

News Digest

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College-loan interest rate may drop

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Clinton administration compromise offered Wednesday would reduce the interest rate on college student loans while assuring lenders a greater return than promised under a 1993 law.

Vice President Al Gore and Education Secretary Richard Riley announced the offer at a White House briefing. They released a Treasury Department report showing that a plan due to take effect in July would cause banks to quit providing the federally guaranteed loans.

"We will ensure that more students can afford to go to college and that lenders can afford to make the loans that will get them there," Gore said. Treasury said it would take lenders about five years to turn a profit under the proposal.

The government is expected to guarantee more than \$24 billion worth of new loans this year to more than 5.5 million borrowers. The new proposal is subject to congressional

approval.

The issue was politically delicate. The administration did not want to be seen as caving to pressure from banks after backing a formula change in 1993 intended to make college cheaper. Nor could it afford to anger students.

The interest rate on student loans now combines the rate on 91-day Treasury bills with a fixed markup. That produces a current student-loan rate of 7.8 percent over five years.

Starting in July, the 1993 law requires a switch to longer-term, higher-rate Treasury bills while allowing a smaller markup. Students would pay 7 percent.

The return to lenders, according to the Treasury Department, would be slightly more than half of the current formula. Banks would earn less than what they need to break even in the first year but would make a slight profit over five years.

For a student borrowing \$12,000,

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AL GORE
vice president

the drop to a 7 percent rate would mean \$650 in interest savings over 10 years. For a student borrowing \$20,000 for a masters degree, savings would amount to \$1,050 over 10 years. For a student borrowing \$60,000 for a professional degree, the savings would amount to \$3,200 over 10 years.

"Combined with the White House proposal to reduce up-front fees on student loans, this proposal will deliver education at a lower cost to millions of students," said Ivan Frishberg, student loan specialist

with the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, a consumer organization.

Republicans on the House Education and Workforce Committee were upset that the administration offered a proposal so quickly, but committee members were not necessarily against it. The committee will consider the proposal when it rewrites the law on student loans.

"Let's make good policy, not election-year politics on this issue," said Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the committee chairman.

FDA warns of Accutane side effects

WASHINGTON (AP) — Accutane users now have more to worry about than acne.

Doctors prescribing the powerful acne drug Accutane should watch patients carefully for signs of depression, stated a warning issued Wednesday on the basis of reports of depression and a few suicides among Accutane patients.

There's no proof that Accutane caused the problems, argued manufacturer Hoffman-La Roche. It said people with severe acne are at risk for depression anyway.

But the Food and Drug Administration counted about a dozen patients who became depressed while taking Accutane, then found that the depression disappeared when they stopped the medication and recurred once they took it again.

That was enough of a link to prompt the precautionary warning, FDA said.

Roche wrote thousands of doctors Wednesday that it is relabeling Accutane to warn: "Accutane may cause depression, psychosis and, rarely, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and suicide."

Patients should tell a doctor if they're feeling depressed, said Dr. John Wilkin, FDA dermatologic drugs chief. And at every visit, doctors should "ask questions to the patient about changes in mood," he said.

Roche officials refused to say how many depressed patients or suicides they know of but stressed that more than 4 million Americans have taken Accutane since it was approved in 1982, and the possible side effect is very rare.

Roche also argued that teen-agers — prime acne sufferers — often suffer depression, and hormones involved with acne also may contribute.

FDA officials would not say how many depression and suicide reports among Accutane patients it received but called them "isolated."

ASUN lends support to tobacco sales with bill

BY JESSICA FARGEN
Assignment Reporter

ASUN

ASUN senators passed bills Wednesday supporting continued tobacco sales in Nebraska Unions and post-tenure faculty review.

Curt Ruwe, president of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, said students have shown support to continue tobacco sales in the union and deserved to be heard.

"Many students have shown concern about and felt adamant about this," Ruwe said.

