

Legislative Notebook

Proposed bill aims to contract private, state prisons

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony on a bill Thursday that would force private prisons to adhere to the same regulations as state prisons.

LB571, introduced by Sen. DiAnna Schimek of Lincoln, outlines how the private prisons would contract with the

Department of Corrections. Some fear that private prison owners would ship inmates from prisons they own in other states to Nebraska.

Senator aims to join public, decertification hearings

Sen. Ernie Chambers wants to break open some closed doors. His bill, LB14, would let the public into now-private hearings held to decertify state

troopers. York attorney Vincent Valentino, who has defended a trooper in a decertification hearing, said unhitching the hearing room's lock was a bad idea. "It's unfair and misguided," he said.

Issuing wetland permits may be at hands of state

On the heels of a Supreme

Court decision banning the federal government from issuing permits to drain wetlands, the Natural Resources Committee heard testimony on a bill aimed at giving the state the federal government's old job.

LB628, introduced by Sen. Chris Beutler of Lincoln, would force landowners to file for state permits before they drain or fill isolated wetlands.

The federal government used to run a similar program

More homeowners with illnesses may get homestead exemptions

Currently, people older than age 65, veterans and widows can get homestead exemptions that lower their property taxes.

Sen. Ray Aguilar of Grand Island and Sen. Adrian Smith of Gering tried to add a few more to the group protected by

homestead exemptions. Aguilar's bill would grant exemptions to homeowners with illness who run up medical bills in excess of \$10,000 or more than 50 percent of their adjusted income.

Smith's bill would extend the same benefits to people with severe heart conditions.

Compiled by George Green. The Associated Press contributed to this report

Law & Order

Lincoln streets plagued by pseudo police officer

A man impersonating a Lincoln police officer could be stopping unsuspecting Lincoln drivers.

Lincoln Police Officer Katherine Finnell said a woman reported she was stopped by a man who looked like a police officer on 27th and N streets at about 9:45 a.m. on Monday.

Finnell said the 44-year-old woman said she saw lights behind her and pulled over.

The woman said the man was in an unmarked white sedan that had white and blue lights mounted on top, Finnell said.

The woman described the pseudo-officer as a white male in his 20s, about 5-feet-10 inches tall with a stocky build, short brown hair and a thin mustache, Finnell said.

The woman told officers the man wore an unmarked dark blue shirt with a silver badge and name tag possibly bearing the name "Arden" on the left side of his shirt, Finnell said.

Finnell said the man also had a dark hat with a dark bill and silver band.

The woman said the man stopped her for her cracked windshield and asked her if she knew it was cracked, Finnell said.

The man then asked to see her license and registration, Finnell said.

The woman was suspicious when he asked her several questions regarding the owner of the car and if he would find anything if he searched the car, Finnell said.

The man gave the woman's information back and sent her on her way, Finnell said.

Finnell said the man was not a Lincoln police officer.

One injured, two jailed after dispute between roommates

A fight between two roommates ended with a citation and both in jail.

Officers were alerted to a disturbance at an apartment complex hallway between Bridgett Mann, 30, and her roommate, Jerry Murray, 30, at 1626 D. St. at about 6:45 p.m. on Wednesday, Finnell said.

Witnesses saw Murray chase Mann down the hall, scream obscenities at her and tell her to get out of his way, Finnell said.

Murray and Mann were arguing all day, Finnell said.

Finnell said Mann picked up a knife with a six-inch blade and stabbed Murray in his abdomen.

Murray was treated for stab wounds at Bryan LGH West and was cited for domestic assault because he hit Mann with a belt. He was then taken to Lancaster County Jail for outstanding warrants.

Mann was cited for second degree assault and also taken to jail.

Lincoln man arrested for sexual assault charge

A friend of a runaway is now charged with sexual assault.

Deputy Sheriff Bill Jarrett said Delos Pumel, 20, was charged with first degree sexual assault on a 12-year-old girl Wednesday after an assault on Tuesday.

Pumel was a distant friend of the girl who had called him for a ride after she skipped school all day, Jarret said.

Jarret said Pumel gave the girl and a friend a ride to his house where the initial assault was made.

Officers found out about the assault while interviewing the girl about why she ran away.

The girl's friend was also a witness to some of the assault, Jarret said.

Jarret said officers interviewed Delos in his home Wednesday and then took him to the station where he was arrested.

Compiled by Jill Conner

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