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Senate Save Cumberland, Easton Mail Operations

By MARK MILLER
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON - The Senate passed a postal reform bill Wednesday that would prevent the U.S. Postal Service from closing mail processing facilities in Easton and Cumberland, a move that came after lobbying by Maryland's two senators.

Maryland Democratic Sens. Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin joined the 62 senators voting in favor of the 21st Century Postal Service Act, but their support was not assured until Tuesday, when language to protect the Eastern Shore Processing and Distribution Facility in Easton and the Customer Service Mail Processing Center in Cumberland from proposed closure was added to the bill.

"We wanted to make sure that processing centers were preserved in important parts of our country," Cardin said.

The USPS was considering the Easton center for consolidation with another facility in Wilmington, Del., and had slated the sorting facility in Cumberland for consolidation with a center in Johnstown, Pa.

However, Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe relented Tuesday, sending the quartet of legislators who have taken the lead on postal reform -- Sens. Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn.; Susan Collins, R-Maine; Tom Carper, D-Del.; and Scott Brown, R-Mass. -- a letter listing the Easton and Cumberland facilities, along with five others in Maryland, among those with "Potential to Remain Open" under the new postal standards the bill

See POSTAL, Page A3

Market Forces Mire Maryland Gas Export Plan in Uncertainty

By VARUN SAXENA
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON - Lusby's natural gas import terminal is a victim of the boom in domestic production, and the industry's political and economic uncertainties are endangering its owner's efforts to rebound by adding export capabilities to the facility to take advantage of the plant's vicinity to the Marcellus Shale gas field.

The development of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") and directional drilling technology has led to a more than 25 percent increase in American natural gas production over the last five years, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOMINION
An aerial view of the Cove Point liquefied natural gas facility along the Chesapeake Bay. The offshore platform is in the background.

But fracking, the most significant development in the American energy industry in decades, has been disruptive to

import facilities. Only three of

See GAS, Page A7

Teacher of the Year
Sharelle Stagg, special education resource teacher at Valley View Elementary School, has been named the 2012 Prince George's County Teacher of the Year. Stagg has spent her eight-year career serving students in Prince George's County Public Schools starting as a classroom teacher.

Community, Page A3

Repeal the Bill

In a letter to ALEC's corporate sponsor, the National Urban League Urges ALEC to Support Repeal of Kill at Will and Voter I.D. Laws. "We call on your companies to stop supporting ALEC's reckless agenda, which harms the communities in which you do business." This group is behind dozens of voter ID laws.

Opinion, Page A4

The Cost of Driving

It's getting costlier to own and operate a vehicle in the United States and in the Washington metro area this year, according to a recent AAA study. The average cost of owning and operating a car in the United States rose to 59.5 cents per mile, or \$8,946 per year — that's an increase of 1.1 cent per mile since this time last year.

Business, Page A5

Movie Review

Given the complexity of what it set out to do, "The Avengers" is probably as good as anyone could have expected. "The Avengers" has to unite multiple characters who have wildly different pre-established personalities and backstories, come up with a plot line that gives each of them a reason to be involved.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Hoyer's Statement on GOP Assault Against Federal Employees

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) released the following statement after Republicans on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee voted to once again ask federal employees to contribute to deficit reduction, while refusing to ask the wealthiest Americans to do so.

"I am very disappointed that Republicans on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee once again called federal employees to contribute to deficit reduction while refusing to ask the same of millionaires and billionaires. Today's vote to impose a 5% cut on employees' take-home pay and reduce the federal government's contribution to their retirement accounts is just one more example of the ongoing assault by Republicans against those who have chosen to serve this nation in civilian service.

Federal employees stepped up to the plate last year by accepting a two-year pay freeze, and they were asked to contribute again this year through higher out-of-pocket contributions by new employees into retirement accounts, contributing to a total of \$75 billion toward deficit reduction over the next ten years. Getting America's fiscal house in order remains one of our most pressing and most difficult challenges, and I will continue to push for a comprehensive deficit reduction solution that is big, bold, and balanced — and does not ask only one group of middle-class Americans to carry the burden. I call on Republicans to stop targeting federal employees and start working with Democrats on finding serious, responsible solutions to our deficit challenge."



FILE PHOTO

PHOTO COURTESY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DHCD Director Eric Brown (middle) with DHCD Employees

Housing and Community Development Team Up for County's Annual "Christmas in April"

By PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
County Executive's Office

are unable to make repairs to their home.

Pamela Wilson, an area coordinator for this year's CIA event, a DHCD employee and a member of the Board of Directors for Christmas in April, serves on CIA's house review panel and selection committee. "I see a definite tie-in to what we accomplish with Christmas in April and the services provided to residents of Prince George's County from our Department of Housing and Community Development's Single Family Housing Rehab Loan Program. DHCD serves the same population for the same purpose, to help elderly and disabled homeowners maintain and stay in their homes. Oftentimes, DHCD and Christmas in April will make recommendations to each other. If a resident doesn't qualify for Christmas in April,

the CIA staff will refer the person to DHCD for possible services and vice-versa."

"We are delighted with Ms. Wilson's involvement this year with Christmas in April," said Mr. Eric Brown, Director of the Prince George's County Department of Housing and Community Development. "She has re-energized our department's participation and our housing team looks forward to doing an outstanding job."

Applicants must qualify for both Christmas in April and the DHCD's Single-Family Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program. Home repairs under the Christmas in April are limited to what volunteers can accomplish in one day. DHCD's Single Family Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program is more extensive in its repairs and renovations.

First Black Preakness Winner All But Erased From History

By AARON CARTER
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - In 1889, George "Spider" Anderson became the first black jockey to win the Preakness. In those days black jockeys were not uncommon.

In fact, the first Kentucky Derby in 1875 was run with a field of mostly black riders, one of whom, Oliver Lewis, won the race.

Not much is known about Anderson, said Dr. Kenneth Cohen, a professor of early American history at St. Mary's College of Maryland. Unlike Jimmy Winkfield, who is the first jockey to win consecutive Kentucky Derbies (1901, 1902) and has a race named in his honor (The Jimmy Winkfield Stakes on Long Island, N.Y.), Cohen said there is no historical trace of Anderson after 1891.

Anderson's fate, Cohen said, is not uncommon for black riders of the era, calling his

See ANDERSON, Page A5



PHOTO COURTESY PIMLICO RACE COURSE
The House of Style
For a fashionable segment of racing fans from 1870 to 1966, there was no other place to be on Preakness day than the sprawling Victorian building known as the Old Clubhouse. Men and women dressed to the height of fashion were served by white-coated Harry M. Stevens waiters, directed by a maître d' wearing a tuxedo. A token replica of the destroyed building's cupola now sits in the infield, complete with horse and jockey weather vane.

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

The oil industry is planning what some call a dangerous strategy of drilling for oil on the Outer Continental Shelf in the Arctic Ocean. What's going on?

-- Vera Bailey,

New Hope, PA

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

An exciting 90 years for Don Young

Donald Young, of Camp Springs, turns 90 on May 5—and what a busy 90 years it has been!

He was born in Newton, Massachusetts, a descendant of Jonas Sanderston who was a beacon tender during Paul Revere's ride.

By the time Don finished high school in Malden, World War II was warming up and soon he was in the Army. He served first with a military police escort, guarding German prisoners of war in a POW camp in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. In 1944, his unit retrained as medics and was assigned to the 191st General Hospital. They shipped out on a converted luxury liner, the USS WestPoint which, without a convoy, made a record ocean crossing in four days. They were bound for Verdun but, because of the Battle of the Bulge, they set up a 1000-bed general hospital in Paris.

After the war, Don attended Boston University College of Business Administration and went to work for the Census Bureau. His 35 years with Census, took him on many adventures—as foreign advisor on loan to the International Cooperation Administration and AID, on assignment to the Philippines 1956-1958 and 1961-1963 as statistical advisor for Economic Census and Economic Surveys, twice to China as lecturer, to Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Paraguay to advise on their economic censuses. Yes, he speaks Spanish. He retired in 1985 with 41 years of government service.

No doubt the best thing that happened to him during his Census years was meeting and marrying a fellow Census worker, Carmina Fernández Cruz, a native of Puerto Rico with a PhD in math. They'll

celebrate their 52nd anniversary in June with their children, Donna and Paul and his wife MaryAnn, and grandchildren Ashley, Kyle and Matthew.

Don Young has been a volunteer with school Science Fairs, the Census Alumni Association, and his parish, St. Philip the Apostle. He enjoys historical researching, the daily newspaper, travel to Florida and Puerto Rico, fishing, Boston baked beans, spumoni, and sunflowers. As he says, "No matter how old, always 'Young'."

Feeling lucky?

The Ladies Auxiliary of VFW Post 9619 invites you to join them on a trip to Harrington Casino, in Delaware, on Thursday, May 17, leaving the VFW at 9 a.m. and returning at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$25—but \$15 is returned to the payer to use for playing. A free buffet is also offered. Call Phyllis Cooks, President of the Ladies Auxiliary, for more information, at 301-736-5022.

