From: Shelburn, Andrew
To: Shelburn, Andrew
Subject: Governor"s Office Daily Update - 8-8-22
Date: Monday, August 8, 2022 8:44:50 AM

AG VALLEY CO-OP

Eustis, NE

Commodity	Delivery	Price	Basis	Date (as of)
Corn	Aug 2022	7.01	99.00	08:28
Corn	Oct 2022	5.77	-25.00	08:28
Milo	Aug 2022	5.77	-25.00	08:28
Milo	Oct 2022	5.32	-70.00	08:28
Soybeans	Aug 2022	14.14	15.00	08:29
Soybeans	Oct 2022	13.29	-70.00	08:29
Wheat	Aug 2022	7.62	-75.00	08:27
Wheat	Jul 2023	7.55	-90.00	08:24

TV and Radio

CNN: Nebraska and Colorado are sparring over water rights. It could be the new norm as rivers dry up

KETV: Hemp can help clean up AltEn mess according to UNL researcher

KSNB: UNMC study shows packing plant workers twice as likely to get COVID (no video)

Governor

LJS: Tax credits available for Nebraska retailers that sell fuel with higher ethanol blends

OWH: Matt Innis won't face charges after being arrested at Nebraska GOP convention

Complete Colorado: Stop giving away Colorado's water; the case for building storage along the South Platte

Agency

OWH: Nebraska Board of Education hiring consultant to review standards writing process

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Kearney Hub: 'Networking magnet': UNK's new offices will be regional hub

State, Local and Regional

OWH: 'It's Russian roulette': Fentanyl fuels rising drug overdose deaths in Nebraska

OWH: Nebraska developer gears up to win OK for RV park/airboat marina on Platte River

OWH: Douglas County reports four more suspected cases of monkeypox

Nebraska Examiner: Corn and soybean 'sweat' helps make Nebraska summers more humid

Brownfield Ag: Nebraska Lawyer Says Perkins County Canal Should Have A Legal Green Light

Opinion

OWH Midlands Voices: Those who show up should not be so easily dismissed

OWH Midlands Voices: What does Zawahiri's death mean for Al Qaeda and for U.S. homeland security?

OWH Public Pulse

1. RV park proposal
2. Protect our planet
3. Had enough?

LJS Editorial, 8/7: A new year, new challenges for schools

LJS Letters

1. Court ruling isn't any surprise
2. GOP can't pick Trump again
3. Sending the wrong message

National/Federal

Nebraska Examiner: Cook Political Report now rates Bacon-Vargas race a toss-up

AP: Iowa abortion provider drops challenge to 24-hour wait law

AP: Senate Democrats pass budget package, a victory for Biden

LJS: Tax credits available for Nebraska retailers that sell fuel with higher ethanol blends

Fuel retailers that sell higher ethanol blends can now apply for tax credits.

The Nebraska Department of Revenue on Monday started taking applications for the credits, which are available to retailers that sell fuel with more than 10% ethanol.

The credits were made possible through the passage earlier this year of LB1261. Gov. Pete Ricketts signed the bill into law this spring after it was passed unanimously by the Legislature.

Currently, 124 stations in Nebraska sell E85 gasoline, which contains anywhere from 51% to 83% ethanol, while 112 sell E15, which contains 15% ethanol.

Only flex-fuel vehicles can use E85, but any passenger vehicle produced in 2001 or later can use E15.

"At the retail level, very simply put, E15 is better fuel and it costs less," Randy Gard, chief operating officer of Bosselman Enterprises and secretary of the Nebraska Ethanol Board, said in a news release. "We are excited about the passage of LB1261 and what it can do for our customers. If you are a retailer, there is now nothing standing in your way today to make the transition from E10, the standard fuel most people use today, to joining this mass conversion to E15."

For more information or to apply for the tax credit, go to ethanol.nebraska.gov/resources/nebraska-higher-blend-tax-credit-act.

By Matt Olberding

OWH: Matt Innis won't face charges after being arrested at

Nebraska GOP convention

LINCOLN — After being arrested on suspicion of third-degree assault and second-degree trespassing outside the Nebraska GOP convention in Kearney last month, Republican Matt Innis won't face criminal charges.

Buffalo County Attorney Shawn Eatherton said Friday that his office did not have strong enough evidence to prosecute Innis or anyone else involved in the case. In a letter sent to Innis on Thursday, Eatherton told Innis that he was not required to appear in court on Aug. 10.

"Based on the information this office received and a review of the evidence, please be advised our office has decided NOT to file a case against you at this time," Eatherton said in the letter. "Therefore, you do not need to appear in court on August 10, 2022, at 2:30 p.m."

Innis, of Crete, could not be reached for comment Friday.

He was arrested after he tried to enter the convention center and was stopped by security staff, leading to a scuffle that prompted staff to call the police, the Nebraska Examiner reported. One staffer alleged that Innis lunged at him and assaulted him, though Innis claimed he was shoved or grabbed by someone and he defended himself, not knowing it was security.

In a social media post, Innis disputed the account by security staff, writing that "when someone came forward stating a video shows the head of security was lying about the initial incident, the security people were then removed, the person they claimed was such a threat was allowed into the convention, and the convention continued without any security on site."

Eatherton said his office reviewed video footage and witness testimony among the evidence of the incident.

Innis, a vocal supporter of former President Donald Trump who hasn't been afraid to criticize fellow Republicans, was one of six Republicans who had their credentials revoked so they could not serve as delegates at the convention. Some said they had their credentials revoked because they had vocally criticized or directly challenged Republican leadership or nominees, including Gov. Pete Ricketts and Republican gubernatorial candidate Jim Pillen.

Innis, along with at least one other delegate who was denied entry, Fanchon Blythe, arrived at the convention center to challenge the decision.

Their removal was the subject of one of many heated debates that day. Some delegates argued that revoking their credentials was an attack on free speech.

After Innis' arrest, the remaining delegates voted to reinstate his credentials, along with four of the other delegates, including Blythe. Innis later returned to the convention center to serve as a delegate.

Later that day, a majority of delegates voted to fire GOP Chairman Dan Welch and elected Eric Underwood as the new chairman.

Days later, Innis and Blythe both attended a media event at GOP headquarters where Underwood weighed in on the party's goals and direction going forward.

By Erin Bamer

Complete Colorado: Stop giving away Colorado's water; the

case for building storage along the South Platte

The South Platte River flows from the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains through Colorado and into Nebraska. Sharing the river, Nebraska and Colorado entered into the 1923 South Platte River Compact. It was one of the first interstate agreements allocating stream flow between states. Lately, however, more water than agreed upon has been flowing out of Colorado and into Nebraska. Because of this, now is a great time for Colorado to build storage along the South Platte.

