

Hereford BRAND

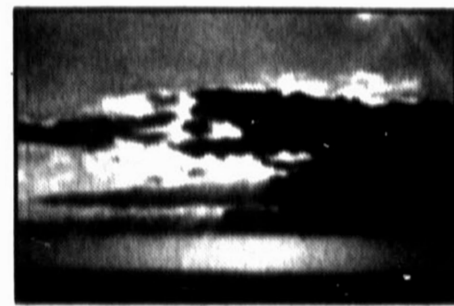
99th Year, Vol. Number 191 • Deaf Smith County, Texas

THURSDAY, March 30, 2000

10 Pages 50 Cents

HUSTLIN' HEREFORD HOME OF Jesse Rincones

Today's weather OUTLOOK



Chance of showers

Tonight: Cloudy with a 30 percent chance of showers after midnight, low in the upper 30s, southeast wind 10 to 20 mph.

Friday: Cloudy with a 60 percent chance of showers, high near 50, northeast wind 15 to 25 mph.

Friday night: Cloudy with a 40 percent chance of rain, low in the upper 30s.

Extended forecast

Saturday: Cloudy morning, becoming partly cloudy in the afternoon, slight chance of showers, high in the mid-50s.

Sunday: Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and thunderstorms, low in the lower 40s, high in the upper 60s.

Monday: Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms, low around 40, high near 70.

Hereford weather

Wednesday's high, 61; low, 32; no precipitation.

FORUM

County officials ask public for comments on a juvenile center

Officials of the Deaf Smith County Juvenile Probation Department will conduct a public meeting at 7 p.m. today at the Hereford Senior Citizens Center about possible location of a 45-60 bed juvenile detention center.

Public opinion will be very important in regards to the possible location of the facility at the closed Golden Plains Care Center in the 400 block of Ranger, according to county juvenile officer Lou Serrano.

The facility has the potential if located in Hereford for an additional 30 jobs, with possible expansion in the future. The facility would be operated by a private company, Civigenics.

Clinton says Syrian leader 'stonewalling'

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton says Israel has offered to relinquish a "significant" portion of the contested Golan Heights while Syrian President Hafez Assad is simply stonewalling on terms for peace.

It is not enough that Assad say, "I don't like your position" and demand all the land Syria lost in the 1967 Middle East war, Clinton said Wednesday at a news conference.

"Once you know what the other side wants and you don't think you can do it, then you ought to come up with some alternative way of trying to respond to the underlying concerns that are behind the position," Clinton said.

Clinton, who made no headway in a three-hour meeting Sunday with Assad in Geneva, Switzerland, was sympathetic to Assad's demands.

He said if the Syrian president disagreed with Israel's "quite significant" territorial proposal, "then there should be some other proposal, I think, coming from the Syrians about how their concerns could be handled."

Syria's official media today rejected Clinton's statement Tuesday that because he had clarified for Assad the options for an accord.



Pouring concrete — Workers with Pioneer Concrete of Hereford took advantage of a sunny day to pour concrete Wednesday at a section of U.S. Highway 385, just north of 15th Street. The state highway department is rehabilitating the roadway from the north city limits southward to U.S. Highway 60 (First Street). The construction project is expected to take about 15 months to complete.

Board to interview 2 prospects

Cotten, Martin expected to fill vacancy as hospital district director

By Donald M. Cooper

Hereford Brand Managing Editor

Deaf Smith County Hospital District directors will meet today to interview two prospects to fill a vacancy on the board.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the board room at Hereford Regional Medical Center.

Gayle Cotten, a partner in the Hereford accounting firm of Warrick & Cotten, and Conny Martin, an assistant principal at Hereford High School, are scheduled to be interviewed by the directors, who are expected to make their decision after the sessions.

The vacancy on the board was created by the resignation of Steve Lawlis. The directors also accepted Lawlis' resignation at the March 21 meeting.

Lawlis, who was elected to the

board in May 1999, will relocate his medical practice to Georgetown later this spring. In his letter of resignation, Lawlis stated he has "many obligations which will not allow me to devote the time necessary to serve the board to the capacity that I believe I should."

