

NLR YMCA to shut doors

Competition, economy cited in branch's closure set for March 31. — Arkansas, 1B



NFL talks continue

Owners, players' union hold bargaining session as deadline grows near. — Sports, 1C

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In the news

■ **Christopher Michael Carroll**, 36, of Manteca, Calif., faces charges of attempted murder, kidnapping and domestic assault after police say he drove 35 miles on a freeway with his wife on the hood of their minivan clinging to a windshield-wiper blade after the couple got into an argument.

■ **Marcia Machtiger** of Pittsburgh and Amanda Kloski, an Oklahoma veterinarian technician, are sorting hundreds of e-mails and phone calls from people interested in adopting Wall-e, a black-and-white puppy dumped at an Oklahoma animal shelter, who lived through two attempts to euthanize him.

■ **Sen. Daniel Akaka**, 86, said he won't run for re-election next year, with the Hawaii Democrat adding that he'll finish his term and step down after 22 years in the Senate.

■ **Joanne Pescatore**, a Philadelphia assistant district attorney, said prosecutors have notified Dr. Kermit Gosnell, who is accused of killing a patient and seven babies at his abortion clinic, that they intend to pursue the death penalty.

■ **Kristin Werner**, a 34-year-old Seattle native, has achieved the rank of gunner's mate chief petty officer, making her the first woman in the history of the U.S. Coast Guard to do so.

■ **John Galliano**, who was fired this week as Christian Dior's creative director after video surfaced of him praising Adolf Hitler at a Paris cafe, has been ordered to stand trial there on allegations of "public insults based on the origin, religious affiliation, race or ethnicity" against three people.

■ **Recep Tayyip Erdogan**, Turkey's prime minister, has accepted libel damages, in an amount not disclosed, from Britain's *Daily Telegraph*, which reported in September that Erdogan's AK party had accepted \$25 million from Iran.

■ **Terrie Robinson**, 24, has been charged in Greenville, Miss., with murder after authorities said they found her 3-year-old son's burned body in an oven.

■ **Istvan Tarlos**, mayor of Budapest, Hungary, said Elvis Presley will be declared a posthumous honorary resident of the city because of his support for Hungary in the wake of the short-lived, anti-Soviet revolution of October 1956.

■ **Victor Barahona**, a 10-year-old Miami boy who was found doused with toxic chemicals in his adoptive father's pest-control truck on Valentine's Day, has been released from the hospital and is staying in a therapeutic foster home.



Snyder

Alito

Justices: Funeral protests shielded

Kin victimized, says lone dissent

DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE PRESS SERVICES

WASHINGTON — The First Amendment allows protests at military funerals, the Supreme Court ruled Wednesday in an 8-1 decision.

"Speech is powerful," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the majority. "It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and — as it did here — inflict great pain."

But under the First Amendment, he went on, "we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker." Instead, the national commitment to free speech, he said, requires protection of "even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate."

The decision, from which Justice Samuel Alito dissented, was the latest in a series of First Amendment rulings from the Roberts court. Last year, the court struck down laws limiting speech about politics and making it a crime to distribute depictions of cruelty to animals.

Only the interest in national security has, in the recent run of decisions, been ruled substantial enough to overcome free-speech interests.

Roberts used language culled from the First Amendment canon of foundational decisions in setting out the central place that free speech plays in the constitutional structure. He pointed to the decision that freed protesters who burned the American flag and another that protected a *Hustler* magazine cartoonist who portrayed the Rev. Jerry Falwell in an outhouse.

"Debate on public issues should be robust, uninhibited and wide-open," he wrote, because "speech on public issues occupies the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment" See **PROTESTS**, Page 5A

Libyan rebels retake oil port



AP/HUSSEIN MALLA

Libyan rebel fighters ride a captured tank toward the strategic oil port of Brega to help counter an offensive by pro-Gadhafi forces to retake the town.

Troops loyal to Gadhafi put up fight

DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE PRESS SERVICES

BREGA, Libya — Rebel forces routed troops loyal to Moammar Gadhafi in a fierce battle over an oil port Wednesday, scrambling over the dunes of a Mediterranean beach through shelling and an airstrike to corner their attackers.

While they thwarted the regime's first counteroffensive in eastern Libya, opposition leaders still pleaded for outside airstrikes to help them oust the longtime leader.

