

TIMES RECORD

TODAY IN BUSINESS

LOCAL DISASTER AID DELAYED PAGE 7C



TODAY IN NATION & WORLD

MICHAEL JACKSON, 'KING OF POP' DEAD AT AGE 50

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50¢

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OPTIONS WEIGHED

Highway Panel Eyes Funding

STATE COMMITTEE SEEKS PLAN TO SELL TO VOTERS

By Rob Moritz
ARKANSAS NEWS BUREAU
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LITTLE ROCK — A state panel created to find a new funding source for state highway system improvements debated its purpose Thursday and asked for proof to convince voters of the need.

"It doesn't make a difference what plan we come up with if we don't develop the resources to sell it to John Q. Public," Bill Fletcher, a member of the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on Highway Finance, said during a meeting. "You've got to have something to present to the mass of the public that you can put on TV and be understood in 30 seconds."

Rep. John Lowery, D-El Dorado, said he did not want to offend anyone but that he feared the committee could easily lose its focus.

"The Highway Commission already knows the need," Lowery said, adding the committee "could in fact

be reinventing the wheel." "The people of this state understand the problem," Mark Lambreth of Batesville said. "The case has been made several times. The case is out there, folks. The people are demanding that roads be maintained."

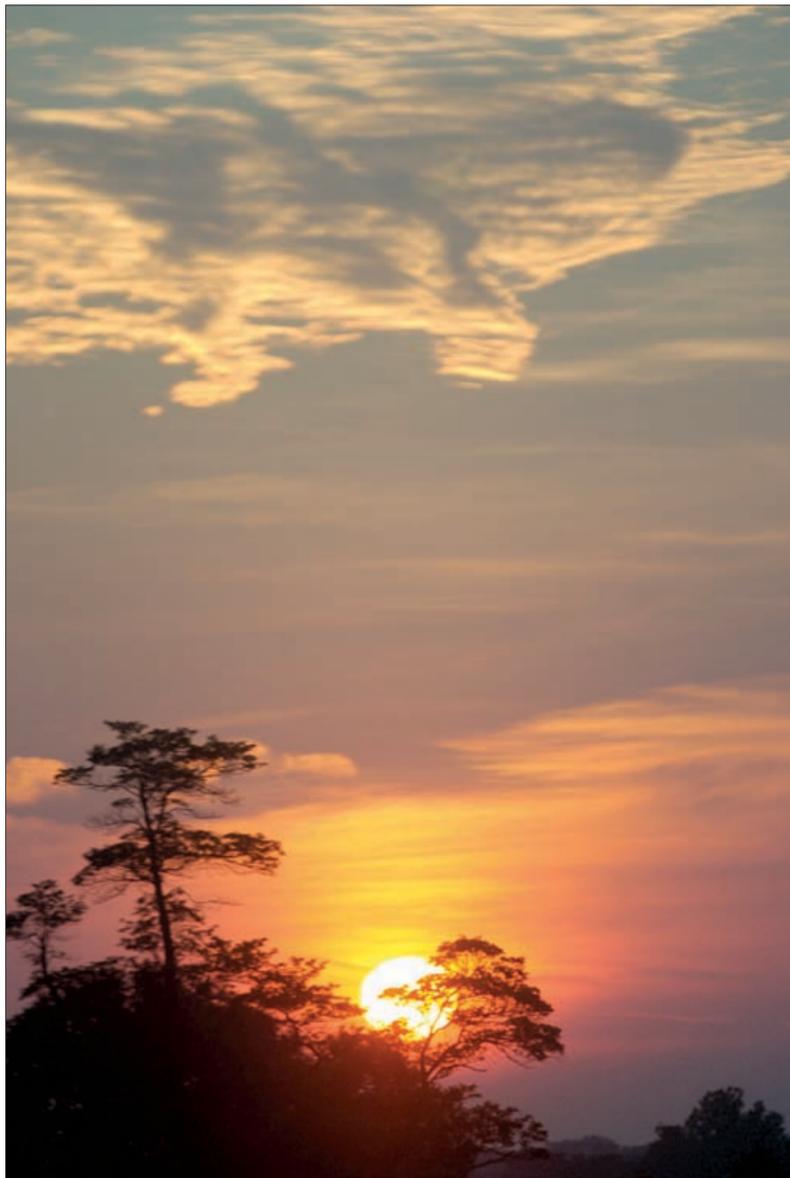
After the meeting, Rep. Mark Martin, R-Prairie Grove, said he was upset.

"The committee, today, I heard, go off on coming up with studies to convince the voters to vote for whatever funding they come up with, before they even establish a funding source. I'm mad ... that they're not worrying about doing what the Legislature asked them to do, but (they're) going out on their own and create a publicity program."

Sen. John Paul Capps, D-Searcy, the committee chairman, said after the meeting the panel understands why it was created and will come up with a recommendation that is fair.