At last week's meeting, board president Dean Crofford said he had been contacted by some county residents who recommended Martin, an assistant principal at Hereford High School, be appointed to complete Lawlis' term.

Director Bobby Owen made a motion that the board appoint Hereford

accountant Gayle Cotten to the position. However, directors Jesse Rincones and Mark Collier said they would prefer to meet with Martin and Cotten before making a decision.

The board then decided to set up the interviews with Cotten and Martin.

If either Cotten or Martin is appointed to complete Lawlis' term, it will be the second time in less than six months that the board has been forced to appoint a new director.

Last fall, Rincones was named to complete the unexpired term of Jeremy Grant, who resigned.



Accident under investigation — Hereford Police Department traffic investigators are continuing to review the cause of a two-vehicle accident Wednesday afternoon at South 25 Mile Avenue and Norton Street. A beer truck and an automobile collided, with both drivers transported to Hereford Regional Medical Center. Their condition was unavailable at press time.

Economy grows by 7.3 percent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The supercharged U.S. economy soared to an annual growth rate of 7.3 percent in the final three months of 1999, the strongest performance in 15 years, the government said today.

The increase in the gross domestic product marked a better-than-expected upward revision from an estimate a month ago that the GDP was expanding at a 6.9 percent rate in the fourth quarter.

The higher final estimate reflected new data showing that U.S. exports were stronger than previously believed and business construction was increasing at a faster pace than earlier estimated.

The Commerce Department's last look at GDP performance in 1999 underscored just how much momentum the economy had going into 2000. The Federal Reserve has already raised interest rates twice this year, in February and last week, following three rate increases in 1999.

Financial markets took the report in stride. The Dow Jones industrial average was up 10 points at late morning, even though analysts saw the stronger fourth-quarter growth

Please see **ECONOMY**, Page A9

Economy helps SS, Medicare

WASHINGTON (AP) — Social Security and Medicare are benefiting from the continued strong economy, experts say, resulting in more optimistic predictions about how long the retirement programs will be able to support aging baby boomers before running short of cash.

The improvement is expected to be reflected in the annual re-

port of the Social Security and Medicare trustees, scheduled for release today.

"The cliff will recede," said Robert Reischauer, a former head of the Congressional Budget Office.

The good news could wipe out what little drive remains in Congress to risk changing the nation's popular pension and elderly health care programs in a hard-fought elec-

tion year.

"I think politically, you will find a lot of people that don't want big reforms to the programs will latch on to the trustees report and say 'Aha, we don't need to do anything,'" said Robert Bixby, executive director of the Concord Coalition, which promotes federal budget discipline.

Stronger-than-expected economic growth has added new years of life

to the retirement programs in recent years, even as lawmakers have debated what to do about projections that they will ultimately be overwhelmed by the huge baby boom generation — the 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964.

Just three years ago, when Con-

Please see **PROGRAMS**, Page A9

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LIFESTYLES

HEREFORD BRAND • Thursday, March 30, 2000 • A3

TAFCE District I meeting convenes in Hereford



Keynote speaker at the TAFCE District I Spring Convention held Tuesday at Hereford Community Center was Trooper Wayne Beighle, Department of Public Safety public information officer.

District I Texas Association for Family Community Education members convened for its annual Spring Convention on Tuesday in Hereford Community Center.

Special speaker for the convention was Trooper Wayne Beighle, Public Information Officer for the Department of Public Safety. Beighle gave a humorous presentation often based on actual events related to his profession.

More than 220 attending were welcomed to the meeting by District I TAFCE director Mateel Brown of Amarillo. Local TAFCE chairman Maudette Smith offered the prayer and American Legion Post 192 posted the colors.

County Judge Tom Simons presented a welcome to the convention of members.

Deaf Smith County 4-H member Abby Wilks entertained the crowd during the luncheon with vocal selections.

Following a silent auction held to benefit the charitable

efforts of the District TAFCE, the voting delegates retired to conduct business. Serving as local delegates were Maudette Smith, Shirley Brown and Kate Bradley.

