

Road panel wants to keep sales tax money safe

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Despite that, the state still faces a budget shortfall. Graves recently cut \$78 million from the \$4.4 billion state budget to help reduce a projected \$310 million deficit. He also canceled \$48 million in aid payments to local governments.

Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius said the transportation program is a vital part of Kansas' economy. Still, she said, maintaining current budget lev-

els will be a challenge. Sebelius has given her economic team the task of reviewing transportation, among other issues.

"Like every critical piece of the Kansas infrastructure, we will have to determine its appropriate priority for resources in these challenging times," Sebelius said.

Graves' task force said it opposed further cuts in revenue transfers from the state general fund to the transportation program, or a reduction in simi-

lar transfers made to city and county governments.

According to task force and Kansas Department of Transportation figures, without continued transfers of taxes from the state general fund, the transportation program could face a deficit of \$1.3 billion over the next six years.

The transportation department estimates legislators have already taken more than \$291 million from the program between fiscal 2000 and 2003.

If there is a \$1.3 billion deficit, the

task force said, cuts could include the canceling of 26 system enhancement projects not yet released for construction, or the elimination of all major modifications to highways through 2009.

Transportation Department Secretary Dean Carlson, who leaves office in January, said if he were making the cuts, they would be a mix of eliminating system enhancements and major modifications to roads, along with adjustments to other modes of transpor-

tation.

Carlson noted testimony from economists who cautioned that trimming the transportation program would mean a loss of jobs at a time when the state needs the economic stimulus.

"They were very persuasive," Carlson said.

The governor appointed the task force in 1998 to lobby for a program of highway, airport, shortline railroad and public transit system improvements.

The group disbanded the next year, but Graves revived the task force earlier this year.

Carlson said regardless of when the current program ends, Kansas would need a program that either built on current projects or simply maintained existing roads. He added that without a plan, the state would face problems similar to the poor condition of Interstate 70 in Missouri.

"You can't just walk away," he said.

International nuclear monitors going to uranium mine

By the Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL

BAGHDAD, Iraq — International nuclear monitors struck out across the Iraqi desert toward a remote uranium mining site, Iraqi officials reported, in one of five inspections mounted today, a marked expansion of the U.N. field operation. Still more inspectors were flying to Iraq later in the day.

Iraq's chief liaison to the U.N. teams, meanwhile, told a Baghdad newspaper the Iraqis have found the inspectors to be working in a "calm and professional" manner. But he again complained about last week's surprise inspection of one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, calling it an American-inspired provocation.

Today marked the end of the second week of field missions for the U.N. inspectors, who have returned to Iraq

around the world

after a four-year absence under a Security Council resolution requiring Baghdad to give up any remaining chemical or biological weapons, and shut down any programs to make them. Iraq denies it still has such weapons or programs.

The Iraq field missions were expanding as U.N. and American analysts began combing through 12,000 pages of documents submitted by Iraq to the United Nations over the weekend, detailing past programs of weapons of mass destruction and what it says are purely civilian programs today in the chemical, biological and nuclear areas.

CARACAS, Venezuela — Hundreds of supporters of Hugo Chavez surrounded the offices of television stations across Venezuela that they accused of backing a general strike to force the president's ouster, ransacking one station in a western state.

"Shut it down!" chanted protesters in front of Globovision television in Caracas on Monday. Waving Venezuelan flags, demonstrators spray-painted the station's walls.

Globovision broadcast images of its ransacked headquarters in the western state of Zulia, claiming Chavez supporters forced their way in, destroying windows, equipment and furniture.

Demonstrators also surrounded Ra-

dio Caracas Television, Venevision, Televen and CMT in Caracas, as well as a regional television stations in the cities of Maracay, Merida, Maracaibo and Barquisimeto. They also protested against a newspaper in Maracay.

"The people are in the streets defending their values and principles," said Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, in a televised address during the protests. "The government doesn't want violence."

But OAS Secretary General Cesar Gaviria condemned the pro-Chavez protests against the media, saying they "threatened freedom of expression." The Organization of American States is mediating talks between the government and opposition.

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — Millions of out-of-work Americans, a bumpy stock

market and economic uncertainties are motivation enough for the Federal Reserve to keep short-term interest rates at 41-year lows for a while, economists say.

Leaving borrowing costs low might motivate consumers, the economy's lifeblood, to keep spending and might encourage businesses to increase investment. That would provide a helping hand to an economy that analysts believe will grow tepidly this quarter and in the first quarter of 2003 but will not slide into a new recession.

"The Fed is expected to be sidelined until at least March given the uncertainties and the fragility of the current economic climate," said Richard Yamarone, economist with Argus Research Corp.

Knocked down by last year's recession, the economy has experienced an

uneven recovery this year. The seesawing economic growth — a below-par 1.3 percent pace in the second quarter, rising to a brisk 4 percent rate in the third quarter — troubles the Bush administration. Fed policy-makers, Wall Street and Main Street.

WASHINGTON — The United States possibly could have prevented the Sept. 11 hijackings if intelligence agencies had reported to a single leader, with the resources to link scattered clues, a senator investigating the attacks says.

Sen. Bob Graham, outgoing chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said Monday that lawmakers hope to prevent future attacks by recommending creation of a national intelligence director, a Cabinet-level post.

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