

VIRGINIA DEMOCRATIC gubernatorial candidate Mark Warner gestures as he addresses a crowd at the Montgomery County Courthouse during a rally in Christiansburg, Va. Saturday. The terror attacks and anthrax alerts have transformed the tone of the gubernatorial campaigns. In New York, New Jersey and Virginia, all of which have heavy death tolls from the Sept. 11 attacks, voters suddenly were assessing candidates on their ability to manage recovery and cri-

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# War, terror overshadow campaigns as Americans prepare to vote

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Absentee ballots languish in anthrax-wary post offices. One candidate departs on a covert Navy mission; others bone up on bioterrorism. In the home stretch of Campaign 2001, it has been tough to practice politics

Prior to Sept. 11, the off-year elections on Tuesday promised to be a low-profile affair for most Americans. There were races for governor in New Jersey and Virginia, mayoral elections in New York and several other big cities, but nothing critical at stake for the two major parties.

The terror attacks and anthrax alerts transformed the tone of the campaigns. In New York, New Jersey and Virginia all with heavy death tolls on Sept. 11 — voters suddenly were assessing candidates on their ability to manage recovery and crises.

for offices now held by Republicans.

In New Jersey, Democrat James McGreevey, the mayor of Woodbridge, has a seemingly solid lead over GOP candidate Bret Schundler, a former mayor of Jersey City. In Virginia, polls give an edge to Democrat Mark Warner, a wealthy political novice, over Republican Mark Earley, a former state attorney general.

Warner and McGreevey have campaigned in the political middle. Their Republican opponents — both opposed to abortion, both stressing antitax stances — have their most solid base among conserva-

New York City has produced the costliest campaign, with Democrat-turned-Republican media billionaire Michael Bloomberg spending \$41 million of his own money. That's Despite strong public sup- nearly quadruple the spending port for President Bush, of Democrat Mark Green,

Democrats have a chance to whose lead has dwindled in the sweep the three major races, all race to succeed popular but term-limited Mayor Rudolph

Even if Democrats sweep the three marquee races, the party may be hard-pressed to interpret victory as a referendum on national policies. Warner, McGreevey and Green have not assailed Bush, while the president, seeking to avoid partisanship at a time of crisis, has not campaigned in person for the GOP candidates.

"With the extraordinary events of this election season, and the fact that no one is in the mood for partisanship, it's going to be hard to read anything into these elections," said Mark Rozell, a political scientist at Catholic University in Washington.

The Earley campaign hoped Bush might cross the Potomac River to stump for their candidate, but acknowledged the unusual circumstances. They're in the middle of a said Earley adviser Christopher LaCivita.

## Little House on the Prairie star Melissa Gilbert elected president of Screen Actors Guild

➤ Results could be challenged due to flawed ballots

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LOS ANGELES - "Little House on the Prairie" star Melissa Gilbert was elected president of the Screen Actors Guild in a hotly contested race, but the results could be challenged because of a flaw on thousands of ballots.

Gilbert got 45.3 percent of the vote to beat Valerie Harper, who had 39.4 percent, according to Friday's count.

'I'm thrilled and honored to have been elected SAG president and am extremely grateful to everyone who worked on or contributed to my campaign," Gilbert said in a statement.

Gilbert, 37, played frontier girl Laura Ingalls on the popular 1970s television series. She received 12,280 votes, according to union spokesman Greg

Harper, 61, who was the wisecracking Rhoda Morgenstern on TV's "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and "Rhoda," received 10,692 votes.

Eugene Boggs finished third with 2,553 votes and Angeltompkins was fourth with 1,613 votes, Krizman said late Friday night. tary,

"M\*A\*S\*H" movie star was elected SAG secreand 'M\*A\*S\*H' television star Mike Farrell

was elected

first vice president. "Mike Farrell and I are looking forward to embracing and working with all the different voices in the guild and its leadership," Gilbert said in her prepared statement. "We're also looking forward to working with our fellow unions to bring film and TV production back to the United States."

The voting took place during a time of discord within the union's ranks, following a lengthy commercial actors' strike last year and a barely averted walkout by movie and

TV actors earlier this year. The results came just a day after SAG's election committee decided to defer a decision on whether to impound the ballots because of a missing signature line on nearly a third of them.

Nearly 24,000 ballots sent to SAG members in New York failed to include the signature Elliott Gould line, which critics said could allow their validity to be challenged. Some 74,000 sent around the country include a line that states: "Voter: Print and sign your name on the back of this

envelope. None of the candidates had raised serious objections to the ballot flaw, and Guild officials downplayed it, saying in a written statement that each ballot envelope is already affixed with a printed member identity label

that verifies its legitimacy. 'If somebody wants to bring a challenge they are free to do so. The constitution says they have to wait until after the election," Krizman said.

The trade paper Variety reported Thursday that Holly wood SAG member Gordon, Drake planned to challenge the results.

"I respect the decision of the elections committee, but I will move forward with my challenge. The issue is credibility to the members. They need to know that the election is valid under the rules of the constitution and bylaws," Drake said.

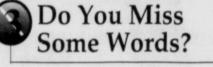


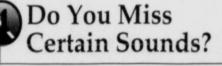
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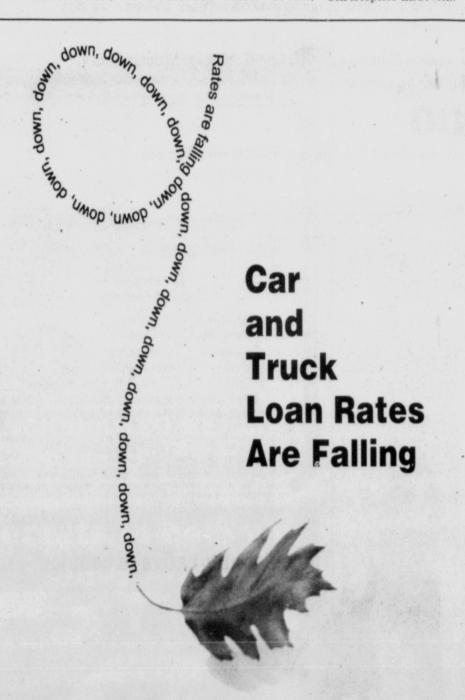
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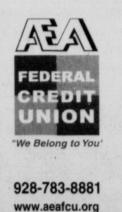


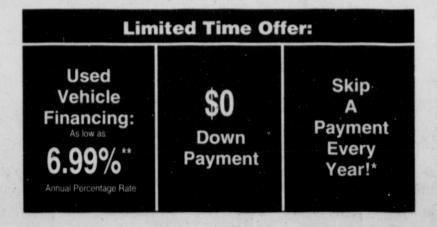
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