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WEATHER
93°/74°
(today/tonight)

Scattered storms.
Forecast, B10

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POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Vacationing Obama is creating high expectations for jobs plan



On his bus tour of rural towns, President Barack Obama challenged Republicans to work with him to pass a jobs plan. But building up the plan before it's unveiled in September, then going on vacation, has opened the president to more criticism. And Republicans may have little incentive to pass a jobs plan that would help him out. **A17**

MARNI JAMESON, B1
Dorm décor:
How to outfit your space.



NATION

'West Memphis 3' freed in horrific slayings of boys

Three men who served more than 18 years in prison for the murders of three young boys have won their freedom — by pleading guilty. The men can still maintain their innocence in the case, which has become a cause célèbre. **A16**

ADVENTURE AS REHAB: INJURED TROOPS WELCOME THE CHALLENGE



PHOTOS BY GEORGE SKENE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mark Zambon, left, gets ready for a photo with an alligator he shot from the top of a swamp buggy as rancher Hoppy Kempfer helps arrange the reptiles. Zambon lost both of his legs in an explosion in Afghanistan.

Wounded in war, Marines find therapy hunting on Osceola ranch

BY KATE SANTICH
Staff Writer

The air is still cool, the day young, when a half-dozen men climb into a swamp buggy and head into the woods of Osceola County.

In the front seat by the driver, 26-year-old Mark Zambon, his lower legs blown off by a roadside bomb in January, sits with a hunting rifle across his lap.

Behind him is Colbey Yazzie, 22, a fellow Marine who gave up crutches just two days earlier — the day before he bagged a 9-foot-3-inch alligator, which has earned him major bragging rights. He moves with surprising agility on his new



Rancher Hoppy Kempfer, left, congratulates Mark Zambon after he shot a gator. Video, photos of hunt: OrlandoSentinel.com

Please turn to **OSCEOLA, A9**

JULY UNEMPLOYMENT AT 10.7% IN FLORIDA

Few bright spots for jobs in slowing economy

BY JIM STRATTON
Staff Writer

Florida's unemployment rate stalled at 10.7 percent in July, as the broader economy slowed and the state lost more than 22,000 jobs from the previous month.

The statewide rate was unchanged from June's revised number, according to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation. It repre-

sents about 987,000 unemployed people in a labor pool of more than 9.2 million.

The state average is almost 1 percentage point lower than this time last year — but 1.6 percentage points higher than the national rate of 9.1 percent.

Meanwhile, Metro Orlando's jobless rate was 10.4 percent last month, unchanged from June but down from 11.6 percent a year ago.

The four-county metro area has added almost 11,000 jobs during the past year, second only to the Miami metro area, which has gained almost 16,000 jobs since July 2010.

Concerns about the national and global economies appear to be holding back progress in the state's labor market. With Wall Street's convulsions, Washington's debt-ceiling fi-

Please turn to **JOBLESS, A9**

CAMPAIGN 2012: GOP U.S. SENATE RACE

DEBATE: 4 BATTLE TO GET NOTICED



Hasner



LeMieux



McCalister



Miller

BY SCOTT POWERS | Staff Writer

Orlando gets its first side-by-side look today at the four major Republican candidates running for the U.S. Senate as they try to establish their right-wing credentials in a debate sponsored by two conservative political-interest groups.

The 2012 GOP primary still is a year away and the four — former Florida House Majority Leader Adam Hasner, former U.S. Sen. George LeMieux, and businessmen Mike McCalister and Craig Miller — are working hard to make some kind of public impression before a better-known candidate considers joining the race.

So far, their campaigns are works in progress. A recent Quinnipiac University poll showed “none of the above” winning the vote of more than half of the registered Republicans surveyed. With the withdrawal last month of state Senate President Mike Haridopolos and his \$2 million-plus war chest, the field lost its best-known and

Please turn to **DEBATE, A9**

Is Florida's drug law unconstitutional?

BY RENE STUTZMAN | Staff Writer

Kellie Ann Williams, a 42-year-old Sanford woman, was convicted last year of possession of a controlled substance. The drug: two anti-seizure pills she had tucked inside her bag for a friend, who had a prescription, as the two women went shopping.

Williams didn't know the drug, clonazepam, was a controlled substance, she said, and she didn't realize that by carrying it, she was committing a felony.

“The whole thing was just a mess,” she said Friday. The law that snagged Williams, a psychology student at the University of Central Florida, is now being challenged by hundreds of drug defendants across the state.

That's because on July 27, U.S. District Judge Mary S. Scriven declared it unconstitutional, ruling that it violated an individual's right to due process.

Please turn to **DRUGS, A9**

OSCEOLA

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prosthetic leg, its socket extending all the way up to his right hip.

Both are only partway through their rehabilitation program at a military hospital in San Diego.

"The idea of hunting alligators and boar in Florida is, like, righteously awesome," Zambon says, grinning. "I can think of no two cooler species."

This five-day taste of freedom is part adventure, part therapy. Started by Ron Raboud, a Florida native, businessman and longtime hunter, the non-profit Wounded Warrior Outdoors has been taking active-duty injured military personnel into the wild since 2008 with the blessing of medical personnel.

"Hunting and fishing are just the motivation for them to work hard in rehabilitation," says Raboud, 52, himself the son of a WWII Army veteran seriously wounded in France. "What really happens out here is that they're climbing stairs, having to move around a lot, and they're showing themselves they can overcome a lot of challenges out in the real world."

This is about as real as it gets. Mosquitoes and biting flies swirl around them as the buggy passes wild turkey and deer skittering through the brush.

