

ing, despite what you see and hear all around you, is still bad, foes of foul mouths say. How to bite your tongue. 9D.

**TODAY'S DEBATE:** Academic performance. In USA TODAY's opinion, "Accountability narrows racial gap in Texas; expand it." 14A.

► "Spare America's schools one more federal mandate," says Rep. Robert Schaffer, R-Colo. 14A.

**MONEY:** Two new ventures aim to jazz up e-mail. 1B.  
► Marketing marvel Pepsi challenge is coming back. 1B.  
► Gas is so high it can be cheaper to fly than drive. 2B.

**SPORTS:** He has the genes but not the means. Zippy Chippy is the losingest horse in Thoroughbred racing. 1C.  
► NCAA schedule puts Florida, Miami fans in pickle. 1C.

**LIFE:** Two men arrested in Oscar statue heist. 1D.  
► For many Oscars fashions, it's see-through or bust. 6D.

Written by John O. Buckley

## Coming Wednesday

### Orphaned and loved

In South Carolina, there's a place so special that the kids who live there might never forget it. Orphaned in some way, they get a new, big family and more than they could imagine at Connie Maxwell Children's Home.



By Eileen Bliss, USA TODAY

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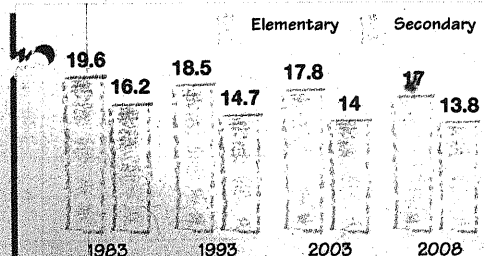
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## USA SNAPSHOTS®

A look at statistics that shape the nation

### Fewer pupils per teacher

Past and projected pupils-to-teacher ratios in the average U.S. elementary and secondary schools:



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

By Mark Pearson and Marcy E. Mullins, USA TODAY

Her son, David, is fine. But asthma, she said, attacks sent Gorman to the emergency room twice before he was born.

## COVER STORY

Gorman's experience is not unusual. Since the morning sickness drug thalidomide caused major birth defects 40 years ago, almost every medication has been guilty by association. Most labels warn against taking drugs during pregnancy or urge women to have a really good reason for doing so.

Almost none of the warnings are based on research. Fewer than 1% of all medications in the Physicians Desk Reference (PDR), the prescription drugs bible, were tested in pregnant women and found to be safe. In fact, the majority have never been studied in pregnant women at all. At best, they have been tested in pregnant animals, but it's not clear how, or if, the results apply to human mothers-to-be.

But there is valuable information being collected about the effects of prescription drugs on pregnant women and their babies. The government is studying how best to inform women and their doctors about what's known — and how to collect even more data. Gorman is one mother who already has

Gorman's experience will help inform other physicians and women with asthma. Before Sara was born, she enrolled in a registry run by the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

The registry, designed to collect data about pregnant women who inhale steroids for asthma, is one of a growing number of such projects. The goal: To fill in some of the sizable knowledge gaps about prescription drug use during pregnancy.

Next Tuesday, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will hold the latest in a series of meetings to discuss registries and other ways of studying how drugs work in pregnancy. "We feel like we're always in uncharted territory," says Sandra Kweder, co-chair of the FDA's task force on pregnancy labeling of medications.

For a number of reasons, trials of drugs not specifically designed to be used during pregnancy ban pregnant women. "It's very hard, ethically and morally, to test a drug" on a pregnant woman, says Gorman's in-

Please see COVER STORY next page ►

# White House seeks ban on g

## Widely used emissions reducer is a potential carcinogen, EPA says

By Traci Watson  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The Clinton administration said Monday that it is moving to ban the gasoline additive MTBE, which is used in one-third of gas nationwide to cut air pollution.

The chemical, which the En-

vironmental Protection Agency says is a potential carcinogen, cuts emissions of pollutants such as carbon monoxide. But it can easily seep into groundwater. U.S. Geological Survey researchers and others estimate that as many as 9,000 community wells in 31 states could be contaminated by it.

The administration seeks to ban the chemical through a regulatory procedure that could last three years. But federal officials are urging Congress to act more quickly. Members of Congress have been discussing legislation to reduce or ban MTBE use since mid-1999 but have failed to pass anything.

Federal officials said the change should have a "negligible" effect on the price of gas.

# Program billed Medicare

By Edward T. Pound  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — In a review covering six states, government auditors concluded that Medicare paid \$173 million to private outpatient rehabilitation facilities for "unallowable or highly questionable services."

The figure represents 66% of the \$263 million that Medicare paid to outpatient facilities in the six states in the one-year period studied by auditors working for June Gibbs Brown, the inspector general for the De-

## Review says facilities submitted \$173

partment of Health and Human Services. Private facilities in the states — Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Texas — receive nearly half of the money paid nationwide under the outpatient rehabilitation program.

Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, who disclosed the report, is outraged by its findings. Harkin, the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that funds health programs, says rehab services are vital to the elderly and disabled and

"can make the difference between a life of independence and dependence. That's why we can't undermine support due to fraud, waste or abuse."

The rehab program is administered by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), which contracts with insurance companies to pay claims to outpatient facilities. Nancy-Ann Min DeParle, the administrator of HCFA, wrote the inspector general that she is moving to stop abuses. A spokesman says the agency is

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