The afternoon session included three workshops. "Moving Mountains" was presented by LaJuana Thames, state vice president for public policy; "Mrs. Clean Fights BAC" was presented by Velma Tate of Fort Worth, state chairman, and Bobbie Elmore of Fort Worth, editor of the *Messenger*; and "Reading Aloud to Children" was presented by Cheri Sherley, with Region XVI Headstart program.

Local businesses providing support for the activity included FirstBank Southwest, First American Bank, Hereford State Bank, First National Bank, Hereford Texas Federal Credit Union, Stevens 5-Star Car and Truck Center, Western Ford Lincoln Mercury, Farm Bureau Insurance, Plains Insurance Agency, Deaf

Smith County Chamber of Commerce, The Secret Garden and Messer Construction Co., Inc.

Hosts for the District I Spring Convention were Deaf Smith, Armstrong, Randall and Briscoe counties.

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CREATORS SYNDICATE

Ann Landers



Ann Landers

Dear Ann Landers: I've never written to anyone for advice before, but I am truly desperate. My husband and I will be celebrating our second anniversary soon. We have four children from previous marriages; two live with us. I am afraid that our commitment to each other is in trouble, and I need your help.

My elderly mother-in-law came to visit over the summer for a few weeks. She became incapacitated, and has been living with us, in our two-bedroom apartment, ever since. We moved her into our bedroom, and our two daughters have the other bedroom. My husband and I are sleeping on the pull-out bed in the living room. This means we have absolutely no privacy. Anyone can walk into the living room at any time. My husband and I can no longer be intimate without worrying about who is going to barge in, so there has been no sex.

I thought I could handle this, but now, I find myself becoming angrier by the day. There is so much resentment building inside me I feel as if

I'm going to explode. My husband sees no solution, and is content to let the situation stay as it is. Meanwhile, I am losing my mind. Please help me, Ann. I feel like — A Time Bomb in the Southwest

Dear Time Bomb: Hold tight, and don't let this nightmarish arrangement ruin your marriage. You are indeed the unfortunate victim of a lousy situation, but there IS a solution.

Move the two girls into the living room, assuring them that this is just a temporary arrangement, and that they must do their part as members of the family "team." You and your husband will then have the privacy of the bedroom, and your mother-in-law will have the second bedroom. You will not regret this sacrifice. Meanwhile, start looking immediately for a three-bedroom apartment. It will be worth the extra money.

Dear Ann Landers: I am a 29-year-old woman who has been married to a wonderful 30-year-old man for seven years. When we were newlyweds, our sex life was terrific. I could not have asked for a better lover. That continued for three years. Then, he began to put on a lot of weight. He now no longer considers himself sexy, and has made no

attempt to have marital relations for nearly four years. I have never said anything to him about his weight, because I know he is sensitive about it, nor have I complained about his lack of interest in me sexually.

I know for a fact that he is not having an affair, because that is not his style. I do believe, however, that his behavior is not normal. He refuses to see a doctor, and will not discuss the subject with me. Ann, I love my husband with all my heart. Will you please tell me what to do? — Waiting in Atlanta

Dear Atlanta: Let me get this straight. You are a 29-year-old woman whose husband has not made love to you for nearly four years, and you are just now getting around to suspecting there is something wrong with him? For heaven's sake, get thee to a counselor, and find out why you have tolerated this unnatural relationship for so long.

You must insist that your "wonderful" husband see a doctor for a check-up, and then, a counselor about his lack of interest in sex. There is a lot of work that must be done to make your marriage "normal." I am well aware that some couples do not consider sex

important, and opt to do without it. You, however, are not willing to do this, and I don't blame you. Get going, and good luck.

Gem of the Day (Credit Gene Hegel of Elgin, Ill.): Never do card tricks for the group you play poker with.

That first kiss, that first embrace... Remember all those things that brought you and your loved one together? Ann Landers' new booklet, "How We Met," is now available. This collection of sentimental love stories will make a terrific gift for that special someone. For a copy, please send a self-addressed, long, business-size envelope and a check or money order for \$5.50 (this includes postage and handling) to: How We Met, c/o Ann Landers, P.O. Box 11562, Chicago, IL 60611-0562 (in Canada, \$6.50).