The South Platte River Compact states Colorado must allow 120 cubic feet of water per second to flow into Nebraska from April to October. Summer is when the flow is the greatest, thanks to snow melt from the Rockies. The compact gives Nebraska the right to build a canal to collect water during the winter season, when less water flows. According to the Compact, Nebraska may build a canal that takes up to 500 cubic feet per second, or 1,000-acre-feet a day from October to April. The reservoir connected to the canal would be roughly one and a half times the size of the Dillon Reservoir.

The Compact also gives Colorado a superior right to divert and store 35,000-acre-feet of water from the South Platte during the winter season. Nebraska cannot interfere with Colorado's right to that water.

Seeing plans from Colorado to expand the budget for water projects, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts incorrectly assumed Colorado will soon take 90% of Nebraska's water. Fearing that Colorado was planning to cut the flow of water, Ricketts signed bills to build a 3,600-acre lake and connected canal. The Compact gives Nebraska the right to use eminent domain to seize land for construction. The new Nebraska laws would resume construction on the Perkins Canal, located in Perkins County, Nebraska and into the northeast region of Colorado near Ovid and Julesburg. The Nebraska legislature has appropriated 500 million dollars to the construction of the canal.

In response, Colorado lawmakers proposed the bipartisan Senate Bill 22-126. This bill was to designate funds for a storage system along the South Platte. During a committee hearing, the bill sponsors, Senators Jerry Sonnenberg (R, Sterling) and Kerry Donovan (D, Vail), and Representative Richard Holtorf (R, Akron), made note of all the excess water Nebraska is already getting from the river. They also mentioned that Colorado still has the authority to build a reservoir for its own water preservation. The bill was ultimately killed, but the sentiment is right: Colorado should start putting its own needs first.

Ricketts shouldn't have to worry about losing water. It is likely the Perkins canal will not bring any extra water to Nebraska. In the past 20 years, Colorado has given Nebraska up to 8-million-acre-feet above the Compact minimum.

Nebraska's real concern is not that Colorado will take Nebraska's water next year. Rather, Colorado's population growth makes Nebraska nervous. The population of Colorado has grown over 19% in the past ten years and is expected to continue expanding. The population along the South Platte Basin alone is expected to increase 42%-70% by the year 2050.

However, Colorado population growth may not have the effect Nebraska assumes. Most of the development is expected to be urban, with farmland transitioning into suburban neighborhoods, which will result in less irrigation and a likely net reduction in water use.

Colorado should ensure no water above the Compact amount flows out of our state. The South Platte Basin is the second most populated basin in the state and the highest producing basin in terms of agricultural value. Currently, 4.5 million Coloradans rely on water from the South Platte for

drinking, recreation, agriculture, energy, and more. The state can use all the water it can get and shouldn't allow any excess water to flow out with no charge.

Jordan Ready, a summer intern at the Independence Institute, is a graduate of the University of Cinncinati and is attending law school at the University of Denver. His areas of interest include natural resources and property law.

OWH: Nebraska Board of Education hiring consultant to review standards writing process

Members of the Nebraska State Board of Education on Friday voted to hire a consultant to examine the state's process for writing academic content standards — a process that last year yielded health education standards that sharply divided Nebraskans.

Over the years, the state's standards-writing process had regularly churned out standards for mandatory core subjects like math and English with little controversy.

But when the board floated optional health education standards last year that included sex education, they ignited such overwhelming public opposition that the board pulled the plug on them.

Board members voted 8-0 to authorize Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt to contract with American Institutes for Research, an Arlington, Virginia, nonprofit.

Under the $50,000 contract, the organization will examine the process Nebraska uses and will deliver a report with recommendations by May 1, 2023.

Hiring a consultant was among several recommendations of an ad hoc board committee appointed last November after the board indefinitely postponed development of the health education standards in September.

Standards are what state officials believe children should know and be able to do in each grade.

In the past, proposed Nebraska standards for social studies and science provoked a few minor skirmishes over content. But those debates paled next to the firestorm that erupted when the board proposed what they described as inclusive standards that included teaching about gender identity and sexual orientation.

The initial draft called for teaching children as young as 6 years old about gender identity and gender stereotypes.

Supporters said the standards would stem bullying, prevent suicides and make schools a welcoming place for all students regardless of their gender identity or nontraditional family structure.

Opponents said the standards amounted to political advocacy that didn't reflect the values of most Nebraska parents. They said the standards would rob kids of their innocence and sexualize children.

Several board members have suggested that the failure of the standards was due, in part, to problems with the process.

Critics say the Nebraska Department of Education did not invite conservative voices to be involved in the writing process.

Board member Patti Gubbels said the review will be "almost like an external evaluation."

The consultant will "come in and look at the standards-development processes and procedures to really do a thorough kind of evaluation with suggestions for improvements," Gubbels said.

The consultant will look at how other states develop standards. The review will include focus group interviews with school leaders, teachers, policy makers, parents, families and caregivers.
Board member Kirk Penner voted in favor but said he doubts the review will do much good. He said the process wasn't the reason the standards failed.
"It was the content, and they're not going to get that from this consultant," Penner said.
By Joe Dejka

Kearney Hub: 'Networking magnet': UNK's new offices will be regional hub

KEARNEY — Amazing things happen when ambitious, visionary people cross paths.
That's the driving principle underpinning a $15.6 million office and regional meeting facility that's scheduled to open sometime in 2023 in University Village at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.
About 150 people gathered last week on the 104-acre University Village tract near UNK to break ground for the facility that will be called the Regional Engagement Center. Chancellor Doug Kristensen said the 52,000-square-foot facility will house a number of regular tenants, but it's also expected to be a magnet for important meetings and decision-makers from across the state.
"It really is a tremendous project," Kristensen said.
Given the Regional Engagement Center's central Nebraska location, Kristensen said it is anticipated the center will become a gathering place for greater Nebraska that will fortify Kearney's role as a regional hub through in-person and virtual meetings, events and presentations. The center will also feature office space so that businesses, nonprofits and other organizations can establish or grow their presence with prime access to a large pool of potential employees: UNK's 6,600 students.
Several businesses and organizations have already signed as tenants, but Kristensen sprinkled his speech with multiple hints that plenty of office space is still available to lease.
Among the initial tenants is Olsson, an engineering and design firm. Other tenants are Grand Island-based manufacturer Chief Industries and Allo Communications.
"Olsson has been invested in the Regional Engagement Center since its inception," said Joe Johnson, Olsson's business consultant leader for Nebraska and a UNK graduate. "We are excited to grow with the state. This expands our footprint into Greater Nebraska."
Olsson operates in nine states. It's headquartered in Lincoln and has satellites in eight Nebraska cities, including Kearney, Grand Island, Hastings and Holdrege.
Roger Bullington, president and general manager of Chief Construction, said the REC "will be a huge networking facility. The fact we're a partner with UNK is tremendous."
Also housed in the Regional Engagement Center will be the UNK Alumni Association and University of Nebraska Foundation. They are in a small office building several blocks from campus.
Approved in December by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, the center will create a centerpiece for the University Village development.
UNK will own and occupy approximately 24,000 square feet inside the two-story building and contribute about $10.4 million in funding through an internal lending program. A private investment company will cover remaining costs.
University Village, a public-private development south of UNK's main campus, is designed as a

