

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Broward County Edition

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35¢

**THE HELP TEAM** CONSUMER ALERT

## Our prices rising fastest in country

### U.S. INFLATION

Annual rate for August

**Fort Lauderdale-Miami:** 3.7 percent

**Seattle:** 3 percent

**Chicago:** 2.7 percent

**Los Angeles:** 2.6 percent

**San Francisco:** 2.6 percent

**Atlanta:** 2.0 percent

**New York:** 1.9 percent

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, CONSUMER PRICE INDEX AUGUST 2007

### ONLINE

Considering moving out of South Florida due to the high cost of living? Vote at [Sun-Sentinel.com/cpi](http://Sun-Sentinel.com/cpi)

BY HARRIET JOHNSON BRACKEY  
STAFF WRITER

New York's got nothing on us. Neither does Chicago, Los Angeles or Atlanta, when it comes to inflation. South Florida has the highest annual rate of any of the major metropolitan areas tracked by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, according to the latest rankings released Wednesday.

The Miami-Fort Lauderdale annual inflation rate of 3.7 percent — for July and August — beats the nation's annual inflation rate of 2 percent by a long shot.

Rent and the price of eating out are among the costs that are increasing the most sharply in South Florida, according to the government figures.

"Oh that's definitely true," said Vincent Evans, a sophomore at Florida Atlantic University, whose budget is straining under the price of gasoline, utilities, even fast food. He said he and his friends have mastered the art of figuring out the cheapest fast-food items.

"We're dollar-menu-a-ires," he said. During the past 12 months, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said, rent in this area has jumped 7.4 percent, far faster than the nationwide 4 percent annual pace. Although the figures

■ PRICES CONTINUES ON 20A

## State's businesses promised tax relief

BY LINDA KLEINDIENST  
TALLAHASSEE BUREAU CHIEF

TALLAHASSEE • When Florida lawmakers swung into action to soothe the pain from soaring property taxes, the state's business community bitterly complained that it had been mostly left out.

On Tuesday, three months after the Legislature's special session on property taxes, House Speaker Marco Rubio sat down with some of Florida's key business leaders and promised they'd get tax relief, too.

Rubio said he wants to look beyond Jan. 29, when voters will be asked to approve a change in the state constitution to provide for an expanded homestead exemption for homeowners.

If passed, the exemption would enable many homeowners to get bigger tax breaks on their primary residence but would do nothing to ease the tax burden on commercial properties, snowbirds and renters, a major point of contention with the business community.

"Today is about what we need to do in addition to that

■ TAXES CONTINUES ON 20A

## THE ISSUE

If you've been treated unfairly by an airline and left feeling helpless, you're hardly alone. Pressure is mounting on Congress to do something about it. The House today will take up a measure that would expand the Department of Transportation's power to investigate complaints like these and fine airlines up to \$2,500 for violating federal standards.

# FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS OVERSOLD SEATS LOST, DAMAGED OR DELAYED BAGGAGE OBTAINING REFUNDS AND FARE ADJUSTMENTS FREQUENT FLIER COMPLAINTS INCORRECT FARE INFORMATION DECEPTIVE OR MISLEADING ADVERTISING

Staff illustration with Photos.com photos

## Protect us, frustrated air travelers tell Congress

BY WILLIAM E. GIBSON  
WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

WASHINGTON • Determined to make air travel more pleasant and customer-friendly, a group of frustrated fliers squeezed into a mock airplane on the National Mall on Wednesday to show Congress what it's like to be trapped on an airport tarmac.

Sounds of squalling babies and bewildering intercom messages were piped into the Mock 1 — a 28-by-12-foot tent painted with phrases like "Help!" "Meds!" "Diapers" and "P.U."

Among those passing through the "cabin" was South Florida U.S. Rep. Ron Klein, who touted legislation he will take to the House floor today that would force the government to investigate growing complaints about canceled flights, lost baggage, fare increases and deceptive advertising.

It was all part of a "Strand-In," a demonstration to press Congress, airlines and airports to improve conditions for travelers. The main focus was on passengers stranded for hours on grounded planes, but the Strand-In turned into a rallying cry for a wide range of consumer complaints.

■ AIRLINES CONTINUES ON 18A

### ONLINE

How satisfied are you with the current state of air travel? Sound off in our online poll at [Sun-Sentinel.com/airtravel](http://Sun-Sentinel.com/airtravel)

## DAILY DIGEST

SUN-SENTINEL WEATHER

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Complete weather on back page of **LOCAL**

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COMMUNITY NEWS ROUNDUP, 4B-5B Deerfield advisory boards need volunteers • Lauderdale settles ex-officer's workers' comp case • Mock SAT scheduled in Pines

### NATION

#### Lifetime care sought for vets

Leaders of a presidential commission want Congress to help Iraq war veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. **3A**

### IRAQ

#### Senate rejects tours bill

It would have required that troops spend as much time at home training as they do deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan. **11A**

### BUSINESS

#### Work stress? Clear the mess

Is a messy desk affecting your productivity at work? Read Marcia Heroux Pounds' column to find ways to clear clutter. **1D**

### LIFESTYLE



#### Fall in love

Sure it's still hot outside. But fool yourself, and the guests, by throwing the perfect fall brunch. We give you tips in our new feature — How 2. **1E**  
Staff photo/Susan Stocker

### LOCAL

#### Leak penalty limited to two

A Hollywood police major and an officer will be the only officers punished for a leak that foiled an FBI investigation targeting corrupt officers. **1B**

#### Police: 5 targeted migrants

The Broward Sheriff's Office has launched an effort aimed at nabbing thieves who target migrant workers who carry cash. **3B**

### SPORTS

#### Mixed martial arts' appeal

Columnist Michael Cunningham wonders if the lure represents "some dark desire to see humans pummeling each other." **1C**

### THE HELP TEAM

#### Doggie treats yanked

PetsMart, with 38 stores in Palm Beach and Broward counties, is pulling jerky-style pet treats made in China from its shelves, as safety investigators try to determine if the items are making dogs sick. **1D**

### ONLINE

#### Get control of your debt

See helpful tips on how to keep your credit card debt under control. [Sun-Sentinel.com/yourmoney](http://Sun-Sentinel.com/yourmoney)

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