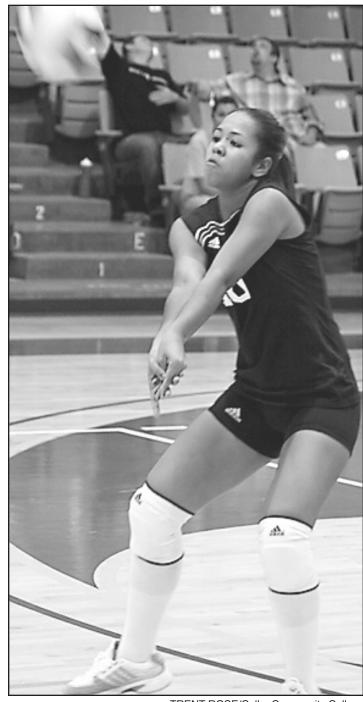
Getting ready



TRENT ROSE/Colby Community College

Jessica Merino of Belen, New Mexico, a Colby Community College freshman, goes for the spike against Dodge City during a scrimmage in Garden City last week.

## States push laws for paid sick days

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) -For school bus driver Jamille pushing the issue since 1993, Aine, a cold is more than an in- when the Family and Medical can't shake the bug, he may not be up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave a able to pay his bills.

ers in 12 states - including Cali- ocrats control the White House fornia, Connecticut, Minnesota and Congress after the November

Workers advocates' have been convenience. His employer does Leave Act was signed into law, not offer paid sick days, so if he requiring employers to provide year. While federal legislation was Some 46 million U.S. workers first proposed in 2004, it may have lack paid sick days, but lawmak-a shot at passing next year if Dem-

## State warns of insurance imposters

employees of a Kansas insurance Kansans to be wary and diligent agency are seeking Social Secu- in reporting any fraudulent inrity numbers from policyholders in the latest scam reported to the Kansas Insurance Department's Anti-Fraud Division.

A southern Kansas insurance tens of billions of dollars." agency recently reported that conmiddle of the night, with the scam by the agency. Social Security numbers.

surance activity," Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of Insurance, said. "Each year, insurance fraud costs companies and consumers alike

Local law enforcement officials sumers had received calls in the were quickly notified of the scam

artist using the agency name, to In order to better identify and retell them their accounts needed to duce incidents of insurance fraud ment; and "confirm" the company be renewed and asking for their – and, most importantly, protect or agent offering insurance is leconsumers – the Kansas Insurance gitimate and licensed in the state.

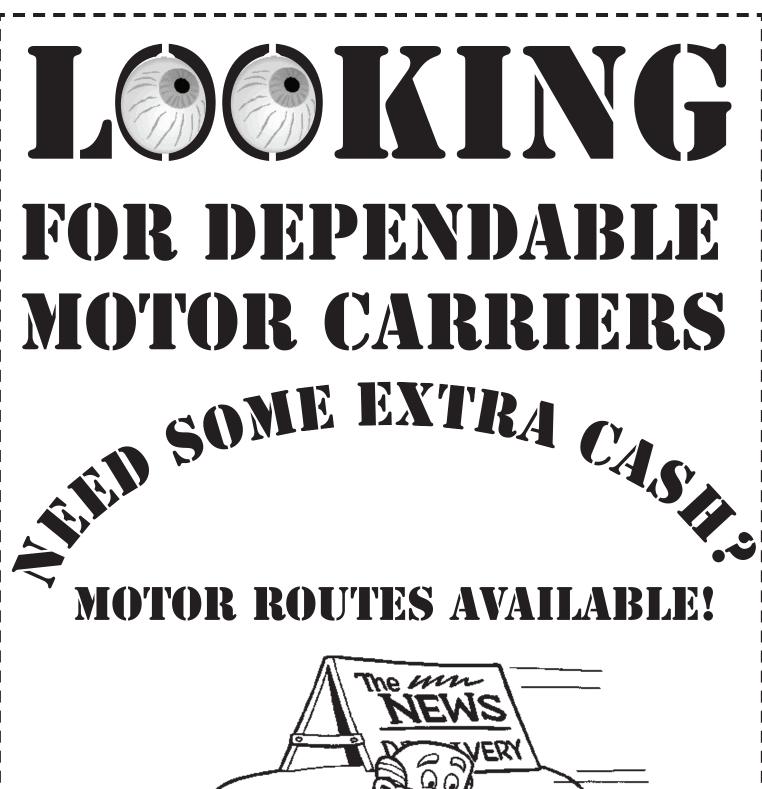
sociation of

Insurance Commissioners offer these additional tips for identifying and responding to any suspicious insurance activity.

• Consumers are urged to follow the "Stop. Call. Confirm." procedure. "Stop" before signing any paperwork, writing a check, or giving out personal information; "call" your state insurance depart-

TOPEKA - Impostors posing as "The scam points out the need for Department and the National As- • Fake insurance companies often defraud consumers by collecting premiums for bogus policies with no intention of paying claims. These "companies" might offer policies at costs that are significantly lower than competitors' prices, or they might be difficult to reach by phone – if there is a listed phone number at all.

