

# HOCKESSIN COMMUNITY NEWS

SERVING UPPER MILL CREEK HUNDRED  
& THE PIKE CREEK VALLEY

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## Plan to lower health insurance unveiled

### Bill would help under-insured, small businesses

By Andrea Miller  
Staff Reporter

Small businesses and families with incomes under \$50,000 could have guaranteed access to healthcare insurance that is 10 to 30 percent lower than commercial rates by Christmas.

Insurance Commissioner Matt Denn has drafted legislation to create a statewide health insurance purchasing pool that is expected to be introduced in the legislature by Sen. Patricia Blevins (D-Elsemere) on May 31.

Denn drafted the bill with the support of Blevins

and Rep. Donna Stone (D-Dover South). Its sponsors estimate that the bill could help more than 30,000 Delawareans in its initial phase at a cost of \$6 million to the state, and has the potential to help even more residents in subsequent years, at a cost of \$13 million annually.

With recent revenue estimates projecting a \$200 million surplus in the state's budget, now is the time to act, Denn said.

"We can't wait any longer to help Delawareans who are getting clobbered by health insurance costs," he said in a press conference May 26 where he and the legislators unveiled the proposal.

#### Plan provisions

Anyone who has lived in the state for at least two years whose annual family income is under the state's median of about \$50,000, and businesses with fewer than 50 employees where at least 30 percent of the employees have incomes under \$33,000 would be eligible to join one of two plans.

Savings would come in the form of lower premiums, lower deductibles and eliminating co-insurances. It would include financial incentives for healthy life style choices.

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Photo by Ruxana Bhatti

## Wilmington hosts 138th Memorial Day Parade

William F. Nutter, the first Delawarean to volunteer for the Army Air Corps during World War II, salutes the reviewing stand after stopping his 1935 Mercedes Benz during the Wilmington Memorial Day Parade. The parade, which has been held for 138 years, is organized by the all-volunteer Wilmington Memorial Day Committee. Three divisions of marching units, including veterans groups and active duty military, marched down Delaware Avenue on May 30.

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## Judge: Reserve accounts legal

### Korn loses case on surplus

By Andrea Miller  
Staff Reporter

New Castle County does not have to return \$230 million in financial reserves to taxpayers, a Chancery Court judge said in his May 30 ruling against Hockessin businessman Richard Korn.

Korn had asked that the surplus be returned to taxpayers because he said the money was held in illegal reserve accounts that served no public benefit.

After less than 10 minutes of deliberation following oral arguments, Chancellor William Chandler said that Korn's arguments were weak, that the county had made a good faith effort to remedy "Enron-like" problems created by the previous administration, and that the chance of "risking public harm (by an order to return the money) tilts overwhelmingly to the defense."

New Castle County Council and the administration of County Executive Christopher Coons have said returning the money to taxpayers would result in double-digit tax increases for the next several years.

"This is a very good day for the citizens of New Castle County," said County Attorney Gregg Wilson after the ruling. "The judge has recognized that the new administration and County Council have acted openly and in good faith, making every effort to comply with the (February) ruling, and have acted to the benefit of taxpayers and citizens of the county."

In February, Chandler had ruled that some of the surplus, which reached \$242 million under the

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# Biden pressed to make abuse bill gender neutral

Senator: Bill already applies to both sexes

By Jesse Chadderdon  
Staff Reporter

A North East, Md. man wants the Violence Against Women's Act to be applied to both genders and he is urging Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), the act's sponsor, to press for that when the bill comes up for reauthorization this Summer.

David Burroughs, legislative consultant to the Safe Homes for Children and Families Coalition, has coordinated a billboard campaign leading to the Wilmington Amtrak Station to draw Biden's attention to the issue.

"He can't help but see them on his way to the train station," Burroughs said of the billboards, one of which is located on the train platform. "The goal is for him to be reminded every time he goes to Washington that men can be abuse victims too."

The Violence Against Women Act, first sponsored by Biden in 1995 and then reauthorized in 2000, provides \$3.8 billion federal funding administered by the Department of Justice for programs to serve abuse victims. A simple majority of votes in the Senate is needed to renew the bill through 2010.

