

FREE

MONDAY, MAY 19, 2003

Volume 2, Issue 160

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

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FANTASY 5

02, 09, 10, 19, 21

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 1, 8, 6

Evening picks: 2, 6, 8

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 08, Gorgeous George

2nd Place: 12, Lucky Charms

3rd Place: 02, Lucky Star

Race time: 1:47.74



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

■ A 77-year-old man drowned in February while fishing, after a tire flew off a car in a nearby auto accident, hitting him on the head, and knocking him into a canal (North Highlands, Calif.) And boulders estimated at 5 tons each rolled down hills and killed people near Honolulu in August (a 26-year-old woman asleep in her bed) and Navajo Lake State Park, N.M., in February (a 20-year-old man). And a 67-year-old man was crushed to death in Shamokin, Pa., in January when two paramedics, carrying him in his wheelchair up about 20 steps, accidentally dropped him, and one fell on top of him.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Distrust any enterprise that requires new clothes."

— Henry David Thoreau



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Inspired



John Wood/Daily Press

An artist on the Venice Boardwalk takes advantage of the weekend's sunny weather to record the view.

City worker charged with soliciting bribes

In one incident, inspector took a child support check in exchange for silence

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

A former City Hall inspector has been charged with two counts of bribery for allegedly taking cash in return for covering up possible building code violations.

Martin Aguirre, 29, of Downey, was charged with the felony counts by the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office last week. He is scheduled to be arraigned on Tuesday.

Aguirre took more than \$1,000 from Santa Monica residents and business owners after telling them they were violating the city's building codes but that he would ignore the infractions if they paid him cash, authorities allege.

Aguirre was arrested by Santa Monica Police in a sting operation in February after he allegedly solicited a bribe from a business owner on Ocean Park Boulevard

See BRIBES, page 6

No education surprises in revised budget

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

Gov. Gray Davis hasn't made it any easier for local K-12 schools, officials learned last week.

However, he also hasn't made it harder on them either.

Davis' revised budget, released this past Wednesday, does little to soften the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's \$13 million budget shortfall for next year.

K-12 schools weren't as lucky as Santa Monica College, which was able to close its gap in state funding by about \$7 million, said Herb Roney, chair of the SMC board of trustees.

"The bad news is that the budget cuts for the 2003-2004 school year remain at \$13 million," said a statement released from Superintendent John Deasy's office on Friday. "The good news — no new cuts."

The May 14 revision includes statewide cuts of \$1.5 billion to education. The cuts are the largest decrease in state spending on education since the 1940s.

When all factors are taken into consideration, including a proposed zero cost of living adjustment, the actual cuts total \$2.1 billion, according to the release.

"It's far from adequate in terms of its fund-

ing for our schools," said Harry Keily, president of the Santa Monica Malibu Classroom Teachers Association. "Tough times are ahead for public schools and for students in the years to come."

School supporters are gearing up for June 3, when residents will vote on Measure S, a proposed flat parcel tax of \$225 on every piece of property in Santa Monica and Malibu.

If passed, the parcel tax would generate about \$6.5 million annually for the cash-

strapped district. The district has already earmarked the cut positions that would be restored if Measure S is approved.

In the meantime, more than 90 teachers have been issued pink slips and more than 100 other employees and administrators are expected to lose their jobs.

"Our schools are an investment in our future," the release said. "The state's ongoing fiscal crisis has resulted in more than \$4.1 bil-

See BUDGET, page 6

Three teens killed after funeral workers protest gang shootings

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Gang gunmen shot and killed three teenagers within 15 minutes of each other just hours after dozens of funeral directors, embalmers, morticians and others in the funerary profession took to the streets in protest of the high rate of inner city homicides.

Police said Sunday that two boys, ages 16 and 17, were shot about 11:35 p.m. Saturday on West 95th Street in South Los Angeles.

According to witnesses, several gunmen with reported gang ties got out of a car and fired at the teens, who died at an area hospital.

At 11:48 p.m., police were dispatched to Avalon Boulevard nearby in response to an ambulance call. There they learned that an 18-year-old man was driven by his friends to the same hospital where the teens were taken after witnesses said he was shot by a gunman in a drive-by shooting.

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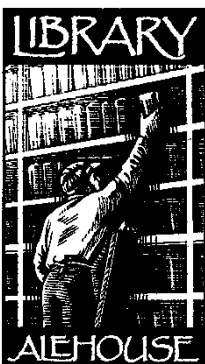
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★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average
★★-So-so ★-Difficult

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Monday, May 19, 2003:

You often find bosses to be difficult and emotional. You might need to cater to those in authority more often, even a parent. How you manage your life and how you project yourself transform this year. The Full Moon and today's eclipse promise changes in the area of relationships. You will find that others respond quite differently this year. If you're single, your status could be up for grabs. Someone important enters your life late in the year. If you are attached, your partner could change right in front of your eyes. Allow more creativity and ease in your interactions. SCORPIO often challenges you.

