

Weather



Cooler, sunny.  
High 70.  
Forecast, B8

# The Providence Journal

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TUESDAY, October 11, 2011 | providencejournal.com

PENSIONS

## Lawmakers risk union wrath with vote on benefits

Unions displeased with a Lincoln Democrat's House vote to limit COLAs poured money into campaign to defeat her

By KATHERINE GREGG  
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — No one knows better than one-term lawmaker Mary Ann Shallcross-Smith the potential risk that lies in wait for any state legislator who votes to cut pension benefits.

A freshman from Lincoln, Democrat Shallcross-Smith lost her House seat in the 2010 Democratic primary



\$35,000 in benefits.  
"They come right up to you at the

to a union-backed challenger, after voting to limit the annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) provided retired state workers, teachers and judges to their first



JOURNAL FILES/ CONNIE GROSCH

Mary Ann Shallcross-Smith lost her House seat.

State House and tell you how they want you to vote. ... "You need to vote this way or we will find an opponent for you" ... and that's exactly what happened," said Shallcross-Smith in a recent interview.

"Never, never, never once happened," says Patrick J. Crowley, the government-relations director for the National Education Association of Rhode Island, of this alleged exchange.

But Shallcross-Smith insists it did, and says: "They rallied for him, and they got out the vote for him, and they

spent primary day making phone calls for him."

And it's clear they also opened their wallets.

Many of the same public-employee unions that helped her get elected in 2008 put their money into the campaign of her 2010 opponent, Jeremiah T. "Jay" O'Grady, instead, helping him raise \$6,870 through 22 labor-backed political-action committees, such as the R.I. AFL-CIO PAC and the AFSCME Council 94 "People" PAC.

SEE PENSIONS, A2

### CRANSTON | PRAYER IN SCHOOLS

"At first, I saw this as a legal issue. But people on the other side have turned this into a religious war against atheists," says Cranston West student who objects to school prayer

## Prayer sparks atheist's fight



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KATHY BORCHERS

Jessica Ahlquist, a Cranston West student, says she is an atheist who objects to the school prayer on display in the auditorium of the school for 50 years. The city defends it as emblematic of the school's tradition.

Objection to school prayer embroils student, city in legal tussle over freedom

By PAUL DAVIS  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

CRANSTON

A s a high school freshman, Jessica Ahlquist wore shiny braces, read books and never missed an episode of "Dr. Who," a TV show about a time-traveling alien who saves civilizations, helps people and rights wrongs.

"I was very shy," says the 5-foot-tall student.

Hardly anyone noticed her — until she spotted a school prayer affixed to a wall in the auditorium of her new school, Cranston High School West.

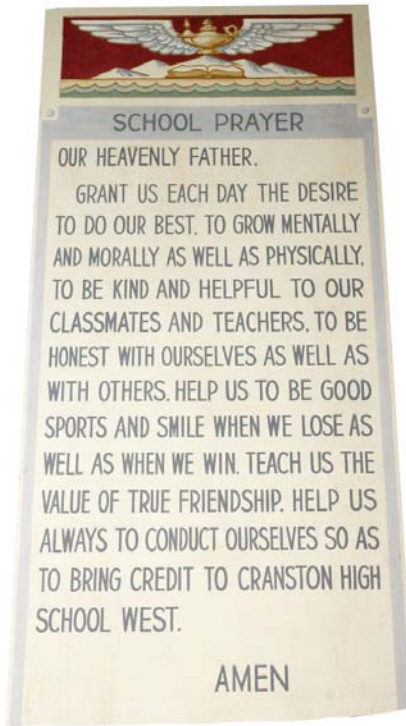
The prayer, still on display, begins "Our Heavenly Father," and urges students to "grow mentally and morally." Amen, it ends.

That's illegal, thought Ahlquist, who began speaking up about the prayer at school meetings.

Now, more than a year later, the 16-year-old junior is at the center of a U.S. District Court suit that alleges the prayer — on display in the school for nearly 50 years — violates the First Amendment.

The Rhode Island Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union filed the suit on Ahlquist's behalf in April, alleging the prayer makes Ahlquist feel "excluded, ostracized

SEE AHLQUIST, A8



EGYPT



AP / KHALIL HAMRA

Relatives of Copts killed in clashes with the Egyptian army grieve after seeing their bodies, in Cairo, Monday.

## Military vows to curb violence

After a peaceful protest by Egyptian Copts turns deadly, Egypt's military says it will get tough

By HAMZA HENDAWI  
and MAGGIE MICHAEL  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO — Egypt's ruling military on Monday condemned a surge in deadly violence as an attempt to undermine the state, and warned that it will act to safeguard the peace following a night of clashes that drew in Christians, Muslims and security forces.

The generals' strong words

signaled that the governing military council will tighten its grip on power, further infuriating activists who have demanded an end to army rule and a transition to democracy.

Egypt's Coptic church harshly criticized the government for its actions in crushing the protests and accused it of allowing repeated attacks

SEE EGYPT, A5

WASHINGTON

## In R.I., conflicting views of Obama's trade pacts

Some fear foreign-trade deals will sap jobs from R.I.; others say some factories will be more competitive

By JOHN E. MULLIGAN  
JOURNAL WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — To Robert S. Brookman of Teknor Apex, a Pawtucket manufacturer of garden hoses and other plastic and vinyl goods, there's a strong case for President Obama's new foreign-trade agreements with South Korea, Panama and Colombia.

Some key materials the 400

workers use in the manufacturing process, including a liquid "plasticizer" made in South Korea, are either unavailable in the United States or they are too costly or too scarce for the needs of Teknor Apex, according to Brookman.

"We will benefit from free trade" because it will elimi-

SEE FACTS, A6

RECENT FIRST AMENDMENT CASES

Church and state

2004: *Osediacz v. City of Cranston*

A federal court upholds the display of a crèche and menorah on the front lawn of Cranston City Hall when displayed with a variety of non-religious symbols.

1998: *Cottone v. Bristol-Warren Regional School Committee*

The Bristol-Warren school district settles a federal lawsuit by agreeing to remove the display of a Nativity scene on the front lawn of a public elementary school.

1992: *Lee v. Weisman*

The U.S. Supreme Court rules unconstitutional a Providence school's practice of having an invocation and benediction delivered at graduation ceremonies.

1987: *Marks v. Town of East Greenwich*

A federal lawsuit challenging the Town of East Greenwich's ownership of a crucifix on public property is dismissed as moot after the display was moved to private property.

1984: *Lynch v. Donnelly*

The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the City of Pawtucket may sponsor a Nativity scene as part of a much larger secular holiday display.

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PolitiFact Rhode Island

A professor at Roger Williams University, discussing the in-state tuition issue, says there are 15,000 undocumented immigrants in Rhode Island. **A3**



RHODE ISLAND

Holiday traditions

Parades, festivals and the seventh-annual Great Day of Service were some of the ways Rhode Islanders marked a Columbus Day that felt like summer. **A4**

