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AG VALLEY CO-OP

Eustis, NE

Commodity	Delivery	Price	Basis	Date (as of)
Corn	Jul 2022	7.03	99.00	08:34
Corn	Oct 2022	5.62	-40.00	08:34
Milo	Jul 2022	5.89	-15.00	08:34
Milo	Oct 2022	5.32	-70.00	08:34
Soybeans	Jul 2022	14.12	-65.00	08:34
Soybeans	Oct 2022	12.75	-70.00	08:34
Wheat	Jul 2022	7.64	-75.00	08:34
Wheat	Jul 2023	7.38	-100.00	08:34

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KMTV: New GOP chair says party will focus on values, not people, moving forward
KETV: Eric Underwood: 'The people will now be in charge of the Republican Party'
KETV: Shovel ready: Pre-pandemic projects receive millions in grants
NPM: Can Behavior Indicate a Person May Carry Out Violence?
NPM: COVID Cases are on the Rise Again in Nebraska
KLKN: Extreme danger warning north of McCook as fire burns for a second straight day

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OWH: New Nebraska GOP chairman looks to improve local engagement to heal divided party

LINCOLN — Newly elected GOP Chairman Eric Underwood said Thursday that he wants to lead the state party in a direction that puts local Republicans first, but before that can happen, he must reorganize the party infrastructure that was hollowed after a tumultuous convention.
Underwood was elected chairman at the Nebraska GOP convention Saturday after he introduced several motions that led to former chairman Dan Welch being fired in a separate vote. He will finish out the remainder of Welch's term, which runs through the end of the year.
At a Thursday press conference, Underwood said the upheaval at the convention wasn't the work of an "activist movement," but rather a group of people who wanted to see a "new value structure" focused on getting conservative Republican candidates elected statewide.
"It was democracy at work," Underwood said.
Underwood has other positions to fill within the state party. Following Welch's termination, a slew of other GOP officers resigned, including Executive Director Taylor Gage. Underwood said he hopes to have the reorganization complete by the end of July or early August.
Underwood had served as the Lancaster County GOP chairman since September 2021. Though he said he wasn't required to, Underwood told The World-Herald that he resigned from the county post as of 4 p.m. Thursday.
Since the convention, several officials have attributed the division within the GOP to long-standing resistance against the party establishment led by Gov. Pete Ricketts. Underwood said the party has been divided "for years, if not decades," though he doesn't think it can be attributed to a single person.
After becoming Lancaster County GOP chairman, Underwood said, he learned that many local

Republican groups across Nebraska have strong relationships with their constituents. There was strong support for bringing that energy to the state GOP. He said many individual Republicans felt unheard by the party establishment, which seemed to be more focused on big elections, rather than local races.

"It felt like this was something that was hurting Nebraska," Underwood said.

Underwood offered few details on how he intends to shift the state party's focus to be more local. Instead, he said he was prioritizing forming the central and executive committees, before moving on to discussing the party's budget and upcoming legislative plan.

Ricketts was not at Thursday's press conference. Jack Riggins, interim communications director with the state party, said that was because the governor had a prior commitment. Ricketts' public schedule stated he was traveling out of state Thursday and would return Friday.

The governor has been a big financial backer of the state party, with $330,000 in donations over the past 12 months, according to disclosure records. Ricketts on Wednesday was noncommittal when asked if he intends to continue contributing to the party's campaign war chest.

Asked about the topic during Thursday's press conference, Underwood said he hopes Ricketts will continue his financial contributions.

Notable officials in attendance Thursday included Lt. Gov. Mike Foley, who delivered remarks to the crowd of reporters and party members. Former Rep. Jeff Fortenberry also attended the event but did not speak.

The nine-term congressman resigned his seat earlier this year after he was convicted of lying to federal agents during an investigation into illegal campaign contributions. Fortenberry has denied any wrongdoing and filed notice that he intends to appeal his conviction and sentencing.

At the press conference, Fortenberry was warmly embraced by several attendees, and Underwood thanked him for his attendance.

Underwood told The World-Herald that he wasn't concerned Fortenberry's attendance may send a bad message to Nebraskans, and said he is welcome in the state GOP.

By Erin Bamer

LJS: Watch now: Fortenberry, Foley attend new GOP leadership rollout event

Newly elected Republican State Chairman Eric Underwood said Thursday the party's new leadership will focus on "getting conservative Republicans elected statewide" during a rollout event attended by former Rep. Jeff Fortenberry and Lt. Gov. Mike Foley.

