

# Clinton pushes Congress on education initiatives

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**SOUTH BRUNSWICK, N.J.** — President Clinton had three missions in New Jersey on Wednesday: Help the Democrats win back the House, plug Al Gore's run for president and push his own education initiatives through Congress before he leaves the White House.

"All over America, our facilities are better than our facilities," Clinton said, standing outside one of eight classroom trailers at Crossroads Middle School, a building that was

designed for 1,200 students, but will have 1,650 when classes start after Labor Day.

"You've got the problem of the trailers, and then you've got the problem in our cities of so many old school buildings that either can't be or haven't been modernized. You've got whole floors in some of these schools that are shut down, even though the schools are full to the gills."

Noting that a record 53 million will enter public and private schools this fall, Clinton criticized Congress for engaging in a

philosophical debate about the federal government's role in education instead of approving money to modernize America's schools. Clinton has requested \$25 billion in interest-free modernization bonds for school districts to help build and renovate 6,000 schools nationwide.

He also wants Congress to approve \$6.5 billion in grants and interest-free loans to make emergency roof, heating, cooling and electrical repairs at 5,000 schools.

Republicans in Congress, who don't want the federal government meddling in local school district affairs, fear Clinton's plan would create unnecessary bureaucracy in Washington.

The GOP prefers a tax credit plan like one Clinton vetoed last year when Congress aimed to lower a school district's cost of borrowing money for building projects.

"For the past two years, Congress has sent school construction packages to President Clinton and both times he vetoed them," said House Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer, R-Texas.

"We will try again but I hope this year our schoolchildren come before politics, and that the president will drop his veto pen and pick up an attitude of compromise so we can get this done."

With education a top concern among voters in this year's presidential election, Clinton also took time to laud Vice President Gore's work to improve the federal student loan program, provide tax credits for college tuition and get 95 percent of schools connected to the Internet — up from 35 percent five years ago.

Clinton spoke at the school before attending two receptions for Democratic congressional candidates. One was to raise \$200,000 for Cherry Hill Mayor Susan Bass Levin and the other was to bring in \$250,000 for Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J.

# Western blazes continue to rage

■ Montana, Idaho and Wyoming are experiencing what is being called the worst fire season in half a century.

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**HELENA, Mont.** — Montana Gov. Marc Racicot declared more of his state off-limits to recreation because of extreme fire hazard Wednesday. His new proclamation means 19.6 million acres are closed — about 31,250 square miles, an area roughly the size of Maine.

Twenty-seven large fires were burning nearly 630,000 acres in the state. Montana encompasses 93 million acres. The governor's new order banned hiking, camping, hunting and fishing on public land in western Montana and parts of central and southern Montana during the height of

the summer tourist season.

Some exceptions were written in for specific recreation areas. And Glacier National Park, one of the state's top draws, is not affected, although it has special fire-prevention policies in effect for visitors, said spokeswoman Amy Vanderbilt.

More than 5.73 million acres have burned across the United States so far this year — an area about the size of New Hampshire — in what has been called the worst fire season in a half-century. The National Interagency Fire Center said 79 large fires are now burning, almost all in the West, and covering more than 1.4 million acres.

The worst fires are in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming.

They included a volatile blaze that has burned at least 75,000 acres near Townsend.

That fire on Tuesday shut down two major power lines to the Pacific Northwest and closed U.S. 12.

The highway was back in service Wednesday, with motorists being guided through the smoke in escorted convoys. The power lines also are back in service as sawyers continued to remove trees and other growth near the 500-kilovolt lines, in hopes of safeguarding them.

In Utah's Stansbury Mountains, two inmates died after being struck by lightning Wednesday while a prison work crew was fighting a fire near Grantsville.

Seven inmates were struck and all were flown by helicopter to the University of Utah Medical Center, where the two men were pronounced dead. They were members of an inmate work group that routinely battles fires.

# N. Ireland faces latest killing in feud

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**BELFAST, Northern Ireland** — A Protestant man was shot to death at his north Belfast home Wednesday, police said, in what appeared to be the latest blow in a vicious feud between pro-British gangs.

No group claimed immediate responsibility.

The shooting happened only a few hundred yards from the spot where the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force on Monday shot dead two Protestant militants, among them a prominent member of the rival Ulster Defense Association.

The UDA had vowed to retaliate by killing UVF supporters. And Wednesday's victim, 21-year-old Sammy Rocket, came from a family that had been expelled from UDA circles in the mid-1990s and had switched allegiances to the UVF.

Before the latest shooting, Britain's minister responsible for Northern Ireland, Peter Mandelson, insisted that a joint UDA-UVF cease-fire remained intact in the province.

Mandelson said he had no doubt that most commanders of the UDA and UVF didn't want their feud to degenerate into a total breakdown of their 1994 truce, a pillar of Northern Ireland's shaky peace accord.

"It is possible for an organization to be on cease-fire but for individuals associated with it to be involved in unlawful activity," he said.

Mandelson defended his

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**Peter Mandelson**  
British Minister for Northern Ireland

decision Tuesday to order the arrest and reimprisonment of the most notorious militant, Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair, who was seized at police gunpoint and delivered by helicopter back to prison.

The brawny UDA commander was paroled last year under terms of the 1998 peace accord, but he had been accused of stoking a violent turf war with UVF members, particularly in his Shankill Road power base.

Adair led a raucous UDA parade up Shankill Road last weekend. After gun attacks on a UVF-linked pub and several leading UVF members' homes, the UVF retaliated Monday by fatally shooting two men, one of them an Adair subordinate, as they sat in a parked car on nearby Crumlin Road.

Britain deployed police and troops into the Shankill district to deter an expected UDA counter-strike. Wednesday night's shooting on a residential street just off Crumlin Road happened not far from a joint police-army checkpoint. No arrests were reported.

Had Mandelson ruled that the joint UDA-UVF truce had broken down, he could have ordered more than 150 convicted members of both groups

returned to prison to continue serving their suspended sentences.

Instead, he focused criticism on Adair, calling him the leading member of a small group of "gangsters and thugs who operate on the black side of Northern Ireland society."

He said Adair had been "given a chance to go straight," but had instead "whipped up the feud." The viability of the Good Friday peace accord depends in part on maintaining cease-fires by the Irish Republican Army, which draws support from the most militant Catholic areas, and Protestant-based gangs such as the UDA and UVF.

Before calling their joint cease-fire, those two Protestant groups were responsible for slaying more than 800 Catholic civilians.

But rivalry over control of criminal rackets has risen between the two groups, particularly once Adair returned home to the Shankill last September.

Adair, 36, was convicted in 1994 of directing terrorism after being taped by undercover police officers bragging about his role in terrorizing Belfast Catholics. He served just five years of a 16-year sentence.

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