

John McCain, R-Ariz., and Aviation subcommittee Chairman Slade Gorton, R-Wash., expressed their "strong reservations" Wednesday on the Senate floor about the proposed merger of United Airlines and US Airways. "We conclude that whatever air travelers stand to gain from the merger is outweighed by what they stand to lose," they said. Their resolution expresses concerns but "does not seek to force any agency or department to take any specific action with respect to the proposed merger," they said. The Justice Department, not Congress, could veto the deal.

Deaf ask AOL to open instant messaging

The National Association of the Deaf has joined the chorus calling for America Online to open up its dominant instant messaging service so its users can communicate with those of rival services. In a letter to the Federal Communications Commission, the group said innovations that could help the deaf "won't happen if each provider uses a different protocol." The FCC, which holds a hearing today on AOL's merger with Time Warner, could require AOL to make its system compatible with others as a condition for approval. ... **The National Federation of the Blind** withdrew its lawsuit against AOL to give the company time to make its Internet service accessible to the blind.

Ford expected to boost fuel efficiency

Ford Motor CEO Jacques Nasser will make a "major announcement" today, which is expected to involve voluntarily improving the automaker's fuel economy, the Union of Concerned Scientists said. *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, citing unnamed sources, reported on their Web sites that Ford plans to improve the fuel economy of its SUVs by 25% over five years.

InfoSpace, Go2Net plan \$2.7B merger

InfoSpace and Go2Net, two of the Internet's biggest software service providers, announced plans Wednesday for a \$2.7 billion merger. The companies provide infrastructure for electronic commerce, high-speed Internet access and wireless Web technologies.

Toysmart.com delays sale of customer data

Bankrupt Internet toy retailer Toysmart.com temporarily withdrew a plan to sell customer data, saying offers of \$50,000 from Walt Disney and \$16,000 from market research company Digital Research were too low. A bankruptcy court hearing will likely be scheduled to address the issue in the next month.

Parents aren't saving enough for college

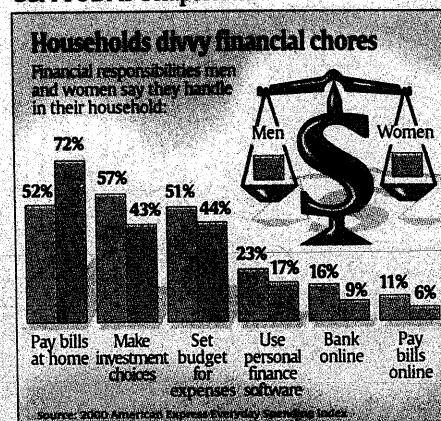
Parents who expect to pay for their children's college tuition may be misguided, a survey shows. Only 29% of all parents say they are prepared to cover the cost of college, according to a survey by Peter D. Hart Research for UPromise, a college funding Internet start-up. Only 50% of all parents have saved more than \$1,000. The survey of 1,002 parents had a margin of error of plus or minus 5.5 percentage points.

Online sweepstakes companies to merge

Online sweepstakes company Uproar said it would acquire competitor Iwin in a deal valued at \$103 million, a signal of an expected wave of consolidation.

Written by Sara Nathan from staff and wire reports

USA TODAY Snapshots®



Women sue: Left to right, Ana Torres, 40, Mirtala Serrano, 27, Rubia Barrera, 29, and Ada Alonzo, 37, and 18 other women alleged harassment and settled for \$1 million from the owners of a food processing plant in Laurel, Md.

Cover story

Immigrants become easy targets for abuse, harassment on the job

Workers arrive for employment, find exploitation instead

By Stephanie Armour
USA TODAY

All Ada Alonzo could do was yell. Forced into a locked freezer room, she says her supervisor groped her repeatedly as she screamed behind the locked metal door. No one, she says, could hear.

While she says she eventually broke free, Alonzo never reported her boss or quit working at the food processing plant in Laurel, Md. As a Spanish-

speaking immigrant from Guatemala, she says she wasn't sure where to turn or what her legal rights were.

"I needed to work," Alonzo says, speaking through a translator. "At times I asked, 'Why is this happening to me?' I was confused. This was a shock to me."

Alonzo made those allegations in a lawsuit filed against her former employer. She and 21 other Hispanic women recently shared in a \$1 million legal settlement against Grace Culinary Systems, a former subsidiary of W.R. Grace, and Townsend Culinary. While W.R. Grace says the women's allegations were never proved, the case spotlights a growing concern: the exploitation of immigrant workers,

whose numbers have swelled in midst of a strong economy and tight labor market.

Many of these employees, speak scant English and unaware of their legal rights, are coming to the U.S. in search of bright economic prospects and plentiful jobs. Instead, the finding discrimination and harassment on the job, according to federal regulators, recent statistics and lawsuits.

► The number of allegations is ploding. Complaints of harassment based on national origin have risen tenfold from 1986 to 1999, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

See COVER STORY next page

Online retailers fined for holiday shipping problems

By Lorrie Grant
USA TODAY

Several major electronics retailers agreed Wednesday to pay \$1.5 million in fines for failing to properly notify online shoppers about shipping delays last holiday season.

CDnow, KBkids.com, Macys.com and Toysrus.com were among seven e-retailers to violate the Federal Trade Commission's mail-and-telephone-order rule mandating that goods be shipped on time.

When a date is not promised, shipment must occur within 30 days.

If the merchant cannot ship as promised, shoppers must be told and a new shipping date set so a customer can accept the delay or cancel the order.

"Today's announcement is an early gift for Internet shoppers," says Jodie Bernstein, director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

Six of the violators, all but CDnow, did not send notices and were also charged with failure to deem certain orders canceled in the absence of a notice. Four —

E-retailers facing fines

E-retailers settle charges over holiday '99 shipping delays:

Retailer	Civil penalty
Macys.com	\$350,000
KBkids.com	\$350,000
Toysrus.com	\$350,000
CDnow	\$300,000
Patriot Computers	\$200,000
The Original Honey Baked Ham Company	\$45,000
Minidiscnow.com	No fine

Source: FTC 1—All but \$100,000 waived due to company's poor financial condition; 2—Minidiscnow.com to reimburse consumers

KBkids.com, Macys.com, Toysrus.com and now-defunct Minidiscnow.com — were also charged with taking orders without a reasonable basis for their shipping representations.

Called "Project Toolate.com," the agency's investigation of widely published complaints marks the first time that the FTC has targeted online retailers for their shipping claims.

Toysrus.com, which claims shipped 95% of items on time, of \$51 million last year. "We do not expect such a huge spike in traffic day season, which is why the happened," a company spokesman KBkids Chief Operating Officer Wagner says the company did move from its site delivery problem could not be kept.

"We did deliver more than 99% of orders on time. We messaging customers that bought December that we were not shipping 48 hours," he says. A division of it had revenue of \$26.2 million.

Each company except CD Minidiscnow has to pay its fine within five days after conviction have been filed in the respective district courts. The process is expected to take two weeks.

CDnow's fine was cut to \$100,000 because of its financial condition. It must pay the fine and the rest by the end of the year.

Minidiscnow.com must reimburse consumers who did not receive orders.