To find out more about Ann Landers and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com. ANN LANDERS (R) COPYRIGHT 2000 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

Alaska purchased on this date

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, March 30, the 90th day of 2000. There are 276 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight
In History:

On March 30, 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward reached agreement with Russia to purchase the territory of Alaska for \$7.2 million, a deal roundly ridiculed as "Seward's Folly."

On this date:
In 1822, Florida became a United States territory.

In 1870, Texas was readmitted to the Union.

In 1945, the Soviet Union invaded Austria during World War II.

In 1964, John Glenn with-

drew from the Ohio race for U.S. Senate because of injuries suffered in a fall.

In 1973, Ellsworth Bunker resigned as U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, and was succeeded by Graham A. Martin.

In 1981, President Reagan was shot and seriously injured outside a Washington D.C. hotel by John W. Hinckley Jr.

Ten years ago: Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus vetoed a highly restrictive state abortion measure, saying the bill gave a woman and her family no flexibility in cases of rape and incest.

Five years ago: Tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees, fleeing violence in

Burundi, began a two-day trek to sanctuary in Tanzania. Pope John Paul II issued the 11th encyclical of his papacy in which he condemned abortion and euthanasia as crimes that no human laws could legitimize.

One year ago: Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic insisted that NATO attacks stop before he moved toward peace, declaring his forces ready to fight "to the very end." NATO answered with new resolve to wreck his military with a relentless air assault. A jury in Portland, Ore., ordered Philip Morris to pay \$81 million to the family of a man who died of lung cancer after smoking Marlboros for four decades.

Sound Government is Everyone's Responsibility

VOTE

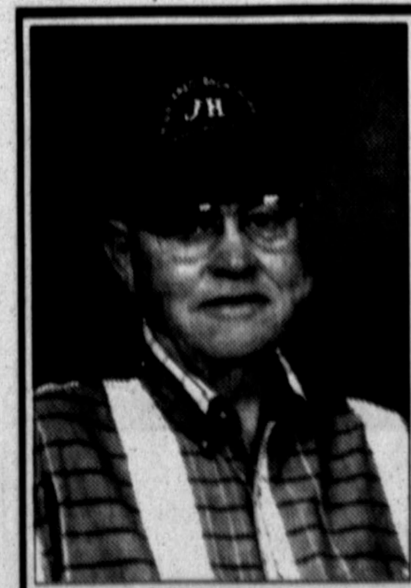
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Puron.

SPORTS

HEREFORD BRAND • Thursday, March 30, 2000 • A5

In the thick of it

■ Hereford team glad to be home for third district round

By Jeff Blackmon
Hereford Brand Sports Editor

They do not wear ruby slippers, and they are not from Kansas, but home will be a pleasant sight for the Hereford High School golf team.

On Saturday, every golf team from district 3-4A comes to Hereford to take on the John Pitman Municipal Golf Course. Unlike the last couple

of years, the Whitefaces hope the home course will work in their favor.

"It seems like the last two years we haven't done very well at our home tournament," head golf coach James Salinas said. "Hopefully it will be different this year."

Salinas said each team in district has done well on their home course so far, and he would like to do the same.

"Borger got out to a big lead because they played their home course," said Salinas. "Monday in Pampa we were able to catch up."

Going into the Pampa tournament Monday, the boys' team from Borger combined for a total round of 304 to lead the district. Dumas was second place at 311, and Hereford scored 319 to come in third. After the Pampa district round, Borger is still in first but only by three strokes. Hereford and Pampa are tied for second right behind the Bulldogs. Salinas said he is proud of the varsity guys closing the gap, but he is constantly reminding the team a lot of golf is left.

"This is only the end of the second quarter...we still have a long way to go."

HHS golf coach
—James Salinas

"This is only the end of the second quarter," Salinas said. "We still have a long way to go."

