

MIDWEST DIGEST

S.D. Guard Eyes New Armory For Pierre Area

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota National Guard is considering a new multimillion-dollar armory from which to base its Pierre-area operations, though it likely wouldn't happen for more than a decade. The Guard has operated an armory east of Pierre since 1976. Officials now are exploring whether to build a new facility north of Fort Pierre.

Col. Kit Cline says the Guard is planning to submit a proposal for a new Pierre-area facility to the Department of Defense's Future Year Defense Plan. The current plan stretches to 2016, and the South Dakota Guard will not be ready to submit its proposal for several years.

Cline says a new armory would address many deficiencies in the current Pierre armory, including a lack of space for modern equipment.

Mickey Named Judge For Scotts Bluff Court

GERING, Neb. (AP) — A Scottsbluff lawyer has been named to an opening on the Scotts Bluff County Court bench.

The office of Gov. Dave Heineman said Monday that he selected 41-year-old Kristen Mickey.

Mickey and Andrew Snyder had been recommended to the governor by the state Judicial Nominating Commission.

Mickey's served as a special prosecutor in Scotts Bluff County and was deputy Banner County attorney, 2003-2004.

He graduated in 1991 from the University of Wyoming with a degree in civil engineering and graduated from Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kan., in 1994.

The opening in the 12th Judicial District was created by the retirement of Scotts Bluff County Judge Glenn Camerer.

Vietnamese Producers Shopping In Neb.

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Some of the largest swine producers in Vietnam are in Nebraska this week to learn more about genetics and feed and to possibly buy the products.

Stan Garbacz (gahr-BAHZ) of the state Department of Agriculture said on Monday that Vietnamese government officials and an official with the U.S. Department of Agriculture were part of the delegation in Nebraska.

After meeting with Secretary of State John Gale and Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, the delegation is traveling on Tuesday to Waldo Farms near DeWitt. Waldo Farms is a leader in swine genetics.

On Wednesday the delegation members will learn about feed nutrition at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. On Thursday they'll visit International Nutrition in Omaha, a feed manufacturer.

Neb. Public Broadcasting Gets \$1.5 Million

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The foundation supporting Nebraska public broadcasting has received a \$1.5 million donation from the estate of a Nebraska woman.

The NET Foundation for Television says the money came from the estate of Anne Urban Alt of St. Paul, who died late last year. It was given as part of NET's Inspire Nebraska Campaign and will be placed in an endowment fund that will perpetually support NET.

The goal of the fundraising campaign is to raise \$25 million for program production and acquisition by 2012.

Alt was a longtime supporter of NET Television and worked as a high school foreign language teacher for many years in Chicago-area schools.

Upon retirement, Alt moved to the Wolbach and St. Paul areas of Nebraska, where she lived until her death.

Correction: Baby Beating Story

SIoux FALLS (AP) — In a July 30 story and the accompanying headline about a Minnehaha County jury finding Utkarsh Vijayvergiya not guilty of assault and child abuse, The Associated Press reported erroneously that Vijayvergiya's son died after being hospitalized in 2008. The child did not die.

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S.D. Second Best In Economic Stress

JEANNINE AVERSA AND MIKE SCHNEIDER
Associated Press

After easing for four months, the nation's economic stress worsened in June because more bankruptcies in the West and foreclosures outside the Sun Belt outweighed lower unemployment, according to The Associated Press' monthly analysis of conditions around the country.

The setback halted a drop in month-to-month stress readings that had begun in February. In May, economic stress had declined from the previous month in 33 states. And in April, stress fell in every state but two.

But in June, bankruptcy rates rose in Utah, California, Colorado and Idaho. Higher foreclosures spread to the Midwest, particularly Illinois. This occurred even as foreclosures eased in states that have suffered most from the housing bust, such as Arizona, California, Florida and Nevada.

More than two-thirds of the nation's 3,141 counties, and 37 of 50 states, endured more hardship in June than in May, the AP's Economic Stress Index shows.

The AP's index calculates a score for each county and state from 1 to 100 based on unemployment, foreclosure and bankruptcy rates. A higher score indicates more economic stress. Under a rough rule of thumb, a county is considered stressed when its score exceeds 11.

The AP's index found the average county's Stress score in June was 10.5, up from 10.3 in May. About 42 percent of the nation's counties were found to be stressed. That was slightly higher than May's reading of 40 percent.

The reversal of improvement reflects a slowing economy.

"The U.S. recovery has lost momentum as of midyear and is struggling to find its foot-

ing," said Lynn Reaser, chief economist at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego and president of the National Association for Business Economics.

