

Briefing: Immigration bill spurs protests across U.S.

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Body

LOS ANGELES — Thousands of people **across** the country **protested** Friday against legislation cracking down on illegal immigrants, with demonstrators in such cities as Los Angeles, Phoenix and Atlanta staging school walkouts, marches and work stoppages. Congress is considering **bills** that would make it a felony to be illegally in the **United States**, impose new penalties on employers who hire illegal immigrants and erect fences along one-third of the **U.S.-Mexican** border. The **bills** have angered many Hispanics. The Los Angeles **protest** led to fights between black and Hispanic students at a high school, but were peaceful for the most part. In Phoenix, police said 10,000 people marched to the office of Republican Sen. Jon Kyl, co-sponsor of a **bill** that would give illegal immigrants up to five years to leave the country. Kyle said most protesters are opposed to a House **bill** that would make illegal **immigration** a felony, something his plan does not do.

Bush, Cheney tear into Democrats

INDIANAPOLIS — President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney launched a two-man offensive against the Democrats on Friday, with Bush suggesting the opposition party would stall the economic recovery and Cheney portraying Democratic leaders as weak on combating terror. Bush, trying to regain his political footing ahead of this year's critical midterm elections, told a GOP audience in Indianapolis that "the difference is clear" between the two parties on how to sustain the **U.S.** economic recovery. Cheney, speaking at a GOP fundraiser in Orlando, Fla., denounced Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid and party chairman Howard Dean by name. And he asserted that "leading Democrats have demanded a sudden withdrawal from the battle against terrorists in Iraq, the very kind of retreat that Osama bin Laden has been predicting."

Pope welcomes 15 new cardinals

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI warmly embraced 15 new cardinals when he placed crimson hats on their heads in a ritual-filled ceremony Friday, tears welling in his eyes as he gripped the shoulders of the Polish prelate who faithfully served his predecessor for 40 years. The moving moment in tribute to Pope John Paul II drew applause from the crowd in St. Peter's Square as Benedict elevated Archbishop Stanislaw Dziwisz, the late pontiff's private secretary, as well as key churchmen from Hong Kong, Boston, Venezuela and the Philippines. They now belong to the group that will choose the German pope's successor.

Stranded motorists face drug charges

ASHLAND, Ore. — Arizona authorities have brought drug charges against a couple who were rescued with four family members from their snowbound motor home in Oregon this week. Warrants were issued in Snowflake, Ariz., for Elbert and Becky Higginbotham on Wednesday, a day after they were found in the mountains. The couple were charged with possession of dangerous drugs for sale — methamphetamine — and possession of drug paraphernalia. Elbert Higginbotham also is wanted on a charge of misconduct involving weapons.

The warrants reportedly were issued after Arizona authorities saw TV coverage of the rescue.

Research suggests stem-cell alternative

NEW YORK — German scientists say cells from the testes of mice can behave like embryonic stem cells. If the same holds true in humans, it could provide a controversy-free source of versatile cells for use in treating disease. Embryonic stem cells can give rise to virtually any tissue in the body and scientists believe they may offer treatments for diseases like Parkinson's and diabetes and spinal cord injuries. But to harvest the cells, human embryos must be destroyed. Some religious groups and others oppose that. The study published online Friday by the journal Nature, comes from Dr. Gerd Hasenfuss of the Georg-August-University of Goettingen in Germany.

Barbara Bush's charity has strings

HOUSTON — Former first lady Barbara Bush gave relief money to a hurricane aid fund on the condition that it be spent to buy educational software from her son Neil's company. Jean Becker, the chief of staff of former President George H.W. Bush, would not disclose the amount that was earmarked for purchases from Ignite Learning. Since Barbara Bush's gift, the Ignite Learning program has been given to eight public schools with high numbers of Hurricane Katrina evacuees, the Houston Chronicle reported. Barbara Bush chose to promote Ignite because she has genuine enthusiasm for his company's program, Becker said.

FCC 'hands off' on politics online

WASHINGTON — The Federal Election Commission released proposed rules late Friday that leave almost all Internet political activity unregulated except for the purchase of campaign ads on Web sites. Commissioner Ellen Weintraub, a Democrat, said, "We tried to craft a regulation that would allow the maximum amount of freedom for people as possible." Most bloggers, individual Web users and sites such as Drudge Report and Salon.com are exempted from regulation and will be free to support and attack federal candidates, much as newspapers do. Most advocates of the blogger community welcomed the proposed rules.

Lawyer won't testify at Moussaoui trial

WASHINGTON — A government lawyer whose misconduct nearly derailed the death-penalty trial of Zacarias Moussaoui will not have to testify about her actions at a hearing Monday, court officials said Friday. Attorneys for Moussaoui had subpoenaed Carla Martin, who brought Moussaoui's sentencing hearing to a halt last week after she violated a court order by sharing testimony with upcoming witnesses. The subpoena told her to report to U.S. District Court in suburban Alexandria, Va., on Monday. But Judge Leonie Brinkema on Friday quashed the subpoena without explanation. One reason a judge would quash a subpoena, experts say, is if the person planned to invoke Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination and refuse to testify. Martin declined to testify at a hearing last week. Her attorney has said she is assembling a defense but is not yet ready to explain her actions.

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