

ROUGHT:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

We will continue to identify every resource possible for producers who have been affected by this drought," Acting Director Bob Brummer said. "We are working closely with the agricultural community of Illinois and the USDA to continually evaluate conditions throughout the state." Farmers in USDA designated areas can seek assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including emergency loans. Only eligible counties are eligible for assistance for eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for assistance.

In addition to the USDA, Governor Quinn announced that the Illinois Finance Authority (IFA) will partner with local banks to activate four programs designed to accelerate support to eligible farmers:

Agricultural Restructuring Guarantee Program provides an 85 percent guarantee with a term up to 10 years on a local bank loan up to \$500,000 used to consolidate existing debt or spread payments out over a longer period.

Working Capital Guarantee Program provides an 85 percent guarantee on a commitment up to 10 years on a local bank loan up to \$250,000 used for input costs related to planting and raising agricultural crops.

Agricultural Loan Participation Program profiles IFA purchase of up to \$100,000 of a customer's bank loan to reduce interest with a loan term up to 10 years.

Rural Development Loan Program provides loans under a revolving program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development from \$50,000 to \$250,000 for economic development financing in communities with less than 10,000 population.

The Governor also

launched Drought.Illinois.gov, a web repository for information on drought conditions, disaster declarations and related information. The website includes quick access to resources like the Department of Agriculture's "Illinois Hay Directory" which can help Illinois producers locate hay to feed their livestock. Many pastures have been badly damaged this year, making the Hay Directory especially important. Printed copies of the Hay Directory also are available by calling (217) 782-4925.

The drought gripping the United States is the widest since 1956, according to new data released today by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In Illinois, a key corn-producing state, "more than half the corn crop is in poor to very poor condition, and it's fading fast," Illinois Farm Bureau President Philip Nelson told The Associated Press on Friday. "The southern third of Illinois is in dire straits, and the northern two-thirds is hanging on by a thread."

"You don't have to drive any distance to see how bad it is," Nelson said, referencing southern Illinois, which he said has received only a half-inch of rain since April, "from the windshield, you can see they lost the corn crop."

It's a story playing out across the Midwest, where almost a third of the nation's corn crop has been damaged by heat and drought so severe that a number of Corn Belt farmers in the hardest-hit areas have cut down their crops midway through the growing season.

Corn farmers had expected this to be a record year when they sowed 96.4 million acres, the most since 1937. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicted they would get 166 bushels per acre. But after months with little or no rain and widespread extreme heat, the USDA has revised that esti-

mate, saying it now expects farmers to average just 146 bushels per acre this year. That would be an improvement from a decade ago, when the average was about 129 bushels.

Fifty-five percent of the continental U.S. was in a moderate to extreme drought by the end of June. NOAA's National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C., said in its monthly State of the Climate report. That's the largest percentage since December 1956, when 58 percent of the country was covered by drought.

This summer, 80 percent of the U.S. is abnormally dry, and the report said the drought expanded in the West, Great Plains and Midwest last month with the 14th warmest and 10th driest June on record.

The nation's corn and soybean belt has been especially hard hit over the past three months, the report said. That region has experienced its seventh warmest and 10th driest April-to-June period.

"Topsoil has dried out and crops, pastures and rangeland have deteriorated at a rate rarely seen in the last 18 years," the report said.

The report is based on a data set going back to 1895 called the Palmer Drought Index, which feeds into the widely watched and more detailed U.S. Drought Monitor. It reported last week that 61 percent of the continental U.S. was in a moderate to exceptional drought. However, the weekly Drought Monitor goes back only 12 years, so climatologists use the Palmer Drought Index for comparing droughts before 2000.

In southern Illinois' Effingham County, Kenny Brummer is facing a double whammy — the drought has ravaged the 800 acres of corn he grows for his 400 head of cattle and some 30,000 hogs, leaving him scrambling to find the couple of hundred thousand bushels of feed he'll need. "Where am I going to get

that from? You have concerns about it every morning when you wake up," Brummer, 59, said today. "The drought is bad, but that's just half of the problem on this farm."

The Agriculture Department is streamlining the process for farmers to apply for federal disaster help, as well as lowering the interest rate on emergency loans to 2.25 percent from 3.75 percent. As much as \$39 million is available under the program, though Vilsack said the projected cost to federal taxpayers is roughly \$4 million since loans are ultimately repaid.

The federal government also will help farmers use part of the land set aside in a conservation program for hay or grazing, as the drought is expected to reduce the amount of corn available for feed.

Neighboring states already have taken action. In Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker has declared a state of emergency in 42 southern counties due to drought or abnormally dry conditions. It's the state's first such declaration since 2009, and is good for 60 days, allowing permits to be issued more quickly for farmers to temporarily use stream or lake water for irrigation.

