

Educ-
Teacher Shortage

Some states can't wait to hire more teachers

Only days before the opening of schools across the USA, many districts are working feverishly to fill teaching positions.

The U.S. Department of Education projects that 2.2 million teachers will be needed over the next decade to meet rising enrollment and to replace teachers leaving the profession. But the teacher shortage is a reality now in dozens of areas:

► Maryland is scrambling to fill 578 teaching slots before schools begin to open next week, says assistant state superintendent Ronald Peiffer. The number of teachers eligible to retire is expected to triple next year, to 10,500.

► The California Department of Education estimates it will need 300,000 new teachers in the next 10 years as 285,000 in the state reach retirement age.

► The Omaha School District is hiring long-term substitutes because it has been unable to fill 40 teacher posts, half of them in

special education — twice the usual number of vacancies.

"Every child should have a fully qualified, well-trained teacher in the classroom," says Education Secretary Richard Riley, who has proposed that teachers be employed year-round, with a corresponding increase in salary.

Even if there's no mass exodus of teachers, officials worry about overcrowded classrooms led by less-qualified educators. Illinois has a fast-track alternative certification program; other states issue emergency teaching certificates so teachers can work while preparing for official certification.

Riley says the White House is requesting about \$1 billion from Congress to help communities recruit and prepare teachers and to update the skills of current teachers. And \$150 million more is being sought to prepare teachers to use technology effectively.

"We need to find ways to induce more people into teaching as a career," Riley says.

States and local school districts are getting creative in recruitment. Teachers are being offered signing bonuses, extra days off and other perks. For example:

► Arlington, Texas, is offering signing bonuses of up to \$3,000 this year.

► Besides a \$1,000 hiring bonus and \$2,000 for specially certified teachers, Maryland has lifted restrictions on rehiring retired teachers, increased salaries 10% and given tuition tax breaks.

► Massachusetts offers a \$20,000 signing bonus over four years. The state has hired 115 teachers, up from 59 last year.

► Fort Worth has invoked a state law that requires teachers to honor their contracts unless they resign at least 45 days before the start of school.

► Some Kentucky school superintendents want to lower the minimum scores new teachers must get on a national test to measure a teacher's knowledge of an academic subject.

Wanted: Calm, kid-loving folks who drive well

Add bus drivers to the list of school shortages.

Districts around the nation are beefing up advertising aimed at filling school bus driver jobs left empty by a tight labor market and robust economy. Among the recruiting and staffing efforts:

► Fairfax County, Va., public schools have 100 vacant bus driver jobs, spokesman Paul Regnier says. The district offers finder fees and signing bonuses.

► The West Pasco, Fla., school district will put drivers on double runs to many schools. Officials say 25 drivers have been hired, but about 33 more are needed.

► The Omaha School District needs drivers for 10 morning and 12 afternoon routes, many for special-education students.

Summit produces strategies to ease gridlock at airports

By Salina Khan
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — With two weeks left in a summer of record flight delays, Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater unveiled a package of initiatives Monday aimed at easing gridlock in the nation's skies and airports.

Slater's announcement followed an unusual 2-hour summit with the nation's major airline executives, labor unions and the Federal Aviation Administration to discuss ways they could all cooperate better.

"Everyone collectively agreed that the service we are providing now is not good enough," Slater said afterward.

One outcome: A task force will be formed to monitor airline-service quality, recommend changes if necessary and report back to Slater in 90 days.

The DOT inspector general's office already is auditing the airlines for compliance with the voluntary "Customers First" plans they adopted in December.

Some airline industry observers were skeptical about the meeting producing improvement.

"It's another example of how nothing will be done," aviation consultant Mike Boyd says. "This is a classic sham."

Other goals from the summit:

► **Aim to reduce congestion at big airports.** The FAA will better manage flights in the air space over Chicago, Boston and Washington, FAA chief Jane Garvey said. She predicted travelers should see fewer delays by October at Boston, New York JFK and La



By Karmenka Palic, AP

Troubleshooting: Slater, left, Carty and Garvey discuss plans to improve service.

Guardia, Newark, N.J., and Philadelphia. Garvey said delays at those airports cause a ripple effect at airports across the nation.

► **Share good ideas.** The DOT will examine successful practices that some airlines use to improve customer service and promote them to others by mid-September.

Slater said airlines have agreed to report their flight delays to the FAA earlier and submit contingency plans for the year's remaining peak travel periods: Labor Day weekend, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The DOT will review the plans and make recommendations aimed at reducing long delays.

American Airlines CEO Don Carty said airlines are not considering reducing schedules, an option favored by many consumer advocates to reduce traffic congestion.

Contributing: Chris Woodyard

Electionline

Section 527 groups must disclose most contributions

A previously hidden source of election campaign funding will be open to public scrutiny starting this week.

