



Santa Monica Daily Press

February 18-19, 2006

A newspaper with issues

Volume 5, Issue 84

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

8 10 18 31 36
Meganumber: 15
Jackpot: \$18 Million

FANTASY 5

5 10 26 27 32

DAILY 3

Daytime: 2 5 3

Evening: 0 7 8

DAILY DERBY

1st: 03 Hot Shot
2nd: 06 Whirl Win
3rd: 12 Lucky Charms

RACE TIME: 1.49.01

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: <http://www.calottery.com>

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

China's Xinhua news agency reported in October that Ai Ai, the veteran chimp at the safari park in Shaanxi province, who is 27 years old and who started smoking cigarette butts at age 11 when her first mate died, has finally kicked her nicotine habit. Zoo officials attributed her success to distractions such as exercise, music (via a Walkman "borrowed" from a keeper), and better food, such as fried dishes and dumplings.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 49th day of 2006.
There are 316 days left in the year.

On Feb. 18, 1885, Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" was published in the United States for the first time.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What is man but his passion?"

ROBERT PENN WARREN

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Mayor looks to remain seated

BY KEVIN HERRERA

Daily Press Staff Writer

SANTA MONICA BLVD. — Fully expecting fierce competition from the city's ruling political party, Mayor Bob Holbrook officially announced on Thursday his intention to run for reelection.

Surrounded by family, friends and City Council colleagues Bobby Shriver, his campaign co-chair, and

See HOLBROOK, page 9

LOCAL

Silencing of squirrels has ceased, for now

BY KEVIN HERRERA

Daily Press Staff Writer

PALISADES PARK — The county-mandated killings of ground squirrels here may have come to an end last week now that a pilot program aimed to control the rodent population has been introduced, according to city officials.

City Manager Lamont Ewell ordered city staff to enter into an education and birth control program created by Animal Advocates, which calls for the treatment of remaining squirrels for fleas to prevent disease, installing signage to advise

See SQUIRRELS, page 9

Much more pallete able



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Parents paint a bathroom at Roosevelt Elementary School last weekend, as the PTA and Roosevelt students, with help from artist David Legaspi, gave a fresh new look to four restrooms on campus as part of the school's beautification project. Some 70 parents painted alongside Legaspi. "It's a great experience seeing the school community pulling together to create an art project for the school children," Legaspi said. "It just shows that art is very much alive in our schools."

Fracas over ficus trees gains steam

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

FOURTH STREET — Merchants here are getting defensive in their fight to save dozens of trees that have lined this street for decades.

As City Hall moves forward with its plan to chop down half of the mature ficus trees as part of a streetscape redesign along Second and Fourth streets, merchants are organizing to save their coveted canopy.

Ken and Kia Salek, owners of Nobel Gems Inc., a jewelry store at 1412 Fourth St., in past weeks have gathered signatures for a petition



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Merchants are petitioning City Hall not to proceed with plans to cut down ficus trees along Fourth and Second streets and replace them with smaller, leafy trees.

from fellow merchants, urging the City Council to reverse its decision to replace the ficus with a less dense species, called a ginkgo tree. They've

managed to get virtually every merchant along Fourth Street to sign

See FICUS FRACAS, page 13

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HOROSCOPES

Keep smiling, Pisces

Santa Monica Daily Press



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll Have:

★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Clearly, you like your independence, and clearly, it might be difficult to get. Others intensify in their demands and long-term desires. Moods change, and people tend to become downright flaky. Step away. Tonight: Add mystery to your quotient.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Complete what you must, as others want you to join in their plans ASAP. The more people you surround yourself with, the happier you will be. Let life continue or become more of a ball. No one can hold you back but you. Tonight: Start wishing upon a star. It just might work.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ The early hours suit you very well. You can daydream, take off on a daytrip or maybe make an important gesture to someone at a distance. A must appearance punctuates the remainder of your day. Tonight: The spotlight is on you!

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Establish your priorities with someone very close to you this morning. Later in the day, you might want to shake your head or do something totally different. Allow yourself the freedom to do just this. Tonight: Add your imagination to spice up events.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Sometimes you simply cannot instrument the plans you want, no matter what. Don't buck trends; go with them. Your grace can make a big difference in the outcome of a situation. Think and share more. Tonight: Let someone else choose.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ You can easily flip and flop right now. Do whatever you need to do to clear out your day. By the afternoon, an adventure awaits you. You will want to join in and take off. Don't allow anyone or any situation to interfere. Tonight: Chat and enjoy your company.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ You might want to chill out in the afternoon after you have done what you need to do. Someone might need some attention, or perhaps you want to get a grasp on your taxes. Enjoy yourself and relax. Tonight: Treat yourself and a friend.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Lie back in the morning. You will want extra sleep, as you might be dragging a bit too much for your taste. In the afternoon, you perk up and are a happy camper. Yes, now you suddenly feel as if you can take on anything. Tonight: What you want.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Focus on having a good time this morning. You might actually want to play the recluse by late afternoon. Your mood changes, but so does others'. Flow and cancel plans if you need to. Tonight: Add mystery.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ The focus remains on you whether you're making a purchase or discussing the pros and cons of a relationship. You might want to head in a new direction, if possible. Now is as good a time as any. Tonight: Make your evening a celebration.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Take an overview when others cannot. It might be more helpful to reveal your perspective in such a way that someone doesn't get defensive. Eventually, as soon as this afternoon, you might want to assume a take-charge attitude. Tonight: Fun doesn't have to cost.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ You become happier and happier as the day progresses. The Sun enters your sign, putting a big smile on your face. You know what you want and where you are going — finally. Act like you know what you want, and see the results! Tonight: Keep smiling.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Time to talk a little preservation

By Daily Press staff

Nearly 100 members turned out for the Santa Monica Conservancy's third annual meeting last month at Hotel Casa del Mar, which featured a presentation on the renovation of the historic building.

In addition to the presentation, the event also included an open forum on city-wide preservation issues and elections to the Conservancy's board of directors.

Renewed for another term are: Ken Breisch, director of the graduate program in historic preservation at the University of Southern California; Bruce Cameron, who also serves on the board of the Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau; Tom Cleys, a real estate developer and current treasurer of the Conservancy; and John Zinner, a former member of the city's planning and housing commissions. First-time board member, Marcello Vavala, also is active with the Los Angeles Conservancy's Modern Committee and leads downtown LA walking tours.

The Conservancy's board of directors meets monthly to set policies, track programs and projects, and govern the organization. Directors and officers also chair and serve as members on the Conservancy's many committees, which are responsible for most of the organization's work. Board members are elected to three-year terms. For more information, visit www.smconservancy.org, or call (310) 485-0399.

Also in conservancy news:

The Santa Monica Conservancy will host an illustrated talk entitled "Revelations of Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church — Forgotten History in Santa Monica" as part of the centennial celebration of Phillips Chapel, on Feb. 26, at 2 p.m. at the landmarked chapel, 2001 Fourth St. The featured speaker will be Alison Jefferson, a master's degree candidate in historic preservation at the University of Southern California.

The history of the chapel is rooted in the story of African-Americans in Santa Monica and their many contributions to the city's history and culture. Jefferson researched the church and the African-American community in Santa Monica as part of her studies in historic preservation. She and Reverend James C. Raymond, Jr., pastor of Phillips Chapel, initiated the process of securing historic landmark designation for the chapel.