Vilsack and Walker encouraged farmers to report crop conditions to their local U.S. Farm Service Agency office, as information can be used for requesting a federal disaster declaration.

Crop insurance could take away some of the sting of this year's woeful performance. The USDA's crop insurance program now covers 264 million acres, 1.14 million policies and \$110 billion worth of liability on about 500,000 farms.

In Illinois, Illinois Farm Bureau spokesman John Hawkins said 60 to 80 percent of the acreage is covered by some form of insurance.

For more information, Drought.Illinois.gov.

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Obama to mark 51st birthday with hometown Chicago fundraiser

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama will mark his 51st birthday next month with "a little celebration" at his Chicago home. First lady Michelle Obama says in a fundraising email to supporters that the campaign is planning a fundraiser at their house in Chicago's Kenwood neighborhood — and grass-roots donors can have a chance to get on the guest list.

Supporters who give \$3 or more to Obama's re-election campaign automatically will be entered into the contest to join Obama at the fundraiser.

Mrs. Obama says her husband's birthday will be "one of the last opportunities he'll get for a little downtime before the final weeks of the election."

Obama's birthday is August 4.



RIVER:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

Mississippi River basin, said Bryan Husted, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Memphis. Sections of Tennessee and regions to the north are experiencing drought conditions. Most areas in the Mid-South are 10 inches or more below normal for rainfall for the year, the weather service said.

Lower-than-normal snowfall levels over the northern plains this winter are also an issue, Husted said. Less snow means less water from melted snow making its way into the Mississippi and the rivers that feed it.

The record low on the Memphis gauge is minus-10.7, set during a severe drought in 1988. That year, a stretch of over 100 miles south of Memphis was temporarily closed, Pogue said.

Near Greenville, Miss., more than 700 barges were backed up on the river. Crews dredged day and night to make the river deep enough for traffic to resume.

A paper published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society in September 1989 estimated that the drought caused the U.S. barge industry to suffer a 10 percent income loss, with total losses at about \$1 billion that year.

The Army Corps predicts

that the river will drop to within about 2 feet of the record, but it is not expected to reach it, Pogue said. So far, no stretch of the river has been closed, but at least one harbor, in Hickman, Ky., has been shut down.

Since 1988, the Corps has worked to improve the navigation system in the river, making sure channels are sufficiently deep. That means the river wouldn't necessarily close, even if the record low is reached this year, Pogue said.

Although Coast Guard officials say closings are not imminent, there have been problems. Towed barge groundings are up compared with years when the river's water level was normal, said agency spokesman Ryan Gomez said.

Meanwhile, barge operators have to carry less cargo to avoid running aground, which means they make less money each trip.

Nashville-based Ingram Barge Company, which operates on the Mississippi and other rivers, has seen business suffer, said Ingram spokesman Keel Hunt.

"Captains and crews know how to navigate through waters high or low," Hunt said. "In a time like this, however, it's a particular challenge because in some cases it's just very difficult to move a barge full of products."

In Arkansas, the water is so low where the White River meets the Mississippi that barges must pass through a

series of river locks. And in New Orleans, the Mississippi is so low that the wooden pilings of the wharfs near the French Quarter have been exposed.

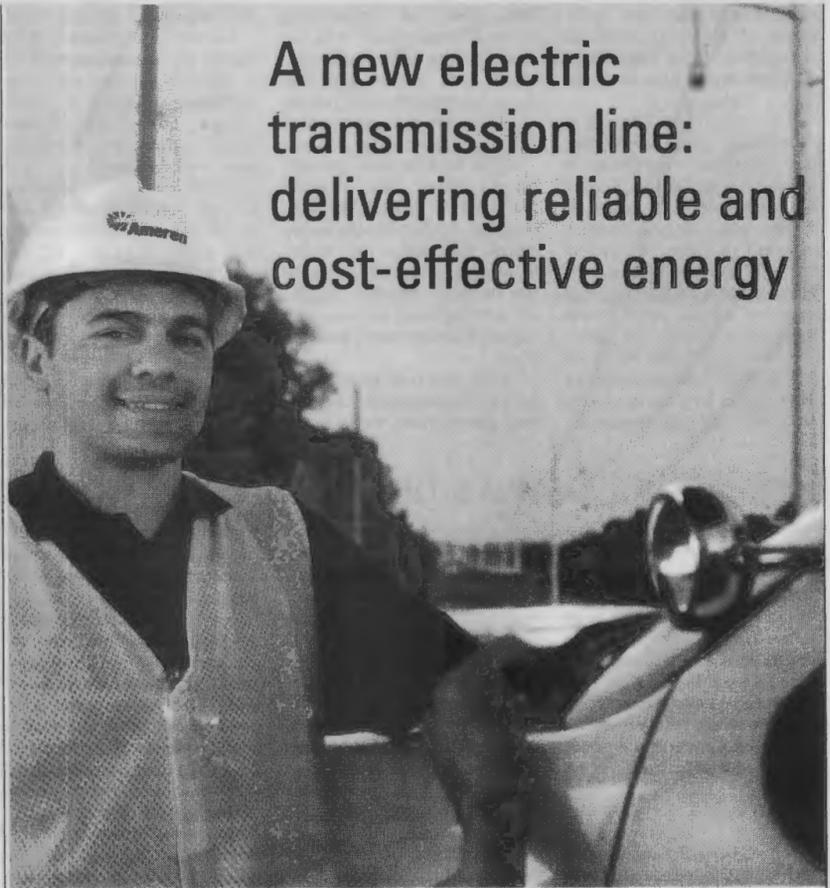
But shippers and river pilots reported no navigation problems. Michael Lorino, the head of a pilots group that takes ships across the pass at the mouth of the Mississippi, said recent dredging by the Army Corps had made it a smooth ride for ocean-going vessels.