pedestrian-oriented neighborhood featuring residential, retail, academic, recreation, community engagement and service industry facilities.
Village Flats opened there in the summer of 2018, and the Plambeck Early Childhood Education Center followed in the fall of 2019. Construction started last fall on the $48 million Element 30 housing project, a partnership between UNK and Grand Island real estate developer Scott Rief that will add upscale apartments, townhomes and 10-plexes to the area. UNK also worked with the city of Kearney and private donors to build an indoor tennis complex that opened earlier this year.
By Mike Konz

OWH: 'It's Russian roulette': Fentanyl fuels rising drug overdose deaths in Nebraska

It was a chilly February night in Omaha, but the party in the apartment near 72nd and Grover Streets was just heating up.
Someone pulled out some cocaine. But unbeknownst to the users, the illicit drug was laced with fentanyl, a synthetic drug so powerful that an amount small enough to fit on a pencil tip can be enough to kill.
When Fire Department medics were later called to the apartment, they found four overdose victims sprawled inside.
The medics were able to revive two and rush them to hospitals. But two others — both women in their 30s — were pronounced dead at the scene, adding to a grim recent toll.
Law enforcement officials here and nationally say fentanyl has been fueling an epidemic of drug overdose deaths.
Through the first six months of this year, there were at least 26 overdose fatalities in Omaha, including 11 during the month of February alone.
Nationally, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration says there have been some 108,000 overdose deaths in the last 12 months — more than enough people to fill Memorial Stadium on a football Saturday.
That’s also four times as many who die from homicides in America each year, and more than twice as many as are killed in motor vehicle accidents. Overdoses both here and nationally have emerged as a silent killer — most such deaths known only to the families directly impacted by them.
Methamphetamine remains the drug of choice in Nebraska. But officials believe as many as two-thirds of all overdose deaths today involve fentanyl. The cheap but potent synthetic opioid is being baked into fake pills made to look like prescription opioids, or mixed into other drugs like meth, heroin or cocaine.
“These fake pills, fentanyl mixed with other things, are climbing at a significant rate,” said Justin King, the special agent in charge of the Omaha field office of the DEA. “No city or town, be it rural or urban, big or small, is immune to this substance.”
Fentanyl represents just the latest wave of the opioid epidemic first sparked in the 1990s by the easy availability of prescription opioids. According to the most recent federal data, accidental drug overdoses in Nebraska are up eightfold over the past two decades.
But unlike the prescription pills that initially sparked the opioid crisis, those using the fake pills or

other drugs containing fentanyl can't be sure what dose they are getting.
Sometimes there's a little fentanyl. Sometimes there's a lot. The international drug cartels producing the pills aren't necessarily known for their quality control.
"It's Russian roulette," said Lt. Steve Fornoff, who leads the Omaha Police Department's narcotics unit. "You are taking the chance of overdosing and dying."
Law enforcement officials and other partners are treating fentanyl as both a public safety threat and a public health crisis, seeking to take the drugs off the street and educate the public of the overdose threat.
They're also touting the importance of naloxone, a medicine that in an emergency can rapidly reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.
Law enforcement and public health officials note the accidental overdose deaths are cutting across all age groups, with those ages 35 to 64 in Nebraska actually dying at higher rates than those 15 to 24. The overdoses also impact people of all races, with Whites accounting for the vast majority of Nebraska victims.
"It's happening to all demographic groups, all races, all parts of town, all socio-economic groups," Fornoff said. "It doesn't differentiate at all."
* * *
Andrew Schroeder was a smart, funny, laid-back kid who easily made friends. He also wasn't afraid to try new things.
So when a friend in 2011 offered the college freshman a prescription oxycodone pill, he took it. He was unaware he had a previously undiagnosed medical issue that would make it difficult for his body to metabolize the drug.
The 18-year-old was found dead the next morning in his college dorm room, one of thousands of victims of the nation's opioid epidemic.
"It's a lifelong sentence for parents and families who have to go on after their child or loved one passes away from a drug overdose," said Andrew's mother, Stephanie. "It changed every cell of my body."
There's no doubt the nation's opioid addiction crisis hit other parts of the country much harder than Nebraska. The rates of abuse and overdoses here have been a fraction of those nationally.
But Nebraska certainly has not been immune.
According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention data, between 2000 and 2020, annual deaths from accidental drug overdoses in Nebraska spiked from 22 to 177 — an increase of 705%.
The first wave of the opioid crisis began in the 1990s when pharmaceutical firms began aggressively marketing opioid pain relievers, which they claimed carried low risk of addiction. The pills became freely prescribed for many types of pain.
The powerful drugs were soon abused, with addicts shopping for doctors willing to write prescriptions. Teens seeking the drugs would steal them right out of their parents' medicine cabinets.
The second wave of the epidemic began in 2010 after a crackdown on the loose prescription of the opioids. Addicts turned to heroin, a cheap, widely available illegal opioid. Overdose deaths continued to climb.
Now the nation is in the third, most lethal wave of the crisis, fueled by fentanyl.
Fentanyl is a prescription drug said to be up to 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin. It's typically used to treat patients with severe and chronic pain.
Drug cartels, mostly based in Mexico, began to produce fentanyl to meet U.S. addicts' unmet