The building housing the church was originally a schoolhouse that the church acquired and moved to its present site in 1908. One of the chapel's notable features is its 11 stained-glass windows commemorating some of the prominent families who attended the church.

The cost for church and Santa Monica Conservancy members is \$10; non-members, \$15. Tickets will be sold at the door. Parking is available on the street and in nearby lots on Main Street. For more information: (310) 485-0399.



CORRECTION — In a Feb. 16 article regarding citizens making requests to the City Council on how to spend a \$2.5 million surplus, the man who asked that it go to a foosball league should have been identified as Larry Skuce.

SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 18	LIFTS OPEN 10/12
CONDITIONS: Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 2"	BASE DEPTH 72" - 96"	LIFT HOURS 8:00am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 35	LIFTS OPEN 6/16
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed				

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 5"	BASE DEPTH 96" - 120"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 150	LIFTS OPEN 25/28
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed				

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-24"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 16	LIFTS OPEN 8/16
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed				

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-24"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 0	LIFTS OPEN 2/4
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder				

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 9:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 18	LIFTS OPEN 14/14
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 8"-18"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 9:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 10	LIFTS OPEN 3/11
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 58°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (2-4 FT)

This weekend we have some swell due from some high riding activity that formed around the Kamchatka Peninsula recently, and some wind swell that will be diving down the coast associated with a rainmaker. Saturday we'll see the NW come in with 14-16 second periods with surf into the waist to possible chest high range on the better set waves. Waves will likely be inconsistent, and rain is expected.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

Small NW for weekend, but rain...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

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RESPONSES ON PAGE 4.

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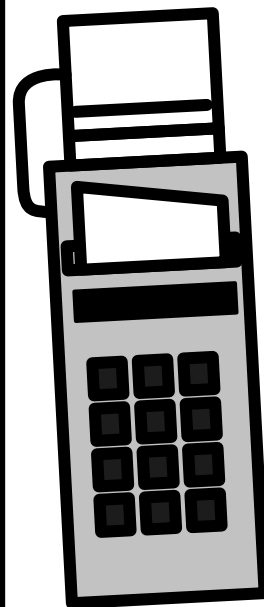
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The QLine

DIVISION BELL AT SCHOOLS RINGS CLEAR

This past week, Q-line asked:

"How should school officials deal with racial tensions at Santa Monica schools?"

Here are your responses:

☉ "Well, I think the school officials should build three different schools. One for the blacks, one for the Mexicans, and one for the whites. Then they would all be separate and do their own thing. Gangster-rap in one, graffitiing in another and I don't know what the white kids are doing these days. Skateboarding or something instead of learning."

☉ "On the surface we all get along for business. Below the surface we all have a hatred for one another. People do not drive around on the streets shooting and killing one another out of love. Nor do we riot in our schools and prisons out of love and respect. As in war, nations fight for position. It is no different when races clash. We all have one thing in common. We are hated by every other nation in the world. Foreign nations do not crash our airplanes into our buildings out of love."

☉ "If baby Adolf Hitler and friends had a class in elementary school that showed that Jews had been in Germany since right after Jesus and after 1,000 years, most Germans probably had some Jewish blood, then the Holocaust may have never occurred. Our children need to be taught not only nationalism, black history, Chicano history, and European history but multi-culturalism. Most African-Americans are mixed with Europeans and Native Americans. There are many Spanish Jews. If we emphasize our cross-cultural ties across schools, rather than our minor differences, it may not end racial strife but it may alleviate much of the hatred."

☉ "The problem isn't racism, the problem is bad kids. The only solution is to take all the bad kids and put them in reform school no matter what race they are. Leave the regular schools for kids who don't cause trouble. That's the problem, not racism."

☉ "I'm not sure that you can do anything about the racial tensions in Santa Monica high schools. Schools conducting mediation and counseling sessions isn't going to help. Ethnic tensions begin at home. The parents of the students are need to be addressed ..."

☉ "We need a more active intramural sports program for not just soccer but ten-

nis, football and all other sports where kids are involved and are not strangers to each other. With that we should stop bringing in kids that are not originally from the community. That would make for smaller class sizes. That would allow students to get to know each other on a better basis and that would alleviate racial tensions ..."

☉ "School officials should teach the commonality of man, not its diversity and difference. There is a commonality of man that includes family. We all have common interests regardless of race, color, age, religion. These are the diversities that God used to divide fellow man."

☉ "Deport illegal immigrants."

☉ "Nothing good will happen until we vote out the current school board. Stop busing in students from other school districts. They are the gang-bangers. Triple-check the residency of students. Students of Santa Monica are the only ones allowed. This will cause a drastic drop in students."

☉ "Officials at Santa Monica High School should look at more balance. They should get more input about reverse discrimination and liberal racism. The current advisors, some of whom are left wing, radicals, should be balanced with more moderate voices. The leftist radicals are part of the problem. They should get input from activists like David Horowitz from the Center for American Culture. He has an excellent book on liberal racism. People need to stop blaming other people and start taking responsibility for their actions. Stop blaming the many for the graffiti of a few. Blaming the principal of Santa Monica High School is scapegoating. There is an old rhythm and blues song, 'Before you accuse me take a look at yourself' by black singer Bo Diddly."

☉ "I have a simple solution to decrease the racial tensions at the high school. Disband all parent groups formed on the basis of color and ethnicity such as the black and Hispanic parent groups. By doing this, the school would be following the premise of Martin Luther King whereby they would be encouraging a color blind school. I think it would be great."

You're the only one for me, and so is my wife at home



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

We just celebrated the most romantic holiday of the year. I'm not talking about Super Bowl Sunday. I'm talking about Valentine's Day. This is the one holiday dedicated to love and affection. It's also dedicated to spending — the National Retail Federation estimates that \$13.7 billion were spent this year on Valentine's Day. It is the biggest single 24-hour period for florists, and it's a big day for candy and greeting card companies. It's also unofficially the biggest day of the year for infidelity — and for catching cheaters.

Millions of people exchange Valentines and gifts on this special day. Some people don't just give a Valentine to their lover, but it's perfectly acceptable for them to send some to their friends as well. However, it's not acceptable if you send a Valentine to two different people with the exact same sentiment if the words are, "You're the one I love best." And that's what these sneaky, but stupid, cheaters do every year.

It seems contradictory that a holiday that celebrates love also marks cheating on one's love. But in the devious minds of cheaters, it makes sense. It's the one day of the year that spouses and significant others expect to spend with each other. It's also the one day of the year that those who are cheating with spouses and significant others expect their cheating lover to spend time with them. They want to be reassured that even though Joe is married to Jane, "he obviously loves me better because, look at the card and gift he gave me, and he had dinner with me, not her." So, what does the cheater do if two people are depending on him? He does what he does best — he cheats. He lies to Jane and probably to Sally, too. He'll make up excuses why he can't be with one of them, he'll buy gifts for both of them, and he'll hope he won't get his alibis confused.

Doesn't cheating on Valentine's Day seem even worse than, say, cheating on March 14? They are taking this almost-sacred day, and turning it into a juggling, trysting challenge. But don't worry, these cheaters are more likely to get caught on Valentine's Day than any other day of the year.

