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Test scores decline
States' performance chart says students still not making grades

WASHINGTON (AP) — Despite ballyhooed efforts at education reform, student achievement is continuing a decline that began three years ago, the government said Wednesday in a controversial report.

Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos said the annual state-by-state performance chart, popularly called the wall chart, "makes it clear that, as a nation, we are still not seriously committed to improving education for all Americans."

The chart has been criticized as promoting flawed data and making unfair state comparisons. Timothy Dyer, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, said American "young people are simply too complex to hang on a wall."

The chart, he said, "has as much to offer educational improvement as the Edsel offered the automotive industry."

Cavazos, however, defended the chart.

"It is the only national measurement of educational performance," he said. "It's the best that we have. Until we develop other measures, we will have to rely on the wall chart."

Officials say the White House argued for abandoning the 7-year-old practice this year because President Bush and the nation's governors had worked to develop national education goals and still are devising more accurate forms of assessment.

The report found that the average American College Testing Program examination scores declined nationally by 0.2 of a point, to 18.6, from 1988 to 1989, while the average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores declined by one point, to 903, during the same period.

A perfect ACT score is 36; a perfect SAT score is 1,600.

The test scores are used by colleges and universities as one standard of admission. States administer either the ACT or SAT, not both.

The report also found that the national high school graduation rate declined from 71.7 percent to 71.1 percent from 1987 to 1988; the percentage of public high school graduates who received a qualifying score on advanced placement examinations declined from 8.8 percent to 8.6 percent between 1988 and 1989.

Bill Honig, California superintendent of public instruction, said the chart "causes more mischief than benefit" because much of the data is a rehash of statistics already made public.

Keith Geiger, president of the National Education Association, said the chart "only continues to confuse and frustrate the public."

Monty Neill, associate director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, said the chart should include a consumer protection label: "Warning! Misuse of Standardized Test Scores Can Damage the Nation's Educational Health."

President makes error in income tax

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush made a mistake in reporting his income to the IRS last year and ended up owing an additional \$7,497. He sent the IRS check for that amount, his press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater, said today.

The oversight involved a deferred compensation income from a former job that he was entitled to collect when he reached age 65, according to the amended form he filed. He turned 65 June 12.

He was entitled to the compensation under an arrangement with Zapata Corp., the now-defunct oil firm he once headed, according to the explanation tax preparers submitted. The error was brought to the attention of the tax preparer as they had submitted his tax return last month, the amended return said.

The deferred compensation was received last year in the form of a paid-up life insurance policy instead of cash, but it should have been reported because it had value.

The life insurance policy was valued at \$26,250, but was not included on his tax return.

Bush is paying interest of \$40.77 that has accrued on unpaid tax for 15 days since the come tax filing deadline, said Fitzwater.

Greyhound workers resume talks; contract negotiations open Saturday

WASHINGTON (AP) — Greyhound Lines Inc. and its striking workers agreed Wednesday to reopen stalled bargaining talks, and the company said it was satisfied that violence in the two-month-old walk-out was over.

Contract negotiations, halted since mid-March, will resume Saturday in Washington, Bernard E. DeLury, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, said after meeting with both sides.

"We've got some good things happening here. They're hellbent on getting a contract," DeLury told a news conference called to announce the weekend talks, which would be the first since March 18.

Greyhound's 6,300 bus drivers and 3,000 clerical workers and mechanics have been on strike since March 2.

Wages and the question of whether replacement drivers will be given permanent jobs over strikers

will be the top issues in the talks, predicted Greyhound Vice President

The company is "satisfied that the violence is behind us ... we're anxious to move forward with negotiations."

— Anthony P. Lanny, vice president of Greyhound

Anthony P. Lanny.

The company walked out of negotiations in Tucson, Ariz., on March 18 because of the shootings and bomb threats against buses and terminals nationwide.

Since then, the Dallas-based company has refused to resume negotia-

tions until a week passed without incident. That deadline passed Monday.

The company is "satisfied the violence is behind us ... we're anxious to move forward with negotiations," Lannie said, noting that been 10 days since a shooting bomb threat occurred.

If a violent incident occurs Saturday, he said, "We'll take it as it comes."

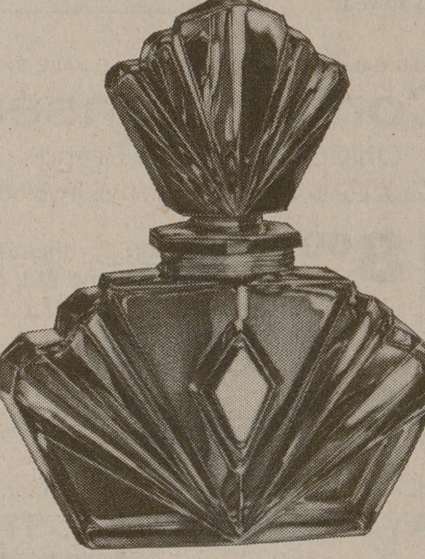
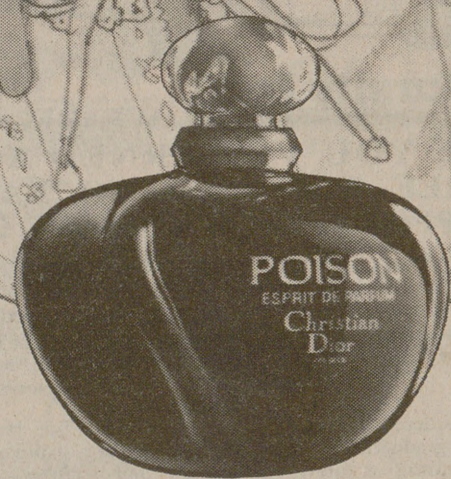
DeLury said, "I think the parties are satisfied that fruitful negotiations can commence at this point forward."

Edward M. Strait, president of Amalgamated Council of Greyhound Local Unions, told the conference that the union has denounced the violence and strikers who know the responsibility to turn them in. The union has been willing to resume negotiations all along, he said.



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