Underwood, of Lincoln, said he is centered on "moving this party forward" with an opportunity for "the people (to) have a voice when they didn't before."

Now, he said, "the people will be in charge of the Republican Party."

Underwood was elected chairman at a party convention in Kearney on Saturday that removed Dan Welch of Omaha as party chairman and, in the process, wrested the party away from the control of Gov. Pete Ricketts.

Responding to a question as to whether he is concerned that the governor may now remove his substantial funding support for the state party, Underwood said he "hopes that (Ricketts) chooses to continue to finance the same goals" of electing Republicans.

Underwood said the party under its new leadership will support gubernatorial nominee Jim Pillen and the other Republican nominees chosen at the May 10 primary election.

And, he said, it will prepare a legislative plan that focuses on fiscal responsibility, agriculture, limited

government, education and "election accountability and voter verification."
Current party rules provide for creation of a plan to elect legislators by September.
"Stay engaged, stay empowered," he urged a crowd of supporters who attended the event at GOP state headquarters in Lincoln.
Underwood, who was previously elected as Lancaster County GOP chairman, is general manager of Rodizio Grill, a restaurant in Lincoln's Historic Haymarket.
The tone of Underwood's remarks at the event was conciliatory as he attempts to build a unified Republican campaign effort this year.
However, in an earlier interview published online by the Nebraska Examiner, Underwood signaled what "could mean more Republican challengers in GOP primary races with incumbent Republicans" in the future, Aaron Sanderford wrote.
The appearance of Fortenberry and Foley at Thursday's event was significant.
Fortenberry, who resigned from his House seat following his conviction on charges of lying to federal officials about an illegal foreign contribution to his 2016 reelection campaign, was abandoned by Ricketts prior to his conviction and while he was an announced candidate for reelection.
Ricketts endorsed Sen. Mike Flood of Norfolk, who was subsequently elected to the 1st District House seat.
Foley endorsed Charles Herbster of Falls City in the gubernatorial primary campaign while Ricketts supported Pillen, prompting the governor to say the lieutenant governor showed poor judgment.
In brief remarks, Foley said the mission now is to elect Republicans.
Fortenberry, who attended the event with his wife, Celeste, did not speak.
Underwood said he is all about "moving this party forward, protecting our future and moving this state forward."
That, he said, is "100% my goal."
The change engineered in Kearney represented "democracy at work," he said, resulting in "a new value structure, a new culture."
Now should come "a healing process," he said.
By Don Walton

Nebraska Examiner: New GOP chair says party still strong, despite glitches in transition

LINCOLN — A locked door at party headquarters greeted Eric Underwood on his first day as the new chair of the Nebraska Republican Party.
And there were a few things missing from the building in downtown Lincoln.
But Underwood, who was elected Saturday in a tumultuous revolt against the existing GOP leadership under Gov. Pete Ricketts, said there might be reasonable explanations for the “hiccups” in the transition to new leaders. At a press conference Thursday, he was preaching unity and Republican power.
“My main message is that the Republican Party is strong,” said Underwood, a Lincoln restaurant manager who had chaired the Lancaster County GOP. “It has the same resources it had before the transition, and when it comes to support, we will support our candidates.”
Underwood was installed as chair after a group of GOP activists took after the so-called “party establishment.” Some were upset with Ricketts’ dominance of the party and others sought stronger support for former President Donald Trump.
Ricketts major donor

Ricketts has been the leading donor to the party. He has given $235,000 to the state GOP this year, according to its latest state campaign finance report, and his parents, Joe and Marlene, gave a combined $230,000 — about 48% of the party's total contributions so far in 2022.

When the governor was asked Wednesday if he would continue to donate to the state party, he didn't answer the question directly, but instead said he would continue to support the election of Republicans. Most observers have translated that to mean he will give directly to candidates he supports, instead of donating through the state party.

At Thursday's event, there was some griping about the lack of elected Republican officials at the event — only Lt. Gov. Mike Foley attended — and a lack of any of the 10 top state party officials who resigned after Underwood deposed former GOP Chair Dan Welch on Saturday.

Where are other Republicans?

Lt. Col. Glen Weaver, who unsuccessfully ran for the 1st Congressional District seat this spring, said that when he lost in the primary, he attended a GOP "unity rally" the next day to support the party's nominees.