demand for prescription opioids. The drug was pressed into pills made to look just like prescription pills, a common form being blue pills stamped with “M30” much like oxycodone tablets.
The DEA says lab testing has revealed as many as four in 10 such pills contain at least 2 milligrams of fentanyl, a potentially lethal dose.
Now drug dealers are mixing fentanyl into heroin, cocaine and meth because it’s both cheaper to produce and more addictive, the DEA’s King said. One UCLA researcher recently described the nation’s illicit drug supply today as “a toxic mess.”
Given the potency of fentanyl, that’s often proving fatal.
Between 2019 and 2020 alone, accidental overdose deaths in Nebraska spiked nearly 50%, with the isolation and social malaise from the COVID-19 pandemic also likely contributing to that toll.
More recent trends tracked by Omaha police suggest overdoses have remained high since. Omaha had 60 overdose deaths in 2020, 56 last year and is on roughly the same pace this year.
In addition, nonfatal overdoses this year appear headed for a record high. For every fatal overdose in Omaha, about 10 overdoses are not fatal.
Often the overdoses and deaths come in “mass overdose events,” which can occur when batches of drugs with high doses of fentanyl are peddled in a community.
In Lincoln a year ago, police traced at least 35 overdose cases and nine deaths to fentanyl-laced cocaine that had been stolen from the Nebraska State Patrol’s crime lab.
Many of the 11 deaths in Omaha in February were likely similarly linked to lethal batches of drugs.
The same weekend as the February Omaha overdose that killed two, seven died in a single incident in St. Louis. A week earlier, nine died on a single Washington, D.C., block.
Just two weeks ago, another mass overdose event occurred in Omaha. Three victims were found in a home in North Omaha. Two died, with the third saved only through administration of multiple doses of naloxone.
“It was pretty scary how close she was to death,” Fornoff said. “If not for the person calling in (to 911) from this party, she would not have survived.”
Narcotics investigators probing overdose events try to trace the drugs back to the dealers and ultimately to the cartels supplying the drugs. Complicating such efforts is that the pills today are frequently bought and sold online in the dark reaches of the internet.
Still, just during the first six months of 2022, DEA agents seized more than 150,000 pills in Nebraska, double the 83,000 seized in all of 2021. Some 32,000 were seized in Omaha in a single two-day period.
“We know we have a product out there people are dying from,” King said. “We’re trying to hold those accountable who are pushing this poison in our community.”
The DEA and Omaha police are in the early stages of setting up a task force to focus on fentanyl. But law enforcement officials are also treating overdoses as the public health crisis they’ve become.
The agencies are trying to educate the public on how lethal fentanyl can be, including through the DEA’s “One pill can kill” campaign.
Obviously, Fornoff said, officers would prefer that people stop abusing drugs, and if addicted, get into treatment. But if they are going to use, he encourages them to not do so while alone and to have naloxone present.
Naloxone, also called by its trade name Narcan, has been made widely available in area pharmacies, often for free. As a nasal spray or injected, the drug can be quickly administered when opioid users develop severe sleepiness or shallow breathing — the signs of an overdose.
Fornoff believes overdose deaths would be much higher in Omaha were it not for the increased

availability of naloxone. This year, about 6% of overdose cases in the city have resulted in death, down from 10% two years ago.
Fornoff also points out that Nebraska's Good Samaritan Law provides immunity from drug possession charges for people who call 911 to report that they or someone they know is experiencing a potential drug overdose.
"Our focus is trying to make sure people don't die," he said.
Schroeder said the situation today is even more scary and dangerous than it was a decade ago when she lost her son. She now serves on the board of Coalition Rx, a local nonprofit working to prevent the abuse of prescription drugs.
As another tool in that fight, Coalition Rx is in discussions with the Douglas County Health Department about setting up a county opioid fatality review board.
Such boards have been established in other cities and states to look into the circumstances behind overdose deaths. The idea is to identify trends that can lead to new public health and law enforcement strategies to protect the public, said Edward DeSimone, a professor of pharmacy sciences at Creighton University who also serves on the board of Coalition Rx.
DeSimone, who teaches about addiction and substance use disorders, said the key is to try to keep people from using in the first place. As with most drugs, he said, once use and abuse becomes addiction, the vast majority of people are powerless against it.
"They think, 'It's only a prescription drug,'" DeSimone said. "That's a mindset that's killing a lot of people today."
By Henry J. Cordes

OWH: Nebraska developer gears up to win OK for RV park/airboat marina on Platte River

The controversial proposal to build an RV and airboat park along the Platte River may still have life.
Brad Brown, who builds high-end homes in the Omaha area, will attempt next week to convince the Valley City Council to greenlight his plan to turn approximately 92 acres along the river into an RV park.
Brown's proposal, which was rejected by the Valley Planning Commission in June, goes before the City Council on Tuesday.
In a text message Wednesday, Brown said he and his team have fine-tuned their proposal.
"Over the past 6 weeks, we have worked hard to listen to the concerns of our neighbors and revise our development plan consistent with the Douglas County Comprehensive Development Plan for floodways (the river side of the levee)," he wrote. "We further researched and revised our development plan to be substantially similar to the recreational and camping areas created by the Papio-River Natural Resource District."
Brown declined to say what changes he is making, saying that as a courtesy to the Valley City Council, he wanted to present his updated plan to them first.
Opponents fear he could receive a favorable vote. The result, they say, would bring noise, congestion and declining property values to their river getaway.
"It is my understanding that the City Council is considering overturning the decision of the Planning

Commission," said Rich Tesar, who owns property nearby and is an elected board member of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. "We're told our property values could go down 25 to 30%. And there is a lot of concern about the airboat noise — it will be like living next to an airport."

Airboats are a type of boat designed to travel across shallow water. They are propelled forward by an industrial-sized fan that is powered by an automotive or jet engine. Passengers and pilots must wear ear protection when riding in them.

The Platte River Resort, as it would be called, would have space for about 290 RVs and 15 to 20 airboats, based on available information.

The park would be located along .75 miles of riverfront property where West Maple dead-ends at the Platte River. The site is immediately downriver from the residential area known as Sokol Camp.

Opponents also say the proposal will increase flood risk and could run afoul of federal regulations that restrict building in the path of flooding. That's because the RV park would be in the floodway, the area along a river that is most heavily regulated.

Domina Law Group, in a letter to the Valley City Council, argues that the development could lead to the community losing access to federal flood insurance and incurring significant related costs. Domina represents Curtis Acres Homeowners Association.

Brown has said his plan is the highest and best use of land given that no permanent housing can be built in a floodway.

Promotional literature describes the park as Nebraska's premier RV resort. Brown has said he would require users to sign six-month rental agreements at $1,000 a month, with a $4,000 down payment. The camp would only be open April 1 to Oct. 31, to avoid that time of the year when ice jam flooding occurs on the river.

At the June planning meeting, Brown described the RV park as an economic development tool that would draw visitors to the Valley area to eat and shop.

Opponents have lawyered up, circulated petitions and posted signs opposing the park. A number of wealthy Omaha families own property in the area.

The four-person Valley City Council is scheduled to vote on the issue at its Aug. 9 meeting. Should the council deadlock, the mayor will cast the tie-breaking vote. Valley's council members did not return requests for comment.

Mayor Cindy Grove said she hasn't formed an opinion on the development.

"There are a lot of things outstanding," she said of the problems cited by the Planning Commission. "The developer is working to address those items."