Private detectives report that V-Day is a big day for them. Cheaters are more likely to be seen buying double Valentine's Day cards or gifts. They're more likely to have two romantic meals with two different people. They're more likely to be so nervous about getting caught that they confuse their lies. So, private detectives who work at such organizations as Discreet Investigations of Golden, Colo., say that if a lover is likely to stray in general, he's definitely going to roam on Feb. 14.

The Institute For Divorce Financial Analysts reports that every year, divorce filings spike in mid-February. It's probably because Valentine's Day provides the offended party with unassailable evidence: Lies that are just too ridiculous to believe even by those who desperately want to believe them; credit card bills that can't be explained away logically; or sightings by friends or detectives.

You probably don't need a detective to catch a cheater on Valentine's Day. There are some telltale signs. For example:

1) If he or she says they bought a box of candy for themselves. "Why not? I love myself."

2) If he or she says, "Let's not go out or make a big deal of Valentine's Day. I love you every day, so why should we make a holiday of just one day a year?"

And I'd tend not to believe the one you love if you walk in on him with the one he's loving, and he says, "How do you like this negligee she's wearing? I got it for you, but I couldn't tell if it looked okay on the mannequin, so I wanted to make sure it looked just right on someone real before I gave it to you."

It's a shame that so many people are besmirching the holiday that we all started to celebrate sweetly when we passed out Valentines to those we had a crush on in grade school. On the other hand, it serves the cheaters right to get caught.

So, if you know someone who's a divorce lawyer or private detective, and they say, "I love Valentine's Day," they might not be romantics. Their heart might just be set on a big payday.

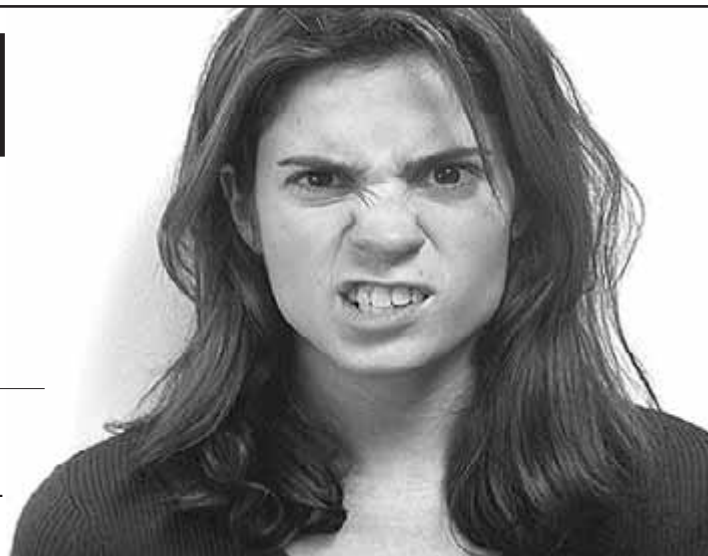
(Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He also has read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's opinion page. He can be reached at smdp@lloydgarver-moderntimes.com.)

OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to editor@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!

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STATE



STATE BRIEFS

Red Cross returns check to city

By The Associated Press

PASADENA — The local American Red Cross chapter returned the city's \$100,000 donation to help house Hurricane Katrina refugees in the San Gabriel Valley.

Leaders of the San Gabriel Pomona Valley Chapter of the Red Cross knew early last fall that they would be reimbursed for money spent on Katrina victims, but the city wasn't told about the reimbursement when the organization pleaded for a city donation.

The City Council approved the \$100,000 donation on Nov. 14.

According to a Red Cross report, the Katrina cost to the local chapter was about \$15,000, though a full accounting has not been completed. Red Cross chapter chairman Michael Zoeller said the city's money was never spent.

"I think we went into this with a good faith relationship with the city," Zoeller said. "I think we did have a breakdown in communications on the part of the chapter. For that we apologize to the city."

Councilman Paul Little, a harsh critic of the Red Cross' approach, said returning the donation goes a long way toward maintaining the relationship between the charity and the city.

Jim Ferris, director of the University of Southern California Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, said nonprofit organizations should tell donors if they're going to be reimbursed elsewhere for a stated need.

Armored truck robber gets death penalty

By The Associated Press

RANCHO CUCAMONGA — Convicted killer Joe Henry Abbott was sentenced to death for the shooting death of Brink's security guard during an Ontario bank heist.

Superior Court Judge Craig Kamansky told Abbott during Thursday's sentencing hearing that he not only ended the life of guard Samuel Saenz, he destroyed the lives of two families and traumatized a community. Saenz, 25, of Hesperia was shot three times in the head.

"You've made your choices, and they've been bad ones," the judge said. "It's time you should be held fully responsible."

Abbott, 36, of West Covina ambushed Saenz on Oct. 30, 2000, in front of horrified customers at the Euclid Avenue branch of the Bank of America. After shooting Saenz, Abbott fled with about \$225,000.

Condo artist doesn't show up for court

By The Associated Press

SANTA ANA — The mastermind of a Huntington Beach condominium conversion scheme failed to show up in court for sentencing because he was too sick with lung cancer to travel from Idaho, his attorney said.

U.S. District Judge David O. Carter told defense lawyer Chris Ayers on Thursday he would issue an arrest warrant if he doesn't receive a doctor's affidavit that Philip Benson, 73, was too ill to make the trip from Hayden, Idaho.

"I don't mean to be harsh, but I am going to take action without further information," Carter said.

Benson was among eight people indicted in December 2004 for their roles in illegally converting Huntington Beach apartments to condominiums. The scandal led to the resignation of former Huntington Beach Mayor Pamela Houchen, who was among those indicted for mail and wire fraud.

Benson pleaded guilty to 24 counts of mail and wire fraud and prosecutors recommended 70 months in federal prison.

Ayers said his client lost the use of his right lung and is on oxygen.

"I don't think his health is going to get better," Ayers said. "In his voice and in his manner I heard someone who is very, very ill. He is resigned to death."

District health benefit costs soar to \$10B

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The school district's cost of lifetime retiree health care benefits has soared to \$10 billion, more than double the Los Angeles Unified School District estimated 18 months ago.

Boosts in benefits, a swelling number of retirees and high health care costs were blamed for the surge in the district's unfunded liabilities.

The \$10 billion represents how much the district would need to set aside, at 5 percent interest, to pay off its future benefit costs without dipping into the operating budget. The district doesn't set aside money for retiree benefits.

"The real effect of this is we have to use up an increasingly larger portion of our general fund revenue to pay for benefits for people who don't work here any longer," said David Holmquist, director of the district's Office of Risk Management and Insurance Services.

"Because we've never set aside money for that, it comes out of our operating budget. That obviously affects the classroom," Holmquist said.

This year, retiree health benefits will take \$235 million out of the district's operating budget. The amount will grow rapidly, by an estimated \$790 million annually, as a portion of the district's overall budget as more baby boomer teachers reach retirement age.

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9th Circuit nominee creates a turf battle

BY KYLE ARNOLD

Associated Press writer

BOISE, Idaho — Members of Idaho's congressional delegation say they'll fight California's two U.S. senators over their claim to a vacancy on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals after President Bush picked an Idaho judge for the spot.

