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WASHINGTON MARDI GRAS

Stephanie Grace: Carnival celebration can't bypass politics, 6A  
See more photos from activities around town, 7A

Meet King Gray Stream and Queen Sarah Heebe, 8A



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CROP CARE



STAFF PHOTO BY JAVIER GALLEGOS  
Farmhand Esteban Hernandez uncovers rows of strawberries to be fed at Landry-Poché Farms on Thursday.

Farmers work to protect strawberries from freezing temperatures

BY CLAIRE GRUNEWALD  
Staff writer

Strawberry farmers in southeast Louisiana spent Thursday pulling back covers off rows of plants to feed them, picking any ripe fruit and then covering them right back up again in preparation for the week-end's cold weather.

South Louisiana is bracing for its second consecutive freezing week-end, under an extreme cold watch

from Friday night through Sunday morning as another blast of arctic air sweeps through.

Strawberry farmers in Livingston and Tangipahoa parishes prepped their farms last week and have kept their cold-weather coverage systems in place in anticipation of this weekend.

Strawberry farmer Rhonda Landry-Poché uses a system of blankets, hooks and lines to create a greenhouse effect during the cold

to protect the strawberry blooms, a part of the plant that is essential for fruit development and makes strawberries in about 21-day cycles. Landry-Poché sprays the fruit with plant food and covers them again.

"When it gets cold like this, that's what we're trying to protect," she said. "What we're trying to do is save these blooms because if not, we'll be shut down for 21 days."

➤ See FARMERS, page 12A

Reinsurers' profits could mean relief for La. homeowners

It's not yet clear how large rate decreases could be

BY SAM KARLIN  
Staff writer

After years of losses, fortunes have changed in boardrooms in Bermuda and London. Reinsurers, who backstop the global insurance industry, are seeing healthy profits.

An extraordinary spate of wildfires, hurricanes and other disasters wreaked havoc on the reinsurance industry for several years, spurring wide-reaching effects that included surging insurance bills for Louisiana homeowners. Reinsurers charged higher prices to homeowners insurance companies, which got passed along to customers.

The steep increases in Louisiana thrust the state into an insurance crisis that's hollowing out hurricane-prone communities and softening the real estate market.

But recent quiet hurricane seasons and the soaring rates that reinsurers have charged have led to unusually strong profits for the reinsurance industry, according to analysts. And with capital flowing freely, the pendulum is swinging back.

Insurance companies who buy protection from reinsurers are seeing huge slides in prices, which have dropped between 10% and 20%, by some estimates.

"Reinsurers have been doing well the past few years after absorbing massive losses for a number of years."

BRIAN KEEFER, CEO of Allied Trust Insurance Company

➤ See REINSURERS, page 11A

Border czar suggests drawdown possible in Minnesota

BY GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO and REBECCA SANTANA  
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Trump administration could reduce the number of immigration enforcement officers in Minnesota, but only if state and local officials cooperate, the president's border czar said Thursday, noting he has "zero tolerance" for protesters who assault federal officers or impede the ongoing Twin Cities operation.

Tom Homan addressed reporters for the first time since the president sent him to Minneapolis

following last weekend's fatal shooting of protester Alex Pretti, the second this month by federal officers carrying out the operation. His comments came after President Donald Trump seemed to signal a willingness to ease tensions in the Minneapolis and St. Paul area.

Homan emphasized that the administration isn't relenting on its immigration crackdown and warned that protesters

could face consequences if they interfere with federal officers.

But he seemed to acknowledge there had been missteps.

"I do not want to hear that everything that's been done here has been perfect. Nothing's ever perfect," he said.

Homan hinted at the prospect of pulling out many of the roughly 3,000 federal officers taking part in the operation, but he seemed to tie that to cooperation from state and local leaders and a reduction in protester interference.

➤ See DRAWDOWN, page 10A



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO BY ADAM GRAY  
People participate in a noise demonstration Wednesday night outside the Graduate by Hilton Minneapolis hotel.

WEATHER

HIGH 50

LOW 26

PAGE 8B

Business .....	3B	Commentary .....	7B	Nation-World .....	2A
Classified .....	7D	Deaths .....	4B	Opinion .....	6B
Comics-Puzzles .....	4D-6D	Living.....	1D	Sports .....	1C

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