Yet at Thursday's press conference, he said, there were no former party officials or state senators in attendance.

"I find it a little bit disingenuous," Weaver said. "We're all on the same team, we just have different leadership."

Underwood brushed off the lack of Republican officials present. He said he had only organized Thursday's press event a couple of days earlier.

Doesn't know if locks changed

He also said he wasn't convinced that someone had changed the locks to the party headquarters to keep him out, explaining that he might have inadvertently given his key to the office to someone else.

At any rate, with the help of the former superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol, Tom Nesbitt, Underwood was able to find a locksmith to gain entrance to the headquarters Sunday.

Underwood added that he expected any missing items, including security cameras, will find their way back to the office and said he had already gained access to digital records of the party, including records from last weekend's convention. Ricketts had pledged to aid a smooth transition in the party.

Underwood said that in his conversations with the governor, he and the new party leadership share a common goal of electing Republicans.

"I fully believe he'll do it in the capacity that he will," Underwood said.

One former elected official who did attend was Jeff Fortenberry, who resigned his 1st District seat in the House after being convicted in March of lying to federal investigators.

Underwood said Fortenberry was a friend who supported the "culture change" in the party.

Over the next seven to 10 days, Underwood said, he expects to complete the task of forming a new state executive committee and to begin the task of hiring new workers to staff the GOP headquarters.

By Paul Hammel

Nebraska Examiner: Federal rent aid likely averted Nebraska 'eviction wave' — but not everyone privy to help

OMAHA — The City of Omaha is coming off a record-busting month for the amount of federal

emergency aid it has distributed so far to renters set back by the pandemic.
That nearly $9 million, doled out in May, is just a slice of roughly $65 million Omaha has allocated in rent and utility grants since the launch early last year of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.
Authorities say the demand is a sign of still-lingering need for housing assistance in a city that has become Nebraska's biggest distributor of the federal aid intended to help stave off evictions.
But a new Creighton University analysis shows that not everyone has had an equal shot at the help.
Pierce Greenberg, assistant professor of social studies, examined Omaha's ERAP process and found that South Omaha — and its sizable immigrant population — has been underserved based on the area's needs and demographics.
"South Omaha sticks out," Greenberg said in describing unmet gaps revealed in his research, which was funded by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. "It just jumped off the map."

Citizenship requirement raises questions

Underlying Greenberg's analysis was a national Urban Institute report that drew upon multiple factors — including income, public assistance, unemployment and housing instability — to identify neighborhoods most likely to be in need of rental assistance. Greenberg compared the "predicted need" with where the emergency assistance actually went after the city's vetting process.
A key takeaway: Of Douglas County's 12 most underserved census tracts revealed in his report, 11 were in South Omaha.
Among likely reasons for those gaps, said Greenberg and South Omaha representatives, is that Omaha and Douglas County governments require applicants to have U.S. legal status. They said the underserved South Omaha census tracts have a sizable number of undocumented persons, and the citizenship query, along with language barriers, probably were deterrents to seeking help.
Furthermore, the situation exposed a disparity in how governments across Nebraska apply the legal status question when determining who gets the federal emergency rental and utility aid.
The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County, in contrast to Omaha and Douglas County, do not ask about U.S. citizenship status.
Like Omaha, the State of Nebraska — which allocates ERAP funding to the rest of the state's 91 smaller counties — demands proof of legal status.

'Smacks of discrimination'

South Omaha Latino activist Ben Salazar said the difference in eligibility standards "smacks of discrimination." He is mulling legal action and has requested a meeting with managers of the Omaha program after learning of the situation from community members who sought help with housing expenses.
"There has got to be a better way to administer these funds so that the families who need the help can get the help, regardless of status," Salazar said in a letter to Metro Area Continuum of Care for the Homeless (MACCH), the contractor the city hired to manage the rent assistance program.
Lina Traslaviña Stover, executive director of the South Omaha-based Heartland Workers Center, said undocumented workers and their families are among populations most harmed by the pandemic.
Last year, she said, an "angel fund" launched by private philanthropic sources helped keep some of the area's undocumented households afloat. Stover said that assistance apparently ran out and is no longer available to her clients.
A statement from Mayor Jean Stothert's Office said the proof of legal status is based on state law, "so the requirement will remain."
Shannon Harner of the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, which provides outreach assistance to the state's 91 smaller counties, said state government officials came to the same conclusion.

