



Santa Monica Daily Press

December 17-18, 2005

A newspaper with issues

Volume 5, Issue 30

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

3 15 23 32 39
Meganumber: 27
Jackpot: \$36 Million

FANTASY 5

7 26 27 33 35

DAILY 3

Daytime: 0 3 0
Evening: 9 6 7

DAILY DERBY

1st: 04 Big Ben
2nd: 11 Money Bags
3rd: 01 Gold Rush

RACE TIME: 1:48.18

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

Albania's Gen. Pellumb Qazimi told Reuters in October that the military is scrapping its fleet of obsolete Chinese-made MiG fighter jets, which the country never used in battle but in which 35 Albanian pilots died over the years in operational mishaps. And the Hindustan Times revealed in September that the local New Delhi government's 97 paid rat-catchers have not caught a single rodent since 1994. (And residents complain that rats are not difficult to find in New Delhi.)

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 351st day of 2005.
There are 14 days left in the year.

On Dec. 17, 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright of Dayton, Ohio, went on the first successful manned powered-airplane flights, near Kitty Hawk, N.C., using their experimental craft, the Wright Flyer.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"A fool and his money are soon parted, but you never call him a fool till the money is gone."

ANONYMOUS

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Residents awaiting the \$100M question

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE — The local government will join forces with the city of Calabasas on a public opinion survey that's intended to gauge residents on their willingness to pay for nearly \$100 million in water pollution remedies.

It was agreed among officials this week that both governments will split the cost 50/50 of a phone poll to survey hundreds of residents in the cities. Santa Monica will pay up to \$25,000, after \$10,000 in grant funding, to research companies Conservation Strategy Group and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates.

Both Santa Monica and Calabasas governments are contemplating ways to pay for improvements to meet recently-passed regulations by the Regional Water Quality Board aimed at improving water quality in Southern California watersheds. (See related story).

Santa Monica officials estimate a \$95 million bond will be necessary to take action on a citywide watershed protection plan, as well as doubling a \$36 stormwater parcel fee.

But before putting that

See SURVEY, page 13

Who'll pay for a cleaner bay?



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Surfers walk past the Pico/Kenter storm drain pond, located just south of the pier. City officials are considering asking voters to approve a \$95 million bond measure to prevent runoff pollution from entering the Santa Monica Bay.

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Local residents will soon be polled on whether they'd support a \$95 million bond to prevent further pollution from going into the Santa Monica Bay.

Santa Monica property owners will also be asked if they'd support a doubling of their \$36 stormwater parcel fee.

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin &

Associates, a Santa Monica-based opinion research firm, was hired by City Hall this week to conduct an opinion survey of residents via phone early next year.

The polling will be done in conjunction with the unveiling of the city's first-ever watershed protection plan, a 15- to 20-year road map on how to prevent further pollution from running into the Pacific Ocean. The plan is expected to be presented to the

City Council in February, with public polling performed in January.

"There are large opportunities and significantly expensive plans," said Craig Perkins, director of City Hall's environmental and public works department.

The plan, which is being drafted by Brown and Caldwell, an environmental engineering con-

See BOND FOR BAY, page 11

Dig this: Waxman wants to tunnel under Wilshire

By Daily Press staff

Rep. Henry A. Waxman, who represents Santa Monica, on Friday introduced legislation that would allow subway tunneling along Wilshire Boulevard.

A five-member safety review panel selected by Congressman

Waxman and the American Public Transportation Association studied the safety of tunneling in methane gas risk zones in October. The review panel has made a unanimous determination that tunneling can be done safely if proper procedures and appropriate technologies are used.

A tunneling prohibition was

enacted after the 1985 methane gas explosion at the Ross Dress for Less store.

The safety panel also has determined that "in 1985 the decision to hold further tunneling in abeyance was prudent, given the circumstances and extent of information and technology available at that

time. Much has changed since then to significantly improve tunneling and operation safety."

"I am very pleased with the panel's unanimous finding that tunneling can now be done safely," Congressman Waxman said. "And I will make lifting the prohibition a priority."

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HOROSCOPE

Dinner for two, Sag

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)
 ★★★ You could find a situation hot, if nothing else. Your instincts tell you to head for the hills. Rather, deal with a key friend or loved one in an independent conversation. Keep plans low-key and focused on what is important. Tonight: Invite others over.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 ★★★★★ Others might be more conflicted than you realize. Do question what might be going on with those who seem full of smiles but testy in their own way. Though you might automatically say no, it might not be best. Tonight: Chat up a storm.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 ★★★ You might want to go shopping for certain gifts. Watch a tendency to buy one for them and one for you. You easily, and we do mean easily, could do serious damage to your budget. Use care if you want to remember everyone. Tonight: Curb the spendthrift in you.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 ★★★★★ Your personality flourishes. Think in terms of freeing yourself of some self-imposed restriction. It's great to be free and easy sometimes. Why not now? Buy or do something special for yourself. Tonight: Happy as can be.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 ★★★ You could be a bit off, and others will let you know it. Several options appear. Which one you take varies according to your personality. You always have free choice. Today is a perfect example. Tonight: Early to bed.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 ★★★★★ Aim for more of what you want. Listen to everyone carefully. Friends mix well with goals. If you have a problem, it will be one of too many choices and not enough time. Be willing to take a nap. Tonight: Where the party is.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 ★★★★★ Listen well to a boss, parent or someone in charge. You will like what is coming down the path. Take care with spending, especially spending to please someone you care about. Be willing to say no to someone you care about. Tonight: In the limelight.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 ★★★★★ You will go overboard because of your imagination. You also might get a lot of flak from someone in charge. Think twice before you take a major action. Recognize that you have many alternatives. Tonight: Put on your dancing shoes and follow the music.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 ★★★★★ A money offer could come in from left field. Your sixth sense could make you wary or touchy. You might feel as if you need to touch base with someone whose opinion you trust. With this person, you'll make the right decision. Tonight: Dinner for two.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 ★★★★★ Others clearly want your attention. Don't allow anyone to cramp your style. You might feel that a partner is being judgmental. Let your reactions mellow out before having a discussion, if you want to stay in control. Tonight: Enjoy yourself.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 ★★★ Knowing when you cannot push anymore might be key. You will want to take your time and get some extra rest. A must appearance could take more energy than you thought. Flow with the moment. Tonight: Early to bed.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 ★★★★★ You are on an unusually creative bent right now. Use your ability to make a difference. Your talent for inventive, fun happenings could come into play. Others let you take the lead. Sneak in a nap. Tonight: Paint the town red.



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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Chanukah celebrants can see the light

By Daily Press staff

Community members are invited to partake is a number of activities celebrating Chanukah in the Santa Monica area this weekend.

Santa Monica Place and the Third Street Promenade will offer public menorah lightings every night for the duration of Chanukah. At Santa Monica Place, lightings will take place Sunday through Friday at 4 p.m. and Saturday at 6 p.m. On the Promenade, lightings will take place Sunday through Thursday at 5 p.m.; Friday at 4 p.m. and Saturday from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

On Dec. 18, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Santa Monica Place will host a free Chanukah crafts fair, featuring a live olive oil demonstration, fresh latkas and a make-a-menorah workshop. Children are invited to create holiday crafts while parents shop.

On Dec. 31 from 7 p.m.. to 11 p.m., a live celebration of the seventh night of Chanukah will take place on the Promenade featuring Chassidic music and dancing, as well as a giant Menorah lighting.

On Jan. 1, a Chanukah carnival will bring the festivities to a close. The carnival will be held at the Chabad House located at 1428 17th St. in Santa Monica from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. The \$5 admission includes lunch and tickets for games can be purchased at \$1 for three or \$5 for 20. There will be a moonbounce, cotton candy, dreidel game, ring toss, art & crafts, food, prizes and an assortment carnival games.

For more information about the Chanukah events happening in Santa Monica, call (310) 453-3011.

It takes an Army: Volunteers spread holiday cheer

By Daily Press staff

The Salvation Army Southern California this weekend will distribute more than 1,000 food and toy baskets in a drive-through setting to pre-selected low-income families. Disney "voluntEARS" will help distribute the baskets and holiday cheer.

Each family will receive food — enough for a holiday meal — and gifts for all members of the family. There will be live music, a mini-snow forest and a snow machine.

