



TAMA UNGER/Citizens Medical Center

Lou Patton said hello to Fiddler the horse at Prairie Senior Living Complex Monday with its owner Shanda Draper, right, 2004 Thomas County Rodeo Queen. Alva Horn, far left, looked on, and Draper's mother, Sue Draper, far right, was on hand to help.

Bush wants Iraq to defend itself

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush says he will not bend to political pressure for troop withdrawals from Iraq and says he told worried leaders in Baghdad the United States will not leave until Iraqi forces can do the job. "I assured them they didn't need to worry," the president said Tuesday. "I am going to do what I think is right. When I tell you these decisions are going to be made by General (George) Casey, I mean it," the president said. Casey is the top U.S.

general in Iraq. Slouched in a high-back swivel desk chair in his office on Air Force One, Bush talked about his 5 1/2 hour visit to Baghdad about a half hour after his departure. Security was extraordinary for the takeoff from Baghdad's airport. Bush's plane sat in total darkness on the runway and lifted off with no running lights. The plane had not been completely refueled so that it could get up high faster. As a result, a refueling stop was required en route

back to Washington and it was nearing dawn Wednesday when it made it back to the White House. Bush sat at his v-curved desk in a rumpled white shirt with no tie. Senior aides stood along the wall or sat on a couch in front of him as he chatted with reporters. Bush said it was unrealistic to expect that Iraq could rid itself of violence — the bombings, gunfire and suicide attacks that have become a part of daily life in some cities.

Dry conditions hampering Texas cotton crop

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — Billy Tiller's 5,000 acres of cotton are parched, thanks to triple-digit temperatures and one of the state's driest springs ever. Even after two straight years of bumper crops in the nation's top cotton-producing state, many cotton farmers like Tiller are worried about the future. "I've never seen anything like it," said Tiller, who has been farming since 1982 on the South Plains, the world's largest contiguous cotton patch. "Until we get a good general rain, we're in serious trouble."

Hot, dry conditions have prevailed across much of Texas. Rains through April gave most of the state a reprieve from serious drought but since May 1, most areas have been "bone dry," said National Weather Service meteorologist Victor Murphy. Statewide, the rainfall average through May was 8.48 inches, or 2.46 inches behind the normal average, which makes the period the 21st driest in 112 years. Also, Texas is experiencing the second-warmest January-through-May period since 1895, with a statewide average 4 degrees above the normal average.

pretty bad." The tough conditions follow back-to-back record crops in Texas. The state produced 8.5 million bales of the fluffy white fiber last year, besting the 2004 record harvest of 7.8 million bales by 9 percent. Some producers might replant other crops or try again with cotton, Tiller said. But it's not an easy decision to make — seed costs are up and the cost of diesel fuel is up. Fertilizer is up, too, a direct increase from the price of natural gas. Producers have to plant their cotton by certain dates if they want to file crop loss insurance claims. They can then replant fields with other crops, like milo. Temperatures are expected to be warmer than normal and there are equal chances rainfall would be normal to below normal, he said. "Unfortunately, the immediate outlook through the end of June is not good," McQueen said.

Backers of comprehensive sex ed not happy with plan

TOPEKA (AP) — Conservative State Board of Education members have backed away from mandating abstinence-only courses, but supporters of comprehensive sexuality classes don't like a proposed compromise policy. The compromise would say districts must offer a comprehensive program of "abstinence until marriage" that also gives students information about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. The policy would be part of guidelines for health classes, with no specific penalty for districts that don't comply.

districts had assumed a child would participate unless a parent objected in writing. Only a few other states, including Arizona, Nevada and Utah, have "opt-in" requirements for sex education, according to the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. During that debate, Kathy Martin, a Clay Center Republican, part of the board's 6-4 conservative majority, suggested threatening schools with the loss of state accreditation if they didn't have abstinence-only instruction. Martin has said the state should send a message to young people that they are expected to avoid premarital sex and that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Hoping to settle the issue, the board had its staff draft the new language.

if you don't get married until 30?" Kei-Ashia Cosey, a 16-year-old Topeka student, supports comprehensive programs even though she promotes abstinence to fellow students while working for the YWCA. Under abstinence-only programs, she said, "What are you saying to kids who are already having sex?" Debra Rukes, director of the Topeka YWCA's teenage pregnancy prevention program, said she's glad the board is moving toward compromise but added that the new language still contains "buzz words." "I'm not going to move on my position," she said.

The board heard comments about the proposal Tuesday and expects to vote on it Wednesday. Advocates of "Abstinence Plus" programs, which promote abstinence but give students information about birth control, worried the proposal over-emphasizes waiting to have sex until marriage. "It's close," said Rachel Prince, of Lawrence, a program educator for the Topeka YWCA's teenage pregnancy prevention program. "We would like to see 'abstinence until adulthood,' because that's inclusive of everybody."

Board member John Bacon, a conservative, said he believes the new language deals with the issue "quite adequately." "I'm not sure what the beef is," said Bacon, an Olathe Republican. But advocates of comprehensive sex education still worried the board's goal is to push districts toward abstinence-only programs, which they say aren't effective. "It's kind of a tricky way of wording it," said Lois Culvert, a retired sex education teacher from Lenexa. "Abstinence until marriage? What

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