



Today: Mostly sunny and cold.
High: 53
Low: 28
Details: B2

50 cents
★★★★★
March 12, 2004

Friday
NEWS SENTINEL
Knoxville
KnoxNews.com

TANTRIC

Band likes Fleetwood Mac, hates piracy. **Preview**



OUCH!

Tide shows Vols door 84-49. **D1**

103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Millions in property taxes are at stake

Bill would reverse 2002 measure benefiting companies

BY TOM HUMPHREY
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NASHVILLE — More than \$10 million per year in property taxes is at stake in a legislative debate that pits local governments empowered to collect the levies against companies required to pay them.

MORE

State Rep. H.E. Bittle tells House colleagues he won't seek re-election. **A10**

Two charities leading push for fund-raising gaming approve of changes this week to pending bill. **A11**

If the companies win, lobbyists for city and county governments say, property taxes paid by homeowners across the state are at risk of being raised to make up for the loss of revenue.

The local governments won the first round when a House subcommittee approved a bill Wednesday sponsored by House Finance Committee Chairman Tommy Head, D-Clarksville.

But as lobbyist John Lyell, retained by Colonial Pipeline Co. to oppose Head's bill, said,

"It has a lot of other hurdles to clear." State Comptroller John Morgan, who supports the bill, characterized Lyell as "ringleader" of about 26 lobbyists lined up against the legislation.

The Tennessee Municipal League (TML), the

See **TAXES** on A10

Lawmaker: Abortion bill dead for year

BY KARIN MILLER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE — An effort to amend the constitution to restrict abortion rights in Tennessee is almost certainly dead for the year.

Sen. David Fowler, who sponsored the amendment resolution, sent it back to committee Thursday after his colleagues added wording that he found unpalatable. He said the changes might allow a father who raped his daughter to have a say in whether she could have an abortion.

"That will be the end for this session," said Fowler, R-Signal Mountain.

He said afterward that even if his colleagues want him to bring it back to the floor, there probably isn't enough time to move it through the House before lawmakers end their work this spring.

"Everybody made their bed, and now they'll have to sleep on it," Fowler said.

Voters must approve constitutional amendments, and Fowler had hoped to get it on the 2006 ballot. Before that, his resolution would have to be approved by a simple majority in the House and Senate this year, then by two-thirds of the members of the next General Assembly. If Fowler has to start over next year, the earliest the amendment could be before voters is 2010.

