Staff Sgt. Keith Cochran, 37, of Providence, with his mother, Lynn Corrigan, of Pawtucket, right, and with daughters Kayla, 13, and Shalyn, 6, at the sendoff, in Warren for members of the 169th Military Police Company.

Tom Gralish, B4

PROVIDENCE — Governor Carcieri has said that Rhode Island law gives judges so much discretion that mandatory minimum laws are no longer needed. But Carcieri says the Rhode Island law needs judges to consider drug treatment and prevention.

Brian M. McGarry, J3

RI. UNIT BOUND FOR IRAQ

Two fronts will pass through the area today, bringing showers and thunderstorms.

Forecast, G2

Health care looms as major campaign issue

Presidential candidates from both parties acknowledge the problems — rising costs, the uninsured — and the political urgency.

By ROBIN TONER

WASHINGTON — There is no better measure of the power of the health-care issue than this: Eighteen months before Election Day, presidential candidates at both parties are promising to overhaul the system and cover more — if not all — of the 47 million people without insurance.

"We’re shocked. We’re disappointed," said Sen. John M. McCain Jr., Republican of Arizona, yesterday to 300 friends and family members at a winding- off ceremony at Kirkham Middle School on the end of the deployment.

"You watch each others’ backs," Maj. Gen. Robert V. Bruz, commander of the Rhode Island National Guard, said. "As long as you take care of each other, your mission will be complete."

As he and other Guard officers spoke, audience members wiped their eyes. Children squealed and babies cried.

It was a scene that had been duplicated in small towns across America. Yesterday’s ceremony was well-attended.

The soldiers of the 169th are part the last members of the Rhode Island National Guard to be deployed to Iraq. Eight members of the 16th Press Corp are on their way. One-hundred thirty-two members of the 161st Transportation Company are already in Iraq. In all, 3,800 men and women in the Rhode Island National Guard have done or are doing tours in Iraq.

DEPLOY, A4

Bill eliminating minimum drug sentences vetoed

The measure is one of 36 passed by the General Assembly that are rejected by Governor Carcieri.

By ELIZABETH AUGER

PROVIDENCE — Governor Carcieri vetoed a bill that would have eliminated the mandatory minimum drug sentences.

The General Assembly passed the bill in the last week of the legislative session, hoping to ease growing working at the Adult Correctional Institutions and to give judges discretion to sentence offenders to drug treatment, rather than prison time.

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DEPLOY, A4

The psychiatric hospital for children will build a $31 million facility beside its building in East Providence.

Bradley Hospital plans to begin construction of the new psychiatric hospital for children, in East Providence, will replace its aging Depression-era building with a new hospital featuring single rooms for every patient, more space for adolescents and the flexibility to handle surgery. The old hospital could be cleaned up to make it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Last week, the hospital received approval from the Federal Department of Health to move forward with its $31 million project. Construction

Rebuilding plan OK’d for Bradley Hospital

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Bradley, A7

Frieda Squires, B1

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