The State Journal-Register, Ted Schurter/Associated Press

Illinois State Police officers investigate the scene of a school bus wreck involving a tractor-trailer in the southbound lanes of Interstate 55 near mile marker 57 north of Litchfield on Monday.

School bus driver charged

LITCHFIELD (AP) — The driver of a school bus carrying 33 sixth-graders that slammed into a tractor-trailer in central Illinois on Monday has been charged with failing to reduce speed to avoid an accident.

An Illinois State Police spokesman says 66-year-old Henry Jaeger of Highland was charged. He was driving the school bus and didn't realize the tractor-trailer had slowed for construction traffic.

Eleven students were injured in the crash. The bus was headed to Grantfork Upper Elementary School in Highland from a field trip to the state Capitol in Springfield.

The bus rear-ended the truck a few miles north of the central Illinois community of Litchfield on Interstate 55.

The crash closed southbound Interstate 55 for several hours. There were 41 people on the bus, including the driver, chaperones and students.

Illinois may allow mini horses as service animals

BY SHANNON MCFARLAND
Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD — Horses could wind up being allowed in Illinois schools, stores and other public places — but only if they're specially trained to help disabled people and aren't much bigger than a golden retriever.

The state Senate voted Tuesday to add miniature horses to the list of service animals, like seeing-eye dogs, that can accompany people with disabilities. The 40-11 vote sends the measure to the Illinois House.

Miniature horses generally range from 24 inches to 34 inches tall and weigh 70 to 100 pounds, according to the disability rights section of the U.S. Department of Justice. They're already considered service animals by federal regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The horses wouldn't have unfettered access to all public places. Illinois businesses and schools could take into account the size and weight of the horse, whether the animal is controlled and housebroken or whether it would compromise safety requirements. The horses can wear backpacks or vests identifying them as service animals, but the legislation would not require such gear.

Advocates say guide horses have several characteristics that make them a valuable alternative when service dogs are not suitable. The Guide Horse Foundation says guide horses can be useful for people with severe allergies or phobias to dogs, or people who want an animal likely to live longer than a dog.

The foundation website says use of horses as helper animals began in 1999 and is still considered experimental.

Miniature horses usually have a docile nature but can be strong enough to provide support while their handler gets up from a chair. The foundation says they have shown excellent judgment and are not easily distracted by crowds.

Warden on leave during investigation

PONTIAC (AP) — The acting warden at a central Illinois prison is on paid leave pending an investigation, and a special prosecutor has been appointed in the case. But officials on Tuesday weren't providing any details.

Acting Pontiac Correctional Center warden Randy Pfister was arrested Thursday on suspicion of unlawful restraint, Livingston County officials said. He has not yet been charged. Illinois Department of Corrections spokeswoman Stacey Solano said a special prosecutor will handle the case.

Pontiac is about 40 miles northeast of Bloomington.

A woman who answered the telephone at a number listed for Pfister said he no longer lived there but took a message for him. He did not return the call and it wasn't immediately clear whether he had an attorney.

claiming the payoff could amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Chicago Democrat is introducing legislation that would create a Division of Internet Gaming within the state lottery. Under his proposal, that new division would make Illinois the first state to jump into the world of online gambling. Illinois is already the first to sell lottery tickets online.

"The state could organize the first major poker pool, garner worldwide popularity, and position itself as a 'hub' for multi-state and interna-

"We should not rush to vote on this proposal, blinded by some dollar signs," said Patty Schuh, spokeswoman for Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno, R-Lemont. "This is a massive expansion of gambling that deserves serious consideration."

The U.S. Justice Department says states can offer Internet gambling so long as it doesn't involve betting on sports teams. The ruling allowed Illinois to sell lottery tickets online, but it also opened the door to much broader gambling options.

Waukegan, chairs the Senate Gaming Committee and is a frequent advocate of expanding gambling in Illinois. He praised Cullerton's proposal as having "unlimited potential" and said it would not cut into business at Illinois casinos.

Millions of people are already gambling online, Link said, so there's no reason Illinois shouldn't get some of that money. And if Illinois acts quickly, he said, it could establish itself before other states jump in.

"It's better to be first than to be last," Link said.

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