Gov. Pete Ricketts' administration has held steady on such a requirement for public benefits.

Thousands of evictions likely averted

Lincoln authorities interpret the state law differently as it applies to emergency aid, said Dan Marvin, director of Lincoln's Urban Development Department, and Jeff Chambers of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center on Children, Families and the Law. The two entities oversee ERAP for Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Chambers said Treasury Department guidelines on the program do not require legal status. He said Lincoln authorities chose not to add that additional barrier.

To be considered for the financial assistance, applicants must answer a host of other questions and pass various income and eligibility thresholds.

"I think all of us would like to serve those who are undocumented but we have legal departments that may or may not be allowing it," Lisa Vukov of Omaha's MACCH said during a webinar recorded early on in the program.

Vukov said in a recent interview that the screening process has uncovered potential fraud cases unrelated to immigration status, and those have been turned over to authorities. She said May proved to be the highest payout month for Omaha so far, adding that it was an indication of continued need.

Greenberg, in his "Delaying the Eviction Wave" report, cited sources that said non-citizens in Omaha make up about 14% of people living in poverty, yet are 7% of the city's population.

"Therefore it is reasonable to assume that a significant need for rental assistance exists among undocumented residents in South Omaha (and other neighborhoods)," he said.

Despite the gaps, Greenberg's findings indicate that, overall, ERAP funds covered rent for about 7,400 Omaha households between April 2021 and April 2022, meaning the program likely helped prevent thousands of evictions.

"The program, on average, is reaching the neighborhoods that it should be reaching," Greenberg said.

An area of North Omaha had the greatest concentration of ERAP use, he said. Downtown, with its high proportion of renters, also had a high concentration, along with neighborhoods west of 72nd Street containing large apartment complexes.

'Temporary Band-aid'

For perspective, Greenberg said, more than twice as many Omaha households benefited from rental assistance in the last year than the average number of yearly evictions in Douglas County from 2012 to 2019.

According to his analysis, the average monthly rent of a person seeking assistance in Omaha was $1,035. About 56% of Omaha households receiving the aid made less than 30% of area median income.

In Lincoln and Lancaster County, roughly 70% of recipients so far earned less than 30% of the area median income, Marvin said.

The average amount of rental assistance per approved application in Omaha was $4,311, which covered about four months, said Greenberg's report, which was based on data obtained through public records requests.

Landlords and tenants could apply for up to 12 months of past due rent and three months into the future.

In all, the study noted, the ERAP has offered a lifeline to many and has mostly been effective at delaying the "eviction wave" many advocates feared.

At the same time, Greenberg said, the evaluation underscores how many households were in need the past year and the high monthly rents many said they pay.
Said Greenberg: "A worry still remains that the program is a temporary Band-aid on larger problems related to housing affordability and poverty."

Deadlines loom for funding

Deadlines loom on some Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds, and Nebraska officials are urging those in need to apply by September.
Omaha has about $35 million yet to be allocated of about $100 million received, according to Mayor Jean Stothert's Office. Stothert said the city plans to seek even more federal ERAP funds to offer Omahans in pandemic-related financial straits.
Douglas County residents outside of Omaha have so far received nearly $5 million in the emergency rental and utility funding, with about $1.6 million yet to be awarded by the year's end, said Jane Gordon of Christian Outreach Program Elkhorn, which manages the program for communities such as Bennington, Ralston and Valley.
To date in the state's 91 counties outside Douglas and Lancaster, about $22 million has been distributed to eligible applicants, Harner said. About $24 million is left. She said the state recently decided to redirect about $15 million of those remaining funds to nonprofits that can provide "housing stability" services.
Gov. Pete Ricketts earlier rejected about $120 million that the federal government had allotted for those 91 counties in a second round of ERAP funding.
Ricketts, in declining the money, said Nebraska was over the COVID emergency and should guard against becoming a "welfare" state. The U.S. Treasury Department has said a chunk of the aid rejected by the governor might go to Omaha and Lincoln.
Lincoln so far has distributed nearly $30 million to its needy residents, said Dan Marvin of the city's Urban Development Department. On average lately, the city has distributed about $500,000 a week of the emergency aid, and Marvin expects that flow to continue through the rest of the year.
For the next installment of federal ERAP funding, he said, Lincoln and Lancaster County plan a more stringent eligibility process that focuses more on applicants on the brink of eviction.
By Cindy Gonzalez

