

**Weather Corner**



**The forecast**

**Tonight** — Mostly clear with a low around 25. South wind between 10 and 15 mph. **Friday** — Mostly sunny with a high near 50. South wind between 10 and 15 mph. **Friday night** — A 40 percent chance of showers after midnight. Partly cloudy with a low around 31. South wind 5 to 15 mph becoming north. **Saturday** — Rain and snow likely, becoming all snow after noon. Areas of blowing snow after noon. Mostly cloudy with a high near 38. Windy, with a north wind between 20 and 30 mph with gusts as high as 40 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent. **Saturday night** — Areas of blowing snow and a chance of snow mainly before midnight. Partly cloudy and windy with a low around 21. Chance of precipitation is 40 percent. **Sunday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 42. **Sunday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 23. **Monday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 43. **Temperatures** Wednesday's high, 44 Low this morning, 25 Records for this date, 76 in 1943, -4 in 1914 Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00 February's precipitation, 0.61 A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

**Briefly**

**Prairie Land Food delivery Saturday**

Prairie Land Food delivery is at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at the Sacred Heart School gym. There are a few food packages available for \$20.50 plus two hours of volunteer services. Call 460-8640 to order.

**Simulcast scheduled Saturday**

Saturday, author and Bible teacher Beth Moore will speak to tens of thousands of women across North America in a live satellite simulcast based on her new book "Get Out of That Pit."

Colby Wesleyan Church is hosting this live international simulcast event starting at 8:30 a.m. For ticket information, contact Colby Wesleyan Church, 320 W. Pine in Colby, or telephone 785-462-8391.

**Square dance Saturday**

The Golden Buckle Square Dance Club is holding a square dance at 8 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building.

**Sacred Heart carnival Sunday**

The Sacred Heart School calendar will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday at the school, 1150 W. Sixth St.

The day will include food, games, prizes and a raffle. The Chrysler "Drive for the Kids" will be held at the same time. All are welcome.

**Remote control car races Sunday**

First Baptist Church of Colby, 615 W. Webster, is holding remote control car races Sunday at the church from 2 to 5 p.m.

**College Board meets Monday**

The Colby Community College board of trustees will meet at 5 p.m., Monday, in the board room of Thomas Hall.

Agenda items include calling for an election to issue certificates of participation; disposal of surplus equipment; approving safe deposit boxes; and reports from president and trustees.

For questions, call 462-3984.

**Colby Diplomat luncheon scheduled**

The Colby Diplomats invite the ladies of the community to the group's annual spring luncheon and a "light-hearted" look at fashion.

The event is from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, March 7 at Colby Country Club. Reservations must be made by Friday, and can be made by calling the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401.

**4-H County Club Days coming up**

All Thomas County youth aged 7 to 19 are encouraged to participate in County Club Days at 5 p.m. Friday, March 16 at Sacred Heart School in Colby.

Youth have the opportunity to showcase their talents in public speaking and presentations, dances, skits, piano, vocal, reading and more.

To register, or for more information, call the Thomas County Extension Office at 460-4582. Registration deadline is Friday, March 9.

**Senators vow to fight Bush administration farm bill cuts**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Two members of the U.S. Senate's agriculture committee vow to fight proposed cuts in farm subsidies, despite resistance from urban lawmakers and other countries.

"The fact is, there are fewer and fewer members of Congress representing rural states or districts that depend on an agriculturally based economy, not to mention fewer and fewer members of Congress that actually have a direct relationship with production agriculture," said Arkansas Sen. Blanche Lincoln.

Lincoln, a farmer's daughter, and Georgia Sen. Saxby Chambliss, whose son-in-law is a farmer, spoke Wednesday at a farm bill forum sponsored by the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public

Service.

Chambliss, the ranking Republican on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, said the renewal of the farm bill might entail a battle with the Bush administration, but that Congress ultimately will decide what to fund.

The current farm bill, written in 2002, expires Sept. 30. A proposal released last month by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns would cut agriculture spending by \$18 billion over the next five years.

The Bush administration's plan would cost \$87.3 billion over the next five years, not counting food stamps and other nutrition programs, compared to \$105 billion spent on farm programs over the past five years.

Most payments go to growers of five major crops — corn, soybeans, wheat, rice and cotton.

Lincoln said many nations oppose subsidies for U.S. farmers, arguing that they make trade between countries unfair. Lincoln said the U.S. market is open to foreign agricultural goods, but that "changes must occur in places other than just the United States."

The U.S. needs to deal with trade issues with foreign countries before cutting subsidies to farmers, Lincoln said. Otherwise, the U.S. would have no leverage in trade negotiations, she said.

Under the Bush proposal, anyone making more than \$200,000 in adjusted gross income wouldn't be eligible for farm payments. The cap

is now set at \$2.5 million.

Cecil Williams, former executive vice president for the Agricultural Council of Arkansas, said the administration's "idiotic proposal" to lower the income cap "would kill this area up and down the Mississippi River."

Chambliss and Lincoln said they will fight moves to lower the income cap, noting that crops grown in the South cost more to produce than other commodities.

"Two hundred thousand dollars to the average guy is a lot of money," Chambliss said. "But what we in agriculture know is, \$200,000 in adjusted gross income means once you get to that point, then you've got to pay for that \$250,000 combine, that \$100,000 tractor that

you've got to have to operate your facilities."

Chambliss said reducing the income cap was "intended to strike at Southeastern agriculture."

