

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

April 28, 2013

Watson Chapel Teacher Receives Grant (Pine Bluff Commercial)

Jason Scoggins, a sociology, civics, and economics teacher at Watson Chapel Junior High School, has been awarded a grant for \$1,864.00 by the Arkansas Humanities Council and Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation to implement an anti-bullying project.

The project “Stand Up and Stand Out” is a program designed to create an anti-bullying culture across the junior high school campus. According to Scoggins, he was encouraged to pursue the grant after his first semester sixth-period sociology students shared their stories with him about their experiences with bullies.

After hearing the students’ stories, he and several of his colleagues met to discuss the need for an anti-bullying program. Scoggins said, “I just feel compelled to try to help students who are being bullied at school, and thanks to the Arkansas Humanities Council and Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, we have a great first step in place.”

LR teacher linked to shooting

A teacher with the Little Rock School District who Benton police say has been operating a marijuana growing operation from his home was arrested Friday in connection with an early-morning shooting that left another man critically injured.

While investigating the shooting of Timothy Gauldin, 29, of Benton, evidence indicated that he shot himself with the help of Jason Gaunt, 35, a teacher in Little Rock, according to a Benton Police Department news release.

When searching Gaunt’s home at 2303 Cherry Crossing in Benton, detectives found the firearm involved in the shooting and “a marijuana home grow operation and related paraphernalia,” according to a release written by spokesman Lt. Kevin Russell.

Police arrested Gaunt and charged him with furnishing a firearm to a convicted felon, possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. He remained in Saline County jail Saturday without bail set.

A contract for the 2011-12 school year between Gaunt and the Little Rock School District that is accessible online states that he worked at the Forest Heights Middle School.

It does not list his position, but shows he was paid \$1,317.50 over 24 installments for his work that year, implying that he may have been part-time.

Gauldin is expected to face felony charges, but hasn't been formally charged yet because of the serious nature of his injuries, Russell said. Gauldin is an active parolee out of the Arkansas Department of Community Corrections, according to the news release.

Officers found him lying in the front yard of 2511 Millbrook Drive in Benton about 12:30 a.m. Friday with a gunshot wound in his chest and originally thought he had been shot while out for a walk. He was airlifted to a nearby hospital, which police are not identifying.

Pamela Smith, spokesman for the Little Rock School District, did not confirm Gaunt's position with the district Saturday.

"It may take time [to confirm] because this is a personnel matter, and we will have to review it," Smith said in a phone interview.

Russell said the detective confirmed Gaunt's position with the school.

Police are still investigating the motive of the shooting, but Russell said it may be "an intricate plot" and there may be additional charges in the case.

Five from Arkansas score National Merit Scholarships (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Five Arkansas high school seniors are among about 1,000 seniors nationally to be named recipients of the 2013 corporate-sponsored National Merit Scholarships.

The students, their high schools and the companies sponsoring their scholarships are:

Jackson R. Longo, Conway High School, Science Applications International Corp.

Mason Hollis, Fayetteville High School, Teradata.

Tony Wang Li, Fayetteville High School, CACI International Inc.

Jonathan H. Main, Fayetteville High School, American Electric Power.

Nicholas J. Baltz, Maumelle, Little Rock Catholic High School, McKesson Corp.

Most of these awards are renewable for up to four years of college undergraduate study and provide annual stipends that range from \$500 to \$10,000 per year. Some scholarships provide a single payment between \$2,500 and \$5,000.

This announcement of National Merit Scholarship winners is the first of several award announcements that the National Merit Scholarship Corp., will make over the spring and summer. Ultimately, some 8,000 students will receive National Merit Scholarships totaling more than \$35 million.

Education Notebook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Student art exhibit begins today in LR

Artistry in the Rock, the Little Rock School District's now annual public showcase of student visual and performing arts, will begin today at the Metroplex Event Center, 10800 Colonel Glenn Road in Little Rock, and will go through Tuesday.

