainment, the music quickly mixed with politics. Members of Congress filtered in and mixed in the VIP room with some of the stars.

Tony Plana, who plays Betty's father in the televi-

sion series "Ugly Betty," said he was ecstatic about President-elect Barack Obama's victory.



He said an Obama administration could improve the lives of all minorities. But he also said Hispanics

deserved a better spot on the inaugural festivities list.

"It's a concern this event tonight is not an official event of the administration. It's a little sad for me Latinos had to organize their own event," Plana said. He said he hoped it did not mean Hispanics would be relegated to a back seat. The event was organized by the National Council of La Raza and other Hispanic organizations.

"American Idol" runner up David Archuleta kicked off the night with "The Star-Spangled Banner" and he was quickly followed with music by War.

Other entertainers at the event included Mexican singer Lila Downs, comedian George Lopez, actress Rosie Perez, telenovela actress Angelica Vale and others.

Bush commutes sentences of former U.S. border agents who shot Mexican drug dealer



In his final acts of clemency, President George W. Bush on Monday commuted the prison sentences of two former U.S. Border Patrol agents whose convictions for shooting a Mexican drug dealer ignited fierce debate about illegal immigration.

Bush's decision to commute the sentences of Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean, who tried to cover up the shooting, was welcomed by both Republican and Democratic members of Congress.

They had long argued that the agents were merely doing their jobs, defending the American border against criminals. They also maintained that the more than 10-year prison sentences the pair was given were too harsh.

Rancor over their convictions, sentencing and firings has simmered ever since the shooting occurred in 2005.

Ramos and Compean became a rallying point among conservatives and on talk shows where their supporters called them heroes.

Nearly the entire bipartisan congressional delegation from Texas and other lawmakers from both sides of the political aisle pleaded with Bush to grant them clemency.

Bush didn't pardon the men for their crimes, but decided instead to commute their prison sentences because he believed they were excessive and that they had already suffered the loss of their jobs, freedom and reputations, a senior administration official said.

The action by the president, who believes the border agents

received fair trials and that the verdicts were just, does not diminish the seriousness of their crimes, the official said.

Compean and Ramos, who have served about two years of their sentences, are expected to be released from prison within the next two months.

They were convicted of shooting admitted drug smuggler Osvaldo Aldrete Davila in the buttocks as he fled across the Rio Grande, away from an abandoned van load of marijuana.

The border agents argued during their trials that they believed the smuggler was armed and that they shot him in self defense.

The prosecutor in the case said there was no evidence linking the smuggler to the van of marijuana. The prosecutor also said the border agents didn't report the shooting and tampered with evidence by picking up several spent shell casings.

The agents were fired after their convictions on several charges, including assault with a dangerous weapon and with serious bodily injury, violation of civil rights and obstruction of justice. All their convictions, except obstruction of justice, were upheld on appeal.

With the new acts of clemency, Bush has granted a total of 189 pardons and 11 commutations.

That is fewer than half as many as Presidents Bill Clinton or Ronald Reagan issued during their two-term tenures.

Bush technically has until noon (1700 GMT) on Tuesday when President-elect Barack Obama is sworn into office to exercise his executive pardon authority, but presidential advisers said no more were forthcoming.

The president had made most of his pardon decisions on low-profile cases, but his

batch in December created controversy.

Isaac Robert Toussie, convicted of making false statements to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and of mail fraud, was among 19 people Bush pardoned just before Christmas.

But after learning in news reports that Toussie's father had donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Republican Party a few months ago, as well as other information, the president reversed his decision on Toussie's case.

In an earlier high-profile official act of forgiveness, Bush saved Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, from serving prison time in the case of the 2003 leak of CIA operative Valerie Plame's identity.

Libby was convicted of perjury and obstructing justice. Bush could still grant him a full pardon, although Libby has not applied for one.

