At least 40 killed, dozens injured in Iraq in attacks on election day

Iraqi rescue workers and security force used cranes and their bare hands to reach dead and wounded residents of an apartment building in Baghdad, Iraq, March 7. The building collapsed after an early-morning explosion, one of several to hit Iraq as voters headed to the polls for the parliamentary election.

Nation's capital legalizes same-sex marriage.

Men's basketball preps for Big West tournament.

Ombudsman serves as confidential outlet for concerns

In the aftermath of the crops house incident at Cal Poly, students congregated at a forum to openly communicate frustrations. Baker said there have not been any leads as to who started the fire.

"I wouldn't need to contact the department for this fire is up in the air," Maddren said. "The chances of finding the person responsible for this fire is up in the air." Maddren said he has sent 23 arson cases to jail in the past 20 years, a 100 percent conviction rate.

Arson is not an uncommon crime in San Luis Obispo. In 2008, there were 28 arson cases reported and $201,850 in damages in San Luis Obispo. In 2009, there were 47 arson cases reported and $102,550 in damages.

In the United States, there were 475 deaths and 2,000 injuries as a result of arson last year. Arson also causes $1.4 billion dollars in property loss each year. In addition to property damage, the costs to a business also include the loss of business profits.

The cause of March 3 fire that destroyed the Cabo San Luis restaurant was determined to be arson last Friday.

The San Luis Obispo Fire Department conducted an investigation and after examining the "relative damage and burn patterns" on the outside wall of the restaurant, the department concluded the fire was "human caused."

San Luis Obispo Fire Department Investigator John Maddren said there have not been any leads as to who started the fire.

"In a fire, the physical evidence is burned up," Maddren said. "The chances of finding the person responsible for this fire is up in the air."

Maddren said he has sent 23 arson cases to jail in the past 20 years, a 100 percent conviction rate.

Arson is not an uncommon crime in San Luis Obispo. In 2008, there were 28 arson cases reported and $201,850 in damages in San Luis Obispo. In 2009, there were 47 arson cases reported and $102,550 in damages.

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Cabot San Luis fire linked to arson

MUSIAN DAILY

Ombudsman serves as confidential outlet for concerns

Sean Hanrahan

In the aftermath of the crops house incident at Cal Poly, students congregated at a forum to openly discuss the tensions stirring on and off campus. Cal Poly President Warren Baker said there might not have been adequate channels to address or voice student concerns, even to communicate frustrations. Baker said he wanted to establish a platform to help students navigate through to find their way.

"When you don't know where to go or who to ask, we are your resource," said David Conn, associate vice president for Inclusive Excellence and director of ombuds services at Cal Poly, one of many ombuds programs that exist within in education systems and business models around the world.

Cal Poly's Ombuds Services is now open for students to voice ideas, disputes and frustrations in a confidential and informal setting. Essentially, the ombuds initiative responds to Baker's impetus in theory, but no students have been counselors yet.

Patricia Ponce, associate ombuds, is stationed at the helm of the ombuds services. Available to walk-ins and by appointment, Ponce will be the person working with students before referring the issue to another department or individual with the student's consent. Her office, located in Robert E. Kennedy Library, works in tandem with the president's office.

National ombuds come from many backgrounds: student development, counseling, educational, legal and mediation to name just a few.

"I attended a week-long training from the International Ombuds Association and possess a bachelor's degree in social work, two master's one in counseling and the other in education and a Ph.D in education concentrating in higher education from UCLA," Ponce said.

Ombuds adhere to four foundational principles: independence, confidentiality, impartiality and informality. Ombuds services, belonging to the International Ombudsman Association, take confidentiality very seriously.

But there are limits. Of course, if students disclose information that could bring harm to themselves or anyone else, authorities would be notified.

"If you admitted that you sliced your roommate's tires because of a conflict that would not violate the confidentiality agreement," Ponce said. "I wouldn't need to contact anyone."

Administrative officials expect student confusion on how ombuds differ from a college counselor or advisor.

"The ombuds office is a place where students can go to get assistance to resolve conflicts, personal or academic," Ponce said.

A Swedish word, 'ombudsman' means a representative. But Cal Poly ombuds, the gender-neutral term adopted, will neither investigate nor exercise any authority.
Ombudsman
continued from page 1

"We don't keep any individual records, but the number of complaints we get is so high that we would help the personal grievance by seeing if there is anything we can do to help in the court of last resort," he said. "We don't have a free speech or an academic policy, but we'll look into it."

Conn said: "It's a relatively obscure position, but becoming more and more common."

Cal Poly had an ombuds program more than 11 years ago. It served only staff and faculty at that time. In 2000, Sean Barks, university ombudsman, left Cal Poly to work at the University of Califor­ nia, Los Angeles's ombudsman office. He is now Director of RESOLVE and company ombuds for the Shell Oil Company.

Cal Poly has referenced other ombuds programs' structures and philosophies to design one that works best for its community.

"It's kind of a two-edged sword plan­ ning," Conn said. "Not thought of until something happens."

No paper trail will exist except for a short form that includes a student's area of study, gender, type of issue and other relevant data. The office will provide trend information for the president's office to make changes and rectify more complaints. But confidentiality is vital to the operation of this service, some offices, like the University of California, Santa Barbara, ombuds don't even correspond through e-mail, as it is not considered a confidential me­ thod.

Administrators expect ombuds services to exist for at least a two-year trial period. Currently, the program is inadequately funded, Conn told the Associated Student Inc. Board of Director at a recent board meeting.

