

# The Independent

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## HAPPY EASTER

# Riverfront park to break ground

## Thursday a celebration of project's start

By **CARRIE KIRSCHNER**  
*The Independent*

**ASHLAND** A long awaited groundbreaking on Ashland's riverfront park is slated for

Thursday evening.

Construction on the project won't begin for several more months, but city officials say there are plenty of reasons to celebrate now.

Ashland City Manager Steve Corbitt said one of the biggest reasons is the city's crucial U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit needed to reclaim land currently under the Ohio River is expected

to be delivered to the city before Thursday. The permit had held up progress on the project for months and was a point of contention between the city and the local waterways association.

The riverfront park's most powerful steward, U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, will also be in town for Thursday's event. McConnell is lauded for making the project a reality. He secured a \$10.2 million earmark in the 2005 Highway Reauthorization Bill for Ash-

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# Senate may balk at early voting bill

By **MIKE JAMES**  
*The Independent*

**FRANKFORT** A bill to allow early, absentee voting in the upcoming primary election may face tough going in the Kentucky Senate.

The bill would allow voting at least 12 working days before the election; current law allows absentee voting for eight specific reasons, including being out of town on election day.

The bill, which has passed the House of Representatives, may be difficult to pass because of the possible cost of additional voting machines, said Sen. Walter "Doc" Blevins, D-West Liberty.

"The problem is fiscal impact," said Blevins, who is in favor of the bill. One estimate calls for 152 additional voting machines at a cost of \$760,000, he said.

The cost initially would be borne by county boards of election, but those boards probably would expect the state to find the money somewhere, he said.

Legislation requiring additional state expenditure isn't likely to go over well in the Senate during the current budget crunch, he said.

Cost wouldn't likely be a factor in Boyd County, said County Clerk Debbie Jones.

She doesn't think early voting would require more voting machines here and sees expanded absentee voting as a convenience issue. "We want to maintain the convenience to the public," she said.

Voter responsibility is more important than broadening voter access, said Sen. Charlie Borders, R-Grayson. "I'm not overly concerned about changing the process. It works very well in Kentucky," he said. "I'm more concerned about the people being informed so they vote intelligently based on issues and the candidates."

Local party officials say early voting would change the nature of campaigning.

"It might make candidates start their campaigns earlier to get their message out," said Boyd County Republican chairwoman Mary Kay Wheeler.

However, the procedure would call for precautions to prevent voting fraud, she said.

"It would make campaigning a different job," said Boyd County Democratic chairwoman Marcus Woodward. Candidates would have to anticipate the early vote potential and get their campaigns in gear much quicker. "They would have to look at not just one day but a window of opportunity."

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KEVIN GOLDY / THE INDEPENDENT

**ABOVE:** Smokey Valley Truck Stop restaurant is off I-64 exit 156 at Olive Hill. **BELOW LEFT:** Earlene Gollihue carries an order of food from the grill at the restaurant. **BELOW RIGHT:** The coconut cream pie is one of the favorites at the Olive Hill restaurant.

# As seen on television



## Smokey Valley Truck Stop gets celebrity visit

By **TIM PRESTON**  
*The Independent*

**SMOKEY VALLEY** In a truck stop with no fuel for sale, a group of hard-working people is learning about what happens after a visit from a Food Network celebrity.

Smokey Valley Truck Stop, off of I-64 at Olive Hill, is featured in the "Like Mama Made" episode of the Food Network's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives," which will air again tonight at 11:30 and several more times during the week following.

Truck stop owner Juanita Flannery said she had not watched the show when first contacted by producers, although she has since learned the show's host, Guy Fieri, has a large and loyal following.

"We've had calls from all over the country. There are some people who just like going where he's been," Flannery said with a giggle, later adding it didn't take long to figure out several of the Food Network's show hosts have true celebrity status.

"We just had a couple in here from Texas. They were in Huntington where they had filmed and they told them he had stopped here. That's what a following he has," she said.

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