Bush's batches of pardons, however, have never included any well-known convicts like junk bond dealer Michael Milken, who sought a pardon on securities fraud charges, or two politicians convicted of public corruption — former Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, R-Calif., and four-term Democratic Louisiana Gov. Edwin W. Edwards — who wanted Bush to shorten their prison terms.

Clinton issued a total of 457 in eight years in office. Bush's father, George H. W. Bush, issued 77 in four years. Reagan issued 406 in eight years, and President Carter issued 563 in four years.

Since World War II, the largest number of pardons and commutations — 2,031 — came from President Harry Truman, who served 82 days short of eight years.

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Steelers not counting Ward out despite injury

Hines Ward needs extensive so chances are he is. It's not going



work to rehabilitate his sprained right knee for the Super Bowl, but Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin still expects the wide receiver to play.

"We're definitely not going to count him out," Tomlin said Tuesday. "We're going to save a seat on the bus for 86."

Ward, the Steelers' career receiving leader, sprained a medial collateral ligament while making a catch in the first quarter of the AFC championship game against Baltimore on Sunday night. If the Steelers played this week, he may not have been ready.

Tuesday was the players' scheduled day off, yet Tomlin observed Ward doing extensive rehabilitation work in the team's practice complex. The Steelers leave Monday for Tampa and the Feb. 1 game against Arizona, but only after they go through a regular week of practice.

The schedule will be the same as for any other week, Tomlin said, and the Steelers will draw up a game plan as if they were playing this Sunday. A game plan that is likely to include Ward.

"We're going to do everything in our power so he gets the medical attention he needs," Tomlin said. "In his mind, he's playing,

to be comfortable between now and game day in terms of making that happen. But it's not about comfort, particularly with Hines."

Ward played in every Steelers game from 2001-04, and he has missed only six games the last four seasons - none this season. He led the team with 81 catches for 1,043 yards, his fifth career 1,000-yard season and his first since 2004.

"I don't plan on missing this game, trust me. So don't worry about my knee, I'll be fine," Ward said following the 24-13 victory over Baltimore.

Ward didn't play much against the Ravens because of the injury, but made catches of 45 yards and 11 yards that set up Jeff Reed field goals. He returned briefly in the second quarter and caught one pass, but did not play the rest of the game.

"I just fell on it wrong," said Ward, the MVP of the 2006 Super Bowl. "I just kind of twisted it and it felt weird. ... But I didn't want to go out there and hurt our team if I wasn't 100 percent. I could have played 75 or 80 percent but a championship game, let's put in a bunch of guys who are 100 percent, go out there and run full speed."

McNabb's lawn burned with Cardinals cheers

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb recently had to play defense at his off-season home in Chandler.

Two Arizona Cardinals fans hung their team's flag in a tree and burned "Go Cards," "Go Kurt," and "I heart AZ" in McNabb's yard with diesel fuel, Chandler police Sgt. Joe Favazzo said Tuesday.

Favazzo said the fans hung the flag Thursday, and McNabb laughed it off and even left it hanging.

