

TIMES RECORD

TODAY IN BUSINESS

GEITHNER PUSHES CHANGE PAGE 8C



TODAY IN NATION & WORLD

OBAMA INKS HEALTH-CARE BILL INTO LAW

PAGE 7A

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CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE

Lawmakers Seek Health Bill Test

REPUBLICANS WANT AG'S OPINION ON LAW'S LEGALITY

By Rob Moritz
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LITTLE ROCK — More than two dozen Republican state legislators asked state At-

torney General Dustin McDaniel on Tuesday for an opinion on whether the new federal health-care reform law is constitutional.

The request came after President Barack Obama

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PAGES 4A, 7A

signed into law the landmark legislation that the U.S. House passed Sunday.

"We want to know what can we do," said Rep. John Burris, R-Harrison, who sought the opinion in a

letter to McDaniel. "It has passed on the federal level. What are the state's options? What does the state need to do to prepare for what's about to come down?"

Among the two dozen other lawmakers whose names appeared on Burris' letter were three running for Congress — Sens. Gilbert Baker of Conway and

Kim Hendren of Gravette, both candidates for the U.S. Senate, and Sen. Cecile Bledsoe of Rogers, who is running for the 3rd District seat in the U.S. House.

The health-care reform bill expands coverage to more than 32 million uninsured Americans. It also requires insurers to allow young people to stay on

their parents' policies until age 26, and prohibits insurers from dropping customers when they get sick or denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions.

Thirteen state attorneys general, all but one Republicans, joined in a lawsuit Tuesday challenging

SEE OPINION BACK PAGE

Advocate Disputes Lincoln's Bill Role

CRITIC: SENATOR IMPEDED PROCESS

By John Lyon
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LITTLE ROCK — U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln touted her role in shaping the health-care reform bill that President Barack Obama signed into law Tuesday, but the leader of a pro-reform coalition in Arkansas says the Democratic senator is undeserving of praise.

"If she had not been so aggressive about her veto power, her veto vote, and lending it to the other side, I'm almost sure we would have come out better than we did and there wouldn't have been any need for the fixes, so I really don't quite share her sentiments," said Candis Collins of Little Rock, state coordinator for Health Care for America Now.



Lincoln

Lincoln said in a news release Tuesday, "I was proud to be on hand as the Senate health insurance reform legislation that I helped craft was signed into law. I now look forward to watching the benefits of this legislation improve the lives of Arkansans by reducing costs for small business owners and the self-employed so they can reinvest the savings in their companies and hire more workers, by forcing insurance companies to cover pre-existing conditions, by preserving Medicare for future generations and by reducing the deficit by more than \$1 trillion over the next 20 years."

"She voted for the Senate bill after they had chopped it up and negotiated and taken out a lot of the things (we wanted). I think she was probably instrumental in giving away some of that stuff," Collins said after holding a news conference to thank U.S. Rep. Vic Snyder, D-Little Rock, for being the only Arkansas House member to vote for the Senate health-care bill.

Lincoln, who is facing a tough re-election fight, played a leading role last year in keeping a government-run health insurance option

SEE LINCOLN PAGE 5A

WETTING A HOOK



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Victor Cortez, 12, left, and Trey Miller, 13, try their luck fishing near the paddleboat pier in Carol Ann Cross Park on Tuesday. The day's warm weather was in sharp contrast to the weekend snowstorm and brought many area residents out to local parks.

City Suspends Open Forums At Meetings

ATTORNEY TO CLARIFY ORDINANCE

By Ben Boulden
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To avoid violating a city ordinance, the Fort Smith Board of Directors temporarily will halt allowing citi-

zens to speak on any topic during its regular board meetings.

Directors at a Tuesday study session asked Ray Gosack, deputy administrator for the city of Fort Smith,

and Jerry Canfield, attorney for the city, to review and clarify language in an existing ordinance governing how public input during board meetings is to be handled.

They also agreed to consider at their April 6 regular

meeting a proposal from At-Large Director Cole Goodman to create a special ad hoc committee of business leaders to examine the feasibility of a 1 percent tax on restaurant meals to support the Fort Smith Convention Center.

Much of Tuesday's discussion was taken up with problems surrounding the citizens forum portion of regular meetings.

During the forums, members of the public have been allowed for many years to

SEE DIRECTORS BACK PAGE

Mansfield School Board Eyes Staff Hour Cuts

By Mary L. Crider
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MANSFIELD — The goal of the state-approved fiscal turnaround plan for the Mansfield School District was a savings of \$1.13 million for the school year. The district achieved only a \$463,340 savings, School Board President Jim Boatright said Tuesday.

Boatright said he called the special meeting because district administrators haven't received sufficient direction from the Arkansas Department of Education regarding turning around Mansfield's fiscal distress situation. No decisions would be made Tuesday, he said.

All the principals were told is they need direction — the same thing board members were told for six months, "and you're ahead of us," Boatright told Principals Tina Smith and Jane Ziegler, Federal Programs Coordinator Sherrell Boulter and Treasurer Carol Reano. Middle School Principal Kenny Burgett and interim Superintendent Bob Evans were not present.

Smith and Ziegler had prepared a list of faculty for a proposed plan to reduce staff hours.

"Basically, what we decided Saturday was the only way we're going to get out of this is to cut deep until we bleed hard," Boatright said.

SEE MANSFIELD BACK PAGE

GETTING STARTED

IN THE NEWS

Obama Fails To Sway Israel On Settlements

WASHINGTON — Two weeks after Israel's announcement of construction in East Jerusalem threatened the worst confrontation with the U.S. in 20 years, the two sides have agreed to disagree. FULL STORY, 10A

'Colonel' Name Out

LITTLE ROCK — A retired Army colonel running for a U.S. Senate seat from Arkansas is criticizing a state law that prevents him from using his military title as a nickname on the ballot this spring. FULL STORY, 2A

Barling Directors OK Deal To Clear Land

By Amy Sherrill
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BARLING — The Barling Board of Directors gave the go-ahead Tuesday to clear several acres of land including the 5-acre site where a municipal complex is planned.

Directors voted unanimously to allow the city to enter into a contract with P&C Sawmill of Ozark.

The business will cut timber on Barling's 50-acre park on Chaffee and the 5-acre municipal complex on Fort Smith Boulevard. It also will purchase the timber from Barling, which will reduce the cost to clear the sites for future development, said City Administrator Ray Caruthers.

"It would be in our best interest to seek payment for the timber and have them go ahead and cut those trees that can be used for timber because we're going to be required to clear the sites anyway," Caruthers said.

The 5-acre site will be completely cleared as the design for the municipal complex covers the entire site.

"... We should just clear it and start over again," Caruthers said.

The 50-acre park site on Chaffee will be thinned to 30 to 35 trees per acre with the exception of the walking trail and parking lot, which will be clear cut, according to the contract.

SEE BARLING PAGE 5A



INDEX

TIMES RECORD

Volume 128, Number 83, 36 Pages

Amusements	3B	Markets	10C
Business	8-11C	Nation & World	7-11A
Classified	12C, Section D	Obituaries	4A
Comics	4-5B	Opinions	6A
Crossword	5B	Sports	1-7C
Living	Section B	Weather	6B

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FULL REPORT, 6B