Anthony Hauer, director of the port at Natchez, Miss., said his port has a deep water channel, and it's not likely barges would have to lighten their loads there.

At Greenville, port director Hart checks the river's level every day. This is harvest season, a busy time for a port that ships goods from the heart of Mississippi's farmlands. According to the Mississippi Department of Intermodal Planning website, the port at Greenville ships potash, rice, corn, wheat, grain feed ingredients, fertilizer and scrap.

A major concern at Greenville and other ports is that the entrance to the river could get too shallow. If that happens, barges could be forced to carry lighter loads to make it to the channel, and the port is hoping to dredge its opening to the river to keep traffic flowing.

"We seem to be living in a day and age of extremes. We had the flood last year and now we have low water," Hart said.



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DROUGHT:

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ting any water conservation measures, but that doesn't mean a notice won't be issued in the future.

Water superintendent for Taylorville, Dave Speagle said that lake levels are not even down three inches. When lake levels start going down in feet, the city starts looking at water conservation, Speagle said. "Right now, we're in good shape."

Taylorville Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief Mike Crews encourages individuals to save water indoors by assuring there are no leaky toilets or faucets. As for outdoor water conservation, he would suggest cutting back on lawn watering and irrigating strategically. "Use low gallonage spray if you wash your car, check outdoor faucets for leaks, hold off burning outside if at all possible," he said.

Although the city has no formal plan for large fires, Crews said, "If we have a large fire I don't see any problems with extinguishment at this point. If a lack of water did come into play, we would change our water application tactics or allow a fire to burn itself out if applicable."

The statewide average precipitation for June was 1.8 inches, which is 2.3 inches below normal and 43 percent of normal. It was the eighth driest June on record. June 1988 was the driest on record at 1.1 inches, according to the Illinois State Water Survey at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The statewide average temperature for the month was 72.9 degrees, a full degree above normal. Additionally, about 56 sites broke daily records on June 28 and 29.

Safety on the Fourth

There is a heightened danger from fireworks due to overly dry ground conditions. "With the current drought conditions, just one stray spark from a firework can ignite a serious brush fire and could threaten peoples' lives and property. This year more than ever we encourage people to leave the fireworks to the professionals and consider attending public firework displays," said State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis in a press release. Mayor Brotherton said that with the dryer weather and higher temperatures, the fire department is at a heightened sense of awareness, especially during the Fourth of July holiday when more people are shooting off fireworks. However, the mayor noted that fireworks are illegal. "TFD will be providing suppression forces as we always have just in case," said Crews.

Beloved Andy Griffith dies, age 86

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Andy Griffith, who made homespun Southern wisdom his trademark as the wise sheriff in "The Andy Griffith Show" and the rumpled defense lawyer in "Matlock," died today. He was 86.

Griffith died about 7 a.m. at his coastal home, Dare County Sheriff Doug Doughtie said.

"Mr. Griffith passed away this morning at his home peacefully and has been laid to rest on his beloved Roanoke Island," Doughtie told The Associated Press, reading from a family statement.

He had suffered a heart attack and underwent quadruple bypass surgery in 2000.

Griffith's career spanned more than a half-century on stage, film and television, but he would always be best known as Sheriff Andy Taylor in the television show set in a North Carolina town not too different from Griffith's own hometown of

Mount Airy, N.C.