Then the fans returned Saturday and left a cardboard box in the

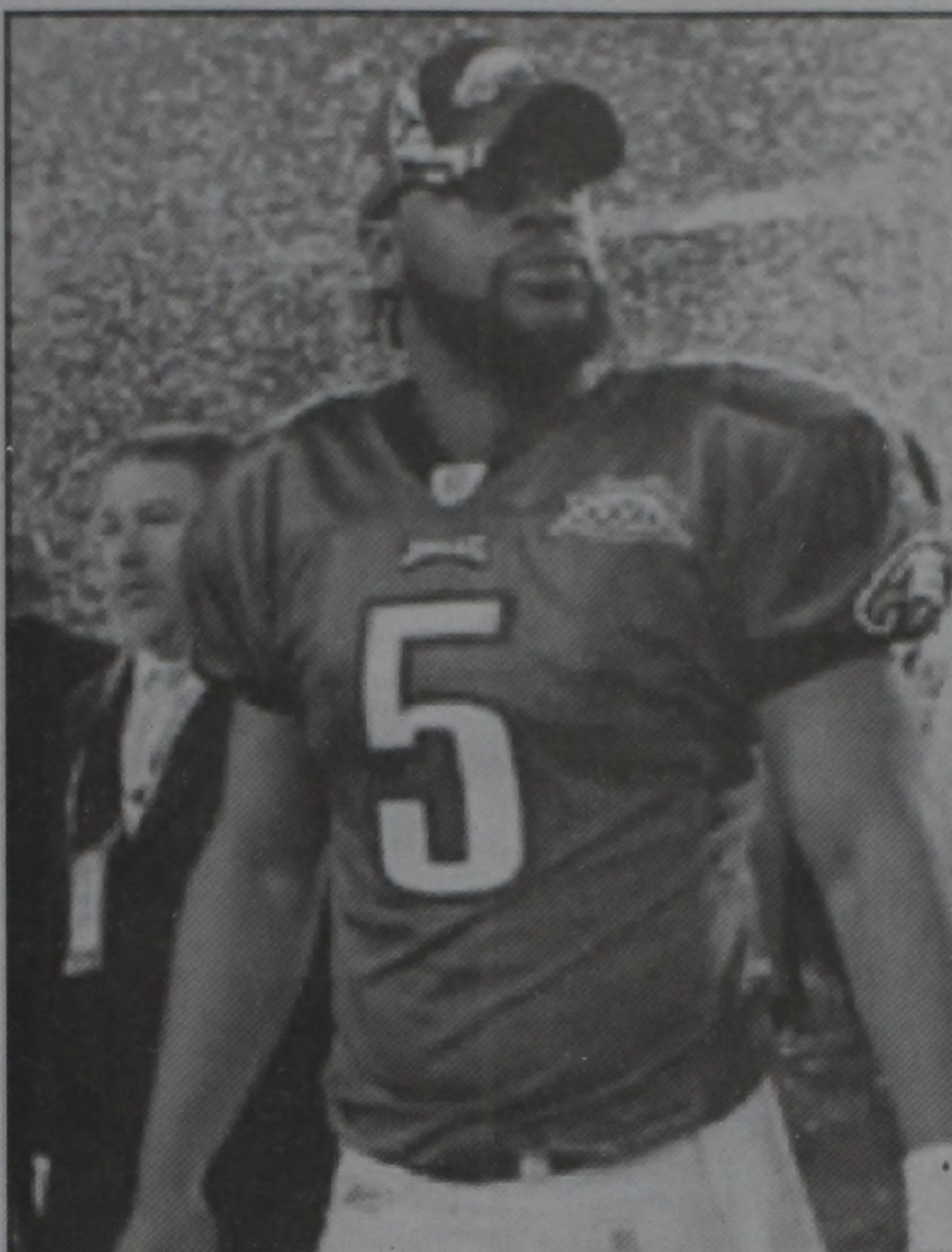
when he went outside Saturday morning, smelled diesel fuel and realized someone had burned Cardinals cheers into his lawn, causing about \$2,000 in damage.

Favazzo said officers found an address label on the box that had been left, and it led to Chandler resident Rex Perkins, 37, who later admitted to the pranks.

His co-worker, Ryan Hanlon, 28, also admitted to the pranks.

Perkins and Hanlon were fingerprinted, photographed and cited for misdemeanor criminal damage.

"When they decided to get



driveway with "Go Cards" written on one side and "Beat Philly" on the other. McNabb laughed that off, too, when he discovered it at about midnight, Favazzo said.

But McNabb stopped laughing

diesel fuel out and start damaging the yard, they crossed the line," Favazzo said.

The Cardinals beat the Eagles on Sunday in the NFC championship game to advance to the Feb. 1 Super Bowl in Tampa, Fla.

