



# FIVE NEW FILMS GET

## ★★★★½

“Miss Pettigrew” tops list  
MOVIE TIMES > H17



# Museum opening brings out stars

Northwest African American Museum  
TICKET > H1

# Consumer Reports' top 10 car picks

MOTURING > F2



FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2008

# The Seattle Times

METRO EDITION



CLOUDS, RAIN.  
HIGH 54, LOW 39.  
> LOCAL B8

50¢ King, Pierce, Snohomish, Island, Kitsap and Thurston counties | 75¢ elsewhere



INDEPENDENT AND LOCALLY OWNED SINCE 1896 | [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com)

## WHAT'S FACING THE STATE'S NEW TRANSPORTATION CHIEF



ELAINE THOMPSON / AP

**BRIDGES:** Fights focus on how to pay for aging spans' replacements



DEAN RUTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES

**FERRIES:** Worn boats reveal a system at risk; riders, workers frustrated



MIKE SIEGEL / THE SEATTLE TIMES

**HIGHWAYS:** Travelers, truckers stuck as major routes closed by storm after storm

# “I’m the person who shuts things down”

PAULA HAMMOND KEEPS SENSE OF HUMOR AMID MAMMOTH CHALLENGES



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond is praised by her former boss for her “gutsy decision” to pull four ferries from service.

BY SUSAN GILMORE  
Seattle Times staff reporter

It shouldn't be hard to find people unhappy with new Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond.

There are the ferry riders whose trips have been disrupted by aging, broken-down boats.

There are the truck drivers who lost millions of dollars when Interstate 5 was closed during the December floods in Lewis County and when the mountain passes were shut down this winter because of avalanches.

There are the ferry workers who have seen their schedules upended by the uncertainties

of which boats would be running on which routes.

Yet Hammond, who took over the state's top transportation job in November, is so popular, and comfortable in her role, she can even mock herself.

“I'm the person who shuts things down,” she joked at a recent meeting.

Hammond, 51, the first woman to head the state Department of Transportation, is no novice when it comes to transportation issues. She's been with the DOT for nearly 30 years, working her way up from entry-level engineer.

She was the chief aide to former Secretary Doug MacDon-

ald, who recommended her as his successor. Hammond manages more than 7,000 employees, 7,000 miles of highways, 3,300 bridges and tunnels and 29 state ferries that carry 26 million passengers each year.

She is paid \$163,500 a year. “What we've learned in the past three to four months is how much we've taken the transportation system for granted and how much we can't,” said Hammond, sitting in her Olympia office near the state Capitol, where she's been spending much of her time this winter. “My job is to be steward of the system. We have to keep transportation whole.”

She knows she's been clobbered with the ills of the state ferries and the closed freeways. Yet even those people most affected don't blame Hammond.

One reason may be that she's been on the job only a few months.

“Paula Hammond is new. She couldn't do anything,” said Bremerton resident Ann Erickson, who has been critical of what she sees as Bremerton taking the brunt of the ferry woes. “Every little hiccup and burp, they punish Bremerton, and we're sick of it,” she said.

Erickson blames legislators, not Hammond, for the trouble. “We have to give Paula a

Please see > **HAMMOND, A14**

# Housing market gets a shot in the arm

## HIGHER LOAN LIMITS FOR 3-COUNTY AREA

Change helps buyers facing steep prices

BY ELIZABETH RHODES  
Seattle Times business reporter

A sizable increase in key mortgage limits announced Thursday may deliver a big dose of first aid to the sluggish Puget Sound housing market.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the quasi-governmental companies that underwrite the majority of the nation's home loans, are now offering mortgages up to \$567,500 in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

That's up from \$417,000, and means buyers of pricier homes will no longer be dependent on jumbo loans, which carry higher interest rates and increase buyers' house payments.

Concurrently, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight

What's changed  
**\$362,790**

Old loan limit for FHA mortgages in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

**\$417,000**

Old loan limit for mortgages in those counties backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

**\$567,500**

New limit for all.

Note: This limit is for single-family homes only. Higher loan limits apply to multifamily properties. To see those limits, as well as revised loan limits for other counties, go to [hud.gov](http://hud.gov) and click on FHA Mortgage Limits.

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight

# Arson jury's tough choice: “Here was a mom with a kid”

BY MIKE CARTER AND HAL BERNTON  
Seattle Times staff reporters

TACOMA — Jurors weighing the fate of Briana Waters struggled with a charge that would have sent the 32-year-old mother and violin teacher to prison for 30 years.

Their verdict, delivered Thursday in a packed federal courtroom, recognized her participation in the 2001 arson at a University of Washington research center, but also her limited role in the crime and the modest prison sentences expected to be given to others involved. The arson was committed in the name of the Earth Liberation Front.

While jurors convicted the Oakland, Calif., woman of two counts of arson, they deadlocked on three other charges, including the most serious, which would have sent her to prison for a minimum of 30 years. Afterward, some in the jury said they were sympathetic because Waters has a 3-year-old daughter.

Please see > **ARSON, A14**



Briana Waters was convicted on two counts of arson Thursday.

**PLANS TO REBUILD the burned Street of Dreams > B1**

## It's time to “spring forward”



Daylight-saving time starts at 2 a.m. Sunday. Clocks should be turned forward one hour. It's also a good time to change batteries in smoke detectors.

## Newsline

A quick look at today's news. For updates: [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com)

**Airlines:** Southwest was fined \$10.2 million for not inspecting jets. > **A4**

**Toys:** The Senate OK'd stricter testing as part of a safety-agency overhaul. > **A4**

**Democrats:** Leaders are seeking a way to handle disqualified Florida and Michigan results. > **A5**

**Heparin:** Concern about the blood-thinning drug has spread to Germany. > **A8**

**Jerusalem:** A gunman killed 8 people in an attack on a Jewish seminary. > **A9**

**Iraq:** Two Baghdad bombs killed 54 people and injured 123. > **A12**

**Sonics:** The Legislature seems unlikely to act this session to save pro basketball in Seattle. > **Local B1**

**Fugitive:** A man facing a child-rape trial in Seattle was captured in Florida. > **Local B1**

**Microsoft:** A feisty Steve Ballmer addressed issues ranging from antitrust to Yahoo in a Mix conference interview. > **Business D1**

**Opinion:** Faster than a speeding harmonica, go check out the local supermen and women of the blues, writes Lance Dickie. > **B6**



JIM BATES / THE SEATTLE TIMES

## 3A tourneys

Katie Grad (10) helped top-ranked Auburn Riverside beat Lakes 64-39 in the girls quarterfinals. In the boys quarterfinals, Seattle Prep rallied from 17 points down to beat Mount Rainier 64-58 in overtime. > **SPORTS C1**

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