

IN BRIEF

Los Angeles County

ROWLAND HEIGHTS

Marijuana operation found in another house

Sheriff's deputies Wednesday found another home in the eastern San Gabriel Valley that had been turned into an elaborate pot-growing operation.

Authorities said they recovered nearly 1,400 marijuana plants worth an estimated \$7.8 million from the home in the 1900 block of Arcadia Avenue.

It's the fourth bust of a pot-growing house in the upscale suburban region in the last two weeks.

LONG BEACH

School district named as finalist in Broad contest

Five urban school districts, including the Long Beach Unified School District, were named Wednesday as finalists for the annual \$1-million Broad Prize for Urban Education, which honors urban school systems judged as making the greatest progress in raising student achievement.

Long Beach is the first former winner since the competition began in 2002 to return as a finalist, according to the Los Angeles-based Broad Foundation. A winning district is not eligible to re-apply for three years.

The prize money goes to scholarships for graduating seniors.

Other finalists are Bridgeport Public Schools in Connecticut, Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida, the New York City Department of Education and the Northside Independent School District in northwest San Antonio.

The State

SAN FRANCISCO

Man who burned his son sentenced in gun case

A man who burned his son two decades ago to prevent his estranged wife from getting custody was sentenced Wednesday to 25 years to life in prison by a judge who called him the "kind of individual for whom the three-strikes law was passed."

Charley Charles, 66, was re-sentenced in San Francisco Superior Court for possessing a gun after an appeals court said the judge erred in not applying the so-called three-strikes law to a pair of convictions in the fire that severely injured Charles' son.

In 1983, Charles, then known as Charles Rothenberg, took his son to a Buena Park motel room and gave him a sleeping pill. He doused the room with kerosene and lighted it before leaving.

The boy survived, and Charles served seven years for attempted murder and arson.

From Times Staff and Wire Reports

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Lottery results

For Tuesday, April 3, 2007

Mega Millions

Mega number is bold

16-26-33-34-46—Mega 38
Jackpot: \$88 million

California winners per category:

	No. of winners	Amount of prize(s)
5 + Mega	0	-
5	0	-
4 + Mega	5	\$11,842
4	236	\$167
3 + Mega	243	\$185
3	12,722	\$7
2 + Mega	4,198	\$11
1 + Mega	24,844	\$3
Mega only	46,912	\$2

Winning jackpot ticket(s) sold in other states:

None

For Wednesday, April 4, 2007

Super Lotto Plus

Mega number is bold

17-18-22-26-35—Mega 10
Jackpot: \$15 million

Fantasy Five: 1-7-9-14-16

Daily Three (midday): 8-6-1

Daily Three (evening): 8-8-6

Daily Derby:

(4) Big Ben
(9) Winning Spirit
(1) Gold Rush
Race time: 1:42.65

Results on the Internet:

www.latimes.com/lottery

General information:
(800) 568-8379

(Results not available at this number)

Mayor plans \$100 million in budget cuts

The spending reductions are intended to reduce Los Angeles' shortfall to \$131 million next year.

By STEVE HYMON
Times Staff Writer

Again casting himself in the role of fiscal conservative, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said Wednesday he will propose \$100 million in spending cuts in the coming year's budget.

Villaraigosa, with City Controller Laura Chick at his side during a morning news conference, said the cuts are intended to reduce the persistent imbalance between the city's financial obligations and what it receives

in taxes and other revenue.

That amount was \$231 million this year. The mayor wants to reduce it to \$131 million in the 2007-08 fiscal year, which begins July 1, and to eliminate it by 2010-11.

"The goal is more ambitious than we earlier envisioned and is going to be harder to achieve," Villaraigosa said.

The mayor said he was persuaded to rein in costs now because of a projection that city revenue will take a hit in future years — particularly if property tax revenue falls because of high rates of foreclosures or a drop in land values. In addition, the city is facing contract negotiations with a union representing 11,000 employees this summer, and some utility user taxes are being

challenged in court.

In the worst-case scenario, the city could lose as much as \$271 million a year. "That would be a budget Armageddon," Villaraigosa said.

