

NEWS CLIPS

SOUTHWEST GAS FILES RATE DECREASE REQUEST FOR NEVADA CUSTOMERS

The Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN) recently received a request from Southwest Gas for a \$22 million rate decrease in the Purchase Gas Adjustment (PGA) for customers living in Nevada. The \$18 million decrease for customers in southern Nevada and \$3.9 million decrease for northern Nevada customers would take effect July 1. Southwest's vice president of Pricing, Roger Montgomery, says the decrease is primarily the result of decreasing natural gas prices since the last PGA in November 1998. "We're pleased to be able to announce this decrease," said Montgomery. "It demonstrates Southwest's determination to search and buy the best-priced gas for its customers." Under PUCN rules, any increases or decreases in the company's purchased gas costs are passed along to customers dollar-for-dollar. The company sees no profit or loss.

PRESIDENT TO AWARD CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO ROSA PARKS

President Clinton will award the Congressional Gold Medal to Rosa Parks at 3 p.m., Tuesday, June 15 in a ceremony in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. On May 4, the President signed legislation sponsored by Rep. Julia Carson, D-Ind., to award the medal to Mrs. Parks. Rep. Carson signed 329 cosponsors onto the bill. Known as the Mother of America's civil rights movement, Rosa Parks touched off the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, when she was arrested for refusing to yield her seat on the bus.

MISSOURI MARCH RALLY AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

The Rev. Ralph Gordon Wright, a Kansas City, Mo. activist and other concerned citizens converged on Kansas City Wednesday for "Enough Is Enough," a march against police brutality and aggression. The march began at the city's Washington Square and ended at the police precinct where local and national leaders are scheduled to speak. In addition to addressing the national problem of brutality, the event recalled the deaths of those who died in Kansas City from police violence. Wright is currently on a hunger strike, and he says he is prepared to remain on one until something is done. "I don't know if I'll ever eat again. I'm that serious about this. Sometimes you have to take drastic measures," he said.

N.C. BILL WOULD RELIEVE FARM DEBT RESTRICTIONS

A bill by Congresswoman Eva M. Clayton, D-N.C., would relieve a debt forgiveness restriction enacted by the 1996 Farm Bill. That law made anyone who had ever received any kind of debt forgiveness ineligible to receive another loan from the United States Department of Agriculture. The proposed bill, "Agriculture Credit Act of 1998," will allow farmers to remain eligible for USDA loans in three instances: following a loan consolidation, rescheduling, reamortization, or deferral of a loan; following a loan write-down due to a financial problem related to a natural disaster or medical condition of the borrower or an immediate family member of the borrower; and following a loan write-down provided as a part of a resolution of a discrimination complaint against the Sec. of the USDA.

CBC URGES FCC TO PUT UNDERPRIVILEGED SCHOOLS ON WEB

Congresswoman Julia Carson, D-Ind., recently joined with other members of the Congressional Black Caucus in strongly urging the Federal Communications Commission to fully fund the E-rate program. "Every child in America must have the opportunity to log on to the information superhighway," Carson said. "The E-rate will ensure that even schools with tight budgets will be able to afford the basic telecommunications services needed to link to the internet." In response to basic wiring needed by inner city and rural schools to access the Internet, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 included provisions for a discounted "E-rate" to allow schools and libraries to install improved telecommunications infrastructure for Internet links. The E-rate is financed by changes in existing telecommunication regulatory fees. Under the program, eligible schools and libraries can receive discounts ranging from 20 to 90 percent.

Supreme Court decision raises census cost

WASHINGTON (AP) — The cost of counting America next year is going up by \$1.7 billion because of the restriction imposed by the Supreme Court on using statistical sampling techniques.

The Census Bureau said last week that it will ask for the extra money in addition to \$2.9 billion already requested for fiscal 2000 for the count.

"This is evidence that in the absence of using modern statistical methods, it is simply going to cost a lot more to do the census," Census Director Kenneth Prewitt said in a telephone interview.

But Elizabeth Morra, a spokeswoman for the House Appropriations Committee, took issue with the Census Bureau.

"It's clearly evident that the 2000 census continues to

be plagued by operational difficulties and cost overruns, and these are problems that are unrelated to the Supreme Court's decision," she said.

