

Woman Pleads Guilty To Running Brothel

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A 66-year-old woman has pleaded guilty to being involved in running a prostitution ring out of an exotic dance club.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports Ruby Venditte pleaded guilty Tuesday to conspiracy to transport a woman between Iowa and Nebraska to engage in prostitution. A plea deal would allow the co-owner of Goodfellas to avoid jail time and be placed on probation. The judge may reject the plea agreement.

Prosecutors say Venditte and her 68-year-old husband, Louis Venditte, managed the club as a front for prostitution-related activities from 2003 to October 2013. According to the plea agreement, the couple persuaded women they hired as exotic dancers to engage in sex acts with customers.

Louis Venditte has pleaded guilty to four federal prostitution charges.

Police Officer Retires After Drunk Driving

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A 46-year-old police officer has retired from the Omaha force after being convicted of first-offense drunken driving.

Online court records say Jason Christensen pleaded guilty on Tuesday and was sentenced to six months of probation and fined \$500. His driver's license was revoked for 60 days.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports that Christensen's lawyer told Judge Craig McDermott that Christensen was given an opportunity to retire and took it so he could continue working on some personal issues.

Brothers Credited With Helping Arrest

FAIRFAX (AP) — The Gregory County Sheriff's Office is crediting two brothers with helping in the arrest of a man who allegedly fired at officers during a weekend chase.

The chase early Saturday began when a deputy attempted a traffic stop outside of Bonesteel. Authorities say the chase involved an exchange of gunfire between officers and the Sioux Falls man driving the car and his girlfriend. It ended in Fairfax.

Authorities tell *The Daily Republic* newspaper that resident Matt Moos attempted to slow the progress of the suspects, until they shot at him. When the Sioux Falls man tried to steal a vehicle from Kyle Moos, Moos pointed a shotgun at him and held him in place until officers arrived.

The girlfriend was arrested in a yard, allegedly holding a jammed pistol.

Gravel Mine Failed To Correct Problems

ORD, Neb. (AP) — Federal regulators say a Nebraska gravel mine failed to correct the safety problems that contributed to a worker's death, but the company plans to appeal.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration said Wednesday investigators found issues at Ulrich Gravel's mine in July that hadn't been corrected since a March death.

Regulators say a 44-year-old worker died after the truck he was driving fell into a pond at the mine in Valley County.

Ulrich's attorney Josh Schultz says the company believes the citations are inaccurate. He says Ulrich Gravel has a strong safety record after more than 35 years in business.

Inspectors say the mine failed to erect berms or guardrails on roads next to water and failed to repair a cracked windshield on a front-end loader that could impair visibility.

Man Pleads Guilty To Robbing Store

RAPID CITY (AP) — A man accused of robbing a Rapid City convenience store at gunpoint earlier this summer has pleaded guilty.

KEVN-TV reports that Sage Hard Heart could face up to 25 years in prison when he's sentenced Sept. 22.

Authorities say Hard Heart walked into a Loaf 'N Jug store in the early morning hours of June 16, pointed a gun at the clerk and fled with an undisclosed amount of cash. The weapon was not recovered, so police do not know what type it was.

City Manager's Resignation Accepted

SIDNEY, Neb. (AP) — The council has accepted the resignation of the longtime Sidney city manager.

The *Sidney Sun-Telegraph* reports that Gary Person spoke about the city's successes and growth over the past decades and during his 16 years in the post.

He announced his intentions last week and said he wasn't being pushed out. At Tuesday's council meeting Person acknowledged the events involving Sidney Police Chief B.J. Wilkinson, who remains on paid administrative leave, stemming from an incident involving former city public works director John Hehnke, whom Person fired last week.

Person told the council that if his resignation "will help the community heal, move forward and place its energy and focus into its very bright future, then please accept it."

The council appointed City Clerk Geri Anthony as interim city manager.

Residents Vote To Keep Developer

HARTFORD (AP) — Residents of Hartford have decided that they want to keep the city's economic development director.

The City Council in June voted to do away with the position. Residents in a special election on Tuesday voted 440-258 to overturn that decision. That's a 63 percent majority.

The turnout quadrupled that in Hartford's last municipal election.

Mayor Bill Campbell says the wishes of the voters will be respected.

