

What's News

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■ **Beer self-checkout legislation stalls** State legislation to control the purchase of beer through retail self-checkout lanes stalled this session and may not be reintroduced, officials confirmed Wednesday. **p2**

■ **Exotic animal zoo owner denies complaints** The owner of an exotic animal zoo in Wynnewood has denied another spate of complaints registered against him by the Humane Society of the United States. The nonprofit organization has accused Joe Schreiber of mistreatment of big cats such as tigers and other animals. **p2**

■ **Review panel OKs Deep Deuce apartment project** Developer Ron Bradshaw is gearing up to break ground on a 139-unit apartment complex in Deep Deuce. The project cleared the Oklahoma City Downtown Design Review Committee. **p3**

■ **Fallin, lawmakers reach tax deal** Gov. Mary Fallin and Republican House and Senate leaders announced late Thursday a plan to reduce Oklahoma's top marginal personal income tax rate from 5.25 percent to 4.8 percent in fiscal year 2013. **p34**

■ **Hitting the road with Spokies** The launch Friday of Spokies, Oklahoma City's first public bicycle-sharing program, turns a corner in central Oklahoma's transportation culture, Oklahoma Bicycle Society President Amy Petty said. **p35**

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High hopes for wind jobs



Michael Huey completed wind turbine technician certification through Green Jobs Central Oklahoma, a project run by an Oklahoma City nonprofit group. It's My Community Initiative. Some who completed the program still have not found work.

PHOTO BY BRENT FUCHS

Program prepares applicants for green careers

BY SARAH TERRY-COBO
THE JOURNAL RECORD

OKLAHOMA CITY — Michael Huey is looking forward to a career in the wind turbine industry, thanks to job training he completed earlier this year.

A decade ago, he was enlisted in the Coast Guard and also had training in aviation at a base in Clearwater, Fla. After leaving the Coast Guard in 2002, he had a series of jobs: sandblasting, industrial painting and driving a forklift, delivering parts for a General Electric wind turbine production plant.

"With all of those jobs, I never found anything that interested me like working in the wind industry," Huey said in a telephone interview. "When I

was working at GE, I just kept thinking how great it would be to work in that field."

He found a green jobs training flyer posted at the Phoenix House in Oklahoma City, which led him on the path to the wind industry. Huey is one of 56 people who completed a 12-week training program provided at no cost by Green Jobs Central Oklahoma, a project run by an Oklahoma City nonprofit group, It's My Community Initiative. The nonprofit is focused on community development through education, employment and health, using a family-centered approach, said Calvin Williams, project director for Green

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Comptroller: Oust directors at Chesapeake

BY BRIANNA BAILEY
THE JOURNAL RECORD

OKLAHOMA CITY — The New York City Comptroller's Office, which oversees several employee pension funds for the city, is urging Chesapeake Energy shareholders to vote out Richard K. Davidson, former Union Pacific chairman and CEO, and Oklahoma State University President V. Burns Hargis from the company's board.

"Shareowners urgently need new directors who are willing and able to exercise strong, independent oversight of Aubrey McClendon, a willful CEO with a penchant for risk," New York City Comptroller John Liu said in a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission on Thursday.

The comptroller's office, which has about 1.9 million shares of Chesapeake stock, is urging shareholders to withhold their votes to re-elect Davidson and Hargis at the company's annual meeting in June because of their positions on the board's audit committee, which is responsible for reviewing financial disclosures, as well as insider deals that could pose conflicts of interest for the company.

The comptroller is also asking Chesapeake shareholders to support a proposal that would allow large, long-term shareholders to nominate candidates for the company's board of directors.

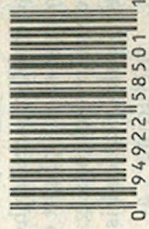
McClendon has come under fire in recent weeks after it was revealed that he has taken out more than \$1 billion in personal loans against his stake in Chesapeake wells and ran a hedge fund that traded in energy commodities while CEO of the company.

"We believe recent revelations regarding previously undisclosed transactions, and the resulting 27-percent decline in the company's share price, demonstrate the audit committee's costly failure to act in the best interests of shareowners," Liu said in the filing. "We are particularly disturbed by the audit committee's failure to review, approve or disclose Mr. McClendon's personal loans secured by company wells, either in connection with the loans themselves or with the transactions between Chesapeake and the investment firms that

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Fallin, lawmakers reach tax deal

BY MARIE PRICE

THE JOURNAL RECORD

OKLAHOMA CITY — Gov. Mary Fallin and Republican House and Senate leaders announced late Thursday a plan to reduce Oklahoma's top marginal personal income tax rate from 5.25 percent to 4.8 percent in fiscal year 2013.

"Today, we have finally reached an agreement with the House and Senate," said Fallin. "We believe that cutting the state income tax must be a priority and must take place this year."

The plan also includes a one-time additional reduction in FY 2015, if state revenue rises by at least 5 percent. In that event, the tax rate would be further reduced to 4.5 percent.

Fallin said that tax collections thus far this fiscal year have been \$350 million more than anticipated.

"It will allow Oklahomans to keep more of their hard-earned money," she said.

Once fully implemented in FY 2014, the plan will represent a tax cut of more than \$218 million. If growth revenue

fires the trigger, that would mean another \$121.4 million reduction.

The agreement also calls for cutting the number of income tax brackets from seven to three and eliminating 33 tax credits, exemptions and deductions.

The \$1,000 personal exemption would be eliminated for single filers earning more than \$35,000 and joint filers with incomes of more than \$70,000. The plan retains the standard deduction, as well as some tax breaks for lower-income Oklahomans, unlike some earlier proposals.

