

LAW & JUSTICE

Justice Overcomes Republican Block

Sears first black woman to lead Georgia court

A black female state Supreme Court justice who overcame Republican efforts to block her reelection has taken the oath of the chief justice's office, with her longtime friend U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas saying he never thought he would witness such an event.

Leah Sears is the first black woman to head the highest appeals court in any state, according to the National Center for State Courts based in Williamsburg, Va. She took office last month, becoming the first woman to serve as chief justice in Georgia.

Sears, 50, was branded an ac-



Leah Sears

tivist judge by Gov. Sonny Perdue and other Republicans, but she won a nonpartisan race last

year for a third six-year term with 62 percent of the vote. She was subsequently elected by her fellow justices to be their chief.

Sears vowed to "strive mightily to uphold the independence and integrity" of the judiciary. Thomas, a longtime friend who is also a native of the Savannah area, said "my pride runs deep as a human being, as a member of the judiciary and as a Georgian."

I never thought that in my lifetime I would be able to witness a black woman

as the chief justice of the state of Georgia's Supreme Court," he said.

Sears was the first woman and the youngest person ever to serve on the Georgia Supreme Court when she was appointed in 1992 by then-Gov. Zell Miller, a Democrat.

Thomas said he is confident Sears will "call them as you see them."

"Those of us who are judges know that it is easy to judge when you already have your mind made up," he told Sears at her oath of office ceremony. "It is hard to judge when you have to make your mind up."

Local Student Earns Medical Degree



Laresia K. Wheat

Congratulations to Laresia K. Wheat of Portland for her hard work and determination in graduating May 26 at the University of Pittsburgh with a medical degree in internal medicine and pediatrics.

A 1989 graduate of Jefferson High School, Wheat first went on to further her education at Lloyla Marymont University where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in performing arts. She then moved to New York City and for several years performed with the Nicholas Rodriguez Dance Company.

In 1998, she decided to further her education and applied and was accepted for medical school at the University of Pittsburgh.

Hands Down for Secrecy

State Senate supports domestic violence survivors' confidentiality

The state Senate gave unanimous support last week to a bill proposing the creation of an Address Confidentiality Program in the Oregon Department of Justice. The program is designed to protect victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who have relocated from having their address disclosed through public records.

The proposal, Senate Bill 850, is modeled on the successful programs currently operating in 17 other states, like Washington where they first started the program in 1991.

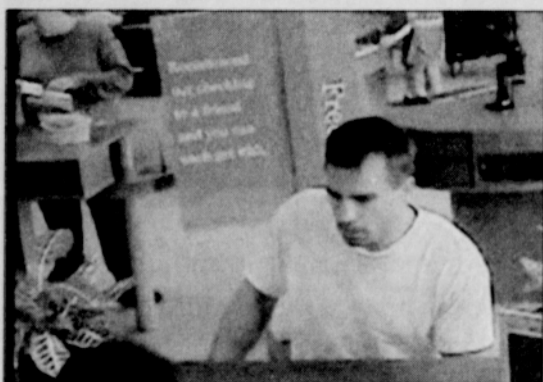
Senator Richard Devlin, chief sponsor of the bill, say the program would provide survivors with a tool to escape and abusive relationship and end the violence against them and their family, while at the same time allowing public agencies to easily respond to the requests for public records.

"The act of filing for a restraining order or child custody requires court documents to be completed," said

Devlin, "In cases where the victim has taken extreme measures to conceal his/her location, he/she may be hesitant to take any steps that could reveal their whereabouts to the abuser."

The Address Confidentiality Program functions by giving the victim a substitute address through the Attorney General's Office to use on all public records, including drivers license, voter registration, public assistance and court proceeding. All the state and local government use this address both for public records and correspondence. First class mail is forwarded by the Attorney General's office to the victim's actual address.

Senate Bill 850 received widespread support from district attorneys and law enforcement agencies around the state along with domestic violence and sexual assault advocates and the Oregon Attorney General's Office. The bill will not proceed to the Oregon House of Representatives.



This is a security camera's view of the bank robber that hit Wells Fargo and Bank of America branches recently.

Repeat Bank Robber at Large

He's hit two local banks within a month, and the FBI needs the public's help in finding him.

The first robbery occurred on June 9 around 4:30 p.m. at the Wells Fargo Bank located at Washington Square. The second robbery took place at Bank of America on SW 185th and Walker in Aloha at 4:40 p.m. on July 8. In both cases, the robber walked

into the bank, demanded cash from the teller and left on foot. He may be armed.

Witnesses describe the robber as a man in his late 20s to early 30s with a medium build between 5'7" and 5'9".

Anyone with information about the robber's identity or either bank robbery is asked to call 503-224-4181.

Laurelhurst Sees Rise in Burglaries

Man arrested on four counts

The Laurelhurst area in northeast Portland has seen a few too many burglaries lately, and it's possible that one man is behind all of them.

On Wednesday, July 13, detectives arrested 29-year-old Stacy Russel Jenkins on three counts of burglary and one county of attempted burglary.

Early morning on June 11, officers responded to a reported burglary in the Laurelhurst neighborhood. They spotted Jenkins



Russel Jenkins

hours later, but released him because they couldn't prove the property he had stolen. The property was later found to be connected with another burglary.

Further investigation connected Jenkins to a burglary that occurred on June 25, among others.

The Southeast Precinct has experienced an escalation of cat burglaries in inner northeast and southeast Portland in the past several months, but it is yet to be determined if Jenkins is connected with any of these incidences. The investigation is ongoing.

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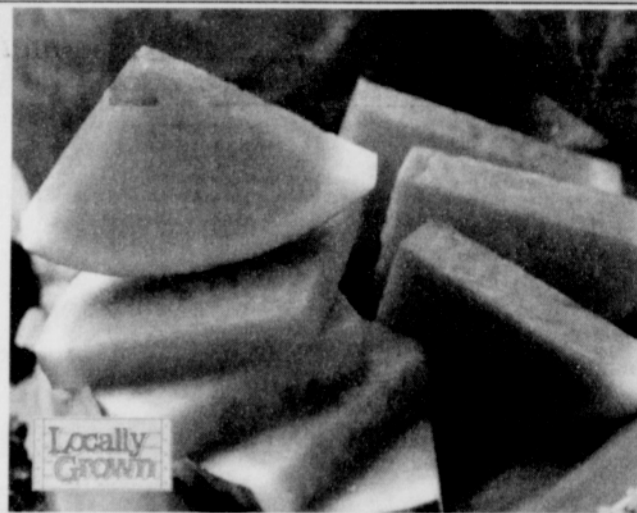
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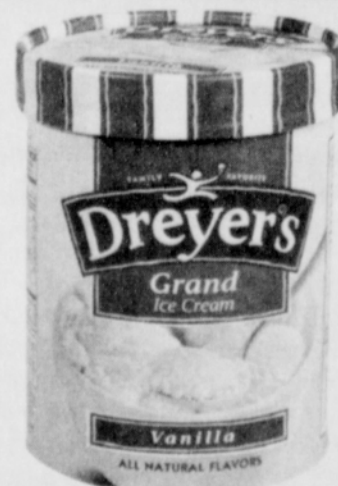
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