Applause

Walter Harley, of Oxon Hill High School, is one of the 21 Washington Area winners of the 29th annual Washington Posts' Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Awards.

Coming up

The Friends of the Surratt-Clinton Library are hosting a Spring Book Sale on May 5, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Cheap Prices, Good Selection, Worthy Cause." Info: fosclpgc@yahoo.com.

Pirate Fest! Come if ye dare! On the grounds of Darnall's Chance House Museum, 14800 Governor Oden Bowie Drive in Upper Marlboro.

Swashbuckling reenactors, hands-on children's activities, live music, food, costume contest and treasure hunt. \$5 per person, free for ages 4 & under. Gwynn Park High School, Class of 1962, plans a 50th

reunion July 14 at the Brandywine Firehouse. Alumni from 1958 to 1966 are invited. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Call 240-304-6285.

Changing landscape

The McDonald's at the corner of Suitland and Allentown roads has a huge banner announcing their drive-in window is now open 24 hours.

From the Heart Ministries, in Andrew Manor Shopping Center, has submitted a site plan to convert the existing warehouse and church to include a private school.

May they rest in peace

Laurie Gibson Colandrea, 46, of Appomattox, Va., formerly of Suitland and a graduate of Suitland High School, died April 7. She was a member of Thomas Road Baptist Church and was active with Little League cheerleading programs and with youth football as team mom. Her brother James E. Gibson preceded her in death. Survivors include her husband, Steven Mark Colandrea, formerly of Morningside; parents, Charles Henry and Beverly DeAtley Gibson; grandfather Alvin DeAtley, sister-in-law, Holly Jean Nichols, formerly of Morningside; three nieces she helped raise; a nephew and other family.

William "Bear" Middleton, of Camp Springs, a retired D.C. Metropolitan Police Officer, died April 8. Survivors include his wife of 24 years, Marlene, four children, 15 grandchildren, brother Charles Middleton and sister LaVerne Branch.

Milestones

Happy birthday to India Goodall and Ruby Haines, May 4; Donald Young, Jim Henderson and Marlyn Meoli, May 5; Gretchen Ennis, May 6; Dwight Holloway Jr., May 7; Brandi Jeter and Buddy Ramsey, May 9; Shirley Eppard and Elijah Thomas, May 10.

ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Join us for the Prince George's County Public Schools Education Foundation Second Annual Golf Tournament. The Golf Tournament will be at the Country Club at Woodmore Golf Course in Mitchellville, Maryland on Wednesday, June 27 from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM (register now). The event will be a fun-filled day of golf and socializing. The Club is located at 12320 Pleasant Prospect in Mitchellville, Maryland, just off the Capital Beltway at exit 17A.

The proceeds from this event will support education related programs benefiting the Prince George's County Public Schools Excellence in Education Foundation. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Visit www1.pgcps.org/golfingforeducation.com for more information and to register.

Cars. Open to 1987 and older, Trailer Vehicles are welcome. No Motorcycles, 4X4's or Mini Trucks. Location is Rt. 301 & Cherry Tree Crossing Rd., Brandywine, MD across from the Veteran's Cemetery. Car Show Time is 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Dash plaques to the first 150 registered, over 50 Trophies to be awarded. General Admission is \$5.00. Registration day of show is \$20.00. Vendor and Swap meet space available \$35.00. There will be games, music, auction and lots of fun. All proceeds go to Charity. Food is by Texas Ribs of Clinton. Please call Paul at 301-751-5705, Tony at 301-399-6597 or Roger 301-466-7118 for information.

BIKE TO WORK DAY 2012

Friday May 18, 2012 Commuter Connections and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association invites you to join over 10,000 area commuters for a celebration of bicycling as a fun, clean and healthy way to get to work.

This event is free for new and experienced bicycle commuters throughout the Washington Metropolitan

Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards' Legislative Update

Edwards To Host 3rd Annual Nonprofit Forum

Washington, D.C. — Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (D-MD) will host her 3rd Annual Nonprofit Forum, "Your Nonprofit: Build It! Grow It! Fund It! Sustain It!" on Monday, May 21st, 2012. This free event is an opportunity for nonprofit leaders throughout Maryland's 4th Congressional District to hear from experts on a variety of important skills, including writing a successful grant proposal, building capacity, marketing the nonprofit, and much more.

Those interested should RSVP at 4mddistrict@mail.house.gov.

Edwards, Rahall lead 69 Members of Congress to Urge President Obama to Protect "Buy American" Policies in TPP

Washington, DC — Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) and Congressman Nick Rahall (WV-3), Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, led 69 Members of Congress in a letter urging President Obama to protect "Buy American" policies in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. The 12th round of negotiations for the TPP are set to begin Tuesday, May 8th, between Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru,

Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam.

Under the proposed framework, individual states and the federal government would be obligated to bring existing and future domestic policies into compliance with norms set forth in 26 proposed TPP chapters. This would include procurement rules that require signatory countries to provide equal access to foreign firms in bidding for domestic government procurement contracts. The U.S. would be required to waive Buy American preferences if such rules were included in a final TPP agreement, which reinvest tax dollars in the domestic economy by directing government expenditures for purchase of goods and services to domestic companies. The letter encourages President Obama not to trade away Buy American provisions in the TPP. The full text of the letter is below.

"We must buy American to build America, and government procurement policy is no exception," said Congresswoman Edwards. "We are focused on creating jobs and revitalizing our manufacturing base, and our trade agreements must not take away this important policy tool. Since 1933, Buy American policies have helped invest large sums of U.S. tax dollars to create jobs, grow our economy, and strengthen



domestic manufacturing. That is why my 68 colleagues and I urge President Obama to ensure that this trade pact does not limit our rights to spend U.S. tax dollars on U.S. goods and services. Let's continue to use government procurement to support our manufacturing sector and create good, high-wage American jobs."

"American innovation is once again fueling our nation's manufacturing base. The American taxpayer has invested mightily in education, research and development to drive innovative manufacturing. We have waivered goodbye to too many good American jobs through trade agreements signed on a tilted table somebody cleverly decided to name, 'free trade.' The American taxpayer and worker deserve a fair shot at the global marketplace. While trading partners may initially have concerns about fair trade, a vibrant marketplace supported by American ingenuity and hard work will lift all economies. It's time we stood our ground for this basic American value."

— U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall

Neighborhood Events

FCC, FEC Announcements are Good for Disclosure, but We Must Do More

Washington, DC — Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen issued the following statement on announcements from the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), the Federal Election Commission (FEC), and the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia on disclosure in campaign spending:

"Today is a good day for disclosure, and we will continue our fight to restore the integrity of our electoral process. The American people have a right to know who is behind the front groups spending millions of dollars to sway their vote. That is why I have introduced the DISCLOSE Act 2012, which will promote transparency and disclosure of the funds being used to influence our political process. Our nation must have a political system that is fair, transparent, and accountable — the fundamental nature of our democracy is at stake."

BACKGROUND:

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* opened floodgates to unrestricted special interest spending in American elections — and we have already started to see the disastrous consequences. Recognizing this new reality, the FCC decided today that broadcasters must post the details of political advertising purchases in a national online database, giving voters increased access to this information. Additionally, the FEC announced that it will not appeal the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia's decision in *Van Hollen v. FEC*, which found that the FEC had severely watered down existing

legal requirements to disclose donors in campaign-related ads. That Court also denied a motion by outside intervenors today to stay the impact of its decision pending their appeal of the Court's ruling. This will allow the FEC to move forward on updating those regulations and increasing disclosure.

Job Training Program Opens New Career Path for Unemployed

Students receive job offers prior to completing the program

LARGO, Md. — TeamBuilders Academy at Prince George's Community College, a cohort-based accelerated adult career training program, celebrates student success at a completion ceremony May 8, 5-7 p.m., Largo Student Center, Community Room B. Three students from the spring class of 18 graduates received job offers prior to completion and each earn more than \$30,000 annually.

"TeamBuilders Academy assists a unique subset of Prince George's County and prepares them for employment opportunities," said Thomisha Duru, program director, TeamBuilders Academy. "The spring 2012 cohort consists of dedicated students that are well prepared to help any construction-related business reach their goals," added Duru.

Participants completed approximately 12-weeks of training which focused on the construction-trade industry. After training has been completed, students are prepared to obtain professional credentials and industry-specific certifications which are directly aligned with local employment oppor-

tunities.

TeamBuilders Academy began in April 2009 and was inspired by former Prince George's County Council member Tony Knotts who recognized a need for a specialized job training program to support his community. TeamBuilders Academy is now open to all eligible adult residents of Prince George's County who are chronically unemployed and eager to enter the workforce but need training, guidance and assistance to establish a solid career path. For more information on TeamBuilders Academy or workforce development and continuing education programs, call 301-322-0964.

Prince George's Community College is a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance. Two-year Education designated by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security (2010-2015).

