

WARMUP
Partly sunny, dry.
High in upper 40s.
Forecast, **E10**

The Providence Journal

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PASTOR DROPS BAN ON WHITE DRESSES AT FIRST COMMUNION

"Our daughter will be able to attend her Holy First Communion in our church wearing her dress."

CHRISTINE COTA,

mother of Bailee Cota, who will receive her First Communion in April

BY KATIE MULVANEY
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

NORTH KINGSTOWN — Seven-year-old Bailee Cota is making her way in the Roman Catholic Church, learning to treat others with kindness and not to sin as she prepares to take her First Communion this spring.

With wide blue eyes framed by generous dark lashes, she is a typical second-grader, full of innocent and boundless spontaneity. She can't wait for the party with friends and family that will follow her receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist, considered the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church.

But Bailee's preparations for that day, a tradi-

tion among the state's 700,000 Catholics, have been marred by conflict for the Cota family. They have been at odds with the priest at Christ the King Church in the South Kingstown village of Kingston over whether she will be allowed to receive her First Communion wearing the same white eyelet dress her godmother wore years ago.

The Rev. Joseph Creedon, who has led Christ the King Church for nearly three decades, had forbidden Bailee, and all First Communion recipients, from wearing white.

But he relented yesterday, agreeing to let

SEE **DRESS, A7**



Bailee Cota, 7, will celebrate her First Communion at Christ the King Church in Kingston wearing the same white dress her godmother wore, but it took some negotiating with the Rev. Joseph Creedon.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL
GRETCHEN ERTL

Gunman kills 5 at Ill. college

Sixteen others are injured when a former student at Northern Illinois University fires repeatedly in a lecture hall and then shoots himself.

BY MONICA DAVEY
and **SUSAN SAULNY**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

DEKALB, Ill. — With minutes left in a class in ocean sciences at Northern Illinois University yesterday afternoon, a tall skinny man dressed in black stepped out from behind a curtain on the stage of the lecture hall, said nothing, and opened fire with a shotgun, the authorities and witnesses said.

The man shot again and again, witnesses said, perhaps 20 times. Students in the large lecture hall, stunned, dropped to the floor.

Five people, all of them students, were killed, John G. Peters, the president of Northern

SEE **ILLINOIS, A4**

Former R.I. priest HIV positive

Dioceses in Providence and Fort Worth, Texas, are notifying people who have filed sexual-abuse claims against the Rev. Philip A. Magaldi.

JOURNAL STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

FORT WORTH, Texas — A priest accused of sexually abusing at least five minors in Rhode Island and Texas is HIV positive, Catholic diocese officials said yesterday.

Pat Svacina, a spokesman for the Diocese of Fort Worth, said diocese officials first learned last week that the Rev. Philip A. Magaldi — who had been removed as a pastor in 1999 and is in the process of being laicized — could be HIV positive. HIV is a retro-

SEE **MAGALDI, A7**

CAMPAIGN 2008

McCain swoops through R.I.



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

Arizona Sen. John McCain makes a campaign stop in Rhode Island, speaking at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Warwick yesterday. On the right is state Sen. Robert Watson, the Senate minority leader.

The GOP presidential front-runner tells an enthusiastic crowd of a thousand that he expects to win the state in November.

BY SCOTT MacKAY
and **M. CHARLES BAKST**
JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

WARWICK — Arizona Sen. John McCain — the presumptive Republican presidential candidate — swooped into Rhode Island yesterday and road-tested the fall campaign themes of low taxes, restrained federal spending and unbending support for the U.S. military surge in Iraq.

McCain spoke at a boisterous rally of 1,000 Republican loyalists who jammed a hotel ballroom where he picked up the endorsement of Governor Carcieri, who began the 2008 campaign cycle supporting former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.

One of McCain's messages yesterday was to emphasize that he is a "big-tent" Republican who wants the support of New England GOP moderates. "I will campaign in every state in the union and I will carry the state of Rhode Island."

McCain said little that was new and, in fact, recycled one-liners from his winning New Hampshire primary campaign last month. But his fans lapped it up yesterday, consis-

SEE **MCCAIN, A5**

projo.com Extra: To hear Sen. John McCain's answers to questions from Journal political columnist M. Charles Bakst, and to weigh in on who you'd vote for among the three presidential front-runners, go to **projo.com**

Chafee endorses Obama

BY MARK ARSENAULT
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Former Republican U.S. Sen. Lincoln Chafee yesterday endorsed Barack Obama for president, citing the Illinois senator's judgment and longstanding opposition to the Iraq war.

Chafee, who lost a run for reelection in 2006, was the only Republican in the Senate to oppose giving President Bush the authority to attack Iraq, in a vote in 2002. Obama, a Democrat who was not in the Senate in 2002, opposed the war authorization in a speech in Chicago.

In making the endorsement, Chafee said Americans who oppose the war deserve a nominee on the ballot who was against it from the beginning. "It was such a colossal error in judgment," said Chafee, in an interview after he made the endorsement. "For Americans who feel like I do, we

deserve a choice on this issue."

Rhode Island's primary is March 4, the same day as the key states of Ohio and Texas.

Chafee disaffiliated from the GOP last summer, saying the modern Republican Party no longer represented his values.

The former Rhode Island senator suggested several days ago he was leaning toward Obama. He informed Obama in a telephone call on Tuesday that he would support him, and offered to help the campaign in Rhode Island. "I said anything he wanted, I would

SEE **CHAFEE, A5**



AP / RICK BOWMER

Supporters of Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., cheer during his rally in Seattle last Friday, when more than 17,000 people showed up.

Will Democrats' roaring crowds hold up in Nov.?

BY CHARLES BABINGTON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Barack Obama is attracting jaw-dropping crowds at stop after stop. Democratic rival Hillary Rodham Clinton would be thrilled with her own big turnouts except that his are so much bigger.

Political insiders are unsure what to make of it all: no one has seen these kinds of crowds so long before Election Day.

Do these to-the-raffers audiences in the primaries mean Obama will win the Democratic nomination? Or do his crowds simply represent highly motivated fans who eventually will be outnumbered by quieter, less-visible voters for Clinton? Or for the Repub-

SEE **CROWDS, A5**

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SCHOOL BREAKFAST CUT PROPOSED

A proposal to eliminate state spending on school breakfast has educators worried about the future of programs they say help improve focus and academic performance in schools across Rhode Island. **B1**

CRANSTON ARTWORK STOLEN

The owner of the Edgewood Manor Bed & Breakfast in Cranston reports a remarkable theft: A 500-pound-plus bronze statue of a mythical half-man, half-goat figure seducing a nymph was hauled off the property Tuesday night. **B2**

RED SOX: ROUGH SEASON AHEAD?

It appears Boston has its work cut out for it this year, with veteran starter Curt Schilling out for at least half the season and American League rivals shoring up their rosters. "We're in a tough division and a tough league," says general manager Theo Epstein. **C1**

