



### TRIBUNE/WGN-TV POLL

Q: If the primary election for the U.S. Senate was held today, for whom would you vote?

#### LEADING DEMOCRATS

	FEB. 11-17	MARCH 3-6
Barack Obama	15%	33%
Dan Hynes	11%	19%
Blair Hull	24%	16%
Maria Pappas	9%	8%
Gery Chico	5%	6%

#### LEADING REPUBLICANS

	FEB. 11-17	MARCH 3-6
Jack Ryan	30%	32%
Jim Oberweis	12%	11%
Andy McKenna Jr.	8%	10%
Steve Rauschenberger	4%	8%

Source: Market Shares Corp. poll conducted March 3-6 of 602 Democratic and 580 Republican voters likely to vote in the March 16, 2004, primary. Margin of error is ± 4 percentage points.

# Obama, Ryan out front

## With week until Senate primary, Hull staggered by divorce

By Rick Pearson  
Tribune political reporter

### CAMPAIGN 2004

■ 2 Democratic long shots not giving up in primary. METRO

With a week to go until Illinois voters cast their primary ballots, a new Tribune/WGN-Ch. 9 poll shows Democrat Barack Obama has surged to front-runner status while Republican Jack Ryan maintains a sizable lead in the nomination battles for the U.S. Senate.

The survey, the last polling by the Tribune prior to the March 16 election, also shows Blair Hull, the Democratic front-runner in a similar poll three weeks

ago, has seen support plummet as his campaign was consumed by allegations that he verbally and physically abused an ex-wife during a messy divorce.

At the same time, attempts by Republican rivals to raise questions of character against Ryan over portions of his sealed divorce file involving actress and ex-wife Jeri Ryan have so far

failed to tarnish the image of the investor-turned-teacher.

Even so, the results of the survey conducted by Market Shares Corp. of Mt. Prospect from March 3-6 indicate that support among Democrats and Republicans alike remains extremely fluid amid what is anticipated to be an election with low voter turnout. That places a premium on candidate efforts to crank out their base vote and get supporters to the polls.

The Tribune/WGN-Ch. 9 survey of 602 likely Democratic primary voters showed Obama, a

state senator from the Hyde Park neighborhood, with the support of 33 percent of primary voters, compared with 19 percent for state Comptroller Dan Hynes and 16 percent for Hull. Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas had 8 percent, former Chicago Board of Education President Gery Chico had 6 percent and health-care executive Joyce Washington and radio talk show host Nancy Skinner each had 1 percent.

On the Republican side, the

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# Iraqis shelve disputes, sign charter

## Shiites to address concerns later

By Christine Spolar  
Tribune foreign correspondent

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi Governing Council, after days of doubts voiced by an important Shiite voting bloc, unanimously approved an interim constitution Monday designed to lead the country toward democratic reform and a return to sovereignty.

Minutes after the new law was signed, however, divisions within the 25-member council became apparent. Several Shiite members said the interim charter fell short of expectations and that one provision, which allows Kurds veto power on the permanent constitution, was "an obstacle" to be revisited.

By evening, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a cleric influential in Iraq's majority Shiite Muslim population, issued a statement that echoed the council members' concerns: The interim charter puts "obstacles in the way" of a permanent constitution.

The discontent added another wrinkle in the months-long process that produced the landmark document designed to serve as a broad guarantee of Iraqi rights until a permanent charter is put to a popular vote in 2005.

The temporary constitution was to have been signed last week, but the signing ceremony was canceled abruptly after five to eight Shiite council members were convinced by al-Sistani that there were questions about the charter's legitimacy.



Iraqi Governing Council members hail the approval Monday of the nation's interim constitution (foreground) after signing it in Baghdad. The charter guarantees basic rights for Iraqis until a permanent one is crafted and submitted to Iraqi voters next year.

New York Times photo by Joao Silva

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# Air Force reports 92 rape cases in Pacific

## New study finds flawed handling of victims' claims

By Eric Schmitt  
New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON—At least 92 accusations of rape involving Air Force personnel in the Pacific were reported to military authorities between 2001 and 2003, according to a new study by the service.

The findings, which surprised some top Air Force officials, also singled out serious flaws in the reporting of sexual assault claims and assistance to victims.

The five-month review was the most comprehensive report of its kind by an Air Force command and has led to a service-wide investigation into how sexual assault is reported, how it can be prevented and how commanders deal with victims.