Throughout the sampling versus enumeration controversy on Capitol Hill, House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, has said Congress would provide whatever funds are necessary to do an actual count.

The Census Bureau had planned to use statistical sampling in the 2000 count, contending that it would save money and be more accurate than the 1990 effort, which, later checks indicated, had some 12.8 million errors — missing 8.4 million and double-counting 4.4 million people.

With sampling, more than 90 percent of Americans would be counted directly and the results would be used to estimate those not counted.

But Republican legislators battled the plan because census numbers are used to allocate seats in the House of Representatives among the states, and they feared sampling would increase the population of Democratic urban areas.

The Supreme Court in January agreed that sampling did not satisfy the requirements for numbers used in apportionment.

But the court left open the possibility of sampling for other census numbers, which are used for such purposes as distributing billions of dollars in federal funds among states and localities.

Prewitt said the bureau will have to increase its advertising and other efforts to get people to respond to mailed questionnaires, will visit more homes that do not mail forms back and will need to hire more people and keep

local offices open longer.

Americans, already inundated with advertising mail, sent back just 66 percent of census forms in 1990, and the bureau is anticipating that the return rate could fall to 61 percent this time.

Each 1 percentage-point drop costs an additional \$25 million in follow-up efforts, Prewitt said.

In February, the Census Bureau submitted a budget request for \$2.879 billion for fiscal 2000 to complete the census, in addition to \$1.686 billion it has spent since 1991 preparing for the count. Prewitt said it will now have to seek an additional \$1.723 billion.

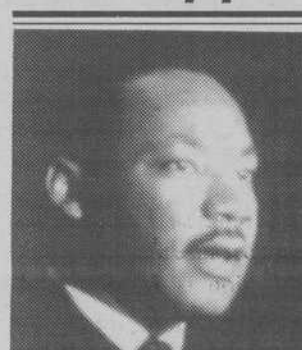
Census Day is April 1. Questionnaires will be sent to some 100 million households, and enumerators will hit the streets to track down those who fail to respond.

New Hampshire approves day honoring King

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Gov. Jeanne Shaheen signed a bill Monday creating Martin Luther King Jr. Civil Rights Day, making New Hampshire the last state in the country to honor the slain civil rights leader with a holiday. The holiday will be observed for the first time on Jan. 17, 2000.

"We have a tremendous heritage of fighting against tyranny and for justice," Shaheen said in signing the bill on the Statehouse lawn.

The bill, approved by the state House and Senate last month, ends years of attempts



"I have a dream"

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

to put King's name on the holiday, which had been celebrated as Civil Rights Day under a legislative compromise passed in 1991.

King's son, Martin Luther King III, represented the King

family at the signing. He said it was appropriate that Shaheen, New Hampshire's first woman governor, was the one to sign the bill.

"My father believed that democracy ought to be

inclusive of everyone, and I think your signature on this bill signifies the progress we've made," he said.

The Rev. Arthur Hilson, of New Hope Baptist Church in Portsmouth, said the new holiday "marked an opportunity to continue pushing King's message, to continue looking at the life of this 'apostle of peace, this prophet of the 20th century.'"

"I hope it's not an end to something. If it is, we'll have missed the real meaning of this," Hilson said. "The dream he talked about certainly has not been fully realized."

Gatherers remember dragging victim, urge tougher hate laws

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Two dozen protesters Monday marked the one-year anniversary of the dragging death of a black man by praying at the Capitol and demanding a special session of the Legislature to enact a tougher law against hate crimes.

The James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act, which would have toughened Texas' hate-crimes law, died in the state Senate earlier this year. The demonstrators were particularly critical of Gov. George W. Bush for not taking a position on the bill.

"Had he not received his precious tax break, Bush would have called a special session. Why not for hate crimes?" asked Kyev Tatum, an Austin minister and spokesman for the Coalition

of African-Americans Unified for Self Empowerment.

Three white men have been charged with killing Byrd, who was chained to a pickup truck and dragged to pieces along a country road in Jasper.

White supremacist John William King, 24, was convicted earlier this year and sentenced to death. The other defendants are awaiting trial.

Democratic lawmakers have pointed to Bush's own White House ambitions as one reason the hate-crimes bill failed.

Bush spokesman Scott McClellan noted that Texas already has a hate-crimes law and added: "Those who commit violent heinous crimes in Texas will be held accountable."

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