

BRIEF STATE

INDIANAPOLIS
Lawmakers weigh changes to coroner rules

A bill being considered by the General Assembly could open a debate on whether Indiana should create a medical examiner system to help county coroners.

The legislation is one of several proposals regarding coroners that lawmakers are looking at this year following a Grant County coroner's error that switched the identities of two Taylor University students.

Whitney Cerak, who was alive, was identified as classmate Laura VanRyn, who died in an April 26 collision between a semitrailer and a school van. The mistake went uncorrected for five weeks until Cerak emerged from a coma.

Under current Indiana law, there is only optional training for coroners and no state oversight. One proposal would require more training for coroners, while another would move toward a constitutional amendment to allow lawmakers to set qualifications for them.

Lawmakers in the past have tried to add training and other requirements for coroners, but the moves were defeated in part because of concerns about adding costs for counties. Sen. Patricia Miller, R-Indianapolis, said the problem with the misidentified students helped to again spark the debate.

"I would certainly hope that this would never happen again," said Miller, who chairs the Senate Health and Provider Services Committee. "We'd like to make it the best system possible."

Miller, who represents portions of Johnson County, is the sponsor of the bill that would call on a forensic science commission to make recommendations on whether the state should create a medical examiner system.

BRIEF NATION

SEOUL, South Korea
North Korea claims deal with United States

North Korea said it reached an agreement with the U.S. during talks this week on its nuclear program, and the top U.S. nuclear envoy expressed optimism Friday that progress could be made when wider arms negotiations reconvene.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry said three days of talks in Berlin between U.S. envoy Christopher Hill and North Korea's main nuclear negotiator Kim Kye Gwan had been held "in a positive and sincere atmosphere and a certain agreement was reached there." No further details were given.

Hill said the talks laid the foundation for progress when six-nation nuclear negotiations resume and that he had agreed with his North Korean counterpart on a number of issues. He also declined to elaborate.

"I am pretty convinced that we have the basis for a good session of the six-party talks," Hill told reporters in Seoul.

In Washington, the State Department offered a more muted assessment of the Berlin talks, saying no issues had been resolved. The talks involved an exchange of information designed to "prepare the way for real negotiations" once the six-nation negotiations resume, deputy spokesman Tom Casey said.

Will troop 'surge' be short-lived?

By ROBERT BURNS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TALLIL AIR BASE, Iraq

The top U.S. commander in Iraq predicted Friday that some of the extra troops President Bush is sending could make an impact and start returning home by late summer, an optimistic note in contrast to skepticism of the plan back home.

Gen. George Casey said security in the war zone should gradually improve during the next three months as the 21,500 added troops build up in Baghdad and in Anbar province. However, the plan's success depends on the

Iraqi government fulfilling its own pledges of adding troops and taking an aggressive approach to sectarian militias and death squads, he said.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has failed to deliver on such promises before.

"I think it's probably going to be the summer, late summer, before we get to the point where the people in Baghdad feel safe in their neighborhoods," Casey told reporters at a news conference with Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

Asked when he thought some of the extra U.S. troops could be pulled back, Casey replied, "I

believe the projections are late summer, but the first troops are just arriving," so nothing is sure.

Sounding his optimistic note, he said, "You're going to see some progress gradually over the next 60 to 90 days."

Gates, making his second trip to Iraq since he took over for Donald Rumsfeld on Dec. 18, headed home after a daylong visit that was not announced in advance.

His trip came as the Bush administration begins a new phase in the war including a troop buildup that has sparked widespread opposition in Congress and the general public,

a reshuffling of Mideast commanders and diplomats and intensified military pressure on Iran. Congress is to take up non-binding legislation opposing the buildup next week.

"Our goal is an Iraq that can defend itself, sustain itself, and govern itself and live free from the scourge of extremism," Gates said. "There's widespread agreement here that failure would be a calamity for American national interests and those of many other countries as well."

The first extra troops — a brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division — have just arrived in Baghdad, and Gates said it was

too early to predict how Bush's plan for quelling the sectarian violence in the capital will work.

Four other brigades are to arrive between now and May, assuming the Iraqis follow through on their commitment to bring three additional Iraqi army brigades into Baghdad and to allow raids against all illegal militias.

Administration officials have declined to estimate how long the extra troops will be needed in Iraq, saying it depends on conditions. Gates said earlier this month that the increase seemed likely to last months, but not 18 months or two years.

Order shuts down diploma Web site

By RICK CALLAHAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

An online company accused of selling fake college diplomas and accompanying transcripts was shut down along with its Web site after a judge approved a preliminary injunction, Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter said Friday.

The Marion County judge approved the stop order Dec. 28 after Carter sued Allen R. Kleiman, owner of Noveltyworksdegrees.com, accusing him of selling fake college and high school diplomas marketed as "highly passable" and "realistic."

The lawsuit accuses Kleiman of violating the state's deceptive consumer sales act, including "knowing and intentional" violations that carry up to \$5,500 penalty for each violation.

Messages left at an Indianapolis phone number for Kleiman were not returned.

Carter said during a news conference Friday that his office investigated Kleiman's company after a citizen complained about the Web site.

An investigator for Carter's office then purchased, for \$59.95, a diploma through the site that resembles a degree from the Indiana University School of Law with an accompanying transcript listing classes taken and grades earned to obtain the degree, he said.

"A lot of hard work goes into becoming a lawyer. We have one of the finest law schools in the country in Bloomington and this is just a brazen, very unsettling example of how fraud has moved into the academic arena," Carter said.

He said the state is relatively early in its investigation into the site, and it's unclear how many customers paid Noveltyworksdegrees.com and how much money the site generated to create and print diplomas and transcripts intended to appear authentic.

According to the lawsuit, the site stated, among other things,

AT A GLANCE

Fake degrees: An online company accused of selling fake college diplomas and accompanying transcripts was shut down along with its Web site after a judge approved a preliminary injunction.

60 bucks: An investigator was able to purchase for \$59.95 a diploma through Noveltyworksdegrees.com that resembles a degree from the Indiana University School of Law with an accompanying transcript listing classes taken and grades earned to obtain the degree.

Quote: Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter: "A lot of hard work goes into becoming a lawyer. We have one of the finest law schools in the country in Bloomington and this is just a brazen, very unsettling example of how fraud has moved into the academic arena."

"We Create Highly Passable Documents ... We aim for documents that look REAL not Replicas that may actually lose Quality of Appearance."

The IU diploma that led to the lawsuit contained no indication it was not genuine and used, without authorization, the seal and logo of IU and also includes a forged signature of IU President Adam Herbert, Carter said.

Kleiman's Web site offered degrees from any college for up to 45 different majors, he said.

John Applegate, the executive associate dean for academic affairs at the IU School of Law in Bloomington, thanked Carter's office for acting quickly to shut down the company's Web site. He said the company's actions could have threatened the public's confidence in the lawyers they hire.

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