OWH: Nebraska health system warns of long wait times in emergency rooms

Nebraska Medicine emergency rooms in Omaha and Bellevue are busy, which means some patients with less urgent conditions may face longer-than-usual waits, a health system official said Thursday.
Dr. Harris Frankel, the health system's chief medical officer, stressed that the emergency rooms at the Nebraska Medical Center and the Bellevue Medical Center are open for business. People who need emergency care, he said, absolutely should come to those ERs.
But people also come to the ER with conditions that aren't emergencies, he said, and "perhaps they could be cared for in a different site." Patients can consult with their physician for a recommendation regarding where they should seek care.
Frankel said it's not unusual for emergency rooms to be busy at this time of year. But the situation is compounded by the fact that both hospitals recently have been at capacity, although that varies from day to day. That delays the process of moving people who need beds from the ER to hospital floors.
Contributing to the capacity crunch is the fact that the hospital is having difficulty finding beds at

skilled nursing facilities for some patients who are ready for discharge but not ready to go home. Those facilities are challenged by the same workforce shortages that are affecting health care at every level, he said. Some also don't accept patients with certain conditions.
"The system is stretched right now, nationwide," Frankel said.
By Julie Anderson

LJS: Temporary casino in Lincoln could be open in just over 2 months

If all goes as planned, Nebraskans could be taking their first pull of a slot machine handle in just over two months.
The Nebraska Racing and Gaming Commission on Thursday gave WarHorse Gaming and the Nebraska Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association the go-ahead to start work on a temporary casino at the Lincoln Race Course that will have up to 300 slot machines.
Lynne McNally, executive vice president of the horsemen's group, said work will include laying out and reconfiguring space in the existing simulcast wagering building and doing wiring for gaming equipment.
The two partners are currently operating under a provisional gaming license the commission issued to them last month, after they became the first entity to officially apply for a casino gaming license.
McNally said that if all goes as planned, the temporary casino will open Sept. 19 at Lincoln Race Course, which is located near U.S. 77 at West Denton Road.
WarHorse held a groundbreaking on Tuesday for its Lincoln casino resort, which has a projected price tag of $220 million and will include 1,200 gaming stations, a 196-room hotel, event space, spa and several restaurants.
The company also is planning a groundbreaking July 27 for its Omaha casino at Horsemen's Park.
McNally said those groundbreakings are purely ceremonial at this point because WarHorse can't start any work on its permanent casinos until it receives its gaming license, something that won't happen until next month at the earliest.
While WarHorse's Lincoln casino will be the first one to open on a temporary basis, it won't be the only one likely to open this year.
Fonner Park in Grand Island also is planning a temporary casino with about 200 slot machines that it hopes to open sometime in the fall.
Fonner Park CEO Chris Kotulak told the commission Thursday that work on a temporary casino will likely start shortly after the State Fair ends on Labor Day.
And it's possible that a third temporary casino could open this year.
Robert Livingston, senior vice president of development for Caesar's Entertainment, told the commission that the company is looking at opening a temporary casino in Columbus, where its subsidiary, Harrah's, is partnering with Columbus Exposition and Racing on a $75 million casino development.
Livingston said the company hopes to have something open by the middle of November.
The temporary casino would be located in the ballroom of Agricultural Park, the location of the current horse racing track in Columbus.
Plans are very tentative at this point, with many details still to be worked out. For example, Livingston said Caesar's, which recently became the fourth entity to formally apply for a casino license, does not yet have a lease signed for the ballroom space.
Another detail still to be worked out is whether the partners can apply for a license for the

temporary site at Ag Park and then transfer it to the new permanent casino site near the intersection of U.S. 81 and U.S. 30, the former site of the Columbus Event Center.
Livingston asked for clarification from commissioners on that issue, but they said they could not provide any guidance.
The two other existing horse racing tracks, in South Sioux City and Hastings, have both announced plans for casinos but have yet to submit applications.
WarHorse, which is developing the South Sioux City casino, has previously said it would concentrate on the Lincoln and Omaha casinos first.
Global Gaming Nebraska, a subsidiary of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, hopes to operate a casino in Hastings. It has not given any indication on when it plans to move forward.
The company did, however, inform the commission that it no longer plans to move forward with plans for new racetracks and casinos in North Platte and Gering.
The Legislature passed a bill this spring that puts a moratorium on any new operations until the Racing and Gaming Commission completes studies of the horse racing market, the casino gambling market and the socioeconomic impact of tracks and casinos. The deadline for those studies is Jan. 1, 2025.
By Matt Olberding

