

In the know



MAKE THE MOST OF THAT SUMMER ROAD TRIP

The high price of gas isn't going to stop 1.52-million Floridians from taking a vacation by car this holiday weekend. We give you tips on how to make that expensive fuel take you as far as possible. **Tampa Bay, 1B**

Lawmakers punch at oil executives

The Senate Judiciary Committee becomes a public relations battleground as senators jab at the leaders of major oil companies about gas prices. **Times 2, 8A**

Cook is America's Idol, in landslide

Scuffy rocker David Cook scores a nearly 12-million-vote victory over David Archuleta

in fan voting for the final of *American Idol's* seventh season. Our critics tell you why it went that way. **Etc, 2B**

Rays take a 9-1 beating in Oakland

Andy Sonnanstine suffers through six rough innings as the Rays finish a six-game trip. A 10-game homestand starts Friday. **Sports, 1C**

Israel, Syria start talking peace deal

The countries announce that Turkish mediators are brokering a comprehensive peace treaty. Israel wants to quell Iran's influence in the region. Syria wants the Golan Heights back. **World, 7A**

Critics open up on Progress nuke plan

The Florida Public Service Commission holds the first of three meetings on the utility's \$17-billion plan for Levy County. High on the list of concerns is the reality of that price tag. **Business, 8B**

What are your 5 favorite things?

From a leather-bound book of poetry to some doll furniture with history, find out what a St. Petersburg woman treasures. And tell us what you value. **BayLink, 1F**



TODAY'S WEATHER

Scattered storms
 8 a.m. Noon 4 p.m. 8 p.m.
 77° 87° 86° 80°
 40% rain chance.
More, back page of Sports

tampabay.com

Holy flying fish!

In bizarre pseudo-news of the day, watch this video of a fish flying out of water for 45 seconds! Go to **video.tampabay.com** and click on Top Video.

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St. Petersburg Times

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FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER

★★★ Thursday, May 22, 2008

Candidates speak out
Clinton demands that results of state's primary count.

Crowds in Tampa
More than 15,000 pack Times Forum to hear Obama.

Hopefuls bring fight to Florida



Sen. Barack Obama greets supporters Wednesday during a rally at the St. Pete Times Forum in Tampa. More than 15,000 turned out to see the Illinois senator in his first Florida campaign rally since the Democratic presidential candidates boycotted the state during the primary season. "It's good to be back," Obama told the enthusiastic crowd.

Obama's pull put to the test

Many sacrifice time, wages to see "history in the making."

BY THOMAS LAKE
 Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — This is how you test a candidate's true gravitational pull. Go to a state where the delegates don't count, in a season when the air feels like wet rags, at noon on a Wednesday, in the heart of the workweek. Then see who shows up.

The students will come, of course, in T-shirts that say *Obama Is My Homeboy* and *Obama Fo Yo Mama*. The retired and the independently wealthy will be there, too, as will a few who work second shift. The real trick will be attracting people with day jobs.

In the master narrative of the 2008 presidential campaign, Sen. Barack Obama's rally Wednesday at the St. Pete Times Forum may be no more than a footnote. It came after he had nearly locked up the nomination, before his impending showdown with the Republicans. Attendance was nowhere near his personal record.

But if a few dozen interviews by the *St. Petersburg Times* are any indicator, Obama passed the day-job test: He drew in the demographic with the most to lose.

Wayne Ferrell, a 53-year-old

Halve the delegation, Ill. senator suggests



Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, autographs a sign at a campaign stop Wednesday in Boca Raton, where she focused on counting Florida's primary results.

Eye of political storm

Barack Obama fires up the crowd in Tampa, acting as if he were already the Democratic nominee. **Story, 4A**

TALE OF THE TAPE: We compare the Democratic candidates' campaign visits to Florida. **Chart, 4A**

CLINTON IN S. FLORIDA: She says counting votes is a fundamental principle of democracy. **Story, 5A**

FRIENDLY VISIT? Gov. Charlie Crist and his girlfriend will spend Memorial Day with John McCain. **Story, 5A**

At politics.tampabay.com

Watch video of Barack Obama's speech and see more pictures from Wednesday's rally.

IN THE CANDIDATES' OWN WORDS: You can also listen to our interviews with Obama and Clinton.

Meanwhile, Clinton says not counting Florida's primary insults voters.

BY ADAM C. SMITH
 Times Political Editor

KISSIMMEE — Delving deeper into Florida's Democratic delegate debacle than he ever has to date, Sen. Barack Obama said Wednesday that "a very reasonable solution" would be to count Florida's disputed primary votes and cut the state's delegation to the convention in half.

Still, in an interview with the *St. Petersburg Times*, Obama brushed off Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's emphasis on counting Florida's primary as a meaningful indication of the popular vote. She in turn called that stance an insult to 1.75-million Democrats who voted on Jan. 29.

"In all these races if I didn't campaign at all and this had just been a referendum on name recognition, Sen. Clinton would be the nominee," Obama told the *Times* during his first campaign trip to Florida in eight months. "It's pretty hard to make an argument that somehow you winning what is essentially a name recognition contest in Florida was a good measure of electoral strength there."

Obama is trying to move beyond the primary dispute and make up for lost time in

Airline refrain: fee, fee, fee, fee

American is the latest to come up with a new charge: \$15 for the first checked bag.

BY STEVE HUETTEL
 Times Staff Writer

Just when it seemed airline customer service couldn't sink any lower, American Airlines stepped over a line that no other major carrier dared to cross.

The nation's largest airline said Wednesday that it would charge most passengers \$15 to check their first bag — \$30 round trip — starting next month.

"It's a ground-breaking change," said Joe Brancatelli, a veteran air travel columnist. Passengers will try to carry more and bigger bags on board, he said, slowing down security screening and delaying flights as they jam overhead bins.

American also announced plans to take as many as 85 jets out of its fleet by year's end. The carrier will reduce domestic flying by about 11 percent in the fourth quarter and cut an undisclosed number of employees at American and affiliate American Eagle.

Like other airlines, American is struggling with jet fuel prices that jumped 80 percent in the last year. All major carriers have raised fares and added a slew of fees for services they used to give customers for free.

"We must find ways to cover the cost of providing our services

25 years in scam, time off for loot

The ex-music mogul can cut his sentence by repaying investors.

BY HELEN HUNTLEY
 Personal Finance Editor

ORLANDO — A federal judge sent Lou Pearlman off to prison for 25 years Wednesday, then offered him what he called the "keys" to his jail cell. For every \$1-million Pearlman recovers for the investors he scammed, he'll get a month trimmed off his sentence.

Unfortunately for them, the former music mogul may not be able to scare up much cash. Pearlman has admitted stealing \$300-million from investors and banks in a scheme that operated for more than two decades. But investigators trying to find where the money went have so far recovered only about \$3.5-



Lou Pearlman ran one of the state's largest investment scams ever.

Some lost life savings

Investors who lost money react to Pearlman's sentencing. **10A**

Pearlman's past

To watch video and read previous coverage about Lou Pearlman, visit **money.tampabay.com**.