

Today: Partly sunny
Winds at 5-10 mph

High 79°
Low 53°



Political fundraising

Donors reluctant to shell out funds for potential candidates **page 6A**



PARTLOW CLOSING

Mental center's closing surprises employees **2A**

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Monday, March 14, 2011

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Representative demonstrates legislative change

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — State Rep. Greg Canfield and his legislative priority for a fiscally conservative state schools budget have become emblematic of the changes in the Alabama Legislature since Republicans took control.

In 2009 and 2010, he offered a

bill to create a more fiscally conservative way to write the state school budget. His bill drew opposition from the Alabama Education Association, and it never came to a vote in a House committee filled with the AEA's Democratic allies.

In the 2011 session, with Republicans now in control, Canfield's bill became the first

bill passed by lawmakers, and it cleared the Legislature in the fastest time possible.

Most Democrats still opposed it, but since the November election, they only make about 37 percent of the Legislature.

"Patience has been a virtue," said Canfield, R-Vestavia Hills.

Republican Gov. Robert Bentley, who signed the bill into law

Friday, sees Canfield's patience coinciding with Republicans taking their first majority in 136 years.

"Basically it boils down to we now have the votes to pass it," he said.

Canfield's bill ends a long-standing Democratic tradition of writing an education budget based on economic forecasts of

how much money the state will receive in the new budget year. That has resulted in the governor having to make midyear budget cuts 20 times since 1950 because appropriations exceeded tax collections. That includes the most recent cut of 3 percent.

Canfield's bill caps the budget's

See **CHANGE**, Page 3A

A PERFECT DAY FOR FLYING



DANNY TINDELL / DOTHAN EAGLE

Keith Davis with the Southern Flyers R/C Club enjoys flying his Align remote control helicopter at Toth Stagefield near Wicksburg on Sunday afternoon.

Japan Earthquake

Thousands dead amid fears of nuclear meltdowns

The Associated Press

SENDAI, Japan — The estimated death toll from Japan's disasters climbed past 10,000 Sunday as authorities raced to combat the threat of multiple nuclear reactor meltdowns and hundreds of thousands of people struggled to find food and water. The prime minister said it was the nation's worst crisis since World War II.

Nuclear plant operators worked frantically to try to keep temperatures down in several reactors crippled by the earthquake and tsunami, wrecking at least two by dumping sea water into them in last-ditch efforts to avoid meltdowns. Officials warned of a second explosion but said it would not pose a health threat.

Near-freezing temperatures compounded the misery of survivors along hundreds of miles of the northeastern coast battered by the tsunami that smashed inland with breathtaking fury. Rescuers pulled bodies from mud-covered jumbles of wrecked houses, shattered tree trunks, twisted cars and tangled power lines while survivors examined the



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A woman reacts amidst debris caused by Friday's massive earthquake and the ensuing tsunami, in Natori, northern Japan, on Sunday.

ruined remains.

One rare bit of good news was the rescue of a 60-year-old man swept away by the tsunami who clung to the roof of his house for two days until a military vessel spotted him waving a red cloth about 10 miles offshore.

The death toll surged because of a report from Miyagi, one of the three hardest hit states. The police chief told disaster relief officials more than 10,000 people were killed, police spokesman Go Sugawara told The Associated Press. That was an estimate — only 400 people have been confirmed dead in Miyagi, which has a population

of 2.3 million.

According to officials, more than 1,800 people were confirmed dead — including 200 people whose bodies were found Sunday along the coast — and more than 1,400 were missing in Friday's disasters. Another 1,900 were injured.

For Japan, one of the world's leading economies with ultramodern infrastructure, the disasters plunged ordinary life into nearly unimaginable deprivation.

Hundreds of thousands of hungry survivors huddled in darkened emergency centers that were cut off from rescu-

ers, aid and electricity. At least 1.4 million households had gone without water since the quake struck and some 1.9 million households were without electricity.

While the government doubled the number of soldiers deployed in the aid effort to 100,000 and sent 120,000 blankets, 120,000 bottles of water and 29,000 gallons of gasoline plus food to the affected areas, Prime Minister Naoto Kan said electricity would take days to restore. In the meantime, he said, electricity would be rationed with rolling blackouts to several cities, including Tokyo.

Man learns lesson in limit of law on cattle

The Associated Press

NANCES CREEK — It was pitch-black driving north on Alabama 9 last April 22. Michael Parker was on that road around 9 p.m., pattering through the darkness in the red 1994 Toyota pickup he drove to a construction job each day.

He was relaxed, riding with one arm on the wheel on the way home from his aunt's house when a head-on collision smashed his forehead against the steering wheel.

"I thought I hurt somebody, so I jumped out," Parker said, standing next to his crumpled truck now in the grass alongside his dirt driveway. "(I) realized it was cow. Biggest bull I've ever seen."

His 62-year-old father, Robert, caught word of the accident and headed down to find neighbors gathered at the scene.

His son was lying 15 feet behind the truck. The bull was in front of it with a broken leg, eyeing Michael.

The jet-black, full grown and "mighty healthy" Angus bull — which had escaped its pasture a number of times before and had charged at least one other car

See **LAW**, Page 3A

Gadhafi drives rebels from strongholds

The Associated Press

BENGAZI, Libya — Moammar Gadhafi's forces swept rebels from one of their final strongholds with hours of searing waves of strikes from warships, tanks and warplanes on Sunday but the insurgents claimed that they moved back in after nightfall.

One rebel said that after their initial defeat, opposition forces destroyed armored vehicles and captured dozens of fighters from Gadhafi's elite Khamis Brigade in the oil town of Brega, driving others back into the town's airport.

Another opposition fighter told The Associated Press by telephone that celebrations had broken out in the nearby city of Ajdabiya, and celebratory gunfire, honking and shouting could be heard in the background.

"We are on our way to Brega to celebrate with our brothers there," he said.

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