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S&P To Fed: Cut Deficits

Agency Warns U.S. Government May Put Credit Rating At Risk

BY PAUL WISEMAN
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — A key credit agency issued an unprecedented warning to the United States government Monday, urging Washington to get a grip on its finances or risk losing the nation's sterling credit rating.

For the first time, Standard & Poor's lowered its long-term outlook for the federal government's fiscal health from "stable" to "negative," and warned of serious consequences if lawmakers fail to reach a deal to control the massive federal deficit.

An impasse could prompt the agency to strip the government of its top investment rating in the next two years, S&P said. A loss of the triple-A rating would ripple through the American economy, making loans more expensive and credit more difficult to obtain.

The downgrade was interpreted as a rebuke to President Barack Obama and congressional Republicans, admonishing them to put politics aside and come up with a long-term financial plan as soon as possible.

"This is a warning: Don't mess around," said Robert Bixby, executive director of the Concord Coalition, a nonpartisan group that is pushing for deficit reduction.

Analysts at S&P have never before used the outlook to cast doubt on the nation's credit worthiness.

In response, stocks suffered their worst slide in a month. The Dow Jones industrial average

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Meridian Bridge High On List Of City Upgrades

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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During a discussion Monday of capital improvement projects, members of the Yankton City Commission expressed an eagerness to finalize plans for the area around the Meridian Bridge.

Current commissioners, as well as commissioners-elect, were on hand as city department heads went through the

capital improvements projects planned for the future. The meeting marked an early step in the months-long process of formulating the city's 2012 budget.

Public Services Director Kevin Kuhl said he was recently told by the contractor responsible for converting the Meridian Bridge into a recreational structure that the project could be complete as soon as August. He added that his staff is taking

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INSIDEtoday



MMC-Bound

■ Yankton's Ray To Take Her Volleyball Talents To Mount Marty College. PAGE 9

VIEWPOINTS



■ PARKER: The Trump Card Turns Into A Wild Card. PAGE 4

Everything Changes In ONE WEEK

WEATHER

9 a.m. 37° Rain, changing to snow at times
3 p.m. 38°

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RECYCLING

River City Recycling This Week
NORTH of 15th St.



TOMORROW

■ OUT TOWNS: Census Figures Impact Yankton Co.
* * *



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

The spring thaw, combined with the recent wet conditions, have wreaked havoc on several rural gravel roads in the region. This has not only made them treacherous for private and commercial motorists, but they're also posing serious problems for emergency crews that may find some roadways impassable.

Wet Conditions Have Made Rural Roads Dangerously Soft

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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A combination of the spring thaw and accumulating moisture has made some rural roads nearly impassable. The deteriorating situation has area emergency responders developing plans for how to overcome the challenge.

"There are areas where it is going to be very difficult to get through, if needed," said Paul Scherschligt, the Yankton County emergency management director. "Things are being put in place for if emergency services are called onto a county road."

He issued an advisory last week warning county residents to be careful while driving

on the soft rural roads.

The ambulance department, fire departments and law enforcement are tracking the conditions of gravel roads.

"I have been in contact with a few bus drivers to check road conditions, and the report has not been good," said Yankton Deputy Fire Chief Larry Nickles. "The roads are taking a beating from heavy truck traffic; the spring thaw; past rain and snow, and more to come."

Fire trucks weigh up to 32,000 pounds, and he said concerned citizens have told him that the fire department won't be able to reach their residences if they are on fire.

"In some areas, we may have to leave the pumper at the road and manhandle hose into the place," Nickles said. "Our pumpers com-

bined carry enough main attack/supply hose to get about 4,000 feet, and that can be branched to smaller attack lines, if needed. The problem is the time it is going to take to get it there, but we have to try if it happens."

One contingency plan the fire department has is to send out four-wheel drive tankers ahead of the larger pumper truck. If necessary, they will pull in the pumper truck.

"Depending on the type of call, we can use just the four-wheel drives," Nickles said. "They have enough water to handle the smaller fires. The area fire departments are asking residents to help them out if they do

■ ROADS, Page 16 please

"I have been in contact with a few bus drivers to check road conditions, and the report has not been good. The roads are taking a beating from heavy truck traffic; the spring thaw; past rain and snow, and more to come."

LARRY NICKLES

Avera Set For Worst As Storm Season Arrives

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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WAGNER — Last summer, Bryan Slaba literally found himself flooded with emergency needs.

Charles Mix County, particularly the Marty area, was inundated with torrential rainfall. Thirteen inches of rain fell in an 80-hour period, creating more than \$1 million damage each for the county and Yankton Sioux Tribe. The flood displaced a number of residents who lived with family or relocated elsewhere.

Slaba needed to be prepared for medical emergencies as chief executive officer of Wagner Community Memorial Hospital-Avera (WCMH-A). The Wagner hospital, along with Avera Sacred Heart Hospital (ASHH) in Yankton, provided relief for area residents.

"We went on alert because there may have been some patients who needed health care," he said. "We had people and beds available in case of a heavy influx of people. We could divert or transfer (patients and staff), making room for more urgent care."

The WCMH-A staff were also prepared for a sudden increase in patient load or any new demands for care, Slaba said. Thankfully, the region was spared major casualties from the flooding.

"We were prepared if we would have had to implement an emergency plan," he said.

A year later, the Yankton and Wagner facilities are gearing up for spring flooding assistance. Because of



P&D FILE PHOTO

These men unload the disaster relief collection spearheaded by Avera and area residents following last summer's flooding at Marty. Avera officials have stepped up their disaster response using lessons learned from last year's flooding.

their previous experiences, Avera officials have adjusted their emergency response on a daily basis.

Avera participates in the national "HAVBED Bed Counts" initiative. This system provides an instant view of medical resources to support transfers and place-

■ AVERA, Page 14 please

YMS Students Use Facebook To Support Jettisoned Teachers

BY DEREK BARTOS
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When it was announced earlier this month that many Yankton School District teachers wouldn't have their contracts renewed for next year due to the budget crunch, two Yankton Middle School students decided to fight back.

Eight-graders Trystan Cale and Lyndsey Kleinschmit recently created a "Yankton Wants Our Teachers Back" Facebook page.

Cale, who set up the page, said the social networking website was the best way to reach the most people.

"Facebook's big: it's nationwide. Everyone has Facebook," she said. "If there was a way to get the word out, that's the way it would be."

The response has been positive thus far, as the page has received 341 "likes." Many people have also commented on the page's wall to voice their support and to offer suggestions on how the two students can further their cause.

"The comments have been really positive," Cale said. "They've reinforced the ideas that I've had. A lot of people have felt the same way about how the teachers should have their jobs back."

While early responses came mostly from students, people from the community have become involved with the page as well.

Cale said the most "likes" have come from the 18-24 age group, followed by the 13-17 age group. Numerous teachers from the Yankton area have also "liked" the page, including 10 teachers from the middle school, but none have left any comments.

■ SUPPORT, Page 8 please

BIG HEAD TODD AND THE MONSTERS
FRIDAY, JUNE 3RD • 9PM

The Nadas 7:30 p.m.
Boring Daylights w/Sarah Benck 6:00 p.m.

RED
SATURDAY, JUNE 4TH • 9PM

Kory & The Fireflies 7:30 p.m.
Janitor Bob 6:00 p.m.
Austin Buescher Band 4:30 p.m.
Mrs. Begley & The Boys 3:00 p.m.

1861-2011
YANKTON SOUTH DAKOTA
Celebrating 150 years of history...
June 2-5, 2011