



Pepsi via N.H.  
RPI's quickest route to the ECAC playoffs has a roadblock.  
Sports/C1

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# TIMES UNION

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ALBANY, NEW YORK ■ FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2004

## States deal gay marriage setback

Opponents hail decisions by California court, Massachusetts lawmakers, but issue is still not settled

By BOB KEEFE  
Cox News Service

Gay marriage advocates suffered a double-barreled setback Thursday, as states on either side of the country moved to prohibit same-sex weddings.

The California Supreme Court ordered the city of San Francisco on Thursday to immediately stop issuing marriage licenses to gay couples, a month almost to the day

**B3** ▶ Spitzer meets with New Paltz mayor.

**COMING SUNDAY** ▶ A Times Union/Channel 13 poll reveals how the Capital Region feels about gay marriage.

In Massachusetts, meanwhile, the legislature gave preliminary approval to a state constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriages but allow civil unions.

Opponents of gay marriage hailed the action by the two states as a major victory, and said it was more proof that the country as a whole is against the idea of same-sex weddings.

"This is a momentum swing," said Glen Lavy, senior attorney for the Alliance Defense Fund, a conservative group that sued to stop the gay marriages in San Francisco. "But frankly, you've got people up in arms all around the country about this lawlessness."

The action in the two states stopped far short of settling the simmering disagreement over gay marriage, however.

While San Francisco must stop issuing wedding licenses to gay couples immediately, the court did not rule on whether or not gay marriages are legal.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom has argued that prohibiting gay couples to wed violates the state constitution's rules prohibiting same-sex marriages. Please see **MARRIAGE A6** ▶



PETER DEJONG/ASSOCIATED PRESS  
**RESCUE** workers remove victims following a blast at the Atocha train station, the largest station and a commuter hub in Madrid.

# Terror blasts rip heart of Madrid

## Train explosions kill nearly 200; Basque separatists primary suspects

By TRACY WILKINSON  
Los Angeles Times

MADRID, Spain — In the most devastating terrorist attack in Spanish history, 10 bombs that detonated minutes apart ripped through crowded commuter trains at three Madrid stations early Thursday, killing nearly 200 people, wounding 1,400 and sending this capital into convulsions of shock and horror three days before a national election.

Authorities immediately blamed the Basque separatist group ETA for the deadliest wave of terrorism seen in Europe in almost two decades. But the scale of carnage went far beyond anything the separatists had ever carried out and led to speculation that other groups might be responsible.

**A8** ▶ Local students safe in Spain.

Interior Minister Angel Acebes initially said it was "absolutely clear" that ETA was responsible. Late Thursday, however, he went before reporters to say police had recovered a stolen van with seven bomb detonators and a tape recording of Quranic verses read in Arabic. The van was found in a suburb where the targeted trains originated, he said.

"I have instructed security forces not to discard any line of investigation," Acebes said.

A short time later, an Arabic-language newspaper in London said it had received a letter purporting to claim responsibility for the bombings in the name of al-Qaida, having "infiltrated the heart of Europe." The claim was downplayed by U.S. officials.

International condemnation and solidarity were swift. President Bush telephoned King Juan Carlos I and Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar and said, "We weep with the families."

The rush-hour blasts paralyzed Madrid. Political Please see **SPAIN A9** ▶



PAUL WHITE/ASSOCIATED PRESS  
**FIREFIGHTERS** pore over the wreckage from a passenger train that was damaged by a bomb, one in a series of explosions Thursday on trains in Madrid. The deliberate attacks, which killed nearly 200 people, took place three days before national elections. At right, two people injured by one of the explosions wait for aid.



JOSE HUESCA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

## State parks police facing an overhaul

**Albany** Plan would end seasonal hires but add full-time officers

By BRENDAN LYONS  
Staff writer

The state may abolish its controversial practice of hiring hundreds of armed seasonal park police and instead rely on civilian safety officers to help patrol New York's sprawling recreation destinations.

"It was indicated to me that they were coming out with a new program, but I haven't seen any-

thing in writing," said Park Police Officer Tom Coulter, president of the local union that represents New York's approximately 180 full-time park officers. "As part of that, the agency said they are committed to creating a more professional, permanent police force, adding to our ranks by about 140 people over the next year and a half."

For the public, the plan would mean far fewer armed police officers patrolling the state's 143 parks and 17 historic sites during the

Please see **PARK A6** ▶

## Swinging toward spring



MICHAEL P. FARRELL/TIMES UNION

Elijah Williams, left, Sophie Jensen and Kyle Kennedy at the Colonie Community Day Care Center kick up their heels as they enjoy Thursday's "get-outside" weather.

## Key expert suppressed true cost of drug plan

Bush White House threatened him with firing, actuary alleges

By TONY PUGH  
Knight Ridder

WASHINGTON — The government's top expert on Medicare costs was warned that he would be fired if he told key lawmakers about a series of Bush administration cost estimates that could have torpedoed congressional passage of the White House-backed Medicare prescription-drug plan.

When the House of Representatives passed the controversial benefit by five votes last November, the White House was embracing an estimate by the Congressional Budget Office that it would cost \$395 billion in the first 10 years. But for months the administration's own analysts in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services had concluded repeatedly that the drug benefit could cost upward of \$100 billion more than that.

Withholding the higher cost projections was important because Please see **MEDICARE A4** ▶

### INSIDE

Some Halfmoon residents want to check out of library deal.

Region/B1

### UPCOMING

Your handshake reveals a whole world of secrets.

Saturday

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