



# Chattanooga Times Free Press

Chattanooga Now www.timesfreepress.com

Tuesday, April 15, 2003 • Vol. 134, No. 122 • • •

TO GIVE THE NEWS IMPARTIALLY, WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

40 PAGES 6 SECTIONS • • • C0c

## BlueCross, HCA dodge legislative struggle

■ Legislation helps two sides reach compromise.

By JOHN COMMINS  
NASHVILLE BUREAU

NASHVILLE — HCA and BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee dodged a messy fight in the General Assembly this week with a last-minute compromise Monday afternoon.

"I think both sides wanted to clear the air," said Rep. Rob Briley, D-Nashville, the House sponsor of the compromise bill.

Under the agreement: ■ BlueCross BlueShield will submit the same financial disclosures to the state Department of Commerce and Insurance that every other health insurance company in Tennessee is required to submit.

■ The Commerce and Insurance commissioner will have the same statutory authority to regulate BlueCross as she does with other health insurance companies.

■ BlueCross will have to give one year's notice to the

See BLUECROSS, Page A5



Bill Clabough

### INSIDE

■ BlueCross earns record profit in 2002, C1

# Pentagon says Iraq war at end

## Marines capture last stronghold of Saddam Hussein

KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

TIKRIT, Iraq — The Pentagon declared the end of significant fighting in Iraq on Monday as Marines stormed the heart of Tikrit, suppressed hard-core resistance there and captured the last stronghold of Saddam Hussein.

"The major combat operations are over," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal said after more than 3,000 Marines fought their way to the center of Saddam's ancestral hometown.

In Washington, the Bush administration already was shifting to two post-war concerns.

The White House and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld turned up the pressure on Syria, demanding that it stop harboring Iraqi fugitives and renounce terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, even as British Prime Minister Tony Blair denied any U.S.-British plans to invade Syria.

U.S. officials also looked forward to a meeting Tuesday in Nasiriyah, where they hoped to begin forging an interim government for post-Saddam Iraq by welding together rival ethnic, religious and exile factions.



U.S. Marines run across a street as they look for resistance in Tikrit, Iraq, on Monday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### Online update

www.timesfreepress.com posts the latest developments in Iraq at 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Click on the "War in Iraq" bar for updates.



cement homes and mud huts. They accepted roses from a few grateful residents — and stayed alert for suicide attacks by the remnants of pro-Saddam militias.

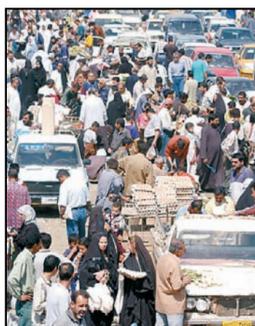
Tikrit was the last important center of Saddam's regime, and now it had fallen — much like Basra, Nasiriyah, Najaf, Karbala, Kut, Kirkuk, Irbil, Mosul and Baghdad.

"There is nothing beyond Tikrit," said Marine Lt. Col. Doug Hardison. "That is it. It's now just a function of when to call the win."

Said McChrystal: "Tikrit was the last area where we anticipated

The military action, however, focused on the Marines' success in securing Tikrit.

They seized an opulent presidential palace and rolled their armored vehicles along the city's broad boulevards. They watched white flags flutter from taxicabs,



Life started returning to normal after the U.S. Marines stepped up security throughout Baghdad on Monday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## White House deems Syria 'rogue nation'

By RON HUTCHESON  
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — President Bush did not list Syria as part of his axis of evil, but it is fast becoming his top target in his campaign to rid the world of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Although U.S. officials downplay prospects of military action, and Syrian officials deny the charges, the steady stream of accusations from the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department is strikingly similar to the invective aimed at Iraq in the buildup to war.

INSIDE ■ A reality check for "axis of evil," A4

On Monday — a day after Bush accused Syria of producing chemical weapons — administration officials branded Syria "a rogue nation" and threatened diplomatic, economic and unspecified "other" sanctions.

U.S. officials also have accused Syria of offering sanctuary to top Iraqi leaders and harboring a host of terrorist organizations. Syria has been on the government's official list of nations that sponsor terrorism since the list's inception in 1979.

A newly released CIA report says that Syria has a stockpile of sarin, a deadly nerve agent. It also says that Syria "apparently

See SYRIA, Page A5

## Two city judges not needed, report finds

By DUANE W. GANG  
STAFF WRITER

The current caseload in Chattanooga City Court does not justify two full-time judges, a report released Monday concludes.

"We think over time we may want to go to two part-time judges," Mayor Bob Corker said. "Looking at the caseload totals, two full-time judges are not warranted."

