

Today	Thursday	Friday
		
High: 84 Low: 54 Precip: 0%	High: 84 Low: 57 Precip: 0%	High: 72 Low: 52 Precip: 20%

IN BRIEF

Accused panty thief's lawyer requests to leave case

PORTLAND — Accused panty thief Sung Koo Kim might soon need another lawyer — his fourth in a year.

Des Connall of Portland, citing an undisclosed ethical issue, said he plans to file motions to withdraw from the highly publicized set of cases in Yamhill, Washington, Benton and Multnomah counties, the (McMinnville) News-Register reported.

Kim, 31, is accused of stealing panties from women at Linfield, George Fox, Oregon State and other colleges. Kim also faces child pornography charges in his home of Washington County.

He is a former suspect in the disappearance of Brooke Wilberger, a Brigham Young University student who disappeared from a Corvallis apartment complex last May. Police eventually said they no longer considered Kim a suspect.

Connall's plan to withdraw from the case comes just weeks before Kim's first trial, scheduled for June 7 in Yamhill County.

If Yamhill County Judge John Collins grants Connall's motion, the trial may have to be put off until fall.

"Because of very recent activities which have occurred between Mr. Kim and this law firm, as of Wednesday, we would move to withdraw representation in that matter in all four counties," Connall told Collins in a pretrial conference conducted by telephone Friday.

Connall said the details of his conflict of interest in the case are "extremely delicate," saying he could reveal them only in a sealed affidavit or private appearance in Collins' chambers.

Connall is the third prominent Portland defense attorney retained by the Kim family since their son's initial arraignment last May.

Michael Greenlick of Borg Strom

& Greenlick represented Kim the first month, followed by sole practitioner Janet Lee Hoffman.

House votes to end home-schooler tests

SALEM — Home-schooled students would not have to take periodic achievement tests unless they participate in sports or other interscholastic activities, according to a bill passed by the House on Tuesday.

The measure, sent to the Senate on a 37-22 vote, would do away with a requirement that students taught at home by or under the direction of their parents take state-approved exams in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10.

Public school students in the same grades are given achievement tests in basic subjects such as reading and math.

A similar measure was passed by the 2003 Legislature but vetoed by Gov. Ted Kulongoski, who said testing was the only way to ensure home-schooled students are getting an adequate education.

The state Education Department estimates that more than 20,000 students were taught at home in the 2003-04 school year.

The new bill requires that to take part in sports or other public school interscholastic programs, students taught at home must be tested and receive a minimum score on a nationally standardized achievement exam.

Backers of the measure said parents deserve the freedom to have their children taught as they choose without unneeded government regulations that include state-mandated testing not required of students in private schools.

Home-schooling parents "have a track record of doing an excellent job," said Rep. John Dallum, R-The Dalles, a retired school teacher and superintendent.

He said many home-schooled students perform better academically than do public school pupils.

But Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene, said without tests there's no way to detect which students aren't doing well.

"I'm concerned about those few students who do poorly," he said.

Rep. Debi Farr, R-Eugene, said she reluctantly supported the bill and will urge the Senate to restore a requirement that parents who home-school their children notify their local education agencies of that fact.

— The Associated Press

Billionaire offers to buy PacifiCorp for \$5.1 billion

BY WILLIAM MCCALL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTLAND — Ownership of one of the largest utilities in Oregon is about to change hands again, only this time the name Enron is not involved — to the relief of many analysts and political leaders.

Instead, another famous name in the business world is the marquee for the latest utility deal: billionaire investor Warren Buffett.

After more than a year of political drama over the purchase of Enron Corp. subsidiary Portland General Electric, the other major utility based in Oregon, PacifiCorp, made news Tuesday with the announcement that Buffett has offered \$5.1 billion in cash to buy it.

PacifiCorp, like PGE, was founded in Oregon and has a long history in the state, with PGE focused on the Portland metro area and PacifiCorp — once known as Pacific Power & Light — serving much of Oregon's outlying rural areas.

PacifiCorp was purchased by ScottishPower in 1999, just two years after Enron purchased PGE. The ScottishPower buyout marked the first time a foreign company had been allowed to purchase a U.S. utility as energy deregulation gained momentum nationally at the end of the '90s.

But like Enron, ScottishPower has decided the U.S. energy market is not going to be as profitable as the British company had hoped, analysts say.

"Their expectations were way too high when they came over here," said Jason Eisdorfer, attorney for the Citizens Utility Board, a utility watchdog group in Portland.

"They were used to a regulatory scheme in the United Kingdom that is fundamentally different than what we have here," Eisdorfer said of ScottishPower, which did not run into the kind of opposition that Enron faced with its purchase of PGE.

The ScottishPower decision to sell

PacifiCorp came "after they reviewed their business and decided they could deliver better returns to shareholders over the long run by focusing on development of their U.K. energy infrastructure and assets," said PacifiCorp spokeswoman Jan Mitchell in Portland.

No major changes were planned for PacifiCorp management, which plans to file for Oregon Public Utility Commission approval within the next couple of months, Mitchell said.

Buffett's bid was seen as a shrewd move by a number of analysts, including longtime energy consultant Robert McCullough of Portland.

"It seems classic Buffett to me," McCullough said.

"PacifiCorp was purchased by an inexperienced group of owners from Great Britain, ScottishPower, and they never did understand the U.S. regulatory or competitive environment terribly well," he said.

Buffett also is taking an opposite approach to PacifiCorp compared to the recent failed bid by Texas Pacific Group to purchase neighboring PGE from bankrupt Enron.

Oregon regulators rejected the \$2.35 billion Texas Pacific bid for PGE after concerns that the Fort Worth-based investment firm was interested only in reselling PGE to make a quick profit in the short term instead of providing the required long-term "net benefit" to customers and the state economy.

"It's almost like night and day," McCullough said. "We have Buffett coming in with PacifiCorp, and he's always been a fundamentals player, never a quick turnaround player."

"He announced it is a long-term acquisition, so he's clearly read the public affairs rule book that Texas Pacific, frankly, never found," McCullough added, noting that ScottishPower is selling PacifiCorp "at what seems to be a very reasonable price."

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