



Trooper joins Highway Patrol

By Sam Dieter
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A new trooper has joined the Kansas Highway Patrol in Thomas County and will be a full-time officer by early September.

that Colby had been his first choice as an assignment after graduating from the academy.
'I worked in Hays,' he said. 'I wanted to move out west, and Colby is a nice town.'

cer Tod Hileman. A total of seven troopers live in the county, and three are assigned to specialty units.
He was part of a class of 16 who graduated from the patrol training academy in Salina on June 9.

Kahle's class was the first in about three years. The patrol had been on a hiring freeze during that time.
Kahle said he will be working in Thomas County for about 50 working days as a trainee.
He will ride with a training officer while performing traffic stops and all the other normal duties of

a trooper.
'I'm ready to be out in the field,' he said. 'I chose to be a trooper because of the name that it carries and the respect in the community.'



Benjamin Kahle

Candidate to compete against friend

By Kevin Bottrell
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Ward Cassidy of St. Francis never wanted to be running for the House of Representatives against his friend Rick Billinger of Goodland, but after being informed of the federal court's redistricting decision, he decided to keep running.

The redistricting decision created many districts with no incumbents and no one filed for election. Political parties had to scramble to find enough candidates to fill the ballots in the three days before the filing deadline. All told, Cassidy said he expects there will be about 50 new legislators at the next session. With so many new faces, Cassidy said that even with only one term under his belt, he'll still be in a position to have influence.

Cassidy said that ability to make a difference is what drove him to continue his campaign. Cassidy served on the powerful House Appropriations Committee, which is in charge of the Legislature's budget, during the last session. He said he was told he has a good chance of being chosen to chair the Education Budget Committee

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House rep runs for a second term

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State Rep. Rick Billinger has a lot of unfinished business from his first and only term in the Kansas State Legislature.

includes Cheyenne, Decatur, Rawlins, Sherman and Wallace counties, along with a portion of Thomas County that includes Colby.

'He hates this as much as I do,' Billinger said. 'Ward and I have been friends for 30 or more years; on Aug. 8 when this is over, we're still going to be friends.'

Still, Billinger said that he felt he was qualified for the job.

'I think I've got the background and the experience,' Billinger said. 'I ran a small business for 30 years. I understand what it takes to run a business, I understand what it takes to run a budget.'

Billinger used his experience during his first term as a representative, when looking at the state budget.

'In my last five years on the

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Last Picnic in the Park lunch of the summer

Lots of people enjoyed the final Picnic in the Park for the summer Wednesday at Fike Park. Shannon Myers (left) and her daughters, Amy and Rachel, were the entertainment for the lunch. Renee Schmeiser (below center) listened to the performance with friends.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press



Senate passes cuts for all but the richest

By Laurie Kellman
Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Senate has debated, sniped and voted on the politically fraught issue of tax cuts, and next week it'll be the House's turn. Still, Americans won't know until after the November elections how much more of their paychecks will go to the government next year.

Wednesday with surprise debates and passage of a Democratic bill fashioned on President Barack Obama's proposal to extend the income tax cuts to all but the wealthiest Americans through 2013. It passed even though the measure stands no chance of surviving the Republican-led House. Meanwhile, the Senate rejected a GOP amendment to extend the cuts to all taxpayers. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, intends to bring up that measure in his chamber next week.

So the matter was a nearly certain stalemate even before Democratic leader Harry Reid and Republican leader Mitch McConnell abruptly agreed to vote on two measures, spent the day accusing

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Coke, Pepsi companies racing for a new sweet spot

By Candice Choi
AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK - Coke and Pepsi are chasing after the sweet spot: a soda with no calories, no artificial sweeteners and no funny aftertaste.

The world's top soft drink companies hope that's the elusive trifecta that will silence health concerns about soda and reverse the decline in consumption of carbonated drinks. But such a formula could be years away.
That's because the ingredient

that makes soda taste good is also what packs on the pounds: high-fructose corn syrup. Artificial sweeteners like aspartame that are used in diet drinks don't have any calories but are seen as processed and fake. Natural sweeteners that come from plants present the most promising alternative, but companies haven't yet figured out how to mask their metallic aftertaste.

Despite the complexities, soft drink makers push on in their search.
'I can't say when it will be here, but it's in the reasonable future,'

said Al Carey, who heads the beverage unit for the Americas at PepsiCo Inc., the world's No. 2 soda maker.

There's good reason that soft drink makers are so eager to tweak their formulas. Once a beloved American treat, sodas are now being blamed for the nation's bulging waistlines - two-thirds of the country's adults are overweight or obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That, coupled with the growing variety of flavored waters and sports drinks, has sent per capita

soda consumption down 17 percent to about 1.3 cans a day since its peak in 1998, according to Beverage Digest, an industry tracker.

In New York City, a ban on the sale of sugary drinks bigger than 16 ounces in restaurants, theaters and stadiums could take effect as early as March. The mayor of Cambridge, Mass., proposed a similar ban last month. And in

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