Scottsbluff SH: Tourism to Scotts Bluff National Monument adds $15M to local economy

The Scotts Bluff National Monument proved to be valuable to the local economy drawing in 194,000 visitors.
Those visitors pumped $12.6 million into the local economy and had a cumulative benefit of $15 million for the economy and supported 169 jobs, according to a report by the National Park Service.
“Scotts Bluff National Monument is a vital part of our valley’s economy, especially for park gateway communities where visitors each year find a place to hike, drive to the top for a view, eat and sleep and make use of other local services that help drive a vibrant tourism and outdoor recreation industry,” Scotts Bluff National Monument Superintendent Dan Morford said in a press release. “At Scotts Bluff, we are excited to share the story of this place and the experiences it provides. We also feature the park as a way to introduce our visitors to western Nebraska and all that it offers.”
The spending analysis was conducted by economists at the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey, according to a press release. The report shows $20.5 billion of direct spending by more than 297 million park visitors in communities within 60 miles of a national park. This spending supported 322,600 jobs nationally; 269,900 of those jobs are found in these gateway communities. The cumulative benefit to the U.S. economy was $42.5 billion.
Karla Niedan-Streeks, executive director of the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau, said the monument plays an important role in the local economy and in Panhandle tourism.
“The Scotts Bluff National Monument is certainly our number one attraction. It’s our most recognized attraction, and, obviously, the most visited attraction that we have in Gering, Scottsbluff and in the region. I think people at times don’t realize how important this attraction is to our communities from a tourism aspect,” she said. “The monument … is a tremendous draw for our community because those people who are going to the monument are spending time at our other attractions.
“We know that (tourists) are not just stopping at the monument, but they’re taking some additional time, whether it’s to purchase a service or a meal, or hopefully staying overnight. We know that

those monies are certainly coming into Gering."
On Thursday, July 7, Jarod Cunningham and his girlfriend, Makayla Becker, visited the monument on a cross country trek from West Virginia to California.
Cunningham said he had planned to visit Scotts Bluff National Monument for some time.
"I've been to all 48 (contiguous) states," he said.
He hadn't yet been to the monument, and Becker has only been to around 31 states on her quest to check off all 48 contiguous states.
Cunningham said the monument was a great place to check off Nebraska for Becker. The couple said they planned to stay overnight before heading to Fort Laramie, then on to California with stops along the way.
Niedan-Streeks said, "(The monument) is a tremendous economic boon to our community and certainly puts us on the map as a as a tourism destination for all those who are seeking the great scenery, the great hiking and the great history that they get to experience at the Scotts Bluff National Monument."
Historically, the monument has always pulled in lots of tourists.
"I've been here for about 25 years — as I recall, one of the highest visitation numbers that they recorded annually was just over 205,000, so (194,000) is a great number post-COVID recovery," she said.
COVID didn't really slow down tourism much at the monument, Niedan-Streeks said.
"One interesting thing, which I don't think is really mentioned, is that the monument's visitation numbers during the height of COVID were really, really good. It was April of 2020 where they set the highest visitation number in April of any year," she said.
Niedan-Streeks said a good number of those tourists were from Colorado's Front Range who were wanting to visit someplace safe that was a short drive and outdoors.
Scotts Bluff County Visitors Bureau Director Brenda Leisy said the monument plays a huge role in the local economy.
"If we did not have the national monument, I think that we would definitely have a really hard time pulling people into our community. It just plays such a significant role in our tourism operation," Leisy said.
Leisysaid it takes a community effort to draw in tourists.
"It takes every single person, events and attractions to make it a large package to try to get (tourists) to stay here longer. … We all work well together, and that's very important," she said.
By Jeff Van Patten

LJS Editorial, 7/15: Care crisis bringing about new approaches

Labor shortages in the grocery business can mean fewer staffed checkout lines.
Labor shortages in the restaurant industry can mean longer waits and shorter hours.
Labor shortages in health care can be -- literally -- matters of life and death.
The monthly installment of Health Matters, an ongoing journalistic partnership between the Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln Journal Star, on Sunday laid out the math and the magnitude of the issue.
Stress levels are up. Unemployment is down -- way down. And it's hard to fill vacancies, which Nebraska Hospital Association President Jeremy Nordquist estimated at between 10% and 15% in many facilities. And almost every problem in Lincoln and Omaha is magnified in rural health care facilities.

