



10 pages

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## House passes health care freedom bill

By John Hanna  
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — A proposed “Health Care Freedom Amendment” to the Kansas Constitution won approval Friday in the state House, but the measure faces a doubtful future in the Senate amid questions about how far it would go toward blocking a major part of last year’s federal health care law.

The House vote was 91-27, giving supporters seven votes more than the two-thirds majority they needed for adoption of a proposed constitutional change. The proposal would add a new section to the state constitution saying no law or rule shall force an individual or employer to buy health insurance — a challenge to the federal law’s requirement that most Americans purchase insurance, starting in 2014.

The result in the House was expected, given that the measure won first-round approval Thursday by a similarly large margin. Supporters’ goal is to put the measure on

the statewide ballot for voters to consider in November 2012.

But they also need a two-thirds majority in the Senate, or 27 of 40 votes, and that’s likely to be difficult even though it, like the House, is controlled by Republicans. Last year, senators were almost evenly divided over a similar measure. Even some Republicans who dislike the federal law championed by Democratic President Barack Obama and Democrats in Congress want to wait for the outcome of federal lawsuits Kansas and other states have filed.

“Why are we wasting taxpayer dollars and legislative time fighting something we’re already fighting through the court system?” said Senate Majority Leader Jay Emler, a Lindsborg Republican.

Strong opposition among Republicans and the rise of the tea party movement have led states to look for ways to challenge the federal law. Last year, voters in Arizona, Oklahoma and neighboring

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### Demonstrating the take-down



JAY WESSEL/Colby Community College

Four Colby police officers demonstrated how they would enter a school if a shooting was in progress at Colby Community College on Thursday. Students played the part of the victims, with simulated dead, wounded and hostages. The simulation, which included police, deputies, highway patrol troopers firefighters and paramedics, was part of a talk on school shootings for the college’s criminal justice program.

## Honor Flight group makes pitch to area veterans

By Vera Sloan  
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When LeVeta Miller, secretary of the Central Prairie Honor Flights finished giving information about the flights on Thursday night, she asked if there were any veterans there who would like to go.

One hand went up. George Elliott, a World War II veteran from Colby, will take an all-expense-paid trip to Wash-

ington, D.C., to view the memorial to the veterans who fought to save a nation when its very existence was threatened.

The Central Prairie Honor Flight is a project of the Kansas Rural Conservation and Development districts that has partnered with the national Honor Flight Network to get World War II veterans to their memorial in Washington, D.C., now, before it is too late.

“We are losing over 1,800 of these heroes a day nationwide,” Miller said, “and

there are only 350,000 left out of the 16 million who fought for our country. Communities all over the state are having fund raisers to help with the project.

“We had a 4-H group in one county who raised \$12,000,” she continued. “High schools, clubs, church groups, corporations, businesses and individuals are all getting behind the program and over the past 34 months they have raised \$800,000. From chicken and noodle dinners, to car washes, to bake sales, it seems

people are anxious to donate and support the veterans.”

People are being generous, Miller said, giving an example of a feedlot operator who wrote out a check for \$25,000 with a promise of more if they didn’t get enough donations for the veterans from his county too make the trip.

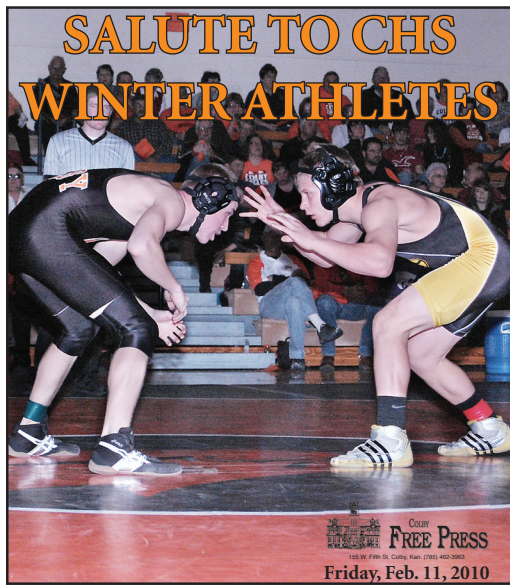
Miller noted that it is more economical to fly a chartered flight because if a veteran gets sick at the last minute, commercial flights do not refund the ticket. With a

chartered flight, the next name on the list is given the ticket, and no money is lost in a non-refundable ticket.

She said the veterans see the WWII Memorial, meet former Kansas Sen. Bob Dole, see the Korean War Memorial, Lincoln Memorial and the Vietnam War Memorial Wall. They cross the Potomac to see the Iwo Jima Memorial and finally the changing of the guard at Arlington

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Salute to  
CHS Athletes  
Inserted in this edition  
of the Colby Free Press



## WWII veteran remembers ‘hell’ over Europe

By Kevin Bottrell  
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Even 67 years later, Charles Cook can still remember the fighter plane he shot down over Germany in 1944.