Puerto Rican boxer Jose 'Chegui' Torres dies at 72



Jose "Chegui" Torres, a former light heavyweight world champion and Olympic silver medalist, died Monday, his widow said. He was 72.

He died of a heart attack at home in his native Puerto Rico, his wife Ramonita Ortiz told The Associated Press.

Torres won the light heavyweight title in 1965 by stopping Willie Pastrano at Madison Square Garden in New York. He made three title defenses before losing a close decision to Dick Tiger in 1966. He finished with a record of 41-3-1, with 29 knockouts.

The mayor of Torres' hometown of Ponce, on the Puerto Rico's southern coast, declared three days of mourning and ordered flags be flown at half-mast.

"Puerto Rico has lost a great Puerto Rican, a very valiant person who aside from being a great athlete, was a great human being," David Bernier, president of the U.S. territory's Olympic committee, told radio station WKAQ.

Torres began fighting when he joined the U.S. Army as a teenager and won a silver medal as a light middleweight at the 1956 Mel-

bourne Olympics while competing for the United States. He lost the title bout to Hungary's Laszlo Papp.

After retiring in 1969, he became a representative of New York's Puerto Rican community, chaired the New York State Athletic Commission in the 1980s and served as supervisor for the World Boxing Organization. He also wrote two biographies - "Sting Like a Bee" on Muhammad Ali and "Fire and Fear" on Mike Tyson.

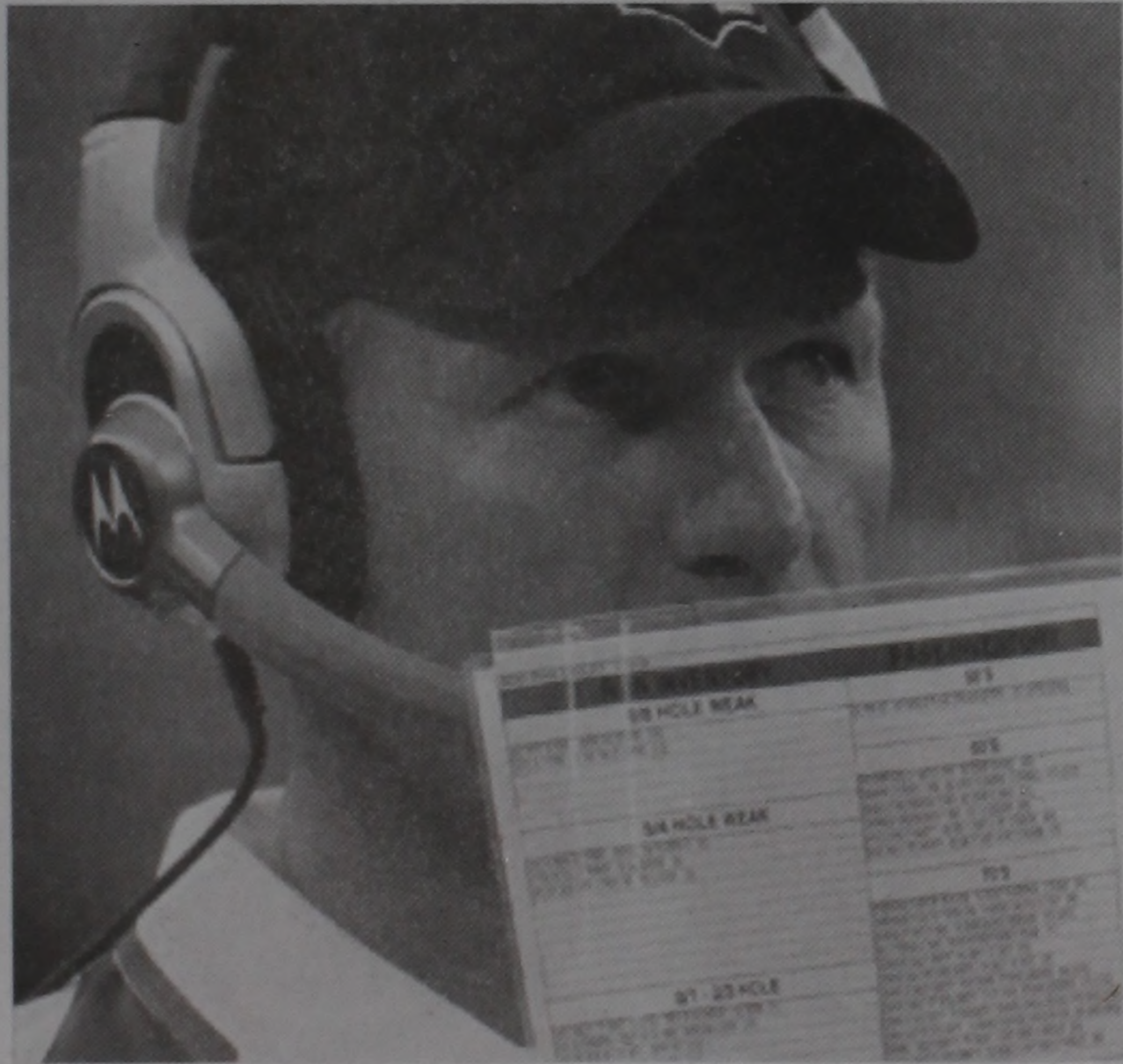
"Through his boxing, writing and speaking out on the important issues of our time, Jose was an inspiration to millions of people across the country and around the world," New York Gov. David Paterson said in a prepared statement, noting Torres trained in New York City and was a New York Golden Gloves Champion in the 1950s.

