



# San Jose Mercury News

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THE NEWSPAPER OF SILICON VALLEY

## Inside

### NEWS

#### BATTLING BREAST CANCER

In 25 years, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation has raised money and changed attitudes. PAGE 3A

#### FEWER WOMEN IN U.S. GETTING MAMMOGRAMS

Health officials say drop is a troubling sign. PAGE 3A

#### IRAN TO OFFER AID TO IRAQ

Ambassador says Tehran will help with military training, equipment and funds for reconstruction. PAGE 9A

#### SLAYING IS S.J.'S FIRST OF YEAR

Shooting in a quiet residential neighborhood on the city's west side leaves a 22-year-old man dead. PAGE 1B

#### TRIAL BEGINNING IN DEATH BY TOY

The robot dog seemed innocent until batteries triggered a blast and killed a man. Trial begins this week. PAGE 1B

## The Week Ahead

### TUESDAY

#### VISTA READY FOR HOME COMPUTERS

Microsoft will introduce its new operating system to consumers after a two-year delay getting it to market.

### WEDNESDAY

#### FED TO ANNOUNCE RATE POLICY

The Federal Reserve will issue its decision on short-term interest rates. Most analysts expect rates will hold steady.

#### GOOGLE SET TO REPORT EARNINGS

The search engine company is expected to report that sales and profits for its most recent quarter were up substantially.

### FRIDAY

#### CLIMATE FORECAST TO BE ISSUED

The report from climate scientists meeting in Paris will be dire, but some U.S. experts say reality may be even worse.

### SUNDAY

#### SUPER BOWL FINALLY ARRIVES

Can Peyton Manning win the big game? How tough is the Bears' defense? Will you have enough guacamole? CBS, 3:25 p.m.

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### WEATHER

Isolated rain  
High: 55-59  
Low: 38-41

Complete forecast, 8B

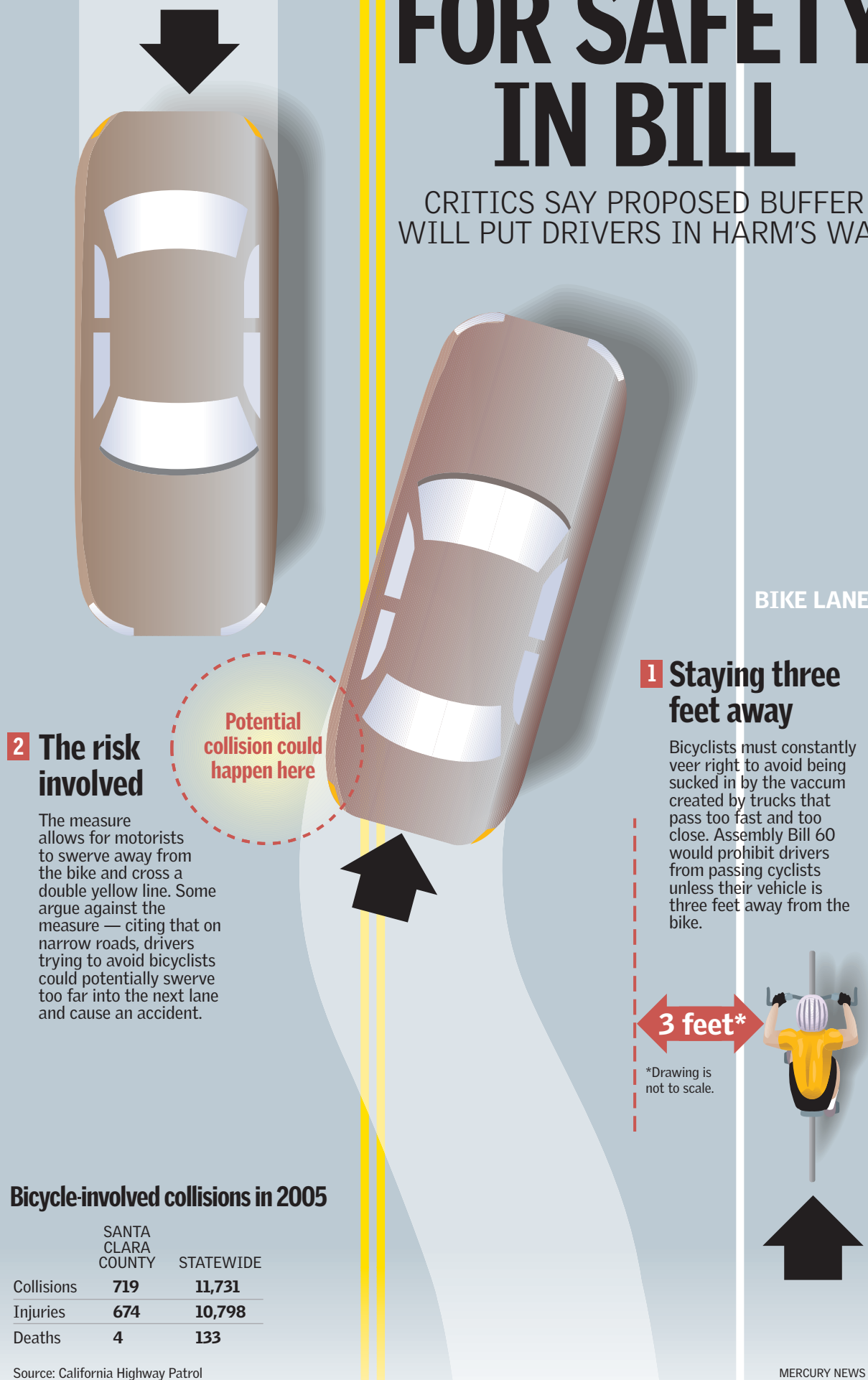
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# CYCLISTS LIKE PUSH FOR SAFETY IN BILL