The mayor will submit his budget proposal to the City Council in two weeks. Villaraigosa on Wednesday reaffirmed an earlier promise not to ask for a tax increase but offered few details on how he intends to cut costs.

He did confirm money will be available to continue hiring police officers. Villaraigosa, with council approval, last year raised trash fees to help pay for his goal of hiring 1,000 more officers by 2010.

Villaraigosa already has said the new budget will have enough

money to hire 780 more officers, which would result in a net gain of 220 officers after attrition.

If that occurs, it would put the department on track to surpass, by June 2008, the 9,852 officers it had in June 1998, a record high.

Chick said most of the upcoming budget cuts, if done properly, should not be obvious to residents. "The public shouldn't notice a difference," she said. "I think that the cuts will be invisible to the public."

Villaraigosa reduced the on-going imbalance by about \$64 million in the current fiscal year's \$6.7-billion budget. He said the new budget may grow to about \$6.9 billion.

To achieve the cuts necessary to balance the next budget, the mayor said he will look for im-

proved efficiencies in the city's 40-plus departments. Villaraigosa and Chick said most general managers have been told to preserve services but to cut 5% in administrative costs.

Chick touted a number of audits overseen by her department that identified potential savings in several departments. She said she soon will embark on major audits of the city's pension funds and such quasi-independent city agencies as Los Angeles World Airports and the Department of Water and Power.

Villaraigosa added he believes the new Democratic-controlled Congress will provide increased funding for local homeland security and anti-gang programs.

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Photographs by STEPHEN OSMAN Los Angeles Times
VOICE IN THE CROWD: Port Hueneme Mayor Maricela Morales tells U.S. Coast Guard officials that her city is against the project, citing concerns about her constituents' health.

Residents speak out about proposed coastal gas plant

The hearing in Oxnard is the first in a series of meetings that will help decide the fate of the \$800-million project off Ventura County.

By GARY POLAKOVIC
Times Staff Writer

Citing safety and pollution concerns, most of the 250 people who turned out Wednesday night for a public hearing in Oxnard urged denial of a proposed \$800-million liquefied natural gas terminal that would be moored off the Ventura County coast.

"It's a dirty and dangerous floating LNG factory," said Assemblyman Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara), whose district includes Oxnard, just before the hearing. "It should not go forward."

The public hearing, the first in a series of pivotal meetings that will help decide the fate of the project, culminates a four-year effort by Australian energy giant BHP Billiton to export liquefied natural gas to California.

But most who attended the hearing before U.S. Coast Guard officials just want the energy company to go home.

"It's not safe, it's not tested, and I don't want to take that risk," Malibu Councilwoman Pamela Conley Ulich said of the terminal, which would be roughly 20 miles offshore from her city.

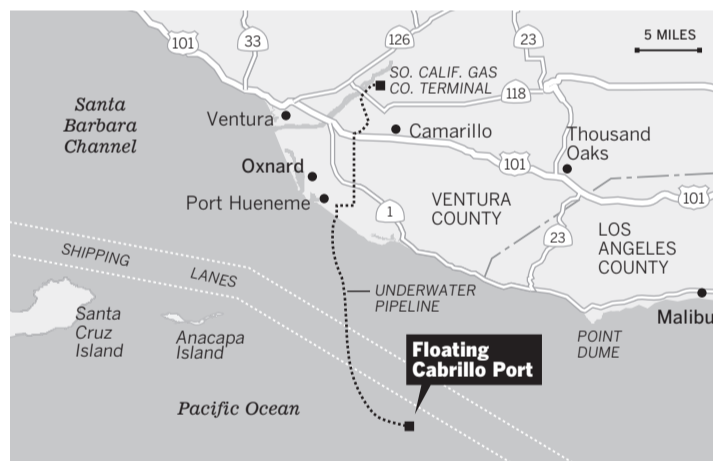
Public comments from the hearing will be submitted to the federal Maritime Administration, which must decide in the next 90 days whether to certify the project's environmental impact report and grant an operating permit.

