

NEWS

National and world news in brief

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American Airlines cancels thousands of flights

On Wednesday, American Airlines grounded over 1,000 flights to have extra inspections on their wiring. The cancellations encompass nearly half of the airline's schedule.

The type of craft in question is the MD-80 which is used by over a third of American's 2,300 daily flights.

On Tuesday, the airline grounded 450 of its flights for similar reasons.

The planes had received wiring inspections two weeks ago, but the Federal Aviation Administration has increased and intensified safety inspections recently. The FAA stated they were too lenient on inspections last year, after the US House of Representatives' Transportation

Committee found safety hazards, in the form of fuselage cracks, on planes belonging to Southwest

Source: CNN, BBC News

Airlines that went unnoticed due to lax inspections.

American Airline's Chief executive, Gerard Arpey, said in a statement, "We continue to inspect every airplane to ensure we are in total agreement with the specifications of the directive. We will get back to a full schedule as quickly as possible."

American Airlines is not the only airline being forced to conduct extra inspections, Delta, Southwest and United have all also grounded flights for inspection, but nowhere near the amount American has.

American Airlines stated that more of its flights may be grounded in the near future. As of Wednesday, only 30 planes were back in operation.

Protests plague Olympic torch relay

Protests have plagued the Olympic torch relay across the globe. The protestors are criticizing China's crackdown in Tibet, and their support of Sudan in light of the years-long massacre in Darfur.

In Paris, the last leg of the relay was cut short due to the unrest. Despite the presence of 3,000 police along the route, the torch had to be extinguished three times and eventually taken on a bus to the end point of the relay. One protestor tried to grab the torch itself and was immediately arrested and thrown to the ground by a police officer.

In San Francisco, protestors climbed the Golden Gate bridge and hung banners, reading "One World One Dream," and "Free Tibet." The torch's route was shortened before the relay began, for security reasons. The first torchbearer was forced to take shelter in a warehouse due to

the sheer number of protestors, but re-emerged a half hour later a mile down the route.

Many of the individuals involved with the relay have aired concerns about the Chinese men guarding the torch. Lord Coe, a former Olympic champion and head of the organizing committee for the 2012 games said "They tried to push me out of the way three times. They did not speak English. They were thugs."

Chinese officials have scrutinized the protestors, claiming they are trying to steal the spotlight from a historical event for their self interests. Despite the Chinese government's criticism, the protestors are the ones coming out on top as the International Olympic Committee is considering cancelling the rest of the relays across the globe, but as of press time no such decision has been announced.

City officials attempt to curb graffiti

By Adam Morton
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Erie officials are cracking down on the growing problem of graffiti throughout the city. "The current graffiti problem in Erie is the worst it has ever been," District Justice Tom Carney said at a recent press conference with local Penn State students. "It's no wonder people find it hard to take pride in our town, it's starting to look like we just don't care."

The current issue in Erie extends far beyond the everyday places graffiti is found such as bridges, overpasses and vacant buildings. Instead, modern graffiti artists, or "taggers," are targeting private businesses, institutions, and residential property. "Taggers are not only affecting the image of our town, but now they are costing individuals a lot of money," Carney said.

Erie City Council member Jessica Horan-Kunco is leading the charge against the graffiti problem. Kunco's concern is the negative image that is created by excessive graffiti. "People who come into our town will think it's full of gangs and thugs" she said, "and Erie's tourism will suffer greatly if no one feels safe within our city."

Erie Mayor Joe Sinnot has teamed up with Kunco by creating a 'Graffiti Task

Force' that consists of local volunteers who wish to help make our town look beautiful once more. Through the aid and donations of local businesses like Home Depot and Braendel Painting, the task force has been successful in removing a substantial amount of graffiti. "The problem though, is that these 'taggers' are becoming more bold and daring," Carney said, "and the graffiti reappears as quickly as it is removed."

Carney believes that public awareness plays an important role in the future prevention of graffiti. "It's not like when I was young and graffiti was just a slap on the wrist," he said.

Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice Act 33 allows for adolescents to be charged as adults for significant crimes and Carney thinks that the city's youth needs to know this. "I know it's tough to be a kid these days," Carney admits, "but they need to know they're really playing with fire."

The penalties for graffiti in the Erie area are as follows. A first offense that consists of damage less than \$250 is considered criminal mischief and can carry a \$250 fine and/or 90 days in prison. However, if the defaced property is a school, church or financial institution the offense climbs to institutional vandalism which carries significant fines and considerable jail time.

However, Carney does not believe that these penalties are always necessary. Erie officials are working on a program that allows 'taggers' who are caught to adopt that building for a year. This means that once a "tagger" is through cleaning up their mess, they must continue to maintain the building by cleaning any future graffiti that appears. "Through this method," Carney said, "combined with good behavior, we don't have to throw kids in jail to teach them a lesson."

"Ignorance and apathy are the major problems in today's society," Carney said, "if you lay down and play dead; they're going to walk all over you." He added, "Every thousand mile journey starts with the first step," he added, and hopefully the 'Graffiti Task Force' can be that step.

Many of Professor Kim Young's journalism students will be participating in a graffiti clean-up that is scheduled for April 19. Anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to contact her for further information. Professor Young can be reached by phone at (814) 898-6394 or e-mail kji10@psu.edu.

As an added incentive, Carney said that he would be willing to write a recommendation of character merit for any student who participates in the clean-up.

Lack of Obama visits to the Erie area could cost him the primary

Continued from page 1.

"His campaign is probably going to focus a lot on the Philadelphia area in turning out who he is sure will support him," stated Speel when asked what other Pennsylvania locations may be drawing focus away from Erie for Obama. "I'm sure he is going to make another visit to Pittsburgh because in the city of Pittsburgh he will do well."