“I can see him now,” the Colby man said, “coming in from the northeast, shooting.”

Tech. Sgt. Cook was a flight engineer on B-17s with the 509th Bombardment Squadron, based out of Peterborough in central England, in 1943-1944.

As a flight engineer, Cook said, he was in charge of the mechanical operation of the plane from takeoff to landing. If anything went wrong during the flight, it was his job to decide if the plane could fly on to the target or should return to base. He also manned twin 50-caliber machine guns in the top turret.

When the German fighter plane dived in on his B-17, he recalled, he opened up with both guns and

the fighter went down in flames. It was the only “kill” his bomber crew had during the war.

Cook said he joined the Army not long after graduating from Colby High School in 1940.

“George Tubbs and I went together,” he said. “My father-in-law drove us to just outside of McCook to meet the train.”

He signed up to be a mechanic and did his training at bases in Miami; Amarillo, Texas; and Glasgow, Mont. He got into the Army Air Corps and began training on airplanes. He recalled one flight when three engines on a brand-new training plane quit.

The pilots and crew had to bail out at 700 feet, he said. A blast of wind prevented him from getting out the door on his first try, but he made it out on the second. His parachute didn’t open until he was nearly on the ground, and he landed hard, hurting his back.

Cook arrived in England in December 1943. One day and night later he was flying his first combat mission over Paris. Cook’s 35 missions took him

over targets including Caen, Toulouse and Metz in France and Bonn, Frankfurt and Berlin in Germany.

On his early missions, Cook said, the bombers had escorts, P-40 and P-38 fighters, but because of their limited fuel tanks, they had to turn back long before the bombers got to their targets.

The B-17s had their own limitations. Cook said the bombers were loaded with just enough fuel to get them to the target and back, and often they glided to a landing on empty fuel tanks. Later in the war, as the Allies took over airstrips in Europe, the bombers had fighter escorts all the way to their targets.

The fighters could protect the bombers from German fighters, but not from flak. Cook said flak, anti-aircraft fire from the ground, tore up planes more than fighters, and his plane got hit every mission.

“Every time we came back,” he said, “there was holes all over the plane.”

See “VETERAN,” Page 3

## State legislators to meet with public next weekend

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. Rick Billinger will take a break from their duties to meet with constituents on Saturday, Feb. 19.

The two lawmakers will be in Colby from 1:45 to 2:45 p.m. in room 106 of the student union at Colby Community College. They will be in Hill City from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m., in Hoxie from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and in Goodland from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. (Central Time).

## Briefly

### Enroll early for preschool

Early enrollment for the Little Angels preschool and prekindergarten at Sacred Heart Catholic School will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday at the school. Come to the preschool classroom. For information, call Sharon Shirley at 460-2813.

### Orchestra plans concert Sunday

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra, made up of musicians from the Tri-State Area, will perform at at 3:30 p.m. Sunday in the Frahm Theatre at Colby Community College. Jan Wolf will conduct. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$3 for children and seniors. Punch and cookies will be served at intermission. For information, call President Mary Shoaff at 462-2159 or e-mail comments@prairieorchestra.com.

### Conference focuses on marriage

The Mingo Bible Church and Heartland Christian

School will hold a “New Love and Respect” video marriage conference from 8:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the school, open to singles, dating couples and married couples. Cost is \$20 per person. For information, call the school at 460-6419.

### Chamber banquet coming up

The Oakley Area Chamber of Commerce will hold its annual banquet and meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Logan County 4-H Building, Second Street and Kahler Avenue. Former National Football League player and CBS color commentator Steve Tasker will speak. Tickets are \$15 in advance. For information, call Jodie Wright at (785) 672-4862.

### Program to detail Kansas forts

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will offer a program on “Kansas Military Forts” as part of its

monthly Food for Thought series at noon next Thursday. Leo E Oliva, a retired Fort Hays State professor, will lead the discussion. A light lunch will be served. Call the museum at (785) 460-4590 for details.

### Genesis to meet on Feb. 17

The annual meeting of Genesis-Thomas County Inc. will begin at 6:30 p.m. next Thursday at the Thomas County Office Complex conference room, 350 S. Range Ave. Anyone interested in attending is invited. For information, call President Wynn Duffey, 462-6342.

### Storm spotter class here March 7

The National Weather Service will offer its annual Storm Spotter Class at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 7, downstairs at the Community Building. For information, call the Goodland weather office at (785) 899-7119.

### Senior group offering tax help

The American Association of Retired Persons will offer tax preparation help for low- and middle-income taxpayers — with preference to those 60 or older — by appointment until April 15. For information, call Earle Rice at 462-2990.

### Apply now for foundation grant

The Thomas County Community Foundation is accepting applications for the “Kids Can Do!” The grants provide \$200 for nonprofit organizations or classrooms. Applications are due by March 1. For information, go to www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com or call 460-9152.