Supporters say that California needs new sources of natural gas. The state gets 40% of its electricity from the fuel and seeks more to meet rising demand.

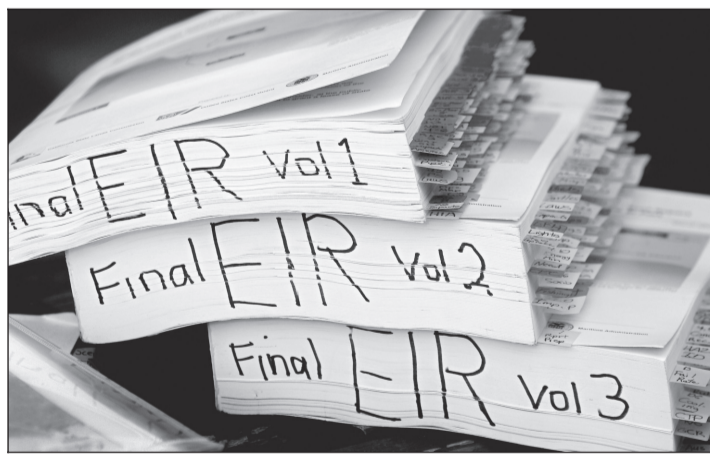
Innes Wilcox, Australian consul-general for the western United States, said Wednesday that California needs reliable energy sources to avoid blackouts that plagued the state in 2001.

"Our LNG can be a great contributor to the California economy," Wilcox said. "It's cheap, efficient and reliable and it's proven to work."

Community leaders and many residents from Oxnard and Malibu point to a recently completed environmental impact report, which cites numerous significant ecological effects associated with the project. The Coast Guard and the U.S. Maritime Administration, among



Los Angeles Times



HEAVY READING: A copy of the environmental impact report on the liquefied natural gas terminal was available at the hearing.

other agencies, will decide whether to certify the environmental report and issue a permit for the project.

Among the concerns is that the project would emit about 215 tons of smog-forming air pollutants annually immediately upwind from the Los Angeles area, one of the smoggiest places in the nation. The terminal, tankers and support vessels combined would rank among the largest polluters in Ventura County.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has ordered Billiton to comply with rigorous California air pollution controls, but reversed itself, instead allowing the company to meet a much more lenient air pollution limit in force on the Channel Islands, where there is no smog.

U.S. Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Los Angeles), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, is investigating whether the EPA acted in response to White House demands after lobbying by company officials.

The California Energy Commission and the state Public Utilities Commission cite growth and rising energy demand as a need for more reliable and diverse sources of energy, including natural gas.

The fuel is favored in California where tough air quality standards preclude use of dirtier fossil fuels, such as fuel oil or coal.

After Wednesday's hearing, the U.S. Maritime Administration has 90 days to decide on a permit under the Deepwater Port Act and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has 45 days to decide on the fate of the project.

Meanwhile, the California State Lands Commission will hold a hearing Monday in Oxnard and the California Coastal Commission will conduct a hearing Thursday in Santa Barbara.

Staff at the lands commission, which prepared the environmental impact report, identified numerous major uncorrectable environmental effects, but is nevertheless recommending approval.

The staff says that although the project will produce excessive noise, air pollution and harm to marine life, the need for new energy sources is of overriding concern.

But the staff at the state Coastal Commission objects to the terminal because it concluded that the project is inconsistent with state and federal laws that protect the coast.

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Teachers scorn offer of 1% raise

Inglewood educators protest the district's stance nine months after their contract expired.

By ADRIAN G. URIBARRI
Times Staff Writer

Nine months after their contract expired, about 150 Inglewood teachers gathered Wednesday to protest their school district's unwillingness to budget from a 1% raise offer.

Carrying signs that accused the district of insulting teachers, protesters stood in front of district headquarters and listened to union leaders talk with a hand-held loudspeaker.

Several times, passing cars honked as union supporters chanted, "No 1%! No 1%!"

The rally came after the district sent, then rescinded, termination notices to more than 180 teachers in recent weeks, a move that union members viewed as intimidation.