With Baker retiring and a new candidate taking office in the near future, "It's conceivable that a new president could throw the ombuds program out," Conn said. "But most likely, they would give it a chance."

Attacks
continued from page 1

present insurgents from launching their fusillade, which appeared to influence some voters and dissuade many from heading to the polls in morning, according to Hamdi Haswani, a spokesperson for Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission.

Later in the day, voter turnout was markedly, Haswani said. Still, the scattered scene at the polls stood in sharp contrast to 2005 when the capital's voting centers were clogged with people. No turn­ out figures were expected before Monday and electoral commission members cautioned it would take time to announce official results.

The election has been consid­ ered a crucial milestone for U.S. relations with its most valuable ally because the outcome of the vote is crucial for the near future military operations in the country. The vote is also a test of the government's ability to stabilize the country and to encourage foreign investment.

According to the official results released by the Independent High Electoral Commission, the ruling al-Iraqiyya coalition, which won the most seats in the 2005 election, has won 13 of the 329 seats in the parliament. The main opposition bloc, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, has won 11 seats.

The results showed a steady decline in voter turnout from 2005, when more than 60% of the electorate cast their ballots. In 2005, roughly 1 million Iraqis died or were injured in the violence in the war-torn country.

The Interior Ministry said it was too early to determine the number of casualties. The government has been criticized for its handling of the election, which has been marred by violence and fraud.

The results are expected to determine the future of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government, which has been in power since 2006. The government has been under pressure to improve security and provide basic services, but has been criticized for its failure to deliver on these promises.

The results will also have implications for the U.S. military, which has been in Iraq since 2003 and has been largely withdrawn since 2011. The United States has said it will continue to provide support to the Iraqi government, but has not made a public commitment to keep its troops in the country.

The results will also be watched closely by Iraqi ethnic and political groups, which have been divided over the election. The Shiites, who have a majority in the country, have been critical of the government's handling of the election, while the Kurds, who control the northern province of Kirkuk, have been more supportive.

Finally, the results will be a test of the government's ability to govern in a country that has been plagued by violence and corruption for years. The government has been criticized for its failure to provide basic services, such as electricity and water, to its citizens.

The results will also be watched closely by international observers, who have been critical of the government's handling of the election. The United Nations has urged the government to take steps to ensure a fair and transparent vote.

The results will also be watched closely by the United States, which has been a major supporter of the government. The United States has said it will continue to provide support to the Iraqi government, but has not made a public commitment to keep its troops in the country.

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Land mines take a toll on Colombia's poor

A manual eradication team uproots coca plants in Colombia’s Narino state in February. The number of eradicators wounded or killed by land mines quintupled in 2008 and 2009, compared with the two previous years.

Chris Kraul

Los Angeles Times

MANZANARES, Colombia — Colombia may no longer lead the world in land mine victims, but the explosions placed by antiguovernment rebels are still sowing tragedy, especially among the poor peasants and ex-combatants recruited to manually eradicate coca plants.

The pain is especially acute in this small coffee-growing town in western Colombia, where residents for the eradication teams have focused their efforts. Ten local men have been killed and 39 wounded by mines since the program started in 2005. That’s 7 percent of the 547 residents who signed up, according to city officials.

Several victims told the Los Angeles Times last month that they have been abandoned by the national government and private contractors hired to recruit the teams and that they receive no disability or medical benefits. City Attorney Ruben Dario Norena said their predicament places an unfair burden on the government.

The upshot is that what once seemed a blessing to those who grabbed at the jobs as a way to double the typical farm wage of $250 a month has turned out to be a curse.

Part of the problem stems from the fact that the national government used intermediary firms to recruit and, technically, employ the workers, confusing those who want to bring grievances.

“We went in high spirits, feeling we were doing something positive for Colombia,” said Luis Eduardo Franco, 38, who was disabled by a mine in 2006. But since I got screwed up, the government has turned back on me and I feel useless.”

The last two years have been especially dangerous for eradicators, with 128 killed or wounded by mines or stray bullets. That’s nearly five times the toll of 27 killed and wounded in 2006-07, according to statistics provided by the Colombian president’s office.

Fanning out across the nation, the eradicators work in teams of 30, using long metal rods to pull up the coca bushes, whose leaves are used to produce cocaine. The ground crews complement an aerial fumigation effort.

Last year, plans covering 425,000 acres were killed by aerial and manual teams in a program partially funded by the U.S. government.

Most of the land mines have been planted by the leftist rebel group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, to protect their bases and transit routes, or in the coca fields to discourage eradication. The bombs are often tied to the plants’ roots, detouring when the plants are lifted.

The rebel group controls most of the cocaine trade from crop to export, U.S. officials say, and it plants the mines to protect its supply of coca, which is grown by farmers committed to selling to FARC labs.

“They send (the eradicators) out with an armed forces escort, which uses metal detectors and bomb-sniffing dogs to try to disarm the mines,” said Alvaro Jimenez, director of the Colombian Campaign Against Landmines, a victims advocacy group. “But obviously something is not working as well as it should.”

Army officers said the mines can be difficult to detect because they are made with plastic and wood instead of metal. The dogs are confused because the rebels disguise the smell of the explosives with materials such as coffee grounds. The FARC, who are well armed, taught the Basque militant group ETA and the Irish Republican Army how to make mines from easily obtainable chemicals, the officials said.

Jimenez noted that one-third of the eradicators killed or wounded by mines were from Manzanares and other rural parts of Caldas state, a reflection of the heavy recruiting here by the FARC and other contractors hired by the government.

