

## NATION/WORLD DIGEST

## Hundreds Of DC School Employees Dismissed

WASHINGTON (AP) — The D.C. Public Schools are firing 241 teachers and warning more than 700 other employees that they could be fired in the next year if their performance doesn't improve.

The firings announced Friday total 302 school system employees, including the 241 teachers. They come largely as a result of the first year of a new teacher evaluation system, though 76 teachers were fired for problems with their licenses.

The evaluation is based largely on five classroom observations of teachers and their students' standardized test scores. Those found "ineffective" on a four-tier system were fired.

Washington Teachers' Union President George Parker says the union will challenge the firings for performance.

## Detained Immigrants Can Be Found On Web

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal officials say they are making it easier for families and attorneys to find people held in 250 immigration detention facilities around the country.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency has created a search tool on its website similar to one used by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Searchers can look by name or so-called "alien" numbers given to people who immigrate to the U.S. or end up in immigration custody. The detainee locator was to be running beginning at midday Friday.

Some 30,000 people a day are in immigration custody. ICE has its own facilities but also contracts with local law enforcement agencies for bed space in local and state jails and prisons.

Creating such a locator was one of the reforms the Obama administration proposed to make the detention system more humane and transparent.

## Struggling Calif. County Hopeful About Loan

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The leaders of a rural Northern California county that has been considering bankruptcy say they're hopeful about their request for a multimillion dollar loan after discussions with state officials.

Counties and cities throughout California have seen their tax revenue plunge because of the recession. But Modoc (MOH-dahk) County is in trouble because it was improperly funding its hospital using money intended for other purposes.

Dan Macsary, chairman of Modoc county's board of supervisors, says no decisions were made Friday about whether the county will get a loan from the state.

But a spokesman for the state Treasurer Bill Lockyer says legal questions have been resolved and state officials are more confident that the County can repay a loan.

The county is seeking two loans of \$4 million and \$12.5 million.

## Seeds Of Distrust In Ala. Town's Cleanup

BAYOU LA BATRE, Ala. (AP) — The Gulf oil spill has replaced most of the shrimp, oysters and crabs flowing into Bayou La Batre (BYE-yoh lah BAT-ree), Ala., with cash — gobs of it. But if this is a boomtown, it's a bitter one.

The sleepy coastal hamlet has received \$8.5 million in BP grant money, more than any other place on the Gulf Coast, but boat operators idled by the spill complain that some of the cash intended to keep them working has gone instead to recreational fishermen and the mayor's brother.

At the docks, hundreds have gathered for meetings and protests about how the grant money is being spent in the town of about 2,300. Mayor Stan Wright says he's done nothing wrong, but BP PLC has changed its practices and taken over check-writing duties.

## Man In Darth Vader Mask Robs Bank

SETAUKET, N.Y. (AP) — A man donning a Darth Vader mask at a New York bank has gone to the dark side.

Police say the man entered a Chase bank branch on Long Island on Thursday, displayed a gun and demanded money. A surveillance camera caught the "Star Wars" character wearing a blue cape and camouflage pants.

The bandit escaped from the Setauket bank with an undetermined amount of cash.

The robbery comes about a week after another bank robber, dubbed the "bouquet bandit," held up a Manhattan bank.

Authorities say Edward Pemberton used a flower bouquet to conceal a note demanding cash during a \$440 bank heist July 15. They say he used a potted plant as a similar prop in a holdup at another bank earlier this month.

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## Black Farmers Still Denied Payment

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK AND BEN EVANS  
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Black farmers, due \$1.2 billion for a legacy of discrimination by the Agriculture Department, suffered a new and disheartening setback this week, despite the national spotlight provided by the quickly disavowed firing of a black department worker.

The Senate refused again to pay the bill. Opponents say it's a question of where the money would come from, and that's a major issue with an election nearing and voters up in arms about federal spending.

Late Thursday, the Senate stripped \$1.2 billion for the claims from an emergency spending bill, along with \$3.4 billion in long-overdue funding for a settlement with American Indians who say they were swindled out of royalties by the federal government.

Even the attention the Shirley Sherrod case brought to the issue of discrimination at the Agriculture Department couldn't bring lawmakers together on a deal. Instead, Republicans and Democrats alike proclaimed their support for the funding — appealing important constituencies — while blaming the other side for not getting anything done.

The result: Thousands of black farmers and Indian landowners will keep waiting for checks that most lawmakers agree should have been written years ago.

"If you say you support us, then, damn it, do it!" said John Boyd, a Virginia farmer and the lead organizer for the black farmers' lawsuits.

Sherrod's resignation under pressure from the Agriculture Department over her comments about race, and the subsequent White House apology, brought fresh attention to the black farmers' claims. In explaining why he acted so hastily in asking her to resign, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said he and the department were keenly sensitive to the issue of discrimination and race given the agency's dismal track record on civil rights.