Griffith set the show in the fictional town of Mayberry, N.C., where Sheriff Taylor was the dutiful nephew who ate pickles that tasted like kerosene because they were made by his loving Aunt Bee, played by the late Frances Bavier. He was a widowed father who offered gentle guidance to son Opie, played by Ron Howard, who grew up to become the Oscar-winning director of "A Beautiful Mind."

Griffith's "pursuit of excellence and the joy he took in creating served generations and shaped my life," Howard tweeted. "I'm forever grateful."

Don Knotts was the goofy Deputy Barney Fife, while Jim Nabors joined the show as Gomer Pyle, the unworldly, lovable gas pumper.

On "Matlock," which aired from 1986 through 1995, Griffith played a cagey Harvard-educated defense attorney who was Southern-bred and -mannered with a



practice in Atlanta. In his rumpled seersucker suit in a steamy courtroom (air conditioning would have spoiled the mood), Matlock could toy with a witness and tease out a confession like a folksy Perry Mason. This character — law-abiding, fatherly and lovable — was like a latter-day homage to Sheriff Andy Taylor, updated with silver hair and a shingle. "The Andy Griffith Show" was a loving portrait of the town where few grew up but many wished they did — a place where all foibles are forgiven and friendships are forever.

wins Griffith a Grammy for best Southern gospel, country gospel or bluegrass gospel album.

2003: Statue of Andy and Opie from "The Andy Griffith Show" unveiled in Raleigh, N.C., part of a series of TV-related statues in various cities sponsored by the cable network TV Land.

2005: Receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civil award.

2007: Gains new acclaim playing the cranky diner owner in the hit independent film "Waitress."

2008: Teams with country star Brad Paisley on the video for Paisley's single "Waitin' on a Woman." It wins Country Music Association award for best video of the year.

2009: Plays the role of Grandpa Joe in the film "Play the Game."

Highlights of Andy Griffith's career:

1953: Has a hit single as Deacon Andy Griffith with the comic monologue "What It Was, Was Football!"

1955: Becomes a Broadway star with the hit comedy "No Time for Sergeants," gaining a Tony nomination for best featured (supporting) actor. (Don Knotts also is in the play.) Reaches the record charts again with top 30 "Make Yourself Comfortable."

1957: Makes movie debut in "A Face in the Crowd," playing a homespun television commentator whose corruption is hidden from the public.

1958: Reprises Broadway role in film version "No Time for Sergeants"; once again, Knotts is in the cast.

1959: Returns to Broadway in "Destry Rides Again." Nominated for Tony as best actor in a musical.

October 1960: "The Andy Griffith Show" premieres on CBS. The gentle comedy, co-starring Knotts, Ron Howard, Frances Bavier and Jim Nabors, would become a television classic. It runs for eight years and has remained a favorite in reruns.

1964-70: Spinoff "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.," starring Nabors, runs on CBS.

1968-71: "Mayberry R.F.D.," the sequel show without Griffith but with the Mayberry setting and some continuing characters, runs on ABC.

September 1986: "Matlock," an hour-long drama series starring Griffith as a Southern defense lawyer, premieres on NBC. Later moving to ABC, it runs until 1995.

1996: Release of "I Love to Tell the Story — 25 Timeless Hymns," an album of gospel songs. It

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Quinn: won't sign gambling bill for ethics law

CHICAGO (AP) — Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn says he won't sign a gambling expansion bill in exchange for a promise that legislators will pass an ethics law in the fall. Quinn made the announcement Monday at a ceremony during which he signed a measure into law that expands a tax credit program for businesses that hire veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Legislature passed the bill earlier this year that would create five new jobs — a land-based casino in Chicago and four on riverboats. Quinn also would allow for first time slot machines at horse racing tracks. That ailing industries are seeking additional opportunities to bring in billions of dollars. Quinn hasn't said whether he will veto the proposal or not, but he's hinted it's likely he would sign the bill.

Americans step up credit card use sharply

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans put more on their credit cards in May than in any single month since November 2007, one month before the Great Recession began. But overall credit card use is still well below where it was just before the downturn. Economists say May's increase was likely a temporary response to weaker hiring and poor wage growth and not a sign of sustained confidence in the economy. "We might see additional increases in credit card debt in the coming months," said Paul Edelstein, director of consumer financial economics at IHS Global Insight. "But they won't match the May surge." Consumer borrowing rose by \$17.1 billion in May from April, the Federal Reserve said Monday. The gain drove total borrowing to a seasonally adjusted \$2.57 trillion, nearly matching the all-time high reached in July 2008. Borrowing has increased steadily over the past two years. But most of the gains have been driven by auto and student loans, which rose to a record level of \$1.7 trillion in May. Consumers cut back sharply on credit card debt during the recession and immediately after. Only in the past year have they started to put more