One of last year’s worst explosions, in a field being cleared in Tulu in northeastern Colombia, killed three eradicators and wounded two, all from Caldas.

The discouraging situation in Manzanares contrasts with a more heartening one nationwide. Last year, the land mine toll was 632 hurt or killed, down from a record 1,178 in 2006.

Jimenez said the decline probably stemmed from more awareness thanks to education programs directed at rural residents and from fewer mines planted by the FARC in populated areas, possibly as a result of the outrage generated by the deaths of children.

Colombia now trails Afghanistan for the dubious distinction of highest number of land mine victims, according to the Geneva-based International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Last month, the Japanese government donated two mine-clearing machines to Colombia. Each Hitchco machine, which resembles a receiving steamed shovel, can clear in a day what it takes manual teams three weeks to do, Japanese Ambassador Tatsuro Terazawa said at a ceremony at Fort Telemala, a military base about 60 miles south of Bogota, the capital. But the machines, which weigh several tons, are of little use to eradication teams that are sent to hilly, largely inaccessible terrain.

Terazawa said Japan had donated about 70 of the machines to governments most plagued by mines, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola and Afghanistan.

“We see how land mines cause so much pain and torn in this beautiful country,” Terazawa told the crowd of government and military officials at the ceremony. “We want those tears to turn to smiles again.”

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Serial killer receives death sentence for third time

Paloma Esquivel

SANTA ANA, Calif. — An Or­ange County jury on Tuesday sentenced Ronald DeFeo Jr. to death for the 1974 murder of five family members. The jury recommended the sentence over生命, a woman, seven days of deliberation after DeFeo, 66, was convicted of the murder of his father, mother and four siblings. He was deemed to have killed himself by suicide in 1974. The sentence was recommendations were overturned. He has been in prison since his 1979 arrest.

Before the trial the murder occurred in October 1974, a year after the DeFeos moved into this Orange County home. DeFeo was residing with his parents at the time of the murder. The prosecution argued that DeFeo was responsible for the deaths of his family members. Some believed DeFeo was in control of the family during the murder.

The jury was asked to consider several factors before reaching a decision, including whether DeFeo was a leader in the family, whether he had remorse and whether he had a history of violence. The jury was also asked to consider the effects of the murder on the community.

The prosecution argued that DeFeo was a leader in the family and that he had a history of violence. The prosecution also argued that DeFeo had shown remorse since the murder.

The defense argued that DeFeo was not in control of the family during the murder and that he had no history of violence. The defense also argued that DeFeo did not show remorse since the murder.

The jury found DeFeo guilty of five counts of first-degree murder and one count of attempted murder. The jury also found DeFeo guilty of a special circumstance of torture.

DeFeo was convicted of murdering his father, mother and four siblings. He was deemed to have killed himself by suicide in 1974. The sentence was recommendations were overturned. He has been in prison since his 1979 arrest.

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State
SAN LUIS OBISPO (MCT) — Local lakes continue to rise with the boost in recent rainfall. The rain gauge at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant's ocean lab has shown twice the amount of rainfall this year compared with the same period last year, said John Lindsey, a local forecaster and media relations representative for Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

As of Friday, 16.19 inches of rain had fallen at Diablo Canyon. Lindsey said, compared to 8.38 inches as of March 5, San Luis Obispo has benefited from the winter rains because they have filled the Salinas Reservoir, one of the city's key water supplies.

LOS ANGELES (MCT) — The federal government has targeted the Los Angeles Unified School District for its first major investigation under a reinvigorated Office for Civil Rights, the Los Angeles Times has learned.

The investigation will focus on services to students learning English, who make up a third of the enrollment in the nation's second-largest school system.

The inquiry was prompted primarily by the low academic achievement of English learners; about 3 in 10 are proficient in math and English at the high school level, federal officials said.

National
NEW YORK (MCT) — Once, it was the fastest and one of the most luxurious ocean liners in the world. On its maiden voyage in 1952, the SS United States set a trans-Atlantic speed record — New York to Bishop Rock, England, in three days, 10 hours, and 40 minutes — eclipsing by 10 hours the mark set by the Queen Mary in 1938.

But for the past 14 years, the pride of a nation has gone nowhere, rusting away at a pier in South Philadelphia, a fading landmark seemingly destined for one last journey: to the scrap yard.

Its owner, Norwegian Cruise Line, which spends about $700,000 a year to moor and maintain the ship, appears ready to pull the plug.

FLORIDA (MCT) — SeaWorld said Tuesday that it is reconsidering whether to keep using the 6-ton killer whale that drowned its trainer last month in performances for audiences.

In the immediate aftermath of the Feb. 24 tragedy, in which 46-year-old trainer Dawn Brancheau was killed, SeaWorld said it intended to return Tilikum to shows.

But SeaWorld has subsequently decided not to make any decisions about its interactions with killer whales until it has completed an internal review of training and safety policies.

International
ISRAEL (MCT) — Israel announced the construction of 1,600 homes in a settlement block in mostly Arab East Jerusalem, an open rebuff that led Biden to issue a sharply worded condemnation.

“I condemn the decision by the government of Israel to advance planning for new housing units in east Jerusalem,” Biden said in a statement issued by the White House.

“The substance and timing of the announcement, particularly with the launching of proximity talks, is precisely the kind of step that undermines the trust we need right now and runs counter to the constructive discussions that I’ve had here in Israel.”

CHINA (MCT) — Chinese health minister Chen Zhu said on Monday that Indian pharmaceutical companies were “more than welcome” to sell their products in China. The Indian companies have been complaining for a long time that China did not grant enough market access.

