

### Thune Noncommittal On 2016 Run

PIERRE (AP) — U.S. Sen. John Thune says he's keeping his options open for a 2016 presidential bid, but right now the South Dakota Republican says he's not exploring a run. Thune on Wednesday said he's focused on his work in the U.S. Senate, where he'll assume the chairmanship of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee in 2015. Politico recently listed Thune among potential contenders for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination. Thune says he is "not anxious to be on lists." A popular Republican elected in 2004, Thune will be South Dakota's senior U.S. senator when Republicans assume control of the chamber. If he decides to take on another Senate term, Thune will be up for re-election in 2016.

### Spearfish Sets Building Permit Record

SPEARFISH (AP) — The city of Spearfish in western South Dakota has set a record for the number of building permits that have been issued in 2014. The *Rapid City Journal* reports that Spearfish has also set a record for the total valuation of development in the community. Officials have issued 451 building permits valued at more than \$45 million through November, surpassing the previous record of 400 building permits granted in 2013, and the \$44 million valuation mark set a decade ago. City Building Official Tom Paisley says Spearfish is a vibrant community that is growing. He adds that more construction projects are planned and heavy equipment will continue to be seen in Spearfish in 2015. The planned projects include renovations to a hospital and a new elementary school.

### Police Probe Dance Team Embezzlement

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Police in North Dakota are probing allegations that someone has embezzled thousands of dollars from a high school dance team. Police in Bismarck say someone appears to have pocketed more than \$10,000 from the Bismarck High School Demonettes Dance Team. Lt. Steve Scheuer says the misappropriation of funds happened between April 1 and Sept. 1. He says the pool of potential suspects includes anyone with access to the funds. Bismarck Public Schools Superintendent Tamara Uselman says the money was taken from a booster club account tied to the dance team. Authorities have asked the team to audit its account in order to accurately know how much money was taken.

### Woman Convicted In Fatal 2013 Crash

SEWARD, Neb. (AP) — A 21-year-old has been convicted of misdemeanor motor vehicle homicide in connection to a fatal 2013 rollover crash in Nebraska. The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports 21-year-old Jessica Percival, of Seward, was convicted Tuesday. She will be sentenced on Jan. 26 in Seward County District Court. Percival was driving in June 2013 near Seward when she lost control of the vehicle and it rolled. Her two passengers were thrown from the car. Twenty-two-year-old Austin Krivda died at the scene and Michael Johnson was seriously injured. The Nebraska Attorney General's Office says Percival had methamphetamine and marijuana in her system prior to the crash.

### 14-Year-Old Catches 23-Pound Northern

LAKE THOMPSON (AP) — A 14-year-old Minnesota teenager was expecting to catch a crappie or two when he recently went fishing on the icy waters of Schaefer's Slough near Lake Thompson. The teenager, however, didn't imagine catching a 23-pound, 41-inch long northern pike. The *Argus Leader* reports that Tim Kreun, of Pipestone, wrestled the huge fish through an eight-inch hole in the ice after a battle that involved both of his rods and reels rigged with jig-heads, minnows and bobbers. He says it took him about 20 minutes to heave the northern pike through the hole. Kreun says at first he thought the fish was a big walleye. He says he is taking his trophy fish to a taxidermist to have it mounted.

### Ring Dropped With Note In S.A. Kettle

MITCHELL (AP) — A sad love story for one man may end up brightening some people's days this holiday season in South Dakota. The man dropped a 14-karat gold, half-carat diamond engagement ring along with a note in a Salvation Army kettle outside a sporting goods store in Mitchell. The ring and note were taped to a \$10 bill. The note partially reads: "This ring made me the happiest man in the world when she said yes, and the saddest when she returned it." The man added that he hopes the ring can be used "to make some kids happy." Salvation Army office manager Sheena Loudner says the ring has been valued at \$1,200. She says the group is going to try to get some bids on the ring and sell it.

### One Dead After Neb. Apartment Fire

CRETE, Neb. (AP) — Authorities have recovered a body following a fire at an apartment complex in southeast Nebraska that displaced 11 families. Saline County Attorney Tad Eickman says 56-year-old Thomas J. Luzum was found in a garden-level apartment unit at the complex in Crete. Autopsy results are pending. The fire at the 16-unit apartment complex was reported Tuesday night. Firefighters contained the blaze within minutes, though other departments were called in after flames flared up in a wall. Authorities say the garden-level apartment unit sustained the most damage. Officials estimate there's about \$100,000 in total damages. The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports a local church and the American Red Cross are assisting affected residents.

## S.D. Governor Hopes Plan To Spend More Now Reduces Youth Offenders In Future

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau



Daugaard

PIERRE — The price tag of \$3.2 million for juvenile justice reforms proposed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard in his budget speech last week covers only the first six months, a senior aide said Wednesday. Jim Seward, the governor's legal counsel, said the changes likely would start January 1, 2016. That is halfway through the 2016 fiscal year that runs July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016. The cost for a full year would be at least double the \$3.2 million, or \$6.4 million, and possibly more, Seward said.

His remarks came during a presentation to the state Council of Juvenile Services.

The thrust is to deliver better outcomes for youths in trouble by providing more direct services in communities.

The hope is the overall costs will be lower, by reducing the number of young offenders placed in state Department of Corrections facilities and programs outside South Dakota.

A work group representing state departments, state courts, counties and schools delivered 12 recommendations that form the nucleus of the plan.

Seward said the reinvestment initiative is separate from the juvenile detention alternative initiative, known as JDAI.

The Council of Juvenile Services, working with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provided grants in recent years to get JDAI started in the Sioux Falls and Rapid City areas.

Because of its potential, JDAI was taken over by the state court system in the past year and a state coordinator was hired.