In December, Bush nominated Idaho 6th District Judge Randy Smith of Pocatello to the San Francisco-based appeals court, which covers nine Western states with a combined population of 58 million people. The court has 28 full-time judges, and its retired judges often consider cases as well.

Smith was nominated to replace Judge Stephen Trott, who moved to Idaho from California after his appointment. Trott declared senior status in December 2004 — the equivalent of retirement for federal judges — and since then, Idaho has not had an active judge on the court.

Another Idaho resident also has been nominated to the court. Boise attorney William G. Myers was tapped by Bush three years ago to succeed Tom Nelson, who took senior status in 2003. Myers' confirmation has been held up by threat of filibuster.

Two seats on the 9th Circuit bench is too many for a state as small as Idaho, say California Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

"The bottom line is that Idaho, with two judges, will be vastly over-represented compared to its caseload or population," Feinstein said in a letter to Idaho Republican Sens. Mike Crapo and Larry Craig, both Republicans.

Feinstein and Boxer also asked Bush to nominate a Californian for the seat previously held by Trott.

"For more than 30 years, this judgeship has been occupied by a Californian," they said in a Dec. 15 letter to Bush, the day before Smith's nomination was announced. "Both the judicial needs of the 9th Circuit and its historical precedents dictate that this judgeship should stay in California."

Idaho has 1.4 million people. California, with 35.9 million residents,

has 14 judges on the 9th Circuit.

On Wednesday, Bush nominated two California lawyers to other seats on the 9th Circuit.

The 9th Circuit does much of its work in three-judge panels. The Idaho senators say that practice gives California a 90 percent chance to have a home-state judge on a case.

Statistically, with two judges, an Idaho judge would weigh in on one in 14 decisions, on average.

Tradition holds that new judges are selected from the same state as the one creating the vacancy. But the seats technically do not belong to any state, said Steve Calandrillo, a University of Washington law professor who follows the 9th Circuit.

The seat Smith was selected for was created in 1935 and originally held by judges from Washington and Oregon. When Trott, a Virginia resident, was appointed, he chose San Francisco for his home but later moved to Idaho.

Calandrillo said while he was a clerk on the 9th Circuit, there were no complaints when Judge Margaret McKeown moved her office from Seattle to San Diego.

"That's because (Feinstein and Boxer) agreed with the politics," he said.

Calandrillo said the opposition from California could be based on the possibility Smith would add conservative weight on the court. Smith is a former chairman of the Idaho Republican Party.

House Republicans, arguing the 9th Circuit has gotten too big to be effective, attempted last year to split it into two circuits. Opponents alleged political motives, contending Republicans were annoyed by 9th Circuit rulings, including a 2002 opinion that declared the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional when recited in public schools. The proposal was defeated.

Instead of breaking up the court, Feinstein asked Crapo and Craig to join her in a proposal to add seven seats to the 9th Circuit.

One judge each would be appointed from Idaho, Montana, Alaska and Hawaii — and California would be given three additional spots. She said that would lighten the caseload of judges and give more spots to less populated states.

Flipped off: California home sales drop to a four-year low

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The number of homes sold in California fell to a four-year low in January, the fourth month in a row that annual homes sales have declined. Home prices also were down from December.

The trends are another sign that the state's once-sizzling real estate market is cooling, leaving some home-sellers in a bind.

"Sellers are becoming nervous about how long it's taking to sell," said Aaron Zapata, executive vice president of Century 21 Grisham-Joseph in Whittier, which has offices in the counties of Los Angeles and Orange.

"There are many sellers who have contingent offers on properties that they're having to withdraw because they're not getting their homes sold," added Zapata.

In all, 38,300 new and resale houses

and condominiums were sold statewide last month, a decline of 27.5 percent from 52,800 in December and down 9.5 percent from 42,300 in January 2005, the real estate research firm DataQuick Information Systems reported Thursday.

Last month's home sales were the lowest since 38,137 homes were sold in January 2002, the firm said.

While some markets within the state are still seeing home prices rise by high double-digit percentages, some pricier areas, such as San Diego County and the San Francisco Bay area, have seen appreciation rates dial back to single-digit percentages.

The median home price in California last month hit \$452,000, down 1.3 percent from December and up 13 percent from \$400,000 in the same period a year ago — the lowest annual increase since 12.4 percent in March 2003, DataQuick said.



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NATIONAL



Beetle mania helping global warming study

BY RACHEL D'ORO

Associated Press Writer

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — The stench is overwhelming, a rancid sweetness that stings the eyes and lungs, clinging to hair and clothes like a vile perfume.

This is the smell of global warming research at work inside a sealed room at the University of Alaska's Museum of the North in Fairbanks, the largest U.S. repository for high-latitude species. Beneath the lids of large coolers, thousands of tiny bugs are devouring the desiccated flesh of carcasses destined for the museum's vast specimens collection.

It's a process used by museums for decades because of the dermestid beetle's unmatched ability to strip bones without damaging even the smallest, most delicate specimens. But today that skill is increasingly crucial in gauging the long-term implications of climate change, particularly in the Arctic where effects of warming appear first and with greater intensity.

"Dermestids may be low-tech, but there's no other method that does as good a job of cleaning skulls and skeletons for long-term archival preservation," said Link Olson, curator of the museum's mammals collection.

These drab little bugs are common household pests that eat through furs, clothing and cereal, shedding their telltale exoskeletons in drawers and cupboards. But in science, dermestids unveil the most minute changes in a species, as illustrated by a study comparing hundreds of martens — a type of weasel — from the Alaska museum's collection.

Israeli scientist Yoram Yom-Tov measured about 400 marten specimens obtained by the museum over the past 50 years. Excluding such factors as gender and high latitude-norms, Yom-Tov found the small carnivore had grown over the years by a few percentage points. That's enough to be significant, he said.

The most plausible explanation is that winters in Alaska are shorter and warmer, said Yom-Tov, a professor of zoology at Tel Aviv University. Plants are more available to such prey as voles, so martens have more food.

Yom-Tov recently submitted his conclusions for publication and said he would like to study more Alaska species.

The Alaska museum has two advantages, he said. It's a treasure trove of species from the Arctic, where temperature averages have inched up, shrinking the year-round icepack and exposing shorelines to powerful storms. Such changes can disrupt wildlife habitat, altering historical ranging patterns.

Also, Alaska has not fallen victim to "an infectious disease called political correctness," Yom-Tov said, which has slowed collections in other U.S. museums.

"Many people objected to museums collecting animals for many years," he said. "Fortunately, this disease did not affect Alaska so much."

Trappers and wildlife managers are part of the reason the museum continually adds to its nearly 100,000-specimen collection of mammals ranging from the tiniest voles and shrews to whales and bears — and every species in between. The specimens come mostly from Alaska and adjacent sections of Canada and Russia.

In December, much of the collection was moved into larger quarters at the newly expanded museum. The preparation lab, however, remains secluded out of necessity. A dermestid infestation is a curator's worst nightmare. There's not much the bugs won't eat.

That much was evident on a recent evening when Olson and mammals collection manager Brandy Jacobsen transferred frozen pieces of a musk ox to the "bug room."