Consumers should check in advance to verify they are dealing with a legitimate, licensed insurer before signing any application for a policy.



posed legislation in the past year Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn. that would require businesses to provide them.

Healthy Families, an advocacy group pushing a November ballot initiative that would require employers to offer paid sick days, said the effort picked up steam in said. Columbus and other state capitals stalled.

"This is the next frontier in assuring workplaces are safe," said Kate Kahan, director of the work and family program at the Washington-based National Partnership for Women & Families, which lobbies on paid sick leave and other workplace and health care issues.

Businesses - especially small companies — argue that forcing them to offer paid sick days hinders their ability to provide a flexible array of benefits, such as a mix of vacation and personal days that also may be used by employees when they are sick. And they say it's a costly new mandate for businesses already struggling through a contracting economy.

Nearly all large companies already offer paid sick leave to at least some of their workers, but require them to expand the benefit.

Kahan and other workers' advocates believe paid sick time should be an employment standard, like the federal minimum wage.

Advocates say the benefit is particularly needed for employees who handle food or work with children.

Aine, who drives Stamford stuto have the financial flexibility to stay home when he's sick.

people you drive," he said.

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 43 percent of the private industry labor force worked in 2007 without paid sick time, a group primarily made up businesses.

and West Virginia – have pro- elections, said the bill's sponsor,

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's largest retailer, gives paid Dale Butland of Ohioans for sick days to employees who work more than 34 hours a week. The company has not taken a position on the proposed federal law, spokeswoman E.R. Anderson

"We feel our health benefits and because federal legislation has sick leave benefits are competitive, and we feel good about it," she said.

Karen Kerrigan, president of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council, an Oakton, Va.-based lobbying group with 70,000 members nationwide, said the costs of providing paid sick days are particularly difficult for her constituents. The new requirement would add to already high taxes and costly workers' compensation, she said.

"This is a piling-on measure," she said.

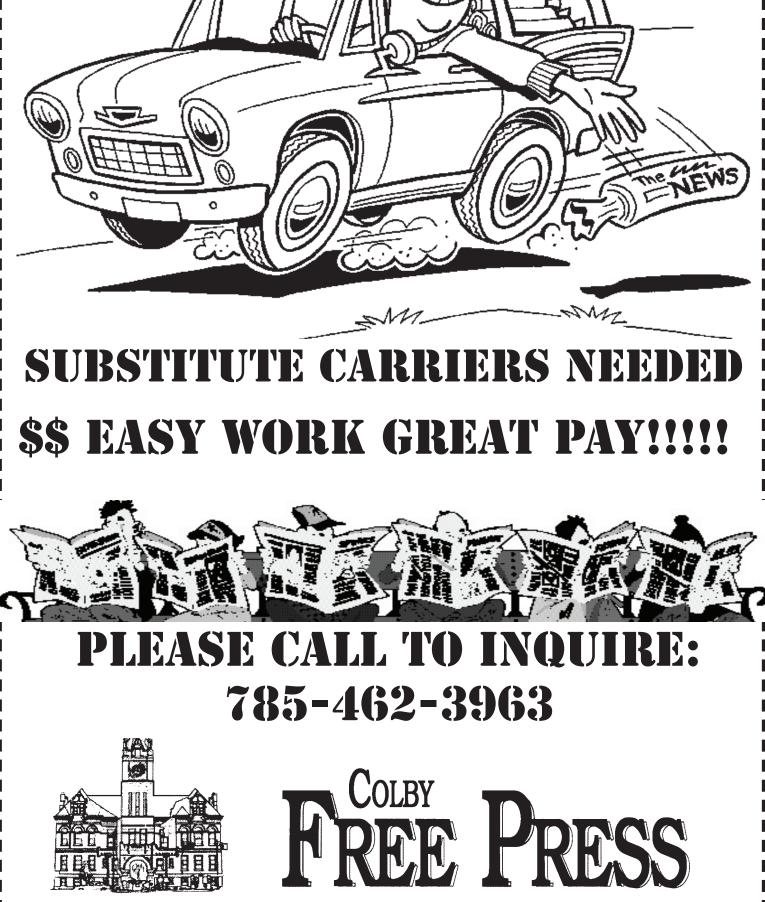
Most jobs that offer paid sick time have higher salaries and attract educated, skilled workers. About 80 percent of managementlevel workers have paid sick time, while 39 percent of service workers get the benefit, the U.S. Department of Labor says.

"Very often these are the jobs state and federal mandates could where people are living very close to the bone," said Debra Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women & Families. "Workers are sometimes putting their jobs on the line because they have a sick child or are sick."

"If we live in a society where all adults are working then we need to have a workplace to accommodate that reality," she said.

Paid sick days are already law dents ages of 3 to 17 to school, cit- in Washington, D.C., where emed that as a reason he would like ployees earn days off based on the number of hours worked and the size of the business, and in "It's not just for me, but for the San Francisco, which requires one hour sick leave for every 30 hours worked.

Proposed federal legislation would provide workers with seven days of paid sick leave a year for employees who work 30 or more of low-paid employees at small hours a week. The benefit would be prorated for part-time workers.



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