As the first Puerto Rican to serve as commissioner of the state Athletic Commission, Paterson said Torres "was instrumental in strengthening boxing in New York."

Torres was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1997.

Torres will be buried Thursday in Ponce.

Whisenhunt listo para enfrentar a antiguo equipo en el Super Bowl



Whisenhunt fue entrevistado para el puesto vacante en Atlanta, y después se enteró de la renuncia de Cowher. Los Steelers lo entrevistaron, pero su candidatura no pasó de ahí. Grimm tuvo dos entrevistas en Pittsburgh e incluso hubo reportes de prensa de que había recibido una oferta para el

Ken Whisenhunt parecía ser el sucesor lógico de Bill Cowher en Pittsburgh cuando surgió la vacante de entrenador en jefe de los Steelers hace dos años. Si no era él, entonces Russ Grimm.

Pero los dos asistentes de los Steelers fueron ignorados en favor de Mike Tomlin, y Whisenhunt llegó a Arizona con Grimm como su principal asesor y entrenador de la línea ofensiva.

Ahora Whisenhunt y sus Cardinals de Arizona enfrentarán a los Steelers en el Super Bowl.

Después del triunfo de Arizona 32-25 sobre Filadelfia el domingo en el partido por el título de la NFC, Whisenhunt quería que Pittsburgh derrotara a Baltimore en el campeonato de la AFC. Y así sucedió.

"¿Cómo podía ser de otra manera?", dijo Whisenhunt. "Después que ganamos el partido, ¿cómo no podían ser (nuestros oponentes) los Steel-

ers de Pittsburgh? Eso era lo que yo esperaba. Es una lástima que ustedes (la prensa) no tengan de qué escribir".

La conexión entre los entrenadores de Arizona y Pittsburgh será un tema recurrente en las dos semanas de antesala al Super Bowl, que se jugará el 1 de febrero en Tampa Bay.

"Será emotivo para nosotros", dijo el tackle ofensivo de Pittsburgh, Max Starks. "Yo gané mi Super Bowl con esos entrenadores".

Whisenhunt fue un asistente de Cowher durante seis años, los tres últimos como coordinador ofensivo. Fue el encargado de diseñar las jugadas para el quarterback Ben Roethlisberger cuando los Steelers ganaron el Super Bowl en el 2005.