While the detention alternatives approach generated some success and led to other related changes in Minnehaha, Lincoln and Pennington counties, it hasn't yet spread deeply into other regional hubs or rural counties where budgets are even tighter and youth offenders are much fewer.

Circuit Judge Jeff Davis of Rapid City and Minnehaha County State's Attorney Aaron McGowan said JDAI's success depends heavily on the involvement of personnel and continuity in key positions. They serve on the council.

Some of the people on the reinvestment work group also serve on the council. In many ways the work group's recommendations seem to address under-developed spots in the JDAI approach, such as additional funding, community advisory teams, more local programs and specific guidelines for judges.

A decade ago South Dakota had one of the highest rates of incarceration for

youths in the nation. The council was created early in Gov. Mike Rounds' administration to start addressing the situation.

"We were ready for a system change," said Carol Twedt of Sioux Falls, the former Minnehaha County commissioner and long-time chair of the council.

She stepped aside as chair Wednesday, with Betty Oldenkamp of Lutheran Social Services chosen as the council's new leader.

Oldenkamp's agency is heavily involved in providing youth services in many South Dakota communities. It is starting a runaway center in Rapid City because of the need that's been found.

"Decisions have to be based on the science behind it," she said.

The reinvestment initiative comes now in the wake of a similar broad set of changes for adult corrections, developed in 2012 as a collaborative effort and adopted by the Legislature last year, as part of the Daugaard administration's emphasis on better results and more efficient spending.

Seward chaired the reinvestment work group. He didn't receive any questions from council members at the end of his presentation Wednesday.

"We're trying to be as inclusive as we can be and get it right the first time," he said.

"Now you have a road map to issue," Twedt said.

## S.D. Delegation Responds To CIA Torture Report

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Republican and Democratic members of South Dakota's congressional delegation have differing views on a Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA interrogation tactics.

The report released Tuesday says the U.S. brutalized scores of terror suspects with interrogation tactics that turned secret CIA prisons into chambers of suffering and did nothing to make America safer after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

It was the first public accounting of tactics employed after 9/11, and it detailed

far-harsher actions than had been widely known, such as simulated drowning, weeks of sleep deprivation and confinement to small boxes.

Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., told *USA Today* that releasing the report was the right thing to do.

"The American people deserve to know the truth — that the CIA tortured detainees during the Bush administration using



Johnson



Thune

interrogation practices contrary to our American values," he said. "We are stronger as a nation when we admit our mistakes,

learn from the past and move forward."

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said that while some of the findings of the report are disturbing, the "conclusions are misleading and do not represent all the facts."

"With growing national security threats from our

enemies around the globe, the release of this report on a program that ended eight years ago puts our military and intelligence operatives in jeopardy today," he said.

Rep. Kristi Noem, R-S.D., said she worries the report could allow the country's enemies to promote aggression against the U.S.

"Congress must continue to provide thorough oversight over our intelligence activities, but the manner in which this was done puts America in danger and does our country little to no good," she said.

## Spending Bill Delays Protections For Sage Grouse

BY MATTHEW BROWN  
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Montana — A legislative rider in Congress' \$1.1 trillion spending bill would delay protections for a wide-ranging Western bird that's been on a collision course with the oil and gas industry.

The Obama administration faced a September 2015 deadline to propose protections for greater sage grouse under a court-approved settlement with wildlife advocates.

But the spending package agreed to late Tuesday by Democratic and Republican leaders prevents the administration from spending any money next year on rules to protect the ground-dwelling bird.

The House is expected to vote on the measure Thursday.

The bill also delays protections for the related Gunnison sage grouse of Utah and Colorado and for two subspecies of greater sage grouse in Washington, Nevada and California.

Wildlife advocates say delaying protections could have irreversible impacts across the bird's 11-state range. A spokeswoman for Interior Secretary Sally Jewell criticized lawmakers for "kicking the can



COURTESY PHOTO: RICHARD CROSSLEY

down the road" rather than finding ways to save the bird.

Spokeswoman Jessica Kershaw added that the Interior Department will continue to work on sage grouse conservation plans with state and local governments.

"The rider will not stop the unprecedented collaboration happening across 11 Western states," Kershaw said.

Drilling and other human activities are among the leading threats to the struggling sage grouse. Western lawmakers have argued the region's economy would suffer if protections were put in place.

The sage grouse legislative rider was included as just a few paragraphs in the 1,603-page spending bill.

Prior attempts over the past two years to block protections for grouse through

stand-alone legislation failed. Attaching it to a crucial spending bill greatly increases its chances.

Sen. John Thune of South Dakota said protections for the bird would affect energy development, ranching and other land uses. He called the spending bill's sage grouse rider an "important win."

"When you have that kind of a listing in place and you have all these regulations and fines and penalties and compliance costs, it just makes it harder for people who are trying to make a living," the Republican said.

Mark Salvo with the group Defenders of Wildlife blasted the move in Congress as "legislative meddling" in what should be a science-based decision.

In 2010, federal biologists

said protections were warranted for greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. But the Fish and Wildlife Service didn't impose them, citing other priorities and a shortage of funds.

After wildlife advocates sued in federal court to force a decision, a pair of legal settlements resulted in the September 2015 deadline to propose protections.

However, those settlements with the groups WildEarth Guardians and the Center for Biological Diversity contained provisions that give the government leeway to miss the deadline if unforeseen circumstances arise. That means little can be done if the bill becomes law.

"I don't think we could challenge it," said Noah Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity.

Population estimates for sage grouse run from 100,000 to 500,000 birds. They range across 290,000 square miles of sage brush habitat in California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Croplands, home development, wildfires and oil and gas drilling consumed more than half that habitat over the past century.

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