

FAIRBANKS

Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today

Hundreds crowd Kenai Peninsula beaches for start of dipnetting season. » A2

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Mostly cloudy, with rain showers and thunderstorms throughout the day.
High today 70
Low tonight 56

Sunrise: 3:45 a.m.
Sunset: 12:05 a.m.

WEATHER » A9

...



LASTING LEGACY

RAHI manager Denise Wartes brings passion to program.

INTERIOR
Page A4

...

MISS USA

Miss Oklahoma earns national crown, title.

NATION
Page A9

...



HARD VICTORIES

Janssen, Weller take first, second in Ester Dome Ass Kicker.

SPORTS
Page B1

...

SMOKE DANGER

Symptoms can build up for asthmatics in low air quality.

HEALTH
Page B4

...

SOURDOUGH JACK: “I sure wouldn’t be able to get up that big ol’ hill.”



Rate hike approved for water, sewer

By Jeff Richardson
JRICHARDSON@NEWSMINER.COM

Rates are going up this month for about 8,500 water and sewer customers in the Fairbanks area. State regulators have granted an interim rate increase of about 16 percent for Golden Heart Utilities and College Utilities. The rate hikes, which went into effect July 1, will translate into a roughly \$6.50 increase to the average water bill and a \$6.60 increase to the average wastewater bill. Utility Services of Alaska, which owns both utilities, asked the Reg-

ulatory Commission of Alaska in May to consider the interim rate hike. The company argued in RCA filings that increased operating costs, declining water consumption and investment in infrastructure justify the increase. Company Vice President Tiffany Van Horn told the News-Miner in May that operating costs have increased 12 percent since 2010, while water and sewer usage has declined during that period. Commission members voted to approve the interim increase on June 25. The last rate hike for Golden Heart Utilities and College

Utilities customers was in 2011. The interim rate will remain in place until the RCA rules on a permanent rate increase sometime next year. Utility Services of Alaska is asking for a rate hike of 18.8 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively, to its water and wastewater rates. If the RCA ultimately approves the permanent rate, the utilities will be allowed to keep the money collected through the interim rate hike. If the permanent rate isn’t approved, then Golden Heart Utilities and College Utilities will be required to return the excess money to its customers.

Utility Services of Alaska will be required to either place the money collected through the interim rate increase into escrow or to pay 10.5 percent interest on future refunds. The company has until Friday to decide which approach it will take. A decision on the permanent rate increase request won’t happen anytime soon. The RCA stated that it will suspend discussions on the issue until January at the soonest, with the deadline for a final decision on Aug. 7, 2016. Contact staff writer Jeff Richardson at 459-7518. Follow him on Twitter: @FDNMbusiness.

A popular landing



Eric Glos, right, and Julio Ramirez, both with G2 Construction, build walls while the foundation is finished for new housing units at Raven Landing on Friday. ERIN CORNELIUSSEN/NEWS-MINER

Interest high for senior housing expansion

By Matt Buxton
MBUXTON@NEWSMINER.COM

With the fourth and final expansion of Raven Landing going up on Cowles Street, the calls are pouring in from seniors hoping to get one of the 35 new apartments in the independent living community. On Wednesday afternoon receptionist Chelsea Walker, one of the first seniors to move in when Raven Landing opened in 2010, was busy printing out additional informational packets. “There are so many people calling that we gave out our last packet this morning,” she said. The new building is the final planned apartment building for the self-described middle-class senior retirement community, and will be the largest at four stories and 35 apartments. It will bring the total apartments at the community to 96. Raven Landing has no income restrictions for who can move in. It charges a market rate rent and providing meals in its community center, utilities and



A concrete boom pump reaches over the foundation for new housing units at Raven Landing on Friday. ERIN CORNELIUSSEN/NEWS-MINER

house cleaning every other week. While there’s some subsidized housing for low-income seniors, Raven Landing Board of Directors Chairwoman Karen Parr said there was nothing else in the Fairbanks area for middle-class seniors. “People tend to think of seniors

as either very poor or rich — the Caribbean cruise crowd — but actually an awful lot of us are in between,” she said. “Quite a lot of the folks here are not that well off at all.”

RAVEN » A8

CUTS » A3

Lawsuit over union fees revitalizes labor groups nationwide

By Lydia DePillis
THE WASHINGTON POST

The last time someone tried to call a lunchtime union meeting at the Upper Marlboro Parole and Probation office in Prince George’s County, Maryland, things didn’t go well. Even with free food. “Nobody reported to the conference room, because they thought someone was there to sell them insur-

ance,” says Monica Harris, who works there. But she, at least, had made it to an all-day activist training run by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees in Baltimore. “A lot of people have lost faith in the union because they haven’t seen anyone,” Harris said to a circle of workers and union staff. “Right now, we’re in a place where we need rebuilding.

It’s not just about lunch.” They nodded understandingly. Stories like this are common in Maryland, a state where most local government workplaces are “agency shop,” meaning that every employee must pay fees to the union whether or not they are a full member. That situation might not last for much longer. The Supreme Court has decided to take a case that could

eliminate agency fees for public sector unions, functionally making all of them right-to-work overnight. “I think that fundamentally this is about weakening unions,” says Jeff Grabelsky, associate director of the Worker Institute at Cornell University, of the Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association case. “There’s a recognition among those aligned behind this initiative that

whatever the ostensible reasons, their understanding is that unions will suffer.” As the case looms, public sector unions have embarked on a broad “internal organizing” effort, reaching workers who may have been paying agency fees for years and never had any contact with a union representative.

LABOR » A3