Hours for the free event that will feature more than 300 pieces of student art as well as musical and dramatic performances are 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. today, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday.

Today's performances include the Western Hills Elementary School Eagle Band, Rockefeller Elementary African Dance Ensemble, Central High mixed chorus and readers' theater, Parkview Magnet High Madrigals and Barbershop singers and orchestra, and the Mann Magnet Middle School band and piano soloists.

In addition to student exhibits and performances, there will be a reception and silent auction of employee artwork Tuesday evening to benefit the district's fine arts program and a newly established scholarship fund. Little Rock School District employee groups will provide the musical entertainment for the evening event.

LR computer drive for families nears

The Little Rock School District is once again offering low-cost, guaranteed-to-work refurbished computers to eligible district students and their families.

The district will make available some 300 computers at a cost of \$40 and \$50 at Computer Power Day 4, to be held from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 11, at the Metropolitan Career Tech Center, 7701 Scott Hamilton Drive, Little Rock.

Students and their families must register for the event in advance by May 9 at the student's school.

The computers are for students who do not have access to a computer in their homes and who qualify for free- or reduced-price school meals, which is based on family income.

In addition to paying for and picking up the computers on May 11, families will be able to receive information on obtaining low-cost Internet service from Comcast.

School volunteers honored for efforts

The Pulaski County Special School District honored school volunteers for devoting more than 135,000 hours of their time to the district's 18,000 students.

Former Superintendent Bobby Lester was the guest speaker at the event, which was held last week at a breakfast at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock. Entertainment was provided by the Mills University Studies String Quartet and the North Pulaski High School Show Stoppers.

Individual schools received awards for the highest number of volunteer hours per student. Those winning schools were Bayou Meto Elementary in Jacksonville, Joe T. Robinson Middle School in Little Rock and Jacksonville High School.

Individual honors for the volunteers with the most hours donated were Christy Blanchard of Bayou Meto Elementary, Marla Williamson of Sylvan Hills Middle School in Sherwood and Velma Warner of Jacksonville High School.

The city of Jacksonville received the Susie Roberts Award. The award is given to a nominated individual or group for their service of positive promotion of the Pulaski County Special School District.

Quiz Bowl competitors win honors, scholarships (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The Arkansas Governor's Quiz Bowl Association awarded \$3,200 in scholarships to each of the seven winning teams in the 2013 Arkansas Quiz Bowl held earlier this month at the Arkansas Educational Television Network studios in Conway.

The association also awarded \$1,600 in scholarships to the second-place teams in the competitions held for each high school classification, 1A through 7A.

The Most Valuable Player within each classification also was awarded a scholarship.

The results of the April 20 Quiz Bowl finals and the names of the winning team members are:

Class 1A - Haas Hall Academy charter school in Fayetteville defeated Alpena High. The Haas Hall team members were Eli Barton, Brendan Thomas, Adam Mendonca, James Underwood, David Gauch, Lauren Goff, Sowmitran Sivakumar, Katherine Magoulick, Mycah Kettner, Pepito Estrada and Mackenzie Goff. Coaches were Paul Wolf and Tad Sours.

Class 2A - Conway Christian High defeated Cedar Ridge High of Newark. Conway Christian team members were Will Henley, Wesley Oliver, Austin Ellis, Mallory Bryant and Shelby Shelton. The coach was Laura Shelton.

Class 3A - Episcopal Collegiate High of Little Rock defeated Fountain Lake High of Hot Springs. The Episcopal Collegiate High team members were Ezra Feldman, Jacob Dowell, Sonia Helen Pascale,

Benjamin Winter, Colin Clemmons, Houston Downes, Dylan Wright, Nicholas Simmons, Jackson Bridges and Alan May. The coaches were Stan Whittlesey and Bruce Hall.

Class 4A - Subiaco Academy defeated Gravette High. The Subiaco team members were Matt Tran, Elijah Hekel, Jameson Hall, Jacob Maestri, John Tran, Patrick Giuliani, Eric Ledieu, Daniel Heinrichs and Sam Chisholm. Coaches were Larry Perreault and Sarah Perreault.