The festivities begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 5 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 17 at 900 West James M. Wood Blvd. From 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., there will be carolers and the Salvation Brass Band will perform.

Do you have community news?



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SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:30am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 3	LIFTS OPEN 4
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-24"	LIFT HOURS 8:30am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 35	LIFTS OPEN 4
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed, Obstacles				

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 24"-36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 150	LIFTS OPEN 21
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed, Obstacles				

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 11	LIFTS OPEN 6
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Hard Packed				

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 0"-1"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 0	LIFTS OPEN 0
CONDITIONS: N/A				

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS N/A	RUNS OPEN 8	LIFTS OPEN 7
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 5	LIFTS OPEN 5
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed				

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 58°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (2-5FT)

This weekend looks like a small day before the significant NW'er hits the coast on Sunday. Before it arrives, knee- to waist-high surf at most is expected today. And then things change in a big way.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

Substantial NW swell hits Sunday...

Bigger NW swell hits midweek...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

N/A

SURF AND SNOW QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? EMAIL ALEX@SMDP.COM



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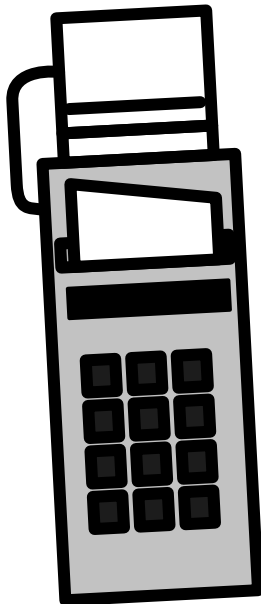
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CHECK OUT THIS WEEK'S Q-LINE
RESPONSES ON PAGE 4.

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The QLine

A COMPLEX ISSUE PITS RENTERS VS. LANDLORD

This past week, Q-line asked:

"Do you think compromise can be reached between the tenants and their former landlord? If so, what form should it take?"

Here are your responses:

Ⓢ "I am the president of Lincoln Place Apartments. I believe that number one, AIMCO would be smart to take the remaining residents and move them to a safe and secure place. The place has already been historical which means they cannot tear down the buildings. I am one of the tenants who will be facing eviction in 2006. I pray that somebody upstairs will be able to answer our prayers for us. I also want to say thank you to the Santa Monica Daily Press for printing our articles in your newspaper."

Ⓢ "I do not think any agreement between these two parties could ever be reached. It's all about the money. Look around you in Santa Monica. It's all expensive, overpriced condos, mostly owned and developed by out- of-the-area developers and exploiters. All with the greedy, welcoming attitude of the creeps in our city administration. Long gone are the nice little single homes and moderately priced apartment buildings. And aren't you glad you keep voting the same duplicitous politicians and rent control phonies in year after year? See what you wound up with?"

Ⓢ "Alas, Abraham Lincoln thought the government to be of the people, by the people, for the people. Apparently, Long Lanky Link, as he was called, never heard the axiom, 'money talks and poop walks.' Nor did he understand the greed and quest for riches of carpet bagging real estate developers and landlords. My choice of axiom is the fact that only the fittest survive. In order for Lincoln Place holdouts to survive will depend on a community outpouring of help from those who feel their cause is just. Without the help of the community they are doomed to failure. Still, if they should fail they will understand that they put up a noble battle against tyrants and did not knuckle under."

Ⓢ "Compromise is not possible when one of the parties is one of these greedy developers. All they want to do is tear down things, build up stuff for more rich people that don't need it instead of people that do need it. There's nothing wrong with the buildings, they're historic. They may be old but they are in good shape despite all the maintenance they have not done on it since they took over the property. They probably wanted to do that so they could say, 'Well, it's in bad shape. We have to tear them down.' There is nothing wrong with those buildings. Any work they do would take forever and would cause nothing but traffic problems in the area. It would be a mess. They should just leave the apartments the way they are and rebuild the ones they tore down but they are too greedy to do that."

Ⓢ "I believe a compromise must be reached because gentrification and the elimination of affordable housing in Los Angeles is only going to increase the problems of homelessness in our communities. If we take affordable housing off line we have to replace it one for one on site if there is going to be new development that occurs."

Ⓢ "There are millions of people who have never had what you would call affordable housing. These people at Lincoln Place have had a good thing for years and haven't planned for what ifs. Life has no guarantees except death and taxes. The tenants should be thankful for what they had and move on. Their sense of entitlement is astonishing."

Ⓢ "I think a compromise should be reached and can be reached where the owners sell it to the city and to the tenants. Even the city could take it by eminent domain and pay for it because we need affordable housing on the Westside and to rebuild affordable housing, even the cheapest units would be no less than \$150,000 to \$200,000. So to rebuild that many units would cost the whole housing budget of the city of LA."

Ⓢ "I don't think a compromise can be reached between the tenants and their landlords, the AIMCO Corporation. They have been unwilling to negotiate since the very beginning. If you look at the history of the offers that they have made to us, they have made no offers at all. Every offer they make includes a poison pill, which in legal parlance means that there is something that can destroy it that is beyond our control. In other words, if the neighborhood were to complain that they didn't like the plans then the deal would be off. So they claim they are offering us lifetime tenancy but it's only a lifetime tenancy if we have a life expectancy of about 90 days. There has been no offer so they have never been in good faith therefore, they are unwilling to negotiate. These evictions are illegal, the judges say that they have not read the cases and yet they're ruling on them. The marshal is serving us on judgment that has been made by judges that have not read the cases. If that is legal, that is not the America I want to live in."

Ⓢ "The main problem would be to remove Sheila Bernard from the negotiations and a good compromise would be for AIMCO to live on Penmar and they could have the rest of the complex to do what they wanted to. We need to have the tenants who have been locked out recently to return to the property."

Ⓢ "The former tenants will either go or stay. A compromise would mean they have to stay. That does not compute. No compromise is possible. Dream on. Either one side or the other will win. The reality is there is only a finite amount of desirable land as long as uncontrolled breeding and immigration is allowed and the population burgeons. The demand for desirable and undesirable land will increase. Why else would people live in Palmdale for example? More desirable land will have more expensive housing. Undesirable, cheap land will have the cheap, 'affordable' housing. As long as uncontrolled breeding and immigration is allowed and the population burgeons, escalating conflicts are inevitable and not just in the real estate area. Believe otherwise and you have demonstrated you are a Polly Anna idiot."

Looking for quick fix to terrorism is screwy



MODERN TIMES

BY LLOYD GARVER

'Tis the season to wait impatiently in lines. And among the lines that people complain about the most are the ones at airport security. It wasn't always like that. If you summon the ghost of Christmas Past and go all the way back to a year or two ago, most people were saying things like, "If it's a little inconvenient, if I have to show up at the airport a little early, if I have to take off my shoes, it's a small price to pay for being safe."

I guess most people have forgotten those words. Now, you're more likely to hear things like, "I can't believe how slow the security people are," or "They actually made me take off my shoes," or "Why can't they just search the people who look like terrorists?"

Well soon, those impatient travelers may not have to wait in long lines with everybody else. Both the Transportation Security Administration and private companies are developing a kind of quick E-Z pass. The way it would work is that the customer would voluntarily undergo a background check, an iris and fingerprint scan, and probably have some secret code word like their pet's maiden name. Then, they'll still have to go through the metal detector at the airport, but their search won't be as thorough and they probably won't have to be "wanded."

It's being hailed as the answer to frequent fliers' prayers. I'm not so sure. Personally, I'd like to have more comfortable seats or some air conditioning even when the plane's on the ground.

First of all, don't the government and private companies have enough personal information on each of us without our voluntarily giving out more? Theoretically, the line with pre-screened "E-Z pass people" will be shorter than the regular line. But if this thing really works the way its proponents say it will, won't just about everybody join in? Then we'll have two lines: A long line of "special" people who don't want to wait in the regular long line right next to them.

If we're still worried about bad guys sneaking on planes, isn't this just another opportunity to make it easier for them? If there's a way of faking a background check or an iris scan, isn't there a chance

that the "wrong people" will figure it out? Do you really feel secure that no terrorist will ever be able to get one of these Quick N' E-Z passes?