on their credit cards and the gains have mostly been modest. That changed in May when the measure of credit card debt jumped by \$8 billion. Still, the level of debt for that category increased to only \$870 billion, or 2.2 percent above the post-recession low hit in April 2011. The category had totaled more than \$1 trillion before and shortly after the recession began. And consumers reached for their credit cards more often during a tough stretch for the economy. The job market slumped. Consumer confidence fell. And wages and salaries, which have barely kept up with inflation in the past year, stayed flat. "It is possible that households are relying more and more on credit cards to cover everyday expenses, given that job and income growth are so weak," said Edelstein. The economy created an average of just 75,000 jobs a month from April through June, down from an average of 225,000 jobs a month in the first quarter. Consumer confidence fell in June for the fourth straight month, according to the Conference Board. The group's index is closely watched because consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of economic activity.

The overall economy grew at a lackluster pace of 1.9 percent in the January-March quarter. Many economists believe growth slowed even further in the April-June quarter. Unless job growth picks up, consumer spending could weaken and drag on economic growth. Some economists believe the economy could get a boost in the second half from lower gas prices, which have been dropping sharply since April. More borrowing is generally viewed as a healthy sign for the economy. It suggests consumers are gaining confidence and growing more comfortable taking on debt. But it can also mean that more people are having trouble finding jobs and deciding to go back to school. Student loan debt has been rising sharply. Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors, said growth in consumer credit is still being held back by the weak gains in income. Households squeezed by stagnant pay are reluctant to take on debt at the pace they did before the recession, Naroff said. Households began borrowing less and saving more when the recession began and unemployment surged.

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Kincaid: three pets per household

Derek Parris
Breeze-Courier Writer

KINCAID — Kincaid has passed an ordinance that only allows each household three dogs, three cats, or any combination of dogs and cats that equal three. Residents of Kincaid should not panic if they have more than three cats or dogs, thanks to the exemption in the ordinance passed Monday evening. The Village of Kincaid Board of Trustees unanimously passed Ordinance 56 stating it is unlawful for any household to keep more than a total of three dogs or three cats, or a total of any combination, the limits of Kincaid. Reasons for the ordinance include the trustees' concern over the keeping of an unlimited number of dogs and cats in the Village is a nuisance and that it is in the best interest of the public health, safety, and welfare of the residents to limit the number of dogs and cats. The exemption, or 'grandfather rule,' states that households who currently have more than three dogs or three cats or a combination will not

be required to get rid of any animals, but when the existing animals do pass away or are removed from the household in any other matter, that animal shall not be replaced or substituted and the three pet limit shall then apply. The ordinance also states that a litter of pups or kittens can not be kept for a period of time exceeding three months from birth. An issue of a business that breeds dogs or cats was raised and the ordinance clearly states that any business or establishment that is zoned for this purpose will be held to different ordinances and zoning laws. Also on the agenda last night was the video gaming act, which the board passed unanimously. The ordinance states that all video gaming systems must comply with the video gaming act passed by the state in 2009 (230 ILCS 40/1 et seq.) which requires any establishment to comply with all state licenses and regulations. Currently one tavern in Taylorville is the only establishment in Christian County that has been approved for the Video Gaming License by the state. Kincaid trustees passed the

ordinance in anticipation of any establishments in the area meeting the state requirements so the that village has an ordinance in place to control the video gaming devices allowed within the city limits. The board decided to submit a new water contract to Jaisyville which would raise their rate ten percent. Currently, Jaisyville residents are paying \$12.18 per 1500 gallons used, which is exactly \$2 less than the \$14.18 that Kincaid residents are paying. The new contract that board is proposing, the ten percent raise, would provide the water for \$13.39 per 1500 gallons, which would allow Jaisyville to adjust the cost accordingly. The board members stated that this increase would be fair since the water rate that Kincaid pays to Taylorville has gone up ten percent every year. David Titus from SIMEC energy company spoke at the meeting, requesting that the village seek the electric aggregation opt out program. Titus spoke for about thirty minutes about the possibilities and benefits of the electric aggregation and fielded ques-

tions from electric customers from the area. The general consensus from board members after the meeting was to take the wait-and-see approach and the matter will be addressed at the next village board meeting, which will be held on August 13. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

TOP:

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starting in the last half of the year. Because hog prices are expected to be higher by that point, feed supplies will have to be rationed out, and yields for more normal crops will hopefully be in the

Hurt cautioned that those in the animal industry need to articulate the extreme financial stress they are likely to experience in the coming 12 to 15 months. "The immediate view is that crop producers will bear the brunt of the financial losses, but losses in animal industries will be enormous over the next year, perhaps becoming considerably greater than for the crop sector," Hurt said. "This

articulation by the animal industries is important to alert consumers to higher retail food prices but also to policymakers. Policymakers will likely have an influence on release of CRP lands for grazing and haying, on any potential disaster payments from the federal government, and in helping the EPA/USDA make decisions about the size for the 2013 Renewable Fuels Standard," he said.

