

## **Airport hovers over passage of bill to finance renovations**

Staff reports

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Manhattan Regional Airport could get unspecified millions of dollars for renovations if a bill that passed the Kansas House earlier this week is signed into law.

The measure, backed by 66th District State Rep. **Sydney Carlin**, would give several million dollars to the airport to help keep flights coming into the facility. The approval is seen as an important step in trying to lure the National Bio and Agro Defense Facility (NBAF) to Manhattan, one of five finalists for the \$451 million project.

The money - \$1 million per year for two years - is designed to lure an airline with jet service to Manhattan, and will act as a payoff if a guaranteed number of passengers is not met, said 67th District Rep. Tom Hawk. Hawk said that with growth at Fort Riley and the private sector in the area, he is confident an airline could remain viable.

"I don't think we'll lose a dime of that money," he said.

There is speculation that the bill could face opposition from backers of a bill that would allow two 700 megawatt coal-fired power plants in western Kansas. The plants were denied permits by Kansas Department of Health and Environment secretary Rod Bremby, who cited the 11 million tons of carbon dioxide they would emit each year. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is expected to veto the bill if it passes the Senate.

**Carlin** told the Topeka Capital-Journal Thursday that House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls, had threatened to rally representatives to block her bill if she didn't back the coal bill. Neufeld, who voted for the measure, said **Carlin** misunderstood him, and that his intention was merely to ask for her support for the energy bill.

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