Established in 1958, Prince George's Community College provides transfer and career programs that help students transfer to four-year colleges and universities and prepare them for the workforce. Each year, 40,000 students take part in more than 200 academic programs and workforce development and continuing education courses. Located in Largo, Maryland, Prince George's Community College has additional sites at Joint Base Andrews, University Town Center in Hyattsville, Laurel College Center, Skilled Trades Center in Camp Springs, and Westphalia Training Center in Upper Marlboro.

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COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

How to Avoid Being a Bad Roommate

For many people, having roommates is a natural transition between leaving their parent's house and buying their own home. It can be a great way to trim expenses and save for the future. But if you're not careful, cohabitating can also devolve into constant bickering over finances and dirty dishes.



Roommate tensions are not limited to strangers. When cash-strapped young adults return to the nest, or older parents move in with grown kids for financial or caregiver assistance, long-suppressed family grievances can erupt if you're not careful.

The key to living amicably with others is open communication. All parties must feel free to ask candid questions about their roommate's financial situation and living preferences. Schedule regular meetings to discuss household issues and air any complaints or perceived inequities before they magnify and sour the relationship.

Try to agree on living arrangement details before moving in together. If you're moving into an established household, make sure you understand and agree with how financial obligations and tasks will be divided. A few considerations:

Whoever signs the lease is responsible for paying rent and meeting other legal obligations, so you may want to have all roommates sign the lease if possible.

You may need the landlord's permission for a new roommate to move in. The landlord may want to run a credit check and may even ask that a new lease be signed.

If one bedroom is more spacious or has a private bath, a 50/50 split may not seem fair. The same goes if assigned parking or other amenities aren't equitable. Calculate rent amounts together so no one feels slighted later on.

Find out which utilities are paid by the landlord and which you'll split. Consider usage levels: Say one roommate works from home and runs the heat all day, or another never watches TV or uses the Internet.

Some people are territorial about their food, especially when budgets are tight. Decide whether you'll go in together on groceries, cleaning supplies and other household items or each buy your own, and set rules for replacing used items.

Many landlords (and utilities) will only accept a single check, so it's up to everyone to settle up and pay each monthly bill on time. Spread the risk by putting each utility in a different person's name.

Each roommate should carry their own renters insurance; otherwise your possessions and liability aren't covered in case of theft or accident.

If your place needs common area furniture or appliances, it may be simpler to buy pieces individually — and keep the receipts — so when you move there's no question of ownership.

Inevitably, your possessions will get mixed in together. To make it easier when your household eventually disbands, make an inventory of who owns what.

You may want to draft a roommate agreement that establishes household rules and duties. In addition to the billing and cost-sharing information outlined above, also include details such as:

Rules for recovering your share of the security deposit.

Rules governing pets, houseguests, parties, noise, smoking, alcohol and other potential disagreements.

Housecleaning schedule and responsibilities.

Agreement about how to handle damages caused by roommates or their guests.

Move-out procedures, including how much notice is required and who is responsible for finding the new tenant.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs. To participate in a free, online Financial Literacy and Education Summit on April 23, 2012, go to www.practicalmoneyskills.com/summit2012.

-Virginia Seaside Lots-

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Valley View Elementary Educator Named Teacher of the Year

BY LIZZY MCLELLAN
Capital News Service

UPPER MARLBORO, MD -- Sharelle Stagg, special education resource teacher at Valley View Elementary School, has been named the 2012 Prince George's County Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made Wednesday at the school system's annual Teacher of the Year Celebration at Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt.

Stagg has spent her eight-year career serving students in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), starting as a classroom teacher at Forest Heights Elementary School in August 2004. She transferred to Valley View in 2009, where she continues to serve students in the Oxon Hill community as a special education resource teacher and Talented and Gifted general education teacher.

"Not only do outstanding teachers touch the lives of students and their families, they inspire their colleagues through mentoring, skill-sharing and enthusiasm for education," said Dr. William R. Hite, Superintendent of Schools. "Having such talented teachers in our classrooms is key to our success in raising academic achievement. One of our primary goals as a school district is to ensure that all teachers have the tools and resources they need to be effective educators."

"Mrs. Stagg is an exemplary teacher who will make a lasting impression on the students and the field of education," said Jo Ann Spruell, principal of Valley View. "She has the perseverance, initiative and intellectual stimulus necessary to prepare students as global learners and future leaders."

Cool Spring Elementary sixth-grade teacher Tamala Stuckey was a runner-up for the award; Barack Obama Elementary fifth-grade teacher Kantravet Davis and Annapolis



PHOTO BY CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Sharelle Stagg, special education resource teacher at Valley View Elementary School, has been named the 2012 Prince George's County Teacher of the Year.

Road Academy English teacher Madolyn Johns were finalists.

"I am honored to have this opportunity to celebrate all of the outstanding nominees for Prince George's County Teacher of the Year," said Board Chair Verjeana M. Jacobs. "These individuals possess all of the qualities that define Teacher of the Year: knowledge of subject matter, dedication to students, awareness of the issues facing educators today and a certain 'star quality' that sets them apart from the crowd."

Stagg was nominated by her peers at Valley View not only for her professional skills, but for her dedication, love of children and support of colleagues. Comments included:

"Ms. Stagg has an amazing rapport with people of all ages, especially children."

"Ms. Stagg goes above and beyond to help not only the students, but the parents."

"Ms. Stagg has an exceptional blending of professional and personal qualities."

Stagg takes on additional service roles at her school as co-chair of the Special

Education Department, member of the School Based Management and Leadership Team, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)/Cooperative Culture coach, Destination ImagiNation team coach, and member of Black History Month and American Education Week committees.

Stagg has been frequently recognized for her dedication and outstanding work. In 2011, she received the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) After-School Tutor Award, the Dr. Jean Phillips Psychological Services Award and Teacher of the Month Award. In 2012, she was nominated again for Teacher of the Month.

Outside of her school community, Stagg is an active member of the Rho Mu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated in Washington, D.C., serving on the scholarship committee, debutante committee and DC Pearls III Foundation Board of Directors. She also serves as youth ministry coordinator and lay speaker at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church.

Stagg trained in Maryland for her teaching career, receiving a bachelor's degree in English and elementary education certification from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She earned a master's degree in special education from Bowie State University.

She will compete statewide with representatives from all 24 counties for the title of 2012-2013 Maryland Teacher of the Year, coordinated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The winner will be announced in the fall and represent Maryland in the national competition.

Three high school students were also honored Wednesday for their winning entries in the Teacher of the Year essay contest. David Calhoun, first place winner for Grade 11, shared his "Most Inspirational" essay during the event. Eleanor Roosevelt High School student Deonna Young was the first place winner for Grade 10 and Largo High School student Samuel Wright won first place for Grade 12.

hold off on the closures.

"I hope that (Donahoe) delays and gives the House more time to act," said Lieberman. "And frankly, I hope it puts some pressure on the House to act."

Carper, one of the Senate's leading USPS watchdogs, agreed with Lieberman's assessment. But he warned that if the House delayed the bill to July or even until after the election, there would be dire consequences for the USPS.

"Every day we delay ... the Postal Service loses \$23 million," Carper said. Any further delays, he added, would be "irresponsible."

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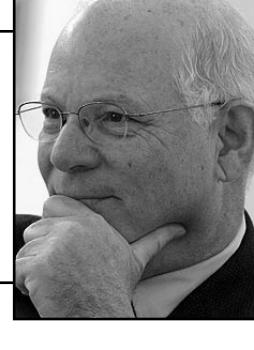
COMMENTARY

THE PRINCE GEORGE'S POST

A Community Newspaper for Prince George's County

Benjamin L. Cardin

United States Senator for Maryland



Congress Needs to Prevent Student Loan Interest Rates From Doubling

Today, millions of Americans are still struggling to recover from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. As we work to restart our economy, employers need highly skilled, educated workers who can fill the good paying jobs of the future, jobs that will help our nation prosper in the 21st Century. Unfortunately, the education that is needed to succeed for millions of Americans is unaffordable and out of reach for too many people.

Millions of Americans are struggling economically, weighed down by overwhelming student loan debt — more than \$1 trillion worth. And according to the Federal Reserve, about two-thirds of that debt is held by people under 30. The situation is about to get much, much worse. Starting July 1, the interest rates on federally subsidized Stafford loans are set to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. This hike in the interest rate is about to hit more than seven million students taking out loans next year.

We must stop this increase in student loan interest rates from taking effect. I support legislation that will prevent the doubling of Stafford loan interest rates this summer, and I urge my colleagues in Congress to set aside partisan differences and to work together to find an equitable way to pay for this so we can make sure this interest rate hike does not occur.

In the 21st Century economy, higher education is not a luxury, it is an economic imperative.

As employers struggle to find qualified workers, too many Americans are struggling to afford the education they need to succeed. College students, grad students and those seeking vocational training will all be impacted if this increase in student loan interest rates is allowed to go into effect.

America must educate its workforce. Access to higher education means more scientists, better doctors and nurses, and higher-skilled workers for the high-tech jobs of the future. These workers will fill jobs that will help ensure our economic success in the 21st Century.

