

# NorthWestern Energy Gets OK To Intervene On Dakota Access

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — NorthWestern Energy will get to make its case to state regulators about its deal to supply electricity for the pump station planned in Spink County for the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

Northern Electric Cooperative of Bath is the assigned rural provider in that territory. Northern Electric opposes allowing NorthWestern Energy to be the supplier.

Dakota Access wants a service area exemption from the state Public Utilities

Commission so it can use NorthWestern Energy. A hearing date hasn't been set.

NorthWestern Energy and Dakota Access reached agreement in October but need permission from the commission to proceed.

The commission granted intervention status to NorthWestern Energy on Tuesday. The deadline originally was July 6.

Tim Olson, a NorthWestern Energy official, said the company couldn't file to intervene until after the agreement was done.

NorthWestern Energy now can inter-

vene in the commission's proceedings on the matter.

The other intervener is Northern Electric, whose lawyer filed June 23.

Brett Koenecke, a Pierre lawyer representing Dakota Access, supported intervention status for NorthWestern Energy at the meeting Tuesday.

No one participated in person or by telephone on behalf of Northern Electric.

The commission voted 3-0 in favor of allowing NorthWestern Energy to intervene. "It appears nobody has any objections," commissioner Kristie Fiegen said.

# Nebraska Population Keeps Growing Slowly To 1.896 Million

BY JOSH FUNK  
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Nebraska's population grew modestly again this year, but it might not be enough to protect all three of the state's U.S. House seats after the 2020 Census.

The new population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Tuesday show that the state's population grew to 1.896 million by July 1 of this year. That's an increase of 13,210 over last year's estimate of 1.883 million. The state's population increased roughly 0.7 percent over last year.

The national population

grew about 0.8 percent to 321.4 million between last year and this year.

Nebraska's population has grown for 28 years in a row. The state could wind up losing one of its Congressional districts if it grows more slowly than other states, but the growth over the first half of the decade is encouraging, said David Drozd, research coordinator for the University of Nebraska Omaha's Center for Public Affairs Research.

"This year's relatively good population growth near the U.S. average keeps Nebraska in a good position to keep all three seats, and moves us a step closer to 2020, reducing the amount of time over which

large shifts in population trends might occur," Drozd said.

Nebraska had the 21st-highest population growth rate this year, which Drozd said is much better than where the state usually ranks, in the low to mid 30s.

Nebraska's growth rate was also better than the nearby comparable states of Iowa and Kansas. Iowa's population grew 0.5 percent to 3.12 million. Kansas grew 0.3 percent to 2.91 million.

But Nebraska's population could also be affected by changes in the works at a couple major employers.

Since the population estimate was completed in July,

ConAgra Foods announced plans to cut 1,000 jobs in Omaha and move 300 jobs to its new headquarters in Chicago.

Outdoor gear retailer Cabela's is also facing pressure from an activist investor, and that company has said it is considering major changes that could affect its employment in the state. Cabela's is based in Sidney, and its credit card unit is based in Lincoln.

If those business changes prompt a significant number of Nebraska residents to leave the state in search of work, that could offset the modest growth the state sees each year.

# State Penitentiary Inmates Producing New SD License Plates

BY DIRK LAMMERS  
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — Inmates at the South Dakota Penitentiary have been busy cranking out tens of thousands of 2016 license plates each day in preparation for the new design's Jan. 1 debut.

The Sioux Falls prison has been producing the state's license plates since 1929, and the 18 inmates working inside the Pheasantland Industries license plate shop can print, punch and bag about 23,000 plates a day, said foreman Pat Gacke.

The current plates, which have been in rotation since 2006, are being retired due to aging and reflectivity and read-

ability concerns.

The new design once again features Mount Rushmore, but the presidential faces are angled differently and tinted shades of beige and brown. The tag number sports a darker shade of blue, and that same color is used for the state script and "Great Faces. Great Places" slogan, replacing the bright red from the previous incarnation.

"The Highway Patrol has a say in the design for readability," said Pat Gacke, license plate shop foreman. "Ultimately it's up to the governor to pass the design."

The Department of Revenue estimates that nearly 1.5 million non-commercial vehicle and motorcycle plates will be run for the 2016 reissue. The prison shop

began printing the new plates in October.

