

ELECTION

LOCAL NEWS

Close Clayton vote to be contested

Opponents expect to challenge school proposition that passed by only two votes

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CLAYTON • Opponents of Clayton School District's Prop S say they expect to challenge Tuesday's razor-thin election results in court.

"That's the sentiment of everyone," said Tom Currier, a leader of the opposition group. "We want to ask for a recount but we will and must wait for the official count. With this close an election, every care should be taken."

The bond issue to upgrade district facilities passed by less than one percent of total votes, according to unofficial results compiled by the St. Louis County Election Board. If three voters had changed their votes, the issue would have failed. District voters have not rejected a bond issue since 1973.

The \$51 million bond issue, financed by a tax increase of 29 cents for each \$100 of assessed

valuation, is intended to pay for repairs, additions and renovations at the Family Center, Clayton High School and the district's three elementary schools. About 200 community members, parents and district staff participated in preparing the list of projects during a year-long process.

But some residents were irritated that Wydown Middle School was left off the improvement list. Unknown to most residents, the board had proposed swapping that school and two unused buildings to Washington University for its CBC property on Clayton Road and \$6 million.

In the face of opposition to the swap, the board withdrew the proposal. In addition, opponents were concerned about the size of the bond issue. Currier said: "We felt it was very imprudent to have a bond issue that had so

much discretionary spending at a time when people are feeling the effects of the economy."

Chris Tennill, spokesman for the school district, said that district officials had "expected it to be a very close election, and we weren't disappointed."

Tennill said that he expected projects to begin concurrently at the various schools in the fall.

And, he said, the board is moving forward to form a task force to look into what's needed for Wydown.

"We hope to have the group present their findings to the board by September or October," Tennill said.

The proposition needed to get more than 4/7 of the total vote. That amounts to 57.15 percent.

The vote was 1,530 in favor and 1,143 against, a 57.24 majority.

"If there would have been a

three-vote switch — and three people voted no rather than voting yes — it would have lost..." said Joseph Goeke, Republican director of elections.

The Election Board has two weeks to check its numbers and certify the election. Thereafter, an interested party may seek a court order for a recount. Such orders are routinely issued when the margin is less than 1 percent.

"You always get squeakers in April," Goeke added. He said the past three April elections have had at least one tie.

While there were no ties Tuesday, five races, including Clayton's, had margins of less than 1 percent. The others were a school board race in the Maplewood-Richmond Heights district, the Ward 1 race in Manchester, the Ward 1 race in Pasadena Hills and the Ward 4 race in Valley Park.

Ladue high schoolers win Lexus Eco Challenge

LADUE • A team of five students at Ladue Horton Watkins High School won \$20,000 in scholarship money in the final challenge of the Lexus Eco Challenge, a national contest that encourages middle and high school students to help protect the environment. Their teacher, Sarah Barton, also won a \$3,000 grant to be used toward school-related supplies and programs. The school will get \$7,000.

The team, the only finalist from Missouri and one of seven high schools to get first-place prizes, was already awarded \$10,000 for becoming a finalist. The students, Rivka Feinberg, Natalie Krebs, Maxwell Montaldo, Mark Wilensky and Gina Wilmott, designed a rain garden to be built at the high school and will build the rain garden as part of their final challenge. The team's website is www.teamleaf.org.

JEFFERSON CITY > **Wage hike targeted** • Minimum pay for restaurant servers and other Missouri workers who depend on tips would not increase under legislation endorsed Wednesday by the House. Missouri voters approved a ballot measure in 2006 increasing the state's minimum wage each year for inflation. This year, the state's wage floor is \$7.05. Tipped employees' wages must be at least half that, or \$3.525.

The House bill would stop the annual wage increases in July for tipped employees. Supporters say that if the increase went through, base pay would rise to \$3.62. The legislation needs another vote to go to the Senate.

JACKSON, Mo. > **Park acreage set afire** • The Missouri Department of Conservation burned 1,300 acres of land at Trail of Tears State Park in southeastern Missouri. The fire on Wednesday was designed to encourage new growth and control the amount of fuel available to wildfires.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. > **Head of pension fund steps down** • Illinois' largest public pension fund named an interim director Wednesday and announced a nationwide search for a replacement. The board of the Teachers Retirement System, a key part of corruption allegations

LAW & ORDER

ST. LOUIS > **Man shot while gambling** • Police said a man gambling with others in the backyard of a vacant house in the 5200 block of Highland Avenue was shot and killed Wednesday afternoon. The victim, in his late teens or early 20s, was shot in the head, chest and hand about 2:40 p.m., police said. His name was not released. No one has been arrested.

ST. LOUIS > **Tax indictments** • Two St. Louis-area residents were indicted Wednesday for allegedly electronically filing 117 false tax returns to claim hundreds of thousands of dollars in refunds, federal prosecutors said. Rejji Lairy and Kenneth D. Johnson paid people to use their names on returns that Lairy filed in 2007 to claim credits based on false incomes and exemptions, prosecutors said. Lairy, 32, of Bellerive, and Johnson, 32, formerly of St. Louis, were charged with conspiracy and seeking false tax refunds.

ST. LOUIS > **Rogue pilot not seen as threat** • The agency charged with defending North American



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Neighbors watch police investigate a murder scene in between two houses in the 5200 block of Highland Avenue in St. Louis Wednesday afternoon. Several shots were fired and a car with four males was seen speeding away.

Kucharek said lethal force was an option, but one that was ruled out soon after a pair of F-16 fighter jets began tailing the plane. "In this instance, I don't think it was considered," Kucharek said. "We knew very early on it was a stolen aircraft, learned pretty early on he didn't have hostile intent."

Fred Winters was shot to death during a service March 8, was one of two churches vandalized in that community Sunday night or early Monday. Police Chief Rich Schardan said rocks were thrown through three doors and a window there, and a window at St. John's Lutheran Church. He said it appeared to be

assault. The girl's mother, Jaimee Scott, 22, is charged with child endangerment, for allegedly failing to protect her. Authorities claim Medina threw the child, 1, about five feet onto a hardwood floor, fracturing her skull.

JEFFERSON COUNTY > **Charged in chase** • Christopher Michalek, 28, of Eureka, was charged Wednesday with two counts of assaulting a law enforcement officer and one count each of resisting arrest by fleeing and interfering in an arrest. Police said he led an hour-long chase Tuesday through Jefferson and St. Louis counties in which Jefferson County sheriff's deputy suffered minor injuries. A woman with him was not charged. Michalek was held in lieu of a \$100,000 cash-only bond.

LINCOLN COUNTY > **Woman killed in crash** • Sandra M. Moore, 46, of Troy, Mo., was fatally injured in a traffic accident about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday on U.S. 61 at Cannonball Road, the Missouri Highway Patrol said. Police said a pickup driven by Linda S. Grummel, 51, of Bowling Green, Mo., hit the driver's side of Moore's pickup, which then struck a