Alabama School Rezoning Plan Brings Out Cry of Resegregation

By SAM DILLON

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. - After white parents in this racially mixed city complained about school overcrowding, school authorities set out to draw up a sweeping rezoning plan. The results: all but a handful of the hundreds of students required to move this fall were black-and many were sent to virtually allblack, low-performing schools.

Black parents have been battling the rezoning for weeks, calling it resegregation. And in a new twist for an integration fight, they



DAVE MARTIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Kendra Williams and other black parents argue that the plan violates federal law.

are wielding an unusual weapon: the federal No Child Left Behind law, which gives students in schools deemed failing the right to move to better ones.

"We're talking about moving children from good schools into low-performing ones, and that's illegal," said Kendra Williams, a hospital receptionist, whose two children were rezoned. "And it's all about race. It's as clear as daylight."

Tuscaloosa, where George Wallace once stood defiantly in the schoolhouse door to keep blacks out of the University of Alabama, also has had a volatile history in its public schools. Three decades of federal desegregation marked by busing and white flight ended in 2000. Though the city is 54 percent white, its school system is 75 percent black.

The schools superintendent and board president, both white, said in an interview that the rezoning, which redrew boundaries of school attendance zones, was a color-blind effort to reorganize the 10,000-student district around community schools and relieve overcrowding. By optimizing use of the city's 19 school buildings, the district saved taxpayers millions, officials said. They also acknowledged another goal: to draw more whites back into Tuscaloosa's schools by making them attractive to parents of 1,500 children attending private academies founded after courtordered desegregation began.

"I'm sorry not everybody is on board with this," said Joyce Levey, the superintendent. "But the issue in drawing up our plan was not race. It was how to use our buildings in the best possible way." Dr. Levey said that all students forced by the rezoning to move from a high- to a lowerperforming school were told of their right under the No Child law to request a transfer.

When the racially polarized, eight-person Board of Education approved the rezoning plan in May, however, its two black

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The return on carnage is suspicion: Zain Muhammad, whose father was slain by neighbors.

TISZAKESZI JOURNAL

Vatican Tree Penance: Forgive Us Our CO,

By ELISABETH ROSENTHAL

TISZAKESZI, Hungary - This summer the cardinals at the Vatican accepted an unusual donation from a Hungarian start-up called Klimafa: The company said it would plant trees to restore an ancient forest on a denuded stretch of land by the Tisza River to offset the Vatican's carbon emissions.

The trees, on a 37-acre tract of land that will be renamed the Vatican climate forest, will in theory absorb as much carbon dioxide as the Vatican will produce in 2007: driving cars, heating offices, lighting St. Peter's Basilica at night.

In so doing, the Vatican announced, it would become the world's first carbon-neutral state.

"As the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, recently stated, the international community needs to respect and encourage a 'green culture," " said Cardinal Paul Poupard, leader of the Pontifical Council for Culture, who took part in a ceremony marking the event at the Vatican. "The Book of Genesis tells us of a beginning

in which God placed man as guardian over the earth to make it fruitful."

In many respects, the program seems like a win-win-win proposition. The Vatican, which has recently made an effort to go green on its own by installing solar panels, sought to set an example by offsetting its carbon emissions.

Hungary, whose government scientists are consulting on the project, will take over large swaths of environmentally degraded, abandoned land restored

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York, who led the fight to oust Mr. Gonzales, issued a statement on Sunday evening praising Mr. Mukasey - a suggestion that Democrats, who are already challenging Mr. Bush over the Continued on Page A16

Veto Risk Seen In Compromise On Child Health

By ROBERT PEAR

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16 -Senate and House negotiators said Sunday that they had agreed on a framework for a compromise bill that would provide health insurance to four million uninsured children while relaxing some of the limits on eligibility imposed by the Bush administration.

The compromise, which resembles a bill passed by the Senate with bipartisan support, sets the stage for a battle with President Bush, who has denounced similar legislation as a step "down the path to government-run health care for every American."

Tony Fratto, a White House spokesman, said Sunday, "The House and the Senate still appear to be far away from legislation that we would find acceptable."

Republicans will come under political pressure to support the compromise. But if the president vetoes it, he will probably have enough votes in the House to sustain his veto, Republicans say.

The compromise would increase tobacco taxes to finance health insurance for more chil-

Congressional aides worked through the weekend to meld the

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SPECIAL TODAY **Business Travel**

With summer's airport delays threatening to become a yearround phenomenon, frequent travelers are sizing up their alter-SECTION H





Yale to Return Artifacts

Yale University has agreed to return artifacts to Peru that were excavated at Machu Picchu by a Yale explorer in 1912, and that Peru contends were merely on THE ARTS, PAGE B3

Two Sides, Common Goals

The head of the United Automobile Workers and the chief of General Motors share a goal in their contract talks: the survival of their institutions.

O. J. Simpson Arrested

O. J. Simpson was charged with six felonies in connection with a reported armed robbery of sports memorabilia in a Las Vegas hotel room on Thursday night, the police said. PAGE A14

Emmy for 'Entourage'

At the 59th Primetime Emmy Awards, Jeremy Piven of the HBO series "Entourage" won for outstanding supporting actor in a comedy series. THE ARTS, PAGE B1



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