SCHOOL:

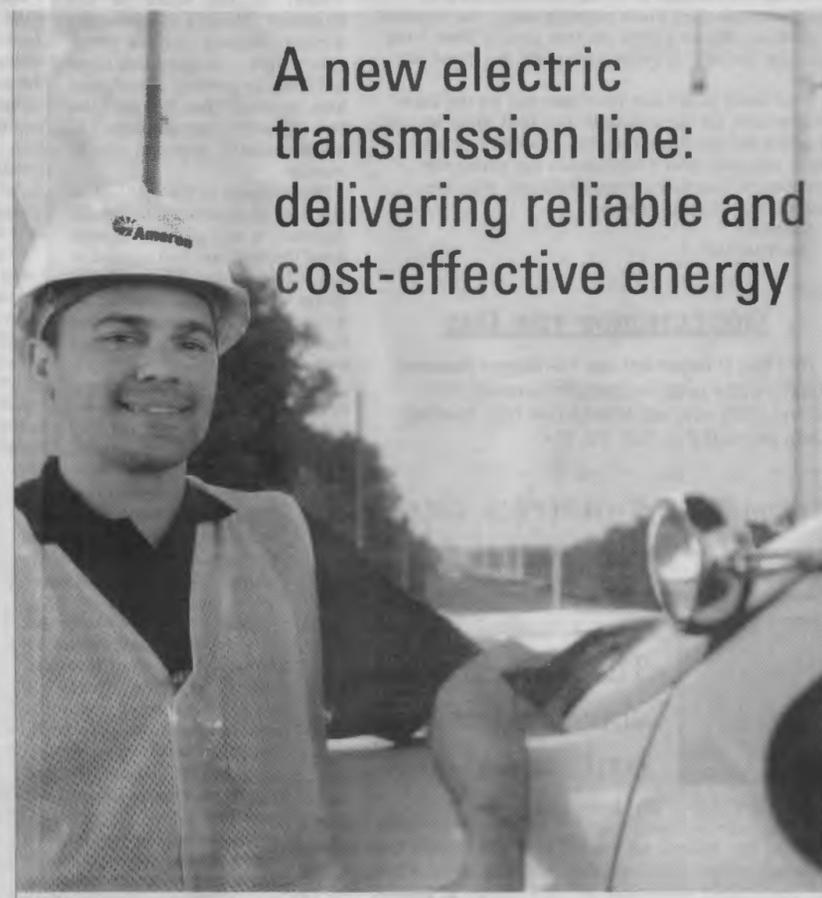
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Fuerstenau also announced that Paris was voted into the Little Illinois Conference and will be leaving the conference in the 2015 school year as Taylorville joins. Board member Jim Fierich said he was approached by a local businessman who asked how it would cost to re-do tennis courts. Dr. Fuerstenau said he would provide exact numbers. Board members said it was discussed in the past and they knew it was possible, possibly in the

price range of \$50k. In other news, members of the Board of Education: -approved the resignation of Sharon Menichetti, kindergarten teacher at Memorial Elementary School; -approved recommendations to employ: Margaret Burgener, part-time ticket manager at Taylorville High School (THS); Adam Vocks, THS varsity girls bowling coach; Brian Sample, THS assistant varsity baseball coach; and Jason Hadley, THS freshman baseball coach; -approved the second reading of Board policies; -approved awarding two diplomas to two young ladies who have fulfilled necessary requirements for graduation; -adopted a resolution for

allowance of Inter-Fund Transfers. This annual practice allows the district to transfer money on a loan basis between funds to cover need expenses for the fiscal year; -approved the fiscal year 2013 general supply order in the amount of \$18,054; -approved the 2012-13 textbook inventory order in the amount of \$31,841.01; Board member David Driskell was absent from Monday night's meeting. Taylorville Board of Education meetings are held every second Monday of the month in the Unit Office at 7 p.m.

Laura Wolfe can be reached at lwolfe@breezecourier.com or 824-2233.



