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Legislators to meet here on redistricting

By Kevin Bottrell

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A committee that is redrawing the political lines in Kansas will hold a public meeting next week at Colby Community College.

The Kansas Legislature's Special Committee on Redistricting will meet with the public from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 20, at the college's Cultural Arts Center.

The Legislature is required to undergo the redistricting process after each cen-

sus, to make sure that House and Senate districts are equal in population. The population has declined in northwest Kansas over the past 10 years, while Kansas as a whole increased its population by 6 percent, mainly in urban areas. This will likely mean that local districts will pick up more territory, or one or more districts will be broken up and divided among the others.

The Legislative Research Department has released adjusted population numbers along with data on how far above or below target population each district is.

"Ideal size" for a Senate district is 70,986 people. The 40th District, represented by Sen. Ralph Ostmeier of Grinnell, includes 18 counties in northwest Kansas and has 62,105 people – about 88 percent of its ideal size.

Ostmeier, who sits on the redistricting committee, said in a June interview that he would not like to see his district grow any larger, but acknowledged that he may have to absorb some territory. He speculated that Philips or Rush counties could be added to bring the 40th up to ideal size.

Ideal size for a House district is 22,716. The 121st District, represented by Rick Billinger of Goodland, sits at 19,113, about 3,600 people below ideal size. The district includes Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan and Graham counties.

Ward Cassidy's 120th District, which includes Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Norton and Phillips counties, sits at 19,855, about 2,860 people below ideal size.

Ostmeier said Don Hineman's 118th District – which includes Wallace, Logan, Wichita, Gove, Lane, Trego and Rush

Counties and part of Ness County – will also be heavily affected since its counties were already sparsely populated and continued to lose people over the past 10 years.

One or more of these districts could be eliminated entirely.

The committee will come up with a redistricting proposal to submit to the Legislature at the 2012 session. If ratified, the new districts will take effect for the 2012 election.

Twenty-one deaths now linked to listeria

By Mary Clare Jalonick

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON – Federal health authorities say a nationwide outbreak of listeria in Colorado cantaloupes is now responsible for 21 deaths and the number may continue to grow.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday reported new deaths in Indiana and New York. The CDC also confirmed a death in Wyoming that state officials reported last week. CDC said 109 people have been sickened in the outbreak – including the 21 dead – in 23 states from California to the East Coast.

The agency previously reported five deaths in Colorado, five in New Mexico, two in Texas, two in Kansas and one each in Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma. CDC said it is also aware of one miscarriage associated with the outbreak.

The number of illnesses and deaths is expected to grow. Louisiana has said it is investigating two listeria deaths possibly related to the outbreak that aren't included in the CDC's count.

CDC officials have said the symptoms of listeria can take up to two months to show up and that they expect more illnesses through October.

The death toll in the cantaloupe outbreak is now tied with a 1998 outbreak of listeria in hot dogs and possibly deli meats made by Bil Mar Foods, a subsidiary of Sara Lee Corp. That outbreak was also linked to 21 deaths. The deadliest

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MARIAN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

This cornfield northwest of Colby caught fire Friday afternoon from a downed powerline. About 200 acres in two circles burned, but firefighters were able to extinguish the fire within three hours. The county road crew and several farmers assisted.

Downed power line sparks cornfield fire

Two circles of corn about six miles northwest of Colby caught fire Friday after a Midwest Energy power pole fell over near the intersection of County Roads V and 15. The Colby Fire Department got the call at 1:42 p.m. McLemore estimated the fire consumed about 200 acres before they were able to get it out at 4 p.m.

In addition to the fire department, the Thomas County road crew provided a tanker and several farmers came to help with tractors and discs.

McLemore said the rain Thursday night may have helped contain the fire a little, but it also made the field muddy. Firefighters had to be careful in low spots so as not to get the trucks stuck. McLemore said the tractors and discs came in handy, since they were able to cut a path for the trucks.



Several tractors towing discs were instrumental in putting out the fire. The tractors dug fire lines and cut paths through the corn so fire trucks could get at the flames.

Water expert to speak here

Robert Glennon, an expert on America's water sources, will speak at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 27, at the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College as part of the Max Pickerill Lecture Series.

