

**Ruling Made For Gage County Sex-Bias Case**

BEATRICE, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Equal Opportunity Commission has ruled in favor of Gage County in a sex discrimination complaint filed by the county's former weed superintendent. Emily Rosenthal alleged discrimination by the county regarding employment advancement opportunities. Rosenthal resigned in August 2010. She filed the complaint in October 2010. KWBE radio in Beatrice says Thursday the commission ruled the evidence failed to show Rosenthal was denied a promotion, due to her sex. Rosenthal has 90 days to appeal the finding in state district court.

**Trial On Track CR Kidnapping Case**

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — The trial of a man charged with kidnapping a convenience store clerk in Cedar Rapids is on track to begin later this month in Linn County District Court. Fifty-four-year-old Keith Elson Jr. is charged with first-degree kidnapping. He is accused of abducting the female clerk at knife point from a Kwik Shop in May 2010. Police found the woman and Elson at his apartment about seven hours later. The Gazette says Elson's trial, which has been delayed several times, is set for Oct. 24. Elson plans to use diminished capacity and intoxication as his defense.

**Fraction Of Calls Played In Minn. Case**

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A defense attorney for one of two women accused of funneling money to al-Shabab in Somalia showed how prosecutors cherry-picked a fraction of conversations from hundreds of hours of wiretaps. During cross-examination of a government witness in the case against Amina Farah Ali and Hawo Mohamed Hassan, Ali's attorney Dan Scott noted that in one recording, jurors heard only 41 seconds of a 20-minute call. Some local Somalis watching the trial say that's unfair and doesn't show what the women were doing. The women claim they raised money for charity. Both are charged with conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. Ali faces 12 counts of providing such support, while Hassan faces two counts of lying to the FBI — a third count against Hassan was dropped.

**Police Surround House In McCook**

MCCOOK, Neb. (AP) — Police have surrounded a house in McCook in western Nebraska after authorities say a man fired on officers when they attempted to check on his welfare. The McCook Daily Gazette says police were sent to the house Thursday morning. Police say when officers tried to enter the house, the man fired one shot at them. Officers have had the house surrounded since then. A SWAT team arrived on the scene Thursday afternoon. The newspaper says McCook schools have been locked down, and parents are being asked to pick up their children.

**Neb. Spending Website Now Updated Monthly**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska State Treasurer Don Stenberg says a state-run database of government spending will be updated monthly instead of annually and offer more user-friendly features. Stenberg announced the changes Thursday as part of an effort to promote the website, www.NebraskaSpending.gov. The website was created in 2007 to provide financial information about government spending and receipts to the news media, businesses and the general public. It is maintained by the State Treasurer's Office. Stenberg says he's still seeking public input on ways to improve the site. He says his office also plans to add state contracts to the searchable website. The site allows users to search for public expenses by dates, dollars amounts and individuals and businesses that received payments.

**Free Lunch Students Up In Sioux Falls**

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota's largest school district has added 515 students during the past year, and a growing number of those students are coming from low-income families. The Argus Leader reports that when the Sioux Falls School District's year ended in May, 46.8 percent of its elementary students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. That's up from 43.7 percent the year before.

**Neb. Insurance Head Needs More Data**

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska insurance officials can't decide whether to recommend a state-based health insurance exchange or follow a proposed federal model until they know how much the national plan will cost, Nebraska Department of Insurance Director Bruce Ramage said. The department is also hearing Gov. Dave Heineman's preference to wait until the U.S. Supreme Court rules on the constitutionality of a new national health care law under which the federal plan would be offered, Ramage said. "We don't know exactly yet what a federal exchange would look like, what cost would be associated with it," he told the Associated Press. "It would be nice to be able to compare. There are a few really important federal regulations that haven't yet been hammered out." Officials do not yet know the minimum essential benefits to be offered in a federal plan, which would shape its cost. "We feel it's too soon to make a recommendation as to how the state should go forward," he said. State officials can choose to adopt a state, regional or federal exchange, or a federal-state partnership under which the federal government runs certain aspects, such as electronic record-keeping, while the state handles customer service and other tasks. State Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, who chairs of the National Conference of State Legislatures' Health Committee and who has studied the insurance exchange program, said the Legislature should act before the court rules or it could be left scrambling to

meet federal deadlines. The court could decide the case as late as June 2012, but lawmakers are expected to adjourn in April. Nordquist said if the law is upheld then lawmakers would have to pass a bill in a special session before June 29 — the deadline to apply for a federal establishment grant worth tens of millions of dollars. "We lose nothing by moving forward and enacting legislation," Nordquist said. "If we sit on our hands and the court upholds the law, we're going to be way behind the game, potentially to the point where the federal government says, 'Nebraska, you're not ready. We're going to run the exchange for you.'" At least 16 states have enacted legislation to prepare for the exchanges, some of the new laws only establish advisory committees or take other early steps, said Kansas Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger, who chairs a health insurance panel for the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. Praeger said state insurance officials may not know exact details of the minimum essential benefit plan until late winter or early spring in 2012. But she said states can still move forward to set up a basic exchange structure without knowing those details. "You don't need that detail right away," she said. "But if you're not sure you want to do this at all, that would be a reason enough to delay." She said states are struggling to set precise minimum coverage requirements because if they enact stricter requirements than the federal government's, they will have to pay the difference in costs for customers who qualify for a subsidy.

**Gore Links Climate Change To Great Lakes Problems**

BY JOHN FLESHER  
AP Environmental Writer

DETROIT — Former Vice President Al Gore linked climate change to a rash of environmental catastrophes Thursday, from floods in Pakistan to drought in Texas and rampant algae blooms sucking oxygen from Lake Erie. The fallout from a warming planet is being felt around the world, Gore said in a speech during the annual meeting of the International Joint Commission, which advises the U.S. and Canadian governments on issues affecting shared waterways. Things will get worse unless people reject a campaign of denial orchestrated by the fossil fuel industry and make significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, he said. "We're still acting as if it's perfectly OK to use this thin-shelled atmosphere as an open sewer. It's not OK," Gore said. "We need to listen to the scientists. We need to use the tried and true method of using the best evidence, debating and discussing it, but not pretending that facts are not facts." Gore, who shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his campaign to awaken people to the climate change threat, said warmer temperatures could nullify much of the progress made in recent decades to heal the battered Great Lakes. Increasingly, severe storms made worse by greater volumes of water vapor in the atmosphere are causing wastewater treatment system overflows that dump raw sewage into the lakes, he said. That forces beach closures and promotes growth of algae blooms that create oxygen-deprived zones where fish can't survive. After largely disappearing as phosphorus discharges into the lakes were reduced decades ago, the algae problem has returned and is worse than ever in some places, primarily on Lake Erie. Smelly clumps of algae are fouling beaches on Lakes Michigan and Huron. Gore's critics have accused him of making exaggerated claims about climate change and cashing in on his activism through investments in green technology. But leaders of the International Joint Commission said his comments about the Great Lakes were based on findings of scientists in the region.

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