



LOSE THE GUT FOR GOOD LIFE, ETC.

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

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THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2007

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MORE NEWS

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POLICE: COP-LANDLORD DID NOTHING WRONG

A sergeant's properties have drawn scads of complaints, but he broke no laws and violated no policies, a probe concludes. **1B**

DUKE ETHICS GURU CALLS CHEATING 'EPIDEMIC,' 7B

HOUSE HAS A MIND TO ADD A HEAP TO STATE DEBT, 1B

CHENEY PUSHES MALIKI TO DO MORE, AND FAST



AP PHOTO BY GERALD HERBERT

A two-month summer vacation for parliament just won't cut it, the vice president tells Iraq's prime minister. **3A**

SENATE BEEFS UP FDA DRUG OVERSIGHT

After a spate of problems with new medicines, a bid to put drug makers on a shorter leash passes overwhelmingly. **3A**

POPE, IN BRAZIL, TALKS TOUGH ON ABORTION

Benedict says Mexico City legislators excommunicated themselves by voting to allow the procedure in their city. **14A**

SUSPECTS HAIL FROM PRO-AMERICAN HOTBED

Alleged Fort Dix terror plotters come from a Muslim enclave where the U.S. is revered. **9A**

REVLON INCENTIVES ADD UP TO \$1 MILLION

In return, the company will upgrade its Oxford plant. But hiring plans are vague. **1D**

TAMMY FAYE STOPS CANCER TREATMENTS

Down to 65 pounds, the former televangelist says her fate is now 'up to God and my faith.' **2A**

WEATHER

TODAY: Partly sunny and warmer. Low 60, high 83.
FRIDAY: Partly cloudy with late storms. Low 62, high 86. **10B**

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Bill could kill Navy's airfield plan

Language added to a defense measure might stop the airstrip in Eastern North Carolina.

By BARBARA BARRETT
WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT
WASHINGTON - A few sentences tucked inside a massive military bill on Wednesday could prove fatal for the Navy's proposed

airstrip in Eastern North Carolina. Reps. G.K. Butterfield and David Price, both Democrats, negotiated with other members of Congress behind closed doors to insert language that would prevent the Navy from building the training strip at its preferred site in Washington and Beaufort counties. Meanwhile, a top Democratic House member from Texas wants

LEARN MORE

Read about the airfield issue in our Under the Dome blog at dome.newsobserver.com.

the secretary of the Navy to consider closing the master jet base at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia altogether and sending its fleet of F/A-18 Super Hornets elsewhere. Among the half-dozen sites that Rep. Solomon Ortiz

wants studied: Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. "It is a realistic possibility," said Rep. Mike McIntyre, a Lumber-ton Democrat, of the possible closure and shift of the jet base. "I think it's a real opportunity for North Carolina to consider." The House Armed Services Committee, of which McIntyre is a member, hadn't approved the massive 2008 Defense Authorization Bill by Wednesday

evening. Members may continue today debating the final wording on a bill that authorizes military programs. It would go next to the full House, and then must be combined with an authorization bill in the Senate, where both North Carolina senators oppose the Washington County site. The language related to the

SEE NAVY, PAGE 10A

ON JONES STREET, A MARCH AGAINST ANNEXATIONS



Harry Dillree, who lives near Pinehurst, marches Wednesday at the Capitol with about 200 demonstrators opposed to forced annexation. About 20 bills have been introduced to alter or stop the annexations, which opponents say let cities and towns grab taxes. Supporters say people should pay for the benefit of living near urban areas. See story, Page 1B.

STAFF PHOTO BY TRAVIS LONG

Voices rally for school board

Parents organize to counter critics

By T. KEUNG HUI
STAFF WRITER

Some Wake County parents are banding together against critics of year-round schools, calling them a "vocal minority" that has gotten too much attention.

Several dozen parents have joined Support Wake Schools, a group formed last week to unite people who believe that they represent most families in the school system. They're upset that the parent group Wake CARES sued the school system, and they say Wake CARES doesn't represent their interests.

"I feel that there is a silent majority out there that supports the policies of the school system or at least have come to accept them," said Chris Decker, a Cary parent who started Support Wake Schools. "I just reached a boiling point and felt the need to speak out."