House Speaker Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, said the plan will allow Oklahoma to continue to move forward. "We can afford it and we should give part of it back to the people of Oklahoma," he said. "We believe the plan truly represents everyone's best ideas."

Senate President Pro Tempore Brian Bingman, R-Sapulpa, said the agreement is the result of extensive negotiations and takes a responsible approach. "I think it is something we can all be proud of at the end of the day," he said.

Senators renew opposition to bonds for museum

BY TIM TALLEY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY — Two Oklahoma state senators criticized managers of the unfinished American Indian Cultural Center and Museum on Thursday and said there are not enough votes in the Senate to pass a bill that would authorize another \$40 million in bonds to complete it.

Republican Sens. Cliff Aldridge of Midwest City and Patrick Anderson of Enid said 14 GOP senators have signed a pledge to oppose additional bonds for the Oklahoma City museum, which they said has seen its construction costs swell from an initial estimate of \$99 million to about \$171 million.

Aldridge said the 16 Democrats in the 48-member Senate also have said they will not support the bill as long as Republicans keep pushing for tax cuts, but he said Republicans remain commit-

ted to income tax cuts in future years. With a majority of the Senate against the measure, it has no chance of passing.

"I don't know how we're going to get it out of the Senate," Aldridge said.

Anderson said the Legislature has already issued \$63.4 million in bonds for the project and that annual bond payments total \$5.5 million. Another \$40 million bond issue would increase the annual bond payments to \$9 million, he said.

"We think that is totally irresponsible," Anderson said. "This would certainly increase spending."

The two senators said they are not opposed to the cultural center, located east of downtown Oklahoma City at the junction of Interstates 35 and 40, and believe it could be an economic boon to the region.

But they said the state has other capital needs including repairs to the state Capitol and the medical examiner's

office, where a storage cooler of bodies malfunctioned Wednesday. Workers were forced to move the bodies to refrigeration trucks.

Budget negotiators have said they have a tentative agreement on a \$200 million bond issue that would fund repairs to the state's crumbling Capitol and other nearby buildings.

Aldridge said the Senate had agreed to consider additional funding for the museum under certain conditions, including development of a completion plan for the structure and an audit of money already spent. He criticized the completion plan as inadequate and said the audit will not be finished before lawmakers are required to adjourn next week.

A final condition was the merger of the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority, a state agency created in 1994 to oversee the project, with the state Tourism and Recreation Department. Legislation that would

authorize the merger is pending. "We think the management of the construction by this agency has been poor at best," Aldridge said. "We're just saying at some point you have to draw the line."

Aldridge said according to the completion plan, the structure needs another \$50 million to finish, plus \$30 million for exhibits. But \$40 million in private donations has already been collected to complete the structure and many of the exhibits will come from the Smithsonian Institution and Oklahoma-based Indian tribes at little or no cost, he said.

Blake Wade, CEO of the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority, said work on the project began in 2005 and was slowed by expensive remedial work on property donated by Oklahoma City that was formerly part of an extensive oil field.

"The land was an environmental disaster and also in a flood zone," Wade said. "It took three years just to do that."

CHESAPEAKE: Ouster of company directors recommended

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provided the loans."

In the filing, Liu also called into question Chesapeake's multimillion-dollar sponsorship deals with the Oklahoma City Thunder. McClendon holds a 19.2-percent interest in the team.

Chesapeake shelled out \$4.8 million in 2011 in sponsorship, licensing and naming rights fees to the Thunder. The

company paid another \$4.6 million to purchase regular season and playoff tickets at Thunder home games, according to the company's most recent proxy filing.

Chesapeake Energy spokesman Jim Gipson declined to comment on Liu's remarks.

The company's annual meeting is slated for June 8 at Chesapeake's corporate

headquarters. A group of investors who are plaintiffs in six shareholder lawsuits filed against Chesapeake in recent weeks have asked a federal judge for an order to postpone the meeting until the company discloses more information about McClendon's loans and any other transactions that might pose conflicts of interest.

A hearing on the shareholders' request is scheduled for May 30 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma. Shares in Chesapeake closed at \$13.55 Thursday on the New York Stock Exchange, down 3.45 percent or 49 cents. The stock has lost more than 30 percent of its value over the past month.

JOBS: Program prepares applicants for green careers

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Jobs Central Oklahoma.

To help fund this job training, the U.S. Labor Department awarded a \$4 million grant for so-called green jobs in central Oklahoma. The jobs include wind farm technician, recycling technician and commercial driver, also known as CDL, Williams said. The goal is to place 190 people who have completed the training program; 105 people have been placed in jobs, Williams said.

Huey completed the training for wind farm technician through Oklahoma City Community College

and two of his instructors were members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, or IBEW. These connections helped Huey get a temporary job doing electrical work in the Devon tower. But he is still working to find his dream job in the wind industry.

Market conditions in that industry have changed since 2009, when Green Jobs Central Oklahoma made its initial projections for how many jobs were most needed, Williams said. The economic downturn, changes in legislation,

land use issues and environmental issues all factored into the number of wind farms that did not open, Williams said. "When we started (in late 2009), we had three companies that were eager to snap up our trainees, and then two went out of business (by 2010)," he said.

While a company needs skilled workers to build large wind farms, they need only two or three to maintain them.

Because the skills taught in the wind farm technician class are useful

in other industries, Williams said, other wind farm technician trainees have been hired to work on cellphone towers or to work on billboards. Huey continues to pursue safety training courses that are useful for the wind industry, he said.

For Huey, getting a job in the wind industry would not only help create a retirement plan for him and his 10-year-old daughter, Amelia, it would also be something meaningful, he said.

"I (want to be) part of something that is going to make a better world."