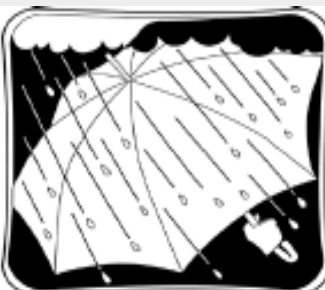


Weather Corner



This Afternoon: Sunny, with a high near 74. North wind between 5 and 15 mph.

Tonight: Mostly clear, with a low around 37. North wind around 5 mph becoming southwest.

Tuesday: Sunny, with a high near 78. West wind around 5 mph becoming calm.

Tuesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 45. North wind around 5 mph becoming east.

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 78. Northeast wind around 5 mph becoming south.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 45.

Thursday: Sunny, with a high near 78.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 47.

Friday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 78.

Friday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 48.

Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 82.

Saturday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 47.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 76.

High fuel prices still may be an issue

By John Hanna
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Before roiling financial markets sent the president and Congress scrambling toward a gargantuan bailout, Kansas politicians were having a spirited argument about high gasoline prices.

In congressional races, incumbents and challengers debated an “all of the above” energy policy for weaning the U.S. away from foreign oil. The discussion covered new drilling, nuclear power, alternative energy, bolstering a weak dollar, curbing financial speculation and boosting fuel efficiency standards for automobiles.

In the past week or so, it’s been easy to forget that debate because of the turmoil surrounding Wall Street. The question of whether a motorist pays \$39 or \$47 to fill up the tank of a small car seems insignificant.

But gasoline prices remain an important issue and one to which candidates for office are likely to return. Even if the big financial storm doesn’t pass until after the Nov. 4 election, the newly elected and re-elected federal lawmakers will have to confront what people pay at the pump.

“There’s no other issue, really, that affects people on a day-to-day basis more than gas prices,” said Washburn University political scientist Bob Beatty. “And even if gas prices go from \$3.75 to \$3.25, people still feel the pain.”

Gas prices hovered around \$4 a gallon during the summer and compelled congressional incumbents and challengers to discuss them. The debate wasn’t confined to the Senate and 2nd Congressional District races, of course, but those contests demonstrate its scope.

In the Senate race, Republican incumbent Pat Roberts is seeking a third term, and his Democratic challenger is former Rep. Jim Slattery. In the 2nd District of eastern Kansas, Democratic Rep. Nancy Boyda is trying to win a second term against GOP nominee Lynn Jenkins, the state treasurer.

There is bipartisan consensus that gasoline prices are too high, that the U.S. remains too dependent on foreign oil imports and that Congress must enact a comprehensive energy policy.

But the details spur significant disagreements.

As an example, Jenkins advo-

cates lifting a federal ban on offshore drilling, including within 50 miles of the coast.

Thus, she derided an energy bill championed by House Democratic leaders, and supported by Boyda, allowing offshore drilling, but starting 50 miles off the coast.

“That is not where the oil is,” Jenkins said. “Drilling is part of the debate. This is ultimately about ending dependence on foreign oil.”

But Boyda defends the legislation as a compromise and says of Republicans who pushed for more offshore drilling, “I’m sorry, but they’re not going to get their way.”

“Our nation has worked on compromise for 232 years,” she said. “The states that don’t want offshore drilling, this is about their tourism and fishing industries. They’re worried sick.”

There’s also the issue of financial speculation, which Boyda, like other Democrats, sees as a key influence on oil prices. She said Congress needs to make financial markets more transparent, so that speculators have less power. Talk of transparency has helped lower gas prices recently, she said.

“You have an energy policy that has been absolutely set by the oil companies for decades,” she added. “They hold most of the cards, and the American people are taking the brunt of that.”

Jenkins contends Boyda has talked about drilling and energy policy but favored only partisan legislation, something that leads to “more money in the pockets of the oil-rich nations.”

Drilling also has been an issue in the Senate race.

Roberts supports opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Many environmentalists strongly oppose the idea, but Roberts contends they’re protecting a “moonscape.”

“It seems like we have to expand our domestic drilling where we can,” he said. “Had we passed ANWR years ago, our problems would be much less serious.”

Slattery said he supports new drilling, but when asked about the refuge, he said opening it up wouldn’t significantly affect the price of gasoline.

Slattery contends shoring up the weak dollar, by attacking the federal budget deficit, will have a much larger effect.

“We have to signal to the global community that we are committed to strengthening the value of the dollar,” he said.

The two Senate candidates also have argued about fuel efficiency standards for automobile. Slattery criticizes Roberts for voting against proposals in past years, only to support legislation this year, deriding the Republican for an election-year conversion.

But Roberts said there are sig-


nificant differences between what he support this year and past bills. For example, he said, the latest legislation sets different standards for cars and pickups.

Such questions, of course, have been overshadowed in recent days by the news out of Wall Street and Washington and the attempted financial bailout.

But gasoline prices aren’t likely to disappear as an issue, because people confront them every time they fill up.

Associated Press Political Writer John Hanna has covered state government and politics since 1987.

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Army moves mission to South

TOPEKA (AP) — The Army has announced plans to shift a mission at Fort Riley that trains advisers sent to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The mission is being reassigned to Fort Polk, La., where units go to prepare for combat. The Army will add 825 people to Fort Polk to train the advisers, who assist the Iraqi and Afghanistan forces.

that 22 of the injured in six area hospitals were soldiers.

It was the second deadly attack targeting troops in northern Lebanon in less than two months.

Security officials said the car packed with explosives was parked on the side of a road and detonated by remote control as the bus drove in the Bahsas neighborhood on the southern entrance to the northern port city of Tripoli.

They said the explosives used were mixed with ball bearings to maximize casualties.

The blast, which tossed the car about a dozen yards, occurred during the morning rush hour, according to the officials.

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