This reminds me of the recent decision to allow people to fly with small scissors or tools. I guess the reasoning was that the odds were great that a terrorist could do any real damage with a scissors less than 4 inches long or a screwdriver less than 7 inches. They don't sound all that small to me. How big is a "box-cutter" anyway? Also, even if it's a minor risk, why take it? How important are those scissors and screwdrivers to passengers in-flight? Can't they repair their glasses or make paper dolls after they land?

And how much money is being spent on developing these Quick Passes? Is this the best way to spend Transportation Security Administration dollars? Wouldn't it be better spent on things like examining cargo or hiring more inspectors?

Excited proponents of the I.D. Pass say that its use wouldn't just be limited to airplanes. It could be used anywhere that there are security lines and searches: ball-games, concerts, parties at rich, paranoids' houses, etc. I don't know about you, but I haven't found security to be an enormous inconvenience when going to a concert or a sports event. Instead of trying to perfect this I.D. card, I'd rather they concentrated on a good sound system and clean bathrooms.

So, it's not that this thing is necessarily a bad idea, but like so many ideas, it seems like something we don't need. Get to the airport a little early, and wear shoes that go off and on easily. Don't look at the long line as a nuisance. Look at it as a demonstration of how much people care about your being safe. Maybe you should see it as a social experience, too. Make new friends with the others in line. And pretty soon, possibly you'll be saying again, "It's a little inconvenient, but at least I feel safer." And maybe you'll meet somebody who thinks you have really sexy feet.

(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 and a weekly column for SportsLine.com. He can be reached at smdp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com.)



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SPORTS



The holiday rush can be one of adrenaline



**EXERCISE
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BY THADDEUS REICHLEY

It's that time of year again. The calendar reads December, which means it is about time I start thinking about getting my butt back in shape after "Lazy November." It also means that Chanukah and Christmas are right around the corner and along with the workouts I need to get in, there is some serious shopping that needs to be done.

Living in LA, chances are that at least one person on your list is a fitness junkie. Knowing that like me, many of you put shopping on the same level with tendonitis, I have put together a list of five gifts that are sure to satisfy all of those hard to shop for "health nuts." Pay attention, and you just might be able to spend this weekend spinning up the coast on your bike instead of fighting the holiday crowds on the Promenade.

1. Coffee cards. When was the last time you did a workout that did not start or end with a cup of coffee? If you cruise into any local java hub at almost any point in the day you are bound to see happy, caffeineated people in workout gear. The added bonus with coffee cards is that you can pack them along on rides, runs, or even to yoga and you never need to worry about having cash. If you get a flat tire on the PCH, you may have to walk home, but at least you'll have coffee.

2. Socks. I know, it seems like a really lame gift but have you checked out the price of socks these days? A pair of athletic socks can run as much as a decent bottle of wine. Though the wine might be slightly more fun, the socks will last longer. You should never skimp on your

feet, but I know that I often buy the cheapo socks by the dozen and suffer through blisters because I am too cheap to spring for good ones. This year, fill somebody's stocking with ... stockings.

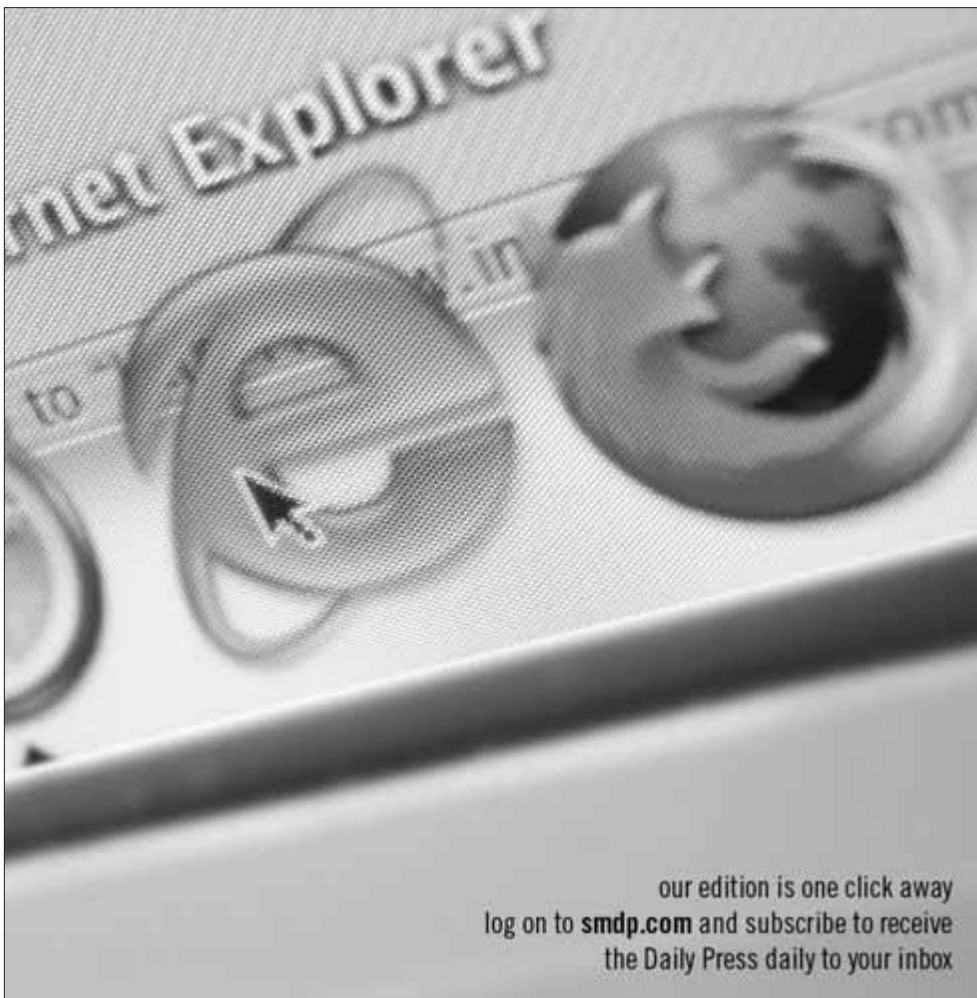
3. TCBY gift certificates. This might just be a personal vice, but I am sure there are other closet addicts out there. Even though I am sure the calories are equal, somehow yogurt just does not seem as bad as ice cream. I mean, it's just yogurt. Justify it any way you like, but the bottom line is that a coffee and vanilla yogurt with Heath Bar at the end of a long day tastes pretty darn good.

4. Lights. No, not the kind you put on old tannenbaum. The kind you wear on your body walking, jogging, or biking around town after dark. Seeing as how it is dark now by 4:30 p.m., most of us are trying to squeeze in workouts, at some point in the week, after dark. LA drivers are dangerous enough in the daylight hours when they can see you. If you are working out without lights at night, you are basically a speed bump.

5. A massage. Every time I get a massage I tell myself that I need to get them more often. They are great for your body and help relieve stress, align muscles and reduce soreness. The problem is that they are not cheap. Nothing says, "I love you" like paying someone else to touch the one you love.

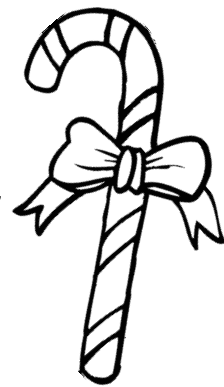
Armed with this list, you will surely cut time off of your previous holiday shopping marathons, and you will undoubtedly make the athletes in your life very happy. And in case you need to know I prefer Peet's to Starbucks, I wear a size 11, and I really like deep tissue. Happy shopping.

(Thaddeus Reichley is a teacher and fitness nerd who lives and trains in Santa Monica. Look for his column on the weekends, and send questions, comments, and gift ideas to thadsthoughts@yahoo.com.)



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Meth users are cause for an identity crisis

BY GREG RISLING

Associated Press Writer

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Stealing mail. Digging through trash. Days spent in front of a computer trying to unlock financial information.

All to score methamphetamine.

Authorities are discovering that more and more desperate users of the drug are turning to identity theft to pay for their habit, creating a criminal nexus costing Americans millions of dollars.

The trend is sweeping the West and spreading to other parts of the country, with one hub of activity in the garages and trailer parks of Riverside and San Bernardino counties on the fringe of suburban Los Angeles.

The region was the site of a third of California's nearly 500 meth lab busts in 2004 and is home to the second-highest number of identity theft victims in the nation.

"It's been said the two crimes go together like rats and garbage," said Jack Lucky, a Riverside County prosecutor who nearly became a victim of identity theft himself before his personal information was found at a meth lab.

