

Ohio State is top seed in NCAAs

Duke, Kansas and Pittsburgh also regional No. 1 seeds for March Madness. Complete bracket in **SPORTS**



THE BALTIMORE SUN

LIGHT FOR ALL

baltimoresun.com

Informing more than 1 million Maryland readers weekly in print and online
Price \$1. Our 174th year, No. 73

MONDAY
March 14, 2011

St. Patrick's Day strut



AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

Mummers parade down Charles Street toward the Inner Harbor along with a caravan of musicians and Irish step dancers who performed before sidewalk-filling crowds swelled by a sunny, mid-50s day just right for wearing a bit of green.



More online

See a gallery of photos of the St. Patrick's Day parade at baltimoresun.com

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2011 SESSION

Granting of parole: Use it or lose it

With 50 requests pending, O'Malley's inaction over 4-plus years vexes some

By Julie Bykowicz
THE BALTIMORE SUN

While Gov. Martin O'Malley has the authority to release a convict serving a life sentence, he has never used it.

Now, lawmakers are considering whether to take it away from him.

The House of Delegates has approved legislation that would free a lifer on the recommendation of the state parole commission if the governor does not file an objection. A Senate committee is expected to vote this week on legislation that would remove him from the process altogether.

The efforts are being led by O'Malley's fellow Democrats, some of whom are exasperated by his inaction on the 50 cases now sitting on his desk.

"He has executive power, but he has chosen to do nothing," said Sen. James Brochin, a member of the committee poised to vote on the legislation.

But some Republicans say that diminishing the governor's power simply allows him to avoid a political minefield. Releasing a lifer who goes on to commit more crime could render a politician unelectable.

"The governor is now directly accountable," House Minority Leader Anthony J. O'Donnell said. The Calvert County Republican **PARDONS**, page 10



ALGERINA PERNA/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO
State Sen. James Brochin sits on a committee considering legislation that would take the governor out of the parole-granting business.

Prayers at city school before tests criticized

Tilghman services called a violation; principal defended

By Erica L. Green
THE BALTIMORE SUN

A Baltimore principal's decision to use prayer in preparation for recent statewide tests is drawing criticism as improperly mixing religion and public education.

For two years, prayer services have been held at Northeast Baltimore's Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School as the Maryland School Assessments, a standardized test for third through eighth grades, neared. Fliers promoted the most recent event, on March 5, as a way to "come together, as one, in prayer and ask God to bless our school to pass the MSA."

Asked about the event, city school officials said they would investigate. In a prepared statement, the school system said that, "while we as a district understand that prayer plays an important role for many in

our school communities ... it is not appropriate for public institutions of education to promote any particular religious practice."

An attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, meanwhile, called the event a clear violation of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits organized prayer in public school settings.

"It's not even a close call," ACLU attorney David Roca said. "The whole flier is clearly conveying a religious message, overtly proselytizing, and somebody should have known better."

Jimmy Gittings, president of the city principals' union, said he supported Principal Jael Yon, "an exceptional principal trying to do what's best for our children in the Baltimore City school system."

Gittings added, "The only individuals I hold accountable for these injustices for See **PRAYER**, page 9

QUAKE AFTERMATH

No damage from latest blast in Japan

A fresh explosion that rocked the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex this morning did not damage the plant's No. 3 reactor, news agency Jiji says.

Quake coverage is on NEWS PGS 8 and 15

TODAY'S WEATHER

CLOUDS, SOME SUNSHINE

50 HIGH 34 LOW



Rain possible Wednesday **SPORTS PG 10**

Rising gas prices affect spring break plans

Travelers are paying more as airlines, cruise lines tack on surcharge for fuel costs

By Hanah Cho
THE BALTIMORE SUN

For her last spring break next week, Morgan State University senior Tenisha Duke planned a road trip to Florida with friends, the eight of them packed in two cars. That way, they could split the cost of gas.

But when violence broke out half a world away, sending gas prices here soaring, even that strategy wasn't frugal enough for Duke. She will be spending her break at her District of Columbia home instead of the

beach. "I'll be home," said Duke, who spends \$80 a week on gas to commute to Morgan State's North Baltimore campus. "And that will save me gas money for the week."

As the spring getaway season begins this month with college students jetting off to sunny destinations and families soon joining them when schools have breaks in April, surging prices at the pumps are hampering plans and tacking on additional costs for travelers. In Maryland, gas prices averaged about \$3.45 a gallon last week — up from \$2.75 a year ago, according to AAA Mid-Atlantic.

And that's not the only mode of transportation getting pricier.

Airlines are increasing fares and adding surcharges to offset the runaway cost of

fuel. Longer flights to Europe are hard hit with surcharges reaching \$400 just as vacationers book summer getaways, according to travel site BestFares.com

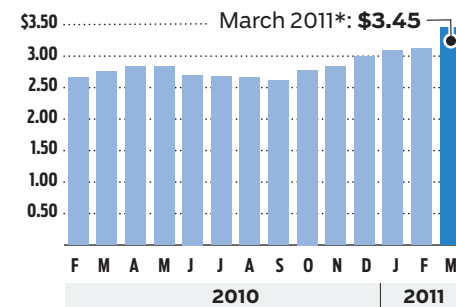
Several European-based cruise lines also have imposed or increased daily fuel fees on passengers. Major U.S. cruise ships such as Carnival Cruise Lines have imposed fuel surcharges in the past and have reserved the right to reinstate them if oil prices exceed a certain price.

Oil prices have spiked on fears of unrest that halted crude production in Libya spreading to other parts of the Middle East. While oil prices fell Friday, on the belief that Japan's massive earthquake would dampen demand, the future is uncertain and potentially volatile.

See **SPRING BREAK**, page 11

Maryland gas prices per gallon

AVERAGE MONTHLY PRICE



SOURCE: AAA Mid-Atlantic
* Through Friday

BALTIMORE SUN GRAPHIC

inside

bridge sports 9 • lottery news 4 • movie directory sunrise 4 • obituaries news 14 • opinion news 12
puzzles sunrise 5, 7, sports 8 • tonight on tv sunrise 7 • comics sunrise 6 • classified sports 8



TIRED, ACHY HEAVY LEGS?

Varicose Veins?

Your Legs Can Once Again Be Happy and Healthy.

Call Today for a FREE Screening: 1-800-FIX-LEGS | CenterforVein.com

Nationally Recognized Vein Center Specializing in the Treatment of Varicose and Spider Veins

Rx
Voted "Top Docs" in the metro Baltimore, DC, and VA areas

Proudly serving MD, DC and VA with 14 convenient locations in:
Bel Air • Towson • Waldorf • Glen Burnie • Annapolis • Easton

CENTER FOR VEIN RESTORATION
Love your legs *again!*