SEE HIGHWAYS PAGE 3A

HERE COMES THE SUN



CARROL COPELAND • TIMES RECORD

The sun rises over the Oklahoma countryside around 6:30 a.m. Thursday with the promise of another hot, dry day. Today's temperature is forecast to be 101 degrees with a heat index around 110. Residents are encouraged to drink lots of water and stay out of the sun. Also take care with pets, especially those outside, to make sure they have water and shade.

Student Success Dean Named

ROWDEN TAKES POST AT UAFS

By Mary L. Crider
TIMES RECORD • MCRIDER@SWTIMES.COM

Diana Rowden of Van Buren is the new dean of student success for the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith.

Rowden will assume the new position on July 1, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor Ray Wallace said in a UAFS news release Thursday.

Rowden has worked for UAFS since 1989, serving as the Gordon Kelley Learning Assistance Center director and as College Preparatory associate dean.

Wallace said the new position is a renaming of Rowden's College Preparatory role, and Rowden's duties there will continue in her new role. She'll also continue to work with Learning Assistance Center staff and the Upward Bound program as well as with Americans with Disabilities Act services on the campus, he said.

"We are now asking this dean to do so much more in terms of increasing all our students' retention and graduation rates. ... While working

SEE DEAN PAGE 6A



Rowden

Prison Woes Raise Old Ghosts

ARKANSAS SYSTEM JUDGED CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT IN 1970

By Jon Gambrell
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LITTLE ROCK — Inmates carrying sawed-off shotguns once patrolled the grounds of Arkansas state prisons, keeping other prisoners in line with fear and intimidation. The few guards kept order with 5-foot-long leather straps and a device that sent an electric charge through an offender's toe and genitals.

Forty years ago, a federal judge declared Arkansas' prisons unconstitutional "dark and evil world," and it took more than a decade for the system to break free of federal supervision. But a spate of recent allegations — including an inmate left naked and covered in his own feces for days who nearly died — have state officials studying a past they had hoped was behind them.

"We've got to stay on top of it because we don't want to get back into federal court on this one," said state Sen. Bobby Glover, who heads a panel overseeing the prison system. "We don't want our prison system being held unconstitutional."

No state official compares the prison system of today to what it once was. But in the past several months, several misconduct allegations have surfaced behind the gates. Investigators say guards at one

"We've got to stay on top of it because we don't want to get back into federal court on this one. We don't want our prison system being held unconstitutional."

STATE SEN. BOBBY GLOVER
D-Carlisle

facility received lap dances from a nurse while on the job. Two convicted murderers escaped by wearing handmade guard uniforms. Guards shot and killed a man who officials said had fled a contraband checkpoint.

Gov. Mike Beebe said he won't call for state prisons chief Larry Norris to be fired because he believes problems in Arkansas are similar to those in other states. Norris joined the state prison system in 1971 and became director in 1993. Beebe said through a spokesman that he has "full faith" in his ability to run the 15,000-inmate system.

The tortured past of Arkansas' prisons dates to the early 20th century. In 1933, the state closed its penitentiary in Little Rock and moved all the prisoners to the Cummins and Tucker

SEE PRISONS PAGE 6A



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Journalists gather Sept. 29, 1968, at an unmarked grave at Cummins Prison near Varner. The Supreme Court ruled in 1970 that the Arkansas prison system violated the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Constitution, and it remained under federal supervision for the next 13 years.

City Fights To Split 918 Area Code In Two

By Tim Talley
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY — The city manager of a rapidly growing northeastern Oklahoma community urged an administrative law judge Thursday to reject a recommendation that the region's new area code be assigned to anyone who gets a new number in the area.

Rodney Ray, city manager of Owasso, a community of about 47,000 north of Tulsa, argued against the so-called overlay option and in favor of a plan that would use a geographic split, in which a line is drawn through the existing 918 area code. Those on one side of the line would keep

their current area code; those on the other side would get the new area code.

Ray said the overlay option, in which people with new numbers get the new area code, regardless of where they live, would confuse the elderly and young people by requiring them to dial 10 digits, including the area code, to make a local call.

Ray said the city's chamber of commerce and regional organizations, including the Indian Nations Council of Governments, have recommended using the split plan, which would require people to dial only seven digits to make a local call, as they do now.

SEE AREA CODE PAGE 6A

GETTING STARTED

IN THE NEWS

Iran's Opposition Leader Vows To Fight On

Iran's embattled opposition leader vowed Thursday that he wouldn't back down from challenging what he called a rigged presidential election despite the regime's increasing attempts to isolate him, telling the hard-liners: "I won't leave the picture."

FULL STORY, 8A

Senators Claim Trimmed Health Bill Near

WASHINGTON — Senators working to give President Barack Obama a comprehensive health care overhaul said Thursday they had figured out how to pare back the complex legislation to keep costs from crashing through a \$1 trillion, 10-year ceiling.

FULL STORY, 10A



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101/79

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