Making college affordable is just common sense. Today, the average college student will graduate with \$25,000 of debt, which may take years for them to pay back. The student loan interest rate increase, set to take effect July 1, will increase that debt by an additional \$1,000. Saddling students of today with this kind of debt tomorrow means they will not have the resources to purchase a house, start of a family, or save for the future — all activities that will help restore our economy.

It is time that we stand up for the American Dream and for our nation's future. We cannot allow higher education to become unaffordable for millions of Americans who have the desire and the ability to learn and succeed. I am committed to preserving affordable college education as a long-term investment in our future.

To Be Equal

Marc Morial, President and CEO
National Urban League



Nat'l Urban League Urges ALEC to Support Repeal of Kill at Will and Voter I.D. Laws

"We call on your companies to stop supporting ALEC's reckless agenda, which harms the communities in which you do business." March 26 letter to ALEC's corporate sponsors from United Republic, Rebuild the Dream, Color of Change and the Center for Media and Democracy.

Last week, the civil rights community and Americans of conscience won a major victory against the corporately funded conservative policy group that supported the "Stand Your Ground" law responsible for delaying the arrest of Trayvon Martin's killer. This same group is behind dozens of voter ID laws, which are jeopardizing the voting rights of millions of Americans. On April, 17th, after an exodus of major corporate sponsors, prompted by pressure from a coalition of progressive and civil rights organizations, including the National Urban League, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) officially ended its involvement in these issues, saying in part, "We are eliminating the ALEC public safety and elections task force that dealt with non economic issues..."

Corporate support, which ranges from \$7,000 to \$25,000 in annual dues to the organization, began to wither in the wake of the public outcry against Florida's Stand Your Ground law, which shields a gunman from prosecution simply by claiming a suspicion that his or her life was in danger. George Zimmerman made that claim to Sanford, Florida police officers who incredulously did not arrest him following the February 26 shooting death of the unarmed, 17-year-old Trayvon Martin.

While presenting itself as an organization that promotes legislation which serves the financial interests of its corporate funders, ALEC has used its close ties to conservative state legislators to

sponsor similar "Kill at Will" laws in 30 states — and the tragic body count is growing. In Florida alone, since the law was passed in 2005, that state's "justifiable homicide" rate has jumped 300%.

The organization has also supported dozens of unnecessary voter ID laws across the country that may keep as many as five million citizens from exercising their right to vote in this all important election year.

In rallies, letters, and social media outreach, the civil rights community reminded ALEC's corporate sponsors, including Coca-Cola, McDonald's, PepsiCo and Kraft, that significant numbers of consumers found their association with the organization's extreme agenda offensive. When a growing number of businesses began severing their ties with ALEC, the group backed away from supporting these "non economic" issues. But we urge ALEC to go one step further.

Now that ALEC has acknowledged that its activities led it far beyond the bounds of reasonable commercial legislative activity, we call upon the group to devote its considerable resources to redress the harms caused by the "Public Safety and Elections" task force — dangerous policies that armed civilian vigilantes and disenfranchised seniors, people of color, and the disabled by the millions.

The full impact of these measures has only begun to be felt. For example, laws that restrict voting access are still in the pipeline in many states. A simple disavowal of its misguided activities will be insufficient to correct the damage that has already been caused. We call upon ALEC to actively support our "Occupy the Vote" campaign to repeal these onerous laws.



Open to the Public

COLLEGE PARK AIRPORT & AVIATION MUSEUM, 1985 Corporal Frank Scott Drive College Park, MD, 301-864-6029, I-95/495 Capital Beltway Exit 25, College Park Airport, established in 1909, is the world's oldest continuously operating airport. It is perhaps only second in importance to Kitty Hawk in the first 25 years of American aviation history. The airport is also home to the College Park Aviation Museum.

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Safe Harbor for the Homeless

Five-year-old Kamari and his three-year-old brother Shamarr clown around in the dining room of the YWCA Family Center in Columbus, Ohio. They and their mother, Stekesha Harris, slept on cots in the shelter's library for their first three nights there because there were so many homeless families needing shelter—a 330 percent increase from two years ago.

"We've been in overflow for more than a year," said Ginger Young, the Center's Director of Housing Programs. She said homelessness is known to trail recession by two years. "The economy tanks. People are laid off. They go through their savings if they have savings. They lose their house—eviction, foreclosure. They sell their stuff. They live with so and so and so until their welcome runs out. Then it's either the car or us."

The YWCA Family Center is an emergency shelter, and for months mothers, fathers, and children have appeared at the door in record numbers and at all hours carrying bags of clothing and a few favorite toys. The Center's policy is not to turn people away, so employees add cots everywhere they can find space. That's where Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Julia Cass met the Harris family while on assignment for the Children's Defense Fund.

As in Young's scenario, Stekesha Harris' hard times began with a layoff. She was working at a group home for adults with intellectual disabilities, cooking, cleaning, and bathing the residents and earning \$8 an hour when she became pregnant with her second child Shamarr. The group home shocked her by letting her go. "They were afraid I would fall and I couldn't pick up the clients anymore. I was really upset because I thought I could handle it," she said. That was more than three years ago.

After Shamarr was born, Stekesha didn't get the job back as she'd hoped. The boys' father helped out for a while but then left. She babysat for other children and made a little money that way. She began receiving food stamps. She signed up with a temporary agency and worked some days here, some days there, nothing steady. "I put in

a lot of applications but it's hard," she said. Eventually she fell behind in paying rent and faced eviction. Her sister helped her with the rent as long as she could. When she couldn't afford to keep helping, she allowed Stekesha and the boys to move in with her and her children but "that didn't work out. She really didn't have room," Stekesha said. And so the family ended up at the shelter.

Stokesha's goal continued to be to find "a job. Any job to get my foot in the door." She regularly sent out a number of applications. A hospice needed a cook and she thought she would be qualified because she cooked in the group home. She went downtown to put in an application at a former Hyatt hotel with new owners. "Dietary, housekeeping, front desk. Whatever position I could get, I'd be happy with... Just keep trying. That's my motto. I am so praying I get one of these jobs so I can move on and give some other family a chance to be here."

A recent front page New York Times article by Jason DeParle reported that as many as one in every four low-income single mothers is jobless and without cash aid—roughly four million women and children with no money, no job. It said many of these families are blocked from

receiving help by time limits and other restrictions put into place by the mid-1990s welfare reform: "[M]uch as overlooked critics of the restrictions once warned, a program that built its reputation when times were good offered little help when jobs disappeared." And as a result, the article goes on to say, "The poor people who were dropped from cash assistance here, mostly single mothers, talk with surprising openness about the desperate, and sometimes illegal, ways they make ends meet. They have sold food stamps, sold blood, skipped meals, shoplifted, doubled up with friends, scavenged trash bins for bottles and cans and returned to relationships with violent partners—all with children in tow."

But for many families even desperate measures to make ends meet aren't working. The rising numbers of homeless families like those in the Harrises' crowded shelter is a sign that for many Americans the safety net has collapsed while in Washington, the House Budget Committee's latest draconian budget proposes even deeper cuts in the safety net while refusing to ask

See WATCH, Page A8

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BUSINESS

Business Exchange

by William Reed



The Auto Industry's Comeback Continues

The Obama 2012 campaign slogan should be "Osama bin Laden is dead and General Motors is alive."

President Barack Obama's role in the death of bin Laden troubles some, but his decision early in his presidency to extend billions in loans to General Motors and Chrysler has paid off. More than two years ago, the American auto industry teetered on the brink of collapse. Now, it has rebounded and has started to make vehicles for America's future. Plants are hiring more workers, manufacturers are returning to profitability, exports of U.S. vehicles are increasing and some of the most technologically advanced vehicles are now being designed and produced in this country. The \$80 billion bailout was President Obama's "bet on the American worker" and there have been ample signs of success in the automotive industry since Obama's bailout.

The news coming out of the U.S. automotive industry has been good for Black Americans. The automotive industry's financial crisis was more devastating for African Americans than any other community and eroded a half-century's economic gains by the Black middle class. From Blacks who left behind subsistent jobs in the South for high-paying factory jobs in the North during the Great Migration, to entrepreneurs and contractors in automotive businesses, the automotive industry has been a major factor in the formation of the Black middle class. In 1945, Blacks comprised 15 percent of the automobile industry workforce, by the late 1970s, "one of every 50 African Americans was working in the auto sector." From 1979 to 2007, Black employment in the auto industry fell to one in 100.

Black Americans greeted President Obama's 2012 Washington Auto Show announcement that "the U.S. auto industry is back" with great anticipation. After hitting a 30-year low in 2009, U.S. auto sales are poised for a second straight year of growth — the result of easier credit, low interest rates and pent-up demand for cars and trucks created by the recession.

Black groups and activist should move to forge increased employment, contracting and community partnerships with

U.S.-based auto manufacturers as they crank up their factories and add thousands of jobs. In addition to the expanded plant operations and employment opportunities occurring among Detroit's Big Three, foreign-owned auto companies such as Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Hyundai, Kia, Volkswagen and BMW have invested \$44 billion into their U.S. operations to account for 80,000 direct vehicle-manufacturing jobs and 500,000 dealer and supplier jobs.

