

# National News

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## Jeb Bush seeks Hispanic, black votes in Florida

Jeb Bush, who narrowly lost the 1994 Florida gubernatorial race to incumbent Democrat Lawton Chiles, has given his "conservative tough-guy" image a makeover in order to court traditionally Democratic constituencies among blacks, Hispanics, and Jews, according to a favorable article in the *Houston Chronicle* on July 12. The Houston daily admits that funds from Texas are filling the Floridian's campaign coffers. Bush's father is the retired President and his older brother, George W. Bush, is Governor of Texas. The article reports that Texas contributors have given \$372,000 to Jeb Bush, and another \$465,000 to the Florida Republican Party. The article paints a scenario in which Jeb Bush's election would allow him to deliver Florida to brother George Bush in the year 2000 Presidential election. Florida is the third largest state.

The *Chronicle's* Kim Cobb points out that Jeb Bush is the beneficiary of a nasty split among black Democrats, many of whom were angered over the removal of Willie Logan, who is black, as Democratic leader in the Florida House of Representatives. Logan was replaced by a white legislator, leading to charges of racism against the party leadership. U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings, no defender of Bush, told Cobb, "The Willie Logan situation was manna from heaven" for the GOP.

Cobb gushes that many pundits see a different Bush from 1994, less abrasively conservative: "Some people say Jeb has changed most publicly by his conversion to Catholicism, his wife's religion."

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## LaRouche Democrats file 70 for Maryland slate

LaRouche Democrats have filed 70 candidates as the "Marylanders for Justice" slate to run in the Sept. 15 primary. The slate is led by Lawrence Freeman for Governor, Mark Nafziger for Lieutenant Governor, and Tom Jenkins for Congress in the 1st District.

Gerald Berg added his name to the slate, running for State Comptroller, after the sudden death of Louis Goldstein, who had held that post for decades. Marylanders for Justice citizen-candidates will also be competing for positions in the Democratic Party State Central Committee, 10 seats in the House of Delegates, and one for the State Senate seat of former State Sen. Larry Young. Young was forced out of that seat, as part of the Justice Department vendetta against black elected officials, and has decided not to run to regain it.

In Montgomery County, Seniors Organized for Change, of the Greater Washington Jewish Community Center, welcomed Comptroller candidate Berg. In previous years, this traditional political forum in Maryland races has been a hotbed of Anti-Defamation League slanders against LaRouche Democrats. But Berg's combined themes of imminent financial collapse and "the same gestapo that went after Clinton is going after you," elicited a serious response.

Berg blasted the dirty operations against Larry Young, saying, "If I owned the *Baltimore Sun*, I could create the appearance of impropriety for any candidate here, alleging they were Jack the Ripper or had slept with Monica Lewinsky. Why bother having an election if you're going to let the *Sun* paper or Ken Starr determine how long elected officials can serve?"

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## Scientist slams hysteria over Clinton China policy

John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists reacted angrily to regurgitations of unsubstantiated charges against the Clinton administration regarding the Chinese failed launch of an American satellite, at a June 18 roundtable on proliferation, sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. After listening to the Heritage Foundation's Richard Fisher, Pike countered, "I've been in this town for 15 years, and this is the silliest thing I have ever seen." Referring to the McCarthyite witch-hunts, he charged that the Clinton bashers were trying to concoct "the greatest act of treason since the Rosenbergs."

Pike pointed out that the Loral satellite company, if it is found that it improperly passed along a copy of a report on the failed launch to the Chinese, will only be slapped with a \$10,000 fine. Why, then, he asked, has this "misdemeanor" been promoted as "treason on the part of the Commander-in-Chief"? He answered his own question, saying that "the Monica attack machine" started running out of gas, and, since Clinton's China summit was coming up, "unavoidably, the rain dance, . . . in advance of any summit, was starting to get itself into motion to torment the President."

Pike rebuffed Bush non-proliferation guru Henry Sokolsky, asserting that China is returning to its historical position as a center of civilization. "Do we intend to play Sparta to China?" Pike asked. "Or do we intend to play Athens?"

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## Clinton reads riot act to 'health' insurers

President Clinton signed an executive memorandum on July 7 ordering the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to take action against health insurers who deny coverage to sick people. The memorandum orders OPM to block their participation in the health insurance program for Federal employees, the nation's largest employer-sponsored health benefits program. OPM oversees the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, which serves 9 million people through 350 health plans. "The administration has zero tolerance for any actions that hinder vulnerable Americans from accessing insurance," the President insisted.

Earlier this year, the administration had received reports that health insurers were giving financial incentives to agents to avoid enrolling people with pre-existing conditions; some agents would delay processing applications until the applicant was no longer eligible. Insurers also reduced commissions to "abnormally low levels" for coverage sold to businesses with fewer than ten employees. In February, the administration issued a bulletin about such violations to insurers and to every insurance commissioner.