And everywhere, demographics are working against progress, as Nordquist notes baby boomer age staffers are retiring. They will go from giving care to needing it, as a much smaller generation moves into the profession.
The blunt-force tool, of course, is pay -- raises for nurses and caregivers in hospitals, hospice and nursing homes. But wage increases have their limits. And higher labor expenses translate into higher costs for health care consumers.
Traveling and temporary workers can fill some of the void in some places, but those are stop-gap measures.
The slower but sustainable option is to make careers in health care more accessible and appealing to younger people -- to fill the pipeline.
The Legislature, rightly, used $10 million in COVID relief funds to help students and $60 million earmarked for a rural health complex in Kearney involving the University of Nebraska Medical Center and University of Nebraska at Kearney.
Additionally, UNMC, UNK, state colleges, CHI Health, Bryan Health, Great Plains Health and others are engaged in creative programs to recruit and retain workers and to help students financially on their paths to graduation.
Their work often involves connecting with students not yet out of high school, planting a seed that health care is a rewarding and lucrative career. And that work often involves reaching a more diverse pool of potential students -- in part because it's an untapped resource and in part because their help is essential as the entire state's population becomes more diverse.
It will take pay, persuasion and new professional pathways -- all working in tandem -- to help heal the health care industry industry in Nebraska.
But the benefits -- increasing opportunity, prosperity and diversity -- will pay dividends for generations.

LJS: What's good for the guns ...

Gov. Pete Ricketts and the Legislature appear set to weaponize the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade and doubtless prohibit abortion pills.
I hope the gun-toting anti-abortionists among them will recognize that just as people, not guns, kill people, people not pills abort fetuses, Therefore, I'm sure they'll agree, abortion pills, like guns, should be unrestricted and widely available.
Roger Holmes, Lincoln

Nebraska Examiner: No honeymoon for newest Nebraska congressman as Democrats slam Flood's 'no' vote on active shooter alert system

LINCOLN — There will be no honeymoon for Nebraska's newest U.S. congressman as Democrats on Thursday lambasted a vote by U.S. Rep. Mike Flood against an Amber Alert-type warning system for active shooters.
Flood, a Republican and former state senator, was sworn in Tuesday as the state's representative in the 1st Congressional District, after winning a special election June 28 against State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks of Lincoln, a Democrat.
The rare, special election was necessitated after Jeff Fortenberry resigned his congressional seat in March following a guilty verdict for lying to federal agents probing illegal, "conduit" campaign

contributions.

Rerun of special election in November

Flood will fill out the remainder of Fortenberry's term, which would have ended in January 2023, but before then, Flood and Pansing Brooks will square off again in November to determine who will serve a full, two-year term in the House.

Flood's first, full day in office on Wednesday included a vote against a bipartisan proposal called the Active Shooter Alert Act of 2022.

A fellow Nebraska Republican, U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, is listed as one of 61 co-sponsors to the proposal, which calls for setting up an Amber-Alert style warning system to alert the public of an active shooter event in the immediate area.

Bacon voted yes

The House bill advanced Wednesday to the Senate on a 260-169 vote, with 43 Republicans, including Bacon, voting yes. Flood and U.S. Rep. Adrian Smith, R-Neb., voted no.

Pansing Brooks, in a tweet Thursday, slammed the "no" vote, saying the proposal was widely backed by law enforcement.

"His vote is another example of the lock-step partisanship tearing our country apart," she tweeted.

Flood, in a statement from his campaign, said that as a broadcaster who has experience in emergency communications, he concluded the Active Shooter Alert Act was "redundant" and was likely intended to convince the public that "guns are the problem."

Intended to cause 'fear'

He said the proposal defines an active shooter situation too broadly, which would prompt alerts "every time there's a discharge of a firearm."

"(That) has the likely intended effect of causing people to live in fear of 'mass shootings' that are not actually mass shootings at all," Flood said in a statement.

Jane Kleeb, the chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party, and Dennis Crawford, a former Democratic candidate for Congress, also tweeted their criticism of Flood's vote. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — whom Flood has criticized during his campaign — also slammed Republicans who voted against the proposal.

"If your child was in a school where there was an assault, wouldn't you want to know?" asked Pelosi during her weekly press briefing.