Chen said pharmaceutical companies from developing countries like India are “more than welcome” to participate in China’s drug sector. He said Indian firms producing “non-generic, and creative medicine” were leading in the developing world.

State operates slots and table games
The Boot Hill Casino in Dodge City, Kansas is the first of a kind in the country, a casino where the games are owned by the state.
U.S. plans to support opposition in Iran policy

Paul Richter
WASHINGiON — After keeping a careful distance for the last year, the Obama administration has concluded that the Iranian opposition movement has staying power and has embraced it as a central element in its U.S.-led campaign to pressure the country's clerical government.

Administration officials and some allied governments believe that a combination of domestic unrest and international sanctions targeting Iran's Revolutionary Guard offers the best hope for forcing Tehran to yield on its nuclear program, and could even lead to a change in the government.

The administration has made the shift at a time when it is facing sharp domestic criticism over Obama's failed initiative to launch negotiations with Iran and its perceived unwillingness to strongly back the opposition movement. Meanwhile, the protests sparked by Jane's disputed presidential election in Iran grew despite a tough crackdown.

This new approach is not a sure thing. It is far from clear that squeezing the Revolutionary Guard, a sprawling military organization that has vast business interests and is close to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, would seriously damage it or strengthen the opposition, as the administration hopes. And despite high-profile encouragement by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and other U.S. officials, many opposition activists fear that Washington's embrace will bring more harm than good.

"Just leave us alone, please," one activist in Tehran pleaded.

Still, U.S. officials and some European allies believe that there is less downside to openly supporting the opposition now because Iran has a broad-based movement with staying power and the U.S. administration is pressing the U.N. Security Council for international sanctions targeting the Revolutionary Guard. The administration and its European allies appear to be gaining Russian support, but serious questions remain about China.

Separately, the Treasury Department in February slapped U.S. sanctions on some organizations and individuals tied to the Revolutionary Guard.

"Sanctions are increasingly being viewed as a cause of political reform in Iran," said Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Depriving the Revolutionary Guard of the ability to sign billion-dollar contracts and funneling them into an international pariah would be welcomed by many democratic activists in Iran."

Though U.S. officials have emphasized that they are not trying to overthrow the Iranian government, Vice President Joe Biden and national security adviser James L. Jones have elected those pressing for a tougher approach by speaking publically about the prospects for political change.

"We're focusing now on how pressures from the outside, combined with pressure from the inside, could turn this around," said a U.S. official who is regularly briefed on the administration's approach.

Some reformers in Iran are fearful that the U.S. approach will bring problems.

"It punishes reformist and civic activists in danger," said Yosef Moftai, a professor of law at Tehran University and a reformer. "The Islamic Republic is waiting for any document showing court or overt help of the U.S. to the Iranian opposition to claim, 'Hey, look, the reformists are the paid lackeys of the U.S. administration.' And then there will be more pretext for arrests."

Morad Saghafi, a social scientist and expert in the Revolutionary Guard, added, "The administration is making it difficult for the U.S. to the Iranian opposition to present a set of values, which are not shared between the Iranian opposition and the U.S. administration."

Late last year, the administration spurred a change in U.S. sanctions to improve Iranians' access to software needed for certain communication processes. "It puts reformist and civic activists in danger," said Vosif Moftai, a professor of law at Tehran University and a reformer. "The Islamic Republic is waiting for any document showing court or overt help of the U.S. to the Iranian opposition to claim, 'Hey, look, the reformists are the paid lackeys of the U.S. administration.' And then there will be more pretext for arrests."

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Obama tries to rally support for health care

Peter Nicholas
Glenside, Pennsylvania

GLENSEIDE, Pa. — In an impassioned talk that ended his campaign, President Barack Obama left what he called the Washington echo chamber Monday and urged voters to knock on doors and make phone calls to embattled members of Congress to pass health care legislation.

Obama said Washington pundits obsessed with analyzing the political optics of a yes or no vote on health care are distracting lawmakers from what is fundamentally at stake. If Congress fails to act, the president said, premiums will rise, insurers will drop coverage based on pre-existing conditions and more people will be saddled with no insurance.

"They need to hear your voices because right now the Washington echo chamber is in full throttle," Obama told an audience of 1,000 at Arcadia University outside Philadelphia. "It is as deafening as it's ever been. And as we come to that final vote, that echo chamber is telling members of Congress, wait, think about the politics — instead of thinking about doing the right thing."

Removing his suit coat, Obama spoke with an emotional intensity that one Democratic senator said had been lacking in his previous health care speeches.

U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, D-Pa., who flew up and back with the president on Air Force One, told reporters afterward: "That's the most fiery I've seen him since the early campaign. When I was listening to him I wished that he had given that in the State of the Union (address in January)."

With the Democratic congressional leadership struggling to lock down votes on Capitol Hill, Obama one week is pursuing a beyond-the-beltway strategy of marshaling grassroots support. He will also talk about health care in a visit to St. Louis on Wednesday.

One Senate Democratic aide said Obama's out-of-town stops are helpful in that they create political space for members to cast a vote in support of the bill.

"He still has a powerful bullish pulpit and he's still our best spokesperson," the aide said.

At this late stage in the debate, influencing public opinion is no small thing. Obama has elevated health care to the top of his domestic agenda and has spent the past year attempting to pass a bill. Yet opinion polls show most people don't like what they've heard about the legislation moving through Congress.

Obama has settled on a simple narrative: Everyday people are being victimized by profit-minded insurance companies. At the event Monday, he was introduced by a woman named Leslie Bank who had written him a letter about a whopping rate increase.