"It's a pervasive problem," he said.

The connection is posing a major challenge for authorities, who until recently tended to overlook or neglect identity theft evidence at meth labs in favor of pursuing drug charges that are easier to prove and carry stiffer penalties.

"We weren't educated or sophisticated enough to spot what they were doing," said Riverside County sheriff's Sgt. Steve Koller, a narcotics task force member. "It's taken us a while to catch up."

U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., has called on the Department of Justice to study the link further and recommend tougher penalties for those convicted of both crimes.

"What we are probably going to find is that there is a stronger connection than we know right now," she said.

No figures were available on just how much the link is costing consumers. Separately, however, meth use and identity theft have taken a toll.

Nearly 10 million Americans fell victim last year to identity theft, costing \$5 billion. Meanwhile, the popularity of methamphetamine has grown, with an estimated 12 million people trying it at least once.

Police said meth users — known as "cranksters" — are drawn to identity theft because they can stay up for days scanning computer records or go "Dumpster diving" for discarded financial information.

A drug dealer recently provided fake identities to a woman in Phoenix who allegedly used them to buy cell phones.

She was paid with methamphetamine, and the phones were later used by some of the dealer's associates, authorities said.

Last summer, Georgia authorities tracked at least 20 thieves — known as the "Mailbox Meth Gang" — who cruised housing subdivisions looking for raised flags on mailboxes that could yield checks and bank statements to exchange for meth. Investigators found 14,000 credit card numbers in a laptop computer seized from the gang.

Police said the thieves don't target one spot too long and often split the work.

"There is the collector who steals your identity from mailboxes or trash bins," said Alameda police Sgt. Anthony Munoz, who teaches a class about the connection for the California Narcotics Officers Association. "Then there is the converter, who turns your identity into something, and lastly there is the passer, the person who uses the fraudulent identity."

Munoz said as many as 85 percent of the identity theft cases he investigates have meth connections. In one, a defendant pleaded guilty to 56 counts of identity theft and was sentenced to just one year in county jail, he said.

"Those are the type of sentences you get," said Munoz, who backs sentencing enhancements for people convicted of both crimes.

Penalties for identity theft vary from state to state. In California, where legislators are trying to strengthen the laws, identity thieves can face up to three years in prison and a fine up to \$10,000.

A conviction in Arizona also carries up to three years in prison, but fines can reach \$150,000. First-time offenders, however, often receive probation.

The situation has emboldened many meth users.

"We don't have the significant sentences right now that would deter some of these individuals," Riverside County District Attorney Grover Trask said. "It's easy money."

Trask said 60 percent of the identity theft cases handled by his office are drug-related. He has created a three-investigator unit to make sure identity theft charges are pursued.

In Arizona, the connection is so prevalent that Attorney General Terry Goddard now sends an investigator with identity theft expertise to meth lab busts.

Lucky, the Riverside County prosecutor, didn't realize personal information had been stolen from his mailbox until a caller said there had been fraudulent activity linked to his credit card.

Lucky got suspicious when the caller requested his Social Security number. When he asked for a supervisor, he was given a toll-free number that was no longer in service.

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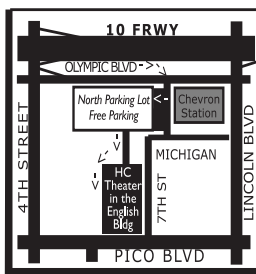
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Tips to avoid becoming an identity theft victim

By The Associated Press

- Get a locking mailbox.
- Don't leave bills out for the mail carrier to pick up.
- Stop financial documents from being sent to your home.
- Pay your bills online. Many sites are safe and difficult to hack by criminals.
- Don't give personal information over the phone.
- Don't carry your Social Security card.
- Contact credit card companies immediately if you suspect fraud.
- Also report it to the Federal Trade Commission at www.consumer.gov/idtheft

STATE



House aims to tighten law for border traffic

BY JIM ABRAMS
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — House Republicans tried to close ranks Thursday on an immigration bill that some complained was not tough enough and others said was inadequate because it failed to include a guest worker program.

These disputes slowed action on a measure intended to shut down illegal traffic along the border while requiring employers to verify the legal status of their workers.

The House voted 220-206 to approve a parliamentary measure needed to move ahead on the bill, but only after GOP leaders appealed in a private meeting for party unity.

"There's kind of a left-right coalition against it," said Rep. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz. Some lawmakers cited the absence of a guest worker program while others feared the proposal could lead to something equivalent to amnesty.

Supporters defended their approach of acting to cut off the flow of illegal entrants before turning to the tougher issues of a guest worker program or other means to fill the jobs that now attract millions of undocumented workers.

"Until the borders are protected we cannot have any kind of meaningful immigration reform," said GOP Rep. Peter King of New York, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee.

Almost all Democrats, and several border-state Republicans such as Flake and fellow Arizonan Jim Kolbe, pushed for a more comprehensive package that dealt with the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants already in the U.S.

The GOP bill "does nothing to solve the real problems of illegal immigration," Kolbe said. "In fact it's worse than nothing."

The White House said in a statement that it strongly supported the House bill, while adding that the administration "remains committed to comprehensive immigration reform, including a temporary worker program that avoids amnesty."

President Bush almost two years ago urged Congress to enact a guest worker program. He repeated that message during a recent visit to the Mexican border.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., says the guest worker issue will be on the table when the Senate takes up immigration overhaul in February. The

main controversy is over whether the estimated 6 million illegal workers should have to leave the country before applying for a temporary worker program.

The House bill combines the work of King and the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis.

The border security aspects, King said, include requiring the Homeland Security Department to employ the personnel and technology needed to secure the border; ending the "catch-and-release" policy for non-Mexicans; and requiring the Pentagon and Homeland Security to come up with a common plan on the use of military technology to stop illegal crossings.

The bill also outlines increased penalties for smugglers and those re-entering illegally; authorizes police along the border to enforce immigration law; and makes illegal presence in the United States, now a civil offense, a misdemeanor crime.

The bill originally made illegal presence a felon. Sensenbrenner's spokesman, Jeff Lungren, said that was being changed because felonies require jury trials and consume too many resources.

Most significantly, the bill requires all employers in the country, more than 7 million, to check on the legal status of workers.

Randel Johnson of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said Wednesday that the House bill was unacceptable to businesses because of "huge concerns" that the requirement to submit Social Security numbers and other vital statistics to a central database would not work. Companies that do not verify the legal status of workers would be subject to penalties.

"We would be more comfortable if it was just applicable to new hires for several years," he said.

Acting House Majority Leader Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said Republicans would work with their business allies on the verification program. But, he said, "this is an issue that really they don't get to determine."

Critics of the bill also predicted that increased penalties and provisions for expedited removal of illegal entrants would drive those in the country illegally further underground.

Bishop Thomas Wenski of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops questioned whether criminalizing illegal presence could implicate the good Samaritan who gives an illegal immigrant a glass of water.



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STATE

County buries ashes of 1,600 in pauper's grave

BY ROBERT JABLON
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — In life, they had names, histories, loved ones. But they had no money. So in death, all they have is a number on a metal plaque and space in a mass grave.

A brief service was held Thursday for 1,619 people whose commingled ashes were placed in plastic bags and buried in an 8-by-10-by-6 pauper's grave at Los Angeles County expense.

They died in 2001 but their bodies had been unclaimed. About one in 10 were never identified. Others had no family. But far more often, relatives simply couldn't afford the thousands of dollars to bury them, said Albert Gaskin, caretaker of the county plot where common graves have been dug annually for 80 years.

Some 300,000 people are buried at the site adjacent to Evergreen Cemetery, beneath a scattering of slender trees.

The county cremates the unclaimed bodies, then keeps the remains in individual brown plastic boxes for two years in case family members come to retrieve them. Sometimes relatives come from out of state to claim the bodies, months or years after they die.

After the two years — and often more years of paperwork — the ashes are finally laid to rest, even if it is in a common grave.

"It gives you a thought that you're helping someone less fortunate than you are," Gaskin said. "I feel good by helping them."

On Thursday, while construction and cement trucks roared in the background, building a new East Los Angeles commuter rail line, the Rev. Phil Manly delivered a 10-minute service over raw earth marked only by a small silver-colored plaque that said "2001" — the year they died.

