

Neb. Communities To Take Over Levee Patrols

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Communities along the Missouri River that have been depending on the Nebraska National Guard to patrol their levees are taking back those duties. The Guard has been monitoring levees on behalf of Omaha, South Sioux City, Nemaha County and the Papio-Missouri River National Resources District since mid-June. That ends Sunday. State officials say they believe local authorities are in a position to take back the inspections. The state will continue daily flyovers of the river, stock sandbags and offer emergency aid.

Alvo Hunter Wins Lottery For Lone Super Tag

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — An Alvo hunter has won a lottery for the lone super tag distributed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The commission says 44-year-old Chris Rounds was selected in Friday's lottery as the recipient of the multispecies tag, which is valid for 2011 and 2012 hunting seasons. The permit has a bag limit of one elk of either sex, one antelope of either sex, one deer of either sex or species and two turkeys. Rounds says he's excited to get the super tag because he was really disappointed that he didn't win the lottery for an elk tag. Rounds' name was selected from among 2,081 applicants who paid \$25 to enter the lottery.

Rail Cars Full Of Coal Derail In Western Iowa

DENISON, Iowa (AP) — Railroads crews are cleaning up after 22 cars of a coal train derailed in western Iowa. Mark Davis, spokesman for Omaha, Neb.-based Union Pacific, says the 136-car train was headed from Wyoming to Illinois when a section derailed about 6:40 a.m. Sunday. No injuries were reported. Davis says crews will work into Monday to clear debris and repair about 800 feet of damaged track that stretches over two rail lines. One of the lines is expected to reopen early Monday. The cause of the derailment is under investigation.

Iowa: Pay Up Before Registering Vehicles

MASON CITY, Iowa (AP) — If you owe money to Iowa, you must pay up before getting car tags. It's the law. But in the past, it applied to clerk of court fees in the resident's home county. The Globe Gazette in Mason City says that as of July 1, the law applies to any past due payment in any Iowa county — and it doesn't matter if it's 3 cents or \$250,000. Cerro Gordo County Treasurer Patricia Wright estimates one out of every three patrons have a "stop" on their registration renewals due to non-payment of fees or fines. She says in one instance, someone owed court filing fees on three different divorces in three counties and couldn't get tags until the payments were made.

Neb. State Fair Requires Disease Test On Cattle

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — All cattle entering the Nebraska State Fair will be required to have been tested for a bovine disease. Of concern is the spread of BVD, or bovine virus diarrhea. The illness is easily spread among cattle and can cause pregnancy loss, reproductive problems and abnormalities in newborns among animals. Fair veterinarian Randall Pedersen told the Grand Island Independent that BVD could have a great impact on Nebraska's cattle industry, so the fair is trying to prevent the disease's spread.

Neb. Government Waits For Debt Resolution

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska state government is bracing for possible federal cuts created by the national debt ceiling showdown, but budget administrators say they don't know how it will affect the state. State officials are taking a watch-and-wait approach as President Barack Obama and Congress tussle over the nation's borrowing authority, said Gerry Oligmueller, state budget administrator in the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services. Oligmueller said the state routinely adjusts to changing federal spending policies, but officials can't act until they know how much will get cut. "I'm not anticipating there will be a default, but there certainly could be a number of changes in the variety of federal programs," Oligmueller said. "None of us state officials have a vote. The important thing for us is to be attentive."

Oligmueller said state agencies are handling the impasse as they did when a possible shutdown threatened the federal government in April. Agency employees who administer federal grants contacted their federal counterparts to see if a shutdown would cut into their funding. In an April 8 letter, Oligmueller told state agency heads to stop spending any federal money that they had not already received and to tap other sources until the federal budget dispute was resolved. A report released this month to the Nebraska Tax Rate Review Committee warned that federal action, including the outcome of the debt-ceiling showdown, could have a "significant impact" on future state revenue but didn't say by how much. Nebraska collected \$62.7 million more tax revenue than expected in the fiscal year that ended in June, a sign it is inching out of the recession. University of Nebraska-

Lincoln spokeswoman Meg Lauerman said dramatic cuts in federal government aid might affect federal Pell Grants used for student aid. But she said it was too early to know what could happen to the university. "We could be impacted, but we just don't know by how much," she said. "I'm sure many university officials are on a wait-and-see status with this issue." Sen. Lavon Heidemann, of Elk Creek, who chairs the Legislature's Appropriations Committee, said it was too early to know what impact, if any, the debt ceiling debate could have on the state. A sudden interest rate hike could hit Nebraska businesses, he said, which in turn could cut into the recently improved state revenues. "There's still a lot of hope that they're going to get their act together in Washington," Heidemann said. "But I just shake my head. I mean, seriously. It's tough to even comment on this, because you don't know what they're going to do."

