

Hearing today

The Civil Service Commission will hear grievances filed by three city employees who say the process used to fill the chief public defender's post was a "sham" and "tainted."

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House passes illegal-immigration reform bill

By MICK HINTON
World Capitol Bureau

OKLAHOMA CITY — The House easily approved an immigration reform bill Wednesday that proponents call the most meaningful in the nation.

The bill passed 88-9 and was sent to the Senate, where it likely will see amendments before it comes to a vote, a Senate co-author said.

Although most House members voted for the bill after nearly two hours of debate, they attacked several of its provisions and criticized the federal government for not tackling the problem.

House Bill 1804 by Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, calls for:

► Denying driver's licenses and oth-

Online

See how House members voted: www.okhouse.gov/51LEG/okh00395.txt

er government identification to illegal immigrants.

► Penalizing employers who hire illegal workers and requiring those with public contracts to use a system to verify the legal status of immigrant workers before hiring them.

► Halting health, welfare and education benefits for people who are in the country illegally, including ending resident tuition rates and scholarships for those who are attending college.

Terrill said the bill is going to the Senate as a "live round," meaning that

it could be passed quickly in its current form. However, Senate co-author Kenneth Corn said the bill's ramifications need to be studied and then changes made to the bill.

Several House members predicted that Terrill's bill will be "dead on arrival" in the Senate, as it was last year.

Corn said senators "would rather have a correct bill to deal with this issue" before it receives a floor vote.

Corn, D-Poteau, said Senate Democrats find unacceptable a provision that stops the children of illegal immigrants from receiving in-state tuition rates, even if those students have attended Oklahoma public schools for two years before entering college.

Terrill's bill would deny them in-state tuition and scholarships.

Corn said Democrats also are concerned about the effect on employers. He called last year for equipping law enforcement authorities to work with federal immigration officials in rounding up illegal immigrants.

Terrill said he had to tone down his proposals because they were in conflict with federal regulations.

Rep. Shane Jett, R-Tecumseh, who abstained from voting, said it took his wife, who is from Brazil, seven years to become a citizen. He said it is difficult for immigrants without money to become citizens.

Jett, who said he's told that between 60,000 and 100,000 illegal immi-

grants are in Oklahoma, said their rent payments alone are providing Oklahoma business "entrepreneurs" with close to \$1 billion.

Rep. Richard Morrisette called the bill a "full attorney employment act" and asserted that 75 percent of the provisions already are federal law.

Morrisette, D-Oklahoma City, noted that the bill contains a provision to allow a U.S. citizen who loses his job to sue his employer if another worker is an illegal immigrant.

"This is excellent," he said facetiously. "My firm will do nothing but wrongful termination causes of action."

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SAND SPRINGS: LANDFILL EXPANSION APPROVED



JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World

Heavy equipment is used to move trash Wednesday at the American Environmental Landfill near Sand Springs. AEL received approval from the state Department of Environmental Quality to expand, making it the largest landfill in Oklahoma.

Dump site to be the state's largest

► The decision adds 50 years' worth of garbage disposal capacity.

By MANNY GAMALLO
World Staff Writer

SAND SPRINGS — The state has given American Environmental Landfill permission for an expansion of its landfill, making it the biggest in Oklahoma, officials said Wednesday.

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality gave the company permission for 152 more acres adjoining its current landfill operation in Sand Springs.

American Environmental Landfill has a 70-acre landfill along 177th West Avenue just north of the Sand Springs Expressway.

That landfill has a life expectancy of 10 more years before it's filled, according to Todd Green, the company's general manager.

The 152-acre expansion would add 50 years to the landfill's operation, Green said.

Once the current 70-acre landfill has reached its capacity, trash-dumping will shift to the expanded site, he said.

In a statement released Wednesday, owner Kenneth Burkett credited the company's employees and their commitment to excellence for the expansion's approval.

"AEL takes this responsibility very seriously, forever endeavoring to remain a friend to the environment as well as to the community we serve," he said.

The statement says the added landfill space allows for future economic growth across the region.

Green said half of the company's business comes from cities around Tulsa, including Broken Arrow, Jenks and Bixby.

To the west, the company serves Sand Springs, Sapulpa, Mannford, Cleveland, Hominy and several other

communities, he said.

