

Venezuela blast kills 39
Gas leak sparks explosion at oil refinery; 86 injured. — International, 6A



Setting the example
Hogs' Coach Smith believes if you want to win, you pay the price. — High Profile, 1D

Arkansas Democrat Gazette

ARKANSAS' NEWSPAPER

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In the news

■ **Linda Sirois**, a 49-year-old Maine woman, gave birth to her grandson, Madden Hebert, after her daughter, Angel Hebert, 25, was precluded from becoming pregnant because of a heart condition.

■ **Jerry Giordano**, a former television anchor at KTUL-TV in Tulsa, was formally charged with one count of possession of methamphetamine on allegations that he had two bags of a "crystalline substance" and another "large rock" of the substance when officers stopped his pickup.

■ **Vladimir Putin**, the Russian president, said in a letter to the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War that his country would be willing to negotiate new reductions in nuclear arms with the United States but that Washington must first change its plans for a missile-defense system in Europe.

■ **The Rev. George Koharchik**, a western Pennsylvania priest, has been placed on leave over allegations of sexual abuse involving children several decades ago, said the Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

■ **Jacquetta Simmons**, 27, was convicted of punching 70-year-old Wal-Mart cashier Grace Suozzi during a dispute over a receipt on Christmas Eve and faces 2½ to seven years in prison under New York's Granny Law, which makes it a felony to intentionally injure someone 65 or older if the defendant is at least 10 years younger than the victim.

■ **Abdullah Gul**, 61, whose role as Turkish president is largely ceremonial, was hospitalized to receive treatment for a recurring ear problem that forced him to cut short a visit to Kyrgyzstan.

■ **Peter TerVeer**, 30, who is gay and was fired from his job as an auditor for the Library of Congress' inspector general's office, alleges in a federal lawsuit that he suffered discrimination based on his sexual orientation and religious beliefs in violation of Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act.



Kimbrell Ritter

Students in state top mark in math

But test scores lag in other skills

CYNTHIA HOWELL
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

A majority of Arkansas students in grades one through nine exceeded the national average on the math section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills this spring but didn't do as well on the reading and language-arts sections.

Fifth- and sixth-graders as a group scored below the 50th percentile — the national average — in reading. Third-, seventh- and eighth-graders similarly scored below the nation on the language-arts portion of the test.

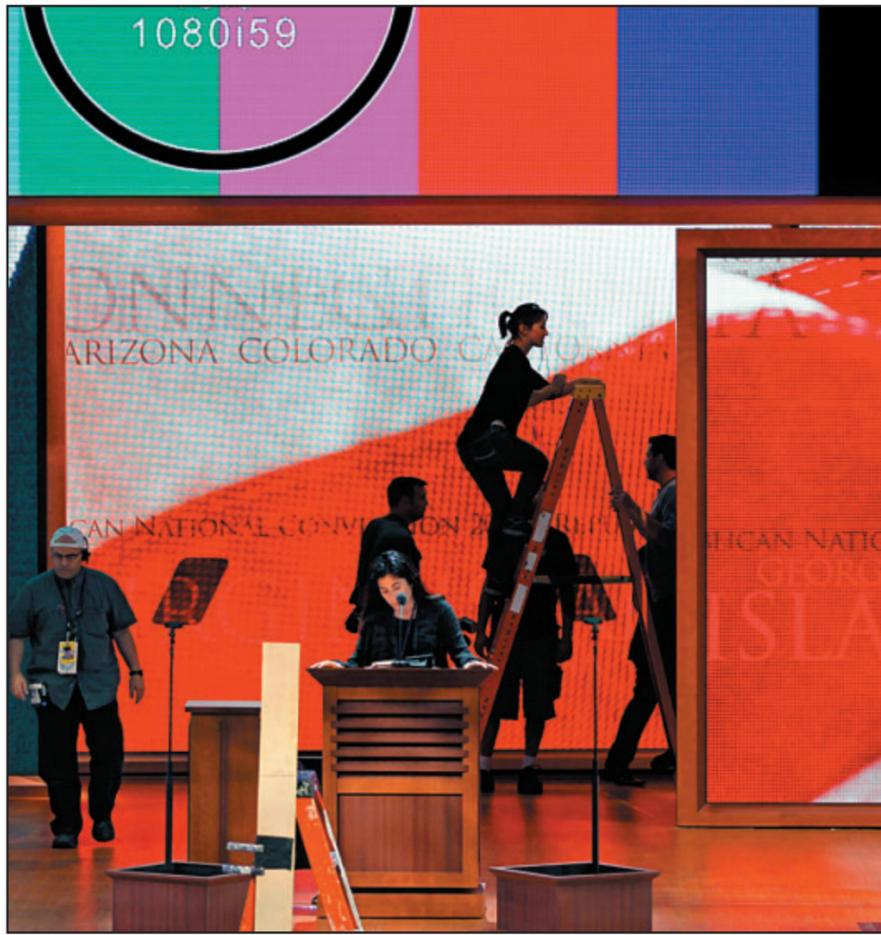
Still, Arkansas students overall did as well or better in 2012 as compared with results from 2011 on the test that gives educators, policymakers and parents a sense of whether Arkansas students are adequately prepared to compete nationally for future jobs.

The nationally standardized Iowa test compares the achievement of Arkansas students with a national sample of students who took the same test.

The math results from this spring ranged from the 50th percentile at ninth grade to the 62nd percentile in the fourth grade, meaning that Arkansas pupils scored

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Romney appeals to Ohioans



Workers ready the stage Saturday for the GOP convention at the Tampa Bay Times Forum.

