

TODAY'S NEWSMAKERS

HARRY BELAFONTE

The man who made Calypso famous in the U.S. will be feted for his civil rights activism next month. Belafonte is one of several iconic men and women of the left who will be honored by Pacifica Radio in honor of the 30th anniversary of WPFW, Pacifica's D.C. affiliate. Also on the dais Dec. 15 will be Dorothy I. Height, former president of the National Council for Negro Women; composer Sonny Rollins; political scientist Howard Zinn; comedian and activist Dick Gregory; Pacifica radio hostess Amy Goodman and educator Ron Clark.



Gore

AL GORE

Nobel Peace Prize winner and former Vice President Al Gore will visit the White House on Monday at the invitation of President George W. Bush, his opponent in the 2000 presidential campaign. The president is hosting all of the 2007 U.S. recipients of Nobel Prizes, including Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator Mario Capecchi, who won the 2007 prize for medicine.

CHERYL ANN SPECTOR

Cheryl Ann Spector, who died in September from leukemia, received the James B. Hunter Human Rights Award posthumously from the Arlington Human Rights Commission this week. Spector, a gay rights activist, created a video and print archive of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community's political and human rights activities and social functions over the past 20 years. The Hunter Award is given in recognition of sustained commitment and outstanding achievement in the area of human rights made in Arlington by an individual, community group, nonprofit organization or business.

D.C. criticized over spending per student

Chancellor under pressure to raise budget for next year

By Dena Levitz
Examiner Staff Writer

Had D.C. officials taken recommendations from a State Superintendent's Office-assembled work group last year about per-pupil spending, they would be allocating, on average, \$500 more per student in this budget cycle, according to education advocates.

Critics of the current spending plan say that the difference could have been paid for a dozen improvements systemwide, including having class sizes at 20 across the board; staffing early education classrooms to accreditation standards; and giving art, music and physical education to all students.

It's a point Mary Levy, director of the Public Education Reform Project, undertaken by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs, and others are trying to drive home to Chancellor Michelle Rhee as she decides how much money to ask for in next year's operating budget.

"The point is the government is not going to give [Rhee] more than she asks for, so we're encouraging her to think about how much it costs to really fund the initiatives she wants," Levy said.

The uniform per-pupil spending formula is the primary way the District funds its public schools. Since 2001, the District's State Superintendent's Office has assembled a work group to develop annual recommendations about whether it meets the system's needs.

Two years ago, the suggestion were taken, which resulted in a funding increase. But last year's recommendation — to set the amount at \$8,846 — was rejected by the mayor's office. Instead, the mayor approved using the previous year's figure and increasing it for inflation so that it came to \$8,322.

This year's work group has submitted its recommendations, which are "being vetted internally" in order to be submitted to the mayor and D.C. Council in the coming week, said John Stokes, spokesman for State Superintendent Deborah Gist.

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**TURKEY TROT**

Runners take off down Ohio Drive at the start of the Sixth Annual Turkey Trot on Thursday in D.C. Proceeds from the 5-mile race go to So Others Might Eat, which helps the city's homeless and needy. — Greg Whitesell/Examiner

TODAY'S TOP STORY » VIRGINIA BUDGET

Cuts would pull \$400,000 from Bay, river monitoring

By William C. Flook
Examiner Staff Writer

Hundreds of thousands of dollars would be pulled from Chesapeake Bay funding in Virginia under Gov. Tim Kaine's budget-cutting proposal, a move that scales back efforts to understand the state's troubled system of waterways.

Kaine, who proposed stripping \$300 million from agency budgets to help close an estimated \$641 million shortfall in fiscal 2007 and 2008, has targeted \$400,000 worth of monitoring and assessment projects for the Bay and its tributaries.

The cuts would roll back a small part of the overall funding for water projects in the state.

They would, however, come at a time when scientists are mystified by bizarre problems on rivers like the Shenandoah and Potomac, where some fish are dying in large numbers and others are manifesting transgender, or "intersex," traits.

The Chesapeake Bay itself, among other problems, is plagued with long stretches without enough oxygen to support life, called "dead zones."

The cuts also contrast with increases in funding in Maryland, where legislators this week autho-



Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine has suggested pulling hundreds of thousands of dollars from Chesapeake Bay monitoring and assessment projects. — Greg Whitesell/Examiner file

rized \$50 million to clean pollution in the Bay.

"It's the wrong time to cut back on any money that will help us collect more data to solve the problems we have," said Ed Merrifield, executive director of the nonprofit group Potomac Riverkeeper.

About half the cuts would come from a Virginia Institute of Marine Science project to monitor aquatic life in deep water, and another \$168,000 would be cut from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for similar work, according to department spokesman Bill Hayden.

The cuts also would pull a combined \$32,000 for projects by the

U.S. Geological Survey and Old Dominion University, Hayden said.

"All this kind of monitoring is important for understanding water quality," he said. "We believe that these cuts will still allow us to get our most important work done without any serious loss of information. ... We believe we can still do our job without this."

Chuck Epes, spokesman for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, called the cuts regrettable but said they wouldn't have a dramatic effect "in the grand scheme of things." He said more than \$250 million has been appropriated for Bay cleanup since Kaine took office.

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THE 3-MINUTE INTERVIEW



Anita Josey-Herring

As presiding judge of D.C.'s Family Court, Anita Josey-Herring has to watch countless families disintegrate before her eyes. But Josey-Herring also helps put families together. The Superior Court recently celebrated its annual Adoption Day, during which 34 children were formally adopted, adding new bonds to two dozen families.

Why do we need an Adoption Day?

We need to raise the public's awareness of the importance of not having kids grow up in foster care without having permanent homes and give kids hope that once they enter the foster care system, there is an opportunity for them to be with a family and have some lifelong connections. We've had, during the calendar year, 234 adoptions.

How are the kids doing in the system?

It varies. But essentially, kids who are older when they enter the foster care system — that's kids who are more than 7 or 8 years old, more so boys than girls, have a more difficult time getting adopted. We are pushing hard to make sure that kids are not considered too old by the time they're 7 or 8 to have a family, so that those kids can have hope again and they're not constantly wondering where they're going to lay their heads.

How many kids are in foster care right now?

There are a couple of thousand right now. That's significantly lower than it was a couple of years ago because we've implemented a lot of reforms. For the older kids who can't be adopted, we're trying a number of initiatives to prepare them for adulthood. We're trying to connect them with important people, like teachers and ministers, so they can have lifelong connections even if they don't have a permanent family.

Who should people call if they're interested in adopting?

They should call the Child and Family Services Agency, 202-671-LOVE. You don't have to be married, you don't have to be rich; you have to be able to provide a supportive environment.

— Bill Myers