

**HIGH & DRY**

Partly sunny today, with highs near 70; increasing clouds this afternoon.

Forecast, E10

# The Providence Journal

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## State police say contractor tapped DOT computers

The illegal access allowed Shire Corp. to gain confidential Department of Transportation information and obtain a competitive advantage, authorities say.

BY BRUCE LANDIS  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The state police said yesterday that Shire Corp., a major bridge contractor for the state Department of Transportation, has been illegally rifling through the DOT's computer system for confidential information that could have helped it take advantage of the agency.

The police, who searched the company's headquarters yesterday, said in court filings that information about other contractors' projects and

planning. Shire, which specializes in bridges, has held more than \$25 million in DOT contracts during the past several years. Some of Shire's projects have taken far longer and cost much more than they were supposed to, while the company has collected millions of dollars by blaming the DOT

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SEE SHIRE, A9

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Extra: To read the text of the search warrant, go to projo.com



Lawyer Artin H. Coloian, representing Shire Corp., said the incident "seems to be isolated and doesn't affect the operation of the company."

JOURNAL FILE

"I'm very upset by what I've seen."

BAN KI-MOON, United Nations secretary-general

## A DISASTER, UP CLOSE



Although restricted to visiting showcase areas by the junta in Myanmar, the secretary-general of the United Nations is appalled by conditions in the cyclone-ravaged nation.

JOURNAL WIRE REPORTS

KYONDAH, Myanmar — In the hours after Cyclone Nargis ravaged Myanmar, U.N. officials tried to call the country's top leader to offer help. For several days, they got no answer and wondered if Senior General Than Shwe had gone into hiding, or even fled the storm-battered country.

But finally, the real reason became clear: Than Shwe didn't really want their help.

Yesterday, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon traveled to Myanmar, also known as Burma, to persuade the leader to accept more humanitarian aid.

Today, he is scheduled to meet with Than Shwe himself.

"I'm very upset by what I've seen," Ban said, visibly shaken by the firsthand look at the devastation, even though the areas to which he was taken were far from those worst-hit by the cyclone.

Before his helicopter flyover, Ban had said he was bringing a "message of hope," to Myanmar's people following the storm which claimed more than 78,000 lives,

SEE MYANMAR, A4



Above, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, center, tours the Shwedagon pagoda yesterday in Yangon, Myanmar, before going to view conditions in cyclone damaged areas and to meet with Myanmar government officials. Top left, a cyclone survivor offers prayers in front of his damaged house.

AP / STAN HONDA

## Fears raised by Medicaid spending cap

The Carcieri administration says a limit it is seeking will save the state millions; opponents fear the plan would create a "catastrophe" for 186,000 recipients.

BY STEVE PEOPLES  
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — Governor Carcieri unveiled dramatic plans in January to transform the state's Medicaid system, a proposal that would affect tens of thousands of elderly, disabled and poor Rhode Islanders who live in nursing homes, group homes and receive health insurance on the state's dime.

The plan was a win-win for government and the people being served, the governor said at the time. Taxpayers would save an estimated \$67 million, while the patients and group home residents would have greater freedom to get the care they wanted.

But Carcieri didn't mention the risks. And now, as state officials are negotiating an unprecedented

SEE MEDICAID, A8

### MEDICAID IN R.I.

More than 186,000 Rhode Islanders received Medicaid funding for medical services in 2006, the most recent annual data available. Costs include state and federal spending.

#### Adults with disabilities:

27,334 people served  
**\$638.7 million**  
(38.4 percent of spending)

#### Elderly:

18,166 people served  
**\$457 million**  
(27.5 percent of spending)

#### Medical coverage for low-income

(Rite Care): 129,111 people served  
**\$342.7 million**  
(20.6 percent of spending)

#### Children with special needs:

12,353 people served  
**\$225 million**  
(13.5 percent of spending)

Source: Rhode Island annual Medicaid Expenditure Report, April 2007

## Defense challenges Celona's credibility

On his last day on the stand, lawyers for former CVS officials now on trial for corruption point to the former senator's income-tax problems.

BY MIKE STANTON  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Live, from federal court, it's the *Celona State House Report*.

That was the theme yesterday as John A. Celona, corrupt ex-senator and erstwhile talk-show host, spent his fourth and final day on the witness stand in the CVS corruption trial, discussing his once-upon-a-time cable television show and its role in alleged bribery and

influence-peddling at the Rhode Island State House.

Unlike his glory years, when Celona built the show he launched with a camcorder into a moneymaking forum for his political ambitions and private consulting venture, Celona didn't get to tout CVS or Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island or Roger

SEE CVS, A6

## Weekend barbecue takes bigger bite

JOURNAL STAFF REPORTS

PROVIDENCE — As Leticia Estrada shopped for groceries last night, she picked up extra beef and pork to barbecue on Memorial Day, and plenty of staples, such as rice and milk, for the rest of the week. But she also left the Price-Rite store with something totally unwanted — a higher bill.

It used to cost \$100 a week to buy food for her husband and two children, she said as she bagged her groceries at the new supermarket in Providence. Now it costs \$120.

And she said some of the biggest price increases have been on those staples, such as rice, that are difficult to skip.

In their finest tradition, Memorial Day cookouts are a feast of all-American gustatory favorites. But this year, shopping for burgers, chips and beer

SEE BARBECUE, A7

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Your turn: Are gas prices affecting your Memorial Day weekend plans? To respond, and for Memorial Day weekend activities and information, go to projo.com



MCT

### BURGER, THE WORKS

National average prices for barbecue fixings this year compared to last year

Item	2008 price	2007 price	Percent change
1 lb. beef	3.52	3.48	1.1
8 hamburger buns	1.61	1.38	16.7
1 lb. American cheese	3.88	3.73	4.0
1 lb. tomatoes	1.77	1.63	8.6
1 lb. lettuce	.99	.90	9.1
Ketchup	2.69	2.49	8.0
16 oz. bag chips	3.89	3.48	11.8
Paper plates	1.82	1.60	13.8
6-pack beer	6.74	6.66	1.2
Charcoal	\$7.89	\$7.78	1.4%

Source: MSNBC.com

### INSIDE TODAY

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### MONEY GOES MISSING IN IRAQ

A Pentagon audit of \$8.2 billion paid by the U.S. Army to contractors in Iraq finds that tens or hundreds of millions of dollars were disbursed with little or no record of goods or services ever being received. **A7**

### LNG PLANT APPEAL REJECTED

The company seeking to build a liquefied natural gas terminal at Weaver's Cove loses its bid to overturn a Coast Guard decision that the waterway leading to the proposed facility in Fall River is unsuitable for LNG tankers. **F1**

### COURT ORDERS CHILDREN RETURNED

A Texas appeals court finds that authorities had no right to seize 464 children in a raid on a polygamist sect's compound and says the children should be returned to their parents. **A2**



### FOUND ME GETS LOST

Helen Hunt makes her directorial debut and stars in *Then She Found Me*, a sudsy melodrama that seems more suited for the small screen, say on the Lifetime channel, than as a theatrical release. **E1**