Class 5A - Watson Chapel High defeated Little Rock Christian Academy. The Watson Chapel team members were Eric Williams, Andrew Fleming, Rhett Hunt, Joshua Knight, Jimmy Beggs, Bailey Garner, Maggie Young, Khadijah Jones, Jalen B. Mauldin, Clarence Hoskins, Sarah Smith and Tony Elkins. Coaches were Ronette Metcalf and Jamie Fox.

Class 6A - Searcy High defeated Benton High. The Searcy High team members were Becca Shaw, Ana Gomez-Taylor, Patrick McKenzie, Joshua Lovitte, Jordan Ladyman, Hayley Raia, Eva Giddens, Austin Shaw, Gareth Evans, Joseph Lim, Crystal Neill and Jack Tate. The coach was Beverly Joyner.

Class 7A - Fort Smith Southside High defeated Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts of Hot Springs. The Southside team members were Emily Langham, Max Weidman, Rachel Davis, Dylan Wright, Thy "Kathy" Dai, Landon Hunter, Laurel Douglas, Brianna Gant, Austin Phan, Zach Smith, Anastasiya Kravchuk and Sami Sexton. The coach was Josh Adams.

Home school in Ozarks focuses on practical skills (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

RED STAR - As Mary Margaret Harris, a 10-year-old home-school student from Red Star, coasts down a plywood ramp and across a concrete floor, the sounds of her skateboarding and squealing blend in with the buzz at Headwaters School.

It's midmorning on a Wednesday, one of the two days the Headwaters School, located in Red Star along Arkansas 16, is open each week. About a dozen children ranging in age from 1 to 14 are simultaneously at work and play in the school's main room, which is a combination of work desks, a kitchen, an activity table and a large, open floor. While some of the children prepare to go outside for a science experiment involving creating large soap bubbles, others freely rollerblade around the school's interior.

The school, which is not accredited, is a cross between a one-room schoolhouse and an artistic community center. Headwaters - founded in nearby Pettigrew in the early 1970s - has served home-schoolers for about 40 years. It relocated to Red Star, which is in the Ozark National Forest, in 1997.

Rain Mako, Headwaters' president and one of the school's three teachers, emphasized that it isn't simply for home-schooled children or their parents, but rather for the entire family.

"In home schooling, you see people who begin for religious reasons, or they're dissatisfied with public education, but also people who see it as an extension of their family life," Mako said. "There is a focus on family closeness, on competence and resiliency. It's a choice to invest a lot of time with your kids - passing on your values and beliefs, but also enjoying life together."

“There’s a common thread to the families that are involved here,” said Mako. “It has to be someone who’s willing to do things that are out of the mainstream.”

“It takes people who are adventurous and resourceful to home school in the first place. To have the less-directed sort of home schooling that works well at Headwaters takes a lot of confidence on the part of the parents,” Mako said.

Sara White, a home-schooler who also teaches at the school, said about 15 home-schooling families have children who attend Headwaters at least twice a month.

The school, which was registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a nonprofit organization in 1976, runs with minimal funding from the community. Parents pay annual fees of \$125 to cover the school’s utilities, phone line and insurance, Mako said. Teachers are paid directly by the parents.

An extended family of community members, many of whom are former students or parents of students, still actively participates in steering the school and planning fundraisers to fund it.

The school hosts home-schoolers each Wednesday and Thursday, although there is no mandatory attendance. Activities normally begin at 10 a.m., and the school day continues into mid afternoon, with a break for lunch.

Mako and other teachers do not rely on a set curriculum, but instead design activities that put practical skills and knowledge to use.

While some families live within minutes of the school, others live more than an hour’s drive away. In those cases, the parents tend to stay the entire day with their children and assist in teaching.