Risks to the recovery are growing. Unemployment is stuck near double digits. The ailing housing market is pressuring home values. The stock market has been roiled by Europe's debt crisis and concerns about the U.S. recovery.

As consumer confidence has sunk, shoppers have cut back on borrowing and spending. Even though they're sitting on record piles of cash, businesses, too, are wary. They're not using their money to expand operations or increase work forces shrunk by the recession.

Unemployment rates fell in most states in June, but it was mainly because more people gave up searching for work and were no longer counted in the labor force.

The most economically stressed states became more so in June, the AP's analysis found. Nevada, with a score of 21.93, again led the nation as it has for more than a year. It was followed by Michigan (16.52), California (16.32), Florida (15.6) and Arizona (15.13).

The healthiest state was again North Dakota (4.83). Next came South Dakota (5.02), Nebraska (6.22), Vermont (6.5) and Wyoming (7.33).

All but six of the 56 counties along the Gulf Coast in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas endured higher economic stress in June. But since the BP oil spill, the economies in the region haven't fared the same, according to the AP's index.

All of coastal Louisiana's parishes have endured higher economic stress since April. So have all but one of the 17 coastal counties in Texas and two of the three in Mississippi. Higher unemployment is the main reason.

By contrast, Alabama's two coastal counties have seen declines in economic hard-

ship, along with more than half the 23 Florida counties on the Gulf Coast. The improvements result mostly from lower unemployment and fewer foreclosures.

In the past several months, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and California in the West have joined Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama in the Southeast among the states with the highest rates of bankruptcy filings. The Southeastern states have perennial high rates of bankruptcy.

But among the Western states, the higher bankruptcy rates stem mainly from rising numbers of foreclosures and more people whose homes are now worth less than what they owe on their mortgage, said Samuel Gerdano, executive director of the American Bankruptcy Institute.

The current bankruptcy filings are a product of the earlier collapse of home prices in those areas, Gerdano said.

"Before the bursting of the housing bubble, Nevada wasn't in the top five" among states with the most bankruptcy filings per capita, Gerdano said. "If you've been to Las Vegas, they're hurting."

Month-over-month, the biggest improvements in June were in the Pacific Northwest and New England, primarily due to jumps in seasonal employment.

Counties of at least 25,000 residents with the highest stress levels were Imperial County, Calif. (31.68); Yuma County, Ariz. (28.37); Lyon County, Nev. (26.81); Nye County, Nev. (24.78); and Merced County, Calif. (24.3).

On the other hand, stress declined in counties whose work forces are heavily involved in farming, mining, manufacturing and hospitality, according to the AP's analysis. Many are in the Dakotas and Kansas. The healthiest in June were Ward County, N.D. (3.85); Brown County, S.D. (3.89); Ellis County, Kan. (4.13); Ford County, Kan. (4.32); and Burleigh County, N.D. (4.35).

Neb. Offers Training To Firms That Hire Veterans

LINCOLN, Neb. — State health officials are offering to train companies to watch for signs of brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder in employees who have served in the military in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Experts have learned that it is difficult to diagnose traumatic brain injuries from the blast of explosives, said Karen Jordan-Anderson, the family program coordinator for the Nebraska Air National Guard. Someone near a blast may have lingering symptoms but may not link the symptoms to the explosion, she said. If they're not bleeding, they often think they're all right,

Jordan-Anderson said.

"In the area of just supporting our veterans, it's best to recognize we all need to be aware," she said.

A 2008 report by the Rand Center for Military Health Policy and Research estimated that about 320,000 service members may have experienced a traumatic brain injury during deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. But only 43 percent of them reported that they had been evaluated for that injury.

The Rand report also said that around 300,000 reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression.

Neb. Tax Authorities Redirect Receipts

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — York County is receiving a \$122,000 windfall in lodging taxes because Nebraska officials recognized the mistake they made earlier by sending the money to Lancaster County.

The problem arose because a businessman that owns hotels in both eastern Nebraska counties paid his lodging taxes with a single payment, and state officials failed to split up the payment.

Bob Sautter, executive director of the York County Visitors Bureau, said the windfall makes

him happy because he'll now be able to redo his budget and restore some of the cuts he'd made.

The 4 percent lodging tax that counties receive is collected from hotels, motels, campgrounds and bed-and-breakfasts.

Lancaster County officials say they didn't initially notice the overpayment because tourism was up in Lincoln last year, so the additional \$122,000 didn't seem improper.

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