By Nancy Gaarder

OWH: Douglas County reports four more suspected cases of monkeypox

The Douglas County Health Department reported four more suspected cases of monkeypox Friday, bringing to 10 the total number of suspected cases in Douglas County.

As with the previous cases, the four new cases are in men under 50. The Health Department has begun tracing the contacts of those with suspected monkeypox. The virus that causes the illness is

spreading mostly through close, intimate contact with someone who has monkeypox.
As of Friday, the United States had tallied 7,510 cases of monkeypox, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least 13 cases have been reported in Nebraska, including three in Lancaster County. In Iowa, Pottawattamie County reported its first suspected case earlier this week. Federal health officials on Thursday declared monkeypox a public health emergency.
Douglas County health officials said Friday that their supply of vaccine against monkeypox remains extremely limited and would be approved only for individuals at highest risk from the virus. They also asked for patience as they work to get more vaccine. County health officials have said they believe the risk to the general public remains low. Supplies of the two-shot vaccine, called Jynneos, remain limited nationwide.
The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services noted in a July 29 advisory to health care providers that the state at that time had received 205 courses of the vaccine.
The state is prioritizing the shots for people who have had close contact with someone with monkeypox, for health care professionals who might be exposed to monkeypox on the job and for those at highest risk of contracting the virus.
Those at highest risk are primarily men who have sex with men, particularly those with multiple sexual partners and those who attend social events where sex is involved.
Douglas County health officials have advised residents with a characteristic monkeypox rash, which looks like pimples or blisters, to contact a health care provider, preferably before going to a clinic. A person who suspects monkeypox but does not have a health care provider should call the Health Department at 402-444-3400.
The illness may start with a fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes or exhaustion. The incubation period generally is one to two weeks but can range from five days to three weeks.
By Julie Anderson

Nebraska Examiner: Corn and soybean ‘sweat’ helps make Nebraska summers more humid

ASHLAND, Nebraska — Nebraskans like to complain about the humidity this time of year. But some might not realize that the corn and soybeans that help power the state’s economy are part of what’s making farmers and their customers sweat.
All plants release into the air much of the moisture their roots absorb from the ground. But the weather is muggier in these parts in July and August than it otherwise would be because corn and soybeans release more moisture than most crops.
Scientists and farmers call this evapotranspiration. The more common term is “corn sweat.”
Those who monitor the impact of that moisture say corn and soybeans make it more humid here because Nebraska and its neighbors grow a lot of both.
Nebraska farmers produced 1.85 billion bushels of corn in 2021, third most in the nation, according to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Farmers here raised 351 million bushels of soybeans, good for fourth in the nation.
Barb Mayes Boustead, an Omaha-area meteorologist, helped spark discussion about “corn sweat”

recently by writing a column about it for the Washington Post. She wrote that densely planted acres make summers in the Midwest and Great Plains feel hotter.

Corn releases a lot of "sweat": One acre of planted corn can release up to 4,000 gallons of water a day, she wrote. Soybeans are no slouch, either, she explained. Evaporated moisture from rivers, ponds, lakes and the Gulf of Mexico make a difference, too.

Evapotranspiration from corn and soybeans aren't the only factors, Boustead said in an interview Friday.

"But the moisture they release into the air does add in a measurable way to the humidity … of more than just the fields," Boustead said. "People can feel it in cities like Omaha and Lincoln."

State Sen. Curt Friesen grows corn and soybeans on his 1,300-acre farm in Henderson, a town of 991 people southwest of York. He said summertime spikes in midsummer humidity are just part of life "when you live out here in the middle of corn country."

He chuckled at Boustead's finding that an Iowa cornfield can be muggier than Miami Beach. It's rough this time of year to change a tire on an irrigation center pivot in the middle of a humid cornfield, where no breeze can reach you, he said.

"You just deal with it," Friesen said. "It's just the way it's always been. I always think it's more stifling in the city when you're surrounded by concrete, and the buildings block the wind."

Friesen, who formerly served on both the Nebraska Corn Board and National Corn Growers Association, said his slice of east-central Nebraska was a little less muggy in the 1950s and 1960s, when fewer acres of farmland were irrigated. He said you can feel the difference when the plants let out more moisture.

Al Dutcher, the Nebraska Extension agriculture climatologist, said irrigation plays some role in what's changing. Federal farm programs and their impact on farmers' planting choices also have significant influence, he said.

More acres in parts of Kansas, Nebraska and North and South Dakota that used to plant wheat have been shifting toward corn and soybeans. That matters, he said, because wheat reaches its peak point of letting moisture go in the spring and fall.

Because more people are planting corn and soybeans from Texas to central Canada, Dutcher said, the midsection of the United States is seeing more concentrated moisture from crops that release more moisture at the same time of year, in midsummer.

Nationally, 90 million acres have been planted with corn and soybeans. That's the equivalent, he said, of planting Nebraska border to border 3.7 times with the top two crops contributing moisture into the atmosphere.

"The reason I'm confident we are seeing more moisture is the expansion of the Corn Belt," Dutcher said. "Some has to do with farm programs, how they're set up — and individual producers looking at prices and chasing an opportunity."

Dennis Todey, who directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Midwest Climate Hub in Ames, Iowa, said Iowa and other Midwestern states are used to the humidity spikes of "corn sweats" because they long ago shifted to corn and soybeans.

Great Plains states are feeling more of that shift today, he said. "Corn sweats" and the combined effects of a changing climate are making it feel hotter, boosting dew points and the heat index.

Weather and climate experts say we're seeing fewer 100-degree days than in the past, combined with warmer nights. That's because the extra moisture in the air makes it harder for temperatures to swing in either direction — higher or lower.

Higher-than-normal overnight low temperatures affect how much water it takes to grow crops, the

livelihood of livestock in cattle ranching states such as Nebraska, and the ability of people to rest well without air conditioning, Todey said.
"It is adding to that effect, where it's increasing the amount of moisture in the atmosphere," he said. "Even in cities, though we're not close to fields, there are enough corn and soybeans out there that it's influencing what we're feeling."
Although evapotranspiration is an issue worth highlighting, Dutcher said, he thinks members of the media are over-using the term "corn sweat."
Friesen said he understands the fascination over "corn sweat" and chuckled, saying people might be more interested to learn about "corn sex" and the distinctly sweet smell emitted when corn starts to pollinate.
Boustead, who said she wanted to help scientists more easily communicate why some of this month's summer heat wave feels worse than usual, wrote about "corn sweat" in all its glory.
"If it's muggy in Mid-America in midsummer," she wrote, "go ahead and blame the corn. Just don't forget its friends: soybeans, soil and waterways, just to name a few."
By Aaron Sanderford

Brownfield AG: Nebraska Lawyer Says Perkins County Canal Should Have A Legal Green Light

