

Nebraskan gets caught in political crossfire

■ Behlen Manufacturing's CEO won't get a Bush administration appointment.

BY STEVE JORDON AND JAKE THOMPSON

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITERS

Nebraska businessman Tony Raimondo won't become the president's manufacturing czar after all.

The White House announced Thursday evening that Raimondo, chairman and chief executive of Behlen Manufacturing in Columbus, Neb., had withdrawn his name as nominee for assistant secretary of commerce for manufacturing and services.

The Bush administration said the withdrawal was related not to criticism from presidential candidate John Kerry but to Nebraska political issues.

Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., criticized the White House for failing to keep him and other senior Nebraska Republicans informed about the nomination.

Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., blasted critics of Raimondo, including Kerry, who had used the fact that Behlen opened a plant in China to attack President Bush on job-creation issues.

Raimondo himself said his appointment was sunk by the likelihood that the Senate wouldn't have confirmed his nomination.

"We found out early that the senatorial approval process was going to be extremely challenging to the Behlen partnership, to my family and probably to the president," he said. "It just wasn't going to work."

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Culprits unclear in blasts



Rescue workers attend to victims Thursday along railroad tracks in Madrid, Spain.

Sequence of events

Simultaneous explosions rock three train stations in Madrid. According to Spain's Interior Ministry:

7:39 a.m.: Three backpacks with explosives blow up on a commuter train in Madrid's Atocha station.

7:44 a.m.: Four backpack bombs explode on a commuter train entering Atocha station.

7:49 a.m.: Backpack bomb explodes as a commuter train enters Santa Eugenia train station.

7:54 a.m.: Two bombs explode on double-decker commuter train in El Pozo station.

10 a.m.: Police carry out controlled explosions of three backpack bombs — two in Atocha, one in El Pozo.



Explosions hit 3 train stations



People light candles Thursday in Barcelona, Spain, for the victims of the bombings in Madrid.

Clues suggest either Basque or Islamic terrorists

THE NEW YORK TIMES

A flood of conflicting evidence and clues emerged Thursday from the carnage of the bombings at three train stations in Madrid, Spain.

The blasts, which killed at least 192 people and injured more than 1,400, pointed in two very different directions, leaving counterterrorism officials struggling to identify a culprit.

Just hours after the bombings during the morning rush hour, Spanish authorities placed

blame for the attacks squarely on the Basque separatist group known as ETA. Hours later, the same officials announced the discovery of new evidence that they said left open the possibility that Islamic fundamentalists had been involved.

"Could it have been Islamic fundamentalists?" one senior Spanish anti-terrorism official asked Thursday night. "It could have been. Spain is clearly a target of al-Qaida. Osama bin Laden has said so himself."

The scale of the violence, the

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Numb horror was the reaction of survivors of Thursday's bombings.

Bombings, kidnappings and assassinations are the hallmarks of the Basque separatist group ETA.

indiscriminate nature of the killing and the near-simultaneity of the 10 bombings were all reminiscent of al-Qaida. In addition, Spain's interior minister

said that police had found detonators and an audiotape of verses from the Koran inside a stolen van that was parked near the station where three of the four bombed trains originated.

Also, a shadowy group affiliated with al-Qaida, the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades, sent e-mails to two London-based Arabic newspapers claiming responsibility for the bombings and warning that an attack against the United States is "90 percent" ready.

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Precision motivates arts center builders



Rodolfo Gomez works on the upper orchestra level of seating in the performing arts center's concert hall. The center is to open in fall 2005.

RUDY SMITH/THE WORLD-HERALD

BY ASHLEY HASSEBROEK
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Construction workers have made sure there won't be a bad seat in the house when the concert hall of Omaha's new performing arts center opens in a year and a half.

Not by installing plush seats, but by pouring concrete in all the right places.

Over the past few months, concrete has been poured to create a precise bowl shape for the hall's orchestra-level seating. The shape will help to ensure that when the seats go in, concertgoers have optimal sight lines.