Automotive manufacturing can help Blacks. The industry is adding jobs at a faster pace than airplane manufacturers, shipbuilders, health care providers and the federal government. Americans spent \$40 billion more on new cars and trucks in 2011 than in 2009. The momentum in auto sales is likely to continue because people need to replace aging cars, of which the average age is 11 years old. A substantive number of Americans are feeling more comfortable about their employment outlook and where they're going. Domestic vehicle sales are expected to reach 17 million around 2018 as 70 million "Millennials" — born between 1981 and 2000 — buy cars and set up modern households. These customer purchases will generate manufacturing activities that have the potential of reviving long distressed populations and industrial sectors. Increasing manufacturing can turn long-suffering Rust Belt cities like Anderson, Ind., Youngstown, Ohio, Lansing, Mich., and Kokomo and Elkhart-Goshen, Ind., into revived and fast-growing cities. The industry's growth enhances Black Americans' jobs and contracting opportunities.

It's time Blacks take Obama's bold "bailout move" to the next level. Innovation through education and research is vital to building a manufacturing economy. Creating a qualified workforce of technicians and engineers is essential to ensuring future success of America's automotive industries. Black leaders and teachers must make sure workers have the skills they need for jobs today and in the future. We need to train our people with skills that will lead to jobs for them. Above politics, we each need to engage in development programs and policies that help people get and hold jobs.

Cost of Owning, Operating Vehicle in U.S. Increased

Increases In Gas And Tires Drive Up Average Costs For Sedans To \$8,946 Yearly,

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Friday, April 27, 2012) — It's getting costlier to own and operate a vehicle in the United States and in the Washington metro area this year, according to a recent AAA study. The average cost of owning and operating a car in the United States rose to 59.5 cents per mile, or \$8,946 per year — that's an increase of 1.1 cent per mile since this time last year. That's based on 15,000 miles of annual driving according to the 2012 "Your Driving Costs" study from AAA.

"The average driving cost for 2012 is up due to relatively large increases in fuel and tire costs, and more moderate increases in other areas," said John B. Townsend II, AAA Mid-Atlantic's Manager of Public and Government Affairs. "Those increases were offset by a decrease in depreciation resulting in an overall increase of 1.9 percent."

In-depth findings of this year's study, including a breakdown of specific costs by category of vehicle and various annual mileages, are contained in the 'Your Driving Costs' brochure which is available at select local AAA branch offices or may be downloaded at the AAA Newsroom.

"Some driving costs fluctuate at different times during the year, such as what we have experienced with fuel prices since the middle of February," explained Townsend.

"However, AAA's use of a consistent methodology for its study allows an accurate comparison of driving costs from year to year, and the figures can reliably be used to compare different categories of vehicles."

Townsend continued, "AAA understands that high fuel prices are a real concern for consumers, and those in the market for a new vehicle may want to be cautious and determine projected operational costs based on varying levels of fuel costs. To assist consumers in determining their individual driving costs, the AAA 'Your Driving Costs' brochure contains a worksheet that can be filled out and personalized for a specific area, driver and vehicle.

Fuel Costs Up 14.8 Percent

The cost of fuel had the largest percentage increase from 2011 to 2012, rising 14.8 percent to 14.2 cents per mile on average for sedan owners. The

average cost of regular grade fuel (used by most of the study vehicles) rose 16.6 percent, from \$2.880 to \$3.357 per gallon. Several vehicles included in the 'Your Driving Costs' study had increases in fuel economy, resulting in the overall average fuel cost increase being slightly less. The fuel costs in the 2012 study were calculated using the national average price for regular, unleaded gasoline during the fourth quarter of 2011.

The cost of tires ranks second highest among the factors that rose from 2011 to 2012, increasing by 4.2 percent to one cent per mile on average for sedan owners. The rise in cost can be attributed to higher costs for natural rubber, and the increased cost of oil used in tire production and transportation from factory to distributors across the country. A collateral factor is a trend for manufacturers to equip new cars with premium-grade tires rather than mid-grade tires.

Depreciation Drops 4.9 Percent

Depreciation costs were up slightly in 2011, but for 2012 the trend has reversed with depreciation falling across the board by nearly five percent. This change may be a consequence of reduced new car sales over the past few years, which has resulted in a relative shortage of good used cars on the market, driving up their value. This is good news for those in the resale market as their vehicles will retain a greater portion of their purchase cost.

Maintenance Costs Up 0.7 Percent

Maintenance costs are slightly higher in the 2012 'Your Driving Costs' study with an increase of 0.7 percent to 4.47 cents per mile on average for sedans. Factors contributing to the increase include higher prices for oil and more manufacturers now requiring synthetic or synthetic-blend motor oils. Although the use of these oils often comes with extended service intervals, the higher cost of the oil combined with increased maintenance operations at each service (which adds to the time required) can combine to increase overall vehicle maintenance costs.

Insurance Costs Up 3.4 Percent

Average insurance costs for sedans rose 3.4 percent (or \$33) to \$1001 yearly. Insurance rates vary widely by driver and driving record, issuing company and geographical region. AAA



CREDIT: MITSUBISHI, TOYOTA, GENERAL MOTORS

Increased environmental awareness, high gas prices and a continually slumping economy have combined to make fuel efficient cars are all the rage today. Pictured from top to bottom: the Electric Mitsubishi i-MiEV, Toyota's Plug-in Hybrid Prius; General Motors' gas sipping Chevy Sonic.

insurance cost estimates are based on a low-risk driver with a clean driving record. For 2012, this group saw a small increase that offset a decrease experienced in 2011. Quotes from five AAA clubs and insurance companies representing seven states showed across the board increases for all sedan sizes, with large cars having the biggest increase.

62nd Year of 'Your Driving Costs' Study

AAA has published 'Your Driving Costs' since 1950. That year, driving a car 10,000 miles per year cost 9 cents per mile, and gasoline sold for 27 cents per gallon.

Driving costs are also affected by how well your vehicle runs. Performing regular maintenance not only ensures fuel-efficient operation but can help prevent costly vehicle repairs that can add to your total ownership cost. For more information on ways to keep your vehicle in top condition read the owner's manual and visit AAA.com for vehicle care information, automated maintenance reminders and repair facility locator tools.

The 'Your Driving Costs' study analyzes the cost to own and operate a vehicle in the U.S. Variable operating costs considered in the study include fuel, maintenance and tires. Fuel costs are based on \$3.357 per gallon (average price of gas for October 2011-December

2011/AAA Fuel Gauge Report) and Environmental Protection Agency fuel-economy ratings weighted 60 percent city, 40 percent highway driving.

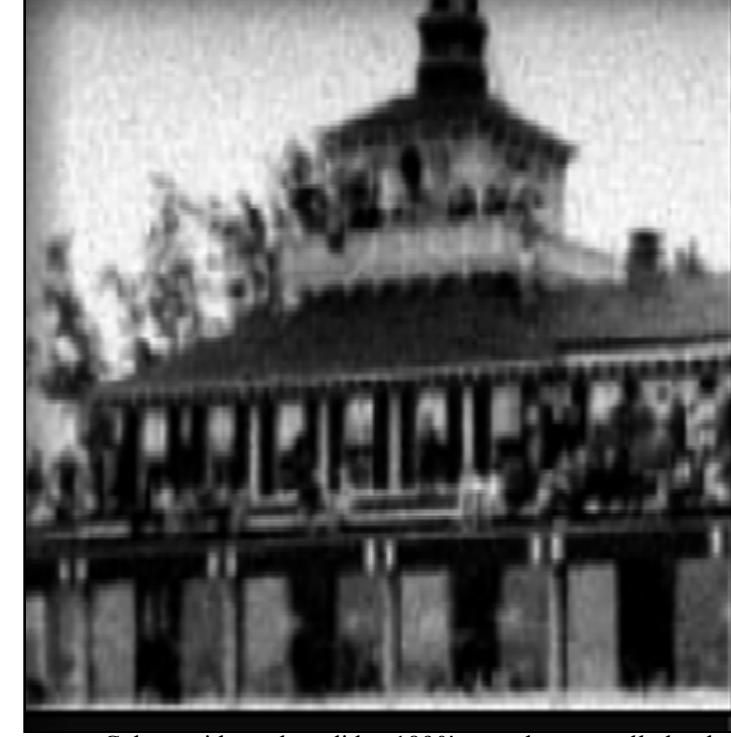
Fixed ownership costs factored into the results include insurance, license and registration fees, taxes, depreciation and finance charges. These ownership costs are assumed to be on a purchase of a new vehicle, depreciated over five years. Finance charges are based on a five year loan at six percent interest with a 10 percent down payment. Your actual operating costs may vary. Refer to page three of AAA's 2012 'Your Driving Costs' brochure for a list of vehicles and assumptions used in the study.