A Nebraska lawyer says Colorado doesn't have a legal right to halt development of the Perkins County Canal and reservoir system.
Steve Mossman with Mattson-Ricketts Law Firm tells Brownfield language in the 100-year-old agreement t is clear. "I don't think they really have a colorable argument that Nebraska does not have the right to build this project."
The 1923 South Platte River Compact between Nebraska and Colorado provides for a flow of 120 cubic feet per second during the irrigation season and allows Nebraska to divert 500 cfs during the non-irrigated season.
He says the compact would ensure that producers can maintain their water rights and it, "Provides that Nebraska can site the structure to divert water from the South Platte in Colorado. It provides Nebraska the right to eminent domain in Colorado for the diversion structure and the canal."
And, Mossman says, development in Colorado's Front Range has caused levels in the river to drop. "Colorado officials have been pretty open with the fact that they will get Nebraska 100 cubic feet-per-second and not a drop more and that the river will be shut down. That's untenable from Nebraska's standpoint."
He says once the water flows into Nebraska, there will be a series of reservoirs in Perkins County. "There are a number of potential uses for that water for irrigation, hydropower, municipalities, and to get it back into the South Platte to cool the power station."
The Nebraska Legislature appropriated more than $50 million dollars to study the project. Mossman says a legal ramification could be the Endangered Species Act.
By Kellan Heavican

OWH Midlands Voices: Those who show up should not be so easily dismissed

I remember sitting up front in the conference room many years ago, only a couple of us had arrived early. The meeting organizer walked in and casually remarked to his assistant, “There’s no one here.” No one here, I thought? I am here. A couple of others are here. Or is it just taken for granted that I, and a couple of others will always be there, will always show up, and do the work that needs to be done.

Over the years, I have belonged to various political and cultural organizations and worked on community projects, and I often heard the same refrain. It goes something like this: “We need more members/more young people, to move here/join our organization/get involved.”

The chairperson will stand in front of a room full of members and volunteers and lament that they see few young faces. They will say they need to draw more young people, or the organization will not be successful. The community leader stands in front of another room and complains that not enough young people are moving to the city.

Of course it is good to always be looking forward and to develop ways to draw more members for the cultural, community or political organization to prosper, for the city to grow and renew itself. But the approach has always struck me as limited in its vision. It takes for granted those who stayed, those who are in that room already, doing the work that needs to be done. The implication is that these members, these citizens, are not as important, not as good somehow, and can be taken for granted.

Often, unacknowledged ageism seems to underlie this. Look around the room of many cultural, political and community organizations and one sees a sea of middle-aged and older faces. Some of this is misleading, as there are meeting rooms around the community, or at universities, filled with younger people, working for their causes. These young people are also contributing, just in a different way. They are also likely to join those other organizations when they are out of the stages of life where they are focused on completing their education, establishing their careers and beginning families ... when they, too, are middle-aged or older.

States and cities are right to always be looking forward and looking for community growth. But in so doing, they should also appreciate those who stay, who continue to live, work and build businesses, and participate in cultural and social events. Often those who stay are treated as if invisible.

Political and cultural organizations should not take for granted the unpaid work and financial contributions by middle-aged and older members. Where would they be if all those volunteers stopped showing up, stopped doing the hard work and sharing their wisdom and monetary donations?

Let us look at what we already have, what is positive and good, and grow from that. Appreciate the people who are here, those who show up. After all, they built this place, these organizations, they did the work, put in the time, the effort.

Rebecca Fahrlander is a retired adjunct professor of psychology and sociology who previously worked in corporate management.

OWH Midlands Voices: What does Zawahiri's death mean for Al Qaeda and for U.S. homeland security?

Last week, the White House reported that the U.S. had killed al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri in a drone strike in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. Zawahiri had been hiding in plain sight, living in a safehouse owned by a top aide to senior Taliban leader Sirajuddin Haqqani.

This fatal event concludes a years-long effort, demonstrating the United States' firm resolve to hold accountable those who harm and threaten its citizens. That message is clear.

Less clear, for the moment, is what this news holds for the future of al Qaeda and, by extension, for U.S. homeland security.

As terrorism researchers at the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center at the University of Nebraska Omaha, we study militant leadership and the implications of high value targeting counterterrorism operations. Zawahiri's death is certainly a win for America, but it also presents the transnational terrorist organization with an opportunity to take stock and reposition itself in the global Salafi-jihadist enterprise. Much still depends on al Qaeda's plan for succession.

As a leader, Ayman al Zawahiri was often characterized as lacking charisma and being difficult to work with. He tended to delegate decisions about the network's daily operations to trusted subcommanders. In many ways, Zawahiri acted more as a custodian of the vision crafted by his predecessor, Usama bin Laden, than a firebrand entrepreneur. His recorded sermons are famously boring. He failed to curb the emergence of the Islamic State.

Still, Zawahiri was no lameduck. He played a central role in refurbishing al Qaeda's image during the rise of the Islamic State by overseeing a campaign to put a more moderate face on the terrorist organization. Perhaps most remarkable is that al Qaeda survived the pressure cooker of the Global War on Terror, even expanding its geographic footprint over the past decade. Zawahiri made key decisions that fundamentally shaped not just al Qaeda but also the contours of the broader Salafi-jihadist industry.

Now he is gone.

Prior to knowing Zawahiri's replacement, we can offer a few assessments with relatively high confidence. First, Zawahiri's death offers some sense of closure to the many of us who have tracked his role in the jihadist threat to the West. As Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), who sits on the House Armed Services Committee, stated, "it does send a message that, while it may take years, we do not forget those who attack us."

Unfortunately, however, Zawahiri's death does not sound the death knell for al Qaeda, or even significant disruption to its global operations. Former U.S. ambassador for counter-terrorism Nathan Sales underscored this recently, "we have to be careful not to read too much into this…one strike does not spell the end of al-Qaeda."

In fact, the group's future hinges on Zawahiri's successor and what kind of leader he proves to be. Indeed, the dramatic variation among potential front runners showcases the distinct pathways that al Qaeda could take from this critical juncture. An intelligence report released last month by the United Nations names four top prospects, including veteran al Qaeda commander Sayf al Adl, al Qaeda media manager (Zawahiri's son-in-law) Abdal-Rahman al-Maghrebi, as well as leaders of prominent affiliates based in the Sahel and Horn regions of Africa where al Qaeda is strongest. In

addition, other dark horse candidates almost certainly remain viable contenders. The opportunity is ripe for a younger, more dynamic emerging leader to take control.

