

ALL ROADS LEAD HERE

The postseason is set for college baseball, with North Carolina ranked as the overall top seed. But who will end up making the trip to Omaha for the College World Series? **SPORTS**



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MIDLANDS



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ONLY IN THE WORLD-HERALD

Filibuster frustration growing in Legislature

■ As in the U.S. Congress, a simple majority is often not enough to pass a bill.

BY PAUL HAMMEL AND MARTHA STODDARD
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — A political shift in the Nebraska Legislature and the return of a master of blocking legislation have prompted an increase in a frustrating tactic this year: the filibuster.

The legislative maneuver, in which an endless string of amendments and motions are used to stop a bill, is being employed more often by conservatives in the 49-member body, who are finding themselves in the minority on more issues this year.

Conservatives have used filibusters in recent weeks to block the expansion of Medicaid, the health care program for the poor, and to prevent the repeal of the death penalty.

Both bills had the support of a majority of state senators, 25 of 49, but lacked the 33 votes needed to stop a filibuster and advance the measures.

The use of the filibuster is at a seven-year high, in part because State Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha, a master of the tactic, returned to the Legislature after a four-year hiatus due to term limits, but also because conservatives have embraced it.

Some lawmakers and observers have complained that, as in politically gridlocked Washington, D.C., it no longer is enough to have a simple majority to advance proposals or pass laws; now it takes a supermajority.

They offer several explanations, including an increase in

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Home valuations trending down

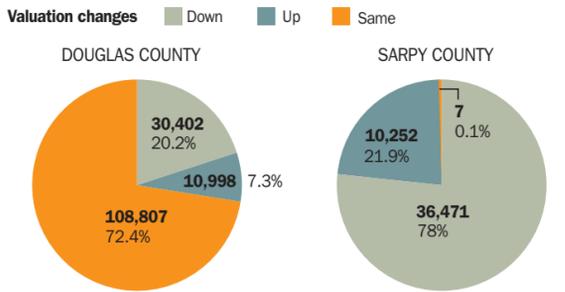


KENT SIEVERS/THE WORLD-HERALD

Longtime Willow Wood resident Ben Menard enjoys the view from the new deck on his home in the Willow Wood subdivision near 132nd and Blondo Streets.

RESIDENTIAL VALUATIONS DROP

Thousands of homeowners in Douglas and Sarpy Counties will see lower valuations, which would mean lower property tax bills if rates stay the same. But most homes in Douglas County are unchanged.



Typical reduction for homeowners with lower valuations
Douglas: down 6.9% Sarpy: down 2.3%

NOTE: Analysis based on existing single-family homes. Does not include condos, most new houses or properties with incomplete data.

SOURCE: WorldHerald analysis of county valuations DAVE CROY/THE WORLD-HERALD

In Douglas and Sarpy Counties, it's the fifth straight year of more declines than increases

BY PAUL GOODSSELL | ONLY IN THE WORLD-HERALD

After three decades living in northwest Omaha's Willow Wood subdivision, Ben Menard is quick to extol his neighborhood's benefits.

"Obviously the location's great. You're well within the city, but close to shopping and entertainment," Menard said. "It's a quiet neighborhood, relatively crime-free, safe. And with all the parks and common areas, it's really pleasant."

But Menard, who is on the Willow Wood Neighborhood Association board, realizes that house prices have been taking a beating in recent years. That's a trend that led the Douglas County Assessor's Office to cut valuations this month for more

than 700 houses in the subdivision, near 132nd and Blondo Streets.

Willow Wood's valuation cuts are mirrored across Douglas and Sarpy Counties as government appraisers continue to adjust to reduced market values. For the fifth straight year, the counties have reduced more house valuations than they increased.

Notices of the new valuations began going out last week in Douglas County, and the updated numbers are posted on the county assessor's website. Sarpy will mail its changes to taxpayers this week.

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Meteorologist Cathy Zapotocny works in the National Weather Service's office in Valley, which forecasts for eastern Nebraska and southwestern Iowa, including Lincoln and the Omaha-Council Bluffs area.
KENT SIEVERS/THE WORLD-HERALD



Meteorologists sound alarm over furloughs

BY NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Doug Ahlberg has worked in public safety in Nebraska for more than 30 years. He has little patience for decisions that put people in danger.

That's how he sees the plan to furlough meteorologists at National Weather Service offices due to federal budget cuts known as the

sequester. "It's stupid — you don't furlough these people, it's like furloughing cops or firefighters," Ahlberg said. "Do you need them all the time? No. But when you need them, you need them."

Ahlberg is director of emergency management for Lincoln-Lancaster County. Before that, he was a Lincoln police officer.

All National Weather Service employees would have to take four unpaid days off — probably in July and August — under a proposal by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to deal with the sequester cuts.

The mandatory across-the-board spending reductions of the sequester

See Sequester: Page 3

Stores help with healthier choices

Checkout aisles at Phil's Foodway in north Omaha are stocked with fruit instead of candy. **Money**

Omaha weather

Today's forecast
High: 86
Low: 68

Full report: Page 6B

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IN MIDLANDS | Recent tornadoes have heightened awareness of severe weather threats.

Midlanders hunker down as stormy week starts with a bang

BY CARA PESEK AND SUSAN SZALEWSKI
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITERS

An outbreak of severe weather pounded Memorial Day weekend picnics and commemorations across Nebraska and western Iowa.

About 400 customers in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area remained without electricity early this morning from a thunderstorm 18 hours earlier when a second tempest brought more wind and rain into the region.

Heavy rain, hail, strong winds and a possible tornado struck southeast Nebraska on Monday night.

Jefferson County sheriff's deputies reported possible tornado damage to farm buildings north of Diller. Buildings along Nebraska Highway 103 were impaled with flying boards. Power lines were down.

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