To conduct its study, AAA's auto buying and repair experts compiled detailed driving costs for small, medium, and large sedans. Driving costs in each category are based on the average costs for five top-selling models selected by AAA. By size category, they are:

Small Sedan — Chevrolet Cruze, Ford Focus, Honda Civic, Nissan Sentra and Toyota Corolla.

Medium Sedan — Chevrolet Impala, Ford Fusion, Honda Accord, Nissan Altima and Toyota Camry.

Large Sedan — Buick Lucerne, Chrysler 300, Ford Taurus, Nissan Maxima and Toyota Avalon.



career, Cohen said, as they did most other black jockeys.

Tennis great Arthur Ashe once wrote in the New York Times that once the Jockey Club was formed in the early

1890's and controlled the issuance and regulation of jockey licenses, blacks were denied theirs.

"By 1911," Ashe wrote, "they had all but disappeared."

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Anderson from A1

career, "short and illustrious."

Anderson's Preakness win was historic," Cohen said, "but needs to be placed in context."

Anderson's horse, Buddhist, owned by Samuel S. Brown, originally had no opponent. If that occurs the jockey merely trots his horse around the track to secure victory. Cohen said former Gov. Oden Bowie entered his own horse, Japhet, just so advertisers of the race would not have been upset by the lack of competition.

Anderson won comfortably by 10 lengths.

Before the Preakness, Anderson's gradual rise can be historically charted in newspapers of the time, said Cohen. For example, Anderson was listed in Baltimore and D.C. races in 1884, though he lost in both.

Even if Anderson's rise was gradual, from a historical perspective, his disappearance was abrupt.

With licenses in New York and New Orleans, Cohen said Anderson continued to win after the Preakness, including at the Alabama Stakes in Saratoga, NY, in 1891. But after that year, Cohen said, Anderson is not heard from again.

Cohen said as important as Anderson's Preakness win is, how he was erased from the sport's history is also significant.

His disappearance in record is peculiar because he was repeatedly mentioned in race results at a time in the 19th century when the focus was typically on the owner, which Cohen suggests makes it strange for Anderson to disappear without mention.

Though he admits it is conjecture, Cohen explained the significance of the inability to historically track Anderson after 1891.

"It's hard to imagine a white jockey similarly disappearing," Cohen said.

Jim Crow laws most likely aided the end of Anderson's

career, Cohen said, as they did most other black jockeys.

Tennis great Arthur Ashe once wrote in the New York Times that once the Jockey Club was formed in the early

1890's and controlled the issuance and regulation of jockey licenses, blacks were denied theirs.

"By 1911," Ashe wrote, "they had all but disappeared."

OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review "The Avengers"

"THE AVENGERS" B+
Rated PG-13 for a little profanity, a lot of action/sci-fi/superhero violence.
2 hrs., 22 min.

Given the complexity of what it set out to do, "The Avengers" is probably as good as anyone could have expected. I'm not referring to the logistics of working out the actors' schedules or the cost of the special effects (which are not unprecedented), but to the narrative complications: "The Avengers" has to unite multiple characters who have wildly different pre-established personalities and backstories, come up with a plot line that gives each of them a reason to be involved, AND deliver a satisfying good-guys-vs-bad-guys superhero adventure.

Oh, and what else? Most of these superheroes are meeting each other for the first time? So we have to address their conflicting attitudes and motives, and can't start with them already functioning smoothly as a team? On top of everything else this has to be an origin story, too?

That's what I mean about "The Avengers" being about as good as an Avengers movie was ever going to be. Making something like this entertaining may sound like a no-brainer -- you just gotta throw all those awesome heroes on the screen at the same time! -- but doing it right is more complicated than that (as you know if you saw "The Expendables"). What they've come up with here has some clunky patches as things are being established, and the story is thin, standard fare. But when it works, it works exceptionally well. And it mostly works.

Things kick off at S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters when an otherworldly power source called the Tesseract is activated, opening a space portal through which malevolent Norse demigod Loki (Tom Hiddleston) can travel to Earth. After using his magic space-scepter to brainwash a few

S.H.I.E.L.D. team members into supporting him -- including expert marksman Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner) -- Loki makes off with the Tesseract. Whatever he wants with it, it can't be good.

Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), the one-eyed leader of the S.H.I.E.L.D. initiative, gets to work. Lethal spy and assassin Natasha Romanoff (Scarlett Johansson), aka Black Widow, is sent to recruit Bruce Banner (Mark Ruffalo), the brilliant scientist who turns into the Hulk when he's angry. It seems that gamma radiation factors into Loki's plans, and nobody knows more about the potential of gamma radiation than Bruce Banner. Billionaire playboy and smart guy Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), also known as Iron Man, is recruited by Agent Coulson (Clark Gregg) to check out the research left by Dr. Erik Selvig (Stellan Skarsgård). Captain America Steve Rogers (Chris Evans), frozen during World War II but now thawed and a little upset at finding himself 70 years in the future, goes after Loki. Naturally, Thor (Chris Hemsworth) shows up too, since Loki is his brother and a known troublemaker.

The rest of the plot unfolds in the customary fashion, with the Avengers making progress in stopping Loki, suffering setbacks, learning more about what he's after, and ultimately having a battle that wrecks several blocks of a major city (spoiler: it's New York). The story, credited to genre veteran Zak Penn ("The Incredible Hulk," "X-Men: The Last Stand") and director Joss Whedon, doesn't offer much originality; it replays the usual comic-book formula and just changes the names.

But the screenplay, which is attributed only to Whedon, more than compensates for the story's averageness with consistently witty dialogue and a stream of terrific moments. Steve Rogers is an old-fashioned soldier, a loyal patriot and the epitome of a team player. He



ROTTENTOMATOES

Marvel Studios presents Marvel's The Avengers—the Super Hero team up of a lifetime, featuring iconic Marvel Super Heroes Iron Man, The Incredible Hulk, Thor, Captain America, Hawkeye and Black Widow. When an unexpected enemy emerges that threatens global safety and security, Nick Fury, Director of the international peacekeeping agency known as S.H.I.E.L.D., finds himself in need of a team to pull the world back from the brink of disaster. Spanning the globe, a daring recruitment effort begins. -- (C) Marvel

literally once jumped on a grenade to save his platoon -- something the narcissistic and volatile Tony Stark would never do. Stark is also involved in the manufacture of weapons technology, which runs counter to Rogers' mindset. "You may not be a threat," he says to Stark in one heated moment, "but stop pretending you're a hero." Stark has plenty of sarcastic things to say to a Boy Scout like Rogers, as well as to Thor, whose courtly language and attire invite mockery. Bruce Banner, constantly struggling not to become "the other guy," can bond with Stark over mathematical and scientific matters. I also love the detail of Agent Coulson being a gushing Captain America fanboy.

In short, while the characters themselves are flights of fancy, the way they interact with each other -- and themselves, in battling their own weaknesses -- makes sense. To me, that's the movie's greatest achievement. Putting Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, the Hulk, Black Widow, and Hawkeye in a room together is one thing. Portraying what happens next in a way

that's believable given what we already know about those characters is another. (Black Widow and Hawkeye don't get as much focus as the others, but they have enough screen time and juicy character moments to register.) Loki is a typical rule-the-world villain, but Hiddleston plays him with sneering, dastardly charm. Mark Ruffalo might be the best of the modern Banners.

The action scenes are appropriately thrilling, shot and edited coherently and with gusto. Each Avenger's individual strengths are used for the benefit of the team; it doesn't feel like anyone has been wedged into the film merely out of obligation. I didn't feel any emotional heft, but that's been the pattern of these recent Marvel films, hasn't it? Glossy, bang-pow comic-book fun, without much sentiment. I miss the affecting sensitivity of the first two "Spider-Man" films, but "The Avengers" doesn't have room (or time) to explore anybody's personal depths. If it has a flaw, that's it, and I was mostly having too good a time to notice.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

Junior Seau's Family Will Allow His Brain To Be Studied and the NFL Holds Its Breath



Today brings news that the family of Junior Seau, the former 10-time All-Pro NFL linebacker who took his own life earlier this week, will be donating his brain for study. They want to know if brain injuries sustained during Seau's 20-year career may have contributed to his suicide.

"The family was considering this

almost from the beginning, but they didn't want to make any emotional decisions," Chargers team chaplain Shawn Mitchell told the Los Angeles Times on Thursday night. "And when they came to a joint decision that absolutely this was the best thing, it was a natural occurrence for the Seau family to go forward."

The ramifications of their decision cannot be overestimated. While we don't know why Junior Seau committed suicide, there are stubborn facts around his death that can't be ignored. We know that Seau was the NFL's second suicide in the last two weeks. Former Atlanta Falcon Ray Easterling killed himself on April 19th.

We know that Seau took his life by shooting himself in the chest, and not the head. This was the method of suicide of former Chicago Bears safety Dave Duerson in February 2011. According to Duerson's much publicized final note, he said he was putting a bullet in his heart instead of his head so his brain could be sent to the Boston University School of Medicine for study. His family complied and it was found that Duerson suffered from a neurodegenerative disease linked to concussions. Medical professionals link these injuries to depression, early-onset Alzheimer's, and as a tragic corollary, suicide. His family is now suing the league in a wrongful death suit.

