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300

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THURSDAY AUGUST 28, 2008

TODAY'S OUTLOOK: INLAND: 95|68 MOUNTAINS: 87|66 DESERT: 106|82 COMPLETE LOCAL FORECAST: B14

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S NEWSPAPER **PE.com**

S E W N

DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION | A HISTORIC NOMINATION

Joyous delegates select Obama

PARTY POWER BROKER

Baca rises as influential player

BY BEN GOAD
WASHINGTON BUREAU

DENVER — When Inland Rep. Joe Baca took the stage this week at the Democratic National Convention, the coveted speaking slot signaled a new day for the folksy self-promoter who campaigns under the name "Working Joe."

For years Republicans held the majority in Congress and Baca was unable to get his voice heard over the din of hundreds of other lawmakers. He was disparaged as ineffectual by his rivals, and mostly written off as a nonplayer on the national political landscape.

Yet his party's reclamation of majority status and his own ascension to the chairmanship of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus has brought the Rialto Democrat a measure of newfound influence.

Baca, the only Democratic member of Congress in the largely conservative Inland area, was ranked by one non-partisan group as the 55th most powerful member of Congress, higher than any of his GOP colleagues.

Baca was asked in recent months to play an important role in Barack Obama



Rep. Joe Baca

IN MAIN NEWS

- Where to watch TV coverage. **A6**
- First-time delegates learn by doing. **A7**
- Delegate sends convention "postcard." **A7**

Lifelong striver one step closer to White House

BY JODI KANTOR
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

DENVER — Barack Obama stepped triumphantly into history Wednesday night, the first black American to win a major party presidential nomination, as thousands of Democrats transformed their convention hall into a joyful, shouting celebration.

Former rival Hillary Clinton asked delegates to the party convention to make their verdict unanimous "in the spirit of unity, with the goal of victory."

IN MAIN NEWS

■ Joe Biden, Bill Clinton declare they believe Obama is the right man for the job. **A6**

And they did, with a roar.

Competing chants of "Obama" and "Yes we can" surged up from the convention floor as the outcome of a carefully scripted roll call of the states was announced.

Tonight, Obama will claim his prize with an acceptance speech before a crowd expected



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barack Obama and Joe Biden officially became the Democratic Party's nominees for president and vice president Wednesday.

A NEW APPROACH: 'WE WANT TO GET THEIR ATTENTION'



FRANK BELLINO/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Bill Stephens, a conservation program specialist with the Eastern Municipal Water District, has additional duties these days. He checks out signs of water runoff at commercial and industrial complexes. After two warnings, a fine will be issued.

TRAILS LEAD TO WATER WASTERS

Inland agency takes policing efforts on the road to the next level

BY JENNIFER BOWLES
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

The sun is just rising over the Inland region and Bill Stephens is on his cop beat, chasing down abusers. Water abusers, that is.

Perhaps the region's first and only water cop, he arms himself with a camera looking for over-saturated lawns across a vast area of western Riverside County from Moreno Valley to Murrieta that is served by Perris-based Eastern Municipal Water District.

"I just saw a spot back there," he said, bringing his van to an abrupt halt. He jumps out to check a broken sprinkler head outside a large commercial facility in Perris. The leaking water drenched the sidewalk and gushed down the curb to the road.

ON THE WEB

■ Watch Bill Stephens work his beat and see how sprinklers go awry. **PE.com**

"That's running pretty good, I'd say a good six to seven gallons per minute," Stephens said.

Although Stephens scours the region only for runoff outside commercial and industrial complexes, the district's employees will start looking at residential yards for similar violations starting Monday. Fines beginning at \$100 will be assessed if two warnings go unheeded.

"Pretty much anywhere that water leaves the property over the sidewalk and into the gutter, we're going to look for, taking pictures," he said.

SEE **RUNOFF/A8**



REINING IN RUNOFF

Eastern Municipal Water District will start assessing fines for runoff from yards:

STARTING: Sept. 1
FOR MORE INFORMATION: Log on to: www.emwd.org/usewaterwisely
TO REPORT RUNOFF: Send an e-mail with exact street address and photo if possible to: conservation@emwd.org

Firefighting costs eat into forests' funds

CUTS ORDERED: Work at campgrounds and other projects are halted to offset big bills run up by blazes.

BY RICHARD BROOKS
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Big fires have burned big holes in the U.S. Forest Service budget again this year, forcing both Inland national forests to slash nearly \$6 million in non-essential expenditures, ranging from road repairs to campground toilet replacements.

"The direction from our national office is to bring all spending to a halt," said Valerie Baca, spokeswoman for the San Bernardino National Forest.

As a result, that forest is cutting \$4.5 million — mostly for 18 miles of roadwork and planning for future tree- and brush-clearing programs — or about 6.5 percent of its \$68.7 million budget.

The Cleveland National For-

est is trimming \$1.35 million — almost entirely for campground upgrades — or 4.5 percent of its \$25 million budget.

That is terrible news, say some forest visitors, who add that years of rising firefighting costs and cuts in nonfire budgets have degraded the forests.

"Go along those trails, and you'll note how many of them have washed out," said Char Miller, a Pomona College environmental history and policy professor. "They've been repaired as best one can do it, but they're still not in great shape."

"The sheer volume of people" pouring into the forests is pounding the facilities, he said. "The bathrooms don't get cleaned, the garbage is not swept up, and the staff is much smaller than it once was."

Existing projects — removing dead brush and trees and thinning overgrown forests to reduce the fire danger — will

SEE **FORESTS/A9**

Drive less, pay less in state insurance plan

BY DON THOMPSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO — The less California motorists drive, the less they might pay for auto insurance under regulations proposed Wednesday.

State Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner said the plan will give drivers the option of paying for their automobile insurance based in part on how many miles they drive.

The idea is to provide an incentive for motorists to drive less — saving fuel and cutting

greenhouse gas emissions. In doing so, they also would lower their insurance premiums.

Such pay-as-you-drive auto insurance policies already are an option in 34 states.

The Brookings Institution estimates that nearly two-thirds of California families would save money under Poizner's plan. The Washington, D.C.-based research organization says the typical family would save \$276 annually per vehicle.

SEE **INSURANCE/A9**

INSIDE

New Orleans feels Gustav's threat

A3 City officials make plans to evacuate the city as forecasters warn a Category 3 storm could hit.



Russia raises Black Sea concerns

A6 Naval commanders fear that NATO has more ships in the area than Moscow.

Border Patrol struggles to keep new hires

A2 About 30 percent of agents leave their jobs after 18 months due to the working conditions.



INDEX

MAIN NEWS: A

- California.....A2
- Lottery.....A9
- Nation.....A3
- People.....A2
- World.....A4

LOCAL PLUS: D

- Comics.....D6-7
- Horoscope.....D6
- Obituaries.....D3
- TV Listings.....D8

SPORTS DAY: B

- Baseball.....B5
- Fans Fare.....B6
- High Schools.....B7
- NFL.....B14
- Scoreboard.....B13
- Tennis.....B7
- Weather.....B14

LOCAL NEWS: C

- Community.....C2
- David Brooks.....C9
- Debra Saunders.....C9

BUSINESS: C

- Briefing.....E2
- Commodities.....E2
- Dilbert.....E2
- Mutuals.....E4
- Stocks.....E4

- CLASSIFIED.....E5
- HOME SERVICES.....E10
- JUMBLE PUZZLE.....E9

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SUNDAY BARCODE

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