"May their memories remain in our hearts and minds," Manly said. He read from the 23rd Psalm, with its famous line about walking through "the valley of the shadow of death," and scattered flower petals on the grave.

Manly said he used the psalm because it is recognized by many denominations. Unclaimed deceased whose paperwork shows they were Roman Catholic are sent to a Catholic cemetery in Rowland Heights, Manly said, but for the others "we have no idea" of their faiths.

Manly has performed the service for three decades.

"I believe that everyone is special," Manly said. "We're all created in God's image, and I think it's a shame that people would die and no one would say anything over them."

At one end of the grave stood a wreath of roses, carnations and orchids provided by county Supervisor Don Knabe and his staff.

Knabe this week took the unique step of having his Board of Supervisors colleagues formally recognize what he called "our fallen brothers and sisters of this county" with a prayer and a moment of silence.

"It was the right thing to do," said his spokesman, David A. Sommers. "In many cases, these are forgotten residents of the county and they can't be forgotten any longer."

A dozen county employees and officials watched, including former county chief medical examiner Thomas Noguchi.

The former "coroner to the stars," whose "clients" included Janis Joplin, Natalie Wood and Robert F. Kennedy, is now state curator for unclaimed deceased. His job includes arranging for some of the bodies to be autopsied or used in medical schools for dissection. Because the bodies are unclaimed, none can be harvested for their organs because relatives must grant permission.

The county performs an important service by arranging to bury the indigent, he said.

"I think whether rich or poor, famous or not famous ... it is very important that we do not lose the track of decency," he said.

Gaskin, the caretaker, says relatives are invited to visit and place flowers. On rare occasions, families have been able to scrape up the money for a plaque long after the burial has taken place.

In one corner of the tree-dotted cemetery, for instance, on the grave for 1966, a small plaque noted that one of those buried there was Jeffery Lansdown, 5, a "beloved brother and son." A photograph of a smiling, blond boy, his mother and other family members and a dozen fading and broken pinwheels surmounted the grave.

"They come pretty often" to visit the grave, Gaskin said of relatives.

A few hundred feet away, the county's crematorium was busy, as it is daily, consuming the bodies of people who were unwanted, unknown or unfortunate.

"Today is a slow day. We're only doing six today," Gaskin said.

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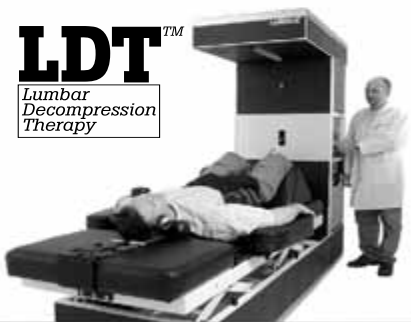
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Report: Counseling does little to help Hispanics with money

BY GARANCE BURKE

Associated Press Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Hispanics may be the largest minority in the United States, but almost half that population — almost 20 million people — haven't opened a basic bank account, according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

New financial education efforts targeting Hispanics have created mounds of brochures but have not explained to families why they should establish a credit history or how to avoid predatory lenders, according to a report released Thursday by the National Council of La Raza, a nonprofit civil rights and advocacy organization in Washington, D.C.

"How can we bring Latinos into the middle class?" said Beatriz Ibarra, the report's author. "The lynchpin of the strategy should be investing in counseling programs on the ground."

In May, President Bush introduced an initiative that called on government agencies and selected Hispanic organizations to promote financial literacy among Latinos. Two years ago, the U.S. Treasury launched a similar effort to step up financial planning and education for all Americans. The FDIC now offers free financial education programs in Spanish in 14 regions across the country.

Elizabeth Kelderhouse, a community affairs officer for the FDIC in Kansas City, said an internal survey shows over half a million people have attended the MoneySmart courses and have gone on to open 100,000 bank accounts.

"You can offer people five different kinds of checking accounts, but it's not going to matter if you don't tell them why they would want one in the first place," said Kelderhouse.

The report released by La Raza points to structural barriers in financial institutions, noting that lenders have little incentive to sign on low-income clients. Financial counselors usually work for a commission and would prefer customers with large asset portfolios, it said.

The report calls on Congress to pass several pending bills that would direct money to a community-based network of financial planning advisers. It also recommends creating an income-tax credit that would cover the cost of one-on-one financial counseling services.

One-time banking fairs won't do much to create a new class of mortgage-ready home buyers, either, said Ian Bautista, president and chief executive officer of El Centro Inc., a Kansas City nonprofit that works with the FDIC to offer Spanish-language courses on everything from opening a savings account to buying a home.

Bautista said many undocumented Latino immigrants shy away from banks and mainstream lenders for fear that giving over personal identification could result in deportation. He said the median income of El Centro's Kansas City-area clients was approximately \$18,000 per year.

A report last year by the Pew Hispanic Center, a Washington-based think tank, found the average net worth of Hispanic households nationwide was about \$8,000, while for Anglo households it was almost \$89,000.

"When customers want to buy a house, banks require a credit-card history, or a history of bank or car loans," said Shane Cuevas, a loan officer at the National Bank of Kansas City. "So people who don't have that are going to end up getting loans from someone on the corner. They'll believe the guy who's going to come to the door and say, 'I speak Spanish and I can close today.'"

Other financial programs targeted at new Latino immigrants are leveraging banks outside the U.S. to offer low-cost car and home loans. And Venice, Calif.-based No Borders Inc. competes with money-wiring outlets such as Western Union, selling debit-like cards on which immigrants can store cash and send money home through a network of Mexican credit unions.

"When you talk about saving more for the future and putting money toward a 401(k) plan it's a point that's moot to a lot of people," said Louis Barajas, president of Wealth & Business Planning in Los Angeles. "They're just barely surviving."

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High standards set for surface waters

BOND FOR BAY, from page 1

sulting firm, as well as city staff, has been in the works for years. It's a result of the Regional Water Quality Board's recently-passed regulations which require cities to reduce pollution in Southern California's surface waters, including Santa Monica Bay.

The standards require that each community develop a plan which will create measures that eliminate or mitigate stormwater pollutants. The local plan will address how those measures could be financed.

And while Santa Monica is a leader in sustainable practices and stormwater pollution prevention, the new standards, which begin in 2006, will require tens of millions of dollars in capital improvements.

"We are behind the curve in what we need to do to meet the new standards," Perkins said.

While the regulations vary for each watershed, all of the standards — which mostly address how much trash and other pollutants can reach the region's streams, rivers and ocean — must be met by 2015, officials said.

In 2006, Santa Monica and other cities are required to reduce the amount of litter

going into the bay by 20 percent. By 2015, 100 percent of litter is supposed to be diverted.

That's going to require at least \$95 million for capital improvements, officials estimate. The operations and maintenance of those facilities would be paid for by the increased parcel fee, Perkins said.

But whether or not the public will support the funding remains to be seen. That's why the Santa Monica City Council this week approved a \$277,500 contract with Brown and Caldwell to complete a draft of the plan, as well as signing up Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates and Conservation Strategy Group to conduct the opinion survey.

The cities of Santa Monica and Calabasas will share the cost of the opinion poll. (See related story).

"I think that's what the polling is about, to see how people feel about paying for cleaning up pollutants in Santa Monica Bay," said Santa Monica City Councilman Richard Bloom, who also is a member of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission. "It's important to do some testing to determine if there is sufficient support for it."

And although the plan is not yet done, most of the capital work would be completed in 10 years. That will include many

Shunning the sleigh



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Santa Claus leads a procession of runners, swimmers and walkers on the beach just south of the Santa Monica Pier on Friday, prior to a news conference announcing details of the inaugural Resolution Festival, which will be held on the pier on New Year's Day. The event is a day-long festival created to help individuals and families kick-start their 2006 resolutions with a Soft Sand 5K, 10,000 Steps Walk, Polar Bear Swim and on-pier expo. For more photos, go to fotobyfabian.com.

projects, including installing screens on thousands of catch basins throughout the city. Santa Monica already has hundreds of screens in place at catch basins, located curbside on many sidewalks, but there are thousands more without screens.

More systems like the "continuous deflection separator," one of which is located in a beach parking lot just south of

the pier, would be built under the plan. The separator is a larger form of catch basin that can collect such items as auto mufflers, Perkins said.