We also now know that not once in 20 years was Seau ever diagnosed with a concussion on an injury report. This is either a miracle akin to dancing between raindrops, or Seau and team doctors just didn't report concussions when they occurred. When asked if her husband had ever suffered a concussion, Seau's ex-wife Gina told ESPN, "Of course he had. He always bounced back and kept on playing. He's a warrior. That didn't stop him. I don't know what football player hasn't. It's not ballyhoo. It's part of the game."

In a heartbreak column, Sports Illustrated's Jim Trotter reflected on the violent passing of his dear friend. He also revealed Seau's thoughts about head injuries as well as his response to those who say that new safety rules are making the sport "too soft."

"Those who are saying the game is changing for the worse, well, they don't have a father who can't remember his name because of the game," Seau said to Trotter. "I'm pretty sure if everybody had to wake with their dad not knowing his name, not knowing his kids' name, not being able to function at a normal rate after football, they would understand that the game needs to change. If it doesn't there are going to be more players, more great players, being affected by the things that we know of and aren't changing. That's not right."

As the Seau family mourns, their deeply courageous decision to submit Seau's brain for study can have mammoth ramifications far beyond the National Football League. If Seau is proven medically to be another casualty of the inherent violence of tackle football, questions will be raised that have consequences well beyond cosmetic changes like putting up warning posters in NFL locker rooms or moving the kick-offs to the 40 yard line. Should we be allowing children as young as five-years-old to be playing in tackle football leagues around the country? Should anyone under the age of 18, be permitted in partaking in something that, like smoking, is demonstrably proven to kill you before your time? Should NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell be absolutely obligated to give up his demands to make the season 18 games, given the risk involved? Should Roger Goodell and the other NFL owners stop fighting the now 1500 former players suing the NFL for their pain and suffering in retirement and just settle these cases now and come up with some sort of plan moving forward? Does the US Congress need to get involved and empower a team of neurologists not tied to the NFL to come up with a definitive risk assessment of playing tackle football?

There is a temptation to compare the modern NFL game to the ancient gladiator battles of Rome, with the publicly funded mega domes our modern coliseums. But that actually gives the NFL too much credit. Everyone in ancient Rome knew they were watching a blood sport with life or death consequences. The NFL sells itself as entertainment for the entire family. The death of Junior Seau means an end of the innocence. If the autopsy produces what we all expect, it will be time for everyone, from fans, to players, to the media, to owners, to Roger Goodell, to grow the hell up.

Atlanta Jazz Festival Celebrates 35 Years Of Southern Hospitality And World Class Jazz!

"We are reaching an important milestone as the Atlanta Jazz Festival celebrates 35 years," states Camille Russell Love, Director of the City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs.

"We take our stewardship of the festival seriously and salute the leaders whose vision and hard work created this preeminent cultural event, featuring well-known jazz legends and exciting new artists. For the entire month of May, through the performances in Piedmont Park over Memorial Day weekend, we'll continue the rich tradition of presenting world class jazz, combined with southern hospitality. Whether you like your jazz traditional or contemporary, smooth or eclectic, with big band swing or a Latin beat, we'll have something to excite your senses and soothe your soul. We invite jazz enthusiasts of all ages to join us for an unforgettable experience."

This year's schedule includes jazz greats Roy Ayers, Cyrus Chestnut Trio, Tito Puente Jr. & Orchestra, Robert Glasper Experiment, Russell Gunn, Edy Martinez and Kathleen Bertrand.

Newcomers include the Grace Kelly Quintet and Yolanda Rabun.

Here's an overview of the 35th Annual Atlanta Jazz Festival:

"31 Days of Jazz"

Every day throughout the month of May there will be jazz performances in parks, restaurants, clubs and venues around Atlanta as part of this year's Atlanta Jazz Festival. Activities will include live jazz in Underground Atlanta, Martinis & IMAX at Fernbank Museum, Jazz Under the Stars at Clark Atlanta University, Friday Jazz at the High Museum and Fiesta Atlanta in Centennial Olympic Park. The entire "31 Days of Jazz" schedule will be available online at www.atlantafestivals.com. You can also pick up a brochure with the schedule at participating partners and enter the Passport Program contest to win prizes and a special VIP Festival Experience.

AJF Weekend Evening Concerts

This year there will be three

concerts at the Loews Atlanta Hotel, located at 1065 Peachtree Street, in the heart of Midtown.

Ojeda Penn will perform on Thursday, May 24 from 8-10 pm in Bar Eleven. Admission is free.

Johnny O'Neal will perform in the AJF35 Kickoff Cabaret on Friday, May 25 in the Mercer Ballroom. Opening performance by Jennifer Freeman. Doors open at 7 pm for an 8 pm performance. Tickets prices are \$35 per person or \$200 for a reserved table for 4. Tickets are available at www.ticketalternative.com.

AJF35 @ Piedmont Park

The festival is back in beautiful Piedmont Park this year with three days of music over Memorial Day Weekend from Saturday, May 26 through Monday, May 28.

Piedmont Park will be open

each day during the festival from 11 am - 11 pm. The event is open

to the public and it is FREE.

Two stages will feature live music all three days from 1 pm - 11 pm.

Two KidZone areas will offer family-friendly fun from Noon - 6pm each day. Activities will include sports like soccer and basketball, a cooling tent where popular cartoons will be screened each day, face painters, inflatables and the ever popular hula hoops! The KidZones are sponsored by Cartoon Network and Publix Super Markets.

Go Green Jazz Eco Village will further environmental education. The Atlanta Jazz Festival is partnering with the City of Atlanta Office of Sustainability and additional organizations whose missions relate to eight areas of sustainability concern: Air quality, Land use, Transportation, Energy, Water conservation, Sustainability planning, Human health & community vitality and Waste. Their goal is not only to reduce the festival's environmental impact during the festival, but to encourage sustainability planning beyond the festival weekend.

Calendar of Events

May 10 - May 16, 2012

Folk & Blues Series: Cantaré

Date and Time: May 11, 8 pm

Event Description: These WAMMIE Award winning musicians hail from Brazil and Argentina with Bolivian roots, and perform music from all over Latin America. Playing piano, accordion, guitar and a dazzling variety of wind and percussion instruments, this group introduces a Latin beat to the folk series. www.cantaremusic.com

Ages: All ages

Fee: \$20 per ticket; call for information on purchasing a series subscription.

Location: *Montpelier Arts Center*

9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708

Information: 301-377-7800, 410-792-0664; TTY 301-490-2329

Doo Wop at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall Trip

Date & Time: Saturday, May 12, 8 am-8 pm

Description: Join us for the best doo wop of 2012 at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore, Maryland. The show features: Shirley Alston Reeves; Jay Siegel's Tokens; Lou Christie, The Chantels; The Vogues; Kathy Young, and Frankie Ford. Before the show, have lunch on your own at Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Fee includes transportation and admission.

Cost: Resident \$95; Non-Resident \$114

Ages: 18 & up

Location: *Departs from 2 locations, please call the Southern Area Operations Office for more information.*

Contact: 301-203-6000; TTY 301-203-6030

SMARTlink # 772915

Mother's Day Tea & Spring Fashion Show

Date and Time: Saturday May 12, 12 pm-2 pm

Description: Celebrate all Mothers at this social tea party while you enjoy and/or participate in the Spring Hat Fashion Show! Prize awarded to the most voted and creative hat.

Cost: Resident \$12; Non-Resident \$14

Ages: All Ages

Location: *Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex*

8001 Sheriff Road

Landover, MD 20785

Contact: 301-583-2400; TTY 301-583-2483

FREE Introductory Swim Lessons

Date & Time: Sundays, May 13 & 20, 4-5 pm

Description: Are your kids safe in an aquatics environment? Did you want to learn to swim as a child but never had the chance? Now here is a chance for you and your children (ages 6 and up)! Sign up for a FREE one hour Level 1 Introduction to Water Skills class. Separate classes will be held for adults and children. Please, one class per family.

Cost: FREE

Ages: 6 & up

Location: *Fairland Sports and Aquatics Complex*

13820 Old Gunpowder Road, Laurel 20707

Contact: 301-362-6060; TTY 301-446-6802

Folk & Blues Series: Memphis Gold

Date and Time: May 18, 8 pm

Event Description: Memphis Gold is Chester Chandler, a blues musician from Tennessee who started on Beale Street at the age of eight and has played with many bluesmen over the years, including B.B. King and Bobby Parker. For a sound bite, visit www.memphisgoldprod.net

Ages: All ages

Fee: \$20 per ticket; call for information on purchasing a series subscription.