The Hereford district round is the third out of five rounds that determine the district win-



Thomas Maldonado eyes his tee shot at the ninth hole during Wednesday's practice round in Hereford. Maldonado will try to repeat his performance from Monday when he led the team with a 76.

ners. Only the top two teams from each district will be able to go to the regional competition.

Salinas said he told his team at the beginning of the year the district race would be open to anyone. Salinas is glad he was right.

"I told them that the dis-

trict was wide open this year," Salinas said. "I told them that by the Hereford match I thought we could be in the hunt, and here we are in the thick of it."

Salinas said he still likes his team's chances if the weather is a little windy. He thinks his team can play great

in Hereford if the conditions are a little rough.

"I would like to see nice weather for the match, but I wouldn't mind a little wind," Salinas said.

Salinas said there are advantages to playing at a home course. He said on all of the holes the home golf team

will already know what type of shot they are going to play, a luxury visiting golf teams will not have.

"Our course is really long," Salinas said. "You have to have good iron play and know where to lay up to do well."

See GOLF, Page A6

GETTING A LEAD



Eyeing home plate — a Hereford base runner eyes home plate in the varsity team's 6-4 loss on Tuesday. The Herd will face Palo Duro Saturday at Whiteface Field.

Hereford JV's streak continues

■ Herd rolls Dumas JV 12-8 on Tuesday

By Jeff Blackmon
Hereford Brand Sports Editor

The Hereford High School junior varsity baseball team is on a roll.

After sweeping a double header from Palo Duro, the junior varsity first team beat the Dumas Demons 12-8 Tuesday to extend their winning streak.

Roman Alaniz tossed a complete game for the win. The team has compiled a 4-3 record on the season.

Third baseman Isaac Alonzo was the spark for the Herd leading the team by batting

4-4 with two doubles. Dumas made a late comeback in the bottom of the seventh narrowing the Whiteface lead to 12-8. With a runner at second base and two

outs, Dumas hit a line drive to the gap in left center. HHS left fielder Albert Cruz sprinted to his left and made a diving catch to end the game.

On Saturday, junior varsity one beat the Dons 9-2, and the second team won 6-3.

HEREFORD	12
DUMAS	8

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CLASSIFIEDS

Flag-desecration bill dies

HOW TEXANS VOTED



Texas lawmakers' votes in the the 63-37 roll call by which the Senate failed to approve a constitutional amendment giving Congress the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag. A two-thirds majority was needed for approval. On this vote, a "yes" vote was a vote to approve the amendment and a "no" vote was a vote to defeat it. Voting "yes" were 12 Democrats and 51 Republicans. Voting "no" were 33 Democrats and 4 Republicans.

Texas
Phil Gramm (R) Yes; Kay Bailey Hutchison (R) Yes.

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate attempt to give the American flag constitutional protections again fell short, with supporters failing to move dug-in opponents who said the measure would undercut basic free speech rights. The 63-37 vote Wednesday was four short of the two-thirds majority needed to amend the Constitution and almost identical to the 63-36 vote when the Senate defeated the amendment in 1995. The author of the amendment, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, vowed that he would try again: "We are not going to quit until we win." He said a large majority of Americans want Congress to be able to punish those who desecrate the flag and that "this place is filled with elitism among those who are voting against the amendment."

But those in opposition argued that attacks on the flag are rare and don't justify what they said would be the first time in the nation's history that the Constitution is changed to qualify First Amendment free speech rights. "A desecrated flag is replaceable. Desecrated rights are lost forever to those who experience the loss," said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass. He noted that among the nations that ban flag desecration are Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea. The amendment consisted of one sentence, that "Congress shall have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." Hatch and others argued that the amendment was needed because the Supreme Court in 1989 struck down a Texas state flag desecration law and the

next year a law passed by Congress, both times on the grounds that they infringed on First Amendment rights. Both votes were 5-4. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said the high court had made a mistake. "In my opinion, flag-burning is not speech, it is conduct of the most offensive kind." But in a setback for supporters, Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., one of 14 Democrats to vote for the amendment in 1995 and a leading constitutional scholar, on Tuesday announced to the American Legion, backers of the amendment, that he was changing his vote. Democrat Sen. Richard Bryan of Nevada, another supporter in 1995, also switched his vote. Republican Sens. James Jeffords of Vermont, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Robert Bennett of Utah again voted against the amendment. Sen. Lincoln Chafee, R-R.I., voted no.

