

QUIET TIME
Gradual clearing today with highs near 40; partly cloudy and dry tonight.
Forecast, E10

The Providence Journal

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FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 8, 2008
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As Romney departs, McCain advances toward nomination

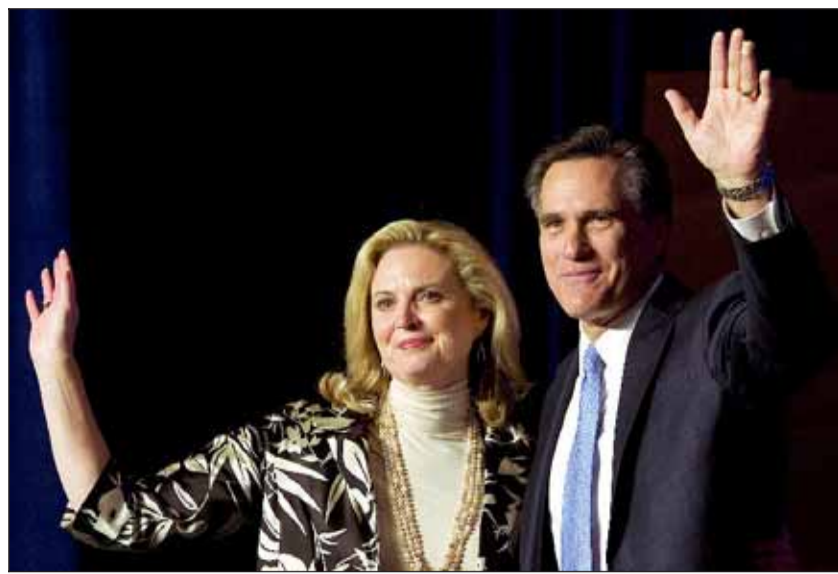
The former Massachusetts governor says he is ending his campaign to bring Republicans together and boost the party's chances in November.

BY ELISABETH BUMILLER and DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK
WASHINGTON — Sen. John McCain of Arizona all but sewed up the Republican presidential nomination yesterday after Mitt Romney withdrew from the race, saying the war in Iraq and the terrorist threat made it imperative that the party unite. In a dramatic announcement before a convention of stunned and largely unhappy conservatives, Romney said that he wanted to fight on but that taking his campaign all the way to the Republican convention in September would

delay a national campaign against Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton or Sen. Barack Obama, the two remaining Democratic contenders. Romney described them as weak on national security. "They would retreat, declare defeat and the consequences of that would be devastating," Romney, a former governor of Massachusetts, told a crowd that broke into chants of "Mitt, Mitt."

Staying in the race, he said, "would make it easier for Senator Clinton or Obama to win." Romney, who spent tens of millions of dollars of his personal fortune on the race, added, "Frankly, in this time of war, I simply cannot let my campaign be a part of adding the surrender to terror."

Romney did not explicitly endorse McCain, but for the first time in a campaign remarkable for its animosity between the two men, signaled a degree of support for him, saying he agreed with McCain on the war and on fighting terrorism. "Now, I disagree with Senator McCain on a number of issues, as



Mitt Romney and his wife, Ann, at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference yesterday in Washington, D.C., where the former Massachusetts governor announced he was dropping out of the presidential race.

MCT / CHUCK KENNEDY

SEE **GOP, A7**

Advocates say round-the-clock gambling means millions more in state revenue; opponents say it's the wrong way to balance a budget



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / CONNIE GROSCH

The House Finance Committee holds a hearing on 24-hour gambling bills at the Colony House in Newport, which attracted anti-casino activists, lobbyists, and legislators whose communities may be affected by the legislation. From left, Rep. Bruce Long, Newport Mayor Stephen Waluk, Rep. William McManus, Rep. John Loughlin II and Craig Sculos, vice president and general manager of Twin River.

24-hour gambling plan decried

BY ALEX KUFFNER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER
NEWPORT — A steady stream of people went before the House Finance Committee yesterday to urge its members to reject legislation that would allow 24-hour gambling in Rhode Island. At a special hearing at Colony House, the only speakers to voice support for the bill were representatives of Newport Grand and Twin River, the two gambling halls that would benefit from the expanded hours, a Teamsters official who cited the prospect of creating new jobs for union members and Rep. William San Bento, who introduced the legislation as a way to

increase state revenue. More than 150 people packed the historic meeting house on Washington Square for the afternoon hearing. Many of them held signs proclaiming their opposition to a change in the law. The two dozen that spoke included town officials, clergy members and anti-gambling advocates.

Newport Mayor Stephen C. Waluk's testimony was typical of the sentiment expressed during the 2½-hour meeting. "We are very well aware of the financial hardships facing the State of Rhode Island," he told the committee. "However, this is not the

SEE **GAMBLING, A5**

R.I. GAMBLING PARLORS



Sources: Twin River, Newport Grand, Rhode Island State Lottery

Twin River
4,752 slot machines
Revenue to state: **\$208.1 million***
Increase with 24-hour operation: **\$16.5 million**

Newport Grand
1,070 slot machines
Revenue to state: **\$47.3 million***
Increase with 24-hour operation: **\$3 million**
*Fiscal year 2007

Lights, camera, action in S. County?

A California developer proposes building a \$75-million movie studio in Hopkinton, if the state approves a tax-credit plan.

BY CYNTHIA NEEDHAM
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — With legislative leaders cheering him on, a California developer yesterday unveiled plans to build a major movie studio in Hopkinton that could help make Rhode Island the Hollywood of the East if — and only if — lawmakers here provide new tax incentives.

Los Angeles-based Pacifica Ventures says it will create a sprawling \$75-million motion picture facility on 60 acres off Route 95, complete with eight sound stages that would cement the state's status as a viable player in the film industry.

House Speaker William J. Murphy called the proposed studio "an economic engine for the state ... the second half, the job producer that goes along with the film and television

SEE **STUDIO, B3**

Authority looking into running Vets

The agency that owns the Dunk and the Rhode Island Convention Center says it's been asked to consider operating the troubled Veterans Memorial Auditorium.

BY BENJAMIN N. GEDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The public agency that owns the state's convention center and largest sports arena is considering a plan that would give it control over the historic Veterans Memorial Auditorium, a major expansion of its authority during a period of consolidation in state government.

The deal would be a reversal for the state, which had been trying to unload the aging performance hall on the small nonprofit group that operates it, the Veterans Memorial Auditorium Foundation.

The Rhode Island Convention Center Authority says it could increase ticket sales at the VMA through better marketing and by scheduling events that have appeal beyond the fine

SEE **VETS, A5**

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Your turn: Should the question of expanded gambling hours in Rhode Island rest in the hands of voters or the General Assembly? To respond, go to projo.com



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CONGRESS CLEARS TAX REBATES

Congress passes a \$168-billion economic rescue plan that would speed \$600 to \$1,200 in rebates to most taxpayers and \$300 checks to low-income people, including disabled veterans and the elderly. **A2**

BIOFUEL SAVINGS CHALLENGED

A new study concludes that almost all biofuels used today emit more greenhouse gases than the conventional fuels they are intended to replace if the full emissions costs of producing these "green" fuels are taken into account. **A5**

GOING AFTER THE MOB

Federal and New York authorities round up more than 80 accused organized crime figures on charges including murder, racketeering, construction extortion and the looting of union-benefit funds. **A4**



SCHILLING SHOCKER

Red Sox starter Curt Schilling apparently has an arm injury so serious that it may require career-ending surgery for the 41-year-old. **C1**

C M Y K A1 MAIN 2/8