The Active Shooter Alert Act, introduced by U.S. Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., would allocate $2 million to set up the public alert system.

By Paul Hammel

AP: House making 1st attempt to protect abortion in post-Roe era

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House on Friday is expected to vote on two bills that would restore and guarantee abortion access nationwide as Democrats make their first attempt at responding legislatively to the Supreme Court's landmark decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

The legislation stands almost no chance of becoming law, with the necessary support lacking in the 50-50 Senate. Yet voting marks the beginning of a new era in the abortion debate as lawmakers, governors and legislatures grapple with the impact of the court's decision. By overturning Roe, the court has allowed states to enact strict abortion limits, including many that had previously been deemed unconstitutional. The ruling is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states. Already, a number of GOP-controlled states have moved quickly to curtail or outlaw abortion, while

states controlled by Democrats have sought to champion access. Voters now rank abortion as among the most pressing issues facing the country, a shift in priorities that Democrats hope will reshape the political landscape in their favor for the midterm elections.

Ahead of House voting, Democrats highlighted the case of a 10-year-old girl who had to cross state lines into Indiana to get an abortion after being raped, calling it an example of how the court's decision is already having severe consequences.

"We don't have to imagine why this might matter. We don't need to conjure up hypotheticals. We already know what's happened," Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar said Thursday on the Senate floor. "Should the next little 10-year-old's right or 12-year-old's right or 14-year-old's right to get the care that she desperately needs be put in jeopardy?"

In the House, Democrats are bringing two abortion bills to the floor on Friday, one of which would prohibit punishment for a woman or child who decides to travel to another state to get an abortion. It specifies that doctors can't be punished for providing reproductive care outside their home state.

The Constitution doesn't explicitly say travel between states is a right, though the Supreme Court has said it is a right that "has been firmly established and repeatedly recognized." Yet the court has never said exactly where the right to travel comes from and that could leave it open to challenge or elimination, as the right to an abortion was.

Lawmakers in Missouri earlier this year, for example, considered making it illegal to "aid or abet" abortions that violate Missouri law, even if they occur out of state. The proposal was ultimately shelved.

The second House bill, which first passed in September but stalled in the Senate, would enshrine abortion access as protected under federal law. It would also expand on the protections Roe had previously provided by banning what supporters say are medically unnecessary restrictions that block access to safe and accessible abortions.

"The bill takes Roe v. Wade into the law of the land and protects it from some of the assaults that have occurred since it became overturned by the Supreme Court," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Thursday.

It would prevent abortion bans earlier than 24 weeks, which is when fetal viability, the ability of a human fetus to survive outside the uterus, is generally thought to begin. The bill allows exceptions for abortions after fetal viability when a provider determines the life or health of the mother is at risk.

The Democrats' proposal would also prevent states from requiring providers to share "medically inaccurate" information, or from requiring additional tests or waiting periods, often aimed at dissuading a patient from having an abortion.

Republicans have celebrated the end of Roe v. Wade and are expected to overwhelmingly oppose both bills, denouncing them as extreme. GOP Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, who supports instituting a nationwide ban on abortion, accused his colleagues across the aisle Thursday of seeking to "inflame" the issue of abortion. He said proponents of the travel bill should ask themselves, "Does the child in the womb have the right to travel in their future?"

Only two Senate Republicans, Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins, have been supportive of abortion rights, but they do not support the Democrats' proposal, calling it too far-reaching. They have introduced alternative legislation that would bar states from placing an "undue burden" on a woman's ability to obtain an abortion before fetal viability, among other provisions.

When pressed Thursday on whether Democrats should work with the two senators, Pelosi pushed back, "We're not going to negotiate a woman's right to choose."

Since the court's ruling last month, some activists have accused President Joe Biden and other top Democrats of failing to respond forcefully enough to the decision. Biden, who denounced the court's ruling as "extreme," last week issued an executive order intended to head off some potential penalties that women seeking abortion may face. His administration has also warned medical providers that they must offer abortion if the life of the mother is at risk.

Meanwhile, the Democratic National Committee has already launched a digital ad campaign to energize voters on the issue, warning that Republicans' ultimate goal is to outlaw abortion nationwide.

"We have to elect a couple more Democratic senators so that we can get around the filibuster so that we can pass legislation that truly impacts a woman's right to choose," she said. "There's no halfway measure."

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