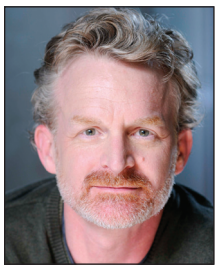




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Rate Hearing Set For Yankton

Northwestern Faces Public Hearing Over Plan To Raise Electricity Prices

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The state Public Utilities Commission will hold a public hearing next month in Yankton about NorthWestern Energy's request to raise rates for the company's South Dakota electricity customers.

The increases would be the first for electricity rates by the company since 1980. The commission's decision to host a hearing came in response to a petition filed by Angela Wiebelhaus of Yankton. She submitted signatures from 27 residents of the Yankton area. Wiebelhaus said most of the people who

signed the petition didn't know about the proposed increase until she went around the neighborhood.

She said her concern is for people — "our fellow man" — who will feel financially pinched.

"Things keep going higher and higher. We all want to stay in our houses," she said.

Wiebelhaus added, "We really do have good service in Yankton, I have to say that."

The hearing is set for Thursday, May 14, at 7 p.m. CT in the Best Western Kelly Inn on S.D. 50 on Yankton's east side.

NorthWestern wants to collect \$26.5

million more annually from the company's 61,200 South Dakota electricity customers.

That would be a 20.24 percent rate increase.

According to the PUC, NorthWestern's plan would cost the average residential customer an additional \$16.76 per month, based on the monthly average of 750 kilowatt-hours.

At the Yankton hearing, people can ask questions, present their views and

PUC | PAGE 2A

Sports



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* * *

El Nino Poised To Make Comeback

BY ROB NIELSEN
Rob.nielsen@yankton.net

After it failed to pan out last year, it looks like El Nino may be seeking redemption later this year.



Today

During Thursday's Midwest and Great Plains Climate-Drought Outlook webinar, South Dakota State Climatologist Dennis Today said the Pacific weather phenomenon has

been building up.

"The El Nino we've been telling you is not much of an issue finally fooled us in the last month or six weeks," Today said. "There's very warm sea surface temperatures below the surface (of the eastern Pacific Ocean). The folks at the climate prediction center put us on to an El Nino advisory. We are in an El Nino and likely to continue. This large amount of sub-surface water is likely to enhance this probability of El Nino and keep it going."

Today said the sea conditions were observed last year,

CLIMATE | PAGE 2A

An 'Ambassador Of Peace'



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Lesterville veteran Bob Gravholt shows the "Ambassador For Peace" medal and proclamation he received from the South Korean government, 61 years after the truce was declared. Gravholt received the recognition for his service with "Operation Platform" which assisted the prisoner exchange after the war ended.

Lesterville Vet Finally Receives Korean War Honors

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

LESTERVILLE — When the 1953 truce was declared in the Korean War, Bob Gravholt thought he was returning home.

But the conflict hadn't ended for the Lesterville man. He was called to fulfill one last U.S. Navy mission that kept him stationed off the South Korean coast for several more weeks.

Gravholt took part in "Operation Platform," which transported 5,000 India troops by helicopter from the USS Point Cruz to Panmunjon.

"It was the largest helicopter airlift in history," he said. "We had to stay four extra months because of it."

The Indian troops were designated to conduct the prisoner exchange in the neutral zone, more commonly known as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). However, South Korean president Syngman Rhee refused to allow the Indian troops to touch his nation's soil.

Rhee's refusal necessitated the massive airlift of the Indian troops from just off Inchon to the designated spot for the prisoner exchange.

"We flew continuously," Gravholt said. "We had to take the Indian troops into the neutral zone where they sorted out the prisoners."

The South Korean government never fully recognized the USS Point Cruz sailors' crucial role in the airlift, Gravholt said. "The ship was awarded a presidential citation from South Korea, but the sailors weren't given an award," he said.

More than six decades later, that oversight has been rectified.

"This package arrived at the post office," Gravholt recalled. "I didn't know what it

GRAVHOLT | PAGE 11A

Status Cymbal



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Mount Marty's Anna Kollasch adds a cymbal splash during a performance of MMC's Jazz Band Thursday night during the annual home spring tour concert at Marian Auditorium. The MMC Chamber Choir and Smooth benediction also performed during a show that concluded the two-day Nebraska tour, which featured performances in Hartington, Osmond, O'Neill, Madison and Crofton.

USDA: Bird Flu Outbreak Could Be 'Devastating'

BY STEVE KARNOWSKI
Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The nation's poultry industry may have to live with a deadly bird flu strain for several years, which would be "devastating," the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief veterinary officer said Thursday.

Dr. John Clifford also said that while new cases should drop to close to zero once the weather warms up and kills off the virus, there's "very likely" to be a resurgence this fall when the wild waterfowl that are natural carriers of avian influenza fly south for the winter.

Clifford spoke on a visit to Minnesota, the state hit hardest by outbreaks that have led to the death of over 2.5 million

BIRD FLU | PAGE 11A

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