It's a record that Vilsack routinely describes as "sordid." For decades, minority farmers have complained of being shut out by local Agriculture offices, well after the days of blatant segregation. African-Americans, for example, complained that loan committees across the rural South were dominated by white "good ol' boys" networks that gave the vast majority of loans and disaster aid to whites while offering scraps to blacks.

Sherrod herself was a claimant in a case against the department. She had been part of a cooperative that won a \$13 million settlement just last year.

The department also has faced persistent complaints of racism and discrimination in its own hiring, and government audits going back

two decades have found that complaints often sit for years without attention. The Government Accountability Office — an independent federal watchdog — reported in 2008, for example, that the Agriculture Department was still issuing misleading reports about discrimination and still didn't have a firm handle on how many complaints were outstanding or how they were resolved.

The auditors said their findings raised questions about whether the department took the issue seriously.

Vilsack and his boss — President Barack Obama — say they do, and they have acted far more aggressively than the Bush administration to resolve minority settlements.

The blockade has come in Congress. Leaders in both parties say they support the funding but things break down when they try to hash out how to pay.

The money for both the black farmers and the Indian landowners was stripped from the Senate war-funding bill Thursday after the House had passed it earlier this month. Senate Republicans objected to a variety of other Democratic priorities as well, insisting they be paid for rather than adding to the federal deficit.

Democrats have offered a variety of proposals, including one package that included tax increases on oil companies and multinational companies. Republicans have objected, calling instead for spending cuts elsewhere.

## Pay Czar Will Not Fight Banks On Exec Pay

BY DANIEL WAGNER  
AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON — For all his tough talk about excessive pay for bankers, the Obama administration's pay czar let the executives go without a fight.

Kenneth Feinberg announced Friday that he would not try to recoup \$1.6 billion in compensation given to top executives at bailed-out banks because he thought shaming them was punishment enough.

His decision to go easy on 17 banks that made "ill-advised" payments to their executives is likely to fuel concerns about how he will oversee the \$20 billion oil spill compensation fund created by BP.

"I'm not suggesting we should blink or turn the other cheek," Feinberg said later in an interview with The Associated Press. "These 17 companies were singled out for obviously bad behavior. The question is: At what point are you piling on and going beyond what is warranted?"

He could not force the banks to repay the money, but the law instructed him to negotiate with banks to return money if he determined that the pay packages were "contrary to the public interest" — language that he opted not to use.

Still, his leniency is a far cry from the bravado he displayed in the months leading up to his final act as pay czar. In February,

he spoke with confidence about his ability to get companies that received taxpayer help to accept less.

In an interview with The Hill newspaper, Feinberg said he had been "fairly successful in convincing the companies that it is in their best interests to seek an accommodation on compensation."

Among the companies Feinberg did not pursue were two whose bailouts are expected to cost taxpayers more than \$38 billion: American International Group Inc. and CIT Group Inc. He also ignored excessive pay at Wall Street powerhouses such as Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and JPMorgan Chase & Co., which reaped massive profits from government efforts to stabilize the financial system. They had no trouble repaying their bailouts.

He said a fight with those banks could have exposed them to lawsuits from shareholders trying to recapture the executives' money, and he did not think that would be fair.

## White House Predicts Record \$1.47T Deficit

BY ANDREW TAYLOR  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — New estimates from the White House on Friday predict the budget deficit will reach a record \$1.47 trillion this year. The government is borrowing 41 cents of every dollar it spends.

That's actually a little better than the administration predicted in February.

The new estimates paint a grim unemployment picture as the economy experiences a relatively jobless recovery. The unemployment rate, presently averaging 9.5 percent, would average 9 percent next year under the new estimates.

The Office of Management and Budget report has ominous news for President Barack Obama should he seek re-election in 2012 — a still-high unemployment rate of 8.1 percent. That would be well above normal, which is closer to a rate of 5.5 percent to 6 percent. Private economists don't think the unemployment rate will drop to those levels until well into this decade.

"The U.S. economy still faces strong headwinds," the OMB report said. They include tight credit markets, a high inventory of unsold housing and retrenchment by state governments bound by balanced budget mandates. The European debt crisis has also had an impact.

Despite these headwinds, the administration expects economic growth and job creation to continue for the rest of 2010 and to rise in 2011 and beyond," the report said.

The gaping deficits are of increasing concern to voters. But Obama and Democrats controlling Congress are mostly taking a pass on deficit reduction this year as they await possible recommendations from Obama's deficit commission.

While there's a slight improvement in the deficit for the current year, next year's predicted \$1.42 trillion worth of red ink — that's 37 cents of borrowing for every dollar spent — is looking worse. It's about \$150 billion more than previously predicted, because of still-slumping tax revenues.

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