Last week, Gen. William Begert, the commander of Pacific Air Forces who sought the review, ordered broad changes in training, reporting and victims' assistance. He also has summoned his top field commanders to a meeting in April to discuss the problem.

"I found it disturbing," Begert said in a telephone interview on Monday, referring to the number of rape accusations, mostly made by servicewomen but also, in some cases, by civilians. "We've got to take this on and lower the number of incidents. Our mission gets done by us trusting each other, and this undermines that trust."

One major problem was the lack of common standard for reporting rapes or other sexual assaults. "Keeping track of the data is a real mess," said Col. Steven Lepper, the command's top lawyer and leader of the review. Lepper said he was "sur-

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### INSIDE

#### SPECIAL SECTION



### Health & Fitness

Yoga is booming in the U.S., but critics say the "Americanized" version stresses physical benefits over emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

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Weather: Flurries; high 38, low 21

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# Workers blame illness on popcorn flavoring

By E.A. Torriero  
Tribune staff reporter

JOPLIN, Mo.—For nearly 15 minutes, the only sounds in the small courtroom were the wheezing, coughing and gasping of Eric Peoples as he went through his laborious breathing treatment.

In the jury box, seven women and five men fidgeted, chewed on pencils, or looked downward as a videotape showed Peoples, 32, struggling to suck in air from a medical device that is part of his daily regimen.

"His normal breathing is like breathing through a little soda straw all the time," Dr. Allen

Parmet, who helped diagnose Peoples' rare lung ailment, told the jurors as they watched the tape last week. "Eventually, he will reach a point where he will not be able to function even with oxygen."

Along with about 30 former co-workers experiencing similar degenerative conditions, Peoples blames his sickness on toxic fumes inhaled in the late 1990s at his \$7-per-hour job mixing buttery-smelling chemicals at a microwave popcorn factory outside Joplin.

Armed with medical arguments and supported by govern-

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# Chicago-area drivers face long, hot summer at pump

By Melita Marie Garza  
Tribune staff reporter

Samuel Brown, a Chicago cab driver for 38 years, knows high gasoline prices when he sees them.

"This is almost the worst it's ever been," said Brown, 64. In fact, he said he is taking home about \$25-\$30 a week less because of gasoline prices that now top \$2 for a gallon of regular unleaded at some Chicago gas stations.

"What are you going to do?" asked Brown. "I just have to put

up with it."

With gasoline prices at near-record highs nationally, scattered shortages around the country reported, and OPEC production cuts expected next month, Chicago motorists are facing a costly summer driving season.

Prices easily could surpass the Chicago-area record of \$2.14 for a gallon of regular unleaded that AAA reported on June 19, 2000, predicted Tom Kloza of the Oil Price Information Service.

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# Mexicans enjoy candid peek at politicians caught on tape

## Three times in recent weeks, sleuths with video cameras have provided footage of officials allegedly cashing in on their influence

By Hugh Dellios  
Tribune foreign correspondent

MEXICO CITY — After years and years of just throwing up their hands, Mexicans have been all atwitter these days about a new tool that some hope may finally stop their politicians from robbing them: the homemade video.

Three times in recent weeks, scandals have riveted the country after sleuths with video cameras have delivered damning footage to television stations showing a politician either allegedly negotiating a bribe, stuffing apparent bribe money in his suit pockets or spending gobs of cash at Las Vegas casinos.

In some cases, the stakes have been enormous: Two of the politicians caught on tape were top aides to Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who cultivated a frugal and honest image to become the early front-runner in the 2006 presidential campaign.

Beyond that, however, Mexicans of every stripe have reacted not only with disgust but with amazement and giggles as they fixated on one episode of gotcha after another, declaring



In this image from a covert video, Rene Bejarano of the Democratic Revolutionary Party is shown apparently receiving \$45,000 from a city contractor. Bejarano at the time was a top aide to Mexico City's mayor, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

the scandals are far better viewing than "Survivor," "Big Brother" or any other reality show.

"This is excellent," exclaimed Moises Sanchez Lopez, an economist who runs a non-profit foundation in Tapachula. "Let's hope they are all scared now that someone is watching."

It's not that Mexicans haven't known about the corruption in their political system. During the 71-year reign of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), ended by President Vicente Fox in 2000, politicians perfected the bribe, or "bite," to a science.

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