

Today	Thursday	Friday
High: 43 Low: 30 Precip: 0%	High: 44 Low: 34 Precip: 30%	High: 40 Low: 32 Precip: 70%

IN BRIEF

Bush Administration focuses on Social Security

WASHINGTON — The Bush Administration is focusing on a Social Security proposal that would allow younger workers to invest nearly two-thirds of their payroll taxes in private accounts, with contributions limited to about \$1,000 to \$1,300 a year, an Administration official said Tuesday.

A final plan is expected to be unveiled in late February. President Bush has not made a final decision on the plan's details.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the size of the private accounts could be similar to a proposal by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and a plan from Bush's 2001 Social Security Commission.

The federal 12.4 percent payroll tax is split between workers and employers. Workers could divert 4 percentage points, while the remaining 2.2 percentage points in taxes would continue going into the system.

Graham's plan calls for the annual contributions to be capped at \$1,300, while the commission proposed a lower limit of \$1,000.

Americans donate more than \$200 million for relief

NEW YORK — From antibiotics to clothes to cash — lots of it — U.S.-based relief groups report an overwhelming response from donors moved by the devastation of the

Indian Ocean tsunami, with more than \$200 million raised as of Tuesday. One charity said online pledges were coming in at the rate of \$100,000 an hour.

Donors contributing to what one official called a "tidal wave of generosity" ranged from actress Sandra Bullock, who gave \$1 million, to 3-year-old Antonio Cabrera, who joined his brothers in dropping off cash-filled sandwich bags at the American Red Cross office in Denver.

Firm statistics for such relief campaigns are elusive. But charity officials said they expected donations to continue streaming in for weeks to come, putting the tsunami in the company of the Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s and Central America's Hurricane Mitch of 1998 as the foreign disasters prompting the largest contributions from U.S. citizens.

The private donations are in addition to the \$350 million pledged thus far by the U.S. government. Two ex-presidents renowned for their fundraising prowess — Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush — have been recruited to spur more private giving.

Indonesia, U.N. fear for children in tsunami's wake

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Fearing child-trafficking gangs will exploit the chaos of the tsunami disaster, Indonesia has placed restrictions on youngsters leaving the country, ordered police commanders to be on the lookout for trafficking and posted special guards in refugee camps.

UNICEF and other child welfare groups warn that the gangs — who are well-established in Indonesia — may well be whisking orphaned children into trafficking networks, selling them into forced labor or even sexual slavery in wealthier neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore.

Such trafficking, if confirmed,

would vastly deepen the suffering of children already struck hard by the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami. Indonesia estimates that 35,000 children on Sumatra island's Aceh province lost one or both parents to the disaster.

Fueling the suspicions, many Indonesians have received mobile phone text messages this week inviting them to adopt orphans from Aceh. The police are investigating the messages.

Pomp, promises as new Congress convenes

WASHINGTON — In a show of strength at the dawn of a new Congress, majority Republicans passed new ethics standards opposed by House Democrats on Tuesday and threatened to change Senate rules if necessary to confirm President Bush's court appointees.

"In this Congress, big plans will stir men's blood," pledged Rep. Dennis Hastert of Illinois, re-elected speaker. He vowed to spend the next two years pursuing key elements of Bush's ambitious second-term agenda.

He mentioned Social Security, including Bush's call to allow individuals to invest a portion of their payroll taxes on their own. The Illinois Republican also pledged action on energy and transportation bills and a measure to crack down on lawsuits.

"We must also start a national debate on completely overhauling our tax code," he added, leaving unclear whether another key presidential objective would become law over the next two years.

Hastert will preside over a House majority bigger by three as a result of the Nov. 2 elections. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee leads a group of 55 Republicans — four more than the GOP had in the old Congress.

Gov. Kulongoski discontented with direction of war

He also stated his position on gambling addictions, saying he would urge an increase in treatment funding

BY BRAD CAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski, an early backer of President Bush's decision to invade Iraq, expressed growing discontent Tuesday with the toll the war is having on Oregon and its citizens.

"If you tell me the exit strategy is five years, it's probably four-and-a-half years too long," the governor said in an interview looking at the year ahead.

On another issue, Kulongoski said he would urge the Legislature to spend more money on gambling addiction treatment to handle the expected increase in caseload when the state begins offering video slot games.

Kulongoski, a former U.S. Marine, has attended the funerals of more than two dozen Oregon soldiers who have been killed in Iraq. He said the task is becoming more emotionally draining with each new casualty.

"It's a very tough issue to deal with, and I have to tell you, it's becoming more and more difficult for the public," he said. "People want to know what the end game is. And what is the exit strategy?"

When Bush launched the Iraq war, Kulongoski applauded the move as a way to free the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. He later said he had doubts about the way intelligence data was used to

justify the invasion.

"All of this stuff about whether we should or shouldn't have gotten in there, the historians can fight that out," he said Tuesday. "All I know is that I now have over 1,300 Oregon National Guard troops there plus all the other kids from Oregon there."

Kulongoski, who took part in a two-day White House-organized trip to Iraq last February, said the upcoming Jan. 30 elections in Iraq could be a good beginning point for an eventual drawdown of U.S. forces.

"I think there is an opportunity for us after the election to bring in the United Nations and bring in more international help and downsize the role of America" in the Iraqi conflict, he said. Meanwhile, Kulongoski has ordered the Oregon Lottery to begin offering video slot machine games by July 1, which are expected to boost net revenues from state gambling by \$120 million.

Kulongoski says the money is needed to fund state police patrols, but officials with the state's gambling addiction treatment program predict the new games could create an additional 8,000 problem gamblers in Oregon.

However, they say they are barely able to meet current demand because the Legislature never came through with its 1999 pledge to dedicate 1 percent of the lottery's net proceeds for gambling addiction treatment.

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