

Voters To Decide Lawmaker Term Limits

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska voters will get the opportunity this November to give state lawmakers a raise and a shot at one additional term in office.

Lawmakers gave both constitutional amendment proposals final approval Wednesday.

The term limits proposal would let state lawmakers serve up to three consecutive four-year terms in office, for a total of 12 years. Lawmakers are currently limited to two consecutive terms, or 8 years. The measure passed its final reading, 31-14.

Voters will also have the chance to boost legislative pay to \$22,500 per year, up from the current \$12,000.

Lawmakers last received a pay increase in 1988, and supporters say the current salary makes it unaffordable for most Nebraskans to serve. The proposal won final approval, 31-15.

Lincoln Wants Input On Smoking Ban In Parks

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The city of Lincoln wants to hear from residents on banning smoking in public parks and other outdoor areas.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* says the city is asking residents this month for their thoughts on banning smoking in places owned and operated by Lincoln Parks and Recreation, including playgrounds, trails, dog parks, golf courses, and ball fields.

The city currently has no restrictions on smoking in outdoor public areas.

After the survey results are in, a committee of health and parks officials and citizen board members will decide what course to take.

Lincoln residents voted to ban smoking in indoor workplaces and public places including restaurants and bars in 2005. The smoking ban went statewide in 2009.

S.D. Legion Officials Upset With Case Outcome

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Members of an American Legion post in Rapid City say they were not consulted when prosecutors struck a deal with a former post manager accused of stealing tens of thousands of dollars from the organization.

The plea agreement between the Pennington County state's attorney's office and Richard Kiewel is unacceptable, John Wheeler, finance officer for American Legion Post 22 said in a story published Wednesday in the *Rapid City Journal*.

"We were disappointed by some decisions the state's attorney's office made in regard to Mr. Kiewel," Wheeler said.

Kiewel has pleaded no contest to a conspiracy charge and prosecutors have dropped a grand theft charge. The state is recommending probation and \$4,600 in restitution. Sentencing is Monday. Authorities have said the theft involved more than \$75,000.

State's Attorney Glenn Brenner said American Legion officials should have been consulted about the plea agreement.

"I take full responsibility for that," he said. "I still support the agreement and where we are."

Public To Hear Repair Plans For Nuclear Plant

BY JOSH FUNK

Associated Press

BLAIR, Neb. — The public will get another chance to learn more about the repairs being made to Fort Calhoun nuclear power plant when federal regulators return Wednesday for another meeting.

The public discussions between the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Omaha Public Power District are part of the strict oversight regulators have imposed on the plant about 20 miles north of Omaha.

Fort Calhoun has been shut down since last April when OPPD began performing routine refueling maintenance. The plant remained closed last summer because floodwaters surrounded the plant for months amid massive flooding along the Missouri River.

Regulators are watching Fort Calhoun closely because it has been closed so long

and because several problems were found at the plant over the past couple years unrelated to last summer's flooding.

Utility officials said earlier this year that they expected to be able to restart Fort Calhoun sometime this spring. But now OPPD spokesman Jeff Hanson said the utility has no firm idea when Fort Calhoun will resume generating electricity.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will have to sign off on all the repairs and changes OPPD makes to Fort Calhoun before it can restart.

The problems at the plant don't represent a public safety threat, according to regulators and utility officials, but additional scrutiny is required because of them.

The operational problems that regulators have found include a fire last spring that briefly knocked out power to the cooling system for used fuel. That fire started in an electrical breaker that had been replaced about

18 months earlier.

During the fire, smoke and soot spread into Fort Calhoun's backup electrical system and knocked that out as well.

The NRC said OPPD officials were also too slow to notify state emergency response officials about the fire when it happened.

Regulators also found flaws in the utility's analysis of how the plant would withstand different accident conditions such as earthquakes, tornadoes or loss of coolant.

A key electrical part failed during a 2010 test at Fort Calhoun. That same year the NRC identified deficiencies in flood planning at the plant.

Recently, OPPD officials have had problems with the sirens Fort Calhoun uses to warn area residents about problems. The utility said it also has backup notification plans.

The NRC will determine whether the siren problems should also be considered a safety issue.

Clean-up

From Page 1

after canvassing the community.

"These were places where we thought there could potentially be an opportunity for the property owner to use these services," Bies said.

City staff is providing contact information about private recyclers in the community who will work directly with the property owners to schedule vehicle removal. Bies said that most recyclers accept vehicles at no cost to the owner, and many will even pick up the vehicle from the owner's property. The value of a vehicle's scrap metal varies, but it's not uncommon for the recycler to pay the owner for the unwanted vehicle.

"Our only criteria for adding (a recycler) to the list is, 'Are

you willing to take the cars for free or pay somebody for them?'" Bies said. "We're not looking to have the clean-up cost somebody money. The goal here is to create at least a cost-free avenue for folks."

In addition to calls about the program, he said many inquiries have been about what is allowed and what is not under city ordinance.

"We're not trying to say you can't have a project car in your backyard," Bies said, noting that is a common question. "We're just saying that, according to the ordinance, if it is licensed and operable, it is good to go. If it's not licensed or operable, cover it with a car cover or store it in a building."

He stressed that it must be an actual car cover, and not, for example, a blue tarp.

"No one who calls us is going to be penalized for asking a question," Bies added. "We'd rather have you call in so we can talk

about some solutions or opportunities rather than wait until there's a problem with upset neighbors or community members."

None of the calls so far have been from people upset about the car clean-up effort, he said.

"Our priority is going to be neighborhoods where there is an identified concern where folks have contacted us," Bies stated. "The focus here is not so much on enforcement as it is on trying to raise awareness. Yankton is like a big small town. It is difficult to conceive of any plan that would be really punitive and have any chance of success. Our number-one goal is to work with property owners to achieve the desired result."

Anyone who would like more information about removing a vehicle or other scrap metal from their property is encouraged to call the Department of Community Development at 605-668-5251.

County Targets Fireworks During Dry Conditions

RAPID CITY (AP) — With persistent dry conditions, one western South Dakota county is going a step beyond banning open burning and also is targeting fireworks.

The Pennington County Commission has implemented a burn ban when the wildfire danger is the "very high" and "extreme" categories, and also will ban fireworks during days when there is an extreme fire danger.

The Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop and weather report that in the past six months, precipitation in southwest South Dakota is as much as 2 inches below normal.

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