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ELECTION 2008

Clinton, Obama back on the trail

By JOHN McCORMICK
and RICK PEARSON
Chicago Tribune

RALEIGH, N.C. — Sen. Barack Obama likes to tell audiences that he is a hardened street fighter from his days in the rough-and-tumble world of Chicago politics.

But the Illinois Democrat on Thursday showed some sensitivity to the blows he took a day earlier in an intense debate with Sen. Hillary Clinton, as he offered a critique in often-sarcastic tones of the traditional presidential campaign process.

"It does not get much more fun than these debates," he said. "They are inspiring events. I mean, last night, I think we set a new record because it took us 45 minutes before we even started talking about a single issue that mattered to the American people."

Obama sought to brush aside criticism about his debate performance, as he told an audience here that Clinton had the right to "kind of twist the knife a little bit."

Clinton, meanwhile, adopted a softer theme of family issues as she launched the final days of

TRAIL TO 9A

2008 FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

Evolution debate gets sexy

By MARC CAPUTO
Herald Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — It's called the "Academic Freedom" bill and it's supposed to give teachers the freedom to teach the "full range of scientific views" about evolution.

But should teachers have the freedom to teach the "full range of scientific views" about sexual education?

Republican Sen. Ronda Storms said that Democratic proposal went too far and had it voted down on the Senate floor Thursday, saying the measure not only didn't belong on her evolution bill, it could lead to "prematurely deflowering kindergartners

EVOLUTION TO 9A

More coverage

Tax break survives for school items, not storm supplies, **1B**

Manatee teachers facing pay cuts

5% drop would help district avoid hundreds of layoffs; administrators face 7.5% salary slash

By SYLVIA LIM
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MANATEE — After a 7-percent pay raise two years ago, Manatee teachers may face a 5-percent pay cut next year to help the school district avoid hundreds of proposed layoffs,

schools Superintendent Roger Dearing said Thursday.

Meanwhile, administrators are facing a 7.5 percent pay cut, Dearing said.

While unpleasant, school board members said, the cutbacks may save more than 400 campus-level jobs at if the

district's budget cut projections for 2008-09 are correct. The school district is one of the largest employers in the county with roughly 7,000 employees.

Employees facing layoffs next year will be notified today, Dearing said.

"I am very much so in favor

of no one being laid off," school board Chairwoman Barbara Harvey said, noting some employees might be re-assigned.

While board members say they can't change their \$35,000 annual salaries, which are set by the state, they have agreed to

donate 7.5 percent of their pay next year to the Manatee Education Foundation, said Jane Pfeilsticker, school board member.

"When we saw the list of 412 people, we said, 'no,'"

CUTS TO 6A

THE PAPAL VISIT | Benedict says America needs to be a land of hope for all



THE POPE | After Thursday's two-hour Mass at Nationals Park in Washington, he blessed the crowd of 45,000.



THE CLERGY | The sun illuminated the colors of the faith, including the red robes of clerics bustling in formation.



THE MASSES | Before the service, the Popemobile did a lap along the inner rim of the stadium.

BRADENTON.COM: Find more images from Pope Benedict's U.S. visit, including Thursday's Mass

Pope meets abuse victims

By BARBARA BARRETT and LISA ZAGAROLI
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Pope Benedict XVI spoke Thursday with victims who as trusting children were sexually abused by their priests, an unexpected gathering that was the Roman Catholic Church's most dramatic step yet to acknowledge the harm caused by the clergy.

The unscripted meeting at the

Vatican Embassy was facilitated by Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley and involved victims from the Boston area, viewed as the seat of the widespread scandal, which involved 12,000 children and teenagers being violated by 5,000 priests in Catholic parishes nationwide.

"They prayed with the holy father, who afterward listened to their personal accounts and offered them words of encouragement and hope,"

said a statement from the Rev. Federico Lombardi, a Vatican spokesman.

"His holiness assured them of his prayers for their intentions, for their families and for all victims of sexual abuse," Lombardi said.

Three of the participants spoke emotionally about the meeting in an interview on CNN, each saying that

POPE TO 6A

Fire razes AMI home

Officials: Blaze begins from spontaneous combustion of rag

By ROBERT NAPPER
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HOLMES BEACH — In a freak case of spontaneous combustion, a rag soaked in linseed oil has been ruled the cause of a fire that destroyed a Holmes Beach couple's home and charred a valuable antique book collection.

The home of Kent and Pa Davis, in the 500 block of 58th Street, was lost to flames just after 2 a.m. Thursday.

Kent Davis said he awoke to a smoke detector going off outside his bedroom. He thought it was just a battery dying.

But when he walked into a living room filled with smoke he knew he and his wife were in trouble. Looking for a way out, he ran to a door connecting his garage to the house.

The doorknob was boiling hot and he could hear violent popping sounds as things were exploding in his garage. Not opening the door, he ran back to his wife and the couple fled from the house.

"He was screaming, 'Get out of the house, get out of the house,'" Pa Davis said.

West Manatee Fire Rescue Marshal Kurt Lathrop said the fire started in a trash can in the couple's garage, where a rag had been thrown away the evening prior.

That rag was soaked in linseed oil, which Pa Davis had used to put a coat of finish on a wooden bench, Kent Davis said. She then threw the rag away in a garbage can in the garage.

Lathrop said linseed oil in a confined space creates intense heat that can spark a fire.

From the trash can, flames engulfed the garage, destroyed a Mercedes and caused a propane tank to explode.

"It was such a shock," Pa

FIRE TO 9A

INSIDE

YOUR COMMUNITY, 6B

Why I live in Snead Island

Where's the perfect place to live in Manatee County? Emphatically, Dorinda Sayre says it's Snead Island, a friendly, beautiful place with extra-caring neighbors.



BUSINESS, 1B

Sitting pretty

Tropitone Furniture Co., a pioneering Manatee patio furniture maker, continues to evolve and grow 54 years after it began.

TODAY'S FORECAST, 10A

High 78, Low 63

Mostly sunny and warm

Today's artist:
Taylor McCart, 4th Grade,
Saint Stephen's Episcopal