And within a couple of years, all runoff during dry weather months would be diverted to sewer systems — not storm

See BOND FOR BAY, page 13

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LOCAL



File photo

Pollution litters the beach near the Pico/Kenter storm drain following a heavy rainfall.

High water marks give SM an edge

BOND FOR BAY, from page 11

drain outfalls that lead directly to the ocean. Santa Monica has outfalls at the end of Pico Boulevard, Montana Avenue and another one will be built at Wilshire Boulevard. There also is one just south of Will Rogers State Beach, which is in the city of Los Angeles.

The operation and maintenance of the systems already in place are paid for by a \$36 parcel fee, which generates about \$1.5 million annually, Perkins said.

The installation of new systems are mostly paid for by county, state and federal grants. As an example, a diversion system installed at the end of Ashland Avenue is being paid for by Los Angeles County. The Wilshire Boulevard diversion also will be funded through grants.

"We are proposing a \$75 per parcel fee over the next 10 years to take care of ongoing needs," Perkins said, adding the fee hasn't been raised since it was established 10 years ago.

He also said Santa Monica is one of few cities that has created that type of revenue source, and as communities grapple with how to meet new state and federal water quality standards, they'll likely pass similar utility fees.

"These communities are desperate," Perkins said. "There will be a lot of discussion on how to pay for it countywide ... This is definitely a big regional issue."

The possible bond facing Santa Monicans will likely be on the November 2006 ballot and would be in place for 20 years. It would be similar to Proposition O, a \$500 million bond that was passed by Los Angeles voters in 2004 and intended for capital projects that will reduce stormwater pollution within the city of L.A.

"It was intended to be a good start and they are already talking about another funding source," Perkins said. "Proposition O demonstrates that people are willing to spend money on clean water and clean beaches.

"We are pretty optimistic that this will be a broadly supported initiative (in Santa Monica.)"

Water under the bridge? Survey aims to find out

SURVEY, from page 1

question to voters, officials want to gauge their interest.

"Calabasas officials have approached Santa Monica with a proposal to poll jointly to achieve economies of scale while still providing each community with results that are at an appropriate level of confidence," city staff wrote this month in a memo to the Santa Monica City Council. "Completion of the two-city public opinion research effort envisioned will provide the city councils of each community with important information about what new funding sources local voters might be willing to support to achieve water quality improvements."

Hundreds of Santa Monica residents will receive phone calls in January by researchers asking them a series of questions that pertain to their thoughts on water pollution and their feelings of whether or not they would support paying for prevention measures, said Richard Maullin, president of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, a local public opinion research firm.

Residents will be selected by random sampling, which is drawn from a list of voters who have valid phone numbers. The aggregate results are then statistically analyzed and cross-tabulated based on what each city wants to know about the respondents.

Because Santa Monica has about 50,000 voters, it's up to the research firms to get an accurate assessment of how people feel based on a small percentage of people polled.

"It's a question of how you make a small sampling speak for a large universe," Maullin said, adding a margin of error is calculated into the final results.

Maullin's firm and Conservation Strategy Group will meet with Santa Monica officials to determine exactly what they want to get out of the survey and then tailor the questions to get precise answers.

One issue on the minds of local government officials is whether or not a \$95 million bond proposal should be asked in November of 2006 if the Santa Monica-Malibu School District plans to put a measure on the ballot to pay for new facilities.

"Traditionally, we have deferred ballot measures if the school district was doing a measure because of voter fatigue," said Santa Monica Interim City Manager Gordon Anderson.

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NATIONAL



National Park head keeps nature in mind

BY JOHN HEILPRIN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Grappling with how much access Americans should get to 84 million acres of the nation's best scenery, National Park Service Director Fran Mainella draws flak from both sides in Congress as she finds herself in a fight to maintain her agency's main mission.

Mainella insists conservation is her priority when considering what's best for the 58 national parks and 330 monuments, preserves and other areas she has overseen for the past five years. Earlier this year, she proposed revising the Park Service's management policies, its official manual guiding the day-to-day work that was last revised in 2001 and 1988.

"The policies are not tilting toward more commercialization," she insisted during an interview with The Associated Press in her office this week, defending the proposed guidelines the Bush administration says will give people more access. "You cannot have outdoor recreation, or have an enjoyable experience, if the resource is not healthy."

Mainella also foresaw inevitable technological changes afoot in the parks with each successive generation. She believes Segway scooters could be allowed in a few national parks, for example, and more cell phone towers could be erected without too much trouble, as long as they are bundled whenever possible with buildings or other manmade structures.

But even supporters of greater access to public lands say preservation might suffer.

"Success should not be determined exclusively by whether our resources look the way they did when the Pilgrims landed," said Rep. Steve Pearce, R-N.M., who heads a House Resources parks subcommittee. "To allow public use and recreation means literally that parks cannot be preserved in a snapshot. ... For 40 years, the preservationists have really infiltrated the national park system."

The National Parks Conservation Association, however, said the management changes would weaken protections for park air quality and wilderness, and could lead to more Jet Skis, snowmobiles, off-road vehicles and commercial activi-

ties.

At a hearing by Pearce's subcommittee this week, Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., said he, too, was "gravely concerned" about the proposal. "The current changes seem unnecessary," he said.

Caught between critics of her revisions to management policies, Mainella is also having to fend off critics like Pearce, who has begun examining whether to tilt the 1916 law that created the agency's mission more toward access and away from preservation.

The law says the Park Service must always work "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Mainella said the law's inherent juggling act between use and care for the nation's prized getaways — a dynamic tension that parks managers adapt to areas as diverse as Alaska's wilderness and the East's car-laden parkways — must always put conservation first.

"It's sort of like the Constitution for us," Mainella said of the "Organic Act" that President Wilson signed during World War I. "It's served us well for 90 years. We are not looking for any changes to it. ... When there's a conflict, conservation has to be predominant."

Mainella also faces criticism from Republican senators, including Craig Thomas of Wyoming and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, who harshly criticized her management plan in November. She agreed to extend the public comment period on it until February.

Those senators said the Park Service's proposed guidance to supervisors would raise the odds of more cell phone towers, air pollution and noise in the national parks. Senate Democrats Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico and Ken Salazar of Colorado said they oppose allowing more parks to recognize businesses and private donors with logos and plaques.

Mainella's bigger concern, though, is critics like Pearce, who questioned the purpose of the "nonimpairment standard" for managing parks.

Political groups taking an interest in Minutemen

MINUTEMAN, from page 14

est iteration of this country's history of reaction and resistance to waves of immigration — first to an influx of Chinese immigrants and later to people from southern and eastern Europe.

"They're reasonable people, yes, they're good people, but they're also reacting against demographic changes, just like every prior generation has reacted against demographic changes of people whom they perceive as different," he said.

The Minutemen see Latinos everywhere — "more in their states, whether it's the South or the Midwest or East or New York City," Fernandez said. "There are more Mexicans in the country. They keep reading about the border and it's like a sieve — people coming across, and

aren't they going to control it, and the government's not doing anything."

Tim Donnelly of Twin Peaks, Calif., who spent five nights on watch along the Arizona border in early April and now heads the California chapter of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, said that support for the Minuteman organizations is growing among political groups, citing in particular Republican women's organizations.

"They're so angry at the president and his shenanigans (in endorsing a guest-worker program) that they're celebrating people like myself and Chris Simcox and Jim Gilchrist," Donnelly said. "They see our movement as perhaps their only and last bastion of hope."

"Illegal immigration doesn't cause every problem," Donnelly added, "but it exacerbates many other issues."

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NATIONAL

Defense bills are finally moving forward

BY LIZ SIDOTI

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Congress is expected to act quickly on two stalled defense bills — including a \$453 billion must-pass wartime spending measure — now that President Bush has agreed to a proposal to ban cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of terrorism detainees in U.S. custody.

In a reversal, the president bowed to pressure from the GOP-controlled Congress and accepted the proposal put forth by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., on handling foreign terrorism suspects and limiting interrogation tactics used by American troops.

Bush's endorsement Thursday came after months of opposition that included White House veto threats of any bill that contained the McCain provisions.

The proposal by McCain, a former Navy pilot who spent 5 1/2 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, has held up completion of two defense bills. Senate versions of the measure included the language, but the House bills did not.

