

Nearly 14 percent of state's seniors not graduating

Sandra Douglass
Special to Sentinel-Voice
Approximately 8.8 percent of all Nevada seniors, 1,501, failed the math component of the high school proficiency exam, and 4.9 percent, 829 students, failed both the math and the English portions of the required test the state requires prep students to take in order to graduate.

Thirty-two percent of the students failing the math and/or English were special education students. Last year, approximately 98 percent of Nevada seniors passed the proficiency exam. This year, 86.2 percent of seniors passed the test, a result some say springs from the 1997 Educational Reform Act. The reform act created tougher academic standards

for all Nevada public school students. The 1999 senior class of 1999 was the first to take the new exam. To address the low graduation rate, the Assembly Education Committee voted last Thursday to decrease the passing score for the mathematics section of the exam from 61 to 57, which would mean that 500 seniors would graduate from Clark

County alone. The measure to decrease the math passing score was criticized by a representative of Gov. Kenny Guinn, and by Senate Majority Leader Bill Raggio in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. They said reducing the score would lessen the importance of a high school diploma and send a negative message to hard-working

students. The effort to change the passing math score died Saturday due to lack of support in the Senate and the Assembly. Some lawmakers will try and revive the issue. Education Committee Chairman Wendell Williams said he wants to help students who have completed the necessary 22.5 credits to graduate and those who have

been offered scholarships to universities and other institutions work around ineptness on the proficiency exam. The Department of Education offered the test for the fifth time last Tuesday. Those interested in the revised standard for the Nevada State Proficiency exam can call the Nevada State Board of Education at (775) 687-9217.

New York Cop: Officer returned with blood-stained gloves

NEW YORK (AP) — An officer accused of torturing a prisoner at a police station borrowed black leather gloves just before the alleged attack and returned them covered with blood, the gloves' owner testified. Officer Justin Volpe said he was "sorry about the gloves" when he gave them back, Officer Mark Schofield told jurors Monday at the federal brutality trial of Volpe and four other policemen. DNA testing confirmed the blood probably came from the prisoner, Abner Louima, according to court papers. Louima was arrested on Aug.

9, 1997, as police tried to disperse an unruly crowd outside a Brooklyn nightclub. Schofield said he provided the gloves to investigators as evidence about a week after the arrest, following a heated telephone conversation with his sergeant, Michael Bellomo. The sergeant, Schofield testified, said "he didn't want to see anybody go to jail. ... I told him, 'That's absurd. I had nothing to do with anything. I'm going to internal affairs.'" On cross-examination, Schofield admitted he came forward only after department

investigators had launched a highly publicized probe. Prosecutors say a raging

Volpe—mistakenly thinking Louima punched him in a melee outside the nightclub

—rammed a stick into Louima's rectum and mouth while officer Charles

Schwarz held him on the bathroom floor. The alleged (See Louima, Page 17)

Cop Chase

(Continued from Page 4)
definitive ruling is needed. "Every single day, law enforcement officers at all levels throughout our country are confronted with ... whether to chase and temporarily stop a person in a high-crime area who runs away at the mere sight of the police," the appeal said. The nation's highest court twice before had the opportunity to consider the issue in criminal cases, but left it undecided when in 1988 and 1991 it chose instead to focus on whether police seizures had occurred. Sam Wardlow was convicted of a weapons violation after he was arrested on a Chicago street in 1995 while carrying a loaded handgun in a bag. Police officers in a patrol car had seen Wardlow spot them and take off running. They pursued and eventually cornered him, and found the gun after a patdown search. The incident occurred in the 4000 block of West Van Buren Street, described by state prosecutors as an area of "high narcotics traffic" at that time. Wardlow challenged his conviction for unlawful use of a weapon by a felon and the two-year prison sentence it carried. He said he had been subjected to an unlawful stop. His appeal in an Illinois court raised the issue of whether his running away from police was enough to create a reasonable suspicion to justify the stop and patdown search. A state appeals court threw out his conviction, and the Illinois Supreme Court upheld that decision last September after saying "such flight alone is insufficient to create a reasonable suspicion of involvement in criminal conduct." Police had acted on "nothing more than a hunch," the state court said, and in so doing violated Wardlow's constitutional rights.

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