Location: *Montpelier Arts Center*

9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel, MD 20708

Information: 301-377-7800, 410-792-0664; TTY 301-490-2329

Concert: Charlie Thomas' Drifters

Date and Time: Saturday, May 19, 8 pm

Event Description: Unfortunately, there are only two Drifters still living today: Ben E. King, who like Clyde McPhatter, went solo after a short while with the Drifters, and of course, the only voice on all the Drifters recordings since 1958-- that of Charlie Thomas. Today's group includes Charlie Thomas, who joined the Drifters in 1958; Jerome Manning, whom Charlie found in a local club in York, PA. singing Drifters songs; Steven Brown, who sang with Sunburst before joining the Drifters; and Louis Bailey, the son of the famous tap dancer Bill Bailey and the nephew of the great Pearl Bailey. Today, the group tours around the world as "Charlie Thomas' Drifters" in order to distinguish themselves from the many fake groups claiming to be The Drifters. The only real Drifter still doing The Drifters greatest hits is Charlie Thomas.

Ages: All ages

Fee: \$30/general admission; \$25/seniors & students

Location: *Arts/Harmony Hall Regional Center*

10701 Livingston Road, Ft. Washington 20744

Information: 301-203-6070; TTY 301-203-3803

Folk & Blues Series: Old Blind Dogs

Date and Time: May 25, 8 pm

Event Description: Celebrating their 18th year as a band, Scotland's Old Blind Dogs—Jonny Hardie, Aaron Jones, Ali Hutton, Fraser Stone—continue to distinguish themselves as vital, innovative ambassadors of traditional music. Subtly and ingeniously expanding upon the very traditions that they celebrate, they harness the resonance and timeless themes of British Isles roots music (the songs and tunes of their native Scotland in particular) and weld them to new rhythmic frameworks, dynamic arcs, and textural expanses, producing a uniquely identifiable sound that reflects the rich heritage of the Scottish/Irish folk. www.oldblinddogs.co.uk

Ages: All ages

Fee: \$20 per ticket; call for information on purchasing a series subscription.

Location: *Montpelier Arts Center*

9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708

Information: 301-377-7800, 410-792-0664; TTY 301-490-2329

EARTH TALK ... Oil drilling on the Arctic Ocean's outer continental shelf

Dear EarthTalk:

The oil industry is planning what some call a dangerous strategy of drilling for oil on the Outer Continental Shelf in the Arctic Ocean. What's going on?

-- Vera Bailey,
New Hope, PA

In November 2011 the Obama administration began lifting the moratorium on off-shore drilling that had been imposed in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced a five year plan including 15 leases for oil development on Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf and in the Gulf of Mexico. For now the East and West coasts of the continental U.S. have been spared from drilling, but environmentalists are particularly worried about opening up the fragile Alaskan Arctic to off-shore rigs.

"This five-year program will make available for development more than three-quarters of undiscovered oil and gas resources estimated on the [Outer Continental Shelf], including frontier areas such as the Arctic, where we must proceed cautiously, safely and based on the best science available," Salazar told reporters.

Republicans were incensed that more acreage was not being made available for off-shore drilling, but environmentalists couldn't believe what they were hearing for different reasons: In June 2011 the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) had released a 292-page report commissioned by Interior Secretary Salazar "to identify the gaps in scientific or technical knowledge about how drilling in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas north of Alaska would affect the region," reports Jerry Bellinson in Popular Mechanics. The report, Bellinson says, "details several areas where those gaps exist,



CREDIT: TOM MACKENZIE, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Despite U.S. Geological Survey warnings that drilling in waters north of Alaska could have deleterious effects on ocean habitats and wildlife, the Obama administration proceeded with a lifting of the moratorium on off-shore drilling. Pictured: An Oiled brown pelican awaits cleaning in the wake of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster.

including oil-spill cleanup technologies, basic mapping of currents and the effects of underwater noise on sea mammals." Despite the USGS's warnings, the Obama administration decided to proceed anyway.

"Drilling infrastructure permanently alters ocean floor habitats," reports Defenders of Wildlife. "Drill rig footprints, undersea pipelines, dredging ship channels, and dumped drill cuttings—the rock material dug out of the oil or gas well—are often contaminated with drilling fluid used to lubricate and regulate the pressure in drilling operations." The group adds that contaminated sediments are carried long distances by currents and can kill important small bottom-dwelling creatures at the bottom of the marine food chain.

Defenders also argues that spills, leaks and occasional BP-like catastrophes are unavoidable

with off-shore oil drilling, if history is any guide. "Even with safety protocols in place, leaks and spills are inevitable—each year U.S. drilling operations send an average of 880,000 gallons of oil into the ocean."

As for wildlife, off-shore drilling can have devastating effects even with no spills or leaks. "Seismic surveys conducted during oil and gas exploration cause temporary or permanent hearing loss, induce behavioral changes, and even physically injure marine mammals such as whales, seals and dolphins," reports Defenders. "Construction noise from new facilities and pipelines is also likely to interfere with foraging and communication behaviors of birds and mammals. Because they are at the top of the food chain, many marine mammals will be exposed to the dangers of bioaccumulation of organic pollutants

and metals." And off-shore drilling only adds insult to injury as far as Defenders is concerned: "In the face of the climate crisis, the U.S. needs to look for ways to decrease petroleum consumption, not...increase it."

CONTACTS: Defenders of

Wildlife,
www.defenders.org; Popular Mechanics,
www.popularmechanics.com/science/energy/coal-oil-gas/oil-drilling-in-the-arctic-ocean-is-it-safe.

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House, that is not a recipe for getting things done," she said.

Tezak said an export ban would harm the industry, leading it to adjust production downward until prices rise. "Trapping production at home is an attractive short-term option, but it doesn't necessarily mean prices will stay low forever," she said.

Tezak and Allen agree natural gas prices will rise regardless of whether exports are approved because drilling is slowing down due to oversupply. Donovan said the upgrades to Cove Point will "help end the boom and bust" because exporting the natural gas would alleviate the excess supply.

The development of additional uses of the newly abundant fuel, such natural gas powered vehicles, are also likely to drive domestic prices higher over the long term.

Even if domestic natural gas prices double, the prices in Asia and Europe are high enough to make exporting profitable, Allen said, because the price differential pays for transportation and other costs.

But Allen warned that other countries including Australia are also investing in liquefied natural gas exports.

Another pitfall is the prospect of fracking taking off abroad, especially in China, which has more recoverable shale gas reserves than any country in the world, according to the Citigroup report.

"The Chinese are the biggest growth market in Asia and if they start producing natural gas from a process like fracking that would reduce the growth in the LNG market," Allen said.

Although natural gas prices abroad are currently high enough to support American exports of natural gas, the question, Allen said, is "whether they'll still be there in five years."

Gas from A1

the 16 liquid natural gas import terminals in North America are in use, said Zach Allen, president of energy consultants Pan EurAsian Enterprises Inc. Fracking has cut the demand for imports and turned the United States into a potential source of exports, he said.

Cove Point in Lusby was built in the 1970's, but demand for natural gas tumbled soon thereafter, and the facility stopped receiving imports after 1980. It was purchased by Richmond, Va., based Dominion for \$217 million in 2002 due to an anticipated resumption of imports. The plant has received no imports so far this year, said Dominion's Vice President Donald Raikes, who said at an energy conference in Pittsburgh that he expects about half of the United States' planned export capacity to become operational.

However, he said Cove Point has an advantage over the competing proposals because of its location, according to Natural Gas Intelligence newsletter.

The company must receive a license to operate the export facility from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and obtain permission to export natural gas from the Department of Energy.

"All of those (export) approvals are backlogged," said Christine Tezak, energy and environmental analyst at financial management firm Robert W. Baird & Co., because the DOE is studying the economic impact of exporting natural gas.

There are nine planned export terminals that have requested approval. "Do they (the DOE) approve two more? Do they do five more? Do they do all nine?" she asked rhetorically. Cove Point will be considered third.

Dominion has approval to sell natural gas to countries that are in free trade agreements with the United States.

Allen said the approval is routine and not very meaningful because of the top export destinations, only South Korea has a free trade agreement with the United States.

Another geographic advantage is the plant's proximity to Europe. Cove Point is the only planned export terminal on the Eastern Seaboard. A report by Citigroup Inc. -- "Energy 2020 North America, the New

Middle East?" -- says that the export terminal could form a "natural gas highway between Europe and North America."

But before that occurs, many hurdles must be overcome.

Few expect all of the planned terminals to be approved, including Dominion Vice President Donald Raikes, who said at an energy conference in Pittsburgh that he expects about half of the United States' planned export capacity to become operational. However, he said Cove Point has an advantage over the competing proposals because of its location, according to Natural Gas Intelligence newsletter.

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On the issue of natural gas exportation, "there's a division between the natural gas consumers and the energy companies," she said, that has divided Republicans as well.

"If you have a division among the Republicans, and they are ones controlling the

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Watch from A4

the rich and powerful to contribute their fair share. Indeed, it would give them more tax breaks at the expense of poor struggling families like the Harrises desperately trying to get back on their feet.

I hope enough citizens will lift their voices and votes against a federal budget which cuts the poor and coddles the rich.

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For more information go to www.childrensdefense.org.

Mrs. Edelman's Child Watch Column also appears each week on The Huffington Post.

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