Nebraska residents who receive federal benefits like Medicaid and Society Security say they're increasingly worried about losing the benefit. Concerns over Social Security checks and health care payments are growing at the Bellevue Senior Center south of Omaha, said Helen Barber, 85, who works in the center's kitchen. Many regulars at the center are talking about the government impasse every day, she said. "It's something a lot of us are worried about," she said. "It's on a lot of people's minds. If you don't get your check, will the rent not get paid? Will you get charged late fees which you can't afford?" At the same time, she said, many regulars still believe Congress and the White House will reach an agreement. "Do they just want all the old people to sit around and die?" she said. "They'll get it resolved. Otherwise, we'll make sure they don't ever get elected again."

No. Dak.'s New Laws: No Texting While Driving

BY DALE WETZEL
Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. — North Dakota has more than 300 new laws taking effect Monday, including a ban on texting while driving, limits on protests at funerals and a measure that allows most employees to keep guns in their vehicles while they're at work. Measures that establish the ladybug as the new state insect and a new state Latin motto that means, "One sows for the benefit of another age," make their debut Monday. Secretary of State Al Jaeger will now also be known as North Dakota's commissioner of combative sports, rather than as the state athletic commissioner. Jaeger's office is known mostly for regulating elections and keeping business records. But his office also licenses boxing and mixed martial arts fighting matches, and the former title implied that he had a much broader regulatory reach, Jaeger said. "There have been occasions over the years

where people have contacted this office and were wondering about, for instance, do we give grants for a new football field?" Jaeger said. "The state athletic commissioner is really a misleading title, because it could infer that I actually regulate varsity sports." The law that institutes the title change includes a \$500 minimum fee for licensing fights. Another new law orders protesters at funerals to stay at least 1,000 feet from a church or burial site. It amended a former law that required a 300-foot minimum distance. The measure was aimed at followers of a Kansas church that have staged protests at funerals of veterans killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The church members believe the soldiers' deaths represent God's punishment of the United States for its tolerance of homosexuality. Employees at businesses that normally ban firearms on their property are now required to allow employees to bring guns to work, as long as they are left locked in the worker's vehicle. The measure doesn't apply to schools, jails,

colleges or to companies that work with explosives. It was approved overwhelmingly in both the North Dakota House and Senate despite strong opposition from business interests. North Dakota's new statewide ban on texting while driving, which carries a \$100 fine for violators, is likely to get the most attention. Until Monday, only the cities of Bismarck and Grand Forks had bans, and both had more lenient penalties than the state law requires. North Dakota joins a group of more than 30 states that have banned texting while driving, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association in Washington, D.C. Lt. Jody Skogen, the North Dakota Highway Patrol's safety and education officer, said he believed the law would deter motorists who now send text messages as they drive from doing so in the future. "The vast majority of the motorists, I feel, are concerned about violating traffic laws," Skogen said. "Now that there is a specific ordinance that covers the act of texting, that group of people will now refrain from texting."

OBITUARIES

Debora Guenther

Debora "Deb" Guenther, age 45, of Yankton, South Dakota, died suddenly from a brain aneurysm, Friday, July 29, 2011, at the St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota. Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, August 2, 2011, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Yankton, South Dakota, with Reverend Mark Lichter officiating. Burial of ashes will be 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Yankton. Visitation is from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Monday, August 1, 2011, at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton, with a rosary at 7:00 p.m. and a Vigil Service at 7:30 p.m. Visitation will resume one hour prior to the Mass on Tuesday at the church. Deb was born September 24, 1965, in Yankton, South Dakota, to Ralph and Daisy (Kaiser) Guenther. She grew up in Yankton and graduated from Yankton High School in 1983. After high