None of the language in the legislation says that the funds can only be used for programs serving female victims.

"The Violence Against Women Act applies to all victims of domestic violence, irrespective of their gender," Biden said in a written statement to the Community News. "Nothing in the act denies services, programs, funding or assistance to male victims of violence."

But Burroughs, 50, who said he was a victim of domestic abuse, said the bill is not applied fairly to both sexes.

"There has always been this perception that only women can be the victims," he said. "But in reality, that's not always the case. There are several examples where grants for programs serving male victims have been denied on the basis that they are ineligible under the bill."

In 2001, Burroughs applied for a grant for funds administered through the Violence Against Women Office for a program that would fund initial hotel stays for male victims who chose to leave their homes for a cooling off period after abuse.

A letter acquired by the Community News from the Delaware Violence Against Women Act Implementation Committee, dated October 9, 2002, said Burrough's proposal was rejected because it "focused on serving men who are victims of domestic violence."

The letter goes on to quote the Department of Justice guidelines for grants under the Violence Against Women Act:

"To reflect Congress's focus on violence against women and the demonstrated need in communities across the country to improve response to women victims, states must fund only programs that focus on violence against women; however, programs must provide to a similarly situated male victim in need."



Photo by Jesse Chadderdon

A billboard at the steps to the Wilmington Train Station advocate expanding the Violence Against Women Act to include men. They are part of a campaign aimed at Sen. Joseph Biden (D), who sponsored by 1995 act.

Biden elaborated on this point in his statement.

"The National Domestic Violence Hotline set up through the Violence Against Women Act has received calls from men who want to stop abusing their partners, men who are in same-sex relationships and are abused by their partners, and in some cases, men who are abused by their wives," he said.

He said that under the bill, stalking laws applied to both sexes have been strengthened, protection from abuse orders have become applicable across state lines and legal assistance to victims unable to afford it has been provided.

"All of these provisions are gender neutral," he said.

Burroughs said the availability of free legal services is a perfect example of how the bill is unfairly applied.

"About 20 percent of the victims that apply for free legal services are men, but less than one percent of the victims that are represented pro bono are male clients," he said. "It's because these groups don't know that the Violence Against Women Act is supposed to be applied to both sexes, and why would they with a name like that."

But Margaret Aitken, Biden's press secretary, defended the bill's name, saying it was selected to acknowledge that the vast majority of domestic violence victims are women.

Aitken would not respond on the record to Burrough's suggestion that Biden add language



Sen. Joseph Biden (D) said the Violence Against Women Act already applies to men.

when the bill is reauthorized to make it clearer that the bill applies to both sexes.

"It's obvious to me that those making the decisions on programs funded through the Violence Against Women Act aren't necessarily aware that the bill is intended to apply to both sexes," Burrough's said. "And so I don't see the harm in adding one simple sentence to clear up the discrepancy. All it would have to say is that 'nothing in this statute should be construed as prohibiting funding for programs serving male victims' and the issue would be dead."

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Letters should be no more than 350 words. The Hockessin Community News reserves the right to make exceptions and also to edit letters for length, content and style. Opinions, however, will not be altered. Only letters sent specifically to the Hockessin Community News will be published.

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Ideas expressed on the Opinion page are solely the views of the letter writer and not the Hockessin Community News.

## Corrections

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# Opinion

## Commentary

## Internet-savvy girls still vulnerable to on-line threats

By Ann Marie van den Hurk  
Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay

Summer vacation from school is coming and children maybe spending more time in front of the computer unattended.

Computer technology is ingrained in the social and academic lives of girls of the "Cyber Generation." The issues and experiences teenage girls face on the Internet are concerning.

Computer-savvy teenage girls report going online anywhere from twice a week to several times a day. Although it hasn't replaced other communications, the Internet with its e-mail and instant messaging features, is an integral part of girls' computer experiences. Too often, these computer-savvy teens are still naïve and emotionally vulnerable. They report grappling with issues such as how to react to sexual online content they unwittingly encounter or to being harassed.

