

MIDWEST DIGEST

Lincoln Closes 2nd Pedestrian Bridge In Park

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Another pedestrian bridge in Lincoln's Wilderness Park has been closed in the wake of a bridge failure that sent children scrambling to safety. Lincoln officials say a 65-foot bridge between Salt Creek and Densmore Park was closed Friday after a visual inspection. The mayor ordered inspections of all pedestrian bridges in the park after one suffered a partial collapse. The middle of a bridge across Salt Creek dipped 12 to 15 feet after a structural failure on Wednesday morning. About 20 people, mostly children in the Wilderness Nature Camp, were on the bridge at the time. No serious injuries were reported. City officials continue to investigate the bridge collapse and are inspecting all bridges in the park.

Fremont Could Suspend Law On Immigrants

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Fremont City Council will consider suspending implementation of a controversial new law banning hiring or renting property to illegal immigrants. The council says in a Friday news release that a resolution on the suspension will be taken up at its Tuesday meeting. The city faces two federal lawsuits from civil rights groups over the voter-approved ordinance. The American Civil Liberties Union and the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund say the ordinance amounts to discrimination. The ban is set to go into effect on Thursday. A federal judge has scheduled a Wednesday hearing on whether to temporarily block the law. The council says it plans to defend the law in court.

Neb. Says No Special Session Needed

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Some Nebraska officials and lawmakers have given their two cents on a multimillion-dollar question: Is a special session needed to address budget problems? No, they said. On Friday, they got an overview of state finances from the Legislature's chief fiscal analyst. Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood of Norfolk asked whether the state had the cash flow necessary to pay its bills and was told by analyst Mike Calvert that it did. But Flood also was told that could change if month-to-month revenue dipped below projections. The so-called no-name committee then voted not to recommend a special session or higher taxes. Gov. Dave Heineman has also said he doesn't think a special session is necessary.

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Neb. Abortion Law May Be Reworked

BY NATE JENKINS
Associated Press Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. — A new abortion law requiring health screening for women wanting abortions in Nebraska may be flawed enough that Attorney General Jon Bruning won't exhaust all legal options to try to keep it on the books. Bruning said Friday he is considering whether it is worth the time and expense to defend the law through what could be a lengthy appeals process, or whether a new bill should be drafted instead. "Despite the fact I'm very pro-life, I need to be realistic in utilizing the legal resources of the state," Bruning said. The director of a group that is challenging the screening law that lawmakers passed early this year said that Bruning's comments, combined with a federal judge's decision last week to block the law, could prevent

other states from considering such a measure. It would require women wanting abortions to be screened by doctors or other health professionals to determine if they had risk factors, cited in medical journals, indicating if they could have mental or physical problems after an abortion. If a screening wasn't performed or was performed inadequately, a woman with mental or physical problems resulting from an abortion could sue the provider. "Given what the judge has ruled and what the attorney general says, it will certainly chill the prospects of this being adopted by other states," said Jill June, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland. She called Bruning's consideration of whether or not to appeal a possible ruling striking the law, should such a ruling be made, the responsible thing to do.

Bruning declined to specify what he sees as flaws in the bill to avoid bolstering the case of Planned Parenthood. It filed a federal lawsuit challenging the law, and U.S. District Judge Laurie Smith Camp last week issued an injunction keeping the law from being enforced. The injunction will be lifted if the court rules that the law can stand. Camp, in her ruling, said the evidence presented so far showed that the screening law would make it harder for women to get an abortion in Nebraska by requiring screenings that could be impossible to perform under a literal reading of the law. She also said the law would put abortion providers at risk of crippling lawsuits. Supporters of the law say it's needed make sure women understand the risks that may accompany abortions because they say abortion providers, unlike doctors who perform other proce-

dures, often don't provide similar analyses of the risks. Bruning said that the concept behind the bill is reasonable, but that "if we were to draft it today, we'd do things differently." His office didn't play a role in drafting the legislation. Greg Schleppebach of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, the main lobbyist for the bill, said it came from the Elliot Conference, an Illinois-based group that opposes abortion and crafted the model legislation for any state to use. Schleppebach said he understood Bruning's position and that lessons from the court case could lead to improved legislation. "You have to look at the reality of the situation — to simply fight on even if the evidence is clear what the judge's opinion is, if the likelihood of success is low, a prudent person has to make a decision whether it's worth the fight or if you learn and make changes," Schleppebach said.

Wind Farm Looking For South Dakota Investors

BY DIRK LAMMERS
Associated Press Writer

SIoux FALLS — A \$23 million, seven-turbine wind farm to be built next to a larger 101-turbine project near White Lake is opening up investment opportunities for South Dakota residents. The South Dakota Wind Partners farm will be built, operated and maintained by North Dakota-based Basin Electric Power Cooperative, and Basin will buy the 10.5 megawatts of electricity it will produce. The smaller farm will be built next to Basin's \$363 million PrairieWinds SD1 project, which will encompass 37,000 acres in parts of Aurora, Jerauld and

Brule counties. South Dakota residents can invest in the side project with a minimum of \$15,000. Jim Burg, chairman of South Dakota Wind Partners' board of managers, said the goal is to raise \$16 million with the offering. "It will be available for any person in South Dakota to be able to invest in this project," Burg said. "That's what we're really, really excited about." The federal government will cover the remaining 30 percent of the project's cost under a provision in the stimulus package. To qualify for the federal assistance, 5 percent of the project's construction must be completed by the end of the year.

The East River Electric Power Cooperative, the South Dakota Corn Growers, the South Dakota Farmers Union and the South Dakota Farm Bureau each contributed \$20,000 to the effort and each is contributing three members to the board. Mike Held, chief executive of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, said wind projects have been great for the state because its wind-rich areas are often in communities that struggle with rural economic development. "We're at the fringe of the corn belt. We don't get any opportunity for ethanol plants or those kinds of things," Held said. "But some of those areas are the best

wind areas in the state." Basin will send the power to other cooperatives in the Upper Great Plains through Western Area Power Administration transmission lines. "This is product that is delivered at home for customers who live in the region," said Jeff Nelson, general manager of East River Electric. The 1.5-megawatt GE turbines are expected to start spinning by the second or third quarter of 2011. South Dakota Public Utilities commissioners granted a permit for the full Basin Electric project last week.

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