Man Given 4 Years For Evading US Taxes

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A North Carolina man has been given more than four years in prison for evading federal taxes while he lived and worked in Nebraska.

Prosecutors say 59-year-old Chet West, of Nebo, on Tuesday was sentenced to 51 months and ordered to make restitution of nearly \$440,000.

The Internal Revenue Service says West earned taxable income of more than \$272,000 while living in Omaha over the tax years of 2007, 2008 and 2009 but didn't file federal returns for those years. Officials say he should have paid nearly \$53,000 in federal taxes. Officials also say that after being informed he was required to file returns, West continued efforts to evade federal taxes.

Prosecutors say the restitution total includes amounts for years beyond the counts of conviction and includes interest and penalties.

Day Care Provider Guilty Of Drug Charges

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A Sioux Falls woman accused of having methamphetamine at an in-home daycare has pleaded guilty to drug charges.

Thirty-four-year-old Jennifer Darger and her husband were arrested in March after a tip from the couple's daughter led police to search their home.

Darger pleaded guilty Wednesday to possession of meth with intent to distribute, possession of a controlled substance and contributing to the abuse or neglect of a minor.

She faces at least one year in prison when sentenced in October.

CNH Announces More Layoffs At Plant

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — Officials for a farm implement plant in Grand Island say 70 more employees will be losing their jobs.

CNH Industrial America said in a news release Monday that the indefinite layoffs result from market conditions and that they will occur in October.

In February the company announced the layoffs of 136 workers, and in August last the year the company announced layoffs of 170 full-time company staffers and 68 agency employees.

Fate Of Nebraska's Death Penalty Likely To Rest With Voters

GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska's death penalty won a last-minute reprieve on Wednesday when a group fighting to keep the punishment announced that it has collected more than enough signatures to stop its repeal and place the issue before voters in 2016.

Nebraskans for the Death Penalty, which was heavily financed by Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts and his family, said it had gathered 166,692 signatures from all 93 of the state's counties. Nebraska's unicameral Legislature voted in May to repeal capital punishment over the objection of Ricketts, becoming the first traditionally conservative state to do so in 42 years.

The pro-death penalty group needed roughly 57,000 valid signatures from registered voters to force a statewide referendum, and double that number to immediately halt the death penalty repeal that was set to go into effect on Sunday. Organizers appear to have exceeded the 10 percent of registered voters hurdle needed to block the repeal until the November 2016 general election.

"Nebraskans sent a strong message about crime and punishment in our state by signing this petition in extraordinary numbers," said state treasurer and former attorney general Don Stenberg, a co-chair of the petition drive.

The likely referendum could prompt both sides to pour money into the state in hopes of swaying voters, said Douglas Berman, an Ohio State University law professor and death penalty expert.

Berman said the Nebraska Legislature's vote to repeal had suggested the death penalty was losing support even in

the American Heartland but a referendum would focus attention on Nebraska.

"Certainly it will make Nebraska a kind of ground zero in the death penalty debate," he said.

Opponents said that the death penalty is beyond repair in Nebraska because of repeated legal challenges and expense to the state.

"We believe the more Nebraskans learn about the failures of capital punishment, the more they will be inclined to get rid of it," said the Rev. Stephen Griffith, the new director of Nebraskans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.

The petitions were delivered Wednesday to the Nebraska secretary of state's office, which will forward them to counties to verify the signatures in a process that will take about 40 days.

Republican Attorney General Doug Peterson, who supports the death penalty, said in a statement that the signatures are "presumptively valid" until determined otherwise. Stenberg said no one will know the exact number of valid signatures for at least a month, but the state constitution makes clear that petitions go into effect on the day they're submitted.

Even if the law is suspended, Nebraska currently has no way to execute any of the 10 men on death row because it lacks two of the three required lethal injection drugs and has struggled to obtain them legally. The state paid \$54,400 in May to order the drugs from a broker in India, but federal authorities have said they can't be legally imported.

Nebraska lawmakers voted by the narrowest possible margin, 30-19, to override Ricketts' veto. Ricketts assailed the Legislature as out of touch with the wishes of most residents. The repeal

vote was helped by an unusual coalition of conservative state senators and more traditional death penalty opponents who had fought unsuccessfully for decades to eliminate the punishment. Some conservatives said they opposed it for religious and moral reasons, while others cast it as an inefficient government program that wastes tax money.