Olson and Jacobsen repeatedly warned visitors about the revolting but harmless odor they were about to encounter in the room.

"Many people objected to museums collecting animals for many years. Fortunately, this disease did not affect Alaska so much."

YORAM YOM-TOV
Israeli scientist

"It gets more bearable as you get used to it," Jacobsen said as the visitors pressed noses to their sleeves.

Seemingly oblivious to the smell, Jacobsen set an ox leg and other chunks of meat under a range hood, where they would air dry for at least two days. Otherwise the meat would be too wet for the carrion-eating bugs, which on this night were crawling all over the skull of a Sitka blacktail deer and the bones of other mammals, including a polar bear.

"They only eat dead flesh," Olson said. "They like jerky basically."

Whether doing their work in coolers or small boxes, the beetles have to be carefully contained, given their voracious appetite. They can subsist on almost anything, including dust bunnies, drywall, cardboard, skin and leather. The more food they get, the more they reproduce.

But there are some things the bugs won't eat, such as rotting meat or bones with high fat content.

"Even they have their standards," Olson said.

A dermestid colony would have snubbed the walrus head and the flipper of a beaked whale that were sitting in tubs of greasy water. They were going through an older process called maceration, which involves soaking bones in bacteria-laden water to break down soft tissue.

Maceration, however, can loosen teeth or weaken sutures in skulls or long bones. That's one reason the dermestid method is preferable, according to Larry Heaney, a longtime member of the American Society of Mammalogists.

Another is their cleaning prowess, especially invaluable when measuring changes over extended periods of time, said Heaney, curator of the division of mammals at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Besides size, bones can change in density, proportion and shape, reflecting deviations in resources. Teeth on a 20-year-old animal alive decades ago can show different wear patterns from a modern animal the same age.

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Border incursion spurs fight over who should enforce law

BY SUZANNE GAMBOA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Ever since military-uniformed smugglers ran a drug operation that went bad on the Rio Grande, a flurry of energy has swept into Washington behind border security politics.

A contingent of cowboy-hatted Texas border sheriffs lobbied the Capitol last week, contending the Mexican military was complicit in the Jan. 23 border confrontation, despite denials from the Mexican government.

The international incident heightened already tense relations between the U.S. and Mexico over border fortification.

Folded within the rancor over the confrontation between Texas lawmen and armed drug smugglers is a tussle over who's job it is to guard the border and who gets the money for it.

The House in December passed a bill to withhold money from local authorities who don't enforce federal immigration laws, a power now reserved for federal officials. The new powers would come with \$1 billion for local governments to cover costs of jailing illegal immigrants.

The measure, which the Senate hasn't taken up, comes as federal money is dwindling for law enforcement grants and county and state coffers are feeling pinched.

Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-Texas, a 26-year Border Patrol veteran, sees some embellishment, a power grab and election year politics mixed into the debate.

"We've had an ongoing issue with drug trafficking on the border that goes back to when I was in the patrol. Yes, it flares up from time to time at different parts of the border, but that's the way it's always been," said Reyes, who was a Border Patrol sector chief.

But Rep. Henry Bonilla, R-Texas, who voted for the measure and whose district includes several border counties, said the sheriffs aren't generating unnecessary angst.

"They are real people trying to enforce our law along the border," Bonilla said.

"They are short on manpower, short on resources. Drug cartels are operating more brazenly than we've seen in history."

Reyes agrees sheriffs and other local law enforcement don't have the resources they need. He co-wrote a measure authorizing \$100 million for local border law enforcement officers to help back up federal officials.

But he is adamant that enforcing immigration law remain a federal responsibility.

In last month's confrontation, Texas troopers chased three SUVs to a Rio Grande crossing about 50 miles east of El Paso. There, they encountered heavily armed men dressed in army uniforms driving a Humvee. No shots were fired and most of the suspects fled back into Mexico.

During a House hearing last week, Reyes questioned one sheriff deputy's testimony that he saw a 50-caliber gun on the Humvee. Speaking as an Army veteran, he said he'd never seen a gun of that power on a Humvee.

"The fact that the sheriffs have caught on and now are using homeland security as leverage to get federal funding, I say good for them. But do it in a rational, calm, honest way," he said.

Bonilla gives more credence to the sheriffs' account of last month's border incursion, saying they meet regularly with Mexican officials who have told them privately about Mexican military involvement.

"There's no one who has suggested this is some kind of scheme," he said.

Reyes questioned why it has taken some so long to rally round border security. He said he's championed more resources for the Border Patrol in the past only to see his proposals voted down.

He noted the heightened uproar has coincided with an election year among many lawmakers looking at competitive races.

"This problem didn't just crop up on Jan. 23, 2006," Reyes said.

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Holbrook on the run for fifth Council term

HOLBROOK, from page 1

Herb Katz, Holbrook said he wants to serve another four-year term because he feels that city government is finally moving in the right direction after decades of stagnation at the hands of Santa Monicans for Renters Rights, which has held a majority on the council for most of the last 26 years.

The SMRR-controlled council and citizen advisory boards have often been criticized for micro-managing and failing to adequately address the more pressing issues raised by citizens.

"I think it is important this fall to elect a council that will place the concerns of residents as their first priority and that's what this is all about," said Holbrook, 64, during a meet-and-greet at the Best Western Hotel. "I will continue to focus on the problems of homelessness, traffic and parking — the big three."

Santa Monicans for Renters Rights was formed in 1979 out of a coalition of organizations that banded together to sponsor the local rent control law. The powerful, left-leaning group has spearheaded a variety of progressive local measures through the years, including campaigning for worker's rights, unionization and slow growth.

Frequently, SMRR's agenda and politics have clashed with the more conservative contingent, as well as business interests like luxury hotels and the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce.

Opponents of SMRR have long worked to break the organization's stronghold on local politics, saying the progressive group doesn't respond to resident and business complaints about homelessness, traffic and City Hall bureaucracy, among other issues.

Representatives from SMRR couldn't be reached for comment.

"The SMRR people have taken the council on a road leading to the extreme and has left no room for compromise," Holbrook said.

The filing date to run for the City Council, which in November will have three open seats, is from July 17 to Aug. 14., according to the city clerk's office. Councilmembers Pam O'Connor, Kevin McKeown and

Holbrook are all up for reelection.

In order to qualify, a candidate must obtain at least 100 valid signatures from registered voters. There is no filing fee. The election will be held Nov. 7. The last day to register to vote for that election is Oct. 23.

Holbrook, a pharmacist, has served on the City Council since 1990. He said he is proud of his tenure and points to the creation of Virginia Avenue Park, the new Main Library and the hiring of new City Manager Lamont Ewell as some of the recent accomplishments he has helped usher through.

If elected to his fifth term in office, Holbrook said he will look to make City Hall more responsive to residents and in doing so, look to create a sense of goodwill amongst residents.

"Often, we are so quick to regulate, regulate, regulate, then inspect, inspect, inspect, and enforce, enforce, enforce," Holbrook said. "My philosophy is to regulate only as a last resort."

Shriver said his main focus as co-chair of Holbrook's campaign will be to raise as much money to combat SMRR's large support base. Hundreds of people will donate time and money to their candidates.

SMRR typically spends close to \$100,000 for its slate of candidates. Most of that money will be spent on direct mailers, which cost about \$17,000 each to print and deliver to an estimated 35,000 households.

