



HOLIDAY SPECIALS

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LEGALIZED MARIJUANA: ARE WE NEXT?



REGISTER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

2 states' votes to OK recreational pot give new energy to movement here, but legislative hurdles loom large

By Sharyn Jackson

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The morning after Election Day, as news sunk in that voters in two states had legalized recreational marijuana, state Rep. Bruce Hunter was having conversations with constituents on their front lawns about the prospect of Iowa doing the same.

"I was out picking up signs, and I ran into several people that wanted to talk about possibly legalizing marijuana and what we could do," he said.

In the coming weeks, Hunter says he hopes to begin the process when he pre-

introduces a bill that would decriminalize marijuana in Iowa. In states such as Nebraska and Minnesota that have done so, those caught in possession of small amounts of marijuana wouldn't necessarily be sentenced to jail, as long as they weren't dealing the drug.

Hunter does not have high hopes for the bill. "I'm sure it would be facing a very stiff veto," he said.

As the nation watched voters in Colorado and Washington state approve ballot initiatives legalizing recreational marijuana use, some legislators and activists have been working to change

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MARIJUANA IN THE U.S.

APPROVED FOR RECREATION

On Election Day, two states — Washington and Colorado — approved the use of recreational marijuana.

APPROVED FOR MEDICATION

18 states and Washington, D.C., have approved the use of marijuana with a doctor's prescription.

DECRIMINALIZED

14 states have lessened penalties for possessing small amounts of pot.

Find a map of the states on **Page 4A**.

Iowa wraps up big year of road projects

U.S. 20 segment, I-35 interchange open this week

By William Petroski

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Iowa's road construction industry is finishing up one of its busiest years ever, just in time for motorists embarking on Thanksgiving holiday travel.

An estimated \$527 million worth of road and bridge projects were completed through Oct. 31, and the figure should approach \$600 million by the end of November, said Mark Bortle, traffic safety engineer at Iowa Department of Transportation headquarters in Ames.

"The dry and warm weather really helped a lot this year," Bortle said. DOT officials also said more state and federal funding was available than expected, and road contractors bid lower on projects, allowing more work to be accomplished.

One of this year's most significant projects is a 26-mile, four-lane segment of U.S. Highway 20, built at a cost of \$111 million, which opens to traffic at noon today in northwest Iowa. The section is between Iowa Highway 4 near Rockwell City in Calhoun County and U.S. Highway 71 near Early in Sac County. This leaves about 44 miles of construction still needed in western Iowa to finish U.S. 20 as a four-lane expressway between Dubuque and Sioux City.

Shirley Phillips, president of the U.S. 20 Association and executive director of Sac Economic and Tourism Development, said she's thrilled to see the latest stretch of road finished. A formal ribbon-cutting

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INSIDE

Gov. Terry Branstad shows little enthusiasm for a 10-cent increase in the state's gas tax despite a coalition's push. **Page 7A**

Man who tried to help friend could face 15 years in prison



James
Licher

By Jeff Eckhoff

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TIPTON, Ia. — A local handyman and electronics installer who tried to help a friend he believes was being sexually assaulted now faces up to 15 years in prison because police say he improperly pointed a pistol at the two men and illegally detained them.

Neither of the men allegedly involved with the assault has been charged with a crime. But James Licher, 31, is accused of assaulting and unlawfully imprisoning the men after he found them in various states of undress

atop a motionless, 52-year-old woman shortly before 4 a.m. on Aug. 24.

"She was a limp noodle," Licher told The Des Moines Register. "She was completely out of it. It was obvious what they were doing was wrong."

The woman, whose name is being withheld, conceded in an interview that she has little memory of the incident, which began with a birthday-night binge of schnapps drinking in a downtown Tipton bar.

Based on the accounts of others and the gaps in her memory, the woman believes she was far

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Latest Israeli strikes kill civilians



A Palestinian man cries over a dead relative at a Gaza City hospital on Sunday. U.S. President Barack Obama was in touch with players in the region in hopes of halting fighting, and warned against a potential Israeli ground invasion. Story, Page 10A. AP

High 60° Low 40°

Partly cloudy.

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