Grimm también llevaba seis temporadas entre los asistentes de Cowher, los tres últimos como su principal asesor y encargado de la línea ofensiva.

puesto.

En cambio, Tomlin deslumbró al dueño del equipo Dan Rooney y al presidente Art Rooney II durante dos largas entrevistas.

Antes de que Tomlin fuera contratado en Pittsburgh, Whisenhunt aceptó el puesto en Arizona y el lunes aseguró que no guarda rencor hacia los Steelers.

"¿Por qué tendría rencor?", preguntó. "No veo por qué uno no querría un trabajo en la NFL. Tuve una gran oportunidad aquí. Me gustaron muchas cosas que pensé que nos darían una oportunidad de ganar. Creo que lo hemos demostrado y estoy emocionado por eso".

Whisenhunt y Grimm le lavaron el rostro a una franquicia de los Cardinals que antes de esta temporada sólo tuvo un año con récord ganador desde 1984, y con apenas dos triunfos en los playoffs en toda su historia.

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Social, Environmental Implications Of Mexico's Tequila Boom

New North Carolina State University research shows that



tequila's surge in popularity over the past 15 years has been a boon for industry, but is triggering a significant hangover of social and environmental problems in the region of Mexico where the once-notorious liquor is produced.

Tequila is distilled from the blue agave plant and, according to Mexican law, can only be produced in an area encompassing the state of Jalisco and parts of four other Mexican states. This sort of distinction, known as a "geographical indication" (GI), conveys the geographical origin of a product, as well as its cultural and historical identity. Tequila and other GIs, such as Champagne and Napa Valley wine, are protected by a complicated set of organizations, agreements and laws worldwide that tie production to a specific place — making it impossible to outsource. But the new study, co-authored by NC State's Dr. Sarah Bowen, shows that the tequila GI is neither socially nor ecologically sustainable, and may serve as a lesson for other regions in Asia and the Americas that are currently trying to establish GIs.

The tequila industry has expanded considerably since the early 1990s, more than doubling its production between 1995 and 2005 alone. But a series of factors, including pest and disease infestations and the fact that it takes at least six years for a blue agave plant to progress from planting to harvest, have contributed to significant instabilities in the supply of agave. The supply problems, coupled with a surge in demand, have resulted in companies planting their own agave — rather than

relying on independent farmers. This also means that agave is now being grown in areas that are within the tequila GI "zone," but that have not previously been used for agave cultivation. These changes have contributed to a loss of traditional farming practices, such as the practice of pruning agave plants to control for pests. Instead, there has been a significant increase in the use of pesticides and other chemicals.

"Many of these changes are marginalizing independent agave farmers and workers," Bowen says, "undermining the social foundation of the region that relies on the agave and tequila



industries." Furthermore, the study shows that the norms that define tequila production do little to preserve traditional tequila production methods. As a result, the social and environmental resources in the Amatitán-Tequila Valley, where tequila production originated over 400 years ago, are under threat.

The study is significant because it provides a case study of how the lack of socioeconomic and ecological sustainability can create a vicious cycle where social concerns exacerbate environmental problems and vice versa. But it also provides some guidance for moving forward. For example, Bowen says, if GIs want to make real contributions to rural development and long-term environmental health, sustainable production practices should be incorporated into the legal framework of the GI itself.

The study, "Geographical indications, terroir, and socioeconomic and ecological sustainability: The case of tequila," was published in the January issue of the *Journal of Rural Studies*. The study was co-authored by Bowen, an assistant professor of sociology at NC State, and Dr. Ana Valenzuela Zapata, of the University of Guadalajara.

House expands children's health insurance funding

The U.S. House widened spending on children's health insurance Wednesday, handing President-elect Barack Obama a quick opportunity to sign a law crucial to the estimated 1 million Hispanic voters in Texas who supported him.

