

BRIEF NATION

TEANECK, N.J.
First day of civil unions busy in New Jersey

Hundreds of gay couples won the same legal rights, if not the title, as married couples Monday as New Jersey became the third state to offer civil unions.

More than a dozen other couples applied for licenses for ceremonies later in the week.

The civil unions, which offer the legal benefits but not the title of marriage, were granted automatically to the hundreds of gay New Jersey couples who had previously been joined in civil unions or married in other states or nations.

Couples who had not been joined previously could apply for licenses but must wait 72 hours before they can conduct civil union ceremonies, the same waiting period for weddings.

New Jersey lawmakers hastily created civil unions in December, less than two months after a state Supreme Court decision held that gay couples had a right to the same benefits as married couples.

Some social conservative groups, meanwhile, are pledging to block same-sex marriage by pressing for an amendment to the state constitution that prohibits such unions.

BRIEFS
WORLD

DEWANA, India
Bombing kills 66 in India, leaders push for peace

Leaders of India and Pakistan pressed ahead Monday with their peace process, hours after twin bombs, apparently intended to disrupt their relations, sparked a fire that killed 66 people aboard a train that links the two rivals.

The fire destroyed two coaches on the Samjhauta Express about an hour after the train left New Delhi on its way to the Pakistan border. Officials said the attack was timed ahead of the arrival of Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri, who was expected today in the Indian capital.

"This is an attempt to derail the improving relationship between India and Pakistan, Railway Minister Laloo Prasad said.

Pakistan quickly decried the attack, and Indian officials took pains to avoid laying any quick blame. Each side appeared to reach out across the border.

JERUSALEM
Israeli-Palestinian summit ends with little progress

A Mideast peace summit designed to open a new chapter for Israelis and Palestinians fed up with violence concluded Monday with no new agreements and a pledge to keep talking.



RICE

After two hours of talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stood alone in a bare-bones hotel function room to call the session "useful and productive."

The prospect of any immediate success here essentially was hijacked by Abbas' surprise announcement last week that he will govern hand-in-hand with the militant group Hamas.

Neither Rice nor other U.S. officials would describe the content of the session, although Israeli and Palestinian officials offered some details.

Olmert said he and Abbas agreed to maintain an open channel of communication, focused both on improving the lives of Palestinians and stopping terrorism.

Abbas and Olmert also discussed possibly extending a three-month-old cease-fire covering the Gaza Strip to include the West Bank, said Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat.

Wal-Mart to help Indy rebuild jobs

Store also aiding 8 other cities

By CHUCK BARTELS
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. announced Monday its plans for nine stores in areas in need of economic revitalization and said it will use those stores to help other busi-

nesses in the area develop.

Wal-Mart Vice Chairman John Menzer, who heads the company's U.S. operation, was traveling to Indianapolis and Pittsburgh to announce that the company is moving into neighborhoods in each of those cities where commerce has faltered.

Menzer said Wal-Mart is working with local chambers of commerce, business groups and minority-owned businesses with the goal of guiding new suppliers and helping new or existing shops thrive.

"We're looking at working families that need us the most," Menzer said. "That's where we want to go."

As jobs are created around the new Wal-Mart stores, tax revenue will rise and the neighborhood economy will improve, Menzer said. Two of the stores are already open: in Chicago and Portsmouth, Va.

In April, Wal-Mart Chief Executive Lee Scott said the company planned to build 50 stores in areas with high crime or high unemployment. At the store on Chicago's west side and at the nine

identified Monday, Wal-Mart will offer advertising to the other businesses in local newspapers and through the audio feed in Wal-Mart stores.

At each of the stores, five small businesses will be picked each quarter for the special treatment, the ultimate focus of which will be "how to take advantage of having a Wal-Mart in your market," Menzer said.

"It could be any type of small business in the area that would draw on our traffic," Menzer said.

The Lafayette Square site in Indianapolis is to get a supercenter, which is planned to open next year.

A supercenter combines a Wal-Mart discount store with a grocery store.

A supercenter also is planned for the site near Pittsburgh, at East Hills, Pa.

Other stores were planned for Cleveland, Decatur, Ga., El Mirage, Ariz., Landover Hills, Md., Portsmouth, Va., Richmond, Calif., and Sanger, Calif.

AT THE STATEHOUSE

House nearing vote on Democrat budget plan

Republicans contend proposal isn't honestly balanced Panel endorses video game bill

By MIKE SMITH
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

House Democrats advanced a \$26 billion, two-year state budget plan to the full chamber Monday, despite Republican claims that it was not honestly balanced in part because it would provide no new money for Medicaid.

Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee rejected several GOP amendments to the bill before it was endorsed on a 15-8 party-line vote.

Democrats control the chamber 51-49, so it is possible they could pass it on their own if all 51 voted to advance it to the Republican-ruled Senate.

House Republicans and GOP Gov. Mitch Daniels have criticized the bill as one that fails to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in known obligations, including about \$225 mil-

By DEANNA MARTIN
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Lawmakers watched clips of violent beatings, topless strippers and other adult material Monday as they considered a bill that would restrict the sale of certain video games to young people.

