

VA To Give \$21.4M For S.D. Veterans Home

PIERRE (AP) — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will give South Dakota a grant to help build a new \$35 million state veterans home in Hot Springs, officials said Friday.

Sen. Tim Johnson said the state will receive \$21.4 million after the project ranked 10th in the nation on a priority list for building state facilities for veterans. Johnson chairs the military construction and veterans affairs appropriations subcommittee, which awarded a total of \$85 million for the Veterans Affairs State Home Construction Grant Program.

The funding will be used to build a 100-bed veterans home in Hot Springs on the same property as the current facility. The VA will provide 65 percent of the project's cost, and the state will issue bonds to pay its share of more than \$12 million.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard said the federal funding will be available until the end of the current federal budget year, and the state has to complete some final steps in the grant process by June to receive the money by Sept. 30.

"A new veterans home in Hot Springs is an important part of making sure we continue to provide great care for our nation's heroes for generations to come," Daugaard said Friday at his weekly news conference.

Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, acting state secretary of veterans affairs, said the state also is working on building a new 50-bed veterans home in eastern South Dakota. He said Brandon, Brookings, Aberdeen and Yankton have submitted proposals to host that facility.

Former Stanton Co. Commissioner Arrested

STANTON, Neb. (AP) — A former Stanton County commissioner has been arrested for allegedly living in a district other than the one he was elected to represent.

The *Norfolk Daily News* says William Goodpasture was arrested on Friday on a warrant for false candidate filing. Sheriff Mike Unger says Goodpasture was taken to the Pierce County jail. Unger says a hearing is set for March 1.

Goodpasture's case is not on the online court system, and it's not known if he has an attorney.

Goodpasture resigned in October. The charges were filed by Knox County Attorney John Thomas, who was appointed special prosecutor following an investigation by the Nebraska State Patrol into complaints to the Nebraska attorney general's office.

Nebraska State Tax Receipts Up In January

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A new report says Nebraska's net tax receipts were higher than projected in January.

State tax commissioner Doug Ewald reported Friday that net receipts totaled \$333 million, more than 8 percent higher than predicted in forecasts.

The report shows net sales and use taxes, individual and corporate incomes taxes, and net miscellaneous taxes were all higher than expected.

General fund receipts for the current fiscal year so far were up nearly 2 percent above the earlier projections.

The comparisons were based on a revised forecast made by the Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board in April. The forecast was adjusted for bills passed last year, and divided into monthly estimates. The board met again in April and revised the forecast for the current fiscal year upward by nearly \$52 million.

South Dakota History Going Digital

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakotans now can access some of the state Historical Society's digital archives online, including more than 16,000 photographs.

The pictures show Black Hills scenery, railroads, people and towns, as well as historic buildings across the state.

The *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* reports that the South Dakota Digital Archives website went up last month.

The archives include government records, maps, manuscript collections and other items of historical value.

They're housed in the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

Bill On Cremation Of S.D. Residents Passes

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota House has agreed that counties could choose to cremate deceased poor people.

Counties pay funeral and burial expenses when a destitute resident dies and no else is available to pay the costs. The House voted unanimously Thursday to approve a bill that would give counties the option of cremating indigent people who die.

A destitute resident's next of kin would be allowed to decide whether that person is buried or cremated. If no next of kin is available, county commissioners would decide.

Plant's Dust Collection Unit Catches Fire

MITCHELL (AP) — Employees at a trailer manufacturing plant in Mitchell were evacuated Friday after a fire in an outdoor dust collection and filtration unit.

No one was injured.

The *Daily Republic* reports that Mitchell firefighters were called to the south end of the Trail King plant Friday after an employee reported smoke coming from the unit.

Mitchell Fire Capt. Ben Vanden Hoek says the fire appears to have started when a fine metal dust was heated within the unit and caused one of the filters to catch fire.

Vanden Hoek says the filtration unit is more than likely a total loss, and there could be a small amount of smoke damage inside the building.

Nebraskan Gets 10-16 Years In Ecstasy Case

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A man has been given 10 to 16 years in prison for selling what he said was the party drug Ecstasy to an undercover Lincoln officer.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports (<http://bit.ly/znsnjj>) 31-year-old Solomon Jerry was sentenced on Wednesday. He'd pleaded guilty to two counts of delivery of a controlled substance.

Authorities say Jerry sold the pills on Aug. 14 and Sept. 13, saying they were Ecstasy. But the Nebraska state Patrol crime lab says the pills were actually a substance called "foxy."

It, too, is an illegal substance.

South Dakota

Senate Panel Approves Bonuses For State Workers

BY VERONICA ZARAGOVIA
Associated Press

PIERRE — A South Dakota Senate committee on Friday approved one-time bonus pay for state workers.

About 13,000 public employees have foregone any salary increase for the past three years while South Dakota grappled with tightened finances. Gov. Dennis Daugaard and a subcommittee of Senate and House lawmakers worked together to come up with the bill, which would provide workers with at least \$2,300 extra in their paychecks on March 30.

"Gov. Daugaard felt it's a small step in thanking state employees for their dedication to public service and for hanging in there," said Jason Dilges, the state's budget director. "State workers are doing more with less anywhere you turn."

The bill allots limited one-time payments to the highest paid and gives extra to the state's lowest paid. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved it unanimously.

The bill outlines a percentage-based bonus that depends on how much the employee earns and how many years he or she has worked for the state. All workers earning

\$46,000 or less would earn a bonus based on that amount, and no bonus could exceed a calculation based on a \$150,000 per year salary.

Those who have worked one year at their state jobs would get 1.7 percent of their salaries. Two years would get 3.4 percent and three years would get 5 percent of their salaries.

