

HOT OFF THE TICKER

Business Parks completes offering

Glendale-based PS Business Parks Inc. said Friday that it has completed its offering of 3.45 million common shares. The real estate investment trust said the offering, priced at \$46.50 per share, netted proceeds of \$153.6 million. PS Business Parks also sold 383,333 of its common shares to Public Storage for \$17.8 million.

Gambling owner makes \$43M plea deal

The founder of the online gambling site BetOnSports.com pleaded guilty Friday to federal racketeering conspiracy and other charges, concluding years of investigating and prosecuting a case in the complex world of offshore sports gambling. Gary Kaplan, 50, agreed in a plea deal to forfeit \$43.6 million in illegally obtained revenue from his criminal enterprise.

Federal regulators shut down bank

Regulators have shut down Dwelling House Savings and Loan Association, a small bank in Pennsylvania, increasing to 73 the number of federally insured banks that have failed this year. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. was appointed receiver of the failed thrift. The FDIC also took over failed IndyMac Bank last year, before it OneWest Bank Group LLC acquired it.

BUSINESS

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ken LLOYD

Snap up promotion that others turn down

Q. I was recently passed over for promotion to a job that was offered to the manager who is immediately below the person who is leaving. This manager keeps his door closed most of the time so he can play video games, and I'm the one who helps his employees as well as my own. I have been here longer and have more education, and I am familiar with every aspect of the department. If he turns down the position, I think it will be offered to be. I am tempted to turn it down because I don't want to be an afterthought. What do you suggest?

A. While it can make sense to promote a manager into an open position that his own manager is vacating, such a move is nonsense if the individual being promoted is marginally skilled. Maintaining a closed-door policy for any reason, let alone for the purpose of playing video games, clearly merits the marginal rating.

There are also questions about the senior managers who made this decision in the first place. Today's best managers spend time wandering around; and if these senior managers were doing so, they would have observed that you have been playing a managerial role while the person they want to promote has been playing games.

If the selected manager turns down this promotion, you should grab it. This promotion would be a break for you, and it sounds like it would be a break for the company, too.

Q. I came up with a creative idea a couple of months ago and told my manager, who dismissed it as unnecessary. Then, at a meeting last week, he said another employee had come to him with this same idea and that it should be implemented. I reminded my manager that I'd had the idea first, but he simply ignored my comment and never offered an explanation. Is there anything I should do?

A. Employees should be treated with respect and trust by their manager, and yours has fallen short in both of these categories.

You should meet with him and, using a questioning mode, try to find out why he initially rejected your idea. Prior to this meeting, ask yourself whether circumstances have changed significantly since you presented your idea so that the idea is now more timely and significant?

As for the future, if you have a great idea, carefully document it and follow-up on it. And you should also be careful in dealing with this manager.

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Viable alternatives

FDIC chairwoman: Parts of financial overhaul won't fly

By Daniel Wagner
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. Chairwoman Sheila Bair is pushing back against key elements of the Obama administration's financial overhaul plan, saying they wouldn't survive in Congress and calling her own alternatives more viable.

Bair said Congress won't approve two major parts of the package: Expanding the Federal Reserve's authority to regulate the largest financial companies and giving a proposed new consumer protection agency examination and enforcement powers over banks.

Such authority now belongs to her agency and other bank regulators.



The Associated Press

FDIC Chairwoman Sheila Bair said alternatives she has backed would "provide a framework that can actually get through Congress."

"There's a lot of resistance from a lot of different quarters to a lot of the things the administration has submitted," Bair told the AP Thurs-

day. "That is a reality the administration needs to deal with."

Bair said alternatives she has backed would "provide a framework that can actually get through Congress." Her ideas include empowering a new agency to protect consumers from abusive mortgage and credit card products — but having bank supervisors enforce those rules.

Her statements highlight Treasury's uphill struggle to sell the administration's proposed financial overhaul to Congress and the public. Since the plan was rolled out in June, industry groups have balked at rules they say will burden companies and raise borrowers' costs. Bank industry lobbyists are lead-

ing the charge against major parts of the plan.

Congress has objected to concentrating more power in the Fed. Critics note that the central bank failed to properly use its consumer protection authority before the crisis erupted.

