

Grins and groans

THE ISSUE | Grins and groans from the past week.
OUR OPINION | Grins to a big week in the Big Apple, Steuben County's new senior housing facility and to students in the Corning-Painted Post school district. Groans to Presidents Bush's proposed funding cuts and to another disturbing incident involving an elementary school teacher.

GRIN

To a fun week in the Big Apple, in both politics and sports, which people are equally passionate about. A Super Bowl parade for the Giants was held in the city on the same day as a Super Tuesday primary in which New York became a crucial state. McCain emerged for the Republicans, while Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama continued their battle for the Democratic bid.

himself in the parking lot of the Wal-Mart in Gang Mills. No one has accused the two men of doing anything inappropriate involving the children at their schools. But these incidents are disturbing nonetheless.

GRIN

To the students in the Corning-Painted Post school district who made Valentine's Day greetings for the veterans at the Bath V.A. Medical Center. A really nice gesture. We're sure it will be much appreciated.

GRIN

Steuben County's new \$16 million senior housing center is on track to open in mid-April in Bath. It's been an exhaustive, decade-long process, but kudos to county leaders for making it happen. The new facility promises to be a huge upgrade and a tremendous asset for county residents.

GROAN

To the cuts in Medicare funding in President Bush's proposed budget, which could cost local hospitals millions of dollars, according to U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.

For example, according to figures released by the Healthcare Association of New York State, Corning Hospital would lose \$613,000 in 2009, and the impact of the cuts over five years is estimated at roughly \$7.5 million. It's the same story at Ira Davenport in Bath, St. James Mercy in Hornell, and Arnot Ogden and St. Joseph's in Elmira. If critics of Bush's plan are right, this is hardly welcome news for hospitals already facing doctor shortages and rising costs.

GROAN

To the former Elmira elementary school teacher – he resigned last week – who was charged with public lewdness after allegedly exposing himself at a rest stop off Interstate 86 in Campbell. It's the second such incident in recent months, following a former Addison elementary school teacher who was allegedly seen fondling

ARTIST'S VIEW



GUEST EDIT | RANDY KUHL

Bush budget not balanced

On Monday the president unveiled his \$3.1 trillion budget. With \$3.1 trillion, one would think that every department and government program would receive adequate funding. But that is not the case. Ironically, in today's faltering economy, the president has put forth a budget that will actually hinder job growth and development in Upstate New York. Particularly damaging is the 11 percent decrease in the federal share of the Appalachian Regional Commission's budget and cuts of more than \$1 billion from job training programs.

From improving highways and local infrastructure to encouraging more employers to move their operations into the Appalachian Region, the Appalachian Regional Commission's purpose is to spur economic growth in the region. The 29th District, which sits at the northern tip of the Appalachian Region, has greatly benefited from the various job programs that train and educate participants to compete in the global economy.

The \$73 million taken from the ARC is simply unacceptable. As a member of the Appalachian Regional Commission Caucus and a member of the Economic Development Subcommittee (which has jurisdiction over authorizing funding for the ARC), I will fight this cut and ensure that the ARC is sufficiently funded in order to maintain its prosperous agenda. Any budget cuts that affect jobs should not be taken lightly.

Another budget cut that greatly troubles me is the \$1.3 billion ripped from job

training programs in the Department of Labor proposal. Job training is vital to creating and maintaining an environment where jobs are cultivated and thrive. For employers and job seekers alike, an effective training program increases worker productivity and satisfaction, which in turn creates a stronger economy. Highly trained workers make more money, pay more taxes, and rely less on government subsidies.

Investing in job training is no different from putting money into a savings account: You will always make more money if you invest it than if you chose to do nothing with it. The president's budget tells Americans that their government would rather hide its money under a mattress than invest in jobs that guarantee positive returns. It does not take a Wall Street tycoon to figure out that this is a poor investment strategy.

As your congressman for the last three years, I have sponsored and voted for legislation that creates opportunities for employers to add jobs and allows small and large businesses to invest more of their own money back into their enterprises.

In October, I co-sponsored the Workforce Investment Improvement Act, which eliminated many of the barriers to job growth and training.

In August, I voted for the 21st Century Competitiveness Act, which provides the needed resources to ensure current and future workers stay competitive in this rapidly-expanding global economy. Additionally, as an active

member of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, I've led legislation through the subcommittee to reauthorize the Economic Development Administration, which generates jobs, helps retain existing jobs, and stimulates industrial and commercial growth in the 29th District of New York.

Over the last year, Corning Inc. announced a \$300 million dollar expansion of their Sullivan Park Research facility, which will add 200 to 300 jobs; Schweizer Aircraft Corp. was approved for a \$500,000 'Jobs Now' grant to retain 491 jobs and hire 100 new workers; and most recently, Sitel Corporation opened a global call center operation that will employ 400 jobs initially, with more to come. These new jobs are only as good as the training they receive, and we only hurt ourselves and our neighbors by cutting job programs.

My colleagues and I in congress who support job training are not asking for another welfare program that drains the nation's coffers. We instead advocate protecting our nation from becoming a welfare state by ensuring that residents of New York are prepared for the jobs of the future.

The American dream and the American spirit must not be held back by a poor investment plan coming out of Washington, but should be embraced and emboldened by government's promise to invest in the people it serves.

■ U.S. Rep. John R. "Randy" Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport.

NATIONAL VIEW | SEATTLE TIMES

Settle botched Indian trust case

An exasperated federal judge has reached a logical conclusion regarding a century of botched accounting by federal bureaucrats handling Indian trust accounts: The government failed, miserably.