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JACKSONVILLE, Ill. (AP) — Relocators of the FutureGen coal project say geologic and engineering tests confirmed the suitability of the site in western Illinois for underground carbon-dioxide storage. The FutureGen Alliance said Tuesday the results show the group to apply for all permits for the site in Morgan County near Redosta. The Alliance says it will no longer maintain separate sites in Christian and Douglas counties. The FutureGen Alliance is a group of coal and power companies planning to refit a coal-fired power plant in Redosta with technology that removes carbon dioxide from coal and stores it underground. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas linked to climate change. The project has cost billions in federal funding. Initial plans to build a plant near Mattoon in east-central Illinois and store CO2 there through.

of I to offer
free online
courses

CHICAGO (AP) — The University of Illinois plans to offer seven free online classes this fall. The university is teaming with an online education company called Coursera. The Urbana-Champaign campus is joining schools such as Princeton, Stanford and the University of Michigan, who already have partnerships with Coursera. Chancellor Phyllis Wise said the U of I is the only public university on the list and that means Illinois' expertise in areas that other schools don't. The courses beginning this fall will include organic chemistry and microeconomics. They won't count toward a degree. Coursera co-founder Andrew Ng (eng) says the courses his company hosts are free, but universities may receive some revenue from charging students \$30 to \$80 for a certificate showing they completed a course.

Mitsubishi
plant in Ill.
to produce
outlander

NORMAL, Ill. (AP) — Mitsubishi officials say the company's plant in central Illinois will produce the 2013 Outlander Sport for the U.S. market. It will be the compact crossover model of the Outlander. Mitsubishi has invested \$45 million in the plant in Normal to begin production of the utility vehicle which was previously produced in Japan. The company is slated to begin production of 50,000 a year with a goal of producing 70,000 a year.

Jesse Jackson Jr.'s absence goes unnoticed in Washington

CHICAGO (AP) — When Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. disappeared last month for a mysterious medical leave, it took weeks for anyone in Washington to even notice.

It was a measure of the disconnect between his famous name and his stature on Capitol Hill. The 47-year-old son of the legendary civil rights leader has become simply a congressman who can deliver the pork back home.

Jackson arrived in Washington 17 years ago with a star quality that set him apart from his 434 colleagues in the House. Yet he has never lived up to those high expectations on the national stage, gaining a reputation in the nation's capital for quixotic pursuits such as trying to impeach President George W. Bush and push through constitutional amendments that had no chance at all.

One big reason given for his failure to rise to a more statesmanlike role is the cloud of suspicion that has hung over him for more than three years because of his dealings with corrupt former Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

"He was, up until about 2008, clearly a rising star," said Dick Simpson, a former city alderman and a political scientist at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "After that his whole reputation collapsed, and he's not been able to move forward."

None of that seems to matter in his Chicago-area district, where the Democrat has brought home close to \$1 billion in federal money and won every election since 1995 in a landslide.

Now, many of his constituents are willing to cut him some slack over the way he has released only scant details about his medical condition in

recent weeks.

Ford Heights Mayor Charles Griffin said that Jackson's health is a private matter and that he has no problem with the way the congressman hasn't disclosed his location or detailed his condition beyond calling it a "mood disorder." Griffin's town of about 2,700 people is one of the poorest in Illinois, and Jackson was key in bringing it drinking water from Lake Michigan.

"I have no idea what his relationship is on the national level," Griffin said. "The only thing I know is that he's ... been successful in bringing back resources and funds to do things to get things moving. And that's the type of approach we need."

While Jackson clearly once had his sights set on becoming a senator or the mayor of Chicago, he seems resigned to playing the role of a politician devoted to local issues. He said earlier this year that the late-1990s water project in Ford Heights was a highlight of his career, not his role as Barack Obama's campaign co-chairman, which earned him a speaking spot at the 2008 convention.

"When I first went to Congress, I promised to bring fresh water to Ford Heights," Jackson said. "That promise has been fulfilled."

The Rev. Jesse Jackson's eldest son was groomed for the national political scene from the beginning, it seemed.

He attended a top private school in Washington and earned a law degree and a master's in theology. He has bragged about spending his 21st birthday in jail after being arrested in an anti-apartheid protest. He co-wrote books with his father and developed his own charismatic speaking style, one that is often punctu-

ated by vigorous pointing with a raised index finger.

Shortly after taking office, he was deemed People magazine's Sexiest Politician in 1997. He became one of the most outspoken and most quoted liberals in the House. An almost Hollywood buzz broke out over his svelte new figure in 2005 when he quietly dropped 50 pounds, disclosing months later that he had had weight-loss surgery.

But he also put significant time and energy behind a raft of big-ticket liberal ideas that largely went nowhere.

In 2001, after Bush took office, Jackson began to push constitutional amendments that would guarantee a right to universal health care and housing. In 2007, he was one of a small number of lawmakers to call for articles of impeachment against the president. Earlier this year, he pushed for a raise in the minimum wage, an idea that never stood a chance in the GOP-dominated House.