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ You could easily wake up on the wrong side of the bed. Review an important decision that could impact a key relationship or money partnership. Give yourself a week to make sure you see everything clearly. Now, that's a lot better. Tonight: Togetherness counts.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ You could be pulled in different directions. Come to terms with a loved one or friend. A boss could change his or her tune. Give this person space to do just that. You might find that your relationship's in a process of change. Work with an existing situation. Tonight: Say "yes." Be easy.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Work demands extra time and effort. Though you could be most tired of what is going on, you need to absorb different ideas. Try hard not to be as reactive. Solutions come to those who are open. News from a distance in the next few months could highlight a need to travel. Tonight: Easy does it.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Call on your creativity. Find answers through the way you deal with others. Push comes to shove if you're not careful with a money matter. Understand your limits within reason. An associate could be touchy, to say the least. Tonight: Get into weekend mode.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Deal with the basics quickly. You might be somewhat reactive to a partner, or he or she might be reactive to you. Others could lose their temper. Be careful, as someone could reverse his or her direction. Act wisely; you could clear out a problem. If you feel lucky, buy a lottery ticket. Tonight: Head on home.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Reach out for those around you. You might not be delighted with a roadblock you hit at work. Take your time and look past it. See what is causing this problem. All types of options come forward if you stay open. Tonight: Plans rapidly change.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Expenses could grow quickly. Think in terms of positive actions within a relationship. Your laughter and devil-may-care attitude could be OK for some situations, but not for all. Remain sensitive. The Full Moon highlights different points of view. Tonight: Your treat.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Know what you want. You might discover that some obstacles lie ahead that you might not be aware of. Stay open to others, especially someone close. This person might exhibit a different side of his or her personality. Consider what might be happening. Tonight: You're personality plus.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Slow down, because the Full Moon might hit you quite hard. Think about another's information. It might not be anchored. Much comes up for you. You might be more jittery than you realize. Evaluate what might be going on. Tonight: Do something relaxing.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ You will see more of what you want in the next few weeks. The Full Moon brings these issues to the forefront. What you believed was a sure thing might not be. Confusion underlines a money decision. Think through a decision. Tonight: Where your friends are.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Stay on top of a decision even though you might have mixed feelings. Others assume a lot of responsibility. Whether or not you agree, changes are afoot. You might want to sit back and do some thinking before you take action. Give yourself the gift of time. Tonight: A

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Reach out for a loved one who might need your attention. Your evaluation of information needs to be questioned. You might not see a situation in the same perspective. Balance news with reality. Your perspective could change dramatically as a result. Tonight: Try a new spot.

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Phone: 310.458.PRESS(7737) • Fax: 310.576.9913
1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401

PUBLISHER
Ross Furukawa ross@smdp.com
EDITOR
Carolyn Sackarison sack@smdp.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jason Auslander jason@smdp.com
STAFF WRITER
John Wood wood@smdp.com
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Del Pastrana del@smdp.com
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Alex Cantarero alex@smdp.com
CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE
Mitch Troy mitch@smdp.com
CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE
Angela Downen angela@smdp.com

CLASSIFIED REPRESENTATIVE
Paula Christensen paula@smdp.com
ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
William Patnosh william@smdp.com
ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Rob Piubeni rob@smdp.com
ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Keri Aroesty keri@smdp.com
CIRCULATION MANAGER
Robert Deamicis Rob@smdp.com
CIRCULATION
Kiutzu Cruz kiutzu@smdp.com
SPECIAL PROJECTS
Dave Danforth dave@smdp.com
STAFF MASCOT
Maya Furukawa ross@smdp.com

LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Schedule released for CityTV's Proposition S Forum

By Daily Press staff

CityTV, the government access cable channel for the City of Santa Monica, has announced airtimes for its coverage of the May 14 Proposition S Forum recently held at the Ken Edwards Center. Moderator Sandy Jacobson discussed the proposition with proponent Harry M. Keiley, proponent Rochelle Lewis-Fanali, and opponent Don Gray. James Allardice from the Santa Monica Mirror and Jorge Caruso from surfsantamonica.com asked the questions.

The channel has partnered with the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica Education Fund to produce the programming.

The airtimes are:

- May 22, 5 p.m.
- May 23, 8 p.m.
- May 24, 10 a.m.
- May 25, 5 p.m.
- May 26, 12:30 p.m.
- May 27, 8 a.m.
- May 28, 8 p.m.
- May 29, 3 p.m.
- May 30, 8 a.m.
- May 31, 7 p.m.
- June 1, 10 a.m.
- June 2, 8 a.m.

CityTV is seen on cable channel 16 in the City of Santa Monica. The channel reaches more than 24,000 cable television households in the city. In addition to election programming, CityTV airs a variety of local news, sports, performing arts and public meeting coverage.