"I don't know of a farmer in Georgia that has 500 acres in cultivation that probably wouldn't have hit that threshold, and that's a small farm in Arkansas or Georgia. Unfortunately, some of these policymakers have no concept of what it's like when you're out there having to get dirt under your fingernails and driving a tractor."

"We have to remind these policymakers and those bureaucrats sometimes that there are real people out there farming every single day that have to face these practical problems."

**Consensus growing for early presidential primary in Kansas**

TOPEKA (AP) — With growing agreement among legislators that Kansas ought to hold a presidential primary in early February 2008, a bill aimed at making it possible won first-round approval Wednesday in

the Senate.

The measure would rewrite election laws to give Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh more flexibility in choosing a date for the election. The bill also would fix a flaw in a law

that allows Thornburgh to set a date but says the filing deadline for the primary is Feb. 12, 2008.

Senators advanced the measure on a voice vote, setting up a final vote Thursday to determine whether it goes to the House, where it could face problems. Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls, opposes a primary because of its \$2 million cost.

"Since I care a lot about health care, would that money, that couple of million dollars, be better spent making sure that more families have health insurance?" he said.

The push for a primary is occurring because the 2008 presidential race will be open and U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas wants to be the Republican nominee.

Kansas had primaries in 1980 and 1992 on the first Tuesday in April, a date legislators now agree is too late to influence the races for the Democratic and Republican nominations. In other years, the parties have held caucuses because the Legislature canceled the primaries. At stake are six electoral votes.

The date most often mentioned is Feb. 5, a week after South Carolina holds its primary. Both national parties have agreed that they won't recognize the results of any primaries or caucuses held before South Carolina's, except for Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucuses on Jan. 14 and New Hampshire's primary.

"Kansas has a real chance to have some impact," said Senate Elections and Local Government Committee Chairman Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler. "We'll have it Feb. 5 or before — I'm convinced of that."

Thornburgh has until Nov. 1 to pick a date for the election, and spokesman Jesse Borjon said he plans to appoint a committee next week to advise him. The bill says Thornburgh must pick a date used by at least three other states, down from five in the law.

"Passage of this legislation puts Kansans one step closer to having a voice in the presidential selection process," Thornburgh said in a statement.

The only hitch was Sen. David Haley's desire to discuss how the president is chosen during the general election.

Haley, D-Kansas City, offered an amendment to bring Kansas into a compact with other states to ensure that they automatically give the most votes in the Electoral College to the winner of the popular vote.

But his amendment died on a voice vote. Huelskamp, who holds a doctoral degree in political sci-

ence, said the founders concluded, "The Electoral College is a great protection for small states like Kansas."

The 1980 primary was an effort to increase participation by Kansans in the nominating process, allowing tens of thousands of people to participate, rather than a few thousand in caucuses.

But it also was an experiment not tried again until 1992, and the state canceled primaries scheduled for 1996, 2000 and 2004, either because lawmakers didn't think the races were competitive enough or because they felt the state couldn't afford the cost.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius included \$2 million in her proposed budget for the primary. A House Appropriations subcommittee approved the money — but added a provision saying it couldn't be spent unless the election were held on or before Feb. 5.

"If we were going to spend it, it made sense to have the primary early enough that it made a difference," said Rep. Kevin Yoder, R-Overland Park, the subcommittee's chairman.

**Payday lenders under fire from states**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Under pressure from lawmakers and consumer groups, the payday lending industry on Wednesday announced changes to educate borrowers and help customers who have trouble making payments on short-term loans.

Consumer advocates called the move a public relations gimmick aimed at discouraging state legislatures and Congress from limiting the annual interest rates on payday loans, which can exceed 400 percent.

Payday lenders offer quick cash advances — for a fee — that customers must repay once they receive their next paycheck. Borrowers who cannot repay the loan by the next payday often "roll over" the loan repeatedly, leading to more charges that can quickly add up and lead to a cycle of debt.

"We've heard the concerns raised about our industry by policy makers and customers and by responsible consumer groups," said Darrin Andersen, president of the Commu-

nity Financial Services Association of America, a trade association that represents about half the payday lending stores.

The biggest change would give customers more time to pay back a loan with no financial penalty. This "extended payment plan" would be available at least once a year and provide borrowers between two and four extra months to pay off loans.

Other changes include a \$10 million national ad campaign warning that payday loans are not a long-term financial solution and a ban on ads that promote payday advances for "frivolous purposes" like vacations.

Consumer watchdogs remained skeptical.

"This does not solve the problem of triple-digit interest rate payday lending that traps borrowers and leads to repeat borrowing," said Jean Ann Fox, consumer protection director for the Consumer Federation of America.

Fox said the extended payment plan does not lower the cost of loans

or make loan repayment any more affordable. She accused the industry of trying to shift attention away from the high loan rates to distract lawmakers from enacting meaningful reform.

The industry is trying to stay one step ahead of those who want to restrict payday lending practices. At least 12 states prohibit triple-digit rates on payday loans, a cap that effectively bans payday lending, according to the Consumer Federation of America. Dozens of other states are also considering legislation to crack down on payday lenders.

A bill pending in the Missouri House would cap annual interest rates on payday loans at 36 percent and require lenders to do a better job of notifying borrowers about the terms of the loans.

But payday lenders say they couldn't make a profit under the cap because it would limit the amount of money lenders could charge on the typical two-week loans to \$1.38 for each \$100-amount borrowed.

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