The school attracts families from as far away as Fayetteville and Clarksville. Many share a back-to-the-land ethic. Some have homesteads that function without use of rural electrical grids. The religious leanings of the various families differ, and most now involved with the school did not choose home schooling for religious reasons.

“We don’t have any religion-purposed families at the moment,” White said. “We have had religious families in the past, and we all have a tremendous amount of respect for each other. What ties us together is our landscape and our tremendous belief in our ability to educate ourselves.”

The number of home schooled students in Arkansas has climbed each year for the past two decades. According to the Arkansas Department of Education, more than 16,400 children were enrolled in home-schooling programs in 2012. That’s more than fivetimes the 3,140 number of home-school students reported in 1992.

Bill Ballard, Arkansas coordinator for home-school testing, said that outside of religion, parents typically report one of three reasons for wanting to home school their children.

“They feel they can actually do better for their children,” said Ballard, noting that in some locations, there may be no public school that satisfies a particular parent.

“Parents of special-needs kids often feel very strongly that they can help their children better than a special-education teacher in a public school. A big percentage of home-schooling parents just feel the public schools are an unsafe environment,” Ballard said. “And some of them just get mad at people.”

Kristin Hedges, who home schools her three children, ages 1, 4 and 6, with her husband in Clarksville, said she discovered Headwaters shortly after moving to Arkansas from Arizona in 2010. Although she initially recoiled at the idea of an hour-long commute to the school, her first visit changed her mind.

“After a month of trying to figure out what we were going to do, and feeling really lonely, I came up one Wednesday,” Hedges said. “As soon as I walked in, I let out a breath I’d been holding since we’d moved here - a breath I hadn’t realized I’d been holding.”

Hedges said Headwaters persuaded her in part to commit to home schooling her children because she wanted them to have a learning experience than deviated from her perception of current public school teaching techniques.

“It’s the whole idea of experiential learning,” Hedges said. “It’s not sitting at a desk and hammering facts into kids. It’s learning as we’re actually experiencing the environment, the world, and what’s going on around us.”

Other parents said they focused on curriculum-based teaching, while using gathering spaces such as Headwaters to put those lessons to practical use. Teachers at the school use nature walks through the Ozark National Forest to teach children to identify trees and plants, and use kayak floats on the Buffalo National River to teach about waterways and geology.

“It’s this experiential learning that’s become really valued for us,” Hedges said. “[The children] seem to have a higher value for what they’re learning, as opposed to adults just telling them what to memorize.”

The Arkansas Department of Education tracks reading-comprehension and conceptual problem-solving scores for home-schooled children, although only in the aggregate. While parents are not required to submit lesson plans or adhere to any established curricula, home-schooled children must take tests using the Iowa Basic Skills test criteria each year during grades three through nine. While parents have access to their children’s individual results, the results are not shared with the state, Ballard said.

According to data from the Education Department, homeschooled children in Arkansas scored on average as well or better than did 52 percent to 68 percent of children taught in public or private schools on the Arkansas Benchmark Exam or the Iowa Basic Skills test over the past five years.

Many of the parents interviewed at the Headwaters School said the most common concern they hear from inside their families and out is that home schooling isolates children from their peers and robs them of the opportunity to develop social skills.

White, whose husband and three brothers-in-law were all home-schooled and attended the Headwaters School in their younger years, said she thinks that daily interaction between parent and child combined with that of children of different ages, is more effective at socializing than is the public school system.

“Look at public school’s idea of socialization: ‘sit down, be still, be quiet,’” White said. “I really didn’t want my children to experience that whole public school scene. I wanted them to experience a smaller environment where they would have really close friends that would be encouraging.”

She said there are tangible benefits in the educational style of the Headwaters School.

“I’ve found that kids learn better from other kids. I like the one-room schoolhouse environment where they’re learning from the kids who are older than them,” White said. “That really helps both the older kids and the younger kids - it gives the younger kids somebody to look up to, and it gives older kids a reason to be responsible.”