More than \$355,000 raised for St. Joseph Center

By Daily Press staff

More than 500 business owners, professionals and community leaders turned out on Mother's Day Eve in the Crystal Ballroom of the Beverly Hills Hotel for St. Joseph Center's 18th Annual Dinner Dance and Auctions. This year's event raised more than \$355,000 to benefit homeless and low-income men, women and children on the westside.

Hosted by actor Stephen Collins, the gala night included a cocktail reception, silent auction, dinner, live auction, live music and dancing. Comedian Jim Bentley and the Leonard Neil Orchestra provided entertainment. Dan Schwala chaired the event for the eighth year.

"Without the help of hundreds of supporters like these, St. Joseph Center would not be able to provide our ongoing continuum of services for disadvantaged families," said Rhonda Meister, SJC executive director. "They help us give advocacy and emergency services to people who have run out of options."

Funds raised from the event will go toward helping more than 7,500 homeless and working poor individuals with basic resources and case management, providing referrals to health care, shelter, job training, job opportunities and housing on seven sites in Venice, Santa Monica, and West Los Angeles.

For more information on how you can help call 310-396-6468 ext. 328.

surf report

Look for a mixture of slowly fading NW wind swell and leftover SW swell. Northern L.A. spots should see 2-foot-to-3-foot surf at many exposed spots and some bigger sets at best NW/combo breaks. South Bay spots see mainly wind swell with surf in the 2-foot-to-3-foot range, with best breaks getting some sets to shoulder high.

Today the
water is:

57°

Sunrise: 6:00 a.m.
Sunset: 7:58 p.m.

	LOW TIDE				HIGH TIDE			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	5:10	-1.6	4:21	1.9	11:42	3.9	10:39	6.6
SUNDAY	6:04	-1.5	5:07	2.3	(12:48)	3.6	11:26	6.2
MONDAY	7:02	-1.2	6:02	2.7	N/A	N/A	2:05	3.5
TUESDAY	8:07	-0.8	7:22	3.0	12:19	5.6	3:30	3.6
WEDNESDAY	9:15	-0.4	9:13	3.0	1:23	5.0	4:46	3.8
THURSDAY	10:20	-0.1	10:57	2.6	2:43	4.5	5:40	4.1
FRIDAY	11:16	0.2	N/A	N/A	4:12	4.1	6:20	4.5

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The Q-Line

Santa Monica College announced last month that because of severe financial cutbacks on the state level, it is too broke to throw the city's only July 4th fireworks celebration. The \$50,000 event, which the college has put on for 20 years, won't happen this year.

Mayor Richard Bloom has spearheaded an effort to keep the event going and brought the issue in front of the City Council last week. There has been discussion about looking to the community to help pay for it.

A fund-raising effort is now underway.

This week, Q-Line wants to know, "Is it important for Santa Monica to have a Fourth of July celebration? Would you help pay for it?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Thursday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in Friday's paper. Please limit your comments to a minute or less; it might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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OPINION

LETTERS

Restaurant owner clarifies goals

Editor:

It has been brought to my attention that some misinformation is being circulated about my plans for the space located at 2901 Ocean Park Boulevard and I want to set the record straight.

My dream and ultimate plan is to operate a local, neighborhood, family restaurant. The menu will feature some of the freshest, healthiest, cleanest hamburgers in the nation.

In addition to hamburgers, turkey burgers, and veggie burgers, we will have five or six different salads, chicken sandwiches, tuna sandwiches, ice cream sundaes, and milkshakes always served with two straws. It will be a family-style restaurant with a vague resemblance to a 1950's burger shop, but with a higher quality of food, a localized clientele and an updated look.

My intention is to bring the neighborhood something new. I can assure you I have no intention to and will not operate any sort of nightclub, bar, lounge or the like in this neighborhood. As a member of the community, I understand what this tight-knit neighborhood is about. I do not intend to grow a business that will not fully serve the needs of the neighborhood.

We will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday through Thursday and from 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. We will be maintaining the seating capacity of the previous restaurant. We have applied for a beer and wine license only to enhance and to add variety to our menu. I can assure you that I love the entire Sunset Park area and would never want to disturb or upset what it stands for.

I am hoping to have our establishment up and running by the end of June or early July. I welcome any questions that you might have and I hope that you give us a try when we open.

Jeff Weinstein
Sunset Park

Stop architectural legacies and educate the kids

Editor:

The upcoming Prop. S school parcel tax initiative puts me in the proverbial "between a rock and a hard place" position.

On one hand, as a person who places high regard in education, it is disheartening to hear about the on-going struggles of our educational system. Money shortages are,

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WE WERE THINKING MAYBE ANOTHER
REPRESSIVE ISLAMIC REGIME.