The video game clips, brought in by a supporter of the bill, filled a big-screen television in the Senate chambers.

Sen. Brent Waltz, R-Greenwood, said he was shocked by the clips and complained that they should not have been

shown in the Senate chambers during a meeting open to the public.

Committee chairman Sen. David Ford, R-Hartford City, took responsibility for the decision to show the clips and said he could have handled the situation differently.

But he said lawmakers needed to realize the graphic content of some video games.

"My thought was you needed to know what you were voting on," Ford said.

The bill cleared the Senate Technology Committee 5-2 and now moves to the full Senate for consideration.

lion the Daniels administration says is needed to cover at least 5 percent of the expected cost increases in Medicaid.

Costs in the state and federal health program for the poor, disabled and elderly are projected to grow by at least 8 percent because of growing enrollments in the program and rising expenses for prescription drugs and medical services in general.

One of the amendments Republicans offered in committee Monday would have restored the \$225 million increase for Medicaid that was included in

Daniels' budget proposal.

Rep. Jeff Espich, R-Uniondale, said that providing no new money for Medicaid was irresponsible and could hurt some people who need or rely on the program.

Besides Medicaid, Republicans say the bill does not cover hundreds of millions of dollars in known obligations.

For example, the bill does not provide more than \$200 million in back payments the state owes local governments. Republicans say those payments should be made.

Protesters oppose efforts to bar same-sex marriage

By DEANNA MARTIN
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

More than 200 people attended a Statehouse rally Monday to send a message to lawmakers: If the state's constitution is amended to ban same-sex marriage, it would affect more than gay couples.

Candace Gingrich, who works for the Washington, D.C.-based Human Rights Campaign and is a half sister of former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, told the crowd that the amendment would affect all unmarried couples in Indiana.

The proposed constitutional amendment has two sections, the first saying that marriage in Indiana is solely the union of one man and one woman. The second part says the state constitution or state law cannot be

construed to provide the benefits of marriage on unmarried couples or groups.

Gingrich said lawmakers need to understand what the second part of the amendment would do.

"They need to read the fine print," Gingrich said.

Proponents say the amendment is needed to protect the sanctity of traditional marriage from lawsuits and activist judges.

Critics say the measure is discriminatory.

Opponents also say the second provision is vague and could be used to nullify domestic violence laws that apply to married and unmarried couples, as well as contracts that unmarried senior couples sometimes have to retain inheritances and share legal, financial and health-care decisions.



DAILY JOURNAL FILE PHOTO
 More than 200 people gathered for a rally Monday at the Statehouse in Indianapolis, protesting a possible ban against same-sex marriage.

Congress to revive shield proposal

Pence, Lugar to introduce bills

By ZACHARY COILE
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

House lawmakers, with the support of top Democratic leaders, are preparing to fast-track long-stalled legislation that would shield reporters in most cases from having to reveal their sources to federal prosecutors.



PENCE

The move follows the Justice Department's decision this week to withdraw a subpoena for two San Francisco Chronicle reporters after a defense lawyer pleaded guilty to leaking grand jury transcripts in the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative investigation, in which top athletes testified they had used illegal steroids.

Reps. Mike Pence, R-Ind., and Rick Boucher, D-Va., plan to reintroduce their federal media shield legislation next month with the support of House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, D-Mich. Conyers has pledged to move the bill through his committee quickly and to the House floor.

Sens. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., and Richard Lugar, R-Ind., are preparing to reintroduce a similar bill in the Senate, although proponents suggest it may be tougher to get a filibuster-proof 60-vote majority in the Senate, given the Bush administration's opposition.

Thirty-two states, including California, and the District of Columbia have media shield laws, and 17 other states have recognized some form of privilege of confidentiality between reporters and their sources. But the protections do not cover reporters in cases in federal court.

The shield law debate comes as high-profile journalists have testified under subpoena in the Washington trial of former White House aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who is charged with lying about the disclosure of a CIA agent's name.

Sponsors of the House bill say they have redrafted it to include three major exceptions where reporters would be required to reveal information: in cases where disclosure could prevent imminent harm to national security; in cases where journalists were first-hand observers to a crime; and in cases where a corporation's trade secret was revealed.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
 P.O. Box 699
 Franklin, IN 46131
 letters@thejournalnet.com

MANAGEMENT TEAM
Publisher
 Jeffrey W. Owen 736-2744
 jowen@thejournalnet.com

Editor
 Scarlett Syse 736-2749
 syse@thejournalnet.com

Assistant managing editor
 Michele Holtkamp-Frye 736-2774
 mholtkamp@thejournalnet.com

Assistant managing editor
 Jennifer L. Gaskin 736-2721
 jgaskin@thejournalnet.com

Circulation director
 Mike Warren 736-2711
 mwarren@thejournalnet.com

Delivery manager
 Bruce Powell 736-2702
 bpowell@thejournalnet.com

Advertising director
 Christina Cosner 736-2750
 ccosner@thejournalnet.com

Administrative manager
 Linda Wirey 736-2751
 lwirey@thejournalnet.com

Information technology manager
 Kathy McDermott 736-2782
 kmcdermott@thejournalnet.com

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