Obama speaks on health reform at Arcadia University in Glenside, Pennsylvania Monday.

Obama also tapped into anger in California over a rate increase that was announced by the state's largest for-profit health insurer, Anthem Blue Cross.

"Just last month, Anthem Blue Cross in California tried to jack up rates by nearly 40 percent — 40 percent. Anybody's paycheck gone up 40 percent?" he asked.

A chorus of "No" swept up from the crowd.
WORD ON THE STREET

"Who do you think burned down Cabo San Luis?"

-I think Chipotle did it.
-"Someone who got food poisoning."
-"I think maybe an employee who got fired."
-"I don’t know anyone who would want to hurt the fish that bad."
-Luke Ray, civil engineering junior
-Drew Cohen, mechanical engineering freshman
-Dominique Olowolafe, communications junior

"Firestone, because they like to fire things."
-Emily Spier, economics sophomore
-Tyler Main, computer science freshman

Avoid Burnout

find out what our reporters & editors are thinking

Gay marriage legalized in Washington

Clement Tan
THE WASHINGTON BRIEF

WASHINGTON — As a cellist and soloist performed Billy Joel’s “Just the Way You Are,” Darlene Garner and Candy Holmes walked down the aisle Tuesday morning and became among the first gay couples to legally marry in the District of Columbia.

Mayor Adrian M. Fenty congratulated Garner and Holmes and two other couples, who wed at the headquarters of the Human Rights Campaign, a civil rights group focusing on gay, bisexual and lesbian rights.

"The six of you here today represent what this country is about," Fenty said. "A great step forward for equality."

Couples had planned weddings at churches, the offices of gay rights groups and the courthouse.

The courthouse typically has four to six weddings a day, but over the next several weeks it is expecting 10 to 12 a day, The Associated Press reported. The court's official marriage booklet has been updated so that the ceremony will end by pronouncing the couple "legally married" as opposed to "husband and wife."

The district's decision to allow same-sex marriage is a victory for gay and lesbian rights groups after successive defeats of legislation in New York, Maine, Iowa and the upholding of Proposition 8 in California last year.

Gay marriages have been legal in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa, Connecticut and Vermont.

Last month, Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler announced that the state will recognize same-sex marriages from out of state until the Legislature or courts decide otherwise.

"When that happened, it was like the stars suddenly aligned with each other," said Garner, 47, of Laurel, Md., who said she would have thought about moving into the district if Gansler had not made that announcement. "We want to live in a jurisdiction that will honor us equally."

Already, there is anecdotal evidence that a number of same-sex couples living in the district's Virginia suburbs are thinking of making the short move into the district or its Maryland suburbs. Both Human Rights Campaign and Equality Maryland, a civil rights group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents, said they have received e-mails inquiring about making the move.

"Maryland state agencies are looking into their policies right now to accommodate the changes that will come with the attorney general's announcement," said Morgan Mowery-Sheets, executive director of Equality Maryland. "But it takes time."

On a federal level, gay and lesbian activists say there will not be full equality until Congress repeals the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 — legislation signed into law by President Bill Clinton preserving the heterosexual definition of marriage and reserving the right of individual states not to recognize out of state same-sex marriages.

While states that recognize out of state same-sex marriages, such as Maryland, can tweak policy applying taxation and health benefits policies for heterosexual couples on same-sex couples, federal agencies are limited by the Defense of Marriage Act.
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Oscars entertained with surprises, comedic timing

During her interview on the red carpet, Best Actress nominee and "Precious" star Gabourey Sidibe said, "The Oscars are like prom night for Hollywood." I can't think of a better quote to help illustrate what exactly takes place on what is historically known as the most important night in the film industry.

Last year's Academy Awards, hosted by the energetic Hugh Jackman, left me with a sense of disappointment. The program barely held my attention and needed to be both funnier and classier all at the same time. This year's ceremony, marking the 82nd anniversary of the awards, definitely wasn't perfect, but it was significantly more captivating and worthwhile.

The show started off with an entertaining Broadway-style performance by everyone's favorite person from "Harold and Kumar," Neil Patrick Harris. We were then introduced to our hosts, Alec Baldwin and Steve Martin. While this was Baldwin's first time hosting the show, it was Martin's third, and with a history of being, in my opinion, the best man for the job, I was that much more intrigued. The pair worked great together, using sarcasm and celebrity roasting to keep everyone in the audience laughing throughout the night. Unfortunately for us however, it seemed as if the stage time for hosting had been reduced compared to previous years.

In terms of acting, the first major award presented was for Best Supporting Actor. The favorite and winner, which was a title well-earned I might add, was Christoph Waltz for his unforgettable performance as the villainous Col. Hans Landa in Quentin Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds." Next came Best Supporting Actress, which Monique took home as a result of her touching performance as an abusive mother in "Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire."

The two main acting awards for Best Actress and Best Actor were, as expected, given to Jeff Bridges and Sandra Bullock for their respective roles in "Crazy Heart" and "The Blind Side." I was thrilled with Bridges' win. This being his fifth nomination, it was an honor long overdue that was finally earned with an extremely authentic and powerful performance as a washed-up country singer with nothing to lose. Although my favorite nominated actress was Carey Mulligan for her honest portrayal as a coming-of-age teenager in 1960s England in "An Education," it's hard to imagine anyone not being happy for Sandra Bullock.

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Ben Stiller presented the Oscar for best make-up dressed as a Na'vi alien character from James Cameron's "Avatar."
"Avenue Q" puppet smut fills up the house

Sean Hanrahan

The Tony award-winning musical "Avenue Q," notorious for its "little bit racist," off-beat, un-wholesome, values-teaching puppets, entertained theatre-goers Thursday at the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center.