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however, not a new issue. The fact that the schools have gone begging before is clearly posted in current property tax bills, where we are still paying on previously passed parcel taxes for our schools.

As I look around our community, I see city money being spent on all kinds of epidermal upgrades — flashing sidewalks, state-of-the-art street sweepers and trash trucks, reconfiguring our civic center like it is SIM City and building a new library to the tune of \$70 million-plus.

Wow, there seems to be funding for everything but education! Our city fathers and mothers have dribbled out a mere supplemental \$3 million or so to the school district, leaving the bulk of financial burden to be addressed in the tax bills of all property owners.

The manner in which the powers that be allocate our dollars reminds me of someone who budgets for BMWs and designer clothes but comes up empty for essentials like food and

See LETTERS, page 5

Teachers and artists not valued in American society



The education of the majority of Americans who cannot afford the private schools is not a priority of the leaders of this country.

It seems we are going back to the days when you have to be rich to be educated. So the elite can educate their children and leave the rest of the country in an uneducated state.

I guess the reason this country was formed is totally lost on these people. They have the highest education and cannot even balance a budget or keep campaign promises. I guess that's what they are taught in Ivy League schools.

Meanwhile the ones who teach are ignored when they tell these leaders that this money is important to the welfare of the ones who are seeking an education. They are told that they spend too much for teaching and they should learn to do more with less. That means some children do not even have the books with which to learn.

But that's all right because their children go to private schools.

Most countries around the world hold teachers, education and the arts in the high-

est esteem. My experience in communist China, for example, showed me that teachers and artists there are held in the highest regard. They are above even politicians and businessmen on the social ladder.

It was the same when I was in Japan in the late 70s and early 80s. Teachers and artists were held in the highest esteem and given the respect due their station.

The ones who educate us are the very backbone of all that we are as a society. They are the ones who help mold us and teach us to form opinions and values. They are the most important people in our lives outside of our families, and in some instances they are family.

Yet education is not as important to our leaders than, let's say, power, money, prestige and the military. It's ironic that we spend more on military than the next 21 or so militarily ranked countries in the world combined. But when push comes to shove, even the military needs educated people to build these "smart" weapons technologies.

So our "educated" leaders are, in essence, shooting their own agenda in the foot when they cut school funding to the degree they have done so far. And the cuts to the schools are cutting into the sectors of the school system that are proven to bring students to the highest capability of learning — the arts.

I, as an artist, see this as the biggest mistake.

It is a proven fact that most people who are exposed to the arts in any form, whether visual, creative writing, music or the the-

ater, excel in all other areas academically. The reason for this is that we, as artists, are taught to "think outside the box." We are taught to use more abstract thinking than those who are learning without the arts.

For example, I was told that in order to take computer animations classes at Santa Monica College in 1997-98, I had to take planar geometry. I see on the X, Y and Z planes when I visualize the piece in my mind and on the canvas before I paint it. All of the math majors I have spoken to tell me that this is the basis for this type of math, as well as quantum physics, quantum mechanics and chemistry.

Through art I have a very good foundation for geometry, algebra and trigonometry. I also studied music at the "University" of the Chicago Public Library when I was 21 to 23 and learned to read and write music, which is totally mathematical in its basic applications. I play the guitar and, from that, have learned other stringed instruments and the piano's basic musical structure.

I also have learned to apply the arts to learning languages by looking for the formula that is the foundation of the sentence structure, which is the same thing I learned in studying the language of music. I have also learned some things about engineering from learning how to use 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5-point perspectives in some of my pieces where I use architecture.

And my studies of anatomy have taught me where all of the human muscles, tendons, surface veins and bones are

located and where the origin and insertion points for the muscles and tendons are, which is the basis for most of the crippling strikes in martial arts.

This is why teachers and artists are some of the most respected professionals in other countries around the world. We have knowledge of the past and think, therefore, that we are dangerous to any type of administration that seeks to misguide the people of this great nation.

That is why Martin Sheen, Susan Sarandon and other actors and musicians who opposed the war and other machinations of the neoconservatives are so vocal and are being blasted by them as anti-American. These people think outside the box, as do the teachers who are converging and organizing protests against the state and federal administrations.

One of the artists whom I most admire is Leonardo Da Vinci. The last job for which he was commissioned was not as an inventor, engineer, painter, architect, anatomist or teacher. His last job was advisor to the king of France.

And I ask you, who has more power, the king or his advisor? This should tell you who supports all these cuts, how much education is worth and how much the arts are worth within education.

(Charles Springer is a formerly homeless man living in Santa Monica. He is also a freelance artist and writer.)

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 sack@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.

COMMENTARY



What are the Constitutional rights of the homeless?



LEGAL VIEWS AND NEWS

By David Pizarra

This is a hot button issue, particularly in a city that likes to style itself as the "Home to the Homeless."