Bair and other federal regulators have voiced their own opposition to parts of the plan, in what some Obama officials have dismissed as efforts to protect their turf. Bair says she's raising legitimate policy questions. As head of an independent regulatory agency, she said she has a duty to tell Congress her opinion.

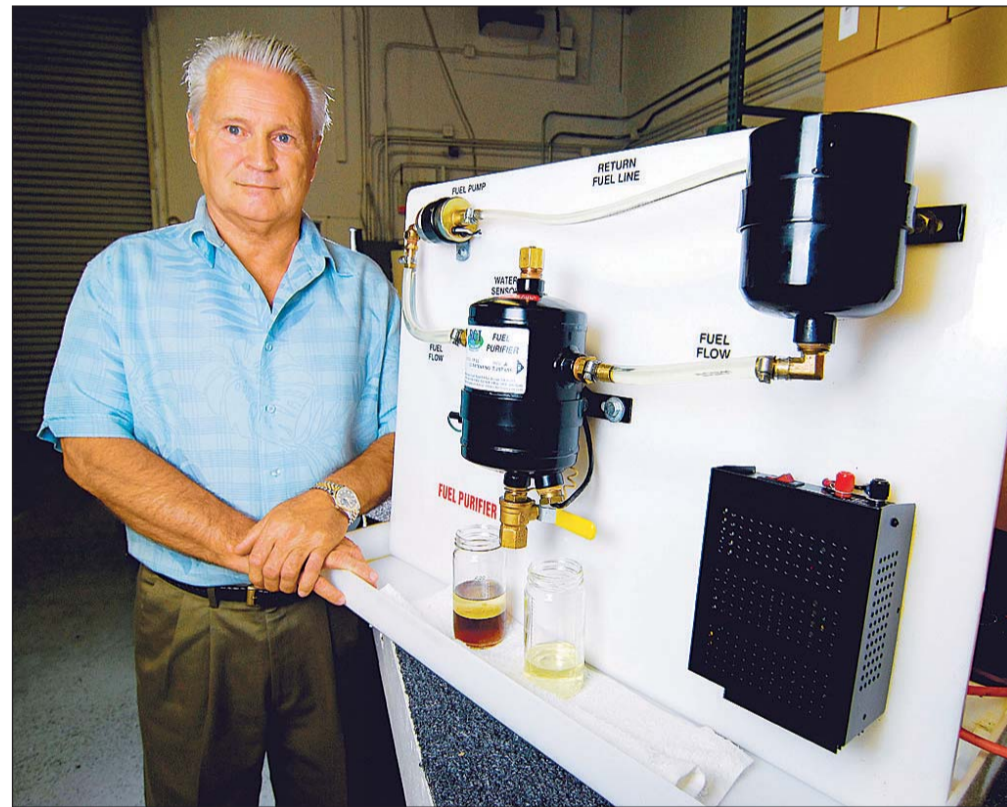
Amid concerns the plan is faltering, top Treasury officials have defended it in a

series of interviews this week. They have insisted the plan is on track and have played down differences among regulators.

"What's important is, at the end of the day, that we all keep our eyes on the prize, make sure we're all pointed toward comprehensive reform of the financial services sector," Deputy Treasury Secretary Neal Wolin told the AP in a separate interview.

He said it's not surprising "that in understandable Washington style, (regulators) defend their own institutions."

Bair's view that the administration plan can't pass Congress could become "a self-fulfilling prophecy," Wolin said.



Frank Perez Correspondent

San Dimas-based RCI Technologies President Robert Randle's company supplies businesses with sturdy metal fuel filters that don't have to be replaced, versus conventional filters that are fiber-based and have to be changed routinely.

Filter fueling growth

San Dimas company's list of clients expands

By Matt Wrye Staff Writer

Robert Randle is convinced he's found the "permanent solution" to purifying diesel fuel, whether it's for trucks, trains, boats, buses, planes, generators or commercial and industrial needs.

With his tiny San Dimas-based company entering a growth phase, it seems the president of RCI Technologies is on to something big.

The company supplies businesses with sturdy metal fuel filters that don't have to be replaced, versus conventional filters that are fiber-based and have to be changed routinely.