The bill, which would add 4 million children to the 7 million already receiving government subsidized health insurance, passed easily, 289-139. Supporters expect it to breeze through the Senate.

The \$32.3 billion cost of expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program for the next 4½ years will be passed on to smokers in a 61-cent increase on the federal tax on a package of cigarettes.

Portions of the bill, expected to be signed by Obama soon after taking office, give states the option of eliminating a five-year wait for coverage of children of legal immigrants and pregnant immigrants.

Advocates for Houston's large immigrant community said the bill has been much needed for years.

"This is welcome news for our community, because we have been ignored by the last administration on these issues," said Nelson Reyes, executive director of the Central American Refugee Center in Houston. "It gives a message of hope."

Texas already provides children's health insurance for legal immigrants, which it started in 2007, but this would give the state federal dollars to help pay for the program.

Conservatives opposed outgoing President George W. Bush vetoed similar legislation twice in 2007, and Texas conservatives who opposed the bill Wednesday are outraged not only by the potential costs, but the extension of health benefits to immigrants.

Obama praised it however, saying: "In this moment of crisis, ensuring that every child in America has access to affordable health care is not just good economic policy, but a moral obligation we hold as parents and citizens. ... That is why I'm so pleased that Democrats and Republicans ... came together to provide health insurance to over 10 million children whose families have been hurt most by this downturn."

Currently, about 16,200 legal permanent resident children are enrolled in Texas' Children's Health Insurance Program at a cost of \$25.2 million this year, said Texas Health and Human Services Commission spokeswoman Stephanie Goodman.

"Ike against kids" The agency estimates there will be 20,000 such children in the program next year at a cost to state taxpayers of \$33.3 million.

"It's great, and I'm pleased to see Congress recognizes the budgets of Texas and other states are severely strained, and hopefully this funding by the federal government will allow Texas to maintain current levels of service to children on CHIP without increasing taxes," said state Rep. Ana Hernandez, D-Houston.

The main change for immigrant children in Texas is that the federal government would pick up 72 percent of the cost of providing them with the subsidized health insurance.

There currently are 454,596 children enrolled in CHIP. And some Texas legislators already are talking about expanding eligibility guidelines and covering about 160,000 more children at a cost of roughly \$100 million a year.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Steve Ogden, R-Bryan, said the state would consider expanding the program if the federal government included financial incentives, but said the question is whether there would be enough money in a tight state budget for Texas to cover its share.

Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso, said Democrats will have to make the argument that

spending priorities should focus on children in a state budget that will be hard hit by Hurricane Ike recovery spending.



"When we're competing Ike against kids, that's the issue," Shapleigh said. Written in secrecy?

Outgoing Texas House Appropriations Chairman Warren Chisum, R-Pampa, said conservatives would balk at expanding CHIP because many working parents with employer-provided health insurance would be tempted to go onto the government-subsidized program because it is cheaper.

"Is this Hillary health care disguised as CHIP?" Chisum said, referring to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's attempts to create universal health care when her husband was president.

U.S. Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston, called Wednesday's vote "outrageous" because it was "written in secrecy with no public hearings, and no public input and no amendments. It was dropped directly onto the House floor with less than 24 hours notice."

Only the start, Pelosi says Culberson, who voted "no" along with Houston GOP Congressmen Ted Poe and Michael McCaul, questioned how states would verify citizenship of applicants and set their eligibility standards.

"The first question we must ask on every piece of legislation is, is it fiscally responsible and affordable at a time of trillion dollar deficits?" Culberson said.

During debate on the vote, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued a statement saying the bipartisan CHIP bill is "only the beginning of the change we will achieve with our new president."

Educacion a hispanos sobre la diabetes

El gobierno de Estados Unidos puso esta semana en marcha una campaña de educación pública que incluye la oferta en internet de recetas que ayuden a reducir el riesgo de diabetes entre los hispanos.

