

LESS IS MORE
Less wind, more warmth today, with highs near 60; clear and cold tonight.
Forecast, F10

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SAVING THE POLAR BEAR



PHOTO COURTESY OF LESLIE WATERS, REID PARK ZOO

The Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Ariz., hopes to mate Kobe, right, and Boris. Kobe was born at the Roger Williams Park Zoo. Roger Williams' polar bear display, which closed in 2005, is expected to reopen in 2010.

Center of attention

The polar bear could become the first animal identified as a threatened species solely because of global warming.

BY MICHELLE J. LEE
JOURNAL ENVIRONMENT WRITER

PROVIDENCE — As sea ice in the Arctic Circle melts, the plight of the polar bear has attracted worldwide attention, turning the animal into one of the most powerful symbols of the threat of global warming.

Environmentalists are pushing to list the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, the first animal that could be included solely because of global warming.

At the Roger Williams Park Zoo, officials support the campaign, which comes at a time when the

zoo is creating a new polar bear exhibit that will be the centerpiece of an estimated \$13.6-million renovation. The zoo expects to open the exhibit in early 2010.

Tim French, the zoo's deputy director for animal programs, said many generations of zoo visitors have loved polar bears.

The zoo's previous polar bear exhibit, which closed in 2005, lasted for 25 years — housing eight bears at different times, including two, Triton and Kobe, who were born at the zoo. The exhibit's last bear, Trixie, the mother of both Triton and Kobe, died in May 2005 from complications after being

sedated to prepare her for a move to a zoo in Indianapolis. Triton, 9, is at the Indianapolis zoo; Kobe, 6, is at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Ariz.; and their father, Norton, 19, is at the Detroit zoo.

French believes the zoo's planned exhibit will provide a new vehicle to talk about the bears, climate change and what individuals can do to help fight global warming.

"We historically focus more on the altruistic part of conservation, we should really do this because it's the right thing to do," French said. "But we need to do a better job helping people to see conservation is for our own benefit as much as anything else."

SEE **BEARS, A9**

Former aide ties Gonzales to dismissals

D. Kyle Sampson contradicts the attorney general, testifying that he kept his former boss fully informed of plans to fire eight federal prosecutors.

BY DAVID JOHNSTON
and **ERIC LIPTON**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The former chief of staff to Alberto R. Gonzales testified yesterday that he had consulted regularly with the attorney general about dismissing U.S. Attorneys, disputing Gonzales' public account of his role as very limited.

D. Kyle Sampson, who resigned two weeks ago, told the Senate Judiciary Committee that Gonzales' statements about the prosecutors' dismissals were inaccurate and that the attorney general had been repeatedly advised of the planning for them.

The two men talked about the dismissal plans over a two-year period, Sampson said, beginning in early 2005 when Gonzales was still the White House counsel. Sampson said he had briefed his boss at least five times before the December 2006 ousters.

Asked by Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., about Gonzales' state-



AP / SUSAN WALSH

D. Kyle Sampson, the attorney general's ex-chief of staff, testifies on Capitol Hill.

ments at a March 13 news conference that he had not participated in any discussions about the dismissals, Sampson replied, "I don't think the attorney general's statement that he was not in-

SEE **TESTIMONY, A7**

Aiming to make health insurance more affordable

Efforts under way by the state, and by lawmakers, seek to lower the cost of health care for small employers.

BY ELIZABETH GUDRAIS
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — A national health-care crisis can't be solved with a single bill.

That was the message yesterday, as lawmakers considered a proposal to address the problem here in Rhode Island by bringing down the cost of health insurance for small employers.

After months of negotiations with insurers, the state health insurance commissioner, Christopher F. Koller, is poised to unveil his own small-business insurance plan on Tuesday. But House Finance Chairman Steven M.

Costantino — the sponsor of the bill heard yesterday — emphasized that the two initiatives are not working at cross purposes. Rather, he said, they are pieces of the same puzzle.

Both aim to make insurance more affordable for small businesses, which make up 94 percent of companies in the state and employ 35 percent of Rhode Islanders, according to Koller's office. (Small businesses are commonly defined as companies with 50 or fewer employees, and that's the definition Rhode Island state

SEE **INSURANCE, A9**

At Brown, while many apply, only a few are chosen

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE

It's that time of year when students across the country are learning whether they've been accepted into the college of their choice.

For the vast majority of those who applied for admission to the freshman class at Brown University, the news will not be good.

In fact, Brown rejected students at a record rate this year, turning away 85 percent of those who applied.

Brown reported receiving an all-time high of 19,043 applications, 4 percent more than last year. The school accepted 2,580, or 14 percent, of those who sought admission.

Students of black, Latino, Asian or American Indian ancestry make up 41 percent of those accepted, the school's highest proportion ever. Women comprise 53 percent.

By comparison, Harvard College selected 2,058 students from an all-time high number of applicants, 22,955. It also set a rejection record of 91 percent.

Tuition, room and board, and fees at Brown for the upcoming academic year are \$45,948.

OVERDUE HONORS



One of the recipients of the Congressional Gold Medal displays a photo of himself taken when he was a member of the Tuskegee Army, the segregated unit of fighter pilots honored yesterday for their service during World War II. President Bush handed out the medals during a ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda. **Story, A2**

MCT / CHUCK KENNEDY

Vote in Senate assures a showdown over Iraq

The Senate approves a bill to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but also sets a deadline for withdrawal from Iraq, a measure President Bush has vowed to veto.

BY CARL HULSE
and **JEFF ZELENY**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Issuing a stinging challenge to President Bush, the Senate yesterday approved a spending measure that provided more than \$97.5 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan but ordered troop withdrawals from Iraq to begin within 120 days and set a goal of removing most armed forces within a year.

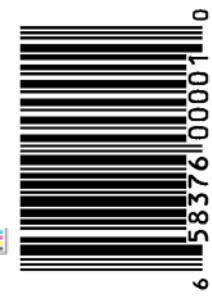
Democrats, preparing for a veto fight, immediately sought to paint the president as obstinate in

the face of broad public sentiment against the war. They said he would be the one abandoning U.S. forces should he reject a final bill that lawmakers expected to produce in a few weeks.

"If the president vetoes this bill, it is an asterisk in history," said Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, after a vote of 51 to 47 on the measure. "He sets the record for undermining the troops more than any president we have ever had."

But Mr. Bush was not wa-

SEE **IRAQ, A7**



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DEEPENING CRISIS

The U.N. Security Council expresses "grave concern" over Iran's seizure of 15 British sailors while Iran retreats from its pledge to release the female sailor among the group and warns they all may be put on trial. **A4**

MORE WORK AHEAD FOR EB?

Leading Senate supporters of the submarine industry are expressing support for Navy plans to double production of attack subs in 2012 — a good sign for Electric Boat. **F1**

COMING SUNDAY: PLAY BALL!

You'll find a special preview of the upcoming 2007 Red Sox season, along with a look at all the other teams in the American and National leagues, in **The Sunday Journal**. Can't wait until Sunday? Get the latest in-depth Red Sox coverage at **projo.com**



A SAD FAREWELL

Columnist Bob Kerr bids goodbye to The Decatur Lounge, long the home to good causes and friendly dogs, in Providence. **B1**