There are many conflicting rights and interests of the permanent residents and the transient residents of this city. The question asked must be addressed by looking at the big picture first.

THE BIG PICTURE

The U.S. Constitution provides all citizens — natural born or naturalize — the same rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Under the Constitution we have the freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of religion, among others. These rights are not absolute, however.

As we are all aware, freedom of speech is a restricted right. I cannot yell "fire" in a crowded theater, I cannot arbitrarily slander others.

Many activists in our community would like to assert that the homeless have an absolute right to live in Santa Monica. That would be an inaccurate assessment of one's Constitutional rights.

We have the right to live someplace, so long as we adhere to the laws of that location. There is nothing in the Constitution that provides me or anyone else with the Constitutional right to live in Santa Monica free of responsibilities like rent and homeownership.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

I have the right to live in Santa Monica, in my apartment, so long as I pay my rent on time. In much the same way the homeless have the right to occupy public spaces, so long as they pay their rent, which in their case is complying with the laws against littering, defecating in public, being drunk in public, not assaulting others and not trespassing on private property.

RIGHTS VS. ENTITLEMENTS

The heated arguments between homeless activists on the one hand, and the law and order activists on the other, frequently confuse the meaning of "rights" with "entitlements."

The heated arguments between homeless activists on the one hand, and the law and order activists on the other, frequently confuse the meaning of "rights" with "entitlements." The homeless activists would have the general public believe that the homeless population is entitled by birth in America to occupy, in whatever way they choose, public lands.

The law and order activists would have the general public believe that the homeless have no right to be on public land because they are assaulting people and causing disturbances.

Neither side is correct. The homeless have the right to be on public property so long as they comply with the local laws.

THE ANSWER

The answer, in my opinion, is that the two sides need to understand that the homeless have some rights, but they are not absolute rights and they have some responsibilities, which too many of them have been shirking.

When the homeless begin to assume their responsibilities, I believe they will find that their arguments will not fall on so many deaf ears.

(David Pizarra is a partner in the Santa Monica law firm of Pizarra & Grist. He can be reached at (310) 664-9969 or by e-mail at dpizarra@pizarra.com.)

LETTERS

LETTERS, from page 4

water. It makes no sense to me how the money in this city is prioritized.

How can anyone rationalize building a new gilded cage for books when we are not investing in the tools and necessities for young people to read them? The well-being of our school district is a municipal problem. It should be addressed by city funding rather than always targeting property owners to take up the financial slack of state deficits. The political heavies ironically came into power by instituting hostile property controls. They later turned the screw on homeowners during the recent Prop. A campaign. Now they want this same

under-represented group to pay the bill for education while they spend city revenue on pet projects and gold bathroom faucets.

I, for one, think the buck should stop at our council people's feet. These seven elected bureaucrats should put aside their politics and need for architectural legacies. Instead they should do the right thing and make up the short falls of our schools from city coffers.

After all a new glitzy library only gleams in the afternoon sun. A well educated child shines for a lifetime.

Jan Tousignant
Santa Monica



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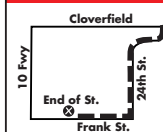


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LOCAL

City to begin background checks on contract workers

BRIBES, from page 1

who was renovating his property.

Aguirre, who randomly walked into the business on Feb. 10 wearing his City of Santa Monica uniform, allegedly told the business owner he didn't have the necessary permits for the construction work. Aguirre allegedly told the businessman to pay him \$1,000 in cash and he would look the other way.

The business owner, who the D.A.'s office has declined to identify, told Aguirre to come back in a few days and he would have the money.

But instead, the business owner called SMPD, which then provided the businessman with marked currency. When Aguirre showed up to collect the cash, SMPD officers were waiting for him outside the store.

"It was a business owner who didn't like to be squeezed and he called the cops," said Richard Ceballos, deputy district attorney in the public integrity division. "For a lot of business owners, this is

the cost of doing business."

When Aguirre was arrested, police found \$1,300 in cash in an envelope in his car but authorities couldn't trace it, Ceballos said.

On Dec. 26, Aguirre allegedly told a Santa Monica homeowner that her garage was illegally converted into an apartment. He said he wouldn't red tag it if she paid him \$3,000 in cash. The woman told Aguirre that she was unable to produce that kind of money on the spot.

Aguirre allegedly returned to the property on Dec. 31, when he accepted her offer of \$28.75 from her purse and a \$200 child support check, which she cashed at a bank after he accompanied her there. He then told her he would be back on Jan. 6 to collect more money, Ceballos said.

On that date, Aguirre again accompanied the woman to the bank, where she gave him another \$300. The woman even offered the change out of her daughter's piggy bank and a Toys R Us gift certificate, but Aguirre didn't take it, Ceballos

said.

"Even criminals have standards," he said.

Aguirre's attorney, Dan Brookman, couldn't be reached for comment.

