

Language layoffs trigger complaint

The Rhode Island Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union claims that laying off Southeast Asian interpreters violates federal law and a 1997 consent agreement.

BY KAREN LEE ZINER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The Rhode Island Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union filed a federal civil-rights complaint against the state Department of Human Services yesterday that cites, as its basis, Governor Carcieri's recent talk-radio comments denouncing state-financed interpreters, and subsequent layoffs of all Southeast Asian interpreters who work for the DHS.

The ACLU submitted the 11-page complaint to the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Boston.

The complaint seeks sanctions against the DHS for, the ACLU says, violating federal law and failing to comply with a 1997 consent agreement Rhode Island entered into with the federal government that sought to resolve similar complaints.

SEE **ACLU, B2**

Paint makers object to R.I. cleanup plan

Hundreds of pages of legal arguments call the attorney general's plan "the most elaborate, invasive, gold-plated experiment in lead abatement ever conceived."

BY PETER B. LORD
JOURNAL ENVIRONMENT WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Three paint companies that lost a historic public-nuisance trial to the state last year filed hundreds of pages of arguments in Superior Court yesterday objecting to a state plan requiring them to spend \$2.4 billion removing lead paint from 240,000 houses and apartments across Rhode Island.

The state's sweeping plan is unnecessary, invasive, disruptive, and might put children at risk during the process of removing lead

SEE **LEAD, B2**

CAMPAIGN 2008

McCain the next 'comeback kid'?

BY MARC SANTORA
THE NEW YORK TIMES

CONCORD, N.H. — Seeking to capitalize on a series of highly sought newspaper endorsements, Sen. John McCain is strongly pushing to attract independent voters who helped drive his victory here eight years ago.

In a sign of a reenergized candidacy, he also plans to return after Christmas Day to campaigning in Iowa, where he has failed, until recently, to gain support and has devoted few resources since the near-collapse of his campaign in the summer.

The campaign said it had not changed its strategy. But, McCain said, "I am obviously going to try to capitalize on it," referring to the momentum.

The crowds following McCain here have

SEE **MCCAIN, A12**



MCCAIN

Rhode Island Constitution

Section 9. If the office of the governor shall be vacant by reason of death, resignation, impeachment or inability to serve, the lieutenant governor shall fill the office of governor, and exercise the powers and authority appertaining thereto...

Who's in charge here?



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / **CONNIE GROSCH**

Governor Carcieri talks yesterday at a State House news conference about who was making decisions during Thursday's storm while he was away on a weeklong trip to the Middle East. "I know you want to lay blame. I'm trying to get at what we can do better," he says.

Carcieri relied on appointees during storm

Providence school buses slip up again

Yesterday's icy conditions force some elementary and middle school students to wait up to an hour for their buses to pick them up.

BY LINDA BORG
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Thirty public school buses were late again yesterday morning, leaving dozens of children waiting from 30 to 60 minutes in the frigid weather.

Once again, icy roads were blamed for the delays, which affected elementary and middle school students. According to school spokeswoman Christina O'Reilly, the First Student buses had trouble chugging up the hill that leads from the bus yard at 3 Ricom Way. Officials said the buses left between 5:55 and 6:15 a.m., and once they cleared the hill, had to navigate roads clogged with snow and ice from two storms, which dumped more than 10 inches of snow on the region in four days.

Providence wasn't the only city having busing nightmares. In Boston, more than 680 students were stranded yesterday after 70 bus drivers skipped work. The no-shows called in sick or used personal days.

After consulting with the city's Department of Public Works, Providence Supt. Donnie Evans decided yesterday at 5:30 a.m. to open the schools on time. Around 7:30 a.m., word began trickling in that the

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Your turn: For your taxes, what do you expect your community to provide in the winter? To respond, go to projo.com

SEE **BUSES, A10**

"You may not like to hear that [but] if I get in my car and get on [Route] 95 with snow coming down at 3 inches an hour ... that's a decision I make. To expect that somehow we're going to miraculously clear the snow off the highways ... and get you through that with no headaches, I don't think is fair."

GOVERNOR CARCIERI

BY KATHERINE GREGG
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — At his first news conference since returning from a weeklong trip to the Middle East, Governor Carcieri yesterday acknowledged his administration did a "poor job" of communicating with the public during last week's paralyzing snowstorm.

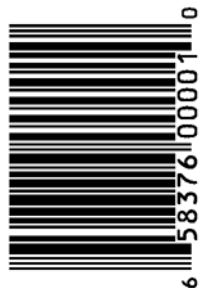
Carcieri said he knew nothing about what was happening back here in Rhode Island because he was flying from Kuwait to Afghanistan — and probably sleeping — while the storm and the epic traffic jam it created choked most of the state's major arteries, stranded Providence grade-schoolers on school buses until late at night, and left motorists struggling for three to six hours, in many cases, to get home on gridlocked roadways.

He said it was early morning in Kabul when his chief of staff, Brian Stern, first briefed him on the storm. From reading newspaper accounts when he got back, "it was

SEE **CARCIERI, A10**



From left, Brian Stern, chief of staff to Governor Carcieri; Jerome Williams, director of the Department of Transportation; and Maj. Gen. Robert T. Bray, Rhode Island's adjutant general, take part in a State House news conference yesterday.



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WHEN FOOD AND ENERGY COMPETE



For years, cheap food has been taken for granted in the United States. But now the price of some foods is rising sharply and many say the boom in ethanol production is to blame. **A2**

HOME HEATING HELP PRESERVED

Congressional leaders and White House officials reach an agreement that means the federal government will allocate roughly the same amount of money as it did last year for heating assistance. **E1**

LAUGHING MATTER

Jay Leno, Conan O'Brien and possibly David Letterman will return to late-night TV with fresh episodes on Jan. 2, two months after the writers' strike sent them into repeats. **F1**



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