Shriver, who said he was elected on a wave of residents' frustration with the City Council, called on the roughly 30 Holbrook supporters present Thursday night to get 20 to 30 of their friends to donate money, and then have them enlist 20 to 30 more.

Holbrook asked Shriver if he could borrow the councilman's famous supporters for his campaign, including actress Jamie Lee Curtis, Oprah Winfrey and rock star Bono of U2, who has worked with Shriver on drawing attention to the AIDS epidemic in Africa.

"He doesn't care about Bono," Shriver said smiling. "He'd rather just have Jamie Lee."

City manager asks county to give program a chance

SQUIRRELS, from page 1

against feeding the animals and distributing immuno-contraceptives.

Ewell also asked for county health officials, who threatened legal action against City Hall if it did not reduce the squirrel population immediately, to not issue any further citations until the one-year program could be studied for its effectiveness.

Squirrels and other rodents are known to carry fleas which could spread disease such as the bubonic plague, county health officials said.

After receiving a summons Jan. 16 from the county Health Department regarding non-compliance with the health and safety code, City Hall was ordered to kill the squirrels or face legal action. Upon learning of this, Ewell ordered staff to reduce the squirrel population using a

deadly poison. The killing of squirrels began on Feb. 6 and lasted for four days.

The city was ordered to reduce the squirrel population before. In July, the council used traps and poison to kill the squirrels.

"As a person who loves animals, my goal is to avoid ever having to reduce the population of squirrels (by poisoning them) again," Ewell wrote in a Feb. 9 memo to the City Council. "We are optimistic that the education and contraceptive approaches will allow us to maintain the population and meet county requirements."

City Council member Kevin McKeown, a fan of squirrels who has tried to stop the killings, said he made contact with Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and officials at the county, but

See SQUIRRELS, page 11

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LOCAL



Their glasses are half full



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Santa Monica firefighters Johnny Maccini (left) and Erik Mills 'take five' one recent day at the Santa Monica Pier, after responding to an overturned crane.

Squirrel plan more humane

SQUIRRELS, from page 9

was unable to stop the latest extermination. McKeown said he has received reassurances from county officials that they will work cooperatively with the City Hall as the new population control plan goes into effect.

The plan is considered a humane alternative to the current method, which is to poison the squirrels with a lethal dose of aluminum phosphide that is either sprayed into the burrows or put in troughs of food. That tactic was deemed deplorable by animal rights advocates, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, as well as residents like Sara Lee Berman, who walks her dog at the park nearly every morning.

"They gas them and then bury them alive. How can they get away with that?" Berman said. "It's one of the happiest things to see people out with their dogs looking at all the little kids pointing at the squirrels. If it's a problem, I think it's one that people can live with."

But according to the county health department, city officials can't. Too many ground squirrels in one area is a violation of the county health and safety code dealing with the harboring and breeding of rodents. The acceptable number of ground squirrels is no more than three visible per acre, which only represents roughly 17 to 40 percent of the population in any given area, said Gale Van Gordon, supervisor of the county's Vector Borne Disease Surveillance Unit.

When Van Gordon and her staff visited Palisades Park last March she said they found 146 burrows below ground. Since squirrels frequently burrow together, she said that puts their number well into the hundreds, spread over a 1.5-mile stretch of open space.

"The ball is in their (city officials) court now," Van Gordon said.

The Animal Advocates' plan is expected to cost \$4,168 and it will run for one year. No poison will be used, said Mary Cummins, president of Animal Advocates, which is licensed by the California Department of Fish and Game.

Under the plan, burrows and squirrels will be dusted with a flea treatment. "Do not feed signs," along with brochures educating the public about squirrels, will be placed in the park. However, signs already are posted and are largely ignored by the public.

Also part of the plan, trash can lids will be secured to prevent squirrels from eating food. A feral cat colony caretaker also will be notified to keep food away from squirrels, and immediately clean and remove excess food after feedings, Cummins said.

Quarterly reports will be given to City Hall, which will include an active count of burrows, along with monthly samples of fleas found on squirrels that will be tested for disease, Cummins said.

"California ground squirrels can control their population size," Cummins said. "If people were to stop or reduce the feeding their numbers would be reduced ... Of course it's impossible to get all feeders to stop. The most realistic goal is to gradually reduce the feeding before breeding season."

Berman admits she is a culprit, even promising her friend to feed the squirrels when she went out of town for a few days.

"I don't think the squirrels are a threat," she said. "They've been out there for years and have developed a natural eco-system. It wasn't a problem until the county got involved."





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LOCAL



Jeweler ready to chain himself to trees in order to save them

FICUS FRACAS, from page 1

their petition, which asks that the ficus be left alone.

The petition was submitted to City Hall, but no formal action has been taken on the merchants' displeasure with cutting down the trees.

"I like the trees, they've been here a long time," said Ken Salek, who has had his business on Fourth Street since 1983. "Why cut down a 75-year-old tree? It's not sensible."

The City Council in October 2005 approved a plan to chop down 50 percent of the ficus trees along Second and Fourth streets as part of an effort to revitalize the pedestrian experience in downtown Santa Monica. For every ficus tree cut down, two ginkos will take its place.

"The thinking was really from two motivating facts: One, how dense the canopy is with the ficus and it doesn't let any light go to the sidewalk," said Kathleen Rawson, executive director of the Bayside District Corp., which manages downtown in conjunction with City Hall. "Second, they are nearing the end of their lifespan and are old, tearing up the sidewalk with their roots."

Design architects anticipate that the ginko trees will lighten up the sidewalks and increase the visibility of nearby businesses, particularly the signs that hang over the storefronts. It's thought that the ginko trees will allow enough light during the day, as well as provide shade when it's needed.

In addition, modern lighting with a single-headed fixture pointing down at the sidewalks will replace existing cobra-headed street lights, intended to improve sidewalk visibility at night. Landscaped curb extensions at the six mid-block crosswalks also will be added to shorten the exposure of pedestrians to traffic while crossing the streets.

But for the Saleks, the ficus trees aren't the problem on Fourth Street. They believe a better maintenance program, improving the sidewalks and additional lighting is more than enough to revitalize the area.

"We put up our signs after the trees were here," Ken Salek said. "If I have bad business, it's not the tree's fault."

The decision to replace the trees didn't come without extensive discussion among the Bayside Board and the City Council, both of which had members who were for and against cutting the ficus trees down. For the Bayside board, the consensus seemed to be that improved lighting, like lampposts, were more of a necessity than eliminating the ficus trees. Regardless, the board recommended to the City Council that it approve the \$3.5 million redesign plan. A compromise was reached by the City Council to cut down half and replace them with double the amount of foliage, albeit a smaller, more leafy tree.

Now, the project is in its design development phase and construction drawings are being created for a series of sidewalk improvements that will occur along both streets from Colorado Avenue to Wilshire Boulevard. Los Angeles-based Gunsul Frasca Partnership (ZGF), a well-regarded urban design firm, is spearheading the plan, which the City Council originally adopted by in 1997 but had been put off due to a lack of funding, officials said.

The plan calls for 80 ficus trees to remain and 54 of them to be cut down — 29 on Fourth Street and 25 on Second Street. Eight ficus trees will be relocated. The ficus trees will be replaced with 116 ginkos.