Six-year rate of graduation rises to 40.8% (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Sixty percent of full-time students who enrolled in a public Arkansas university for the first time in fall 2006 had not received a degree from that institution six years later, according to a report by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.

The state’s average six year graduation rate, used to track its progress against other states, reached 40.8 percent in 2012. That’s an increase over recent years - the rate was 39.5 percent last year and 37 percent five years ago - but the rate must continue to steadily grow for Arkansas to reach Gov. Mike Beebe’s goal of doubling the state’s degree holders by 2025.

“It’s not just a goal,” said Shane Broadway, interim director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. “From an economic standpoint for Arkansas, it’s a necessity.”

After public college and university chancellors and presidents signed a pledge to help meet Beebe’s goal, they continued ratcheting up admissions standards, creating new student support programs and exploring ways to retain struggling students to help them earn degrees.

Those efforts are evident in the most recent statistics, college leaders said, and the growth trend should continue as more students are affected.

Among universities, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville had the highest six-year graduation rate, with 60 percent of the 2,725 first-time, full-time students who enrolled in the fall 2006 semester earning a degree within the next six years, the report said.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock had the lowest of the four-year institutions, with 19.3 percent of 605 students graduating in the same time period. UALR’s leadership have attributed its lower graduation rates to relatively high enrollment of nontraditional students, who take longer to complete a degree and often transfer between campuses before graduating.

The state's 22 community colleges gauge success with a three-year graduation rate. Rates are typically lower at two-year campuses because many students transfer to four year institutions before completing a degree or take courses part time during semesters so that they can balance work with class, which extends the time it takes to graduate, leaders said.

Of the 8,337 first-time, full time students who enrolled in the state's community colleges in fall 2009, 19.6 percent had earned an associate's degree, technical certificate or certificate of proficiency within three years, the report said.

Among community colleges, the three-year graduation rate was highest at Arkansas State University-Mountain Home, where 40.2 percent of 214 students earned a degree or certificate three years after enrolling. It was lowest at Mid-South Community College, where 10 percent of 200 enrolled students earned a degree or certificate in the same time.

Economic development and government leaders have said Arkansas' relatively low number of degree holders and relatively poor graduation rates affect the state's ability to attract new businesses and recruit highly skilled employees.

Arkansas ranked third from the bottom compared with other states and the District of Columbia in the proportion of its population 25 and older who had completed a bachelor's degree, according to the U.S.Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

In 2011, the latest year for which numbers are available, 20.3 percent of the state's 25-and-older population had completed a bachelor's degree.

That rate was ahead only of Mississippi and West Virginia, and far below the District of Columbia, which had 52.5 percent of its population who had attained at least a four-year degree.

The national average was 28.5 percent.

Arkansas' public universities must increase the rate at which they award bachelor's degrees by 4.73 percent a year to double the total number they award annually by 2025, said Tara Smith, director of institutional finance for the Higher Education Department.

Arkansas' public institutions awarded 13,988 bachelor's degrees in the 2011-12 school year, 6.7 percent more than they awarded in the previous year and 21.5 percent more than they awarded five years prior, according to another report by the Higher Education Department.

The 4.73 percent growth rate is a part of a new "performance funding" formula that provide less state funding to universities that can't meet goals related to areas such as graduation and retention of students. Under the same formula, a community college must increase the number of associate's degrees it awards each year to retain funding.

Higher Education Coordinating Board members, meeting in Hope last week, expressed some hesitation about the 2025 goal.

"I wonder if it's feasible," board member Joe Bennett said.

Bennett said he didn't want colleges and universities to relax their academic standards to increase degrees.

Broadway said he doesn't think that will happen. At this point, institutions are showing potential to meet the goal, he said.

"I think it's attainable," he said.

State legislators pass 61% of bills filed in session

The 89th General Assembly approved 1,520 of the 2,492 bills filed during the 100-day legislative session, or 61 percent.

