



Iverson, Firsick  
 And Somsen  
 Among Year-End  
 Award Winners  
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**Mostly Cloudy And Mild**

9 a.m.: **20** | 3 p.m.: **30**  
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# 2013: Beginnings And Endings

## Farm Bill Focus

SD Lawmakers  
 Map Out Their  
 Priorities For '14

BY HENRY C. JACKSON  
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Negotiating and implementing Congress' multibillion-dollar farm bill so that it helps South Dakota, including ranchers who suffered heavy losses during October's blizzard, will be the first order of business in 2014, the state's congressional members say.



Thune



Noem

The House and Senate has each approved a version of the five-year, roughly \$500 billion bill, but there are major differences between the two regarding crop subsidies and how much to cut food stamp programs. A new farm bill also would restore emergency protections for livestock producers, a key element for the state.

Lawmakers hope to work out a compromise by early next year, which would mark the first a farm bill has been approved since a 2008 deal. That deal expired in 2012 but was extended until September 2013.

"The immediate priority for 2014 is to get it passed," Republican Sen. John Thune said. "But part of passing it, and with any major bill, is implementing it. We want to make sure it works, the commodity title, the safety net reforms and everything we're fighting to get in it."

The emergency protections for livestock producers would potentially bring relief to South Dakota ranchers who lost between 15,000 and 30,000 cattle when an early-season blizzard swept through part of the state in October.

"Disaster assistance will help a lot," Thune said.

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## SF Salvation Army Kettles Strike Gold

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Two gold bars valued at more than \$1,200 each were dropped in kettles in Sioux Falls, the Salvation Army said.

Charity spokesman Steve Cook told the *Argus Leader* that one bar was dropped this week in a kettle wrapped in a note that read, "Bell Ringers are Special People." The other gold bar was dropped in a kettle in Sioux Falls about three weeks ago, he said.

The Salvation Army received \$1,230 for the first gold bar, and Cook expects to receive a similar amount for second one.

It's been at least two years since a donation of that value was made to the Salvation Army, he said.

"We're always hopeful for something like that," Cook said. "We've had a lot of people drop things of value in there and we take every donation seriously because it goes towards helping those in need."



DAVID LIAS/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK  
 In September, this car was found in a creek near Beresford, eventually drawing to a close a 42-year-old cold case involving missing Vermillion girls Pam Jackson (inset, left) and Sheri Miller. The case's resolution was named the *Press & Dakotan's* top story for 2013.

## Cold Case Cited As Area's Top Story

In a year filled by notable beginnings and endings, the conclusion of a 40-year-old mystery proved to be the most compelling story in the Yankton area.

The resolution of a cold case involving two Vermillion girls who had been missing since 1971 was tabbed the *Press & Dakotan's* top news story of 2013.

The drama in the Yankton County Auditor's Office was voted the No. 2 story by *P&D* staff, followed by the October storm that impacted much of South Dakota and Nebraska, the state's 125th anniversary kickoff in Yankton and the local impact of the government shutdown in October.

The second five included the hiring of Dr. Wayne Kindle as Yankton's new school superintendent, the bumper harvest by farmers, Sen. Tim Johnson's announcing the end of his political career, developments concerning the former Human Services Center campus and the beginning of water plant improvements in Yankton.

### 1. VERMILLION'S COLD CASE

The 42-year-old cold case involving the disappearance of two Vermillion girls who have been missing since 1971 saw a dramatic development with the Sept. 23 recovery of the 1960 Studebaker linked to the case.

Cheryl Miller and Pamela Jackson, both 17, disappeared May 29, 1971, on their way to a party in Union County. They were last seen riding in a Studebaker Lark, and the license plate matches a car spotted upside down in Brule Creek near Beresford. The car was found about a half-mile from the gravel pit believed to be the girls' destination.

A passerby found the car, with authorities believing that changing water levels led to the exposure of the vehicle. The car was carefully extracted to preserve evidence. Testing indicate the car was in the highest gear, suggesting that foul play wasn't involved in the case.

The two sets of skeletal remains were first sent for DNA testing to a Sioux Falls laboratory, then to the University of North Texas for further testing. The tests were sought to identify the remains.

During the course of their investigation, authorities conducted a search of a farm seeking evidence related to the cold case.

A state prison inmate had been indicted in 2007 on murder charges in the girls' disappearance. However, the charges were dropped when it was learned a prison informant had faked a recorded confession involving the first inmate.



DAVID LIAS/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK  
 ABOVE: In March, Sen. Tim Johnson, with his wife Barb at his side, announced at a press conference in Vermillion that he would not be seeking reelection in 2014. BELOW: In November, Gov. Dennis Daugaard and his wife Linda cut the celebratory cake as part of the state's 125th anniversary kickoff gala in Yankton.



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

### 2. THE COUNTY AUDITOR SAGA

Yankton County residents rang in 2013 without something they always took for granted: their property tax bills.

The Yankton County Auditor's Office did not finalize property tax levies on schedule, which raised a number of concerns as the drama unfolded for more than a month. The issue was resolved in February after Yankton County Auditor

Paula Jones abruptly took a leave of absence from her position for medical reasons.

Following the events, an assessment of the Auditor's Office was conducted by the South Dakota Department of Legislative Audit at the request of the Yankton County Commission.

Commission Chairman Bruce Jensen said after hearing the report that it gave commissioners peace of mind as they moved forward.

"We had to know exactly what was going on," Jensen said. "There were some minor things in the report, but we're going to correct them. Thank goodness, it turned out well — better than I thought it was going to."

Jones did not appear at another County Commission meeting once she went on medical leave, and in June she announced via a letter that she was resigning after 14 years of serving in the auditor role.

Patty Hojem, the then-deputy auditor, was selected by the commission to carry out the rest of Jones' four-year term, which expires in 2015.

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