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ATTENTION
All On-Campus Residents

ALL current on-campus residents are required to complete the Housing Decision 2002 process to renew or cancel their housing for the fall 2002 - spring 2003 academic year.

WHEN: March 4 (8 a.m.) - March 8 (5 p.m.)

WHERE: On the Residence Life Homepage (www.reslife.tamu.edu)



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Federal court throws out convictions on three officers

NEW YORK (AP) — In a stunning turn in one of the nation's most shocking police brutality scandals, a federal appeals court Thursday threw out the convictions of three of the four white officers sent to prison in the torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima.

A three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously that Charles Schwarz's lawyer did not defend him adequately and that the jury was tainted by news reports when it convicted him of violating Louima's civil rights by holding him down during the 1997 assault in a police station bathroom.

The court also said there was insufficient evidence to sustain the obstruction-of-justice convictions of Schwarz, 36, and officers Thomas Wiese, 38, and Thomas Bruder, 35. Wiese and Bruder had been accused of lying to cover up Schwarz's role.

The ruling did not affect the guilty plea of the main attacker, Justin Volpe, 37, who admitted he sodomized the handcuffed Louima with a broken broomstick in a fit of rage. Volpe is serving 30 years.

Civil rights leaders and Louima supporters expressed outrage over the ruling, which reopens an explosive case that inflamed racial tensions and touched off street protests.

The Rev. Al Sharpton called the decision "a shocking display of how the judicial system continues to fail to protect citizens from police abuse."

The appeals court entered a judgment of acquittal for all three officers on the obstruction charges, effectively bringing an end to the case against Wiese and Bruder. The two men had been given five-year prison sen-

tences but have been free on bail during their appeal.

However, the court ordered a new trial on the civil rights charges for Schwarz, who is serving 15 years behind bars in Oklahoma.

U.S. Attorney Alan Vinegrad said that he was disappointed by the ruling but that his office is prepared to retry Schwarz.

The Police Department had no comment. Louima had been arrested in a melee outside a Brooklyn nightclub. According to tes-

leading investigators.

Schwarz's wife, Andra, said the family looking forward to having him home. "It's like a dream," she said. He could be freed on bail as early as next week, his lawyer said.

"It's a sweet day when you can show the government was wrong and it was wrong from the beginning," said Stuart London, Bruder's lawyer.

Joseph Tacopina, Wiese's attorney, said his client wants to "resume his normal life and possibly return to the force."

Schwarz has denied ever being in the bathroom. Even after his conviction, he insisted that Louima and the government other star witness, a fellow officer, confuse him with Wiese. Volpe himself indicated Schwarz was not there.

In its ruling, the appeals court suggested that Schwarz's attorney at the time, police union lawyer Stephen Worth, did not do Volpe as a witness because he wanted to avoid implicating Wiese, a union delegate.

The court said there was a "distinct possibility" that "Worth would sacrifice Schwarz interests" for those of the police union.

The appeals court also said that the case was tainted because it found out about Volpe's plea from a juror who learned of it through news reports.

Sanford Rubenstein, a lawyer for Louima, said his client would "look to the federal government to retry the case and we will be supportive of their efforts as we have in the past."

Louima sued the city and the police union and settled in July for \$8.7 million—the largest payout in a police brutality case in New York.

"It's a sweet day when you can show the government was wrong and it was wrong from the beginning."

— Stuart London
Thomas Bruder's lawyer

Body identified as missing 7-year-old girl's

SAN DIEGO (AP) — An autopsy confirmed Thursday that the body of a child found in the desert east of San Diego is that of 7-year-old Danielle van Dam, who disappeared from home nearly a month ago.

The identification was made through a comparison of the missing girl's dental records and X-rays taken from the body, said San Diego County District Attorney Paul Pfingst.

The cause of death could not immediately be determined because of the body's state of decomposition, he said.

Danielle's neighbor, David

Westerfield, 50, has been charged with killing the girl. He has pleaded innocent to charges of murder, kidnapping and possession of child pornography.

Volunteers, who had tirelessly searched for the little girl, found the body Wednesday near a small grove of oak trees, just off a two-lane road 25 miles east of San Diego.

The child was wearing a plastic necklace similar to one Danielle was seen wearing in thousands of fliers distributed after her disappearance. An earring matching the description of a pair she was wearing at the

time of her disappearance also was found.

Initial reports indicated the body had been burned, but authorities declined to discuss the condition of the remains.

Danielle disappeared after her father put her to bed Feb. 1. She was discovered missing the next morning, eventually leading to a search involving thousands of volunteers that stretched from Mexico to the desert east of San Diego where her remains were found.

Westerfield spent the weekend of Danielle's disappearance traveling around San Diego

County in his motor home, camping in the desert east of the city. Authorities have said they found traces of Danielle's blood in the motor home and on an article of his clothing.

Westerfield, a twice-divorced father of two grown children, has said he was at the same time with friends the night Danielle disappeared.

Van Dam's husband was home with their daughter and two sons.

Damon and Brenda van Dam thanked volunteers Thursday.

NEWS IN BRIEF

States want to mandate the Pledge of Allegiance

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Responding to the post-Sept. 11 burst of patriotism, state lawmakers around the country want to put the Pledge of Allegiance into more public schools.

Half the states now require the pledge as part of the school day, and half a dozen more recommend it, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

This year, bills to make the oath mandatory have been brought up in Connecticut, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Colorado, Mississippi and Indiana.

In Connecticut, Republican state Rep. Philip Prelli said schools have gotten out of the practice.

"It comes back to teaching what our country stands for," he said.

The Connecticut Civil Liberties Union

opposed Prelli's bill at a hearing on Monday.

"Patriotism isn't something you have to put on the books," executive director Teresa Younger said. "It's something that happens when your government is taking care of its people."

In Missouri, a pledge bill that died three years ago "suddenly started picking up a lot more traction" after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, said sponsor Sen. Ted House, a Democrat.

The Missouri bill would require public school students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at least once a week and allow for objectors to be excused. It passed the state Senate 30-0 on Monday.

"It's a quick and easy way to start thinking about what it is to be an American," House said.

The Minnesota House on Wednesday passed a bill that would require the pledge at

least once a week in public schools.

A similar movement is under way to pass the motto "In God We Trust" in schools. Michigan passed a law in December that makes it clear that the motto can be hung in schools. Florida, Utah, Arizona, Virginia, Louisiana and New Jersey are considering similar legislation.

In October, school board members in Madison, Wis., were the targets of a patriotic backlash after three members voted against schools' using the pledge as a way to fulfill required daily moment of patriotism. The board later voted to allow schools to offer the pledge.

Earlier this month, Colorado's Senate Judiciary Committee killed a Republican-sponsored bill requiring students to recite the pledge.

Democrats said forcing students to do so could cause eventually cause them to become jaded about their country.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scientists rescued by search team

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — Two American scientists lost in a mountainous park for a week were rescued by a Dominican search team and were recovering Thursday.

Patrick Martin and Oliver Duren got lost on Feb. 21 in Armando Bermudez National Park, site of Pico Duarte, the highest mountain in the Caribbean at nearly 10,500 feet.

They survived by rationing two days worth of food supplies and drinking spring water until a rescue team found them Wednesday afternoon.

Martin and his assistant Duren, both from Cornell University, were researching a rare pine tree, Pino occo-

dentalis, which grows in parts of the Dominican Republic.

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