The Finance and Management Bureau said the state has about \$31 million from state, federal and other funds from which to make the pending bonus payments.

S.D. Lawmakers Call Each Other Liars At Hearing

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — Rep. Stace Nelson's feud with leaders of the South Dakota House escalated Friday when he and House Republican Leader David Lust called each other liars during a committee hearing.

Nelson, R-Fulton, had asked the House State Affairs Committee to approve his bill making it illegal for legislative staff to reveal information about requests from lawmakers for conducting research or drafting bills. The measure also would have prohibited legislative leaders from interfering with lawmakers' access to the Legislative Research Council staff.

The committee voted unanimously to kill Nelson's bill, as legislative staff policy already forbids those staffers from revealing confidential information about lawmakers' requests for help on research or writing bills.

Nelson and several other lawmakers have accused Lust and other House leaders of asking legislative staff to reveal such confidential information last year about research and bill drafting done for other lawmakers, but an investigation determined those charges were unfounded.

Nelson testified Friday that, despite the findings of the investigation, he had reliable information that legislative staff had been pressured to tell House leaders about research requests and proposed bills before the bills went public.

"Nobody should have the authority to intervene, obstruct or tamper with the research or legislation," Nelson told the committee. "No place in government do we condone malfeasance or corruption or protect it."

Robert Bender, a citizen from Hanson County, told the committee he was with Nelson last July when a legislative staffer told them House leaders were obstructing other lawmakers' bills.

During debate on the confidential information bill, Lust said it was unacceptable for anyone to lie about other lawmakers or the staff.

"What I find unconscionable is when someone comes and throws around lies about legislators," said Lust, of Rapid City.

Nelson interrupted Lust, telling him: "It's you." He then walked out of the room.

"I'm glad you're leaving because that's appropriate," Lust said to Nelson.

Nelson replied: "Please pass

your lies about me to the press."

Such a harsh exchange is rare in South Dakota legislative meetings, as lawmakers are encouraged to be polite and respectful. A South Dakota Highway Patrol trooper was patrolling the hallway outside the committee room, also an unusual move.

Nelson and five other lawmakers signed a letter in December questioning whether Lust, House Speaker Val Rausch of Big Stone City and Assistant Republican Leader Justin Cronin of Gettysburg had asked for confidential information about bills being prepared for other legislators.

The three House leaders have said they did not ask for confidential information. They said they asked that staff members not just draft bills for lawmakers, but also advise them of possible constitutional flaws in the proposals that could prove embarrassing to the Legislature.

Rausch, the House speaker, briefly prevented Nelson from speaking on the House floor earlier in the legislative session when Nelson refused to meet to discuss allegations that he had verbally abused and threatened another House member. Nelson denied the allegations, and he has been allowed to speak during House debate.

Nelson also accused Rep. Charles Turbiville, R-Deadwood, head of a legislative management board, of interfering with his request for research on changing the way the Legislature's website reports some votes.

All four Republican leaders accused by Nelson are members of the House State Affairs Committee.

"It's difficult when you walk into the chicken coop and the foxes are guarding it," Nelson said.

Nelson also asked the panel Friday to approve two other bills dealing with changes in the way legislators' votes are recorded and posted online, but the committee rejected those measures as well. Committee members said changes in the Legislature's website can be made by policy, so there's no need to put such language in state law.

Rep. Peggy Gibson, D-Huron, said she was upset that Nelson had questioned the honesty of the legislative staff. She said staff members have treated her well, been honest and have never said a bad word to her about any other legislators.

"I find this very disconcerting and sad," Gibson said.

Omaha Senator Brings Back Healthy Food Proposal

BY MICHAEL AVOK
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — An Omaha senator will take another shot at providing low-income Nebraskans with access to healthy food by reviving a bill that Gov. Dave Heineman vetoed last year.

The measure from Sen. Brenda Council of Omaha promotes and expands access to nutritious foods, and is also touted as a way to lower health care costs, create jobs, revitalize distressed communities and open new markets for the state's farmers and ranchers.

Legislative Bill 1123 would create the Nebraska Healthy Food Financing Initiative Act and cost \$300,000 per year. That money would be used to offer grants and loans to individuals and businesses that want to build, renovate or expand grocery stores in areas considered to be "food deserts." The measure also seeks to establish "farmers' markets, food consumer cooperatives, community gardening projects and distribution projects that enable food retailers in under-

served communities to regularly obtain fresh produce."

The bill states that "when fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods are not easily available or affordable, people ... face serious barriers to eating a healthy diet. Research indicates that residents of low-income, minority, and rural communities are most often affected by poor access to supermarkets and other retailers offering healthy food choices."

The Agriculture Committee will debate the measure Tuesday. It passed in the Legislature last year, but was stunted by Heineman.

He said at the time that the federal government already offered 19 programs that address access to healthy foods. In addition, he said assistance also was available through the Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center and other sources.

His veto stuck after lawmakers couldn't muster the 30 votes needed to override the governor's decision.

Nebraska Supreme Court Orders New Trial In Murder Case

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Supreme Court has ordered a new trial for a man sentenced to life in the 1987 death of a neighbor, saying DNA evidence may have changed the outcome of his trial.

Leroy Parmar was convicted of first-degree murder for the robbery and death of Frederick Cox. Cox's bound body was found in his Omaha apartment.

Parmar sought DNA testing of two blood-stained sheets pulled

from Cox's bed, which excluded Parmar as a contributor to the DNA on them.

A Douglas County District Court rejected his plea for a new trial, saying the evidence would not have changed the outcome of his trial.

But the Nebraska Supreme Court said Friday that the lower court erred, because the DNA results "tend to create a reasonable doubt," that Parmar killed Cox.

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