Government Bill No. 31 supports two solutions. Foremost, the bill urges keeping union tobacco sales, but if it is discontinued, senators voted unanimously that the lost revenue of about \$31,000 should not be made up for with a student fee increase.

Ruwe said the NU Board of Regents will consider a bill Saturday to make post-tenure review more rigorous.

First Vice President Amy Rager said improved post-tenure

review at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was necessary to keep up with other universities across the country that are "sweeping toward tenure-review."

ASUN Government Bill No. 32 also encourages the regents to leave the logistics of the post-tenure review plan largely to each separate campus in the NU system.

In other ASUN news:

— Government Bill No. 30 was passed commending Karen Steinauer, who is retiring after nine years at ASUN Student Legal Services.

— Director of Student Judicial Affairs Charles Greene invited ASUN senators to a play explaining student judicial processes. The play is March 17 at 7 p.m. in the Temple Building, 12th and R streets.

— Senate Bill No. 24 recognized the Shotokan Karate of America Club as a student organization.

Albright: Military force still an option for U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Clinton administration insisted Wednesday that military force remained an option and ruled out any swift easing of economic sanctions.

"We're not going to swallow this hook, line and sinker," Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said of the agreement U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan worked out last Sunday with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

But Senate Republican leader Trent Lott denounced the U.N. agreement as a cave-in and said accepting it would be the same as buying "peace at any price."

"It is always possible to get a deal if you give enough away," Lott, R-Miss., said in a speech on the Senate floor.

"The deal negotiated by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan with Iraq does not adequately address the threat posed by Saddam Hussein," he said.

Lott portrayed the deal as an abdication of U.S. power to the United Nations.

"The secretary-general is calling the shots," Lott said. "The United States is not."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright defended the administration's Iraq policy before a House Appropriations subcommittee. "It is

real-world policy, not a feel-good policy," she said.

Touching on some of the fuzzy provisions, Albright said the diplomats who will be added to U.N. inspection teams will be "observers only," with the monitors conducting the searches.

She also said an arms control specialist — not a technician — will be added to the panel in charge and will head the teams that go to the so-called presidential palaces.

"We cannot do everything by ourselves," Albright told the Senate panel.

Lott said Wednesday: "With all due respect to Secretary Albright, I stand by my comment" criticizing the accord.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle disapproved of Lott's statement.

"I don't see what purpose it serves by attacking one another at this point," the South Dakota Democrat said. "I mean, if ever there was a time for us to present a unified front to Iraq, this ought to be it."

With Republicans leading the attack, Albright shied away from declaring any partisan motive. However, she said, "We need to have understanding of what we accomplished and not criticism without a solution."

Women get tips to avoid sexual assault

BY ERIC RINEER
Staff Reporter

Women can fight against the threat of sexual assault on campus, security experts said late Tuesday.

TEAM Inc., a group of personal security experts and private investigators based in Bellevue, told a group of about 60 UNL students they could take precautions to protect themselves from rape.

John Hoffman, president of TEAM, said women between the ages of 16 and 19 have the highest probability of being sexually assaulted.

"Women at these ages are more vulnerable," he said. "They're more inclined to being alone at night, and they meet

more people."

Larry Willis, Husker Hall director, said he organized the event after receiving requests from some residents.

The requests arrived after a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student was sexually assaulted the night of Feb. 6 in the Harper/Schramm/Smith Residence Complex parking lot, he said.

"There's a lot of concern on campus right now," Hoffman said.

Hoffman, a state-licensed investigator, said women on campus can take several steps to help protect themselves on campus:

- Avoid walking or jogging alone at night.
- Stay in well-lighted areas.
- Wear clothes that give them

"There's a lot of concern on campus right now."

JOHN HOFFMAN
TEAM president

freedom of movement, so they can react if attacked.

■ Look around cars and in back seats before climbing inside.

■ Don't hitchhike.

Hoffman said the presentation Tuesday was an excerpt from an eight-hour course he teaches on taking precautionary measures against rape.

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