Aguirre was a contract employee since October with an Ontario-based firm called JAS, which offers services to City Hall's building and safety department.

Aguirre had worked as a city representative for only two months before city officials became suspicious of his work, said building inspector Tim McCormick.

Aguirre worked as both a code compliance inspector and a construction inspector in December 2002 and January and the early part of February of this year.

"In some ways, he knew we were closing in on him," McCormick said, adding this is the first time a building and safety representative has been caught soliciting bribes. "This person was just waiting to be caught."

Aguirre's responsibilities included investigating building and safety violations, work permits, maintenance complaints, work-related noise complaints, zoning violations, nuisance complaints, sign violations, outdoor merchandising compliance and construction sites.

While it's City Hall's responsibility to check the backgrounds and qualifications of potential contract employees, it has not been an official policy to check an applicant's criminal history — until now.

"What has come out of this is we are now doing complete criminal background checks for contract employees, which normally was done for city employees," McCormick said. "It takes something like

this to realize that you can be conned."

The building and safety department hires contract employees as vacancies become available in City Hall, which in the past can be as many as five at one time. However, McCormick said no contract employees were in his department a couple of years ago.

The city currently employs seven code compliance inspectors and seven construction inspectors. Three of the 14 workers are temporary employees.

Planning department officials evaluate the applicant's qualifications, then decide whether to hire him or her. They are then referred to JAS, where they are actually hired as a contract employee, McCormick said.

"(JAS is) obviously upset they were hired by us and billed through their firm," he said. "Now we have safeguards in place to deal with these types of people."

"He was an anomaly and is a person that wasn't very sophisticated and was desperate."

JAS representatives declined comment.

Aguirre passed his building and safety inspector certification and has previously worked in construction and has no prior convictions.

He remains free and is expected to surrender to the charges at his arraignment next week, Ceballos said. Aguirre most likely will ask Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Harkavy to allow him to remain free on his own recognizance.

Aguirre faces up to eight years in prison and a maximum of \$4,000 in fines for both counts.

Education cuts the same in Davis' new budget

BUDGET, from page 1

lion in cuts and deferrals over the last two years ... Combined, these cuts reduce funding by more than \$1,000 per student."

Federal funds proposed by Davis for special education only add up to about 2 cents per child, the release said.

And that is just a proposed budget.

The only way to avoid even further program cuts, according to the release, is for the state to issue its final budget on time.

Other important changes in the May revision include the elimination of funding statewide for the Golden State Exam, \$13 million in overall test reductions, \$25 million in reduced supplemental instruc-

tion, \$22.5 million in reduced principal training and \$125.4 million in reimbursements, which the state is obligated to provide to schools but has deferred for the second year in a row.

The governor proposed a new \$7 million cut in adult education, cutting administrator training, reducing instructional materials, reducing advanced placement offerings and eliminating math academies for middle schoolers.

Further, the governor's proposal calls for the elimination of the K-4 intensive reading program, reducing gifted and talented education, or GATE, classes, reducing employee retirement plans, cutting library materials and reducing college preparatory courses, school improvement funds and supplemental grants

Headline Headline

SHOOTINGSZ, from page 1

The 18-year-old also was pronounced dead at the hospital.

Two others were treated and released. Police said both shootings appeared to be gang-related, but it was unclear whether they were related.

Earlier, funeral workers in suits drove through South Los Angeles in a parade of white, silver and black hearses and stood

in silence at a graveyard decorated with black and white balloons.

Demonstrators said they organized the event because they were tired of seeing young gunshot victims arrive at their parlors. They ended the protest with the release of white doves.

According to preliminary figures from the state attorney general's office, there were 653 homicides last year in Los Angeles, a jump of 11.1 percent from 2001.

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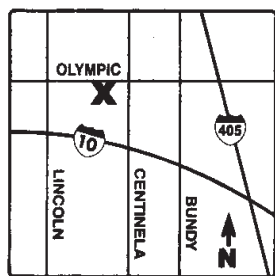
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STATE □ NATIONAL

Unborn children bill entangles Peterson murder

BY DAVID CRARY
AP National Writer

Adding fuel to the already fierce debate over abortion, Republicans in Congress are evoking the Laci Peterson murder case as they try to enact the first federal law to endow a fetus with legal rights separate from the expectant mother.

Laws similar to the federal bill already are on the books in more than half the states, and with Republicans in control of both chambers of Congress, the federal measure has a good chance of passing.

President Bush has pledged to sign the act, which sponsors have renamed "Laci and Conner's Law" in honor of Laci Peterson and her unborn son. Laci's husband, Scott Peterson, has been charged with double murder by prosecutors in California, which has a fetal homicide law.

"In the Peterson case, I've heard no one go on radio or TV and say there shouldn't be an indictment for the death of that child," said Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, the act's chief Senate sponsor. "The fact is there are two victims — it's a fiction to say there aren't."

