



The Patriot Ledger

Gun permit renewal delays frequent

Revision bill creates one-time requirement

By LANE LAMBERT
The Patriot Ledger

BOSTON — Paul Johnson is a longtime, law-abiding hunting rifle owner from Carver. And he's mighty unhappy with the way the state handles gun permits.

In July, his 21-year-old son applied to renew his firearms identification card, a month before his old ID was to expire. Plenty of time, they figured.

His son finally got the new ID on Saturday — 18 days beyond the state's 40-day application deadline, by Johnson's count.

"The authorities will enforce the letter of the law on you, but not on themselves," he said.

Now, Johnson is among a battalion of gun owners backing a state bill that would loosen the nation's toughest gun-control law.

The bill, filed by Sen. Stephen Brewer, D-Barre, would end the requirement to renew firearms identification cards every four years that was established by the 1998 Massachusetts Gun Control Act. It would also eliminate repeat criminal background checks that are part of the renewal process.

At the State House this week, Brewer said his proposal speaks to the law-abiding citizens who have been caught in the bureaucratic mess of backlogged renewal paperwork.

"One-third of the 351 cities and towns are having enormous complications" processing the requests in a timely fashion, Brewer said. "The process is clearly broken and it needs to be fixed."

Brewer's bill would essentially create a one-time, \$100 fee for obtaining a license and remove the renewal requirement.

State officials are defending the current law.

Police chiefs fought for the 1998 law change, and worry that weakening it would lead to

Please see PERMIT — Page 2

Providing hope for the FUTURE

HELPING IN HAITI
A Story of Hope, Charity and Faith



■ Daphnee Buissereth, 7, can hope for a better future in Fond des Blancs, thanks to the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation. Nannette Canniff of Randolph, the foundation's executive director, holds Daphnee's 3-month-old brother, Pierre Roody Buissereth.

A four-part series by KAREN ESCHBACHER & photos by GARY HIGGINS / THE PATRIOT LEDGER

LEARNING CURVE

FOND DES BLANCS, Haiti
It would be easy to expect very little in a place that even nature ignores.

But the people of Fond des Blancs, where dusty, barren ground is a constant reminder of how tough life can be, keep searching for an escape, a way to climb out of the poverty that punishes them.

A relief effort begun by a handful of people at a Quincy church is giving some of them that opportunity.

The St. Boniface Haiti Foundation began by providing medical care and humanitarian aid in this rural region in southwest Haiti. After two decades, it

Please see OPPORTUNITY — Page 11

FAITH AND GROWTH

FOND DES BLANCS, Haiti
Nannette Canniff lays a set of blueprints on a table and tries to decipher the architect's drawings.

Three years after the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation added an operating room, nutrition center and dentist's office to the hospital it built in rural Haiti, another expansion is in the works.

Under the plan, an addition would increase the number of patient beds at St. Boniface Hospital from 20 to 35, and more housing would be built for visiting American volunteers.

Exactly when construction begins will depend on how soon the foundation can raise \$500,000 to build it. And

Please see HOPE — Page 10

INSIDE: Personal journal: A nation separated by more than miles PAGE 10

Fire OT costing \$32K every week

Plymouth selectman says sick time abused

By TAMARA RACE
The Patriot Ledger

PLYMOUTH — A decades-old contract clause requiring minimum staffing levels at each of the town's seven fire stations is costing \$1.6 million a year in overtime.

Town Manager Pamela Nolan told selectmen last night that the fire department is paying about \$32,000 a week in overtime.

She said the town's 124 firefighters are earning an average of \$13,000 a year in overtime.

Nolan said she has tried to negotiate minimum staffing out of the contract, but has no money available to offer raises or other incentives in return for union concessions on overtime.

■ Kingston fire department seeks \$50,000 for overtime Page 13

"It's a serious issue," Nolan said. "It has to be addressed." Finance Director Patrick Dello Russo said at the current overtime rate, the fire department will run out of money by January, seven months into the fiscal year.

Fire Chief James Pierson said any changes in overtime requirements would require contract bargaining and that firefighters would be reluctant to go along with a reduction.

When Pierson said, "This isn't the venue to negotiate," Selectman Kenneth Tavares responded angrily.

"We can't afford to spend \$32,000 a week in overtime," Tavares said. "That says there's abuse of overtime or the department is not properly manned. If we see something that doesn't look right we'll talk about it. We've dipped into other departments to cover a \$200,000 shortfall in your department. I strongly recommend you get together with the town manager and finance director and find a solution."

Tavares acknowledged that serious illnesses and an aging firefighting force have contributed to the overtime problem, but said abuse was also a factor and had to be stopped.

"Let's face it: if you've got the sniffles, you go to work," he said.

Reduced staffing from sick days and vacations forces Pierson to call in firefighters on overtime pay to meet minimum staffing standards.

Eight firefighters are taking advantage of an

Please see BUDGET — Page 2

Patriot Act backlash is growing

Experts: Public starting to realize law's long reach

By BOB EGELKO
Scripps Howard News Service

In response to the worst terrorist attack ever on U.S. soil, Congress passed the greatest expansion of search-and-surveillance authority in the nation's history, with barely a murmur of dissent. But less than two years later, the USA Patriot Act is under siege.

More than a half-dozen bills to roll back portions of the law are pending in Congress.

One passed the Republican-controlled House in July on a stunning 309-118 vote, with support from small-government conser-

Patriot Act powers

- Surveillance: The government can collect more information
- Coordination: Law-enforcement agencies can share more information
- Secrecy: New surveillance powers let the government search in secret

as President Bush is prepared to veto any significant changes in the Patriot Act, but the House action may have signaled a change in the climate.

Nearly 160 local governments and the legislatures of Vermont, Alaska and Hawaii have condemned the Patriot Act and, in some cases, instructed their officers not to cooperate with its enforcement.

Librarians and booksellers have denounced provisions allowing seizure of patrons' records and are backing a recently filed constitutional challenge in federal court.

The Bush administration has put plans for a successor "Patriot II" act on hold, and Attorney General John Ashcroft made a nationwide

Please see PATRIOT — Page 2

vatives as well as civil-rights liberals. It would cut off federal funding for "sneak and peek" searches, which involve secret entries and delayed notice to suspects.

The bill has little chance of becoming law,

SURF'S SWELL



GREG DERR/The Patriot Ledger

■ A surfer catches a wave at Nantasket Beach in Hull yesterday, as the leading edge of Hurricane Isabel kicks up the surf. See stories Page 6.

WEATHER: Page 34

Tonight Clear, 53°



Tomorrow Some sun, 66°

INDEX

Daily game: 9286
All 4: \$4,396
Full results: Page 2
44 pages
To call: 617-786-7000



Dear Abby	32
Business	18, 19
Classified	34-44
Comics	22
Editorial	20
Locals	13-17
Obituaries	33
Sports	23-27
TV listings	32

NATION/STATE



Most watched

■ Bush creating center to develop master list of terrorism suspects PAGE 4

On notice

■ FDA warns Canadian drug company that fills Springfield prescriptions PAGE 8

NEWS OF NOTE

DUXBURY	26
HANSON	13
KINGSTON	13, 14
NORWELL	13, 26
PLYMOUTH	14, 16, 26
SCITUATE	13, 16