The Saleks say they were unaware of the plan until urban designers from ZGF were seen two weeks ago marking which trees should go. That's when they began soliciting their neighbors to sign their petition.

But Rawson and Ellen Gelbard, a City Hall planner, say extensive community outreach was done in an effort for merchants and residents to speak out on the proposed development. Notices were sent out informing people of the commu-



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press
The owners of Nobel Jems are spearheading an effort to convince the City Council not to alter the streetscape of Fourth Street by removing the canopy of ficus trees.

nity workshops held on the proposed project in April of 2005, and a letter was sent to all merchants in the area informing them of the Oct. 11, 2005 public hearing when the final decision was made by the City Council. Also, the Bayside Board discussed the plan in an open forum on several occasions, and the project was highlighted five times in the Bayside Beat, a downtown newsletter distributed monthly to all merchants.

"We were really trying to get people's opinion," Gelbard said. "It's frustrating."

She added that it's imperative merchants understand that the amount of trees on Second and Fourth streets are doubling.

"The petition makes it sound like we are cutting down all of the trees," Gelbard said. "We are adding two ginko trees for every one ficus tree."

While merchants' efforts to save the trees may be a little too late since the project is already underway, construction isn't going to begin until early 2007, said Lisa Padilla, principal at ZGF.

If the City Council were to reconsider the tree issue, urban designers would have to go back to the drawing board, adding significant expense to the multi-million dollar plan that has been in the works on and off for nearly a decade.

"It affects everything we've laid out," Padilla said. "(The trees are) pretty central in what we are designing for the streetscape."

But Salek believes that the ficus trees are central to the Fourth Street ambiance.

"This is our street, our atmosphere," he said. "As long as we are here, the trees will be here."

"I'm going to chain myself to one if I have to."

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INTERNATIONAL

Israel threatens to clamp down on Hamas

BY JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM — Israel will clamp down on Palestinian areas, cutting the West Bank off from Gaza, banning Gaza workers from Israel and halting most funding, in a campaign to weaken the violent Hamas as it assumes power.

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The tough measures emerged from a security meeting Thursday, and acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is expected to sign off on them Friday.

Israel's Cabinet is to approve them Sunday and put them into effect immediately — the day after the new, Hamas-dominated Palestinian parliament takes office.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, meanwhile, will demand that Hamas publicly accept his goal of reaching a peace deal with Israel and recognize past agreements with the Jewish state, officials said.

Since Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections last month, Israeli leaders have taken a tough line against the group. They have rallied international opposition to Hamas and said there will be no dealings with the militants until they change their ways.

On Thursday, senior Israeli officials approved a series of tough measures aimed at crushing the Gaza Strip's already teetering economy.

"The swearing-in of the Palestinian parliament on Saturday rings a gong for us," Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said, according to meeting participants. "A Hamas government will mean an authority of terror and murder."

Israel will bar Gaza laborers, stripping about 4,000 Palestinian families of their main source of income, and halt the movement of Palestinian officials between the West Bank and Gaza.

Later Israel will consider even tougher economic sanctions, including restrictions on Palestinian exports, the officials said.

Blocking access to Israel would be devastating to for Gaza. The Israeli market is the largest for the impoverished coastal strip, and most of Gaza's exports to the rest of the world go through Israeli ports.

The campaign is aimed at isolating the Gaza Strip from the West Bank. The Palestinians claim both areas, separated by Israeli territory, for a future state.

Israeli is likely to halt monthly transfers of about \$50 million in taxes and customs duties it collects for the Palestinians. The transfers are crucial for the Palestinian Authority to pay salaries to 140,000 government workers.

Mudslide buries Philippine villages, more than 20 are dead, 1,500 missing

BY PAUL ALEXANDER

Associated Press Writer

MANILA, Philippines — A rain-soaked mountainside disintegrated into a torrent of mud in the eastern Philippines on Friday, swallowing hundreds of houses and an elementary school in sludge three stories high. At least 23 bodies were recovered, but 1,500 people remained missing.

The farming village of Guinsaugon on Leyte island, 420 miles southeast of Manila, was virtually wiped out, with only a few jumbles of corrugated steel sheeting left to show that the community of some 2,500 people ever existed.

"It sounded like the mountain exploded, and the whole thing crumbled," survivor Dario Libatan told Manila radio DZMM. "I could not see any house standing anymore."

Two other villages also were inundated, and about 3,000 evacuees were at a municipal hall.

"We did not find injured people," said Ricky Estela, a crewman on a helicopter that flew a politician to the scene. "Most of them are dead and beneath the mud."

The mud was so deep and unstable that rescue workers

Israel has said humanitarian aid would continue.

Mushir al-Masri, an incoming Hamas lawmaker, condemned the Israeli economic threats.

"This is collective punishment on our people," he said. "The world should realize that more pressure on the Palestinian people will create more tension and everyone is going to be a loser, including Israel."

Israeli critics warn that the measures could plunge ordinary Palestinians even deeper into poverty, encouraging extremism and violence. Criticizing the funding cuts, moderate Labor Party leader Amir Peretz said there are "indirect ways" to "get around Hamas and strengthen moderate forces" among the Palestinians.

At the parliament session Saturday, Abbas will ask Hamas to form a new Cabinet that recognizes interim peace agreements with Israel and his efforts to reach a permanent settlement, said Nabil Abu Rdenah, a top aide to Abbas.

"Any new government should be a continuation of the previous government," Abu Rdenah said. "They have to say this publicly and in writing."

Abu Rdenah declined to spell out what action Abbas would take if Hamas refuses to accept his program, saying, "it's too early to talk about this."

Abbas' speech is likely to kick off a drawn-out negotiating process. Once Abbas taps Hamas to form a new Cabinet, the militants will have five weeks to do so.

"We are really going to have a showdown and a major crisis," said Saeb Erekat, a Fatah lawmaker and outgoing chief negotiator with Israel.

Mushir al-Masri, an incoming Hamas legislator, expected a compromise.

"I think that always we can find common understandings," he said. "All of us are shouldering joint responsibility to serve the interests of our people."

In a sign of pragmatism, Hamas officials said they would nominate Ismail Haniyeh, a relative moderate, to be the next prime minister. The 46-year-old Haniyeh, a resident of Gaza's Shati refugee camp, has served as a liaison between Hamas and the outgoing Fatah-led government.

had difficulty approaching the school. Southern Leyte province Gov. Rosette Lerias told the British Broadcasting Corp. the school had 246 students and seven teachers. Only one child and one adult had been recovered.

Lerias said the Philippine army and air force, and the Red Cross, were on the scene, but search-and-rescue efforts were called off at nightfall. She asked for people to dig by hand, saying the mud was too soft for heavy equipment.

"All those who could have come today have come," she told BBC. "We hope to be able to rescue more people."

The U.S. Embassy said an American naval vessel was en route to the disaster area and Philippine disaster officials were being consulted on coordinating chopper deployment. The Red Cross also appealed for U.S. troops, who are in the country for joint military exercises, to send helicopters.

"Help is on the way," President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said in televised remarks. "It will come from land, sea and air."