Finally, a decent, honorable and ultimately expensive settlement may be in sight for Blackfeet Indian Elouise Cobell, who filed suit in 1996 on behalf of hundreds of thousands of American Indians. The elemental issue is the failure of the U.S. government to be responsible stewards of oil, gas and timber receipts and other royalties held in trust from Indian lands as far back as 1887.

After 11 years of stalling by the Interior Department, U.S. District Judge James Robertson concluded that an accounting required by the lawsuit was an impossible task. No amount of CSI-style forensic number crunching would produce a fair, timely

answer. For starters, no one could produce something as basic as a beginning balance for the Indian accounts.

Robertson, based in Washington, D.C., skewered both the bureaucracy and Congress in calling quits to the endless accounting. Bean counters attuned to stretching the work through their entire careers were one problem, but the judge also chided lawmakers for not spending the money necessary to do the job right.

In the tortured history of this case, one federal judge was successfully challenged and removed by government lawyers. A special master in the case resigned over the Bush administration withholding in formation. Officials during both the Clinton and Bush presidencies were cited for contempt.

Bottom-line, honest, credible answers could not be provided because of sloppy bookkeeping or outright destruction of records.

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NATIONAL VIEW | SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

Bush budget takes money from health care

If nothing else, you have to admire the consistency with which President Bush has dealt with the nation's health care crisis.

For seven consecutive years he has acted as if it didn't exist. His final budget, released Monday, continues to reflect an across-the-board disconnect with the needs and wishes of the American people. The

spending plan would deepen the crisis at a time when increasing numbers of Americans – 47 million and counting – are uninsured.

This budget should be rejected by Congress in favor of a plan that at best tries to solve – and at a minimum does not worsen – what is perceived by the vast majority of Americans as one of our most pressing domestic problems.

The single most damag-

ing portion of the Bush budget is his proposal to cut an additional \$200 billion from Medicare and Medicaid programs. That will cause irreparable harm to public hospitals that are required by law to provide medical care to uninsured residents. And it will further reduce the number of doctors willing to treat a growing senior population, let alone the poor on Medicaid.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

What about home oil prices?

TO THE EDITOR | There seems to be a lot of discussion about the price of gasoline, but I don't see anything about the price of home heating oil. I had a delivery on Jan. 30 at a price of \$3.7390 per gallon.

Every delivery the price has gone up drastically. Isn't this a little ridiculous?

According to your paper, Exxon Mobil and Chevron are having billions in profits. This is coming out of our pockets. How can we help the economy when we have no money left to spend?

I have worked and saved all my life so I can stay in my home as long as I am able to care for myself. But if I cannot afford to have heat I will have to do

something else. I drive 40 miles a day, five days a week for radiation therapy. I am just glad I can still do this.

I try to keep my furnace turned down to 65 degrees but it gets very uncomfortable. I think we deserve a decent price for home heating oil so we can be comfortable in our homes.

Leona Vosburgh
Cameron Mills

COMMENTARY | PETER EICHSTAEDT

Fighting in Chad means more misery in Darfur

As the bloody fighting in Chad continues between rebels and the government forces of President Idriss Deby, it appears that neighboring Sudan is likely to emerge as the prime beneficiary of the conflict.

The fighting has served to worsen the already perilous situation facing thousands of Sudanese refugees both in Darfur as well as those who had fled into the eastern regions of Chad.

Despite Deby's claims that he had regained control of Chadian capital N'Djamena, it appeared that rebel forces were massing in the southern part of the country in advance of another assault.

Observers believe that the timing of the most recent attacks on the capital – the latest of several raids conducted in the past 18 months by the recently unified rebel groups – was no accident.

A well-armed force of some 3,700 soldiers from the European Union was due to arrive in the region within weeks with a mandate to guard the border between the two countries and protect the vulnerable Darfuri refugee camps inside Chad.

The EU's mission looked similar to that of the United Nations peacekeepers recently deployed inside Darfur itself.

The Chadian rebels, who had in the past found safe haven in Darfur to regroup and rearm, made it clear that they did not want the EU in their country.

The EU's presence along the Chad-Sudan border would not only constitute a threat to Sudan's lawless "janjaweed" fighters, it could also thwart the Chadian rebel movements at war with Deby, whose rule has been backed by a permanent French garrison in N'Djamena.

Debes before the latest fighting, Abderaman Koulamallah, a spokesman for the Chadian rebels, accused the EU force of being a thinly disguised attempt by the French to prop up Deby's government. Observers believe the rebels' latest assault was intended to create enough chaos on the ground to dissuade the EU forces from undertaking their U.N.-sanctioned mission.

For the moment at least, the strategy appears to have worked – the EU deployment has now been delayed, although EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana insists that the peacekeeping mission will still be launched at some undetermined date.

Experts on the region see Sudan's hand behind the latest unrest.

"There is no question that the Sudan government has been arming and protecting the rebels going into Chad," said Gerald LeMelle, executive director of Africa Action, a think tank based in Washington.

"The government of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir government is very afraid of the multi-national force coming in."

If Chad is destabilized, LeMelle said, attention will be diverted from the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Darfur, and the international community will become less willing to endanger its peacekeepers either in Chad or Darfur.

"There is no question that as Sudan understands well the more instability they can create, the less inclined the international community is to come in," said LeMelle.

The Sudan government has admitted responsibility for an attack on a U.N. supply convoy in Darfur in early January. The attack effectively shut down the U.N. operation there while further negotiations on the U.N. presence took place.

LeMelle argues that such tactics have worked well for Sudan in Darfur, and are now being exported to Chad.

■ Peter Eichstaedt is a reporter in The Hague who writes for The Institute for War & Peace.