"What the Nebraska Legislature did is going to have an effect," said Robert Dunham, executive director of the Washington-based Death Penalty Information Center, whose group often criticizes how the death penalty is administered. "The message that conservative legislators can reach across the aisle with moderate and liberal legislators — that message is still there and still resonates."

Nebraska hasn't executed an inmate since 1997, and has never done so using the state's current three-drug lethal injection protocol.

The state was the 19th to abolish capital punishment, as has the District of Columbia, while the death penalty is legal in 31 states and for some federal crimes. The number of executions in the United States has gradually declined in recent years and only a handful of states led by Texas regularly put inmates to death.

The announcement of the number of signatures caps an 82-day petition drive backed by Ricketts and his father, TD Ameritrade founder Joe Ricketts. The governor had given \$200,000 to Nebraskans for the Death Penalty as of the last filing deadline on July 31, while his father had donated \$100,000. The group raised a total of more than \$652,000 from 40 individual donors and seven groups classified as businesses, political action committees and other entities.

Attorney Wants To Legalize Hemp On Reservation

KEVIN BURBACH
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — An attorney on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation wants residents to vote on whether the tribe should legalize industrial hemp, but the tribal chairman says he's concerned taking action without the federal government's blessing could jeopardize the tribe's sovereignty.

Hemp advocates say they believe a U.S. Department of Justice memo to U.S. attorneys on handling states that have legalized marijuana opens the door for industrial hemp on tribal lands. Attorney Chase Iron Eyes has been collecting signatures to put a question on the Sept. 30 ballot asking tribal members whether hemp-legalization language should be added to the tribe's constitution.

Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault said he agrees that industrial hemp could be

beneficial to the reservation that straddles North Dakota and South Dakota, but wants to first get a permit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to grow the type of cannabis that doesn't produce a high and is used for things like textiles and lotion. Many states, including North Dakota, recently defined industrial hemp as distinct from marijuana in order to allow its production.

Iron Eyes said now is the time for impoverished tribes like Standing Rock — where federal labor statistics show that more than half of able-bodied workers were unemployed last year — to create an industry that doesn't rely on outside help.

"There's things that need to be done so that we can learn to provide for ourselves," he said.

Archambault said it's "in our best interest to pursue industrial hemp," but that such specific language might not be. He also noted tribal

officials are already working with Sitting Bull College, which is on the reservation, to get a permit from the USDA to study and grow hemp, something the 2014 farm bill allows state agriculture departments and colleges and universities to do. Without such a permit, he fears putting the tribe's sovereignty in jeopardy.

Calls to U.S. Attorney offices in South Dakota and North Dakota were not returned Wednesday.

The National Hemp Association believes the so-called "Cole memo" released by the Department of Justice in 2013 paves the way for tribes to grow hemp, according to group spokeswoman Neshama Abraham.

In it, the department lays out eight areas the federal government will prioritize when it comes to marijuana in states where the drug is legal, including drug cartels, sales to minors and areas where it is being sent from states

that have legalized it to states that haven't. Subsequent DOJ guidance in October 2014 expressly made those priorities applicable on Indian reservations, too.

Tim Purdon, the former U.S. attorney for North Dakota, said tribes that want to grow hemp could run into fewer issues with the federal government in light of the Cole memo.

"I have to believe that there is a huge difference in the way the (Department of Justice) would look at a legalization of recreational marijuana effort versus how they would look at a legalization of industrial hemp process," said Purdon, who recently filed a motion to lift an injunction against Alex White Plume, an Oglala Sioux tribal member who has sought for years to grow hemp in South Dakota.

But, Purdon added, the "safest way" for tribes wanting to cultivate hemp would be to comply with the farm bill.



Out On The Town



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5-7pm Cooks Choice

Thursday
5-7pm - Domestic Beers **\$1.50**
5-7pm - Hamburger/Pizza Burger & Fries **\$5.00**

Friday
Country Fried Steak
Serving 5:30-8:00

Saturday Entertainment
No Band
Regular Menu 5:30-8:00

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Sunday at 6:30p.m.
Happy Hour M-F 4:30-6:00

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Monday - \$5 Cheeseburger & Fries (5-11pm)
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11am-2pm

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