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Metro

In Brief

Wednesday, August 3, 2005; B03

THE DISTRICT

Secret Service Car Hits Pedestrian

A pedestrian was struck yesterday by a U.S. Secret Service patrol car near the Naval Observatory and the vice president's residence in Northwest Washington, authorities said.

The incident occurred about 10:30 p.m. in the 3400 block of Massachusetts Avenue NW, D.C. police said.

The woman who was injured was taken to a hospital. Her condition was not known.

Lights Out on Bridge, Lincoln Memorial

The National Park Service said it plans to turn out the lights on Memorial Bridge, in the Lincoln Memorial and on two short roads nearby tonight as part of the construction project underway in that area.

The outage is expected to last from 11 p.m. until 5 a.m. tomorrow, the Park Service said. The Park Service urged visitors to leave the memorial by 10:30 p.m. tonight.

Leak Closes Providence Hospital ER

A refrigerant leak in an air conditioning unit forced the temporary closing of the emergency room at Providence Hospital yesterday, a D.C. fire department spokesman said.

The leak was discovered about 6:15 p.m., and the emergency room was closed for about 90 minutes, spokesman Alan Etter said. He said there were no injuries or relocations.

Guantanamo Improved, Norton Says

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), just back from a trip to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, said conditions at the detention facility there seem to have improved. She also said she wants an independent commission to survey detainees.

Norton last visited the military-run prison in February 2004, and she wants observers allowed in to show the public that the military has nothing to hide.

Norton took the one-day trip as part of a congressional delegation. She said she was allowed to observe facilities used by the prison's most defiant detainees.

During her last visit, the delegation saw female prisoners being interrogated while they ate ice cream. She said she thought those interrogations were staged.

This time, Norton said, she was convinced that detainees live in more humane facilities, with better safeguards against abuse.

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MARYLAND

Voting Machine Reliability to Be Studied

The State Board of Elections will contract with two universities to study the reliability of the state's Diebold electronic voting machines and help legislators decide whether there should be a paper trail that could be used to verify counting accuracy.

Linda Lamone, state elections administrator, told members of a Senate subcommittee on elections yesterday that the studies will be completed before the General Assembly meets in January.

Diebold electronic machines were used in all Maryland polling places last year except in Baltimore. State election officials said the machines accurately counted the votes, and only the kinds of scattered problems that always occur on Election Day occurred.

But critics said the Diebold machines are unreliable because they do not create a paper trail that can be used to verify individual votes and are vulnerable to errors and fraud, including attacks by hackers or manipulation of votes by insiders.

Lamone said the Maryland Institute for Policy Analysis and Research at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and the Center for American Politics and Citizenship at the University of Maryland at College Park will study the system.

Seven Frederick Homes Damaged in Fire

A child playing with a lighter apparently started a fire Monday night that damaged seven homes in Frederick, causing an estimated \$700,000 in damage, investigators from the Maryland state fire marshal's office said yesterday.

No one was hurt in the two-alarm blaze, which started on the rear deck of a three-story townhouse in the 1500 block of Wheyfield Drive. It then spread to the roof and an adjoining home.

Mary D. Kane Named Secretary of State

Mary D. Kane was named Maryland's secretary of state yesterday by Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R).

Kane, wife of Maryland Republican Party Chairman John M. Kane, replaces R. Karl Aumann, who stepped down this week to go onto the Maryland Workers' Compensation Commission.

Mary Kane has served as deputy secretary of state and chief legal counsel since March 2003.

The state Senate must confirm the appointment. Duties include recording of the governor's executive orders and notaries public filings, and filing other documents.

Health Curriculum Advisers Sought

Authorities have invited applications for seats on the 15-member Family Life and Human Development Advisory Committee -- the citizens group that will advise educators rewriting the health curriculum for Montgomery County Public Schools.

The Board of Education recently shelved its revised health education curriculum and dissolved the original advisory committee after the school system was sued by two groups who opposed some of the material in the new lessons. A settlement was reached, and educators are starting to write a new curriculum.

Applicants must be Montgomery residents. Individuals who served on the previous committee are not eligible. Applications must be received by Sept. 9. Anyone interested in obtaining one can contact Becky Gibson by e-mail at Becky_Gibson@fc.mcps.k12.md.us or call her at 301-279-3301. Applications are on the school system's Web site at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe> .

VIRGINIA

Lottery Hits 4th Record Performance

The Virginia Lottery turned a record profit of \$423.5 million in the past year.

It was the fourth consecutive record performance for the lottery, Lottery, topping the fiscal 2004 profit by about \$15 million, the agency said. Donna M. VanCleave, the lottery's interim executive director, credited instant scratch ticket sales. Sales of scratchers reached almost \$680 million, a \$49 million increase.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I'm a bit desperate. You always want to be a legal permanent resident, to feel more secure."

-- Mela Garza, who arrived from Guatemala two years ago on a special "spouse visa" and is waiting to become a permanent U.S. resident. -- B1

Compiled from reports by staff writers Allan Lengel, Martin Weil, John Wagner, Nelson Hernandez and Lori Aratani and the Associated Press.

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