

# The Dallas Morning News

Texas' Leading Newspaper

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50 cents

## Fighter till the end

Actor Christopher Reeve became a real-life Superman with his tireless work for the disabled.

▶ **OVERNIGHT, 11B**



## NOSE GUARD

As sneezin' season kicks off, here's your game plan.

▶ **HEALTHY LIVING, 1E**



Partly sunny



High: 74 Low: 58  
5-day outlook, 2B

### AT A GLANCE

#### Today's headlines

A full-page summary of the day's news appears daily on the back of the Metro section. 12B

### METRO

#### W-H to lay off 20% of workers

Nearly 20 percent of Wilmer-Hutchins employees will have to be laid off in the coming months, district officials said. As many as 30 teachers could lose their positions. 1B

#### Girl planned slaying, police say

The 12-year-old accused of killing her sleeping mother planned the crime, police say, and apparently brought friends to see the body. 1B

### WORLD

#### UPDATE

#### Detainee sent to Saudis

**Previously:** A Saudi-American was captured in Afghanistan in 2001, labeled an enemy combatant and held in U.S. solitary confinement for nearly three years without charges.

**What's new:** Yaser Esam Hamdi returned to his family Monday after agreeing to forfeit his U.S. citizenship and to live in Saudi Arabia for five years. Full story, 16A

#### Al-Sadr's followers turning in weapons

Supporters of rebel Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr began surrendering weapons as part of an agreement to end fighting. 13A

### BUSINESS

#### New-home sales up, pre-owned down

Sales of new homes grew almost 7.5 percent in the third quarter, but sales of pre-owned homes were down last month. 1D

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## Sessions pulls ahead of Frost

Both camps feel confident in one of nation's hottest House races

By **DAVE LEVINTHAL**  
Staff Writer

In the final stage of one of the most expensive House races in history, U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions is in control.

The four-term Republican congressman leads his Democratic rival, U.S. Rep. Martin Frost, 50 percent to 44 percent in their quest to represent Texas' 32nd Congressional District, according to a *Dallas Morning News* poll.

Both campaigns declared the results encouraging, though the poll's director gives Mr. Sessions the edge — for now. The survey indicates

See **SESSIONS** Page 19A

### THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS POLL

Likely voters' picks in the 32nd Congressional District if the election were today:

**50% REPUBLICAN PETE SESSIONS**

**44% DEMOCRAT MARTIN FROST**

**Other, not sure: 6%**

**SOURCE:** Telephone poll Thursday through Saturday of 807 likely voters in the 32nd Congressional District. The margin of error is 3.5 percentage points, meaning each candidate's total can vary that much in either direction.

## CPS failed in 70% of N. Texas cases

Investigators didn't act quickly to protect kids in danger, audit says

By **TERRI LANGFORD**  
Staff Writer

State child abuse investigators failed to take necessary action to protect endangered children in the Dallas-Fort Worth area 70 percent of the time, according to previously confidential results of a state audit.

The findings, released Monday in response to reporters' queries, indicated that the problem was nearly as bad statewide.

In a review of 1,103 child abuse cases in North Texas that were closed between Jan. 1, 2003, and May 31, 2004, the state's Health and Human Services Commission found that caseworkers with the Child Protective Services division failed 70 percent of the time to act quickly to protect a child in danger.

"It appears that CPS Region 3 [Dallas/Fort Worth] was performing at a minimum standard and often below standards," Brian Flood, the commission's inspector general, said in his report to the governor. "When abuse or neglect was indicated in the file, only 30 percent of the time did CPS caseworkers imple-

### INSIDE

#### Report: State failing elderly

Texas Adult Protective Services has "lost sight of its mission" to protect the elderly and disabled, and the agency's worst failures occurred in the Dallas-Fort Worth region, according to a report released Monday. 2A

See **AUDIT** Page 2A

## Astros sky-high after first playoff series victory



DOUG PENSINGER/Getty Images

The Houston Astros defeated the Atlanta Braves, 12-3, on Monday to advance to the National League Championship Series against the Cardinals. The series starts Wednesday night in St. Louis. (Coverage begins on 1C.)