The parents have formed an on-line message group, shown up at public meetings and contacted elected officials expressing their backing for the school system.

Last week, Wake CARES, which claims to have at least 3,000 active members, hailed as a victory for parents a judge's ruling that the school district couldn't assign students to mandatory year-round schools. The ruling forced the system to revise plans to con-

INSIDE

JUDGE APPROVES: Wake's voluntary approach gets a nod. **► 10A**

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DEA agent posed suspect in sombrero

A 2005 photo of the Mexican man sealed a plea deal that freed him last week

By SARAH OVASKA
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH - A Raleigh-based Drug Enforcement Administration agent had a Mexican suspect put on a sombrero and hold a Mexican flag and then took his picture, the suspect's attorney said.

The defense attorney, Jeff Cutler, said a prosecutor and law enforcement officers confirmed the existence of the 2005 photograph of Jorge Hernandez-Villalvazo during a pretrial meeting last week. Within minutes, the

prosecutor offered a plea deal, avoiding a trial and freeing Hernandez-Villalvazo.

Cutler said the disclosure of the photo "was the driving force behind that plea deal." Hernandez-Villalvazo left the Wake County jail Friday, two years after his initial arrest on a charge of conspiring to traffic cocaine. "They humiliated him," Cutler said.

Wake District Attorney Colon Willoughby, whose office handled the case, said taking the photo was a mistake. "It

shouldn't have happened," he said.

DEA officials on Wednesday would not identify the agent or release the photo. "DEA is looking further into the matter," spokeswoman Ruth Porter-Whipple said from Atlanta.

The incident took place shortly after the arrest of Hernandez-Villalvazo, 41, in April 2005. Hernandez-Villalvazo, a native of Mexico who has permanent U.S. residency, had been living in the Zebulon area and buying cars that he took to Mex-

ico to sell, Cutler said.

A Wake County sheriff's detective, working alongside DEA agents as part of a task force that tackles large-scale drug-trafficking networks in the Raleigh area, headed the investigation that ensnared Hernandez-Villalvazo. The investigation relied on court-ordered wiretaps of several phone lines.

Hernandez-Villalvazo was one of seven defendants arrested. Two others have pleaded guilty

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Study may win respect for lowly opossum

By CATHERINE CLABBY
STAFF WRITER

It's ugly. It seems dim-witted. It's the punch line of jokes about roadkill.

But the humble opossum may shed light on how humans can recover from spinal injuries and beat skin cancer.

Scientists in North Carolina and Massachusetts report today they have sequenced the genome of the *Monodelphis domestica*, a laboratory animal cousin to the pale, rat-tailed critter that invades people's crawl spaces and garages at night.

Cracking the animal's DNA code may give insight into a remarkable talent of newborn opossums. Damaged nerves in their spinal cords naturally regenerate — a biological feat that scientists would love to recreate in people. "If we can unravel the molecular mechanism that allows that



Genome study of the common opossum's lab-living cousin could aid research into nerve regeneration and melanoma.

SOUTHWEST FOUNDATION FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH PHOTO

that would provide a huge amount of important information for the field of regenerative medicine," said N.C. State Uni-

versity geneticist Matthew Breen, whose laboratory broke the code with researchers at the Cambridge-based Broad Insti-

tute and others.

In addition, opossum genes might give insight into the lethal skin cancer melanoma. Opossums are the only mammals besides humans known to easily develop the cancer from sun exposure.

Such qualities have elevated the long-in-the-snout, flat-in-the-road marsupial to celebrity status, landing the genome sequencing story on the cover of the journal *Nature* this month. Even that might not do much for the possum's image.

"They've got a bad reputation but they're not as bad as people think," said Matt Scott, who traps possums locally for the animal control company Trutech. Scott, a wildlife biologist, said the research didn't surprise him:

"A lot of things out there that people hate are helpful in one way or another."

COMING SUNDAY

IN THE N&O



She had eight tickets in five years. Why didn't anybody stop this Greensboro woman before she killed someone? Read our four-part series, "Speed Unlimited," starting Sunday.

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