It was an evening of frank and profound puppet sex. Hearing nouns in the dark, followed by explanation from lead characters Kate Monster and Princeton — as they proved that even puppets can fornicate on the first date with the help of a long island — was only audience foreplay for what was to come in the second act: a message to live and laugh in the moment.

Created by Jeff Marx, 39, and Robert Lopez, 35, "Avenue Q" shocked and entertained Broadway audiences up until Sept. 13, 2001, a run lasting more than six years and 2,334 performances. A second national tour of the show opened in Sept. 2001 with a non-Legacy touring cast — which performed last week at the PAC.

International productions have played in cities around the world over the last three years. One woman in the lobby before the start of the show explained how she had seen "Avenue Q" in New York, but that Moscow was by far the best performance she witnessed.

"It was an interesting decision to bring "Avenue Q" to the PAC," Cal Poly Arts Director Steve Leri said.

Broadway musical "Avenue Q" features "Sesame Street"-style puppets in more adult settings.

To fully appreciate depth in a 3-D movie, you need equally clear vision in both eyes. Even a small misalignment could contribute to those symptoms of discomfort.

— Lawrence Tychsen
Ophthalmologist-in-chief, St. Louis Children's Hospital

3-D movies can cause headaches, nausea

Evan S. Benn

Thousands of people are packing movie theaters across the country to see the now "Alice in Wonderland," in 3-D and dozens of them will likely leave with headaches.

That's not a criticism of the film, but a fact. Doctors say those with less-than-perfect eyesight can suffer called vision fatigue, caused when 3-D technology forces the eyes to make constant adjustments to focus on images that are simultaneously near and far away. Humans see in three dimensions, but the exaggerated imagery of 3-D movies can cause a strain in some, according to Jeffrey Anshel, a California optometrist who has researched vision fatigue in computer users.

"Each person will experience it differently," Anshel said, adding that vision fatigue tends to be more pronounced during longer 3-D movies. "I think that a two-hour movie is fine, but going into three or more hours could lead to eye strain."

Reports of vision fatigue popped up in recent months after the release of the 3-D blockbuster "Avatar," which has shattered box office records, taking in more than $2.5 billion worldwide and becoming the highest-grossing film of all time. Several theatergoers complained of motion sickness after watching James Cameron's epic sci-fi adventure, filmed with breakthrough digital 3-D techniques.

Despite causing discomfort in a small number of people, 3-D movies aren't going away anytime soon. Besides "Avatar," some of last year's other top-grossing films — "Up," "The Hangover," and "Inception" — also used the technology.

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"Warning signs"

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"Warning signs"
Pushing the envelope a little, Lieran said he expected a few complaints, but, he said, that didn't happen.

With a conservative community demographic, the San Luis Obispo community might have rejected "Avenue Q," but that didn't happen either. The show sold out early, 1,262 seats.

Unfortunately, not many students had the financial opportunity to enjoy the performance. "I didn't see hardly any people on my side in the audience," San Diego native Kate Marie, 19, said. "I was expecting the crowd to be a lot younger than it was.

Tickets sold between $30-85, more than most students are willing to pay for a few hours of entertainment, but Lieran noted that 90 percent of Cal Poly arts shows offer student-discounted tickets.

"I didn't see a lot of young people in the audience either," tickets sold quickly, he said. "I encourage students to take advantage of the 20 percent-off face value ticket prices, to get in on or early.

For a full listing of the remaining productions at the Performing Arts Center this season, visit www.pac.calpoly.edu.

"How to Cook a Tart" is a recipe for a tart as seems, at first glance, to center around Janine March's crusade to convert the rest of the world to her love for high-fat, high-butter recipes. In a cookbook. A pleasantly plump author, Janine's greatest love in life is food — and lots of it.

It was her unabashed passion for gourmet dining at every meal that initially drew her and her husband Daniel together, but when he falls for another being Caitlin ... because of this near-death experience, butter, becomes the most financially successful film of all time, leaving so many loose ends that I doubted the show's potential, but it fails to follow through. March undeniably excels. Though even this borders on the absurd at times, the descriptions of the dishes Janine concocts will undoubtedly leave your stomach yearning more than once.

"How to Cook a Tart" has its somber and somewhat muddled story, one shining bright spot in the novella's rich, decadent food commentary — an area in which Janine March undeniably excels. Though even this borders on the absurd at times, the descriptions of the dishes Janine concocts will undoubtedly leave your stomach yearning more than once.

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Obama preserves the illusion of change by forcing health care plan through reconciliation

Well, they didn’t want to do it, but those darn, uncompromising Republican senators forced Democratic lawmakers to proceed in desperation. Staunchly refusing to start from scratch, Democrats decided to forge their legislation through the process of “reconciliation.” They claim that Republicans have given them no choice, and this is the last resort.

However, this view is completely ignorant to GOP lawmakers’ perspective and overlooks the lack of consideration faced by Republicans over the past year. Congressional Democrats have created a bill that attacks the core values of Republican lawmakers and their constituents. The current bill respects the notion of small government, restricts individual freedom and attacks free enterprise— all principles that Republicans take to heart. Yet the Democrats have the nerve to call out Republicans (and conservative Democrats) for standing in solidarity against it. What do they expect?