According to a study released in May by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's

**THE WHITE HOUSE** announced on July 7 that Chinese military observers would be present at the annual August military exercises in the Pacific, called Rimpac 98, which involve the United States, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Chile. In addition, the People's Liberation Army will send observers to a multilateral air exercise later this year in Alaska, entitled "Cooperative Thunder."

**MICHIGAN** finally passed a law making "assisted suicide" illegal on July 1, which will go into effect on Sept. 1. However, during the last eight-year reign of terror by Jack Kevorkian, prosecutors have refused to investigate even obvious homicides by Dr. Death, and those who did were slapped down by judges and juries, upholding the victims' "rights" to be killed.

**THE U.S. APPEALS COURT** in Denver announced on July 10 that it would rehear a case involving prosecutors offering leniency to witnesses in exchange for testimony, staying the implementation of an earlier July 2 ruling, until another decision is issued by the full court. A three-judge panel had held that it is a violation of the Federal anti-bribery statute for prosecutors to offer to go easy on witnesses if they will give testimony against their accomplices.

**GEOFFREY FIEGER**, Jack Kevorkian's accomplice/lawyer and gubernatorial candidate in Michigan, was strongly rebuffed by UAW strikers, when he tried to join their picket line on July 1. Local 659 first vice president Norm McComb said, "The rank and file is not as dumb as he [Fieger] thinks they are."

**THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS** this year are expected to have the lowest turnout in decades, according to the U.S. Information Service and other press. So far, according to the July 1 *The Hill* newspaper, 83 Congressional incumbents—51 Republicans and 32 Democrats—have no major party challengers, up from only 18 in 1996.

Center for Health Care Strategies, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) are dropping both Medicaid and Medicare. More than 8 million people covered by Medicaid are enrolled in HMO plans. In both rural areas and inner cities, patients are being left without access to doctors or hospitals, once the HMO contract is up. Most community clinics that had served the poor under Medicaid or other programs closed once Medicaid shifted primarily to HMOs.

At least six HMOs have terminated some of their Medicaid services in more than 12 states. Utah has lost its managed care programs for *all* of its Medicare and Medicare clients. In Massachusetts, Tufts Health Plan and Blue Cross and Blue Shield have both dropped out of the Medicaid program. U.S. Healthcare, Aetna, Prudential, and five other companies have dropped out of New York State's Medicaid programs. Kaiser Permanente, the largest HMO, quit North Carolina's Medicaid program. In Ohio, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield pulled out of Medicare plans in 19 counties; Healthnet terminated its Medicare plans in 10 counties.

## Houston judge gives FBI bloody nose again

Still licking its wounds from the aborted frame-up of five Houston City Council members, the FBI got another setback as Federal Bankruptcy Judge Karen Brown on July 7 rejected testimony from an FBI agent in a hearing linked to the Federal case against former Louisiana Gov. Edwin Edwards. Judge Brown rejected FBI agent Richard McHenry's testimony, saying it was a second-hand restatement from an informant who lacks credibility. The testimony was based on statements from informant Michael Graham, who went to the FBI alleging he had evidence of bribes being paid to then-Governor Edwards, including from former Houston Mayor Fred Hofheinz.

Graham initially made his allegations against Hofheinz and Edwards to the FBI after Graham filed for bankruptcy in 1996. He lost his house to Hofheinz in the bankruptcy, with the default of a loan for which the house was collateral. Hofheinz's attorney,

Michael Ramsey, told the judge he believes that Graham went to the FBI to get back at Hofheinz. On the basis of Graham's story, the FBI and Justice Department launched an investigation into Edwards, which may now be threatened by Brown's dismissal.

## Virginia auditor slams prison 'inmate industry'

A report released on July 8 by Virginia state auditor of public accounts Walter J. KucharSKI, says that the Virginia Correctional Enterprises has not only broken the law, but lost money, and acted to benefit private vendors. The VCE, the brainchild of former Gov. George Allen and then-Attorney General (now Governor) Jim Gilmore, lost \$412,000 in 1997, and has a debt of over \$5 million, with assets of only \$3.5 million. The auditor's report does not address the criminal investigations into VCE practices, which were the subject of an exposé in the *Virginian-Pilot*.

According to the *Pilot* story, money was no object when VCE was providing for its private industry partners, to whom it extended hundreds of thousands of dollars in credit.

Meanwhile, according to the July 6 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Virginia is seeking to lease up to 3,290 prison beds, although the prison system is already holding 37% more inmates than it was built to accommodate. Department of Corrections head Ron Angelone told the daily that he would not call 137%, or even 150%, of capacity overcrowding. "Overcrowding is when you have an inmate sleeping on the floor. That means you do not have a bed available for an individual. . . . Then you can call that overcrowding."

The complaint was raised by Virginia Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants. CURE has pointed out that in some prisons there are 90 people per dorm, and they share only four toilets. Angelone euphemizes the situation as "operational capacity." The state is already contracted to lease 300 beds to Delaware, and is seeking prisoners from other states, possibly including 1,200 from Michigan and Washington.