Abortion-rights activists counter the gruesome murder case is being exploited callously as part of a broad strategy to undermine the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

Read literally, the pending Unborn Victims of Violence Act is not an anti-abortion measure. It explicitly exempts abortion while making murder or injury of an unborn child a separate offense during the commission of certain existing federal crimes.

Abortion-rights groups nonetheless are alarmed that

Congress might, for the first time, recognize a fetus as a potential victim independent of the expectant mother.

"This is one of their strategies — to ascribe legal rights to the fetus separate from the woman," said Kate Michelman, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America. "Their intent is to do whatever they can to contribute to the ultimate goal of overturning Roe v. Wade and taking away a woman's right to control her reproductive life."

Twice since 1999, the Unborn Victims act cleared the U.S. House of Representatives but failed to reach the Senate floor in the face of opposition from abortion-rights supporters.

The latest version of the bill has been endorsed by Laci Peterson's parents and siblings. In a letter to sponsors this month, they said the measure "is very close to our hearts."

Critics of the bill are upset that its sponsors so readily embraced the link to the high-profile murder case.

Renaming the bill for Laci and Conner "is shameless exploitation of a horrific tragedy," Michelman said. "It sickens me."

Abortion-rights supporters say violence against pregnant women can be combated without recognizing a fetus as a separate person. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., is proposing an alternative bill that would provide a possible life sentence for any assailant who terminates a pregnancy.

"We can protect women from violence without opening the Pandora's box of the abortion debate," Lofgren wrote to her House colleagues.

In an interview, Lofgren expressed dismay that crime victims like the Petersons are used as "the poster child for the right-wing agenda."

She also contended supporters of the Unborn Victims Act were disingenuous in downplaying its potential impact on abortion rights.

"I can deal with people who simply disagree on abortion," she said. "What bothers me are people who aren't honest about what they're doing."

The bill would not permit prosecution for any abortion to which a woman consented, or for any act by an expectant mother — even an illegal act such as drug abuse — that harmed her unborn child.

The bill also would not supersede comparable state laws, but would apply to various federal crimes, including kidnapping across state lines, drug-related drive-by shootings, and assaults occurring on federal property.

The measure has strong backing from many anti-abortion groups, including the prominent National Right to Life Committee. Its legislative director, Douglas Johnson, said the act deserves support regardless of its effect Roe v. Wade.

"Whoever killed Laci and Conner Peterson didn't perform an abortion," Johnson said. "It's important to protect unborn children from all threats."

Within the anti-abortion movement, some activists criticize the bill because it exempts legal abortions. But Dr. Joe Cook, vice president of the American Association of Pro Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said "we have to approach this in a way that's doable, a step at a time."

Disney to launch service beaming movies to homes

BY GARY GENTILE
AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — The Walt Disney Co. is betting that demand by consumers for movies in their homes is strong enough to support a new technology that beams films through thin air to boxes atop their TVs.

This fall, Disney will launch a service called "MovieBeam" in Salt Lake City and two other markets yet to be determined. It will require viewers to rent set-top boxes available at consumer electronics stores that plug into a television like a DVD player.

Pricing of movies will be similar to a rental at a video store. Viewers will be able to watch a rented film as many times

as they wish in a 24-hour period.

MovieBeam is intended to offer another alternative for movie fans who can now get so-called video-on-demand from cable companies and over the Internet.

But with so many households already wired with cable or satellite boxes, VCRs and DVD players, Disney could have a tough time convincing consumers to try its new service.

"It's very hard to see how consumers will make room for that alongside what they've already got," said Josh Bernoff, an analyst at Forrester Research.

Disney won't rely entirely on MovieBeam. It intends to keep distributing its films through a number of platforms, including the Internet, cable and

video rental stores.

MovieBeam could boost the bottom line of the entertainment giant because it would cut out the middle man and allows Disney to keep a higher share of the profits.

"Unlike cable video-on-demand, where the customer gets VOD from his or her cable operator and the studios get paid a wholesale fee, this is a direct-to-consumer retail service where the consumer builds a relationship with us," said Peter Murphy, Disney's chief strategic officer.

MovieBeam could allow Disney to reach nearly every home in the country with its signal, giving it an advantage over Web-based systems that only work with high-speed Internet access and cable that only works on digital systems.

Officials with Disney declined to say how much the company was spending on developing the new service, which has been in the works for two years.

Video-on-demand allows consumers to watch movies any time of the day and fast forward, rewind or pause just like a video. The service competes with video rental stores, offering convenience and competitive pricing, even though most VOD services don't yet carry the selection of new and older titles found at a typical Blockbuster.

MovieBeam doesn't have Blockbuster worried because the chain is making an increasing amount of money on sales of DVDs. In addition, MovieBeam does not plan to make films available until after they have debuted in video stores.