Congress is likely to finish both defense bills as soon as this weekend. Lawmakers are expected to sign off on the McCain proposal in at least one of the bills — most likely in the spending measure that also provides \$50 bil-

lion for the Iraq war — before adjourning in a few days.

With the end of the year looming, congressional negotiations to iron out the differences intensified this week, as did efforts between the White House and McCain to reach an agreement that would satisfy administration concerns.

A breakthrough was reached when McCain agreed to add language allowing civilian interrogators the same legal protections as those afforded to military interrogators — an offer he extended after rebuffing Bush administration efforts that early on sought an exemption for CIA interrogators and later sought some immunity from prosecution for those who are accused of violating the standards.

Already facing criticism of its detainee policies from abroad, the White House was dealt another blow Wednesday when the House voted to endorse McCain's proposal, which the Senate overwhelmingly approved months ago. As a result, both GOP-controlled chambers were on record backing McCain by veto-proof majorities, putting pressure on the White House to reach an agreement.

After months of negotiations, McCain declared "a done deal" that he said shows that the United States "upholds values and standards of behavior and treatment of all people, no matter how evil or bad they are."

"We've sent a message to the world that the United States is not like the terrorists," McCain said while appearing alongside the president in the Oval Office to announce the agreement.

The president said the ban and accompanying interrogation standards will "make it clear to the world that this government does not torture and that we adhere to the international convention of torture, whether it be here at home or abroad."

McCain's proposal pitted the president against members of his own party and threatened to further tarnish a U.S. image already soiled by the abuses at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.

The legislation would prohibit "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" of anyone in U.S. government custody, regardless of where they are held. It

also would require that service members follow procedures in the Army Field Manual during interrogations of prisoners.

Added was a provision modeled after the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which says military personnel accused of violating interrogation rules can defend themselves if a reasonable person could have concluded they were following a lawful order. Those rights — and the right to legal counsel — would be extended to CIA interrogators under the agreement.

Also added, officials said, was a statement explicitly rejecting immunity for those who violate the standards.

The agreement came as the president finds himself defending his wartime policies daily amid declining public support for the Iraq war and his own low standing in opinion polls. The United States also is feeling pressure and facing questions from its European allies over its treatment of detainees held abroad.

The Bush administration had long said a ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading practices did not legally apply to suspects held overseas. During a trip to Europe last week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was pressed repeatedly on the topic, finally saying that "as a matter of U.S. policy," such treatment was banned for U.S. personnel wherever they are.

The agreement reached Thursday would put the prohibition into law.

The White House initially threatened to veto legislation containing the McCain proposal and sought to kill it altogether, arguing that the ban and interrogation limits could tie the president's hands during wartime. The administration later switched gears and Vice President Dick Cheney made a rare personal appeal to all GOP senators for a CIA exemption. Later, the administration sought some protection from prosecution for accused interrogators.

McCain said there were "legitimate concerns raised by the administration concerning the rights of interrogators," leading to the additional language.

Bush said the agreement ensures "protections for those who are the front line of fighting the terrorists."

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Senate vote should alter Patriot Act

BY JESSE J. HOLLAND
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Several Patriot Act provisions that the Bush administration says are crucial in the fight to stop terrorism on U.S. soil may only be around for another couple of weeks.

A coalition of Senate Democrats and libertarian-leaning Republicans is threatening to filibuster a congressional agreement to renew 16 key portions of the USA Patriot Act before they expire Dec. 31.

A showdown vote was scheduled Friday, with the White House and its congressional allies rejecting suggestions for a short-term extension of the current law as is. White House allies said they would prefer to let the 16 temporary provisions expire completely rather than give critics more time to add additional restrictions on the FBI's ability to comb through Americans' computer files and bank and library records.

Making most of the Act's provisions permanent is a priority for both the Bush administration and Republican leaders on Capitol Hill before Congress adjourns for the year.

The House on Wednesday passed a House-Senate compromise bill to renew

the Act that supporters say added significant safeguards to the law. These supporters predict doom and gloom if the Patriot Act's critics win and the provisions expire.

The failure to renew the provisions would be "interpreted by our enemies as somehow inviting or even enabling further terrorist attacks on U.S. soil," Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said.

But the critics, who include senators like Democrat Russ Feingold of Wisconsin and Republican Larry Craig of Idaho, say they don't want the Patriot Act to expire — they just want enough time to improve the bill to the point where it doesn't infringe on American liberties.

"Continued good-faith negotiation will result in solving the problems in a way that will be acceptable to a vast majority of this body and will not in any way diminish the ability of our law enforcement and intelligence organizations to do their job," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., one of the original Democratic sponsors of the Patriot Act.

Congress passed the Patriot Act overwhelmingly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The law expanded the government's surveillance and prosecutorial powers against suspected terrorists, their

**Congress passed
the Patriot Act
overwhelmingly after
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associates and financiers.

The bill's supporters, who include Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter, R-Pa., must get 60 votes to overcome the critics' filibuster threat. Bush, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and Republican congressional leaders have been lobbying hard this week to secure those votes and avoid a filibuster.

A filibuster would be "a bad decision for the security of the United States," the president said Thursday. "I call upon the Senate to end the filibuster and to pass this important legislation so that we have the tools necessary to defend the country in a time of war."

Moments later, the senior Democrat on the issue, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., told

reporters that more than 40 votes exist to sustain a filibuster in a test vote Friday.

The bill's opponents say the original act was rushed into law, and Congress should take more time now to make sure the rights of innocent Americans are safeguarded before making most of the expiring provisions permanent.

They says the current Patriot Act gives government too much power to investigate people's private lives.

"Folks, when we're dealing with civil liberties, you don't compromise them," said Craig, a board member of the National Rifle Association.

Chief among the critics' concerns are the National Security Letters that the FBI can use to compel the release of such private records as financial, computer and library transactions. The bill for the first time explicitly says the third-party recipients of NSLs — banks, Internet service providers and libraries — may hire lawyers and challenge the letters in court.

Feingold and his allies want more reports from the Justice Department on how the letters and other tools are used in terror investigations. They also want to set limits on how long law enforcement officials may continue to use NSLs in terror investigations.



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Iraqi officials tally millions of ballots

BY PATRICK QUINN

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi authorities tallied millions of ballots Friday and received some complaints about the conduct of the parliamentary election, including allegations of “violent interference” with voters. The election commission said none of the complaints involved fraud.

Officials said it could take at least two weeks until final results are announced for the new, four-year parliament because all the complaints have to be investigated. Preliminary results might be available in less than a week, they said.

Although violence was low on election day, the U.S. Marines said a mortar attack Friday killed an Iraqi soldier and four children playing soccer in a schoolyard that was a polling station in the western Euphrates River valley town of Parwana. Two children were injured.

The election commission did not provide any figures on how many of Iraq’s 15 million voters cast ballots Thursday, but officials estimated turnout could have been as high as 70 percent.

Another 320,000 Iraqi expatriates voted abroad, a top Iraqi election official said Friday. The overseas polls were praised by monitors despite several violations being reported.

Hamida al-Hussaini, head of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, told reporters in Amman, Jordan, that the highest polling was in Iran, where 59,000 people voted from Tuesday through Thursday.

Jordanian authorities arrested 34 Iraqis for trying to vote twice.

The commission said it had received 178 election complaints so far, and spokesman Ezzeddin al-Mohamady said 35 of them charged “violent interference” from the police, army or election workers.

He said most of the rest, 101, were related to campaigning violations such as using religious symbols in campaign ads.

“Until now, we have not received any complaints about fraud,” al-Mohamady said.

Western officials in Baghdad said they had heard reports of numerous voting irregularities in the north and south, most of them dealing with intimidation of voters.

Al-Mohamady confirmed that “there have been some violations in Kirkuk,” a northern city claimed by Arabs, Kurds and Turkomen.

“There were shortages (of ballots) in some stations. Some voters rolls, maybe, were missing some names. This did not only happen in the Arab area, but in different parts of Kirkuk. This has been fixed and the shortages were taken care of,” he said. “There were some attacks on some observers who were at some stations.”

In Mosul, capital of the predominantly Sunni Arab province of Nineveh, an official with the Sunni Arab Iraqi Islamic Party charged that Kurdish soldiers voted twice in at least one location. Honayn al-Qado also said there were many names missing from voters rolls.

A Mosul official with President Jalal Talabani’s Kurdish Democratic Party claimed Sunni Arabs tried to pressure people to vote for their alliance. Abdel Ghani Botani also alleged that thousands of Kurds were missing from voters rolls.