Sen. Richard Gordon, head of the Philippine Red Cross, issued the casualty estimates and made an international appeal for aid.

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New James Bond, new Bond girl

By The Associated Press

Clooney is nominated for Oscars for best supporting actor for “Syriana” and best director for “Good Night, and Good Luck.” He also shares a best original screenplay nomination

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In 1564, artist Michelangelo died in Rome.

In 1861, Jefferson Davis was sworn in as president of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, Ala.

In 1930, the ninth planet of our solar system, Pluto, was discovered.

In 1960, the Eighth Winter Olympic Games were formally opened in Squaw Valley, Calif., by Vice President Nixon.

In 1970, the "Chicago 7" defendants were found innocent of conspiring to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic national convention.

In 1972, the California Supreme Court struck down the state's death penalty.

In 1977, the space shuttle Enterprise, sitting atop a Boeing 747, went on its maiden "flight" above the Mojave Desert.

In 1988, Anthony M. Kennedy was sworn in as the 104th justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

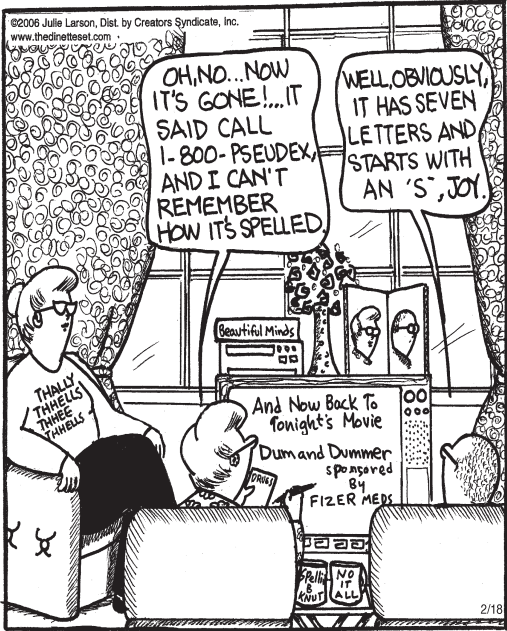
In 1995, the NAACP replaced veteran chairman William Gibson with Myrlie Evers-Williams, the widow of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers.

Ten years ago: A member of the Irish Republican Army blew himself up and wounded nine other people when the briefcase bomb he was carrying detonated accidentally on a double-decker bus in London's West End.

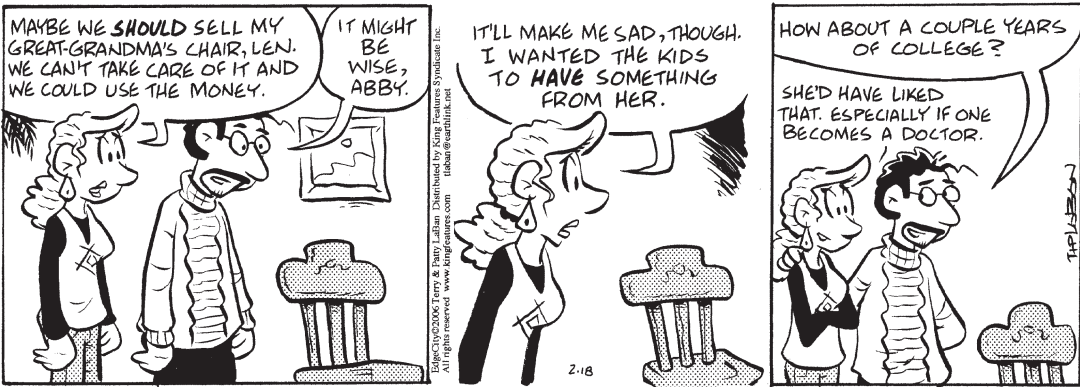


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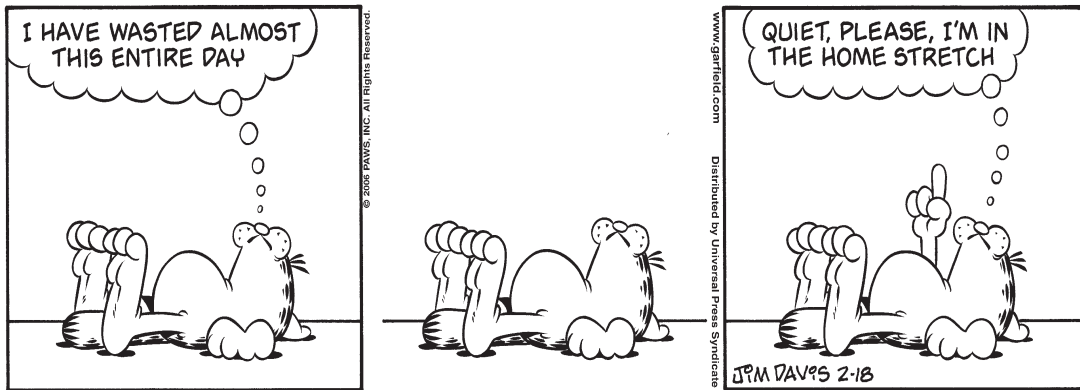
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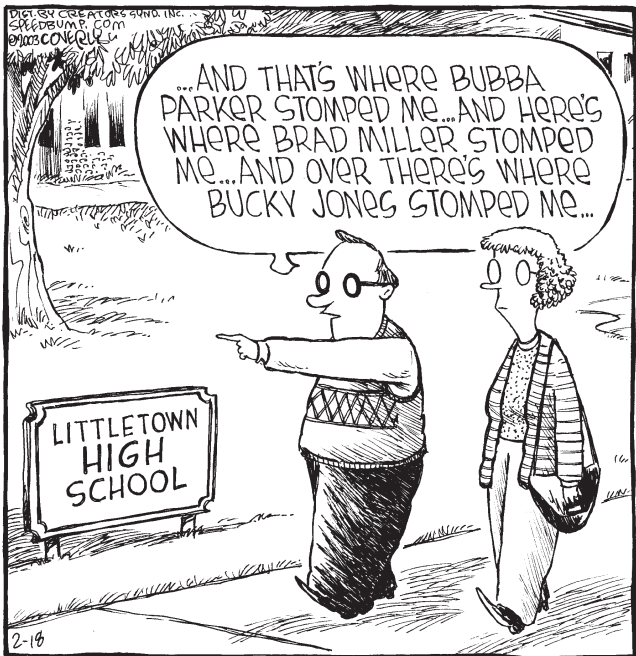
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FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAMES STATEMENT FILE NO. 06 0037670 FIRST FILING. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as OneSoul, OneSoul...many designs, OneSoul Designs, by Rebecca H., 2614 1/2 Grand Canal, Venice, CA 90291. The full name of registrant(s) is/are : Rebecca Mahboubi-Fardi, 2614 1/2 Grand Canal, Venice, CA 90291 This Business is being conducted by, an individual. Signed: Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious name or names listed herein.. /s/: Rebecca Mahboubi-Fardi
This statement was filed with the County Clerk of LOS ANGELES County on 1/6/06. NOTICE: THIS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM THE DATE IT WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED PRIOR TO THAT DATE. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name statement in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14411et seq., Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS to publish 2/4/2006, 2/11/2006, 2/18/2006, 2/25/2006



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