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Senator Sets Future Agenda

Sen. Avel Gordly discusses her plans for the future at The Portland Observer Monday. The Democrat representing northeast and southeast Portland is kicking off her re-election campaign. Gordly said advocacy for education, social services and mental health are her priorities in the State Legislature and she encouraged area residents to get involved in the issues. She said vital programs such as the state's medically needy program are in jeopardy of losing funding because of a Feb. 3rd tax referral

Court Allows Parks Suit Over Song

(AP)—The Supreme Court refused Monday to intervene in a lawsuit over the the song "Rosa Parks" by the Grammy-winning rap group OutKast.

The action, taken without comment from the justices, means the 90-year-old civil rights figure can go ahead with her lawsuit against the band.



Rosa Parks

The chorus of the song goes, "Ah-ha, hush that fuss. Everybody move to the back of the bus."

Parks claimed that OutKast violated her publicity and trademark rights and defamed her. She wants all references to her removed from future versions of the record.

OutKast has argued that the song is protected by the First Amendment.

Parks made history in December 1955 when she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Ala., city bus. Her arrest triggered a 381-day boycott of the bus system by blacks and led to court rulings desegregating public transportation nationwide.

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New National Medicare Law Enacted

Elderly to confront difficult choices

(AP)—Elderly patients are about to confront numerous and sometimes difficult choices as a result of the most far-reaching changes to Medicare in four decades, including a new prescription drug benefit.

Beginning in 2006, seniors who want the optional drug benefit will have to choose whether to enroll in a stand-alone drug plan or move from traditional Medicare to a managed care plan that offers drug and

other benefits not covered by traditional Medicare.

They'll be making comparisons among plans that do not necessarily offer precisely the same coverage and if they don't enroll in the drug program right away, they'll pay a penalty to enroll later.

The government will spend nearly \$400 billion over the next 10 years to subsidize prescription drug coverage, which begins January 2006. At the same time, the government will encourage insurance companies to offer private plans to millions of older Americans who now receive health care benefits under terms fixed by the federal government.

Democrats pledged to fight for changes in the law, principally for measures to bring down the price of prescription drugs. Republicans wrote into the new law a provision expressly prohibiting the government from using its vast purchasing power to control drug prices.

The first tangible result of the Medicare law will be prescription drug discount cards that will cost no more than \$30 a year. President Bush said the discounts will range from 10 percent to 25 percent off retail prices. Critics say the promise of savings is wildly inflated.

The cards are likely to offer different discounts for different drugs

made by different companies, so seniors will have to choose the drug card that meshes best with their prescription medicines.

Some current Medicaid beneficiaries - among the poorest of seniors - could see the number of different drugs now available to them restricted once they are shifted to the Medicare plan, several health analysts said.

The new Medicare plan will pay all drug costs of seniors with incomes below \$12,123 and \$16,363 for a couple - as long as their savings do not exceed \$6,000. There are declining subsidies for people with slightly higher incomes.

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New York Settles Sharpton Lawsuit



Democratic presidential candidate Al Sharpton performs James Brown's 'I Feel Good' with Tracy Morgan during his monologue as guest host of the Dec. 6 broadcast of NBC's Saturday Night Live.

(AP)—New York City has agreed to pay \$200,000 in damages to Rev. Al Sharpton after he was stabbed nearly 13 years ago at a protest where he said police failed to protect him.

The settlement, which also covers the Democratic presidential candidate's \$7,447 hospital bill, came as jury selection was to begin Monday in his decade-old civil case against the New York Police Department.

Sharpton claimed police were "careless, negligent and reckless" during the 1991 incident. Sharpton, a civil rights activist, was protesting what he considered lenient sentencing of white defendants in the 1989 killing of a black teenager.

The city's law department defended the NYPD's actions, but said it agreed to the settlement because the city could not predict how a jury might rule.

Sharpton said he still fears large crowds as a result of the stabbing, and has a one-inch scar on his chest.

His attacker, Michael Riccardi, was convicted of first-degree assault and sentenced to the maximum of five to 15 years in prison.

Job Losses Hurt African Americans

African Americans have suffered another month of double-digit unemployment. According to a government report released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 10.2 percent of African Americans were unemployed in November compared with 11.5 percent the month before. The national unemployment rate in November was 5.9 percent. "For those Americans without jobs, the term 'jobless recovery' is a cruel joke, Congressional Black Caucus Chair Elijah E. Cummings, D-Md. said.

The new data also showed that job loss continued during the month of November in the manufacturing sector. The economy lost an additional 17,000 manufacturing jobs. The country has lost manufacturing jobs every month for the last three years, for a total loss of 2.6 million manufacturing jobs since President Bush took office.

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