February 18, 2014

Tuesday, 18 February 2014 11:22

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Man pleads guilty in Garden City homicide

GARDEN CITY (AP) — A man pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the stabbing death of a Garden City man in March 2011.

Prosecutors charged Chad Schmidt Jr. of Garden City had been scheduled to go to trial next week for first-degree murder in the death of Jeffrey Nichols, who was stabbed 20 times.

Schmidt, 25, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and guilty to the lesser charge on Feb. 11. He is scheduled to be sentenced March 28.

Garden City police say Schmidt told them he and Nichols fought over Nichols' home. Schmidt claimed he killed Nichols in self-defense.

Natural gas offers value as propane prices soar

• Pamela Ice Hall-Gulf Energy

WICHITA - Record freezing temperatures have created a significant increase in heating fuel demand and cold-weather consumers are bracing for impact of a constantly rising balance on winter heating bills.

Propane prices have risen 50 percent since the beginning of January, thus last year and more than 8 percent colder than normal. Combatting the cold has caused an increase in energy consumption leading to price spikes and a shortage of fuel range from major fuel propane to sidewalk salt for natural gas.

Natural gas customers have fared well compared to those propane customers, but the cold has caused increased demand.

"The typical homeowner can save anywhere from $750 to $1,500 a year stock heating season by choosing safe, reliable natural gas over propane," said Lee Mayer, director of business operations for Kansas-based gas utility Black Hills Energy.

Mayer said the average homeowner when the price of propane more than doubled from late December to late January according to U.S.

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Miss Kansas Theresa Vail will be coming to Liberal

See Wednesday's edition

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2014
LEADER & TIMES
Your daily news & views for 127 years

USD 480 bands present the Liberal Band Festival

• Special to the Leader & Times

At USD No. 480 bands - grade 5 through 12, will present their Band Festival at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Kinder Auditorium at Liberal High School.

Featured on the program is the combined 6th grade band, from Cottonwood and Sunflower Intermediate Schools, the 7th and 8th grade bands from Cottonwood and Sunflower Intermediate Schools, the 9th grade band, the Concert and Jazz Bands from Liberal High School, and the Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Lab Ensemble from Southwest Plains Regional Technical School.

The 7th and 8th grade the evening with the Star Spangled Banner to be followed by

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Kan. students lobby against sex education bills

Legislators may move to limit reports of classroom and hallway posters suggesting sexual teens and adults could express their love for someone else displayed without parents' knowledge

by JOHN HULIN
Associated Press

TOPEKA — College students lobbied Kansas legislators on Monday to halt bills that would change the way sex education is taught in schools or restrict classrooms and materials.

The bills would require school districts to secure parental or guardian consent before students would receive sex education instruction or materials. Currently, consent requirements are left to local districts.

Students from the University of Kansas, Emporia State University and Wichita State University were lobbying Monday to encourage legislators to reject the bills, which they contended would be harmful to sex education. The students are members of campus Choice USA, a national abortion-rights organization. Choice USA is a subsidiary of Planned Parenthood.

The students lobby in Topeka each session and discuss the sex education bills in their forum this year.

"We need to be able to have our voices heard, get a statewide mandate on this," said Fred Hook, a Wichita State senior majoring in economics and political science.

The House bill will be heard today in the education committee. The Senate bill awaits a hearing. Both bills were introduced by Rep. Steve Brunk, R-Wichita, and Rep. Rameney Hildabrand, who was concerned about what materials are put in front of students.

Hildabrand's bill would prohibit posters of classrooms and hallway posters suggesting sexual acts individuals could express their love for someone else. The materials, Hildabrand said, were put up without parents' knowledge.

The bill would "put parents back in control of what their children are being taught and the manner that it is being taught," Brunk said.

Both said districts should retain control over the texts based on community norms.

A lot of families really don't talk about that and we don't want students to be taught that, Brunk said.

Hook, who graduated from Jefferson West High School in Meriden, said he was taught sex education in which sexuality wasn't a frequent topic of study. He school had an opt-out policy meaning parents had to sign a form if they did not want their student to be receiving sex education.

Five-year anniversary of Obama's stimulus renews partisan fight over jobs, economy

• Associated Press

The Feb. 17, 2009, file photo shows President Barack Obama picking up the first pen to sign the economic stimulus bill during a ceremony in the Museum of Nature and Science in Denver. The White House says a costly spending bill President Barack Obama signed into law five years ago helped set pace for the economy and helped the U.S. avoid another Great Depression. *AP Associated*

The five-year anniversary Monday of President Obama's stimulus package has prompted Democrats and Republicans to once again cover the economy and whether the roughly $800 billion in spending created or saved jobs.

The White House hailed the measure, known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as a 19-month economic turnaround that helped stave off a depression and is credited with creating or saving 3.6 million jobs through 2012 and eventually ended the country's Democrats and Republicans.

The measure sought to "jolt" a nearly stalled Great Depression and made targeted investments that will pay dividends for years to come, said Jason Furman, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, which produced the report. "But it also provided a boost to the economy in the short-run, which was critical to avoid a deeper recession," Furman said in a blog post.

Republicans have long criticized the stimulus spending — arguing that it was rammed through Congress by Democrats and created far fewer than the 4 million jobs promised.

The stimulus has turned out to be a classic case of big promises and big spending with little results," said Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., the House Budget Committee chairman and rising star in the party.

Obama signed the bill about 18 months after the economy officially entered a recession, but it took eight months before the national unemployment rate peaked at 10 percent in October 2009.

Ryan said the slow recovery and the sluggish jobs market underscore really dismal results Americans have been looking for weeks.

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Inmate released after more than 4 years in prison

District Judge Ben Burgess released Ellison Pride ruling that his right to a speedy trial had been violated

WICHITA (AP) — A Wichita man who was in jail for more than four years waiting for a trial in a sexual predation case has been set free.

Todd Ellison, 45, was scheduled to go to trial next week to determine whether he should be held for life as a sexually violent predator. He was accused of sexual assault involving children from cases in 1996 and 1997 but when he was about to be released in 2005, prosecutors filed a petition to have him held in a mental institution for a sexually violent predator. The Wichita Eagle reported.

But District Judge Ben Burgess released Ellison Friday, ruling that his right to a speedy trial had been violated. The Sedgwick County District Attorney, Mike Wilkins, said he had tried to stick with and listen to make sure I was keeping what I said to myself. I'm not a big talker. Monday I was with my lawyer and you, I was completely taken by surprise."

Wilkins had argued that keeping a sexually violent predator in jail for four years while awaiting trial was unconstitutional.

Ellison said he is not serving a sentence for sentence and parole are over. Wilkins argued in a recent court filing that Ellison is "a sex offender with a mental illness problem. He wants to be in a state managed by the government and the slow passage of time, Justice, here, has not been kind to him."

Ellison said he spent much of his time in prison taking college courses, studying the Bible and watching movies. He said he would be a model inmate. He's confident he won't be a repeat offender.

"I would just hope that people would realize this is something that happened to me and I'm a different person and that person matters," he said.

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