



Prisoner Exchange
Wire photo
Freed Pakistani prisoners kiss their land while they enter from India as Indian prisoners line up on left to enter their country from Wagah border post near Lahore, Pakistan, Sept. 12.

Bill makes new provisions in state abortion statutes

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Legislators moved closer to achieving the goal of their special session as the Missouri State Senate passed an anti-abortion measure.

The bill would allow parents to sue people who help their minor daughters get abortions without their consent. It also would impose new requirements upon abortion doctors.

On a 26-6 vote, the bill moved to the House, which also must approve it to send the measure to the governor. A House committee endorsed its version of the legislation a day earlier.

Gov. Matt Blunt called the session on anti-abortion legislation after the Legislature's anti-abortion majority failed to pass anything during the regular session that ended in May. Blunt and some researchers had concerns that language in that legislation would have harmed stem cell research in the state.

The special session deals with only a few abortion provisions, and legislative leaders vowed not to let this measure get caught up in a stem cell debate. Lawmakers also plan to make technical fixes to various other bills.

Debate on the abortion measure began around 10:30 a.m. Several Democrats who support abortion rights talked about the bill, delaying a vote, until after 6 p.m. They offered

various amendments, some of which legislative leaders quickly tossed out as beyond the scope of the special session's purpose, and others that the Senate rejected.

Supporters say the legislation is aimed at people who help teens obtain abortions at a clinic in Illinois, where there is no parental consent law.

"We've given parents a right in Missouri that is nullified by the state of Illinois," said Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, who is handling the Senate bill.

But Sen. Joan Bray, D-St. Louis, said the bill doesn't consider some awful situations teens might face and that many girls might be scared to face a judge under the system set up for when they seek an abortion without acquiring their parents' approval.

"You're standing there acting like God," Bray said to Loudon. "You do not know the circumstances."

Lise Saffran of Columbia said she mentors teen mothers and worries that any guidance or conversation she has with a young woman who finds herself pregnant could open her up to a lawsuit.

"Consider the kind of chilling effect a law like this might have," she said. "You don't frighten away the helpers in your community with the threat of civil lawsuits."

Some ministers also have said the provision could stifle the clergy's ability to counsel young pregnant women.

But Loudon called that a ridiculous assertion, and anti-abortion groups said the provisions are necessary.

The bill "will protect women, will protect parental rights, and we believe it will save many lives," said Susan Klein of Missouri Right to Life.

Another provision in the bill would require doctors who perform abortions to have clinical privileges at a hospital providing obstetrical or gynecological care within 30 miles of where the abortion takes place.

The Springfield Health Care Center has said that provision could affect its business because the doctor who performs abortions at the center has privileges at several hospitals, but none are within a 30-mile radius.

Some Democrats advocated access to contraception and education as the best way to reduce abortions.

A bill by Bray would require the state to provide funding for family planning services, ensure that school districts follow state law in teaching sex education and make emergency contraception available to rape victims in hospitals.

Newspaper publishes without its home newsroom

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — It's hard to get a copy of hurricane editions of The Times-Picayune, which was chased out of New Orleans by flooding two weeks ago. Even the editors complain that they can't get their own newspaper in the temporary newsroom at an office complex in Baton Rouge, 75 miles from New Orleans.

Circulation trucks haul the newspaper throughout the region, drivers tossing copies on porches where possible. In Baton Rouge, which has doubled in population with New Orleans evacuees, free papers are left at shopping malls and rescue centers.

Sunday's headline proclaimed "Glimmers of Hope Emerge as Water Slowly Recedes."

A Times-Picayune columnist, Chris Rose, walked among police and National Guardsmen in downtown New Orleans Saturday handing out copies. He said they were the first in the city itself since Katrina.

Rose and other reporters remain in the city, living in what Editor Jim Amoss calls Spartan conditions. The newspaper trucked down some generators because no power, telephone or water service is available.

"The perseverance and sheer energy of everybody astounds me," Amoss said.

In the first days after Katrina slammed the city Aug. 29, the paper was published only online. As water rose after levees ruptured, staffers fled to higher ground but continued their coverage despite almost complete telephone failure. The first printed editions came Sept. 2, when the Times-Picayune, owned by Advance Publications, made arrangements with The Courier, of the New York Times regional media group.

John Morton, a media analyst based in Silver Spring, Md., called the paper's continued publication "a miracle."

If the paper was locally owned, he said, the damage would almost certainly lead to bankruptcy. But that's unlikely because of deep support from its corporate owners, Morton said.

There is no estimate on when the newspaper can resume operations in New Orleans. Amoss said the newspaper's office is still surrounded by water, but the presses and other equipment were not flooded.

Newspaper staff, advertisers and residents cannot move back into the city until it is drained, power is restored and their homes are habitable.

Athletes find creative ways to spice up sports

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Some came to mountain bike in their underwear, and others were motivated by the promise of free beer. But it was the prospect of getting really dirty that brought Chris Phillips to town for an offbeat, obstacle-filled running and biking race.

"One thing was on my mind the whole time: the mud pit," Phillips said after finishing the final obstacle of the Muddy Buddy race. "Plus, it was hot, and I was ready for a little cool down."

The Muddy Buddy, a six-mile duathlon that ends with an Army-style crawl through a 50-foot-long mud pit, attracted more than 1,600 racers recently to the Boulder Reservoir. Two-member teams traded off between trail running and mountain biking, with each leg divided by a giant air-filled wall, monkey bars or some other kind of obstacle.

Some racers dressed up as pigs or superheroes with red capes and tiaras taped to their bike helmets. One scantily clad couple wore white tank tops and briefs.

"It's definitely different," said Phillips' race partner, Andrea Pietka, a first-time Muddy Buddy racer. "All the mud and the water and the obstacles, it makes you not feel the pain of running. Well, you still feel the pain, but it's more fun."

Thousands of active people are getting creative when it comes to competition, finding odd or at least more entertaining ways to race outside the typical 5K and 10K runs.

In Kansas City, Mo., entirely underground 5K and 10K runs occur to celebrate Groundhog Day at a subterranean business complex.

"I think it's tied to the whole extreme - sport mentality," said Ryan Lamma, spokesman for the Running USA trade group. "Traditional sports, for some people, just don't cut it."

The Muddy Buddy race series began seven years ago and now brings its mud pit and laid-back atmosphere to seven cities around the country. The series will wrap up in Los Angeles on Oct. 23.

The races will attract about 11,000 participants this year, race founder Bob Babbitt said.

"A lot of people are just getting into the fitness thing," said Babbitt, an Ironman triathlete. "And this is where it starts, events like Muddy Buddy. You can do this, your 80-year-old grandma can do this, everyone can do this."

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