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Forecast, B6

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Obama makes history

Illinois senator claims Democratic nomination; Clinton reaches out for vice presidential spot



AP / CHRIS CARLSON

Sen. Barack Obama arrives for an election night rally with his wife, Michelle, in St. Paul, Minn., yesterday as he secured enough delegates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Locally, African-Americans take pride in Obama

BY KAREN LEE ZINER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Old guard civil-rights activists and younger African-Americans in Rhode Island yesterday exulted as Sen. Barack Obama moved toward a historic Democratic nomination of an African-American for president. "I'm excited to see in my lifetime someone like Barack emerge, as he has done with such intellect and grace, and see how America is increasingly transcending race as an issue," said longtime civil-rights activist Michael S. Van Leesten. Van Leesten called Obama's apparent nomination "a manifestation of how great America is, with all of its difficulties and challenges we've been able to witness in our

generation a man of color emerging as a potential president of the United States, in a very serious way." He added, "My perspective, having dealt with things in the South — the water coolers and the separation of races and the 'back of the bus' and all the indignities and injustices that occurred, and seeing his candidacy come through all of that, says a lot about the American people. "I'm just really thrilled, not because I'm a man of color, but because increasingly [of] how people are not judging people by the color of their skin." Ray Watson, executive director of the

SEE PRIDE, A5

BY TOM RAUM and NEDRA PICKLER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PAUL, Minn.

Cheered by a roaring crowd, Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois laid claim to the Democratic presidential nomination last night, taking a historic step toward his once-improbable goal of becoming the nation's first black president. Hillary Rodham Clinton maneuvered for the vice presidential spot on his fall ticket without conceding her own defeat. "America, this is our moment," the 46-year-old senator and one-time community organizer said in his first appearance as the Democratic nominee-in-waiting. "This is our time. Our time to turn the page on the policies of the past." Obama's victory set up a five-month campaign with Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a race between a first-term Senate opponent of the

Iraq war and a 71-year-old former Vietnam prisoner of war and staunch supporter of the current U.S. military mission. And both men seemed eager to begin. McCain spoke first, in New Orleans, and he accused his younger rival of voting "to deny funds to the soldiers who have done a brilliant and brave job" in Iraq. Americans, he added, should be concerned about the judgment of a presidential candidate who has not traveled to Iraq but "says he's ready to talk, in person and without conditions, with tyrants from Havana to Pyongyang."

SEE OBAMA, A4

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Your turn: What should Hillary Rodham Clinton's next step be? To respond, go to projo.com

State lawmakers tackle renewable energy proposals

BY TIMOTHY C. BARMANN
and KATHERINE GREGG
JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

PROVIDENCE — The Rhode Island Senate last night passed a series of energy bills designed to encourage and embrace renewable energy projects, both large and small, in order to make the state less dependent on electricity produced by traditional fossil fuels. The House of Representatives approved one of its own and started debate on another. But in this corner of the State House, the debate escalated into allegations the bill had been stuffed "chock-full" with so many "treats" that it had been turned into the legislative equivalent of a piñata, and then rammed through a House committee without the opportunity for public

SEE ENERGY, A7

Accused killer: 'I was afraid for my life'



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

Nicholas Gianquitti, center, charged with fatally shooting Cranston firefighter James A. Pagano in a neighborhood dispute, cries as he listens to the 911 tape yesterday in court.

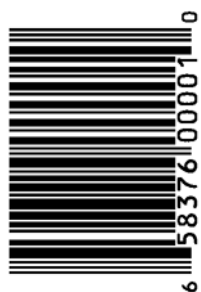
In the tape of the 911 call made after Cranston firefighter James Pagano was shot, his neighbor and alleged killer states his case.

BY DAVID SCHARFENBERG
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

WARWICK — The 911 call came in at 3:11 p.m. Nicholas Gianquitti had just shot his next-door neighbor, Jim Pagano. And the shooter's wife, Jennifer, was on the phone — screaming, incoherent. "Please!" she seemed to be yelling. "Please!" She asked for an ambulance. She said her husband was a retired police officer. Then Nicholas took the phone. Calmer. And in the chaos, a nascent defense: The neighbor had come to his house, he said. The neighbor had pushed him down the stairs. "I drew my weapon and I shot him," Nicholas Gianquitti told the 911 operator.

"I was afraid for my life," he said. "He's on my property," he said. "I'm in the right." Prosecutors played the 911 call in court yesterday as the bail hearing for Gianquitti, a former Providence police officer charged with murdering Pagano on May 18, stretched into a second day. The hearing will resume this afternoon with testimony from Dr. Alexander Cherkov, the assistant state medical examiner, who conducted an autopsy on Pagano. District Court Judge Elaine Bucci is expected to make a ruling within days — holding Gianquitti without bail, as the case moves to a grand jury for indictment, or setting bail.

SEE 911, A7



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WILL THE CIGAR TAX GO UP?

The highest tax on a premium cigar in Rhode Island is 50 cents, and shop owners want to keep it that way. They're urging lawmakers to make the tax cap permanent, saying that it's a matter of their survival. B1

GM TO CLOSE 4 PLANTS

The automaker plans to idle pickup and SUV factories while focusing on smaller, fuel-efficient cars. A2



SOX OFFENSE STINGS RAYS

Even without David Ortiz, the Red Sox manage to score 7 runs and topple the division-leading Tampa Bay Rays last night, thanks in part to a tie-breaking double by Coco Crisp, left. It's Boston's 11th-straight victory at home. C1