The process involves printing the designs onto rolls of transfer ribbon, which are then pressed onto rolls of aluminum. A press machine punches the aluminum rolls into individual license plates with holes and feeds them onto a conveyor, so inmates can pair them together for packing.

Like all of the 120 or so workers inside Pheasantland Industries, the license plate shop inmates earn just 25 cents per hour, but Gacke said many enjoy the regularity of leaving their cells from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. with an 11 a.m. lunch break.

"We get a good crew that takes a lot of pride in their work," Gacke said.

# Lincoln Event To Remember Homeless Who Died This Year

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — An event has been held to remember the homeless who died in Lincoln this year.

The Lincoln Journal Star reports that the annual event known as "Longest Night of the Year," was held Monday at People's City Mission, and 13 homeless men who died this year were honored. Chaplain Brian Thomas

spoke on their behalf, noting that the faces of homelessness are just as important as those who have homes.

The men who were remembered included 58-year-old Maurice Taylor, 71-year-old Richard Brownyard, 57-year-old David Wiley and 57-year-old Gary Sorheim.

Thomas said that the four men were veterans.

"Just because someone is homeless doesn't mean they're unintelligent," Thomas said. "Almost all of these guys had a career at some point."

Another homeless man who died this year was a 60-year-old Douglas Embree, who had spent 20 years working with troubled youth and people struggling with

alcoholism. Thomas said Embree was killed when he stepped in front of a car and was struck on Jan. 31.

"Each one of them were men who mattered," Thomas said. "Each situation is different, and you can't say someone is homeless just because of addiction or mental illness. Often many factors come into play."

## OBITUARIES

### Peter Lashbrook

Peter John Lashbrook was born January 11, 1989, in Clarion, Iowa, the son of the Rev. Steven J. and Dr. Laurie E. (Hansen) Lashbrook. Over the years of his life, he lived in Clarion, Iowa, Crete, Nebraska, Kent, Ohio, Manistee, Michigan and Yankton.

He attended Middle and High School in Manistee, Michigan, where he played varsity football and baseball and was active in musical theatre productions and music programs. He graduated from Manistee High School in 2007. Following graduation, Pete attended West Shore Community College in Scottville, Michigan for three years. He had most recently been enrolled in the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, studying Social Work and Criminal Justice. He was an avid, responsible hunter, enjoying duck, pheasant and white tail deer hunting. He was especially proud of participating in and completing three Tough Mudder competitions in 2012, 2013 and 2014 in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan and of being a Godparent to Quillen Hansen of Mankato, Minnesota. Twice



Lashbrook

he participated in mission trips to Haiti, with Helping Hands for Haiti, an organization begun and led by his uncle, Dave Hansen. The

first trip was in 2010, just after the earthquake that rocked the impoverished island nation.

Pete was a member of the First Congregational Church of Manistee, United Church of Christ and of two hunting conservation groups, Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever. He worked a variety of jobs following high school and particularly enjoyed working at Wahr Hardware in Manistee and at the South Dakota Human Services Center in Yankton, where he

was a certified nurse's aide. He taught himself to play the guitar, banjo and ukulele and was a devoted Beatles fan. He enjoyed performing for the annual Manistee Rotary Show and at West Shore he participated in many musical theater productions and was a member of the Collegiates show choir.

He died on Sunday, November 22, 2015 at his parent's home in Akron, Ohio after a long, draining battle with colon cancer.

A Memorial Prayer Service for Peter will be held Sunday, December 27 at 1:30 p.m. at Calvary Lutheran Church in Irene, with Irene United Methodist Pastor Judy Saylor officiating. Services were also held in Manistee, Michigan and Akron, Ohio. Burial will be at Hillcrest Cemetery in Irene. Peter is survived by his

parents, Steven and Laurie Lashbrook, his sister, Kirsten Lashbrook and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Kenneth and Mildred Lashbrook, and maternal grandparents, Earl and Edith Hansen.

Funeral arrangements are being handled by Anthony Funeral Home in Akron.

Memorial gifts should be made to Helping Hands for Haiti, 45406 295th Street, Irene, SD 57037 or to the American Cancer Society, for Lynch Syndrome research.

