U.S. BRIEFS

Little sign of inflation as prices barely rise

WASHINGTON (AP) — Consumer prices increased slightly last month as food and energy costs ticked up, but there was little sign of widespread inflation.

The Consumer Price Index rose 0.1 percent in November, less than the previous month's rise of 0.2 percent, the Labor Department said Wednesday. In the past year, prices have moved up only 1.1 percent.

The report shows that the sluggish economy is keeping prices in check. Outside of the food and energy costs, core consumer prices rose 0.1 percent, the first increase in four months.

Several reports this week showed that the economy is gaining strength, with retail sales rising and business executives increasingly optimistic. But with unemployment near double-digits and workers receiving only modest wage gains, retailers and other companies are reluctant to raise prices for fear of losing customers.