

Who's to blame for high oil prices? Suppliers versus speculators



AP / HASAN JAMALI

U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman, attending the Saudi Oil Summit in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, yesterday, disagrees with the assertion by Saudi King Abdullah, seen speaking in the background, that speculators are responsible for the dramatic runup in energy prices.

BY ROBERT F. WORTH and JAD MOUAWAD
THE NEW YORK TIMES

JIDDAH, Saudi Arabia — A hastily convened global energy summit meeting led by Saudi Arabia ended largely in disagreement yesterday, with only a modest pledge of increased production by the Saudis and no resolution on what other practical steps should be taken to ease the crisis over soaring oil prices. The Saudis, who considered the meeting a success just because of the high attendance, announced they would raise production by 200,000 barrels a day. But news of that increase had already been absorbed by

the voracious world market for oil, and it was not expected to affect prices. Saudi Arabia, the biggest oil exporter, is the only country with the ability to significantly increase production quickly. Rather than finding areas of agreement, participants in the one-day meeting in this coastal city on the Red Sea illustrated the sharply diverging views on what has caused oil prices to double in the past year to

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The top 10 oil-producing nations

- Saudi Arabia
- Russia
- United States
- Iran
- China
- Mexico
- Canada
- United Arab Emirates
- Venezuela
- Kuwait

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

The top 10 oil-consuming nations

- United States
- China
- Japan
- Russia
- Germany
- India
- Canada
- Brazil
- South Korea
- Saudi Arabia

Housing recovery outlook bleak

A Harvard study concludes that it will take longer for prices in Rhode Island to rebound because the state is continuing to lose jobs.

BY LYNN ARDITI
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Rhode Island's deteriorating job market is expected to delay its recovery from what a new study describes as the nation's worst housing downturn in a generation.

The 2008 State of the Nation's Housing report that Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies released today says mounting job losses during the first three months of this year are "raising the risks of even sharper price declines and higher delinquencies ahead."

"Those parts of the Northeast that are losing jobs are going to take longer to come out of this," said the center's director, Nicolas P. Retsinas. "I don't think there will be a quick recovery."

"The state's economy is engulfed in a self-reinforcing negative cycle where the housing market has undermined the job market."

MARK ZANDI,
chief economist with
Moody's Economy.com

In most of New England, Retsinas said, the housing market problems should begin to abate by next spring — but Rhode Island may be the exception.

In Rhode Island, about 1 in 41 mortgages, on average, were in foreclosure during the fourth quarter of last year, the seventh-highest in the nation, according to the report. The foreclosure rate was highest (1 in 25 loans) in Ohio, where layoffs and weak job growth have driven more homeowners into default. Nationally, industry experts say, states with the

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Presidential election chaos in Zimbabwe

In the face of violent attacks by groups supporting incumbent Robert Mugabe, opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai withdraws from a runoff election set for this week.

BY CELIA W. DUGGER
and BARRY BEARAK
THE NEW YORK TIMES

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — The leader of Zimbabwe's opposition party withdrew yesterday from a presidential runoff just five days before it was to be held, saying he could neither participate "in this violent, illegitimate sham of an election process," nor ask his voters to risk their lives in the face of threats from forces backing President Robert Mugabe.



MUGABE

The opposition candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, the standard bearer of the Movement for Democratic Change, said at a news conference in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, that his party was facing a war rather than an election, "and we will not be part of that war."

A governing party militia blocked his supporters from attending a major rally in Harare yesterday, the head of an election observer team said. The opposition said rowdy youths, armed with iron bars and sticks, beat up people who had come to cheer for Tsvangirai.

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CAMPAIGN 2008

Democrats see chance for gains in the Senate

Among Republicans considered vulnerable is New Hampshire's Sen. John Sununu, who is being challenged by Jeanne Shaheen, a former Democratic governor.

BY JOHN E. MULLIGAN
JOURNAL WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Jack Reed finally has a reelection race, but his Republican opponent, Robert Tingley, does not yet promise the kind of political show that Rhode Islanders enjoyed two years ago in Sen. Lincoln D. Chafee's campaign — with well-financed and well-known opponents, a hard-fought primary and his eventual loss to Sheldon Whitehouse.

But elsewhere, this year's struggle for partisan advantage in the Senate has plenty of drama in store, with a vivid presidential clash as a backdrop,

a pair of interesting New England campaigns and the possibility that Democrats can expand their thin majority.

The Cook Political Report, an independent campaign tracker based in Washington, estimates that the Democrats could add between four and seven seats to their 51-49 Senate majority. (There are two independent senators, Bernard Sanders of Vermont and Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut, but both caucus with the Democrats and voted in this Congress for Democratic leadership.)

By all accounts, this year's political climate favors the Democrats, who



SUNUNU



SHAHEEN

are running hard to the drumbeat of "change" behind their presidential candidate, Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois. The Republicans are burdened with an unpopular war, a poorly viewed president who has been in office for almost eight years, and a difficult economy — underscored in bold-face every time a voter pumps a \$4 gallon of gasoline into the tank.

The politico with day-to-day responsibility for supervising the party's effort to elect Democrats to the Senate is J.B. Poersch, a former Rhode Islander and Reed's onetime chief of staff.

Poersch cites a number of recent polls that show a generic voter preference for Democrats and a large ma-

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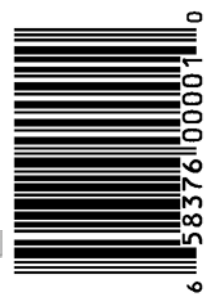
Poll: Race, age key factors for many voters

BY JON COHEN
and JENNIFER AGIESTA
THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — As Sen. Barack Obama opens his campaign as the first African American on a major party presidential ticket, nearly half of all Americans say race relations in the country are in bad shape, and 3 in 10 acknowledge feelings of racial prejudice, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Lingering racial bias affects the public's assessments of the Democrat from Illinois, but offsetting advantages and Sen. John McCain's age could be bigger factors in determining

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LOSING INTEREST

A TV consultant reports that all three major broadcast networks have dramatically cut back on the number of minutes they devote to coverage of the war in Iraq on their nightly news programs. **A2**

BROKAW TO HOST

NBC News announces that veteran anchor Tom Brokaw will moderate *Meet the Press* through the November election, filling the vacancy created by the death of Tim Russert. **A4**



LATE-INNING HEROICS

It took 13 innings to accomplish but Kevin Youkilis manages to salvage Boston's series against St. Louis with a two-run walk-off homer to give the Sox a 5-3 win. **B1**