Moreover, joint committee negotiations purposely excluded Republicans while they hammered out the details behind closed doors. The president consistently vowed Republican senators as unnecessary resistance to this process, neglecting to consider that they represent millions of everyday Americans, who are likewise opposed to the current health care bill. In the end, however, we have to depend on the federal government to ensure our livelihood. President Obama suggested that “there are things that can be done at the state level to help foster innovation and eliminate some Republican concerns.” This may be true, but these elements have not been included in the bill and there is no sign that they will be added after the summit. His “us vs. them” mentality has constantly vilified the opposition. He has no intention of making concessions; it’s his way or the highway.

This setback would be out of the question if it could have prevented Democratic re-election. As a result, Democrats decided to take their bill to the bitter end. Now that they no longer have the 60 heads they need in the Senate, Democrats believe “reconciliation” will be the only way to bypass GOP resistance. Reconciliation would be used by the Senate to pass the “fixes” that the House made to the original Senate bill (passed on Christmas Eve). In this way, only 51 votes would be necessary in the Senate for passage.

Although both parties have used this method in the past, it is completely inappropriate to use it for this bill. It is meant to reconcile strictly budgetary matters—not to advance social legislation. Reconciliation also typically draws support from both sides; it isn’t supposed to be a way for one party to sidestep another. There’s a reason it’s called “reconciliation.” Democratic lawmakers are-doing everything in their power to force-feed us harmful legislation. President Obama told them not to give up when they believed all hope was lost, and these last-minute efforts are poor attempts to redeem themselves as political leaders. This is not about helping patients; it’s about preserving the illusion of change.”
Planned Parenthood could benefit from a name change

Contraception is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about Planned Parenthood. The organization has built its reputation around safe sex for almost 90 years, when it opened the first birth control clinic when abortions and oral contraceptives were illegal and sexually active women had few options. As a way to stand up for women’s rights and change society’s perceptions of sex, Margaret Sanger, devout Catholic and founder of Planned Parenthood, put the program at the forefront of the fight for sexual rights.

Now as the program’s mission has expanded and their target audience has grown beyond the female population to include men and teens, it can be expected that Planned Parenthood would gain even more support if they changed their name to facilitate a better image that is not only more attractive to those who seek their services, but also promotes their overall goals.

Today, the organization continues Sanger’s original mission, but now addresses more issues like sexual education reform, promoting yearly STI screenings, ensuring health care access and targeting reproductive rights in Africa, Asia and South America. Their services also have expanded to include free counseling and screenings for STIs and the general public.

In an article written by the Toronto Star, Linda Capperuld said, “A lot of young people thought the word Parenthood might conjure up the retro image of a housewife and blue-collar husband. This idea completely overlooks the main population between the ages of 15 and 25 that the organization assists and as well as the large portion of families without health insurance looking for alternatives for inexpensive medical assistance. The name Planned Parenthood also implies that the services are only for heterosexual couples excluding those in the gay community.”

By changing the name to something like The American Sex and Reproductive Agency, the government would be able to have their services appeal to a larger spectrum of society as well as address more sex issues.

Jessica Diba is a journalism junior and Mustang Daily reporter.
Pac-10  

continued from page 16

bara Coach Bob Williams, whose coaches are top-seeded in the tournament because of their two best games against Pacific.

The key then could be seeding. To win the title, the top seed must be at least seven and 11/2 games ahead of No. 2. If No. 1 and 2 would need just two wins in two nights.

Since that format was adopted in 2004, only two teams seeded eighth through eighth have advanced to the title game. Northridge did it that year from the No. 6 seed and Irvine did it in 2008 from the No. 5 spot. And for the last 13 years, the champion has been seeded 1, 2 or 3.

Santa Barbara comes in as the favorite, with conference player of the year Orlando Johnson and those two victories over Pacific. Johnson, a 6-foot-5 guard, averaged 18 points a game after sitting out last season to satisfy NCAA transfer rules after coming over from Loyola Marymount. He has scored in double digits in every game this season. "We know he's going to bring the whole package every night," Williams said.

He is a sleeper at might be Long Beach State, which finished 13-15 overall and 8-8 in conference but played some of the toughest nonconference schedules in the nation, with games against Kentucky, Duke, Texas, Clemson, West Virginia, Notre Dame and UCLA. "I do think it prepared us," Coach Dan Monson said.

No Big West team seems likely to advance beyond the first round of the NCAA tournament, but it's still an opportunity for the conference. Next season, the tournament moves to the Honda Center and the league begins a five-year contract as the member host of the NCAA West Regional.

"The stars may be aligned," Big West Commissioner Dennis Farrell said.

For a year anyway.

Basketball

continued from page 16

State and at home against Davis.

If the Mustangs make it past the second round they will face one of the top two teams in its conference, Pacific or Santa Barbara in the semifinals. Pacific swept the season series against the Mustangs winning both games by a combined total of 36 points. Cal Poly split with rival Santa Barbara as the home team won both games.

If Cal Poly can piece together four wins, the Mustangs will find themselves at the top of the NCAA tournament. For seniors Keeler, Delong and Charles Anderson, it would be the culmination of a long journey and an experience that would be tough to put into words.

"It'd be a dream come true," Delong said. "Words can't explain how important that would be to me. It would be amazing and that's all that I'm focused on."

A year after reaching the Sweet 16, the UCLA Bruins rank seventh in the Pac-10 and are likely to miss the tournament this year.

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THIS WEEK IN CAL POLY ATHLETICS

BASEBALL

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

www.mustangdaily.net

MUSTANG DAILY

SPORTS

Pac-10  

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BASEBALL

CAL POLY vs.  

TONIGHT at 6:00 p.m.

TUE.