Along with passing the state's \$4.9 billion budget and placing three constitutional amendments on the 2014 ballot, they made it illegal to pass off used bedding as new, cleared prosecuting attorneys to run in nonpartisan elections, legalized the sale of unpasteurized milk and changed some county boundaries.

According to the Bureau of Legislative Research, the 100-member House introduced 1,300 bills; the 35-member Senate proposed 1,192.

The percentage of passed bills is consistent with that of other regular legislative sessions over the past year. Such sessions are held in odd-numbered years.

According to data from the bureau: in 2011, 55.6 percent of all filed bills passed; in 2009, 65.7 percent passed; in 2007, 62.3 percent passed; in 2005, 73.2 percent passed; in 2003, 62.9 percent passed.

Following is a glimpse at some of the bills considered in the 2013 legislative session, which ended Tuesday.

BUDGET

Act 1517 increases the state general revenue budget by \$197 million to \$4.924 billion in the fiscal year starting July 1.

The measure prioritizes the distribution of general revenue to state agencies on the basis of three categories - A, B and C.

Category A will be funded first and is to receive \$4.786 billion. Category B will be funded second. It is to receive \$131.75 million. Category C will receive \$6.65 million if enough general revenue comes in to fund it.

The state's current forecast expects enough general revenue to fully fund Categories A and B.

Most of the increased state money will go to public schools and the state's Medicaid program. The final budget factors in \$10 million that will result from tax cuts, sets aside \$18 million in rainy-day funds and funds 2 percent cost-of-living raises for state employees who don't work at state higher-education institutions, the first such cost-of-living raises in three years.

The Public School Fund that provides aid for the state's 239 school districts will increase by nearly \$47 million to \$2.046 billion. The state Department of Human Services will get a nearly \$95 million increase to \$1.226 billion, with the state's Medicaid program getting an \$85 million increase to \$890 million.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Lawmakers also approved three proposed Arkansas constitutional amendments to be referred to voters in 2014.

Senate Joint Resolution 16, sponsored by Sen. Bill Sample, R-Hot Springs, seeks to deny groups that are circulating petitions to get measures on the ballot an additional 30 days to collect more signatures if too many of the signatures on their original petitions are deemed invalid.

Some lawmakers said the signature-gathering process for petitions had become a "free-for-all." Others said the measure would be an unnecessary restriction that would make it harder for citizens to change the law.

HJR1009, sponsored by Rep. Warwick Sabin, D-Little Rock, would establish some ethics rules changes and adjust term limits for lawmakers to serve a total of 16 years in either legislative chamber.

It would prohibit direct political contributions from corporations and unions, and require that lawmakers be out of office for two years before they could become lobbyists; there's currently a one-year limit. It also would create an independent citizens commission that would set salaries for lawmakers and other elected officials.

SJR7, sponsored by Sen. Jonathan Dismang, R-Beebe, would allow the Legislature to pass a law requiring that administrative rules of a state agency be reviewed and approved by a legislative committee before they go into effect.

SCHOOL CHOICE

The Legislature chose not to wait for a pending federal appeals court ruling and decided to change the state's school-choice initiative. The new law is Act 1227.

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis has not yet issued an opinion in a case filed by the parents of white children who attempted to transfer from the 60 percent white Malvern School District to the 95 percent white Magnet Cove School District. A lower court found the state's school-choice law unconstitutional because of its racial restrictions, but the appeals court stayed that decision while it's under appeal.

The law limits transfers to no more than 3 percent of a district's enrollment each year, exempts districts with court-ordered desegregation responsibilities and requires the Department of Education to collect transfer data and report it to the Legislature. The law expires in 2015.

LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

The Legislature enacted Act 234 to overhaul the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship program.

Lawmakers said they made the changes because more students than expected are receiving the lottery-funded scholarships, and the lottery's net proceeds have fallen short of projections.