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ROLL 'EM!
Film and television production in Texas

Since 1910, more than 950 movies and television programs have been shot in Texas, including *Wings* (San Antonio, 1927), *The Last Picture Show* (Archer City, 1971) and *Michael* (Austin area, 1996). Feature films produced in Texas in 1999 include *Any Given Sunday* (Irving) and *All the Pretty Horses* (San Antonio). In the last decade, the production budgets of film and television projects in Texas totaled \$2.02 billion.

	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
Studio feature films	5	7	7	7	10
Independent feature films	17	29	17	29	20
Network TV movies	3	1	5	4	6
Cable TV movies	1	1	4	1	2

SOURCES: Carole Keeton Rylander, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (www.window.state.tx.us) and the Texas Film Commission (www.governor.state.tx.us/film)

Cámara... ¡acción!
Producción cinematográfica y televisiva en Texas

Más de 950 películas y programas de televisión se han filmado en Texas desde 1910, entre las que se incluyen *Wings* (San Antonio, 1927) *The Last Picture Show* (Archer City, 1971) y *Michael* (en las afueras de Austin, 1996). Entre las películas de largo metraje filmadas en Texas en 1999 se incluyen *Any Given Sunday* (Irving) y *All the Pretty Horses* (San Antonio). En la última década, los presupuestos de producción para largo metraje y proyectos de televisión en Texas sobrepasaron los dos mil millones de dólares.

	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
Películas de Largo Metraje de Estudios Cinematográficos	5	7	7	7	10
Películas de Largo Metraje Independientes	17	29	17	29	20
Películas de Cadenas de Televisión	3	1	5	4	6
Películas de Cable	1	1	4	1	2

FUENTES: Carole Keeton Rylander, Comptroller de Cuentas Públicas de Texas (www.window.state.tx.us) y la Comisión de Cinematografía de Texas (Texas Film Commission) (www.governor.state.tx.us/film)

DAILY CRYPTOQUOTES
DAILY CRYPTOQUOTES — Here's how to work it: **AXYDLBAAXR** is **LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-30 CRYPTOQUOTE

UB UR CDBSW L TCFLW
TGC UWRMUJSR OR TUBG
BGS QJSLB BGUWQR BGLB
RGS TUNN MJSZSWB OR
DJCF LXXCFMNURGUWQ.

— L. AOF LR, MSJS
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: A RICH MAN AND AN ASHTRAY — THE MORE THEY COLLECT, THE DIRTIER THEY GET. — JAPANESE PROVERB

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Economy

From Page A1

as evidence the Fed will keep pushing interest rates higher. "The economy is rocking," said Stan Shipley, senior economist at Merrill Lynch in New York. "Despite the good news on productivity, growth is too fast for the Fed. We expect them to tighten in May."

Many economists are predicting at least two more rate boosts before midyear as the Fed continues trying to cool an economy it believes is growing faster than the country's ability to supply workers and products for a seemingly insatiable consumer. The rate increases are designed to raise borrowing costs for big-ticket items such as homes and cars and in that way cool off demand and keep inflation from getting out of hand. Critics have charged that the Fed is fighting a phantom menace with no signs, outside of energy, of any price pressures despite the rapid growth. An inflation index tied to the GDP showed that prices remained well-controlled in the fourth quarter of last year, rising at an annual rate of just 2 percent, up only slightly from a 1.7 percent rate of increase in the third quarter. In a second report today, the Labor Department said the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits rose by 3,000 last week to 266,000. Even with the slight increase, the nation's job market remained the tightest it has been in decades. The four-week moving average for claims declined to 268,000, the lowest level since Dec. 15, 1973. The report on jobless claims was just the latest indication that the economy has continued to speed ahead this year. Many analysts are predicting first-quarter growth will come in well above 5 percent. While that will be slower than the fourth quarter, it is still above the Fed's speed limit of around 3.5 percent for growth at this stage of the expansion. The Commerce Department also reported today that after-tax corporate profits were up 2.7 percent in the fourth quarter, the best showing since a 7.4 percent jump in the first quarter of 1999.