"With a conventional filter, when you service it, about 80 percent that you throw away is good fuel," Randle said. "With our filters, about 80 percent is contaminated. We're getting all the bad stuff."

Picture a hospital, a big hotel or a multi-level corporate office. Most of them have backup power generators in the basement and the 12,000-gallon to 24,000-gallon emergency fuel tank that goes with it, Randle says.

Weatherization causes dirt and water to show up in the fuel, sometimes causing sulfuric acid to form.

RCI Technologies

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The fuel has to be cleaned during routine maintenance.

Replaceable filters are inexpensive — but you pay for what you get, Randle said. His filters range from \$400 to \$6,000, depending on their size.

He said several new clients are discovering the benefits of his metal filters.

No dismantling is required. Clients simply turn the spigot at the bottom of the purifying tank and drain out the impurities.

"You can service my purifiers in less than two minutes," Randle said.

RCI, he says, is doing surprisingly well amid the recession. A couple of years ago, a small whiteboard with customer orders hung on Randle's wall.

"Did you see all the names on it?" said administrative assistant Marisa Hernandez while standing outside Randle's office and referring to a new whiteboard. "I had to buy a bigger one."

Randle remembers how naysayers jabbed at his fuel purification ideas 15 years ago, when he started the business.

"Everyone told me I was crazy," Randle said. "They said, 'You can't have a business without (replaceable) parts to stir up recurring business.' I said, 'I don't want widgets — I want to make a tool to do the job.'"

The company is staying busy selling to military bases, hospitals, hotels, county and city agencies, manufacturers, electricity providers, and a variety of other businesses that use and store fuel.

There's an environmentally friendly component to RCI, too.

The Green Clean Institute — a green certification research organization — certified the company's fuel filter product in November along with its fuel recirculating systems product, which keeps storage fuel fluid and lubricated, according to a news release.

Both products reduce carbon emissions by purifying fuel.

Given the success of RCI's products, Randle hopes to add employees to his small staff soon.

"Here's something that'll last 20 years," he said about his filter. "It's a cheap, cheap investment."

China trade ruling to benefit US

By Ryan Nakashima
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — American companies counting on a favorable trade ruling against China to boost sales of CDs, DVDs, books and video games will need a crackdown on rampant piracy before they can reap big benefits.

Chinese incomes are lower than in the United States, and the quality of pirated entertainment there is quite good, making legal goods a tougher sell.

U.S. entertainment and media companies hope a World Trade Organization decision this week requiring Beijing to lower import barriers will make more legal products available in China, and perhaps diminish demand for pirated goods.

But there's a long way to go in a country where a pirated DVD is easily available for a third of the price of a movie ticket — often before the movie opens in Asian cinemas.

"I don't care whether it's pirated or legitimate so long as they look good and are convenient," said Linda Nie, 30, a researcher at a Beijing university who recently bought a pirated Chinese-language edition of Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat."

She said 70 percent of her books and DVDs at home are pirated. "The pirate stuff is good quality and well-wrapped. It's so easy to get. It's available everywhere."

The Chinese can also easily access music and video for free through file-sharing sites, particularly when they have high-speed broadband connections, as many Chinese now do.

The WTO rejected Beijing's policy forcing U.S. media producers to route business through state-owned companies. But China is considering an appeal, and it may ultimately take the threat of sanctions to truly open the world's largest marketplace to American entertainment.

The Chinese import restrictions have been blamed for making fewer legal goods available and thus helping pirates profit and proliferate.

"Consumers buy pirate copies maybe because it's very slow for legitimate copies to enter the Chinese market," said Xiao Wei, manager of the FAB music and movie store in Beijing. "For example, pirate copies of the movie 'Slumdog Millionaire' were available right after it won the Oscar award, but we just started to sell the legitimate copies recently, half a year later."

Trade groups want Beijing to allow prosecution of those who sell small quantities of pirated goods and make enforcement more consistent, instead of relying on periodic crackdowns and going easy on violators the rest of the time.

China has a population of 1.3 billion, but sales of legal entertainment products have been relatively small. Consider music: China has nearly 30 times more people than South Korea, but sales are 40 percent smaller, at about \$82 million last year, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.