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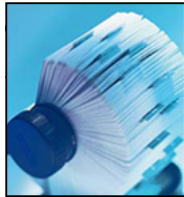
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BACK PAGE

New Mexico may join quest to verify Billy the Kid legend

By The Associated Press

LINCOLN, N.M. — The Lincoln County sheriff's office has opened an investigation into the escape of Billy the Kid from the Lincoln County jail 122 years ago, hoping to determine whether the Kid had an accomplice and if then-Sheriff Pat Garrett indeed tracked down and killed the escaped gunslinger.

The investigation will focus on the April 28, 1881, escape during which the Kid killed two lawmen, said Steve Sederwall, a reserve officer for the sheriff's office.

At the time, Billy the Kid was waiting to be hanged for the murder of Sheriff William Brady, a casualty of a New Mexico range war now known as the Lincoln County War.

Sederwall said Garrett never officially investigated the killings of the two lawmen since he already had a death warrant for the Kid.

Sederwall and longtime Lincoln County Sheriff Tom Sullivan want Gov. Bill Richardson to authorize the state police to assist in the investigation. Richardson is considering the request, said the governor's spokesman, Billy Sparks.

"The governor is very interested in getting to the bottom of the Billy the Kid legend," he said.

Sederwall said he hopes state police could determine whether the Kid had an accomplice. Sullivan hopes for a crime scene reconstruction, similar to what was done at the legendary OK Corral gunfight in Tombstone, Ariz.

Some physical evidence might be left in the historic courthouse in the form of a

fragment of the bullet that killed one lawman, Sullivan said. It would be in a wall, since plastered over, at the bottom of a staircase where the Kid shot the man.

If investigators could determine the type of bullet, they could tell whether the lawman was shot with his own gun or another provided to Billy by an accomplice.

Sullivan also wants to prove Garrett killed the Kid, also known as William Bonney, on July 14, 1881, in a Fort Sumner house and that the Kid was buried nearby.

Some claim Garrett shot the wrong man, and at least two people later claimed to have been the Kid. Other people contend a body buried in England is the Kid's.

Sullivan said the impetus for the investigation began more than a decade ago when he visited a museum in Hico, Texas, dedicated to Brushy Bill Roberts, who claimed to be Billy the Kid.

"The theme of the Lincoln County sheriff's office is Pat Garrett. We've got Pat Garrett on our shoulder patches," Sullivan said. "So what they're alleging over there really is that Garrett killed somebody else in Fort Sumner and covered it up. We would like to clear his name."

Sullivan wants to exhume the body of Bonney's mother, buried in Silver City, and compare the DNA to that of Brushy Bill Roberts' body.

The state would have to get a court order to exhume the body.

The DNA also could be compared to the body buried at Fort Sumner and to other claimants, said Dale Tunnell, a forensics expert for the Arizona Department of Corrections, who is helping in the case.

"Most of these people that are historians, they don't have access to the records that we do," said Tunnell, whose expertise is in authenticating and interpreting written documents. "Having a badge does open a lot of doors."

Robert Utley, author of "Billy the Kid:

A Short and Violent Life," doubts the merit of the investigation.

"If you want to involve an accomplice, that may be historically interesting if you can prove it — which nobody has ever done — but you're not going to prosecute anybody for it," he said.

Beagle makes incredible, Alabama to Kansas journey

By The Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Stray dogs show up all the time around Auburn University. They don't usually belong 800 miles away in Kansas.

But that was the case with Norman, a beagle who wandered off from his owner in Solomon, Kan., one day in March and showed up Friday outside an Auburn University computer repair shop.

"I didn't think much of it — we've found dogs out here before," said Daryl Waites, Auburn's digital repair manager. "Usually just some student lost them."

Waites, a dog lover and owner, coaxed the beagle into the repair shop, where he and receptionist Cindy Darby checked the dog's collar. The collar's dull brass tag was inscribed: 2003, City of Solomon, KS.

Darby called City Hall in Solomon, a small town located 90 miles west of Topeka, and gave the tag number and a description of the dog.

"It sounded like a description of Norman," said an astonished Tallie Baetz, Solomon's city clerk.

Norman belonged to Baetz's neighbors, Tim and Jennifer Cross, two local schoolteachers. They had named the chubby dog — a wedding gift from Tim to his bride — after the character on "Cheers."

"She said she had our dog, but no idea how he got there," Jennifer Cross said. "I was crying too hard to teach after she called. I ran to tell Tim, but he didn't believe it was true."

No one knows how Norman came to arrive in Alabama. Stretches of interstate and railroad alike run through both Solomon and Auburn. If he walked, he would have had to average about 20 miles a day.

"I wasn't going to take a vacation this year, but it looks like we're going to make a drive to Alabama to get Norman," Jennifer Cross said.

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