Programs

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gress was trying to pass legislation to balance the federal budget, Medicare had been projected to run short of cash in 2001. The trustees have gradually pushed that date back, however, and last year pegged it at 2015. Likewise, Social Security's insolvency date has been extended from 2029 in 1997 to 2034 in last year's trustees report. The trustees have said that in 2014, the program will need to start drawing on its currently accumulating trust fund when incoming taxes are no longer sufficient to cover benefits. "I think the message is that we don't need to be stamped into action by imminent financial collapse. We should carefully consider in what ways the structure (of retirement programs) should be retained and what ways it should be changed," said Henry Aaron, an economist at the Brookings Institution think tank. Give or take a few years, however, the bottom line remains, Reichauer said: "Sooner or later the nation is going to have to restructure Social Security and Medicare and the longer we wait to take on that challenge, the more wrenching those adjustments will have to be." Economic factors contributing to the brighter prospects for Social Security and Medicare continued last year, including the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. With more Americans working, more are also paying the payroll taxes that support the two programs, padding their balance sheets. Low inflation also saves Social Security money because yearly cost-of-living raises to retirees are smaller. In addition, Medicare spending decreased slightly in 1999, by about 1 percent — the first decline in the program's history. Experts attributed it to restrained inflation, cuts mandated by Congress in 1997, and a crackdown on fraud and billing errors. Medicare spending is not expected to continue to fall, however, mainly because the nation's elderly population is growing. Other factors also could temper the optimism of the traditionally conservative trustees, who include the secretaries of labor, treasury and health, plus the Social Security commissioner and private gurus. A private advisory panel last fall recommended, for example, that the trustees boost their current assumptions for Americans' increasing life expectancy. That would tend to dampen financial forecasts because people who live longer cost retirement programs more. Social Security is the largest federal benefit program, sending checks to 44 million Americans. In addition to payments to retirees, Social Security also makes payments to disabled people and to the survivors of workers who die young. Medicare, which provides health coverage for 39 million elderly and disabled Americans, already is spending money from a dwindling trust fund to pay hospital benefits. Outpatient benefits provided by the program are paid for separately, however, with income taxes and participants' monthly premiums.

House won't force Kosovo withdrawal

WASHINGTON (AP) — Averting a showdown with President Clinton, the House refused today to require him to withdraw U.S. peacekeepers from Kosovo unless European countries deliver more of the aid they have promised for the Yugoslav province. By a 219-200 vote, lawmakers rejected a bipartisan effort to use the threat of withdrawal to pressure the Europeans to deliver millions of dollars more for economic, humanitarian and policing assistance. Clinton would have had to begin withdrawing troops in June. The vote came a year after the 78-day air war against Yugoslavia began, during which the U.S. flew about three-fourths of the bombing missions. There are 37,000 NATO-led peacekeepers in Kosovo, including 5,300 Americans. "The least they can do after we flew all those sorties ... is to simply keep their word" and contribute more, said Rep. John Kasich, R-Ohio. Opponents said the provision would have ended up giving Europeans the power to make decisions on U.S. troop deployments. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott said Kosovo is a "permanent dilemma" for U.S. policy-makers. Speaking at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Talbott said the administration is seeking "the right mixture of priorities and values." If the United States came out flatly for independence, that could destroy what has been accomplished in the province, which remains part of Yugoslavia, he said. And the administration could lose the support it has among European allies. Talbott said if the United States appeared to be against independence and for putting Kosovo back in Yugoslavia, "we would be wrong." Bombing of Serbia last year forced Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw Serbian forces and special police from Kosovo, which is dominated by ethnic Albanians. The proposal to threaten withdrawal was offered to a wide-ranging, \$13 billion measure containing \$2.1 billion for the costs of U.S. troops in Kosovo. Had the restriction become law, the \$2.1 billion would have been cut in half on June 2 if Clinton had not certified that the European contributions had been delivered.