Mr. Corker asked for the review of City Court and the City Court Clerk's office in January when Judge Walter Williams announced he would retire. The mayor and City Finance Officer David Eichen-thal released the preliminary findings Thursday as a five-member panel began interviewing the seven candidates vying to succeed Judge Williams.

The report also recommends the city: ■ Reduce staffing for the clerk's office to somewhere between the current 25 to no fewer than 13, and reduce staffing for the two judges.

■ Send repeat offenders to



STAFF PHOTO BY JEFF GUENTHER

Mayor Bob Corker speaks Monday during an interview session to find a new City Court judge. Several candidates were interviewed at the Development Resource Center to replace retiring Judge Walter Williams.

Hamilton County General Sessions Court.

■ Consider increasing the court's \$60.25 fee.

According to the report, there were 82,129 citations to City Court in the 2002 fiscal year. Of those, 57 percent were for park-

ing tickets, a majority of which did not require a court hearing. Another 39 percent of the citations were for traffic violations.

In one week in early January, the report found, the two city judges heard 1,230 traffic cases, while one sessions court judge

heard 1,067. Knoxville's part-time judge, who earns \$41,000 a year, averages 1,365 cases per week, according to the report.

Judge Williams refused to comment on the report.

City Judge Russell Bean, however, said he disagrees with some of the report's findings.

"It is not our purpose to make money or save money," Judge Bean said. "Our job is to keep control. I think he (Mr. Eichen-thal) wants to cut corners for finances."

Mr. Corker said the switch to part-time judges would require a City Charter change, but the Chattanooga City Council would not likely pursue it until 2006, when terms for the two judges expire.

The \$111,060 city judges earn more than what judges in comparable municipalities with similar caseloads make, the report shows. Two part-time judges — the equivalent of 1.5 full-time judges — could save the city more than \$50,000 a

See JUDGE, Page A5

## Bush renews emphasis on economy

ISSUE

President begins aggressive push to promote his recovery plan.

By SCOTT LINDLAW  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush, eager to avoid the political mistakes of his father, is making an aggressive push to boost the sluggish economy even before the bullets stop flying in Iraq.

Bush plans a Rose Garden speech on the economy and tax cuts today, Americans' income tax-filing deadline day. He also was meeting with small-business leaders.

On Wednesday, the president will sign a budget measure that will finance the war and rebuilding program in Iraq and anti-terror efforts at home. Then he is to fly to St. Louis to tour a Boeing Co. factory, where he is expected to talk about the Iraq situa-

tion, his budget request and the economy.

Also, with Congress adjourned for its two-week Easter recess, Bush is sending 25 Cabinet officials and deputies across the country to promote his economic recovery plan, which relies heavily on tax cuts. The proposal is under fire from lawmakers, including some Repub-

See BUSH, Page A6



Dave Goetz

## Ruling clears way for Tennessee to receive April's tobacco settlement money

By JOHN COMMINS  
NASHVILLE BUREAU

NASHVILLE — Cash-strapped Tennessee got a break Monday when tobacco giant Philip Morris USA announced it will make this month's scheduled \$65 million master settlement payment.

An Illinois judge on Monday afternoon agreed to lower from \$12 billion to \$800 million the bond in a recent civil judgment against Philip Morris. That allowed the tobacco company to make a \$2.6 billion master settlement payment to 46 states, which was due today.

"This is good news," Tennessee Finance Commissioner Dave Goetz said.

Earlier Monday, before the judge lowered the bond, Gov. Phil Bredesen briefed his cabinet on fallout from the potential loss of \$65 million in tobacco settlement money

and \$175 million in federal TennCare funds under the health plan's budget neutrality cap.

The governor said he would consider floating nearly \$60 million in road construction bonds to help fill the budget hole created by the loss of tobacco money. Tennessee has no

road debt, and floating bonds would break a long-standing pay-as-you-go policy in Tennessee state government. The governor stressed that he would float the bonds only as a last resort.

"I want to make sure people

See BUDGET, Page A5

### TODAY'S WEATHER



Sunny and warm.  
High 80  
Low 56  
Details, C6



### Tech talk

Computers help speech impaired communicate.  
Lifestyle, E1



© 2003, Chattanooga Publishing Inc.

### INDEX

Advice	E4	Editorials	B6-7	Puzzles	E2, F3, F6
Business	C1	Lifestyle	E1	Sports	D1
Classified	F1	Metro	B1	Stocks	C3
Comics	E2-3	Movies	E6	Television	E5
		Obituaries	B4	Weather	C6
		People	A2	World	A3