"[Hillary] should not be winning Erie County by a landslide and if he campaigned here and came personally for a couple visits, my guess is he would have a chance to win Erie County."

Senator Clinton's case for becoming the Democratic Presidential nominee could ride on Pennsylvania and depending on how or if she wins the state, several scenarios could play out.

"If Obama can win Pennsylvania, you're probably going to see the remaining uncommitted superdelegates come to his side and Hillary Clinton's mathematical chance of winning the nomination will drop to almost nil very quickly...if

she wins by less than five percent...at that point some of the superdelegates may also start going to Obama's side," Speel said.

If Hillary wins by a larger margin, between five and ten percent, then the contest between her and her Illinois opponent will likely continue relatively unchanged. "If she wins Pennsylvania by a large margin, by over 10 percent, then obviously she is still going and she has a case to make," Speel stated.

The associate professor also postulated another reason for why Obama may simply be biding his time, waiting for the opportune time to hit the Erie area.

"In order to win Pennsylvania it is actually better that he not have momentum now because expectations for his campaign would rise and if she did somehow win Pennsylvania it would be an even bigger win for her...They like the fact that he is five to ten percent behind now so that if he can somehow win on April 22 that would doom Hillary Clinton's presidency."

Jenkins endorses Obama

Continued from page 1.

Jenkins told the audience of mostly college students, with a few adults mixed in, that after Obama graduated from college, he was left with significant college loans, just like they would be. In Jenkins' appeal, he noted that people making less than \$75,000 per year would receive a tax credit of \$4,000 towards their student loans.

Jenkins went on to describe why he believes Obama is not your run-of-the-mill politician.

"This is a time when we have a politician that respects what people think," he said.

As Jenkins finished his speech and a long line formed for a meet and greet session, Jenkins told the audience, "This

is your time."

The increased activity on college campuses seems to be having an effect. State officials released the newest voter registration numbers on April 7 noting an eight percent increase in the number of registered Democrats to 4.2 million in the state. At the same time, the Republican Party saw a decrease of about two percent since last fall's election.

New polls by Quinnipiac University released last week show that Obama is narrowing the gap in Pennsylvania. Last month, Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) held an 11-point lead over Obama. However, the newest polls show that lead has slipped to just six points.

Behrend students remember Virginia Tech massacre

Continued from page 1.

on a killing spree," said Calvin Schmadler, a freshman business major. "It would be unfair to prosecute someone for something they have yet to commit."

A mere four days later is the eighth anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School, when two students killed 12 of their classmates and one of their teachers, before taking their own lives. Columbine was considered the worst school shooting in history, until Virginia Tech.

Since the late nineties, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of school shootings. There were eight school shootings between 1997 and 1999, and five have already occurred in 2008 (all in the month of February), the most that has ever happened in a single year.

The only school shooting to occur near the Erie area was the shooting at Parker Middle School in Edinboro, Pennsylvania in 1998. The shooter, Andrew Wurst was only 14 at the time. Wurst brought a firearm to a restaurant hosting a school dance which left one dead, three wounded. The owner of the restaurant then drew a shotgun on Wurst, keeping him at gunpoint for 11 minutes until authorities arrived.

Continued from page 1.

being able to fill gaps in the workforce within two or three years, and even bringing new companies into the city.

The Erie executive board has a unique setting in mind, aiming to start off the college without a centralized campus. Students would enroll in the college, pay community college-priced tuition, and take classes through the four-year schools in the Erie area. The board said that since four-year schools are expecting a sudden drop in student applications after the year 2008, a new pool of students would be beneficial.

Yet when pressed about the financial strain the four-year colleges would endure from taking in a large group of students for a fraction of the tuition, DiVecchio admitted that there would be "some competitive pinches." Since 30 percent of Behrend students are Erie residents, there could be an overlap of students who might be able to take the same classes at Behrend for a sliver of the price.

Mary-ellen Madigan, Director of Admissions at Behrend, said that the impact on Behrend would depend on the setup of the community college. If the community college housed its own classes and focused on technological skills, Behrend would be able to be involved without much risk. Madigan said that she would like to see the community college in place as a stepping-stone to a four-year college, functioning to boost ill-prepared high school students up to a more rigorous level.

However, if the community college "farmed out" classes to other colleges, as DiVecchio seems to be planning,

Madigan predicted some problems. First of all, the community college would have to make up for any money that Behrend would lose from a reduced tuition. Secondly, the community college would have to be Middle-State accredited, or the credits would not count for Behrend as they might some other schools in the area.

In fact, Erie developed a similar concept for a technical school in 1991. The Northwest Pennsylvania Technical Institute was "intended to function as a school 'without walls,' i.e., without a campus. Classes were to be provided by public, private and non-profit providers with which NPIT had cooperative agreements," according to the summary report on Northwest Pennsylvania Technical Institute and Wrightco Technologies Inc, which was released Oct. 2003.

The NPIT graduated 10 students in the 10 years before it shut down, although it turned out considerably more "technical skills certificates." The college was never audited by the state until 2003, when it was discovered that the NPIT owed the Commonwealth \$16 million.

Behrend students are less than enthusiastic about the potential arrangement. Many are concerned about classroom space, saying that it is already difficult to register for all of their classes. Another concern is how much of Behrend's resources they would be sharing. "Are they basically able to mooch off our stuff without paying our prices?" asks Ahmed Abdalla, Behrend freshman. Current freshman at Behrend would still be enrolled in 2010, when the community college is supposed to be in place.

Quotes on Civility

"The precepts of the law are these: to live honestly, to injure no one, and to give every man his due."

— Justinian I, Byzantine emperor (483-565)

Janet Neff Sample Center
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