DDT in ocean concerns EPA

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Federal officials say they will toughen measures to prevent consumption of fish tainted by a huge deposit of DDT on the ocean floor.

The pesticide has contaminated Santa Monica Bay's Palos Verdes Shelf for a half-century and earned a Superfund designation.

"This is the largest DDT contamination site in the country," the Environmental Protection Agency's Keith Takata said Wednesday. "The first step to protect the public health is to make sure people aren't eating white croaker contaminated with dangerous levels of DDT."

Additionally, the EPA in July will launch a three-month pilot project to cap 180 acres of ocean floor along the Los Angeles coast with sand and silt to prevent the spread of the pesticide.

The \$5 million experiment will take place in waters about 200 feet deep, said Fred Schauffler, the EPA's project manager.

The contaminated area has an estimated 100 tons of DDT spread across 17 square miles of ocean floor. There are also about 10 tons of PCBs.

Chemical manufacturer Montrose Corp. allegedly dumped residue, including DDT, into the sewage system

from 1947 until 1971. The area was declared a Superfund environmental cleanup site in 1996.

DDT, which was banned in the U.S. in 1973, has been linked to cancer and reproductive problems in humans.

Because contamination levels of DDT are the highest in bottom-feeding fish, such as the white croaker, the EPA will call for more aggressive enforcement of the catch limit and the commercial fishing ban in the area, Schauffler said.

The agency also will launch an educational campaign and

monitor contamination levels of white croaker sold in markets, Schauffler said.

Montrose and other companies responsible for the pollution have challenged the EPA's capping plan as being too risky.

"We ... disagree with the Montrose folks who claim there's no significant human health risk and the problem is going away on its own by virtue of biodegradation of DDT," Schauffler said. "Here we are 30 years after the last significant discharge and we still have a very major problem on our hands."

Diabetes, herbicide linked

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force has found the "strongest evidence to date" that exposure to Agent Orange is linked to diabetes, improving the chances that Vietnam veterans suffering from the disease will receive compensation.

The Air Force said Wednesday the connection so far is only statistical and is yet to be proved by biological study. Air Force planes sprayed 11 million gallons of Agent Orange in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 to destroy jungle cover for communist supply lines, expose enemy sanctuaries and bases and destroy crops needed to feed enemy troops. The operation was equated by some critics at the time to chemical warfare.

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"I believe we have to use this moment to make the investment that will keep our progress and prosperity going far into the future."

■ Carmakers to give Gore peek at high-mileage automobiles

WASHINGTON (AP) — With high gasoline prices as the backdrop, Vice President Al Gore is joining the Big Three automakers to promote development of higher mileage vehicles.

Gore gets his first look today at new fuel economy test cars built by Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp. and DaimlerChrysler AG as part of a government-industry effort that began in 1993.

Through the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles, the Clinton administration challenged the automakers to develop a family-size sedan that gets at least 80 miles per gallon, and all three have come close in the last few months to meeting the goal.

Gore said the U.S. auto industry is leading the world and the partnership can help it stay on top.

"I believe we have to use this moment to make the investment that will keep our progress and prosperity going far into the future," Gore said.

"By reducing our dependence on foreign oil, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and by positioning the American auto industry as the world leader in a crucial new market in this new economy, the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles can help to keep our economic engine humming for decades to come," he added.

The Energy Information Administration this week said average gasoline prices nationwide had dipped by 2 cents during the past week to \$1.55 a gallon for all grades. The private Lundberg Survey showed a \$1.69 average at 10,000 service stations it monitors.

The high cost of gasoline has been a hot topic in Washington, with truckers jamming city streets in protest and lawmakers scrambling for a way to bring prices down.

During a news conference Wednesday, President Clinton said Gore "has taken the lead" on the partnership and he hopes the price increases will promote efforts to become more energy efficient and develop more alternative fuels.



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