"It's a slap in the face," said Dawn Wynne, a third-grade teacher at Worthington Elementary School. "If you want highly qualified teachers, then pay us as if we're highly qualified."

Wynne, who also serves on the union's organizing team, said some of the termination letters were sent a day after the deadline for notifying teachers that they might not be retained next year. And some of the notices went to tenured teachers, Wynne said, who have more protection from firing. About two weeks later, she said, the district told teachers they would keep their jobs.

Last week, in a letter to parents, schools Supt. Pamela Short-Powell defended the district's position in negotiations with teachers, writing that funding has dropped as students have left the district.

"The reality is that declining enrollment has brought major

challenges" for the district, she wrote. "As fewer students equal fewer dollars, potential staff reductions are necessary."

More than half of the school districts in Los Angeles County face declining enrollments, said Kenneth Shelton, assistant superintendent at the county's Office of Education.

He attributed the drop to various factors, including California's declining birthrate, parents being forced out by rising housing costs, and charter schools, which enroll an increasing number of former public school students.

"The stress is that when districts have to readjust and resize for the population they serve, they have to look at staff," he said.

In March 1993 and June 1997, financial problems in the Inglewood district triggered AB 1200, a state measure that allows county- or state-appointed advisors to intervene in a district's budgetary decisions during times of fiscal turmoil. To keep that from recurring, Inglewood's board approved a 4% budgetary reserve rate — one percentage point more than required.

If Inglewood were to face such financial problems again, the law would not allow it to renege on collective bargaining agreements such as pay raises — even if those agreements led to insolvency.

Shelton, who was Inglewood's advisor after its problems a decade ago, said that if the school board approves a big salary increase this year, teachers might face more dire consequences in coming years. School closures, for example, could leave hundreds of workers jobless.

"If you're giving salary adjustments, you may be able to afford it this year," Shelton said. But "it's kind of like lightning striking. Things can happen all of a sudden."

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Guatemalans facing deportation sue U.S.

The lawsuit claims the government mishandled and unfairly denied applications for asylum.

By TAMI ABDOLLAH
Times Staff Writer

Guatemalan immigrants who face deportation filed a class-action lawsuit against the U.S. government this week, claiming their applications for asylum were improperly processed and unfairly denied. About 200 families are represented in the lawsuit filed Tuesday in federal court in Los Angeles.

But the outcome could affect close to 200,000 Guatemalans who had applied for refugee status, said Byron Vasquez, director of Casa de la Cultura de Guatemala, a Los Angeles-based advocacy organization.

Over the last 40 years, hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans have fled their civil war-torn country for the U.S. Many obtained work permits and applied for political asylum. As the result of a previous lawsuit and subsequent federal court ruling, Guatemalan immigrants were allowed to apply for an asylum hearing if they entered the country on or before Oct. 1, 1990.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Guatemalans continued to come to the U.S. in the 1990s. The country's civil war ended in 1996.

These immigrants applied for refugee status but were lumped together with the asylum applicants who were beneficiaries of the earlier lawsuit. As a result, many had to wait years for their cases to be adjudicated, Vasquez said.

Now many of them who have put down roots in the U.S. face deportation, he said.

"They've spent an important period of their lives, young adults, when they could establish themselves with some sort of career," said Jesse A. Moorman, a lawyer with Human Rights Project, which is representing the Guatemalans. "It's all been over here, and so to be forced to transport life back there now, when there's still many problems, is quite a difficult prospect."

Sharon Rummery, spokeswoman for the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, said the agency does not comment on pending litigation. Under the law, eligible asylum applicants must prove past persecution or a well-founded fear of future persecution based on race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion.

After a one-year dip, the number of Guatemalans deported has steadily increased, from 3,429 in 1999 to 12,529 in 2005, the most recent fiscal year for which government statistics were available.

"The civil war has ended, but from what I understand, many, many problems of poverty and inequality exist," said Kevin Terraciano, professor of Latin American history at UCLA. "I am opposed to that program to send people back to a war-torn country in which justice has not been served," he said. "Many of those problems that forced those people to flee to begin with remain, and are, in my opinion, related to bad U.S. policy in Central America."

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