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Atwood man's body found

Norton County Sheriff Troy Thomson said the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks reported finding a body Monday afternoon at Keith Sebelius Reservoir west of Norton.

The body was confirmed to be of Dale Nelson, 81, of Atwood, who had been missing since Nov. 7, 2006. His pickup was found at the

reservoir two days later.

The Norton County Sheriff's Department and Norton County Emergency Medical Service, as well as other rescue workers, joined Wildlife and Parks at the water's edge in a refuge area at Prairie Dog State Park.

Norton Telegram contributed to this story.

Plans to increase state worker's pay stalls in legislation

TOPEKA (AP) — Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' proposal to raise state workers' pay by 4 percent has hit a snag in the Republican-controlled Legislature, with an influential senator questioning whether the state can afford to be so generous.



K. Sebelius

Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dwayne Umbarger said Tuesday that he wants to postpone a decision on pay raises until the end of the legislative session in late April. Umbarger said he and his colleagues need to know whether approving the raises this year would leave the state short of money in 2010.

The GOP-led House Appropriations Committee also is likely to tinker with Sebelius' plan, but for a different reason. Republican leaders want to overhaul the system that determines what civil service employees are paid, and they're hoping to consider some small changes within the next two weeks.

State government has about 42,000 employees, making their pay raises a key budget decision for legislators each year. Sebelius' proposals would increase state spending by more than \$86 million a year.

"I'm just trying to figure out how to pay for it," said Umbarger, R-Thayer.

Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, said he is frustrated that state employees would

have to wait until the end of the session. He said state workers shouldn't come last in the budgeting process.

But Carl Hill, lobbyist for the Kansas Association of Public Employees, took Umbarger's statements in stride. He said what's important is that legislators improve longevity bonuses and give civil service employees a cost-of-living increase, as well as a raise for completing a year on the job satisfactorily.

"In the final analysis, it really doesn't matter when the pay plan is put together, whether it's now or toward the end of the session, just as long as those components are there," Hill said.

Sebelius proposed a \$12.4 billion budget for the state's 2008 fiscal year, which begins July 1. The legislative budget committees are working on their own versions of bills containing the bulk of that spending, with the House committee planning to finish its work by March 9 and the Senate panel, a week later.

Once the two chambers have reviewed their work, House and Senate negotiators will draft the final version so that it can go to Sebelius by early April. Lawmakers then plan to take a spring break and return April 25 to wrap up their work on the budget and other issues.

Sebelius proposed giving civil service employees a 2.5 percent "step" increase in their pay, compensating them for another satisfactory year on the job, as well as an additional 1.5 percent cost-of-living increase. Employees not in the civil service would receive an average 4 percent merit raise.



Sheridan County Clerk Paula Bielser watched Steve Newell, alerting patrons concealed weapons are not allowed in the courthouse. Signs also hang at the north and south entrances.

Don't bring your guns to town

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press



Signs are going up in businesses and government building windows letting people know weapons are not allowed inside.

As of Jan. 1, Kansas residents over 21 and without a felony conviction or other criminal history background can apply for a concealed weapon carry permit. Applicants must pay a fee for the permit, be fingerprinted and undergo approved weapons training.

"We are just following the law," Sheridan County Clerk Paula Bielser said Tuesday.

"These signs are supposed to be on each entrance."

If a person is caught with a weapon in a building where the sign is posted, the punishment is considered a class B misdemeanor with a six-month county jail sentence and a \$1,000 fine.

Bielser said besides the courthouse, signs are going up in all

county buildings in Sheridan County. However, there are exceptions to the law and guns can not be taken into schools, libraries, churches, day care centers, athletic events, state office buildings and courtrooms. Punishment for getting caught with a weapon at those facilities is a class A misdemeanor which leads to a one-year sentence in a county jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Businesses and organizations can also prohibit guns being brought inside by posting a sign to that effect. Besides the sign, regular rules, regulations and policies on such

conduct are to be made available to the public upon request.

Signs must be 8-inches by 8-inches, with the graphic part of the sign at least 6-inches in diameter. If the sign is larger, it must be proportional in size.

The signs must be white, have a graphic of a black handgun and have the circle and diagonal slash must be red. No text may be within the 1-inch area surrounding the graphic. Signs are in the Thomas County and Logan County courthouses as well.

"We posted our signs about a month ago," Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms said. "They are also posted at the law enforcement center, the emergency medical service building, the landfill."

Logan County Clerk Pat Schippers said a sign is posted in the lobby of Logan County's courthouse reminding people not to bring a weapon inside the building.

Some of the other places in Colby where the signs are posted are Citizens Medical Center, Prairie Senior

Living Complex and Family Center for Health Care have made weapons off limits.

"Shortly after the first of the year we made the campuses tobacco free and concealed carry free," Tama Unger, public relations spokesman said. "We are a healthcare organization and we are joining healthcare facilities across the state to promote healthy living."

As far as Colby Medical and Surgical Center Administrator Dave Voss, whether to ban weapons from the clinic is a board decision, one of which has not been made.

The Kansas Attorney General's office is the licensing agency for the state and that office started issuing concealed carry licenses to qualified applicants Jan. 2. So far more than 6,864 Kansans have applied for a concealed carry handgun license and of those applications receive, 4,476 have been approved.

Thomas County recycling organization gets \$100,000 grant

Funds to improve recycling services

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Thomas County and outlying communities will benefit from a \$100,000 grant awarded to the Northwest Regional Recycling Organization headquartered in Colby.

Lynette Koon, program coordinator, said the grant from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment will be used to purchase recycling trailers.

"They will be to provide more outreach," she said. "It was \$70,000 less than what we asked for."

The state received 46 grant applications totaling \$5.1 million.

However, it had only \$826,471 to give out. Northwest Regional Recycling received the third largest grant.

Trailers will be purchased for Rawlins, Decatur and Sheridan counties and four extra sets of bins for each community in Gove County.

Additional projects are replacing the bins at the Thomas County building with bigger bins and finishing the building in Sheridan County. However, those projects



Irvin Schwarz, regional facility operator with the Northwest Regional Recycling Organization in Colby, opened one of the recycling bins

are at the bottom of the list.

She said the recycling group met

and a couple of the counties decided to get different trailers and bins to

Friday. The organization would like to get bigger bins, and may be able to do so because of a new grant.

help save some money.

The other counties are the top

priorities, but she still hopes for new bins. "We would like bigger ones

that are easier to dump and for people to use," Koon said.

She said the state prefers regional projects because they provide the most service for the money.

"That was the focus for this time — to try to service underserved areas," Koon said.

The regional organization has received several grants in the past. The money can be used only for equipment purchase or on buildings.

Colby's recycling building was built in 2000, and the regional organization was formed in 2003. Member counties are Thomas, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Sheridan, Logan and Gove.

Koon hopes to include Wallace and Sherman counties.

The organization has one employee, Irvin Schwarz, the regional facility operator in Colby.

Thomas County commissioner Ken Christiansen said the grant is a sign people are using the center.

"That takes a load off the county landfill," he said.

Recycling keeps cardboard, newspaper, some plastics, tin cans, beverage containers and more out of the landfill.

"I'm very pleased," Christiansen said. "Lynette is doing a fine job. Slowly but steadily, recycling is growing. It's a plus situation for us."

TISHA COX/Colby Free Press