"It's a real science," said Larry Hopp, a project executive for Kiewit Construction, the center's general contractor. "(A theater consultant) out in New York fig-

ures out where every seat will go because the sight lines of every seat are so critical. You've just got to be right."

Since ground was broken for the \$90 million center at 13th and Douglas Streets nearly a year ago, the project team has learned that artistic considerations such as sight lines and acoustics can complicate a job.

"Part of this project's quality-control program has to be raised to a higher level simply because of the acoustical and theatrical concerns we're trying to meet," Hopp said.

Workers, for example, needed to leave a 2-inch gap between the concert hall's skeleton and the concrete that surrounds it to create a "box within a box" to help isolate sound.

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Performing arts center

Price: \$90 million

Location: 13th and Douglas Streets

Opening: Fall 2005

Height: 100 feet (four levels)

Size: 175,000 square feet. Includes concert hall, chamber music hall and courtyard.

650 truckloads of concrete poured so far.

1,063 seats on the orchestra level of the concert hall (2,000 for entire hall).

500 air vents underneath the orchestra-level seats to help circulate air.

20-foot-high air duct underneath the entire "bowl" of the concert hall. The duct is especially big to improve the air flow and acoustics.

Operated by: Omaha Performing Arts Society, a private nonprofit.

Future performers: Omaha Symphony, touring and local dance and music groups.

Court stops gay marriages in California

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

SAN FRANCISCO — The California Supreme Court unanimously ordered San Francisco on Thursday to stop marrying gay couples and announced

that it would rule on the legality of the city's actions within the next few months.

City officials immediately complied with the court's order, directing the clerk not to issue any more same-sex marriage licenses as of 2:33 p.m. local time Thursday.

"We were filling out the application and they told us to stop," said Art Adams, who was the first to be denied as he and partner Devin Baker sought a license. "It's heartbreaking. I don't understand why two people in love should be prevented from expressing it."

The ruling from California's highest court came four weeks after Mayor Gavin Newsom ordered his staff to issue same-sex

Inside

A Massachusetts measure would ban same-sex marriages but establish civil unions. Page 6

A lesbian couple from Bellevue got married last weekend in San Francisco. Living

Suspect in child's neglect was once the accuser in an abuse case

BY TODD COOPER AND JUDITH NYGREN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITERS

In 1992, Gary Malm Jr., then 12, was taken away from his home after he said he was battered and bruised by his father.

This week Malm lost his own son after authorities found the malnourished young child languishing in a maggot-infested crib.

While Malm may not have physically abused his



Malm

physical abuse, said Sabrina Schalley, director of child and family services at the Child Sav-

ing Institute. An abused child is at least getting attention from a parent — and negative attention is better than none, she said.

Schalley called Devon's neglect "profound."

"I'd put it in the top 10 percent of (worst) cases that we know about," she said.

Malm's childhood was anything but tranquil. Court records indicate that prosecutors accused Malm's father, Gary Sr.,

of physically assaulting him for a few months in 1992, "resulting in bruises and a bloody nose."

The accusations — and Malm Jr.'s subsequent removal from Malm Sr.'s care — were just part of a tumultuous childhood.

His parents divorced when he was 4. His mom died when he was 8. He was taken from his dad's custody when he was 12 and placed in a foster home.

He went on to be treated for depression. He ran with gangs,

his family said, and ended up in court for misdemeanors such as marijuana possession.

Then, the mother of his three children died in August.

Now 23, he sits in Douglas County Jail on a felony child abuse charge — a crime punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Malm told police he had given up caring for his youngest son. He hadn't changed him, bathed him or removed him from the

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Omaha weather



Partly sunny and breezy. High 50, low 35.



Two metro-area schools, Omaha Westside and Bellevue West, advance in Class A at the state tournament. Sports



Specialties vary as churches lure parishioners to their ever-popular Lenten fish fries. Living



Coming Sunday:

Mystery mayor. Omahans know less about Mike Fahey than any mayor in generations.

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