El Departamento de Salud indicó que su campaña "Más que comida, es vida", diseñada en colaboración con los Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC por su sigla en inglés) y los Institutos Nacionales de la Salud (NIH), apunta a que los hispanos preparen sus platillos tradicionales en forma más saludable.

"Con unos cuantos ajustes sencillos se pueden elaborar estos platillos en forma más sana y con menos grasa y calorías", dijo Betsy Rodríguez, consejera de salud pública del grupo de trabajo hispano/latino del Programa Nacional de Educación sobre la Diabetes.

La campaña contiene materiales en inglés y español, entre los que se incluye el recetario "Ricas recetas para personas con diabetes y sus familiares", que ofrece ideas sobre la preparación de alimentos al gusto del paladar hispano.

Esta publicación ofrece recetas deliciosas y saludables —tortilla española, carne guisada de res o pavo, pargo rojo caribeño, pizza de dos quesos y tacos de aguacate—, explicó Rodríguez.



La prevalencia de la diabetes tipo 2 es 1.5 veces más alta entre los hispanos que entre los blancos no hispanos en los Estados Unidos, de acuerdo con las autoridades de salud. Más del 10% de los hispanos de 20 años en adelante han recibido un diagnóstico de diabetes.

Las tasas de diabetes varían entre los hispanos-8.2% en los cubanos, 11.9% en los mexicano estadounidenses y 12.6% en los puertorriqueños. "La preparación de la comida es un componente fundamental en el control de la diabetes", señaló Rodríguez. "Los estudios han demostrado que las personas obesas o con sobrepeso pueden prevenir o retrasar el desarrollo de la diabetes con solo rebajar el 5 ó 7% de su peso total".

Texas drafting new science curriculum

The Texas Board of Education convened a public hearing Wednesday on proposed new standards for the teaching of science in Texas classrooms.

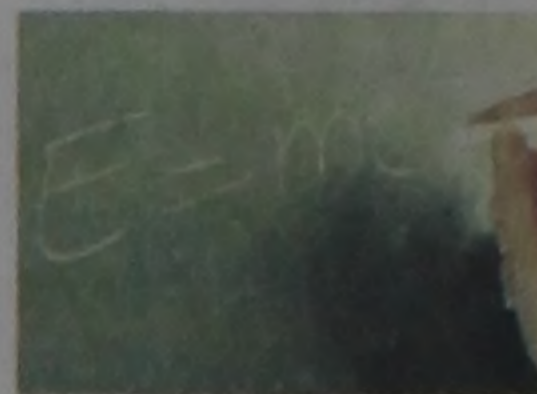
The issue receiving the most attention is whether the state will continue to require teachers and textbooks to cover both the strengths and weaknesses of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, The Dallas Morning News reports.

Curriculum review committees composed of science teachers and academics have recommended Texas scrap its

long-standing requirement for looking at both sides of all scientific theories.

The newspaper says the panel that drafted standards for biology has proposed additional language that would keep supernatural and religion-based theories out of those classes.

A preliminary vote on the standards, which will remain in place for a decade, is scheduled for Thursday.



60 U.S. schools start nutrition program

Sixty schools throughout the United States have instituted a nutrition program aimed at promoting increased fruit and vegetable consumption, a principal says.

Sendra Ranch Principal Suzie McNeese said her school in Haslet, Texas, is one of the schools embracing the new program that is attempting to expand students' food knowledge, the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram said Wednesday.

McNeese said the food bar offered to students as part of the program offers nutritional mainstays such as carrot sticks and apples

for free and there are plans to offer such dishes as Southwestern salad.

"We're really just trying to put some things out there they ordinarily wouldn't try, she said. There are some tried-and-true things we know kids love, but we want to give them some more options."

The dining services program is called Cool*Caf and is the brainchild of cafeteria vender Aramark. Aaron Wylie, an Aramark food service director, told the Star-Telegram that the monthly program also includes educational shows and material for students that promote good nutrition.



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