Sand Springs City Manager Doug Enevoldsen praised the landfill expansion's approval.

"The planned expansion by AEL offers assurances not only for Sand Springs but for other communities in the Tulsa metropolitan area that there will be a convenient, adequate and environmentally sound solid waste repository for many years to come," he said.

Enevoldsen called American Environmental Landfill a "quality operation that is sensitive to both environmental issues and community issues."

Green said the company is trying to draw off methane gas from the decomposing trash to sell to area gas users.

He said wells are being developed in the landfill to collect the gas and pipe it.

Green said the company's property also contains several coal veins and that methane gas from them would be added to the gas from the landfill.



Tulsa World

One gas user in Sand Springs is willing to buy the gas once American Environmental Landfill can deliver it, he said.

Landfill waste, if handled properly, can be used as fuel to power an entire community, Green said, comparing it to Tulsa's trash-to-energy plant.

The firm also says revenue from a successfully operating landfill can be used to improve schools and roads.

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POLICE CHIEF SEARCH

Rejected candidates will file grievances

By BRIAN BARBER
World Staff Writer

Three internal candidates for police chief who were rejected by Mayor Kathy Taylor in favor of an external search will file merit grievances Thursday with the Civil Service Commission.

Deputy Chief Bill Wells, Maj. Paul Williams and Maj. Rob Turner are being represented by an attorney for Tulsa's Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 93.

"One of these qualified candidates should have been chosen," FOP President Darin Filak said. "This is clearly a violation of the promotion process."

The crux of the grievances will be a section of Tulsa's City Charter, which states that only sworn officers on the force can apply for promotions within the Police Department.

Although recent revisions to the city's hiring policies seem to give the mayor the authority to hire an external candidate even if qualified internal candidates have applied, Filak said those changes do not supercede the charter.

"She and the City Council can change policies, but it takes a vote of the public to change the charter," Filak said, noting that the system is in place to take politics out of the selection process.

The three candidates were unavail-

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Group: State undercharges pollution fees

By CURTIS KILLMAN
World Staff Writer

Oklahoma environmental regulators are shortchanging themselves millions of dollars annually in permit fees levied against large air polluters, a nonprofit group claims.

Oklahoma lost \$2.7 million in 2002 because it charges fees that fail to meet minimum levels required by the federal Clean Air Act, the Washington, D.C.-based Environmental Integrity Project says in a report issued Wednesday.

The report found that Oklahoma is one of at least 17 states that undercharge industries for annual air emissions permit fees.

The fees are supposed to cover the cost of permit issuance, monitoring and enforcement-related activities, according to the report.

The undercharging of fees means that states either don't have adequate resources to cover the cost of implementing the Clean Air Act or the public has to pick up the tab for a program that polluters are supposed to pay for under the law, the nonprofit, nonpartisan group claims.

"If the states charge fees that are below what the federal minimum standard is, they need to show they have enough funding to cover all the things that those fees are supposed

SEE FEES A-11

Builder knows that toll bridge requires vote, group claims

By SUSAN HYLTON
World Staff Writer

The South Tulsa Citizens Coalition has released a legal opinion that its members believe strengthens their stance that an agreement to build a toll bridge connecting Jenks to south Tulsa is not valid without a public vote.

The opinion, a copy of which was given to the Tulsa World on Wednes-

day, was written by an attorney for the company that has an agreement to build and operate the bridge.

Attorney Ron Barber wrote the opinion in 2004 at the request of his client, Bill Bacon, president of Infrastructure Ventures Inc.

Barber states in the opinion that "the right of a private person or entity to maintain a toll bridge has always been held to require a governmental

franchise."

He further states that the county would be the appropriate governmental entity to grant such a franchise, noting that the "Oklahoma Constitution requires that the grant of a franchise by a municipality must be approved by the voters."

Citizens Coalition spokesman Michael Covey said his group obtained a copy of the opinion from a Tulsan

who was approached by Infrastructure Ventures as a potential bridge investor. He would not name the source.

Barber would not comment on his written legal opinion.

But an attorney in his firm, Joe Fears, said proponents of the bridge do not believe that the current bridge agreement constitutes a franchise be-

SEE BRIDGE A-11