Girls want parents and adults to fully understand their online lives. However, girls sometimes rely too much on their own

judgment in making decisions about how to behave online. Girls are aware of the varied dangers of the Internet, but want more proactive involvement rather than prohibitive don'ts from parents. All reap many positive and safe benefits from Internet usage, as it allows girls to build social self-confidence and express intense emotions they may not otherwise share.

When empowered with knowledge and given pertinent advice, girls can successfully navigate both positive and negative experiences on online.

What can we do as adults to helping girls navigate the Internet safely?

Here are some tips:

- Talk to her about safety rules for using the Internet. Her common sense is probably very different from yours.
- Discuss with her what her online rules should be, such as how much time she can spend online, what kinds of sites she can visit, etc. Consider her input seriously.
- Know what she is doing online, such

as what sites is she visiting or does she go into public chat rooms? Familiarize yourself with the Internet.

- Maintain an open dialogue with her about her Internet use. Be willing to compromise, but make sure she understands your concerns are for her safety.

- Encourage her to teach you some new Internet-related skills opening a door to communication.

- Without becoming overly judgmental, help her solve problems she encounters online. Make sure she knows she can come to you with those problems.

- Prepare your daughter for the kinds of uncomfortable experiences she might have online, without making her feel that the Internet is a totally frightening place.

- Find out what her friends are doing online so you know what her Internet social reality is all about.

Together, if we arm our teens with knowledge, trust, and support, they'll be able to use the Internet safely. Let's have a "Safe Cyber Summer."

## My View

## More rights trampled on...this time for a beer

By Bill Chanin  
Executive Editor

Last year I wrote a column criticizing Weyco Inc., in Lansing, Mich., for adopting a policy that gives it the right to fire employees if they smoke... even if it occurs after business hours or in the confines of their own homes.

Although I'm an avid crusader against smoking, I said it was an infringement on a person's rights to dictate what they do on their own time in their own homes.

As long as a person's actions don't infringe on anyone else's rights or pose a danger to innocent bystanders, no one should have the authority to impose their will on others. Now comes another chilling story that is just as ridiculous.

In Denver, Colo., an employee of a distributor for Budweiser beer has been fired for drinking Coors beer in a bar two years ago.

Ross Hopkins is suing American Eagle Distributing Co., charging them with wrongful termination.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages for lost wages and benefits. No trial date has been set.

An attorney for the distributor told the Associated Press that the company prefers not to try the case in the media.

A Colorado law states that workers cannot be fired for legal activity while off duty and away from work. There are exceptions, such as when a worker's actions relate to an occupational requirement or create a conflict of interest.

Clearly the exceptions don't apply in this case, but, according to the Associated Press, court papers filed by American Eagle said Hopkins' termination "was necessary to avoid a conflict of interest with his responsibilities to American Eagle and/or the appearance of such a conflict of interest."

CNN reported that Hopkins, who was a warehouse supervisor for the distributor, said he was not wearing a uniform or representing American Eagle when he was at the bar with some co-workers. He said he had ordered a Budweiser but a waitress brought Coors. He decided to drink it because he didn't want to wait.

The son-in-law of the distributor's majority shareholder was at the bar, and offered twice to buy Hopkins a Budweiser, but he turned it down both times.

It doesn't matter if the waitress was slow or the son-in-law of the distributor's majority shareholder, or even if the majority shareholder himself, was in the bar. What matters is that once again, a person's rights have been trampled on.

Hopkins should not have to be forced into accounting for his actions. He has a right to drink whatever beer he wants to during his off hours.

Where will it end? Where is the threat to a multi-million dollar company like Budweiser if Hopkins drinks Coors or even Miller, for that matter?

A good example of art imitating life was a segment on the show "Seinfeld." One of its characters, Elaine, wore a Baltimore Orioles cap while sitting behind the New York Yankee dugout.

A Yankee official, who gave out the complimentary tickets, asked her to remove the cap. She refused and he threatened to throw her out if she didn't take it off.

Elaine chose to keep the cap on and was escorted out of the stadium.

Three cheers for the Elaines and Ross Hopkins' of the world who stand up to those shortsighted bullies who threaten our freedom of expression.

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