The attack on Brega, a strategic oil facility 460 miles east of Gadhafi's stronghold in Tripoli, illustrated the deep difficulties the Libyan leader's armed forces — an array of militiamen, mercenaries and military units — have had in rolling back the uprising that has swept over the eastern half of Libya since Feb. 15.

In the capital, Tripoli, Gadhafi warned against U.S. or other Western intervention, vowing to turn See **LIBYA**, Page 8A

Drillers face earthquake hearing

Emergency session set on barring use of 2 disposal wells in the shale

TOBY MANTHEY

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission on Friday will consider a temporary order to stop Chesapeake Operating Inc. and Clarita Operating LLC from using two drilling-fluid disposal wells in Faulkner County.

The commission staff members see a "potential correlation" between "the injection operations and the seismic activity" in that part

of the Fayetteville Shale formation, said Shane Khoury, deputy director of the staff and its chief counsel. "That's pretty much all I can say at this point."

Scientists have reported more than 870 earthquakes in northern Faulkner County since September.

A 4.7-magnitude earthquake occurred Sunday night about 3 miles northeast of Greenbrier. It was the state's largest quake since 1976 and

was felt in six states although damage was minor.

The commission's special hearing will be at 10:30 a.m. in the Game and Fish Commission building at 2 Natural Resources Drive in Little Rock.

Khoury said the two wells were selected because of their location in relation to faults.

Scientists have been trying to determine whether the earthquakes in the area are from natural activity or are linked to disposal wells.

Earthquakes around Enola, roughly 20 miles southeast of Guy, began in 1982 and continued off and on for a few years.

Drilling for natural gas by using the hydraulic-fracturing method in the Fayetteville Shale began in 2004. The formation runs across northern Arkansas.

Hydraulic fracturing is a process of extracting natural gas from underground shale See **WELLS**, Page 4A

Congress dodges a shutdown

Deadline stretched 2 weeks as spending cuts negotiated

DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE PRESS SERVICES

WASHINGTON — Congress on Wednesday approved a budget bill that will prevent a government shutdown for now while lawmakers negotiate over Republican demands to further cut federal spending this year.

The Senate voted 91-9 to send the measure to President Barack Obama, who signed it Wednesday afternoon. Democratic Sen. Mark

**OBAMA SEEKS** panel to compile list of federal properties that can be sold off. Page 4A.

Pryor and Republican Sen. John Boozman, both of Arkansas, supported the legislation. Five Republicans, three Democrats and independent Bernie Sanders of Vermont voted no.

The bill, which reduces spending by \$4 billion, passed the House on Tuesday by a

335-91 vote. Current government spending authority would expire Friday and the legislation extends that to March 18.

"We're going to keep working toward a solution" for the rest of this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said before the vote. "This time around it may not include everything Democrats want or everything the Re- See **SPENDING**, Page 4A



AP/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

**Senate Majority Leader** Harry Reid (foreground), with Sen. Charles Schumer, discusses budget negotiations Wednesday.

2 U.S. airmen shot, killed



AP/MARTIN OESER

German police work Wednesday outside the Frankfurt airport where a 21-year-old gunman who authorities said was from Kosovo attacked a bus carrying U.S. Air Force members, killing two airmen and wounding two. Article, 6A

Pryor warns U.S. cuts imperil center near PB

ALEX DANIELS ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Mark Pryor warned Wednesday that federal-spending cuts passed by the House of Representatives and now before the Senate would result in the loss of hundreds of jobs at a national research center near Pine Bluff.

As part of the legislation passed by the House last month that would fund the federal government through the end of the current fiscal year, lawmakers reduced the annual budget for the National Center for Toxicological Research in Jefferson from \$59 million to \$35 million.

This week, the Senate began scrutinizing the House-

passed cuts. The senators are attempting to trim the federal budget, while simultaneously protecting projects and jobs in their states.

Congressional aides said work at the Arkansas center would grind to a halt if its budget is reduced by as much as proposed, because without assurances of future funding, the agency would have to stop paying its contractors and lay off nearly half of its staff.

The center, which is part of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, conducts and coordinates research on the health effects of toxins, which are poisonous substances produced by living cells or organisms.

Pryor, a Democrat from See **CUTS**, Page 4A

WEATHER

**LITTLE ROCK**  
Today Partly cloudy.  
High 70, winds southeast at 5 to 15 mph.  
Tonight Partly to mostly cloudy.  
Low 52.



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