

FAMILIAR FEEL
Another humid day with highs in the mid-80s; partly cloudy tonight.
Forecast, E12

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Slowly, R.I. budget cuts begin to take hold

With the start of the new fiscal year, some programs are already affected by spending reductions while others won't be affected until later in the year.

BY STEVE PEOPLES
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

CENTRAL FALLS — Tracy Walker stands along the chainlink fence far from the podium, flashing a cardboard sign at passing cars to protest millions of dollars in budget cuts she doesn't understand.

She is a mother of four children lost to state custody. A drug addict. A resident of Amos House, which runs the rehabilitation program she credits with saving her life just a week earlier.

"I don't understand too much about it," Walker, 39, says of the state budget, from the

back of a rally that drew dozens of protesters yesterday afternoon to this VFW parking lot. "But it probably affects me."

Indeed, the swath of cuts approved in Rhode Island's 2008-09 budget, which took effect yesterday, will affect tens of thousands of low-income, disabled and elderly Rhode Islanders, in addition to community groups such as Meals on Wheels, the Rhode Is-

SEE BUDGET, A3

Powell spurns talk of becoming vice president

Speaking in Rhode Island yesterday, the retired general says he is not ready to endorse either John McCain or Barack Obama.

BY G. WAYNE MILLER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Former Secretary of State and four-star Gen. Colin Powell yesterday said he has no interest in running for vice president should presumptive Republican nominee John McCain ask him to join the GOP ticket, as has been speculated recently in media reports.

"I am not interested in political life and I am not a candidate for any office," Powell said at a small news conference.

Nor is he ready to endorse McCain or Democratic presumptive nominee Barack Obama — but he seemed to leave open the

SEE POWELL, A5



R.I. Supreme Court overturns lead-paint ruling



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL FILES

The judges say the companies did not control their paints after selling them generations ago.

BY PETER B. LORD
JOURNAL ENVIRONMENT WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The Rhode Island Supreme Court yesterday brought an abrupt end to the state's nine-year campaign to force some of the nation's major corporations to clean up the lead-based paints that the state believes poisoned tens of thousands of Rhode Island children.

In a unanimous 4 to 0 ruling, the court overturned a string of decisions by Superior Court Judge Michael A. Silverstein and a verdict by a six-person jury that found the companies created a public nuisance by making and selling the paints.

The court found there was no public nuisance because even though lead-based paints continue to harm children today, Sherwin Williams Inc., NL Industries and Millennium Holdings LLC did not control their paints after they sold them generations ago.

It was a major decision in a case that has taken on massive proportions. Within hours, it was cited on hundreds of business and health Web sites across the country. It reverses a verdict from the longest running civil trial in the state's history.

The ruling saves the paint companies billions of dollars that the state was demanding to clean up the paints on hundreds of thousands of houses in Rhode Island. It cost Motley Rice, the private law firm that bankrolled much of the state's case, contingency fees that would have amounted to 16 percent of the billions of dollars.

SEE LEAD, A5

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Extra: To read the 81-page Supreme Court decision, and for more on the lawsuit, go to projo.com

Case History

Oct. 13, 1999 Attorney General Sheldon Whitehouse, above, right, citing the high percentage of children in Rhode Island with elevated levels of lead in their bloodstream, files suit against eight major paint companies alleging they created a public nuisance.

Oct. 29, 2002: The case ends in a mistrial, with four jurors siding with the companies and two with the state.

March 21, 2003: Newly elected Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch announces that he will continue to pursue legal action begun by Whitehouse against the paint companies.

Feb. 22, 2006: At right, Roberta Hazen Aaronson, left, and Liz Colon, both advocates of the suit against the paint companies, leave court after a six-person jury finds that the "cumulative presence of lead pigment in paints and coatings on buildings throughout the state of Rhode Island" constituted a public nuisance.

Feb. 26, 2007: Superior Court Judge Michael Silverstein, who presided over both trials, rejects every objection raised by the paint companies over the way he administered what had become

the longest civil jury trial in state history.

July 1, 2008: Lynch, right, at a news conference yesterday after the Rhode Island Supreme Court overturns the ruling against the paint companies, calls the decision "enormously disappointing."



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SILVERSTEIN

Deputy Chief Paul Kennedy, center, talks with the Javier family on their front porch at 145 Camden Ave., Providence, yesterday where their son's friend, Jeffrey Lopez, 19, was fatally shot Monday night.



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL
MARY MURPHY

Sidewalk confrontation blamed in slaying of Providence teen

BY W. ZACHARY MALINOWSKI
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — A decision by two Smith Hill teenagers to walk through a pack of Laos Pride gang members cost one of them his life, the police said.

Jeffrey Lopez, 19, was gunned down Monday night on the front porch of an apartment house less than two blocks from where the confrontation took place on a Camden Avenue sidewalk. A second shot grazed the back of Lopez's friend, Carlos Javier, also

19. A few minutes later, the police arrested two 16-year-old boys and the 13-year-old sister of one of the boys. The boys are charged with murder, while the girl is charged with retrieving the gun and threatening the teenage

boys outside the gang hangout at 115 Camden Ave.

In a city where gun violence has surged in recent months, the police found the city's eighth homicide of the year, and the second teenager killed in less than a week, particularly senseless.

"It's ridiculous, frankly," said Deputy Police Chief Paul J. Kennedy. "It's not having enough room on the sidewalk to pass. It's

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Video: To watch a video of the scene at 145 Camden Ave., Providence, go to projo.com

SEE SHOOTING, A3

INSIDE TODAY

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HELP FOR R.I. JOBLESS

Up to 5,000 more jobless Rhode Islanders may be eligible for extended unemployment benefits for up to an additional 13 weeks now that President Bush has signed federal legislation authorizing the payments. **F1**

SOX STUNG BY RAYS

The pumless Sox squander a stellar pitching performance by Tim Wakefield and fall further behind division-leading Tampa Bay with a 3-1 loss to the Rays. **C1**

AN AMERICAN GIRL



Although it's set in 1934, there's something remarkably up-to-date about *Kit Kittredge: An American Girl*, a film starring Abigail Breslin, center, that's based on one of the dolls and books in the popular series. **E6**

