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Bill would ease tax burden on Olympic medalists

By Katherine Skiba
Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON — House Republican Aaron Schock of Illinois wants Olympic medalists to get applause, not a higher bill from the Internal Revenue Service, but some experts take issue with his proposal to trim winning athletes' tax bills.



In Sports

- Gymnast Gabby Douglas strikes gold in the women's all-around, **C1**
- Swimmer Michael Phelps wins a 20th Olympic medal, **C4**

U.S. athletes win performance bonuses when they capture Olympic medals: \$25,000 for a gold, \$15,000 for a silver and \$10,000 for a bronze. Plus there's the value of the medal itself, which experts say is taxable.

Schock introduced a bill Wednesday to amend the tax code to make an exception for Olympic medals and bonuses. If passed, it would apply to prizes and awards won this year.

"One of the greatest joys of the Olympics is to watch our athletes perform at the highest levels of competition and to see them stand on the podium to be rewarded for their success," he said.

"Apparently, the sacrifices they make for their success don't stop once they receive their Olympic medals. The federal government has to penalize our athletes by taxing them for the medals they have rightfully earned."

At Northwestern University School of Law, David Cameron said he'd be surprised if the IRS goes after medalists for taxes on the fair-market value of their gold, silver and bronze medallions. But he believes the agency does pay close attention to dollar prizes.

"Paying your taxes is not punishment," said Cameron, associate director of the school's tax program.

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Buehler calls for PERS reform

By Lauren Dake
The Bulletin

Knute Buehler, a Bend orthopedic surgeon and candidate for secretary of state, is adding his voice to those who are calling for reforms to the state's Public Employees Retirement System.

The job comes with no authority over PERS reforms but, Buehler said, he's wading into the debate surround-

ing the state's pension because the job comes with a responsibility to "stand up and educate people on these issues."

"When the numbers don't add up and the state is not on a financially sustainable course — and that's the situation right now — you're responsible for putting



Buehler

up the red flag," he said.

If elected, he would also refuse to receive state benefits, despite being eligible. One of the six reforms he proposed Thursday included no longer allowing the "fox to guard the hen house."

The state needs to remove the conflict of interest it has with elected officials who receive public benefits and are also involved with making policy

and reforming the system, he said.

Secretary of State Kate Brown's campaign said, in a statement, "It's great Dr. Buehler is wealthy enough to not worry about his retirement plan. However, most state workers are barely making enough to support their families, and some don't even have basic health care coverage."

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A BRIDGE TOO CROWDED?

• Some say the popular Deschutes put-in at Harper Bridge is an accident waiting to happen



Pete Erickson / The Bulletin

Justin Larsen, 15, of Salem, carries a raft to the Deschutes River while dropping off several at Harper Bridge in Sunriver. The bridge is a popular put-in spot for river floaters, which can lead to crowded conditions.

By Dylan J. Darling • The Bulletin

Hot summer days bring crowds to Harper Bridge, just south of Sunriver on the Deschutes River, looking to cool off.

Parking along Spring River Road, river users grab their flotation devices and haul them over dusty trails to the water's edge. In doing so, they often wander across the road through passing traffic.

"Pretty soon someone is going to be hit or run over — really hurt there," said Jerry Hubbard, who lives near the bridge.

To remedy the situation, Deschutes County leaders are considering installing a public boat launch to provide safe access to the river, but are far from making any decisions. Last fall, Hubbard and his neighbor David Odgen presented public launch options at the bridge to the Deschutes County commissioners.

The report didn't detail a specific recommendation.

"It's still an open issue and still a dangerous situation for the public to use Harper Bridge,"

Hubbard said Thursday.

The idea of creating a public boat launch at Harper Bridge, which has long been known as a place to start a float of the Deschutes south of Bend, isn't new.

Ron Bures, who also lives near the bridge, said he has been asking the commissioners about it for six years and his key questions go back to the mid-1990s. He says county documents from then show the developer of Crosswater Club should have designated land for a public boat launch other than what floaters and boaters are using around Harper Bridge.

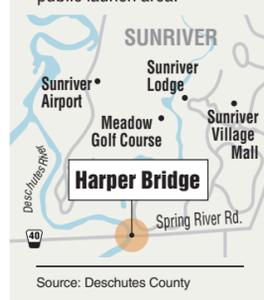
"They are not supposed to be there," he said. But Tom Anderson, director of community development for Deschutes County, disagrees.

After reviewing the county documents, Anderson said the developer met the requirements by setting aside land at Harper Bridge to allow public access to the river. About a quarter of an acre around the bridge is now being used for the makeshift launch.

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Harper Bridge

A popular put-in for floaters on the Deschutes River, Harper Bridge south of Bend regularly draws a crowd, leading to complaints to the county and requests for a public launch area.



Source: Deschutes County
Scott Steussy / The Bulletin

Drought worsens in areas already parched

By Alyssa A. Botelho
The Washington Post

The drought has intensified in the most parched areas of the country, with more than a fifth of the contiguous United States experiencing "extreme" or "exceptional" drought, according to numbers released Thursday by the National Drought Mitigation Center.

As lawmakers scrambled Thursday to put together a bill giving disaster relief to ranchers, much of the Great Plains continued to fry under cloudless skies. Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas are experiencing intensifying drought.

"It's hard to believe that it's getting worse, but it is, even with some rain in the region," said climatologist Brian Fuchs in a statement released by the drought center, which is based at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Just three weeks ago, the portion of the lower 48 states receiving those two most serious drought designations stood at 11.6 percent. That area has now doubled, to 22.3 percent. The jump in the past week from 20.6 percent represents an increase of about 32 million acres.

The geographical expanse of the drought has shrunk very slightly, but it remains historically high, with more than three-fifths of the lower 48 experiencing moderate drought or worse.

That's an area that comes close to matching the sprawling drought of 1934 at the worst of the Dust Bowl era.

The new statistics show that the areas that need rain the most aren't getting it, and there is little moisture on the horizon as the country sizzles through the hottest year on record.

"Any time you have that much heat together with drought, you impact crops worse than if it was just drought," said Roger Pulwarty, who monitors drought for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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Europe's financial crisis having an impact on U.S. businesses

By Ariana Eunjung Cha
The Washington Post

MADRID — The newest Apple store in Spain, like its counterparts in other parts of the world, is designed to draw you in. Stone floors, glass doors, and rows of blond wood tables stocked with scores of

gleaming MacBooks, iPads and iPhones as far as the eye can see.

On a recent weekday afternoon, the cavernous showroom was missing only one thing: customers.

Only a handful were scattered throughout the store —

and most were just browsing.

"I would have liked to buy lots of things, but I have no money," sighed Nacho Corral, a 37-year-old government worker whose salary was recently cut 7 percent along with those of other civil servants.

The eerie emptiness of the

store, located in an upscale shopping mall in Madrid, is an indicator of the growing severity of the impact of the European financial crisis on U.S. companies.

In the latest series of earnings announcements from U.S. corporations, top American brands such as Whirl-

pool, Ford, General Motors, Starbucks and Apple have reported disappointing revenue because of Europe's troubles. These results, over the past two weeks, have heightened concerns on Wall Street about the health of U.S. business.

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