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### Group Formed To Look Into Charities

PIERRE (AP) — The National Association of Attorneys General has formed a committee that will look into charities in an effort to keep consumers and businesses from becoming victims of a scam or theft.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley is the association's president. He says the committee "will address the many challenges facing citizens and businesses every day when solicited for charitable giving."

Attorneys General George Jepsen and Doug Peterson, from Connecticut and Nebraska respectively, will co-chair the committee. Other committee members include Attorneys General Edward Manibusan, of Northern Mariana Islands; Sean Reyes, of Utah; Derek Schmidt, of Kansas; and Bill Sorrell, of Vermont.

The association is made up of attorneys general from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

### Meth Causing Crime Increase In Pierre

PIERRE (AP) — Officials are blaming methamphetamine for a big increase in serious crimes in South Dakota's capital city.

Hughes County State's Attorney Wendy Kloepfner told commissioners Monday that her office in Pierre has had 904 cases this year, about 150 more than last year, and that the increase is "just due to the methamphetamine," the *Capitol Journal* reported.

And the caseload is wearing on her staff, she told commissioners.

"Our staff is beyond frustration and overworked," she said. "I didn't realize how low morale is and how bad the frustration is. And the year isn't over yet. So in the next couple months I might be coming to you with a plan."

The commission approved Kloepfner's immediate request to pay overtime for up to two employees and to hire a temporary part-time employee to help fill in for another who is on maternity leave.

Hughes County Sheriff Mike Leidholt told commissioners that "the meth problem is nearing an epidemic problem in central South Dakota."

The sheriff said the number of jail inmates from Hughes County crimes has gone from 40 per day to 60 per day "in a relatively short time. The meth is all over."

### \$8M Library Set For Completion In 2017

ABERDEEN (AP) — Aberdeen's city manager says the town's new \$8 million public library should be completed by summer 2017.

The *American News* reports that City Manager Lynn Lander presented a construction timetable on Monday to the Aberdeen City Council.

Lander says the plan is to open bids in February and break ground on the project on April 1. He says construction should take 16 months.

Voters approved the new library this month.

### Pygmy Hippopotamus Calf Now On Display

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska zoo is welcoming a new addition: a pygmy hippopotamus calf named Mabel.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports that the nearly 3-month-old calf is now on display at the Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium in Omaha.

Pygmy hippos are native to swamps and rain forests in western Africa. The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the species as endangered.

Named by her keepers, Mabel is in the Lied Jungle portion of the zoo with her mother, Chomel, who came from the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. Her father, Scooby, was born in the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas.

Mabel now weighs 76 pounds, up from 19 pounds when she was born on Oct. 1. She will blossom to between 350 and 600 pounds when fully grown.

### Rookie Police Officer Sees Fire Rescue

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Five people have been rescued from a house fire in Omaha on what turned out to be an Omaha rookie police officer's first day of training patrol.

The *Omaha World Herald* reports that Officer Anthony Abboud and his trainer, Officer Robbie Goering-Jensen, were discussing the importance of being able to quickly change direction Sunday, when Goering-Jensen spotted a house fire.

Goering-Jensen and Abboud called firefighters and responded to the fire. Goering-Jensen went inside the burning home and rescued Robert Damper, his wife, Lula, and their three sons.

Goering-Jensen, who trained as a firefighter with the Nebraska Air National Guard, says he could only see about 2 or 3 feet in front of him when he went back inside the home for a second time to rescue one of the sons. He says that's when he heard a woman calling from a bedroom in the back of the house and he had to assess "my own limitations" and decide whether to immediately respond or to wait for the Omaha Fire Department.

"In all honesty, I did have some internal struggle with it," Goering-Jensen said.

Ultimately, the officer went inside the burning home for a third time and rescued Lula Damper.

Investigators say an uncovered light bulb hanging too close to clothes in a closet started the fire.

Abboud said he did not think he would be involved in something like that on his first day, but gave all the credit to Goering-Jensen.

"Robbie deserves all the credit," Abboud said. "I was just driving the vehicle, and I just helped him from the outside (of the house). It was a very surreal day."

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