Tax-exempt political groups known as Section 527 committees have been raising and spending large amounts of money to influence the outcome of November's election. But until recently, the secret groups didn't have to tell the government anything about their contributors or activities, or even that they existed.

A law that took effect July 1 requires groups organized under Section 527 of the IRS tax code to register with the agency and file periodic reports disclosing contributors of \$200 or more annually and expenditures of \$500 or more annually.

Groups that choose to file monthly had to postmark their first report to the Internal Revenue Service by Monday; those that want to file quarterly must send their first report by Oct. 15. The groups must report all activity since July 1.

The Center for Public Integrity, a nonpartisan Washington watchdog group, has counted 20 Section 527 committees that have been active this election year. The best-known example is Republicans for Clean Air, which spent \$2.5 million in television advertising attacking Arizona Sen. John McCain just before the New York and California primaries. Eventually it came out that the group consisted of two Texas brothers, Charles and Sam Wyly, who have been major donors to McCain's rival, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the Republican nominee for president.

— Katherine Hutt Scott

Polls finds race for Congress is close

The Democratic and Republican conventions may have changed public perceptions of the presidential candidates, but they did little to alter the images of the two parties, a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll showed. Asked before the conventions whether they would vote Democrat or Republican in the upcoming congressional elections, 47% of likely voters said Republican and 47% said Democrat. Asked the same question after the two conventions, 48% said Democrat and 46% said Republican. That suggests the race for control of the House remains a tossup. Republicans now hold control of the House by a 13-seat majority.

Also, when asked after the conventions which party better represents their values, 50% said Democrat, 40% said Republican. Those numbers have been remarkably consistent since 1992.

A majority of Americans also view the two parties' policies as generally mainstream, although Democrats are seen as more so, 67%-56%.

Asked whom they would vote for if President Clinton were running against Republican nominee George W. Bush, voters picked Bush, 54%-42%.

— Richard Benedetto

Cheney votes today in Wyoming primary

Republican vice-presidential candidate Dick Cheney, and his wife, Lynne, will vote in the Wyoming primary today. They will cast their ballots at a firehouse near Jackson Hole in Teton County.

Oklahoma and Alaska also hold primaries today. Most of the congressional incumbents in the three states face little or no opposition. Oklahoma voters will decide a tax issue: whether to lower the fee for car tags.



By Kathy Willens, AP

At New York campaign stop: Police block Ribby Goodfellow from the media and others.

Heckler nags Lazio to release tax returns

A Democratic heckler dressed as Uncle Sam has been dogging Republican Rep. Rick Lazio and pressing him to release his income tax returns. Lazio is in a close race with Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton for a Senate seat from New York. Lazio said his federal and state returns will be available by the end of the month.

"There is one thing that we will release that Mrs. Clinton will never release and that's a New York state income tax return," Lazio said in a reminder to voters that Clinton has lived in the state only since January.

Clinton began her day at her home in Chappaqua in Westchester County. "I'm looking to the final stretch of this campaign," she said. "I've had the most wonderful time for the past year ... and I've been able to meet a lot of people who care about the same issues I do."

► Also Monday, former New York governor Mario Cuomo said he thinks his eldest son, federal Housing Secretary Andrew Cuomo, will run for governor of New York in 2002. However, the elder Cuomo said that "unless Andrew is lying to me," his son has not yet completely committed to running.

Calif. might not be Gore's for the taking

Some California Democratic activists are concerned about how close the presidential race is in the nation's most populous state. New polls show Gore has pulled even with Bush nationally, but a poll by Public Policy Institute of California before Gore's convention speech last week showed a statistical tie in California. "There's concern that he should be way ahead," said Charles Douglass, an activist from South-Central Los Angeles. Douglass and others, including Gov. Gray Davis, wanted Gore and his running mate, Sen. Joe Lieberman, to embark on a statewide tour after the convention in Los Angeles ended Thursday. Instead, the candidates campaigned from a boat going down the Mississippi River. Despite the concerns, the California activists say there's plenty of time for Gore to shore up his support and capture the state's 54 electoral votes.

McCain released from Arizona hospital

Doctors said the final review of two skin cancers and surrounding tissue removed from Sen. John McCain concluded that the cancer had not spread. McCain's office said the Arizona Republican was resting comfortably at his home in Phoenix after his release Monday from the Mayo Clinic Scottsdale.

Surgeons removed melanomas, the most serious form of skin cancer, from McCain's left temple and arm on Saturday. Doctors said Monday that his "prognosis is very good." This is McCain's second bout with skin cancer. He had a cancerous mole removed from his shoulder in 1993. The onetime presidential hopeful turns 64 on Aug. 29. He hopes to resume campaigning for GOP candidates by Labor Day.

Written by Paul Leavitt with staff and wire reports