Guenther

school she moved to California and later Minnesota before returning to Yankton in 1991. She attended Stewart School of Hair-styling and worked at Smart-style and later JC Penney's in Yankton. She also worked at Captain Norms and was most recently working as the manager at Pump 'N Stuff in Yankton. Deb loved being outdoors; working in her garden, fishing and camping. She always had a positive outlook on life and was a great listener. She would help anyone who needed it and would never let you down. She was always there when you needed her. She loved doing crossword puzzles and was a wonderful daughter and friend. She was a loving mother to her two daughters, Danielle and Ashley, and especially loved spending time with her grand-

son, Connor. She was a big part of Connor's life and loved every minute. She will be dearly missed. Survivors include her fiancé; Jeremy Tramp of Yankton; two daughters, Danielle and Ashley Sudbeck of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota; grandson, Connor Triplette of Brooklyn Park; father, Ralph Guenther of Yankton; mother, Daisy Guenther of Yankton; brother, Mike Guenther of Colorado Springs, Colorado; and many cousins. She was preceded in death by her grandparents. To post an online sympathy message to the family, please visit wintzrayfuneralhome.com. Yankton Press & Dakotan August 1, 2011



Online condolences at: www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com

Perry Slagle

Perry Allen Slagle, 65, of Yankton died Thursday, July 28, 2011, at his residence. Mass of Christian Burial is at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 3, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Yankton, with the Rev. Dan Smith officiating. Burial will be in the Sacred Heart Cemetery in Yankton. Visitation is 5-8 p.m. Tuesday at Wintz & Ray Funeral Home, Yankton, with a rosary at 7 p.m., followed by a Scripture service at 7:30 p.m. Visitation resumes one hour prior to the funeral at the church. To send an online sympathy message, visit wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

Charles Schulte

FORDYCE, Neb. — Charles J. Schulte, 74, of Fordyce, Neb., died Saturday, July 30, 2011 at Avera McKennan Hospital, Sioux Falls. Mass of Christian Burial is at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 3, at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Fordyce, with the Rev. David Fulton officiating. Burial will be in St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Fordyce. Visitation is 4-8 p.m. Tuesday, with a vigil service at 7 p.m., at the church. Visitation will begin one hour prior to services on Wednesday at the church. Wintz Funeral Home, Hartington, is in charge of arrangements. To send online condolences, visit www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

Leonard Conrad

Leonard C. Conrad, 84, of Yankton died Sunday, July 31, 2011, at Avera Sister James Care Center, Yankton. Arrangements are pending under the care of Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton.

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Owed

From Page 1

has approved 87 agency write-offs totaling nearly \$3 million. Further analysis of the new report shows that since 2009, the state has transferred thousands of accounts to the Affiliated Group totaling more than \$25 million in debt. The agency has recovered about a quarter of the debt but also received more than \$100,000 in commission fees for its service. Unlike many other states, the state allows the front-end commission system that assumes the company is accurately calculating and reporting its activity. In the next round of contracting, Kinsman said the state will look into alternatives that mandate the collection agency issue individual bills for its service. "I think the collection agency is doing a good job overall," Kinsman said. "The commission percentage is set, and right now, they send us the check minus the amount they take. The other way is to get the whole debt back, and then the collection agency sends them a bill on the percentage. That way is probably cleaner and more transparent, so we'll ask for a quote on our next

round of contracting." Who is escaping the grasp of state officials and the professional debt collectors? For the Department of Corrections, it's mostly parents of juvenile offenders. The agency leads the state in debt write-offs with \$1.5 million since 2007. Scores of the 716 juveniles in the state's correctional system leave their parents with bills for housing, clothing, food and medical treatment that they don't pay. Corrections Secretary Denny Kaemingk said parents falling short of what judges think they can pay has been a subject of conversation for years. "This is concerning that we can't collect any more money, but if we don't have the money, we still have to deal with the children. We can surely review what we do, talk to some experts to see if there's a better process," Kaemingk said. "It is a major problem, and solutions seem to be few." At the Department of Revenue, debts are never officially written off, allowing business owners to prove they owe less or fulfill their tax obligations. State records show the state submitted nearly \$11 million in debt over several years to the collection agency. Officials said the million-dollar figures sent to the collection agency are largely inflated due to

a process called "jeopardy assessment," according to Joan Serfling, director of administrative services for the Department of Revenue. If a business pays \$1,000 per month in taxes and suddenly stops filing, the state sends jeopardy assessments after several months of delinquent taxes with a calculation based on that average. So if there were four months of no filings, the state assumes the business owes \$4,000. Serfling declined to release which individuals or businesses owe the department the most. Since 2007, South Dakota's Board of Finance declined only four of the nearly 100 requests for write-offs at its meetings, which usually last less than 30 minutes. "The key is that we be keeping close track of when this happens and having a vision on when we collect it and only write off debt as a last resort," Venhuizen said. "Sometimes it's more expensive to collect the debt than the amount you're trying to collect."



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