



Senate bill could save overnight mail

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
nt.betz@nwkansas.com

A bill passed Wednesday by the U.S. Senate could delay any decision to move sorting of the Colby area's mail out of state for months, if not longer, and make it more difficult for the U.S. Postal Service to close small post offices and mail-handling facilities.

The 21st Century Postal Service Act passed on a 62-37 vote Wednesday af-

ternoon with the support of a bipartisan coalition including Kansas Sens. Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts.

The bill includes provisions, which if it becomes law, could at least delay any changes to mail-sorting plants. The area's mail now is worked overnight in Salina, but under plans announced by the Postal Service last year, could be moved to North Platte, Neb., with a delay of one to two days. That would end overnight delivery of First Class mail within the service area of a "sectional center facility"

such as Colby's post office.

The Senate bill would require the Postal Service to redo its studies of closing mail plants like the one here, said Tonda Rush, chief executive officer of the National Newspaper Association, and an expert on postal law. That alone could take several months to a year. Another provision provides a three-year moratorium on changing service standards and a two-year delay on plans to end Saturday mail delivery.

That might put the shift to North Platte on hold even longer, according to Sen.

Moran's office. The Postal Regulatory Commission could review any decision to change mail handling. No changes could be made in any event until after this year's elections in states, such as Kansas, which allow mail balloting.

The Senate worked through 39 amendments beginning Tuesday and finishing Wednesday evening, then approving the final version and sent it to the House of Representatives, where it faces an uncertain future at best. The conservative, Republican-dominated House seems to

be aiming more to remake the struggling Postal Service rather than help it. No action is expected before the end of the current moratorium on closing post offices and sorting plants.

The Senate bill would give the service some flexibility in solving its financial problems, but seeks to preserve many of the rural post offices and mail-processing centers which otherwise might be closed after the self-imposed moratorium ends

See "SENATE," Page 2

Woman gets 13-year term for chase, shots

A California woman was sentenced to more than 13 years in prison in Sherman County District Court on Thursday, bringing to an end more than a year of proceedings against two people who led law enforcement officers on a high-speed chase through Sherman and Thomas counties last year.

Piper Lacey Stout-Briese, 31, Palmdale, Calif., was sentenced to 161 months - 13.4 years - in the Kansas Department of Corrections by Sherman County District Judge Scott Showalter. She was charged with two counts of attempted second-degree murder for shooting at Kansas Highway Patrol troopers during a chase on Jan. 16, 2011.

Stout-Briese and Anthony Patrick, 31, of Lancaster, Calif., had been parked at the Interstate 70 rest area east of Kanorado in a Toyota Scion when they were ap-

proached by Trooper Perry Frey. Frey testified he had run the car's license plate, which came back as registered to a Dodge pickup.

Patrick gave Frey a false name, and when the trooper asked for his license and registration, Patrick started the engine and sped off east on I-70.

Frey radioed for help. Sherman County Sheriff's Deputy Asa Stiles responded, setting up "stop sticks" - devices put on the road to deflate tires - at the west Goodland exit, but Patrick swerved around them, continuing east with Frey and two deputies following at speeds up to 90 mph.

As the chase continued, Stout-Briese began firing a .22-caliber rifle out of the passenger window at Frey, hitting his patrol car. Troopers put down more stop sticks at

See "CHASE," Page 2

Sons of Legion want to put flags in yards

The Colby Sons of the American Legion are accepting requests from people who would like the group to place three-foot-by-five-foot American flags in their yards for patriotic holidays.

Flags will be put up and taken down for Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Patriots Day and, weather permitting, Veterans Day.

The deadline to sign a contract is Saturday, May 19, said Tracey Galli. A donation of \$25, is suggested. Blank contracts are being printed as an advertisement the Colby Free Press.

Proceeds from the project go to support Honor Flights for World War II veterans, provide Christmas presents for veterans in area nursing homes and to support Genesis-Thomas County food bank, the Child Welfare Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Bibles for Troops, a World War II Veterans Memorial Sign for U.S. 24, the annual Run for the Wall and Legion post improvements.

The Sons also are planning for a memorial monument for veterans at Beulah Cemetery in Colby, and part of fund-raising proceeds will go to help build that monument.



SHARON FRIEDLANDER/Colby Free Press

Fourth graders learn about conservation

Fourth graders from eight counties came to town on Wednesday for a fun day filled with interesting facts at the fifth annual Kids Conservation Roundup at the Community Building.

Students listened to presentations on reptiles, skins and skulls, prairie animals, soil tunnels, farm safety, pollinators, rangeland water problems and stream banks.

Dominic Sierra, Oakley, and a girl (above) listened as Matt Barnes from the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service in Decatur County explained all about earthworms. Students got hands on with

the worms, much to the chagrin of some. Ew!

Ted Houser (left in right photo) of the Wallace County conservation office and Matt Palmquist, of the Sheridan County office taught students about rangeland and native prairie grasses.

The experts asked questions and handed out information at each station. The students excitedly answered the instructors and ask questions of their own.

This annual program is put on by the Northwest Kansas Conservation and Environmental Alliance.



Business After 5



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Kenny Bixenman got some veggies from the buffet at a Business After 5 affair last week at Sunflower Bank in downtown Colby. Cheryl Edmundson (center) and Susan Orr were helping people get some goodies during the event, put on by the bank for the Colby-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

Spring cleanup coming soon

The City of Colby and the Thomas County commissioners have joined again to sponsor the annual citywide-countywide Cleanup Week from Monday to Friday, May 7 to 11.

Deadline to arrange a pickup of extra loads and large items is noon next Friday. Call the city office at 460-4410 to schedule a day.

The city is asking service clubs and church groups to volunteer to clean up public areas, including parks, ballfields and all roadsides and entrances to town.

Individuals and businesses are encouraged to make an extra effort to spruce up their yards and share in

the pride of having a clean city and county.

Anyone willing to help the elderly and infirm and other who can't move their own junk should call Jo Strange at the city office, 460-4410, and leave your name. People who need help should also call that number to be matched up with volunteers.

City crews will follow the regular scheduled routes for yard waste and trash pickup, but other crews will be available to handle extra trash and large items for residential customers only. Owners of businesses and

See "CLEANUP," Page 2

New maps leave 40th in bad shape

By John Milburn
The Associated Press

TOPEKA - A group of lawmakers endorsed new maps for Kansas Senate districts today, setting the stage for a vote next week as the deadline for approving the maps grows closer.

The Senate map includes a controversial proposal to stretch the 17-county 40th district around Colby into the eastern half of Kansas.

The committee endorsed the new districts, along with new lines for the 10 state Board of Education seats. The measure also includes changes already approved by the Kansas House to its 125 districts. Three committee members voted against the map, led by Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, who criticized how western Kansas was divided up.

The Grinnell Republican represents the 40th District of northwest Kansas, the largest in the state in numbers of counties and square miles. The map endorsed

today makes that worse, collapsing a district now held by Democrat Sen. Allan Schmidt of Hays and giving Ostmeyer more land to cover.

"This committee's got to be kidding me," he said, noting that it would take more than three hours to get from the proposed western boundary with Colorado to the

See "MAPS," Page 2