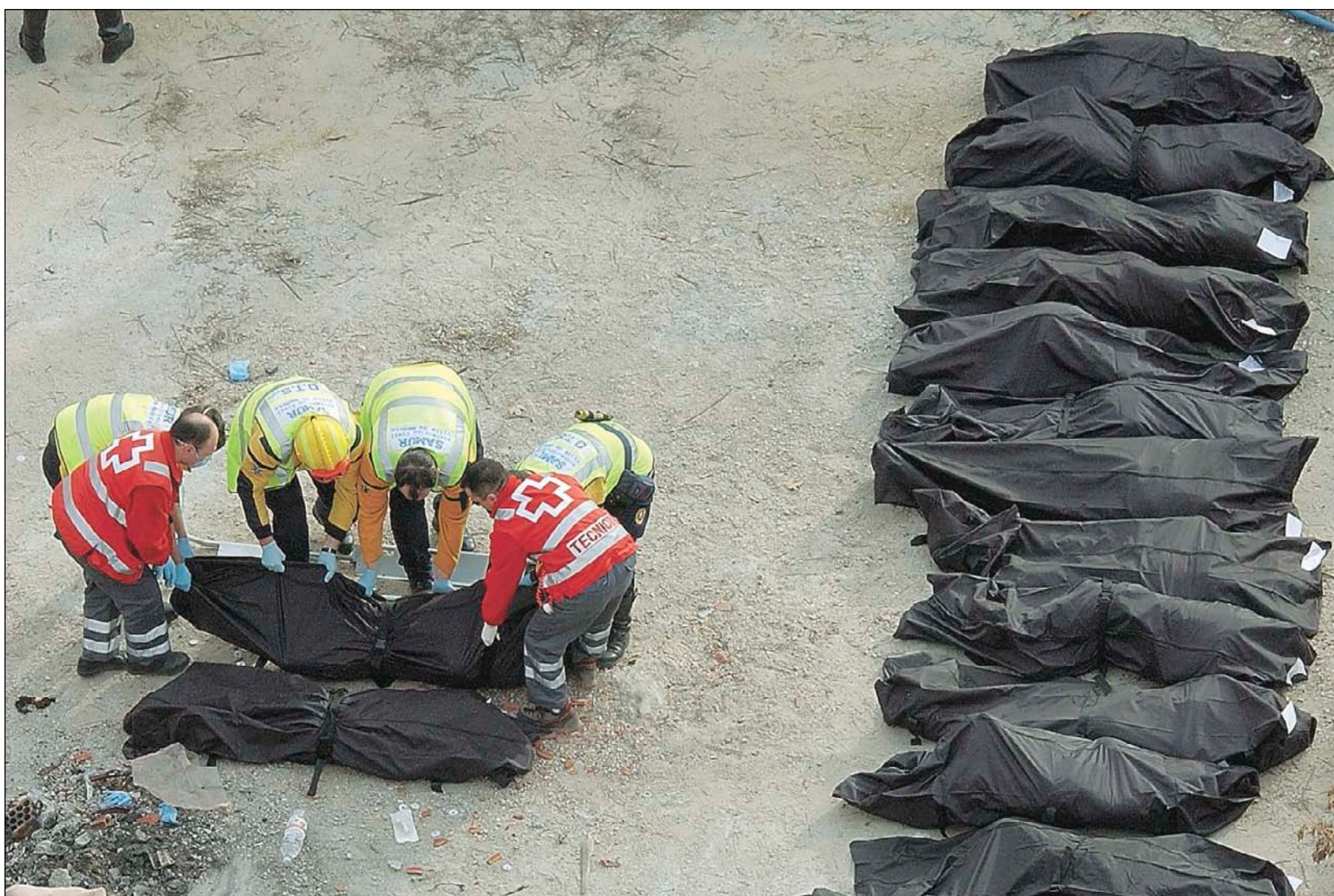
See **ABORTION** on A11

Bombings in Spain kill more than 190

10 blasts hit rush-hour trains

Explosives hidden in backpacks

Suspicion falls on separatists, al-Qaida



Rescue workers remove victims at the Atocha train station after a series of bombs blew apart four commuter trains Thursday in Madrid.



An injured man holds a blanket as he and another victim wait for help outside the Atocha train station in Madrid.

Attack exactly 2½ years after Sept. 11

BY MAR ROMAN
Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — A series of bombs hidden in backpacks exploded in quick succession Thursday, blowing apart four commuter trains and killing at least 192 people and wounding more than 1,400. Spain blamed Basque separatists, but a shadowy group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida for the worst terrorist attack in Spain's history.

Panicked rush-hour commuters trampled on each other, abandoning their bags and shoes, after the first three bombs went off in a train in the Atocha station in the heart of Madrid. Seven other bombings followed on other trains. Train cars were turned into twisted wrecks, and platforms were strewn with corpses. Cell phones rang unanswered on the bodies of the dead as frantic relatives tried to call them.

"March 11, 2004, now holds its place in the history of infamy," Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said. The bombing came three days ahead of Spain's

general election on Sunday. A major campaign issue was how to deal with ETA, the Basque militant group.

Campaigning for the election was called off, and three days of mourning were declared.

It was also 2½ years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, and it was Europe's worst attack since the bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, killed 270 people.

The 10 backpack bombs exploded in a 15-minute span, starting about 7:39 a.m., on trains along nine miles of commuter line from Santa Eugenia to the Atocha terminal, a bustling hub for subway, commuter and long-distance trains just south of the famed Prado Museum. Police also found and detonated three other bombs.

"An act of barbaric terrorism has engulfed Spain with profound pain, repulsion and anger," King Juan Carlos of Spain said on television.

See **SPAIN** on A13

MORE

Investigators are unsure if Basque separatists or a Muslim militant group is responsible for Thursday's deadly train bombings in Spain. **A13**

Probe of GOP file snooping likely

Senate judiciary panel favors seeking prosecutor to investigate matter

BY RICHARD POWELSON
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WASHINGTON — A majority on the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday favored seeking a prosecutor to find if there were crimes by two Republican aides who read or copied Democratic documents

on a shared, partly unsecured computer system.

One of the two Judiciary Committee aides, Manuel Miranda, later became a counsel to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., but resigned last month.

Committee members were seeking agreement on whether to make the written request for prosecution directly to the U.S. Department of Justice, a U.S. Attorney's Office or an outside prosecutor.

An investigation by the Senate

Sergeant at Arms office and Secret Service agents, released a week ago, found nearly 5,000 mostly Democratic documents were stored in a Republican staffer's computer folder from about October 2001 to March or April 2003. Some memos showed Democrats' critiques of Republican judicial nominees and a variety of opinions intended only for certain staffers' eyes.

The two Republican aides were

See **FILE** on A13

State's fund for cleaning up underground tanks is broke

BY MATT GOURAS
Associated Press

NASHVILLE — The state program that pays for cleaning up leaky underground oil and gas tanks is bankrupt and hasn't paid some of its bills in nearly a year, prompting Gov. Phil Bredesen to propose a taxpayer bailout of the fund.

The state Department of Environment and Conservation says it has not been charging companies enough to buy into the

cleanup fund, which operates like an insurance program.

For just \$125 per year, tank owners get reimbursed up to \$1 million to repair and clean up spills and leaks and another \$1 million to cover legal damages. The fee hasn't been raised since the early 1990s, the agency said.

Now the program faces roughly \$20 million in past due bills and is \$11.7 million in the hole.

See **TANKS** on A12