## CRITICS SAY PROPOSED BUFFER WILL PUT DRIVERS IN HARM'S WAY



### Bicycle-involved collisions in 2005

	SANTA CLARA COUNTY	STATEWIDE
Collisions	719	11,731
Injuries	674	10,798
Deaths	4	133

Source: California Highway Patrol

By Edwin Garcia

MediaNews Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO — Gladwyn d'Souza of Belmont takes the usual precautions when preparing for a bike ride: He wears a bright yellow jacket, affixes a mirror to the handlebars and hangs a reflective triangle from his seat.

Once on the road, he constantly veers right, to avoid being "sucked in" by the vacuum created by trucks that pass too fast, too close.

But d'Souza, 51, and other cyclists may pedal with less angst if the Legislature adopts a measure intended to keep motorists at a safe distance from bicycles. Assembly Bill 60, introduced by Pedro Nava, D-Santa Barbara, would prohibit drivers from passing cyclists unless their vehicle stays at least three feet from the bike.

"It says if a driver passes you close,

See BIKE BILL, Page 13A



GARY REYES — MERCURY NEWS

Bicyclists ride up Sand Hill Road in Portola Valley on Sunday. An Assembly bill would force drivers to provide a three-foot buffer when passing bicyclists.

### IS THIS A GOOD IDEA? VOTE AND READ THE PROPOSED BILL

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### AMERICA IN IRAQ

## Iraqi soldiers lead in foiling plot to kill Shiites

By Joshua Partlow and Saad Sarhan

Washington Post

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi soldiers, backed by U.S. helicopters, stormed an encampment of hundreds of insurgents hiding among date palm orchards in southern Iraq in an operation Sunday that set off fierce, daylong gun battles during the holiest week for the country's Shiites.

### CLINTON: BUSH MUST GET U.S. OUT OF IRAQ ON HIS WATCH

PAGE 6A

Iraqi security officials said the soldiers killed scores of insurgents while foiling a plot to annihilate the Shiite religious leadership in the revered city of An-Najaf. A U.S. helicopter crashed

during the fighting, killing two soldiers.

The spokesman for Iraqi security forces in An-Najaf, Col. Ali Nomas Jerao, said that 250 suspected insurgents were killed in the fighting, which took place about eight miles northeast of An-Najaf and that 40 people were detained. The U.S. military did not

See IRAQ, Page 8A

### STOCK OPTIONS SCANDAL

## Average worker takes a hit

### TAX BILL AMONG HEADACHES LOOMING FOR RANK-AND-FILE

By Mark Schwanhausser  
Mercury News

There's a largely overlooked class of victims from the stock option backdating scandal: rank-and-file workers.

Across Silicon Valley and the nation, hundreds of thousands of workers who played no role in manipulating options nonetheless could pay a price, from lost stock options and lost investment opportunities to looming tax bills.

Average workers could be slapped with thousands of dollars in back payroll and income taxes for exercising options they later learn were backdated. Employees who exercised tainted options before the backdating scandal erupted in 2006 unwittingly might have triggered a staggering 20 percent tax.

And dozens of companies have imposed indefinite "blackout" periods

See OPTIONS, Page 13A

### IMPACT ON WORKERS

Here are four ways rank-and-file workers could feel the impact if their companies are entangled in the stock option backdating scandal:

- Workers cannot exercise options during company-imposed blackouts, some of which have lasted for months.
- Workers can't buy discounted stock through employee stock purchase plans, or ESPPs.
- Incentive stock options may be stripped of their tax advantages, including some that have already been exercised.
- Workers who received backdated options could face a 20 percent tax penalty and interest charges under new rules designed to curb abuses involving deferred compensation.

Source: Mercury News reporting

## Making state's voice heard in nominations

### CALIFORNIA SETS SIGHTS ON FEBRUARY PRIMARY

By Steven Harmon

MediaNews Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO — The growing likelihood that California will move up its 2008 primary from June to Feb. 5 not only means the state could have a resounding voice in what promises to be a wide open, power-packed presidential contest, but it also could energize voters, boost Latino political clout and spur political reform.

It also threatens to roil the national campaign. It would compress the nomination process into a dizzying five-week period, and force candidates in both parties to dig deep into their war chests to compete in the state's expensive media market.

National political interests, especially the Democratic National Committee, are not fond of the idea because of that

See PRIMARY, Page 4A

## Quake-driven crash shows vulnerability of Asia's link to Net

### REPAIR WORK MAY DELAY PLANS TO LAY MORE CABLE

By John Boudreau

Mercury News

A major earthquake that struck half a world away near Taiwan in late December forced Robert Tung to go shopping for typewriters in Los Angeles.

The quake snapped a half-dozen or more deep-sea fiber-optic cable systems, representing some 90 percent of telecommunications capacity of the region. All across Asia, computer screens froze as access to the outside world was cut. In a keystone, the connected world became unconnected. A month later, Internet service for many users in Asia has yet to be completely restored.

The disaster revealed unseen and often ignored vulnerabilities in this new global Internet village, in which

See CABLE, Page 10A