His highest-profile project in the district, a proposed third airport in the Chicago area, never went anywhere over questions of who should run it and whether it was needed.

Jackson was expected to have distinguished himself more by now.

"He's got one of the most recognizable names in the country. It carries its burdens and is one that he wanted to attain some kind of national visibility," said Alan Gitelson, a Loyola University political science professor. But "we can't point to any area where Congressman Jackson has marked himself as a leader. His role has been relatively more homestyle than anything else."

Political experts say one explanation was that he was too busy eyeing other offices.

Fact finder recommends 14% raise for Chicago teachers

CHICAGO (AP) — An independent fact finder has recommended that Chicago teachers receive a 14.85 percent raise to "compensate teachers for working a longer school day and year," a union official union said Monday.

The announcement is the latest turn in acrimonious negotiations that prompted teachers in the nation's third-largest school district to authorize their leaders to call a strike this fall. However, Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis did say whether the report would make a strike more or less likely.

"We are not making that kind of judgment," Lewis told The Associated Press after a news conference. "Now we will start talking to our members."

Lewis declined to release the report. But she said a key finding supports what teachers have been complaining about throughout an acrimonious negotiating process that led them last month to overwhelmingly authorize a strike. She said the fact finder, Edwin Benn, not only found that teachers are being asked to work an average of 19.4 percent more hours than a longer school day, but that it is unrealistic to expect teachers to work that much longer without additional compensa-

tion.

In a brief statement, district spokeswoman Becky Carroll suggested that agreeing to a substantial pay increase for teachers was not a realistic possibility.

"We are operating under the most dire financial situation CPS has ever faced," she said. "Asking taxpayers to fund a \$330 million price tag in year one alone of this contract ignores the gravity of the financial crisis facing the District and would have devastating impacts on our school communities."

The district did not say whether it would reject the arbitrator's findings; Lewis previously had said that both sides would have 15 days to accept or reject the report once it came out.

Lewis said she called Monday's news conference because Chicago Public Schools leaked the report to the media. The district did not respond to that accusation.

Much of the teachers' frustration has centered on Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who rescinded a 4 percent raise last year and then tried to go around the union in his push for longer school days by asking teachers at individual schools to waive the union contract to work more hours.

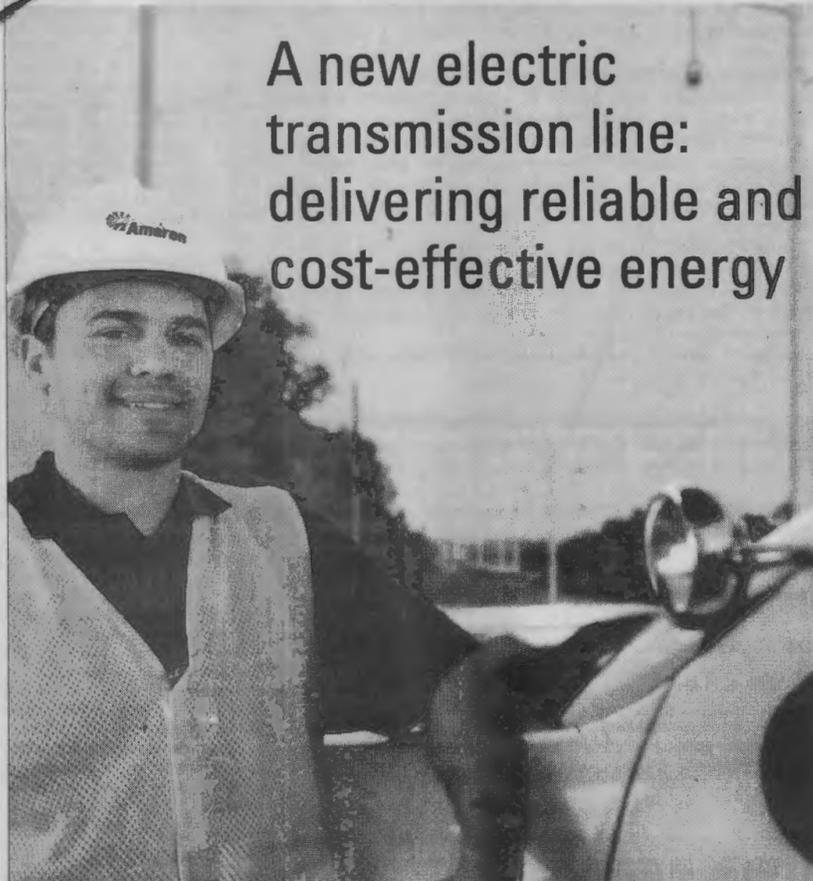
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