

San Ignacio lagoon in Mexico, where a proposed salt plant is being called a threat to the whales and other sea life. 6A.

PROTEST CASE: Supreme Court to hear arguments on Colorado law that requires protesters to stay 8 feet from patients entering facilities such as abortion clinics. 4A.

HEALTH INSURANCE: TV ad characters Harry and Louise return to lament the plight of 44 million Americans who don't have health insurance. 2B.

TODAY'S DEBATE: War crimes prosecution. In USA TODAY's opinion, "War criminals walk free as plans for new court stall." 14A.

► "The International Criminal Court is a fundamentally flawed idea that the United States should unequivocally reject and actively oppose," John Bolton says. 14A.

MONEY: Latest way to worker's heart: free food. 1B.
► Mutual funds finding that green is good. Your Money. 4B.
► The lowdown on lost luggage. Business Travel. 5B.
► Three-wheelers, back-seat cam and a more luxurious Lexus are all on display at Detroit auto show. 8-9B.

SPORTS: Green Bay expected to make one-time assistant coach Mike Sherman the head coach. NFL. 1,7-8C.
► Sonics sink Lakers 82-81. NBA. 1,3,4,6C.
► Indiana basketball star returns to face Bob Knight. 1C.

LIFE: *American Psycho* movie gets NC-17 rating. 1D.
► Think before you forward one of those hoax e-mails with the promise of free money. It might cost you. EWorld. 3D.
► Learning-disabled star in acclaimed documentary. 6D.
► Autograph dealer takes his papers seriously; collection of Einstein letters could get \$1 million. 8D.

Written by John O. Buckley

Coming Wednesday



Setting up shop

The Sydney Australia Summer Games are eight months away, but some U.S. athletes, including swimmer Jenny Thompson, left, are already there and tuning up. Road to 2000, a monthly Olympics report

USA TODAY

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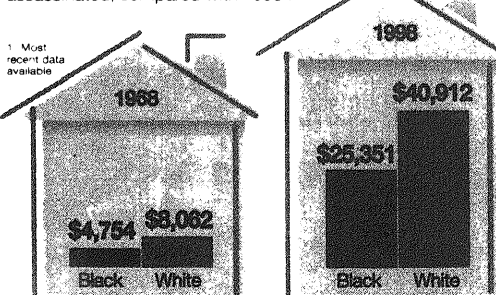
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A look at statistics that shape the nation

Black, white income gap

Median household income for blacks and whites in 1968, the year Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, compared with 1998



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

By Mark Pearson and Qian Tian, USA TODAY



By Bob Riha Jr., USA

Fighting for acceptance: Heather Zetin, left, and Brooke Parks of the Gay Straight Alliance club in Orange, Calif.

Religious groups have won their battle to be allowed on campus now another struggle tries to stop schools from drawing the line

By John Ritter
USA TODAY

ORANGE, Calif. — Religious conservatives went all out in 1984 to win passage of a federal law forcing high schools to allow Christian clubs and prayer groups on campus. Now, to the dismay of the religious right, gay students are using the same law to secure a place for their own clubs.

The number of gay and lesbian clubs meeting on high school grounds has grown dramatically, from fewer than 100 to more than 600 in just two years, according to the New York-based Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

But the growth hasn't come without controversy. Many principals and school boards balk at clubs for gay students alongside the chess club or the glee club and refuse to sanction them. Other school districts balk initially, then reluctantly permit such clubs rather than risk lawsuits.

Here in suburban Los Angeles, an urban landscape where diversity of all kinds is as conspicuous as anywhere in the country, a rare court battle is taking shape over the limits schools can impose on that traditional mainstay of the high school experience, extracurricular activities.

Last month, the seven members of the Orange Unified school board voted to reject a Gay Straight Alliance club at El Modena High. Within days, the club's gay student organizer sued in federal court, and the board dug in for a fight.

"This club is about what goes on in real life," says Su-

zanne Wilson, 16, a straight member of the El Modena club. "It's forcing kids to think about real-life situations they'll have to deal with later on."

The battle here puts a fresh twist on an old debate: what extent can a school regulate after-class activities that it permits? Civil libertarians say school officials not censor a club because they don't like its membership views or sexual orientation.

In Orange, a city of 124,000 in northern Orange County, board members set two conditions for the club to be approved: that it change its name and that sex not be discussed. The board said both conditions were within the scope of the 1984 law, the Equal Access Act. The law prohibits high schools that have a religious club and that get federal money from discriminating against any club on the basis of the speech at its meetings.

"You can't say, 'We won't let the Black Panthers in because we don't like what they say, but we're going to let the Girl Scouts in because that's wholesome,'" says Anthony Sciarano, a Chicago lawyer on the board of the National School Boards Association's attorneys council.

James Bowles, the lawyer for the Orange board, calling heterosexuals "straight" offended some parents. And he says the board thought Gay Straight Alliance name favored by most such clubs nationwide, was offensive, derogatory and inflammatory name.

Board members declined to be interviewed.

Some school districts have rejected gay-straight

COVER STORY

Please see COVER STORY next page

Liposuction death rate 'unusually high'

By Robert Davis
USA TODAY

The death rate for liposuction, the popular cosmetic surgery performed mainly in doctors' offices and clinics, is 20 to 60 times higher than the death rate for all operations performed in hospitals, a newly published survey shows.

Hospital patients undergoing all types of surgery, including risky procedures on the sickest of the sick, die at a rate of 1 in 100,000 to 1 in 300,000.

But the liposuction survey, in which 917 plastic surgeons voluntarily reported deaths in ex-

change for confidentiality, shows that for every 5,000 liposuction procedures from 1994 to 1998, one patient died — 95 in all. Among the causes were blood clots, anesthesia problems and internal injuries.

More than 172,000 Americans have liposuction, a procedure in which fat is sucked out of thighs, bellies and other parts of the body, every year by board-certified plastic sur-

geons. Any doctor can perform the surgery, so the actual tally may be more than double that.

Because the surgery is widely regarded as simple and safe, the high death rate comes as a shock to patients and medical safety advocates.

"The difference (in death rates) is gigantic," says Ellison Pierce, executive director of the Anesthesiology Patient Safety Foundation, which has

been at the center of national efforts to reduce errors. "It's unacceptable."

Plastic surgeons have admitted that causes of death may be more than double that in the survey. In the Society of Plastic Surgeons, "We're not going to let a plastic surgeon perform a liposuction procedure without more de-

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