## Area companies cancel employee flu shots

Vaccine shortage could be costly as worker absentee rates climb

By **VICTOR GODINEZ**  
Staff Writer

Some of the largest employers in Dallas-Fort Worth are calling off scheduled flu-shot drives because of the shortage of the vaccine re-

ported last week.

The shortage could cost companies nationwide millions of dollars in lost productivity at a time when unscheduled absence rates are already at a five-year high, experts say.

Officials warned of shortages after British authorities suspended the license of Chiron Corp., maker of almost half the U.S. supply, because of vaccine plant problems.

Businesses that have canceled flu-shot drives in recent days include AMR Corp., Southwest Airlines Co., RadioShack Corp., Texas Instruments Inc., Alcatel SA, TXU Corp., Dean Foods Co., Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp., Pizza Hut Inc., J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. and General Motors' Arlington plant.

Southwest Airlines was set to alert its employees that shots would be available this month for a small

fee but was informed last week that its supplier didn't have enough shots and was canceling the drive.

"We had hoped to reach anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000 employees," said spokesman Ed Stewart. "It's not like a flight attendant can do his or her job from home."

Firms including Pizza Hut and J.P. Morgan Chase voluntarily can-

See **COMPANIES** Page 14A

## Is county 'bloodthirsty' — or dead right?

Harris officials admit blunders in '92 case but say man, then 17, guilty

Third of five parts

By **DOUG J. SWANSON**  
Staff Writer

The chief witness against him lied. The crime lab botched his case. At least three jurors say that if they had it to do over again, they probably would not send Nanon Williams to death row.

But that is where he remains, nine years after his conviction in

### KILLING YOUNG

TEENS SENT TO DEATH ROW

Longest-serving juvenile killer awaits his fate. 19A

Houston for capital murder.

"The state of Texas," he said, "would rather kill me than have someone admit he made a mistake."

Actually, the state freely admits multiple mistakes in the case. But the man who prosecuted him says Mr. Williams still should be executed.



IRWIN THOMPSON/Staff Photographer

Nanon Williams was convicted nine years ago in Houston for a slaying related to a drug deal, a crime he says he didn't commit.

"I'm very comfortable the right person is on death row," said Vic Wisner, a felony chief for the Harris County district attorney's office. Mr. Williams was 17 when he

was arrested on a murder charge. Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments on the

See **'92 HOUSTON** Page 18A

## Texans will get tax break

Bill allows deduction of state's sales levy on federal returns

By **KATHARINE GOODLOE**  
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Texans who itemize their federal tax returns are only a president's signature away from being able to deduct the state's sales tax.

State officials expect the average Texas family to save \$310 a year under a measure passed Monday by the Senate. The deduction would start this year but expire after 2005 unless Congress renews the provision.

The provision is part of a wide-ranging \$137 billion corporate tax

### Senate OKs tax package. 1D

package. It provides \$76.5 billion in tax breaks for manufacturers — including oil and gas businesses — architectural and engineering firms, and film and music companies. It also includes a \$10.1 billion buyout for tobacco farmers and aligns U.S. exporters with international trade rules.

Residents of all 50 states who itemize their federal taxes would be able to deduct either their state and local income taxes or their sales taxes — whichever are higher.

Nationally, 35.1 percent of taxpayers itemized their deductions on their 2002 tax returns, and the number of Texans itemizing closely tracks that number, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

Those opting for sales tax deductions would choose between claiming a standard deduction or one based on actual receipts. Receipts for big-ticket items such as cars and boats could also be tacked onto a standard deduction.

The sales tax deduction was eliminated in the Tax Reform Act of 1986, and the new measure is expected to affect 55 million taxpayers nationwide.

Residents of Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington and Wyoming would be most affected, as those states tax sales but not incomes. Some lawmakers believe Alaskans would also stand to gain from the measure, but there are conflicting interpretations of the state's tax laws.

The measure is expected to save Texans \$740 million, and Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn believes it will create \$623 million in investments and \$923 million in increased state gross product.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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