Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today

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



The weather.

Mostly cloudy, with rain showers and thunderstorms throughout the day.

High today.....70 Low tonight56

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



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

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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 Regulatory 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.

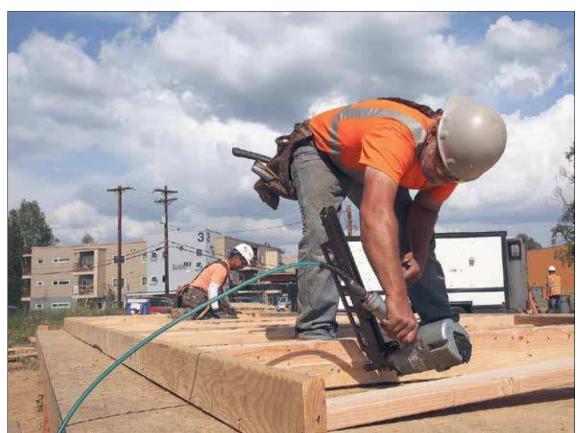
The interim rate will remain in place until the RCA rules on a permanent rate increase sometime net year. Utility Services of Alaska is asking for a rate hike of 18.8 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively, to its water and wastewater rates.

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

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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

RAVEN » A8

UA targets low-entry programs for removal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JUNEAU — The University of Alaska plans to eliminate or suspend a number of majors this year to deal with an ongoing budgetary squeeze on the state's public universities.

The university system has slated 31 academic programs for removal, including 21 at the University of Alaska Anchorage, the Juneau Empire reported.

"Sometimes having three of something isn't as good as having one strong something," UA president candidate Jim Johnsen told the Juneau Empire.

The university system has \$15 million less to work with this fiscal year. The legislature slashed its budget by 4 percent to help make up the state's multibillion-dollar deficit.

But state employees were also promised a 2.5 percent pay raise this year. Half of that will be paid through state general funds but the university system has to cover the rest, said University of Alaska Southeast Vice Chancellor Michael Ciri.

"So unless we can show that we can earn more money, it's always a budget cut," he said.

He said UAS will need to make up from an approximately \$1.6 million reduction this year. It plans to eliminate four programs over the next few years: its master's of business administration, its associate degree in automotive power technology, its residential building science certificate and its pre-engineering certificate.

UAS also has suspended admission to its arts program.

Students currently enrolled in the changing programs will be able to finish their coursework and ear their degrees, even if new students are not admitted.

Ciri says the programs chosen by UAS are not entirely

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

reasons, their understanding is that unions will suf-As the case looms, pub-

whatever the ostensible

lic 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



Classified » B7 Comics » B6 | Couples » A5 | Dear Abby » A7 | Health » B4 | Obituaries » A8 | Opinion » A6