

BRIEFS

NATION

WASHINGTON

Bernanke confirmed as Greenspan's replacement

The Federal Reserve on Tuesday nudged a key interest rate up to the highest level in nearly five years and left the door open for possibly one more rate hike as Alan Greenspan brought his long tenure as chairman to a close and Ben Bernanke was confirmed as his successor.

Bernanke, a former Fed board member who since last summer has been President Bush's chief economic adviser, was confirmed by the Senate on Tuesday. He will take over today as the Fed's 14th chairman since the central bank was created in 1913.

At Greenspan's final meeting, the central bank voted to boost its target for the federal funds rate to 4.5 percent. It was the 14th quarter-point move in a credit-tightening campaign that began 19 months ago.

GOLETA, Calif.

Ex-postal employee kills five, commits suicide

A former postal worker shot five people to death at a huge mail-processing center and then killed herself in what was believed to be the nation's deadliest workplace shooting ever carried out by a woman.

Investigators would not release the killer's name or discuss a motive or the circumstances under which she left the Postal Service two years ago.

The rampage sent employees running from the Goleta plant in Southern California and prompted authorities to warn nearby residents to stay indoors as they searched for the killer.

Authorities found two people dead outside the plant. Another body was just outside the door, and a wounded woman was just inside. Three more bodies, including that of the killer, were farther inside.

The wounded woman, Charlotte Colton, 44, was hospitalized in critical condition. She had been shot in the head.

All of the woman's victims were believed to be employees at the postal center.

CHICAGO

Three students shot near Chicago high school

Three students were shot Tuesday morning on a street near their high school and one was in critical condition, officials said.

The shootings happened shortly before 8 a.m. near Carl Schurz High School, Chicago Police spokeswoman Patrice Harper said. No charges were filed by midday, police spokesman Pat Camden said.

The three male students are two freshmen and a sophomore, said Chicago Public Schools spokesman Michael Vaughn.

Camden said all the victims were in good condition.

BRIEF

WORLD

MOSCOW

Putin: Russia has missiles able to surpass any system

President Vladimir Putin boasted Tuesday that Russia has new missiles capable of penetrating any missile defense system and said he had briefed French President Jacques Chirac on their capabilities.

"Russia has tested missile systems that no one in the world has," Putin said. "These missile systems don't represent a response to a missile defense system, but it doesn't matter to them whether that exists or not. They are hypersonic and capable of changing their flight path."

Putin said the new missiles were capable of carrying nuclear warheads. He wouldn't say whether the Russian military already had commissioned any such missiles.

In April 2004, Chirac became the first Western leader to visit Russia's top-secret Titov space control center, which controls all of its satellites and is involved in launching its intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Alito confirmed after partisan fight



President Bush shakes hands with Judge Samuel Alito in the Roosevelt Room of the White House on Tuesday after the Senate

voted to confirm Alito as the 110th justice of the Supreme Court. Alito was confirmed by 54 Republicans and four Democrats.

'It is a seat that is reserved for few but that impacts millions'

By DAVID ESPO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Samuel Alito took his place on the Supreme Court Tuesday after winning Senate confirmation, a personal triumph for the son of an Italian immigrant and a political milestone in President Bush's campaign to give the judiciary a more conservative cast.

The 58-42 Senate vote was largely along party lines as Democrats registered overwhelming opposition to Bush's choice to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, whose rulings have helped uphold abortion rights, affirmative action and other legal precedents of the past 50 years.

Bush hailed Alito as "a brilliant and fair-minded judge who strictly interprets the Constitution and laws and does not legislate from the bench."

"It is a seat that is reserved for few but that impacts millions," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist moments

Alito confirmation

Samuel Anthony Alito Jr. was confirmed to the Supreme Court in one of the most partisan victories in modern history.

For	
Republican:	54
Democrat:	4
TOTAL	58
Against	
Democrat:	41
Republican:	1
TOTAL	42

SOURCE: Congressional Quarterly AP

before the Senate sealed Alito's place in history as the nation's 110th justice.

Alito, 55 and a veteran of 15 years on the appeals court, watched on television alongside Bush at the White House as the Senate voted.

He was sworn in about an hour later in a low-key ceremony at the Supreme Court building across the street from the Capitol. Chief Justice John

Roberts, Bush's first nominee for the high court, administered the oath of office.

Alito's confirmation has been a certainty for days, and all Republicans except Sen. Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island voted for him. Only four of 44 Democrats voted in favor of confirmation, the lowest total in modern history for an opposition party.

"There is no consensus that he will allow the court to perform its vital role in continuing the march of progress toward justice and equal opportunity," said Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, leader in a final attempt to derail the nomination that exposed Democratic divisions instead.

The conservative Family Research Council said it welcomed Alito's confirmation on behalf of those whose "weariness over the court's embrace of judicial activism rallied voters across the country in pursuit of a new course."

Judging from the court docket, the first case Alito will hear from his seat at the far right

end of the bench will involve a pair of challenges to Clean Water Act regulations, appeals from cases filed by landowners and a paper mill.

Alito's confirmation capped a seven-month drama that began when O'Connor announced she would retire, signaling the first change on the court in a dozen years.

Bush named John Roberts to replace her, but William Rehnquist died before the Senate could hold hearings. The president swiftly tapped Roberts to be chief justice.

Bush then named White House counsel Harriet Miers to the O'Connor seat, but she drew fierce opposition from conservatives who worried that she would not be reliable enough on issues such as abortion.

Abandoned by Senate conservatives, she withdrew. Bush picked Alito to replace her, turning to an appeals court judge with unchallenged intelligence and sterling conservative credentials.

Widow

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

"I'm more determined than ever that my husband's dream will become a reality," the young widow said soon after his slaying.

She pushed and goaded politicians for more than a decade to have her husband's birthday observed as a national holiday, achieving success in 1986.

In 1969, she founded the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta and used it to confront hunger, unemployment, voting rights and racism.

"The center enables us to go out and struggle against the evils in our society," she often said.

Scott King became a symbol in her own right of her husband's struggle for peace and brotherhood, presiding with an almost regal bearing over seminars and conferences.

Those who met her in Franklin nearly three years ago recall her speech and how the experience touched their lives.

Huddleston remembers her holding his hand, hugging and making him feel at ease.

"There was this historical person you read about all your life, and here she is sitting across from you," he said.

"She was so full of grace. In a world with so much violence and problems, she had a calming influence, just like in that room."

Huddleston and a student talked with her for about 30 minutes before the speech.

"Mrs. King wasn't interested in

talking about Mrs. King, she wanted to know about the student," Huddleston said. "Mrs. King wanted to know what she planned to do after college."

Scott King spoke to a full crowd in the Spurlock Center on campus, part of an inaugural welcome for the college's new president, James "Jay" Moseley.

Moseley had met Martin Luther King Jr. when he was a college student and said Coretta King's passion and eloquence were just as inspirational.

"She made an inspiring call to young people to take up roles of leadership in their community," Moseley said.

"It was a gift watching students be so blessed and inspired by her."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.



Coretta Scott King, widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., walks a picket line with others to protest apartheid in South Africa, on Nov. 29, 1984, at the South African Embassy in Washington. Scott King died Tuesday morning at age 78.

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