In the coming school year, first-time recipients of the scholarship will receive \$2,000 as freshmen, \$3,000 as sophomores, \$4,000 as juniors and \$5,000 as seniors at four-year universities. New scholarship recipients enrolling in two-year colleges will get \$2,000 a year for both years.

Students first awarded the scholarships in the 2010-11 school year will continue to receive \$5,000 a year to attend universities and \$2,500 a year for community and technical colleges. Those who were first awarded the scholarships in the 2011-12 or 2012-13 school years will continue to get \$4,500 a year at universities and \$2,250 at colleges. Those amounts won't change for those students as long as they remain eligible to receive the scholarships.

CONCEALED CARRY

The Legislature approved a measure to keep secret the names and ZIP codes of about 130,000 concealed-handgun licensees in the state.

Act 145 was signed into law by Lt. Gov. Mark Darr in February while the governor was at a National Governors Association meeting in Washington, D.C. Beebe had planned to let it become law without his signature.

Under the law, no information about concealed-handgun-permit owners is publicly available under the state Freedom of Information Act.

DEATH PENALTY
The Legislature approved a measure to amend the state's death-penalty statute, which was ruled unconstitutional last summer.

Sen. Bart Hester, R-Cave Springs, has said Act 139 aims at fixing problems identified last June by the Arkansas Supreme Court when it struck down Act 1296 of 2009.

In the opinion, the court wrote that the Legislature "abdicated its responsibility and passed to the executive branch, in this case the [Department of Correction], unfettered discretion to determine all protocol and procedures, most notably the chemicals to be used, for state execution."

The new act states that a condemned prisoner must first be injected with a benzodiazepine, an anti-anxiety drug, before receiving "a barbiturate in an amount sufficient to cause death."

The Legislature also OK'd Act 1490 by Rep. Nate Steel, D-Nashville, to allow the state to sentence children convicted of capital murder to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling found that states could not require life sentences for murderers who committed their crimes before turning 18.

Under the previous Arkansas sentencing statutes, capital murder was punishable only by death or life in prison. About 60 state prisoners are serving life sentences for capital murder tied to crimes they committed as youths. COUNTY LINES

Act 1067 by Sen. Bryan King, R-Green Forest, changes the boundaries of Boone and Carroll counties. The change goes into effect Jan. 1. King said Carroll County law-enforcement officials have to drive several miles around Table Rock Lake through Boone County to reach the Cricket Creek boat dock.

Specifically affected is the Cricket Creek Public Use Area and Backbone Bluff, near the Missouri border, both of which will now be in Boone County.

GED TEST FEES

A bill to shift the cost of taking the General Education Development test from the state to the test-takers sailed through both chambers before becoming law earlier this month.

Act 1063, sponsored by Rep. Harold Copenhaver, D-Jonesboro, gives the authority to the state Board of Career Education to approve fees for the tests and other assessments.

The board was previously restricted to charging \$10 the first time the test was administered and \$20 for the second and subsequent tests.

NONPARTISAN PROSECUTORS

Act 1110 makes elections nonpartisan for prosecuting attorneys.

The act, by Rep. Matthew Shepherd, R-El Dorado, removes party affiliations from the positions and requires filing fees to go to a nonpartisan fund, some of which will be used to pay salaries for trial-court assistants.

USED BEDDING

Act 1420 increases the penalties for knowingly selling used bedding as new.

The act sponsored by Sen. Jeremy Hutchinson, R-Little Rock, makes it a Class A misdemeanor to sell fabric, filling or an article of bedding that has been used under labels reserved for new bedding. A Class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

RAW MILK

With some legislators referring to it as a “freedom issue,” the General Assembly approved a measure to allow dairy farmers to sell up to an average of 500 gallons of unpasteurized milk per month.

Under Act 1209, sponsored by Rep. Randy Alexander, R-Springdale, sellers will be required to post signs and put labels on bottles warning buyers that the milk hasn’t been pasteurized (heated to kill bacteria), has not been inspected by the state Health Department and that the consumer assumes all liability from health problems that may arise from drinking it.