"Don't you wish you could run like that?" says Jim Sursely, 63, an Army veteran wounded in Vietnam. The comment is not meant to taunt. Sursely, his legs and most of one arm blown off when he stepped on a land mine at age 21, understands in a way that few can.

A former national commander of the nonprofit Disabled American Veterans, he is here in large part as living proof that life can be full and whole even when one's body isn't.

"I've got four kids, 10 grandkids, and, amazingly



GEORGE SKENE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mark Zambon, 26, finds an irreverent sense of humor serves him well, especially since losing both legs to a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. Here, after he and his occupational therapist each shot a gator, he poses in mock distress. "Oh, my God," he says, "it's raw comedy."

enough, I even found a second woman who wanted to marry me after my first marriage ended," he says. Irreverent humor seems to be a prerequisite.

It helps to see his example, says Yazzie, who lived on the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona before joining the Marines two months out of high school. It helps, too, just to get outdoors.

"I was pretty lucky because I only lost one side — you know, one leg," he says of his injury a week before he was supposed to come home from Afghanistan. "But it's good to get out here, out of the hospital. You just start to feel really cooped up in there."

Raboud runs the charity solely on passion and private donations. He knows some potential sponsors may frown upon the political incorrectness of hunting, but the military has embraced the cause. Medical personnel choose the soldiers they think will most benefit from the trip.

But there is no government money and no paid staff.

It costs about \$250,000 a year to put on a handful of adventures like this — duck-hunting in Oklahoma, fishing in Maine, bear-hunting in British Columbia. Hunting gators is apparently a soldier favorite, despite the oppressive August heat and humidity.

Hoppy Kempfer, whose family has owned this Osceola ranch land for generations, steers the buggy near a canal and cuts the engine. He sets out a boom-box playing the sound of a baby gator in distress, though it sounds vaguely like a pre-pubescent teen clearing his throat. This is supposed to lure the adult gators into popping above the surface to investigate.

The men wait. The alligators never approach, but they can be seen in the distance — barely — their brains a target the size of a human thumb and at the

moment 50 meters away.

Zambon, who served five tours detonating explosive devices before the one that took his legs, levels a rifle toward the shadows. He squeezes off several shots, each a narrow miss, and the buggy maneuvers up the bank before the Marine's bullet finds its mark, piercing the gator's skull. The creature flops onto its back as the men cheer. Zambon smiles widely. He'll be taking home meat from the gator and a 90-pound boar he killed a day earlier when he returns next week to San Diego.

For a guy with six brothers, a guy who grew up hunting, the experience is a reminder that he's still the same man. "This is the hunt of a lifetime," he says. "For me, it really opens a door."

More information about the group: woundedwarrioroutdoors.com

ksantich@tribune.com or 407-420-5503

DRUGS

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Its flaw, according to her: Prosecutors don't have to prove that a defendant knew he was breaking the law, only that he was delivering or had possession of a controlled substance — for example, cocaine or a wide variety of prescription medicine.

Florida is the only state with such a law, she pointed out.

Her ruling came in the case of Mackle Shelton, who had been sentenced to 18 years in prison after being convicted in Osceola County of cocaine delivery and other charges.

"Shelton has produced a category five hurricane in the Florida criminal-practice community," wrote Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Milton Hirsch. On Wednesday, he agreed with Scriven, throwing out 39 drug cases.

But judges in Santa Rosa and Escambia counties have ruled the other way.

Central Florida judges must make up their own minds.

On Friday, Circuit Judge Renee Roche in Orlando listened to assistant public defenders argue on behalf of three drug defendants but ran out of time and asked them to come back.

On Thursday, Circuit Judge Debra S. Nelson in Sanford held five hearings and said she would rule next week.

"I'm certain that any legitimate defense attorney would be raising it in all their drug cases," said Bill Ponell, president of the Central Florida Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys.

Orange-Osceola Public Defender Robert Wesley said his lawyers would. "It'll be like dominoes," he said.

Prosecutors say Scriven's ruling may be persuasive but that it should have no impact on state courts. They are required to follow the rulings of Florida's district courts of appeal and Florida Supreme Court — not a U.S. district judge.

"We believe the law that

we've followed for many years is the proper law now," said William Eddins, state attorney in Escambia and three other Panhandle counties and president of the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association.

According to defense attorneys, the Florida Legislature created the problem in 2002, when it added three paragraphs to the state's drug statute.

It was a push-back, they say, against the Florida Supreme Court, which had ruled the state must prove that a defendant knowingly committed a crime.

Its sponsors included Allan G. Bense of Panama City, who would become House speaker in two years; Gus Bilirakis of Palm Harbor, now a member of Congress; and Dan Gelber of Miami Beach, a former federal prosecutor.

Bense did not return a phone call Friday. Bilirakis was in Israel and unavailable for comment, and Gelber doesn't remember the legislation, he wrote in an email Friday.

The change, defense attorneys contend, has turned innocent acts into felonies.

They cite the case of Williams, the Sanford woman who was carrying the pills of a friend, and another man — not related to her — Robert Edward Williams, 44, of Longwood.

He went on trial last month in Sanford, charged with possession of a controlled substance — one alprazolam pill, an anti-anxiety medicine. He had a prescription for it, but because he had put it in a pill bottle with a different label, he was arrested, jailed and prosecuted, according to court records. Judge Nelson halted the trial and dismissed the charge.

Assistant Public Defender Alpheus Parsons represented Williams. "I think that's crazy," he argued. "The law can't be like that."

The Florida Attorney General's Office plans to appeal Scriven's and Hirsch's rulings, said Eddins.

rstutzman@tribune.com or 407-650-6394