

## SHOOTINGS LEAVE 2 DEAD



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / ANDREW DICKERMAN

Central Falls Police Sgt. Wayne Solan, above, carries a shotgun at the main entrance of Central Falls High School yesterday. Several officers were at the school in the wake of two deadly shootings in the city over the weekend. Below, students were dismissed a half hour early from school yesterday.

# Fear in Central Falls

Several parents show up at the high school to take their children home early, fearing rumors of retaliation for weekend shootings that killed two teenage boys.

BY TATIANA PINA  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

CENTRAL FALLS — Maida Lopez walked into the hallway at Central Falls High School yesterday searching the corridor for her daughters Hilda and Sandra. There were already about 40 parents near the main office, talking all at once and trying to find out where their children were so they could take them out of school before dismissal.

Two teenage boys had been killed in the city over the weekend and rumors were running rampant that there would be retaliation after school.

Sunday night, a 16-year-old Central Falls High School student who the police have not yet named was shot to death on Darling and Dexter streets. On Saturday, 19-year-old Helder Tomar, of Harvey Street in Pawtucket, was shot to death in Jenks Park in the afternoon. Anthony Strobert, 19, of Pacific Street — who was also shot and was being treated at Rhode Island Hospital — was charged with Tomar's slaying. During a news conference yesterday at Central Falls police headquarters, Chief Joseph Moran said that the shootings may be related.

Students called or text messaged their parents to come get them out of school before dismissal.

SEE SHOOTINGS, B2



# Analysts say R.I. economy in recession

From the jobless rate to the number of home foreclosures, the state is faring worse than its neighbors.

BY STEVE PEOPLES  
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island stands alone as the only Northeastern state "in recession," according to economists who reported yesterday that the state's economy hasn't been this bad in nearly two decades.

The Ocean State's employment figures, its foreclosure rates, and personal income growth are worse than its neighbors and national averages.

Rhode Island is one of just nine states in recession — the next closest is Ohio — while Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut have growing economies, according to Steve Cochrane, senior managing director for Economy.com, which is owned by Moody's Investors Service.

"Clearly, in the Northeast, Rhode Island is a picture of weakness," Cochrane said. The somber news was delivered yesterday in a State House committee room where a dozen budget analysts will convene for the next two weeks to pore through tax receipts, economic trends and state expenditures.

SEE RECESSION, A4

# Lawmakers balk at paying for benefits

A bid to contribute to their health-care coverage is quickly scuttled, but some say that could change.

BY KATHERINE GREGG  
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — During their marathon House budget-cutting debate last Friday, lawmakers talked again and again about the need to "share the burden" and "share the pain."

But they decided to spare themselves from making any contribution to their own 100-percent state-paid health insurance.

For several days last week,

House leaders talked among themselves about possibly proposing an amendment to the big midyear budget-cutting bill that cleared the House on Friday. It would have required all 38 senators and 75 House members who elect to take the benefit to do what some are already doing voluntarily — that is, pay 10 percent of the cost.

But they backed off in response

SEE BENEFITS, A4

# Pastor's media appearances putting pressure on Obama

The Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr.'s attempt to explain his previous remarks reignites the controversy.

BY SHAILAGH MURRAY and PETER SLEVIN  
THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — Sen. Barack Obama again sought to distance himself from the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. yesterday after his former pastor capped a weekend media offensive with an appearance in Washington in which he revisited many of his most controversial comments.

"He does not speak for me," the Democratic presidential can-

didate said as he campaigned across North Carolina. "He does not speak for the campaign."

Obama aides said Wright had rebuffed their recent offers of public relations assistance, and they stressed that they had no warning about a media blitz that included an appearance with Bill

SEE WRIGHT, A6

# SINKING FEELING

## Gas prices weigh heavy on some boaters

BY TOM MOONEY  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

UNUSUALLY at this time of year, Frank Blount has his Frances Fleet of deep-sea fishing boats running seven days a week. But with some of the best spring cod fishing in a decade beckoning uncommonly close to shore, Blount is canceling trips.

The price of diesel has his boats tied up for two days a week. And more cost-cutting measures may surface if the fish suddenly move farther offshore.

"I figure every time fuel goes up a penny it cost me \$1,500," says Blount.

John Souto, 73, of Cranston, has chased

bluefish and striped bass up and down Narragansett Bay for decades from the helm of various boats. With the prospect of paying \$4 or more for each gallon of gas this season, he's planning on drifting with the tide much more often and hoping the lunkers come to him.

And then there are the notable exceptions.

Last Thursday, while Michelle and Patrick Curry, of Pawtucket, were posting their outboard for sale on Craigslist — spooked by the rising price of fuel — Rich O'Brien, 44, of North Kingstown, launched his \$90,000, life-

SEE WATER, A8

**In Business:** Will high gas prices hurt R.I. tourism? **E1**

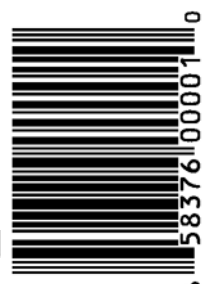
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**Your turn:** The ripple effect of gas prices: Where are you seeing it? To respond, and for an audio slideshow about a new boat owner fulfilling his long-held dream despite the spike in gas prices, go to **projo.com**



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GRETCHEN ERTL

Rich O'Brien pilots his new boat from the boatyard in Barrington to its new slip in Wickford Harbor on Thursday. The first tank of gas, 127 gallons, was free from the boat dealer.



## INSIDE TODAY

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## COURT UPHOLDS IDS FOR VOTERS

The U.S. Supreme Court decides that Indiana can require voters to produce a government-issued photo identification without violating their constitutional rights, a ruling that could be felt nationwide. **A2**

## BACK ON THE BENCH

Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor will sit on the federal appeals court in Boston next week and hear arguments in about a dozen cases, including one from Rhode Island. **B1**

## REBATES EN ROUTE

For some who chose to receive their federal tax rebate electronically, the cash may already be sitting in their accounts; find out when you're likely to receive your rebate from the U.S. Treasury. **E1**



## HAWKS BEAT CELTICS, 97-92

Josh Smith and the Hawks are too much for Kevin Garnett, left, and the rest of the Celtics as Atlanta beats Boston, 97-92, to tie the first round of the NBA playoff series at two games apiece. **D1**