Who eventually assumes leadership stands to affect a number of factors central to the future strategic and operational direction of the al Qaeda enterprise. If the above list of possible successors is any indication, al Qaeda faces a wide and diverse range of plausible futures. Important dynamics to monitor – which will be directly affected by who is in charge – include the group's geographic center of gravity, levels of cohesion among its network of affiliate groups, its relationship with the Islamic State, group ties to the Taliban, its status quo cooperation with the Iranian regime, and prioritization of U.S.-based targets in future terrorist attacks.

For the moment, we refrain from adding to the cacophony of conjecture as to who will step into power. Instead, we are more concerned with how the new leader will lead. In searching for clues about how Zawahiri's successor will make decisions, we look to the prior experiences that he will bring to bear. Does he have extensive military experience, or religious training that he can leverage to claim credibility and exude influence? What are his historic areas of operation? What existing kinship, ethnic, and professional networks can he leverage to enhance al Qaeda's organizational capacity? All of these factors will likely shape al Qaeda's vision and standard operating procedures post-Zawahiri.

These factors also carry potential significant implications for U.S. homeland security. The new leader may choose to reinvigorate al Qaeda's historic emphasis on "the far enemy" — and be better equipped to manage such a campaign. We must watch for signs of renewed campaigns to solicit the material support of American citizens and residents, recruit foreign fighters, and inspire attacks on the U.S. by inspired homegrown violent extremists.

Al Qaeda is still in the game, but Zawahiri's death marks a symbolic end to the 9/11-era of the Global War on Terror. Following Usama bin Laden's death in 2011, it took more than six weeks for the group to publicly announce Zawahiri's ascension to the top spot. During that space, the next chapter of transnational jihadism is being written.

Gina Ligon, Ph.D., is the director of NCITE Center and management professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Austin C. Doctor is an assistant professor of political science at UNO, the director of counterterrorism research initiatives at the NCITE Center and a fellow of the Modern War Institute at West Point.

LJS Editorial, 8/7: A new year, new challenges for schools

Next week, Lincoln Public Schools will open doors for the 2022-23 school year, welcoming back thousands of students as schools across the state begin to "restore normal" after more than two years of pandemic disruptions that kept students at home, in masks at school and altered what and how they were taught.

As the pandemic becomes endemic, masks could return to Lincoln on a school by school basis. But one of the biggest immediate challenges for schools is addressing the learning loss of the last two years.

That's the view of new Superintendent Paul Gausman, who told the Journal Star editorial board that LPS needs to further develop its strategy to address learning loss beyond the use of federal pandemic funding for reading and math interventionist and additional hours for teachers for work

with special-education and early childhood students.
Returning to normal, however, shouldn't mean returning to average. In fact, Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt urged a gathering of administrators to use lessons from the pandemic to improve schools and, specifically, address problems that plagued public education in the state before COVID emerged in March 2020.
Chief among those issues is chronic absenteeism. Some 77,000 students, 23% of the total population, were chronically absent last year. That number is 30,000 higher than pre-pandemic levels. But even that tally of 45,000 is too high.
"That's not the normal I want," Blomstedt told the administrators.
Similarly, a 31% gap between the math proficiency of English language learners and all students was identified last year, a 5% percent increase from the pre-pandemic gap.
"Again, I'm not happy with normal," Blomstedt said, while citing unacceptable achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity, poverty and special needs.
Speaking at the Administrators' Days conference in Kearney, which is something of a pep rally for those who run the state's schools, Blomstedt didn't offer any specific recommendations for addressing the problems. Nor will those solutions likely come from the State Board of Education. Rather, they must be worked out district by district. It is at that local level, as it should be, that school boards and superintendents need to be committed to finding ways to bridge the achievement gaps and teachers committed to implementing those strategies.
That is the only way to truly fulfill the Nebraska constitution's requirement of a free education, and just as important, laying the groundwork to hit the target set by the Legislature of least 70% of 25- to 34-year-old Nebraskans having a degree, certificate, diploma or other postsecondary or industry-recognized credential with economic value by 2030.
Those degrees and credentials are critical for 21st century economic success, and they simply can't be achieved if public schools don't improve beyond pre-pandemic normal as they prepare students for post-graduation life.

Nebraska Examiner: Cook Political Report now rates Bacon-Vargas race a toss-up

LINCOLN — A much-followed national political analyst is now rating Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District matchup between U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., and Democrat State Sen. Tony Vargas a toss-up.
A column Friday by David Wasserman in the nonpartisan Cook Political Report said it's clear that this week's "emphatic" rejection in Kansas of an anti-abortion ballot issue has "swiftly galvanized Democrats."
Wasserman, who moved the race from "likely Republican" to a "toss-up," wrote that Bacon's narrow victories in 2018 and 2020 in the Omaha-based district "are starting to look more like a function of far-left, pro-single payer Democrat Kara Eastman's limited appeal than his own strength."
"Multiple private surveys taken by both parties," according to Wasserman, are now showing Bacon, a retired brigadier general, tied with or trailing a more moderate Democrat, Vargas.
Vargas, a former Omaha School Board member who once taught in Brooklyn, is now emphasizing

Bacon's responses to a 2016 questionnaire from Nebraska Right to Life in which the congressman said he opposed abortion exceptions for rape, incest and a mother's life.
In a press release Friday, Vargas called the shift to a "toss-up" a "major national development."
"But it only confirms what Nebraska voters already know — that Don Bacon has changed and he's no longer the right person to represent this district," Vargas said.
A spokeswoman for the Bacon campaign said that Vargas is just as "extreme" as Eastman.
"Sen. Vargas's anti-police, weak on crime record coupled with his past efforts to raise (state income) taxes in Nebraska to the fifth highest in the nation shows he will be a rubber stamp for Nancy Pelosi," said spokeswoman Danielle Jensen, citing Platte Institute testimony on a 2019 proposal by Vargas.
Wasserman wrote that Republicans aren't panicking and maintain that Bacon has always started his races in this position.
"But the issue threatens to put him in a serious bind in this suburban (district)," Wasserman wrote, one that President Joe Biden won in 2020 with about 56% of the vote.
The columnist said the vote in Kansas confirms that Democrats will use the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision to overturn abortion rights to "squeeze pro-life Republicans in Biden-won seats."
But, Wasserman added, it remains to be seen if worries about inflation will override concerns among independent voters.
By Paul Hammel

AP: Iowa abortion provider drops challenge to 24-hour wait law

DES MOINES (AP) — Planned Parenthood officials in Iowa said Friday that they have decided to dismiss their challenge to an Iowa law that requires abortion patients to wait 24 hours after their initial appointment to return to the doctor to get an abortion.
The case was the center of an Iowa Supreme Court ruling on June 14 in which the court allowed the law to go into effect, reversing a judge's ruling that it was unconstitutional. The court went the extra step of reversing a 2018 Iowa Supreme Court decision that said abortion was a protected right under the Iowa Constitution, potentially making it easer now for lawmakers to get abortion restrictions approved by the courts.
Abortion remains legal in Iowa for now, but Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds said she will ask the courts to revive a six-week abortion ban law that another judge had declared unconstitutional and blocked from implementation in 2019.
Planned Parenthood, which provides most abortions in Iowa, said it made the decision with its legal counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa to dismiss the 24-hour waiting period law.
Instead, Planned Parenthood will focus its efforts on fighting the governor's attempt to revive the six-week abortion ban and counter efforts by Republican lawmakers to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot that declares that no constitutional right to an abortion in Iowa exists.