CAL POLY vs.  

Friday at 6:00 p.m.

Saturday at 6:00 p.m.

Sunday at 1:00 p.m.

CAL POLY vs.  

Friday at 11:00 a.m.

Saturday at 2:00 p.m.

CAL POLY vs.  

Friday at 2:00 p.m.

Saturday at 11:00 a.m.

CAL POLY vs.  

Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

AT BOB JANSSEN FIELD

CAL POLY vs.  

Saturday at 12:00 p.m.

Admission for all Cal Poly Athletic Events is FREE for Cal Poly Students.

WE ARE THE MUSTANGS
Mustangs gear up for rematch against UC Irvine in first game of Big West Tournament

Zach Lantz

"UC Irvine is the sweep we should have had," senior forward Ryan Darling said. "It's time to finish the house cleaning.

In the Mustang's first game of the Big West Tournament today, Cal Poly will square off against UC Irvine, a team that defeated them 91-84 in overtime less than a week ago. In last Wednesday's game both the Mustangs and Anteaters sank four three-pointers in the final 38 seconds of the game, including the game-tying three with less than a second to go. Sophomore forward David Hanson feels that the tough loss will provide motivation for their rematch on Wednesday at the Anaheim Convention Center.

"They get us there at our place and made a comeback in a game that we kind of held the lead the whole time, now we get to play them again and we're probably going to be more hungry," Hanson said.

In last weekend's game both Cal Poly and UC Irvine had four starters each score in double figures. Shawn Lewis led all scorers with 26 and added 10 rebounds. First team all-conference guard, Lorenzo Keeler, scored 21 points in his last game at Mott Gym.

Callero hopes his team can repeat that type of effort because he felt like his team was in control for a majority of the game.

"We feel confident as a team that we can play with anybody in the Big West," he said. "We're playing our best basketball of the year.

He said not much would change in terms of preparation from last weekend as he pointed out that the Mustangs were either ahead or tied for all of last 50 seconds of regulation. It wasn't until overtime that the Anteaters took the lead for good. He also added that facing the same opponent back-to-back gives the team an advantage because they don't have to spend as much time scouting their first round opponent as they normally would.

If anything is going to change in the strategy from last week, Calero said the Mustangs might not focus so much of their defensive attention on Michael Hunter and Eric Wise. Those players were held to 19 and 17 points respectively, while two other Irvine players were able to score in the twenties.

Callero said he feels confident because, with the exception of Pacific, every team they could face before the finals they have beaten at least once this season.

"The season, the Mustangs have exceeded expectations. In multiple pre-season polls, Cal Poly was projected to finish last in the Big West. At the end of the regular season, the Mustangs have four more wins than last season's win total.

Standing at No. 6, Cal Poly will have the longest road of any team to the tournament championship. Hanson knows that this team can compete with anyone in the conference but it will take a special effort to win four games in a row.

"The games are so mentally, emotionally and physically draining; that it's going to take every single guy on this team to win all four games," Hanson said. "Those are four games we know we can win. We obviously have to play well and shoot the ball well. We're very close, we are right there and we know we can take any of these teams."

"We feel confident as a team that we can play with anybody in the Big West," he said. "We're playing our best basketball of the year.

Junior Shawn Lewis scored 26 points and added 10 rebounds in a 91-84 loss to UC Irvine last Saturday. Lewis has tallied double-digit scoring totals in the Mustangs' past eight games, averaging 18 points per game.

Mustangs lose Big West opener to Cal Poly

In college basketball, Pac-10 losses could be Big West's gain

Baxter Holmes

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Pacific 10 Conference basketball has lived the good life for years, growing fat off future NBA talent, NCAA tournament riches and media attention. UCLA traditionally put on a lot of weight this way, USC gained some too.

But not this year. Come Selection Sunday, many experts are predicting that the Pac-10 will send only one team into the NCAA tournament, and it won't be from Los Angeles. USC is already out for sure because of a self-imposed postseason ban. UCLA is 13-17 and is very much of a longshot to win this week's Pac-10 tournament, which would be the Bruins' only way into a bracket.

For the Pac-10, which typically has sent five or six teams to the tournament in recent seasons, that's a rare shutdown. Same with UCLA and USC, which last missed the tournament in the same season in 2004.

All of which makes for a great opportunity for the Big West Conference to steal some headlines.

"We're kind of in the same boat as the Pac-10," Cal State Fullerton Coach Bob Burton said. "We don't have a real (standout) team." In the Big West, that's known as business as usual. Almost every year in its only NCAA tournament participant is the team that earns the league's automatic bid by winning the conference tournament.

The difference this season is that team could very well be the only NCAA entrant from Southern California. Long Beach State, Fullerton, Cal State Northridge, UC Riverside, Irvine and UC Santa Barbara will be among the conference toppers in the Big West tournament, which begins Wednesday at the Anaheim Convention Center. That means a .667 percent chance of a Southland team advancing, Pacific, Cal Poly and UC Davis are the other teams participating.

Santa Barbara (18-9) and Pacific (20-10) were the circuit's top teams in the regular season, each finishing with a 12-4 conference record. Below those teams, however, parity reigned. No other team finished better than 8-8 in conference play, and the bottom dwellers, Riverside and Northridge, each had victories over the co-champions.

"It's about as up in the air as it has ever been," said Santa Barbara coach Illustration McGraw.

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Cal Poly defeats Northern Illinois

Brian De Los Santos

Cal Poly, launched by a seven-run, first-inning effort, held off UC Irvine in first game of Big West Tournament

Cal Poly defeats Northern Illinois