The head of Iraq’s largest Sunni Arab slate, the Iraqi Accordance Front, predict-

ed the governing Shiite United Iraqi Alliance would not retain its slim parliamentary majority. Adnan al-Dulaimi said his group, the Kurdish Alliance and former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi’s secular ticket would gain strength and might be able to form a governing coalition.

With Shiite Arabs making up 60 percent of Iraq’s 27 million people, the Shiite alliance is expected to win the largest bloc in the 275-member parliament and have the first crack at trying to form a government.

“We believe that these elections will lead to forming a balanced government of all parts of the Iraqi people and it will not be controlled by a specific group and this will lead to solving the problems,” al-Dulaimi told The Associated Press.

The coalition of religious Shiite parties that dominates the current government will almost certainly need to compromise with rival factions, with widely differing views, to form a government.

Jawad al-Maliki, a legislator and senior member of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari’s Dawa Party, which is a part of the Shiite alliance, said there was “no doubt that initial results show that we will be the strong bloc.”

He added that a governing coalition would probably be required.

“The Kurds will be close and maybe the Sunni brothers might join,” he said.

Opposition to the American military presence runs deeper among Sunni Arabs, a minority that enjoyed a privileged position under Saddam Hussein and that provides the backbone for the insurgency.

But Sunni Arabs voted in large numbers Thursday, after boycotting the landmark Jan. 30 election for an interim legis-

lature to protest the U.S.-led presence.

A prominent militant group said Friday the reason it did not attack polling stations was to avoid harming Sunni Arab voters.

“We knew Sunni (Arabs) would participate in this game (because) most were forced to through the oppression, torture and destruction and suffering they receive from the slaves of the Cross (the Americans) and the Shiites,” the Islamic Army in Iraq said in a statement posted on an Islamic Web site.

The statement could not be immediately verified.

The strong participation by Sunnis bolstered U.S. hopes that the latest election will produce a broad-based government capable of ending the daily violence that has ravaged the country since Saddam’s ouster.

The top U.S. military commander in Iraq said he will make recommendations in the next few weeks about additional troop withdrawals, and he expects troop levels to drop back to the past average of 138,000 by February.

Gen. George Casey told Pentagon reporters in a videoconference that Iraq’s military should be able to largely take the lead in the country’s defense by next fall. Iraqi police forces, though, may not be ready until 2007.

Al-Dulaimi said Sunni Arab participation in the election could have been even higher if there were more polling centers in key Sunni areas.

An election commission spokesman, Farid Ayar, said officials opened only 167 of the planned 207 voting stations in Anbar province because of security concerns. Anbar includes Ramadi and Fallujah.

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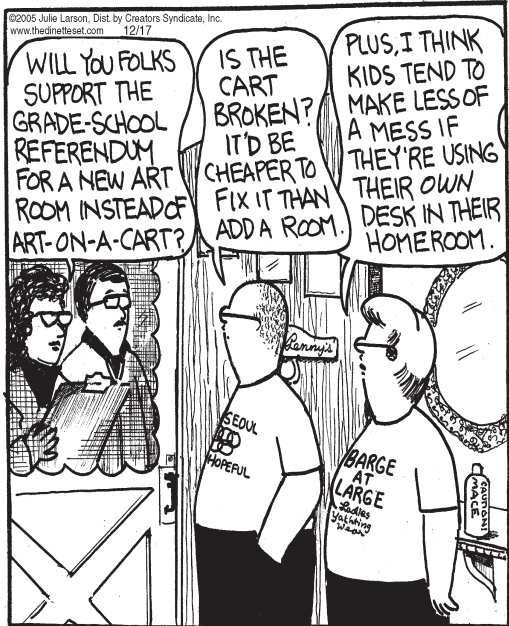
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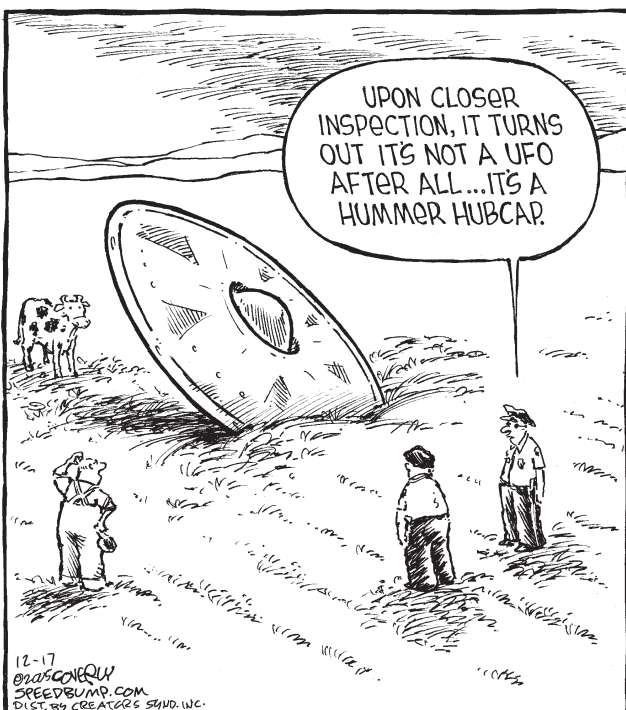
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- 44 Lip

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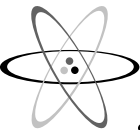
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Out of synch: Simpson falls ill

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ashlee Simpson collapsed following a performance in Tokyo and has been hospitalized.

The 21-year-old singer on Thursday had just performed her single, "Boyfriend" for MTV Japan, when she told the audience she felt sick and said to them, "I love you guys," *Us Weekly* reported Friday. She then collapsed in an elevator and was rushed by ambulance to a hospital.

Her representative, Rob Shuter, confirmed the report to The Associated Press, but would not give further details or provide Simpson's condition.

Simpson, the younger sister of Jessica Simpson, has been touring to support her sophomore album, "I Am Me." She infamously was caught lip-synching her "Saturday Night Live" performance in October 2004.

Her upcoming appearance at the Radio Music Awards on Monday has been canceled.

LONDON — Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and relatives of their Beatles' bandmates are suing EMI to recover what they claim is more than \$53 million in unpaid royalties, their company said Friday.

McCartney, Starr and relatives of John Lennon and George Harrison are pursuing the case both in New York and London.

"We have tried to reach a settlement through good faith negotiations and regret that our efforts have been in vain," said Neil Aspinall, who heads Apple Corps Ltd.

"Despite very clear provisions in our contracts, EMI persists in ignoring their obligations and duty to account fairly and with transparency," Aspinall said.

EMI declined to comment on the case.

LONDON — "Desperate Housewives" star Teri Hatcher has accepted libel damages from a tabloid that claimed she regularly had sex with men in a van outside her home, her lawyer told a court Friday.

The Daily Sport, which published the story in July and repeated it in August, agreed to pay "very substantial damages" and her legal costs, to print a front-page apology and promised not to repeat the allegations, attorney Simon Smith said.

The amount of damages was not disclosed.

David Hirst, representing the Daily Sport, said the newspaper accepted that the articles were entirely false.

"The defendant received the story from a source who it trusted, who in turn read the allegation elsewhere," Hirst said.

Smith said Hatcher "is a proud single mother to her 7-year-old daughter and naturally finds extremely insulting the lurid suggestion that she neglects her daughter in order to have regular sex with a series of men in a van parked outside her home."

"Such allegations are without any substance at all," Smith said.

Hatcher, who was not in court, issued a statement saying she had "tolerated many ridiculous and fabricated lies and gossip in the tabloids" as something that "just comes with the territory of fame."

"But when a story appeared about me, insinuating that I am an irresponsible and neglectful parent, I had to draw the line."

LONDON — Prince William will begin his training to become a British army officer on Jan. 8 when he starts attending the country's elite Sandhurst military academy, royal officials announced Friday.

William, 23, the eldest son of Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana, follows his younger brother Prince Harry in attending the academy, Charles' Clarence House office said in a statement.

Charles is expected to travel to the school to bid farewell to William on his first day. The future king will be expected to bring his own ironing board so he can prepare his uniforms on a daily basis.

William, who is second in line to the throne, graduated from Scotland's St. Andrews University in June.

The two princes will be based in different parts of the college.

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