Glennon is the Morris K. Udall Professor of Law and Public Policy in the Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona. A recipient of two National Science Foundation grants, he serves as water policy advisor to Pima County, Ariz.; as a member of American Rivers' Science and Technical Advisory Committee; and as a commentator and analyst for various television and radio programs.

Glennon is the author of "Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters." His latest book, "Unquenchable: America's Water Crisis and What To Do About

It," was published in April 2009. He has also published pieces in the *Washington Post*, the *Arizona Republic*, and the *Arizona Daily Star*. Since 2009, his speaking schedule has taken him to more than 25 states and to Switzerland, Canada, Singapore, Australia and Saudi Arabia.



R. Glennon

Glennon received a J.D. from Boston College Law School and an M.A. and Ph.D. in American History from Brandeis University. He is a member of the bars of Arizona and Massachusetts.

Autographed books will be available for purchase following the lecture.

There is no charge to attend. The Max Pickerill Lecture Series is funded annually by anonymous donors.

For information, call Linda Davis-Stephens at 460-5528.

Traceability rule comment deadline extended

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced Friday that it was extending the deadline for public comments on its proposed rule for mandatory animal traceability, following a request by 49 organizations for a deadline extension. The public comment period deadline is extended to Friday, Dec. 9.

The organizations had sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack requesting an extension to al-

low sufficient time for the people who will be affected to analyze the rule and submit comments.

"We have significant concerns about the substance of the rule, and we appreciate the USDA providing more time for public comment," stated Judith McGeary, executive director of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance and vice-chair of the Department of Agriculture's Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal

Health. "Our farmers are already struggling with the poor economy and terrible weather conditions in many parts of the country, and they needed additional time to provide comment to the agency about the impact this proposed rule will have."

While the department already has traceability requirements as part of existing animal disease

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Railroad plans U.S. 40 closure

The Union Pacific Railroad will close a section of U.S. 83 in Oakley Tuesday and Wednesday to make repairs to the tracks on the west side of town.

The highway will be closed from the west U.S. 40 intersection to Second Street from 9 a.m. Tuesday until 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Any oversized loads will need to find alternate routes. All vehicles with a height greater than 15 feet, 6 inches will not be able to travel east on U.S. 40 during the temporary closure and should seek alternate routes.

All other local and through traffic will need to follow the posted

alternate route.

Drivers should use caution, pay attention to the work zone signs and respect workers when driving through a road work zone.

For information, contact Kristen Brands, northwest Kansas public affairs manager, at (785) 877-3315 or kristenb@ksdot.org.

Weather bad for monarch migrations

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) – Migrating monarch butterflies are facing especially dire conditions this year as they pass through the Midwest on their yearly migration to northern Mexico.

Chip Taylor, director of Lawrence-based Monarch Watch, said that in a normal year, butterflies visit a lot of flowers as they migrate south from their summer range, which stretches from New England to the Dakotas.

The University of Kansas ecology and evolutionary biology professor said the monarchs survive the winter by living off the fats they consume on the way to the woods west of Mexico City.

But this year, their path will take them through Texas, where much of the vegetation has dried up in the hottest summer on record. And many of the surviving plants were burned in wildfires that have blackened millions of acres.

The *Kansas City Star* reported that Taylor described it as "a thousand miles of hell – a nearly flowerless/nectarless and waterless expanse."

Taylor said the number of monarchs has been declining and he fears this year's conditions won't help. He wondered how many monarchs will make

the fall trip safely but arrive too skinny to survive the winter or reproduce on the return trip north.

The monarchs that begin the return trek around March will lay eggs in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas before dying off. The offspring that emerge will keep moving north through April and May, all the way to Winnipeg, Canada. A subsequent generation will fly back to Mexico.

"Here, we can produce three to five generations in a hot summer," Taylor said about the central Midwest, "but only the last generation heads south."

Since spring, Taylor had predicted the numbers starting the march from the East Coast would be low. However, he was disappointed by the counts from the Great Lakes Midwest, an area that stretches from Ohio to Wisconsin. The only bright spots were the eastern Dakotas and western Minnesota, but overall

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