AP/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

He, Ryan slap Obama on economy

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DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE STAFF
FROM WIRE REPORTS

POWELL, Ohio — Republican White House hopefuls Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan rallied a crowd of more than 5,000 supporters in Powell, Ohio, on Saturday morning, seeking to drive home their critique of President Barack Obama's leadership on the economy in their final joint campaign appearance before the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla.

Taking the stage with Ryan for the first time in Ohio since he tapped the Wisconsin congressman as his running mate two weeks ago, Romney sought to mount a pre-emptive strike against the Democratic National Convention

CONVENTION to spotlight rising young stars of GOP. Page 10A.

SUPER PACs pulling out all the stops for convention. Page 10A.

RON PAUL set for last hurrah. Page 11A.

speech that Obama is to deliver in Charlotte, N.C., early next month, arguing that the president will have "all sorts of marvelous things to say" but that voters should pay heed to his record, not his rhetoric.

"They've experienced the last four years, and they know if they re-elect him they'll get four more years of the same," Romney told supporters gathered at the Village Green Park in the upscale suburb northwest of Columbus. "It is not his words that people have to listen to; it is his action and his record, and if they look at that, they'll kick him out

See **CAMPAIGN**, Page 11A

Mormons tout Romney

He earns their regard, not necessarily their votes

FRANK LOCKWOOD
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

As a Republican-leaning lifelong member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jim Griffin, 66, is watching the rise of presidential candidate Mitt Romney with pride and wonder.

"I am excited as a kid on Christmas morning... I'm just exuberant about it," he said Friday morning.

The retired doctor and volunteer high school seminary

teacher will be fixed to his television this week as Romney, a former Massachusetts governor and fellow Mormon, accepts the Republican presidential nomination in Tampa, Fla.

In Arkadelphia, a lawyer and Latter-day Saint named Alan LeVar also will be watching Romney's acceptance speech, a bit more dispassionately.

LeVar, 44, is a Barack Obama voter and a former

president of the College Democrats at Brigham Young University — the church's flagship school in Provo, Utah.

But, he says, Romney's trailblazing candidacy has earned respect that stretches across party lines in the Mormon community.

See **MORMONS**, Page 11A



AP/DIEU NALIO CHERY

Residents leave an area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, flooded by Tropical Storm Isaac early Saturday. As the storm swept past Haiti and bore down on Cuba, officials in Florida urged vacationers to leave the Florida Keys and Gov. Rick Scott declared a state of emergency.

PLUS
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Isaac douses Haiti, Cuba, barrels for Florida coast

COMPILED BY
DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE STAFF
FROM WIRE REPORTS

HAVANA — Tropical Storm Isaac pushed Saturday over Cuba after sweeping across Haiti's southern peninsula, where it caused flooding and at least four deaths, adding to the misery of a poor nation still trying to recover from the terrible 2010 earthquake.

Isaac's center made land-

fall just before midday near the far-eastern tip of Cuba, downing trees and power lines. In the picturesque city of Baracoa, the storm surge flooded the seaside Malecon and a block inland, destroying two homes.

Forecasters said Isaac poses a threat to Florida on Monday and Tuesday, just as the Republican Party gathers for its national convention in Tampa. It could eventually

hit the Florida Panhandle as a Category 2 hurricane with winds of nearly 100 mph.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott declared a state of emergency, officials urged vacationers to leave the Florida Keys and the National Hurricane Center in Miami said a hurricane warning was in effect in the Keys, as well as for the west coast of Florida from Bonita Beach south to Ocean Reef

See **ISAAC**, Page 9A

First man on moon, Armstrong, 82, dies

1969 feat realized Kennedy's pledge

PAUL DUGGAN
THE WASHINGTON POST

Neil Armstrong, the astronaut who marked an epochal achievement in exploration with "one small step" from the Apollo 11 lunar module on July 20, 1969, becoming the first person to walk on the moon, died Saturday at age 82.

His family announced the death in a statement but did not disclose where he died. They attributed his death to "complications resulting from cardiovascular procedures."

A taciturn engineer and test pilot who was never at ease with his fame, Armstrong was among the most



Neil Armstrong on Feb. 20 (left) and aboard Apollo 11 on July 20, 1969.

celebrated Americans of the 1960s Cold War space race.

Twelve years after the Soviet Sputnik satellite reached space first, alarming U.S. officials, and after President John F. Kennedy in 1961 de-

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17 soon-to-exit legislators got OK for state-paid trips

MICHAEL R. WICKLINE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Legislative leaders OK'd requests from 17 lawmakers to take taxpayer-financed trips to out-of-state annual conferences this summer, though the legislators aren't seeking election to the Legislature this year and have terms that will end Dec. 31.

At least three of the 17 later decided not to go to the conferences.

The state's cost for the trips generally averages a few thousand dollars each. How much the trips cost in

total isn't clear yet. Some lawmakers have yet to seek reimbursement from the state, according to state officials.

Under a law enacted by the 2011 General Assembly, House Speaker Robert S. Moore Jr., D-Arkansas City, and Senate President Pro Tempore Paul Bookout, D-Jonesboro, have authority over lawmakers' state-paid travel to national or regional conferences.

Previously, the authority was split between legislative

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WEATHER

LITTLE ROCK
Today Scattered showers and thunderstorms.

High 89, southeast winds at 5 to 15 mph.
Tonight Rain continuing.
Low 72.



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