AP: Senate Democrats pass budget package, a victory for Biden

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats pushed their election-year economic package to Senate passage Sunday, a hard-fought compromise less ambitious than President Joe Biden's original domestic vision but one that still meets deep-rooted party goals of slowing global warming, moderating pharmaceutical costs and taxing immense corporations.

The estimated $740 billion package heads next to the House, where lawmakers are poised to deliver on Biden's priorities, a stunning turnaround of what had seemed a lost and doomed effort that suddenly roared back to political life. Cheers broke out as Senate Democrats held united, 51-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris casting the tie-breaking vote after an all-night session.

"Today, Senate Democrats sided with American families over special interests," President Joe Biden said in a statement from Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. "I ran for President promising to make government work for working families again, and that is what this bill does — period."

Biden, who had his share of long nights during his three decades as a senator, called into the Senate cloakroom during the vote on speakerphone to personally thank the staff for their hard work.

The president urged the House to pass the bill as soon as possible. Speaker Nancy Pelosi said her chamber would "move swiftly to send this bill to the president's desk." House votes are expected Friday.

"It's been a long, tough and winding road, but at last, at last we have arrived," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., ahead of final votes.

"The Senate is making history. I am confident the Inflation Reduction Act will endure as one of the defining legislative feats of the 21st century," he said.

Senators engaged in a round-the-clock marathon of voting that began Saturday and stretched late into Sunday afternoon. Democrats swatted down some three dozen Republican amendments designed to torpedo the legislation. Confronting unanimous GOP opposition, Democratic unity in the 50-50 chamber held, keeping the party on track for a morale-boosting victory three months from elections when congressional control is at stake.

The bill ran into trouble midday over objections to the new 15% corporate minimum tax that private equity firms and other industries disliked, forcing last-minute changes.

Despite the momentary setback, the "Inflation Reduction Act" gives Democrats a campaign-season showcase for action on coveted goals. It includes the largest-ever federal effort on climate change — close to $400 billion — caps out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors on Medicare to $2,000 a year and extends expiring subsidies that help 13 million people afford health insurance. By raising corporate taxes and reaping savings from the long-sought goal of allowing the government to negotiate drug prices for Medicare, the whole package is paid for, with some $300 billion extra revenue for deficit reduction.

Barely more than one-tenth the size of Biden's initial 10-year, $3.5 trillion Build Back Better initiative, the new package abandons earlier proposals for universal preschool, paid family leave and expanded child care aid. That plan collapsed after conservative Sen. Joe. Manchin, D-W.Va., opposed it, saying it was too costly and would fuel inflation.

Nonpartisan analysts have said the 755-page "Inflation Reduction Act" would have a minor effect on surging consumer prices.

Republicans said the new measure would undermine an economy that policymakers are struggling to keep from plummeting into recession. They said the bill's business taxes would hurt job creation and force prices skyward, making it harder for people to cope with the nation's worst inflation since the 1980s.

"Democrats have already robbed American families once through inflation, and now their solution is to rob American families a second time," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., argued.

In an ordeal imposed on most budget bills like this one, the Senate had to endure an overnight "vote-a-rama" of rapid-fire amendments. Each tested Democrats' ability to hold together the compromise bill negotiated by Schumer, progressives, Manchin and the inscrutable centrist Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz.

Progressive Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., criticized the bill's shortcomings and offered amendments to further expand the legislation's health benefits, but those efforts were defeated. Republicans forced their own votes designed to make Democrats look soft on U.S.-Mexico border security and gasoline and energy costs, and like bullies for wanting to strengthen IRS tax law enforcement.

Before debate began, the bill's prescription drug price curbs were diluted by the Senate's nonpartisan parliamentarian who said a provision should fall that would impose costly penalties on drug makers whose price increases for private insurers exceed inflation.

It was the bill's chief protection for the 180 million people with private health coverage they get through work or purchase themselves. Under special procedures that will let Democrats pass their bill by simple majority without the usual 60-vote margin, its provisions must be focused more on dollar-and-cents budget numbers than policy changes.

But the thrust of Democrats' pharmaceutical price language remained. That included letting Medicare negotiate what it pays for drugs for its 64 million elderly recipients, penalizing manufacturers for exceeding inflation for pharmaceuticals sold to Medicare and limiting beneficiaries out-of-pocket drug costs to $2,000 annually.

The bill also caps Medicare patients' costs for insulin, the expensive diabetes medication, at $35 monthly. Democrats wanted to extend the $35 cap to private insurers but it ran afoul of Senate rules. Most Republicans voted to strip it from the package, though in a sign of the political potency of health costs seven GOP senators joined Democrats trying to preserve it.

The measure's final costs were being recalculated to reflect late changes, but overall it would raise more than $700 billion over a decade. The money would come from a 15% minimum tax on a handful of corporations with yearly profits above $1 billion, a 1% tax on companies that repurchase their own stock, bolstered IRS tax collections and government savings from lower drug costs.

Sinema forced Democrats to drop a plan to prevent wealthy hedge fund managers from paying less than individual income tax rates for their earnings. She also joined with other Western senators to win $4 billion to combat the region's drought.

Several Democratic senators joined the GOP-led effort to exclude some firms from the new corporate minimum tax.

The package keeps to Biden's pledge not to raise taxes on those earning less than $400,000 a year.

It was on the energy and environment side that compromise was most evident between progressives and Manchin, a champion of fossil fuels and his state's coal industry.

Clean energy would be fostered with tax credits for buying electric vehicles and manufacturing solar panels and wind turbines. There would be home energy rebates, funds for constructing factories building clean energy technology and money to promote climate-friendly farm practices and reduce pollution in minority communities.

Manchin won billions to help power plants lower carbon emissions plus language requiring more government auctions for oil drilling on federal land and waters. Party leaders also promised to push separate legislation this fall to accelerate permits for energy projects, which Manchin wants to include a nearly completed natural gas pipeline in his state.
Still, environmental groups hailed the passage as a milestone. "Tremendous progress," said Manish Bapna, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council, in a statement.

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