

Senate Passes Bill On Cremation Of Indigents

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Senate has approved a bill allowing counties to choose to cremate deceased poor people.

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

The bill next returns to the House, which will decide whether to approve a change made by the Senate.

The bill says a destitute person's next of kin could decide whether that person is buried or cremated. When a destitute Native American dies, the person's tribe could make that decision.

If no next of kin or tribe is available, county commissioners would decide whether someone is buried or cremated.

S.D. Senate Passes Public Meeting Law

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Senate has passed a measure requiring local governments to post notices of public meetings in visible places.

State law now requires a local government to post a public notice at its office at least 24 hours before a meeting is held. But some have posted those meeting notices inside their office buildings so the notices are not visible when those offices are closed.

The Senate voted unanimously Wednesday to require that such public notices be posted in places accessible to the public. Sen. Ried Holien of Watertown says such notices could be placed on outside doors or windows so people can see them after an office closes for the day or weekend.

House Passes Bill Redistributing Nursing Beds

PIERRE (AP) — Some South Dakota nursing homes are struggling to find beds, but a bill that has passed the House may help solve the shortage.

House members voted 66-2 on a bill Wednesday that allows the Department of Health, with help from the Social Services Department, to annually shift nursing facility beds to areas with the highest need.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard advisor Deb Bowman says the eastern half of the state has beds that could go to the Rapid City area, allowing residents to stay closer to their homes.

She says the state has 74 beds from closed facilities.

The bill allows an exception to Gov. George Mickelson's 1988 moratorium on buying more beds with state taxpayer dollars.

Next it goes to the Governor's desk for his signature.

Tribe Seeks Order To Limit Beer Sales In Nebraska Border Town

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Leaders of a South Dakota American Indian tribe who are suing beer makers, distributors and retailers are now asking a judge to restrict alcohol sales in a tiny Nebraska town that borders their reservation.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe added the request late last week to a federal lawsuit that seeks \$500 million in damages for the alcohol-related problems on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The tribe's attorney, Tom White of Omaha, said he will argue that Nebraska officials have failed to enforce their own laws by allowing beer sales that far surpass the amount that can legally be consumed in the area.

Alcohol is officially banned on Pine Ridge, a reservation the size of Connecticut in southwestern South Dakota. Nebraska state law prohibits drinking outside of the stores, and the nearest non-reservation town is more than 20 miles to the south. Yet the four beer retailers in Whiteclay, which has fewer than a dozen residents, sold the equivalent of nearly 5 million cans in 2010.

"The defendants have failed to make reasonable efforts to ensure their products are distributed and sold in obedience to the laws of the state of Nebraska and the Oglala Sioux tribe," White said Wednesday.

The lawsuit says the tribe has "no adequate remedies to protect its federally granted rights" to protect its sovereignty and enforce its own alcohol ban. He pointed to statements by Attorney General Jon Bruning, the state's top law enforcement officer, who has said shutting down the beer stores will not solve the problem.

The lawsuit in U.S. District Court of Nebraska targets some of the world's largest beer makers, as well as their distributors and the four stores in Whiteclay.

Tribal leaders and activists blame the Whiteclay businesses for chronic alcohol abuse and bootlegging on the Pine Ridge. They say most of the stores' customers come from the reservation, which spans southwest South Dakota.

The \$500 million lawsuit seeks reimbursement for the cost of health care, social services and child rehabilitation caused by chronic alcoholism on the reservation, which encompasses some of the nation's most impoverished counties.

One in four children born on the reservation suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and the average life expectancy is estimated between 45 and 52 years — the shortest in the North Hemisphere except for Haiti, according to the lawsuit. The average American life expectancy is 77.5 years.

The lawsuit alleges that the beer makers

and stores sold to Pine Ridge residents, knowing they would smuggle the alcohol into the reservation to drink or resell.

Matthew Fletcher, a Michigan State University associate law professor who specializes in American Indian issues, said the suit offers a novel approach to a problem that has plagued the reservation for more than a century. But, Fletcher said, "my sense is, it doesn't have much of a chance."

For years, Nebraska lawmakers have struggled to curb the problem, and are considering legislation that would limit the types of alcohol sold in areas like Whiteclay. The measure would require local authorities to ask the state to designate the area an "alcohol impact zone." The state liquor commission could then limit the hours that alcohol sellers are open, as well as ban the sale of certain products.

The beer store owners, distributors and retailers have all declined to comment.

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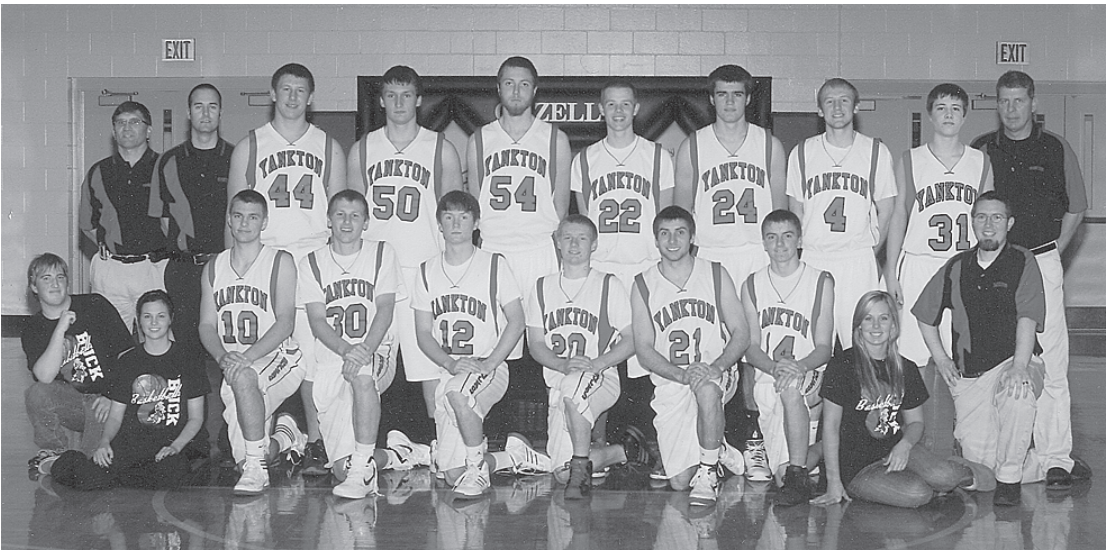
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Photo courtesy of Photography by Jerry & Associates



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Districts Feb. 28-March 2 • Region I March 6 • State March 15-17 in Rapid City

2012 Yankton Gazelles Basketball



Photo courtesy of Yankton School District

Front row (l to r): Jenn Granflaten, Tory Gross, Emily Fedders, Audrey Fuks, Jessica Wirth. Middle row (l to r): Chloe Cornemann, Courtney True, Morgan Tessier, Whitlee Larson, Abbie Mitchell. Back row (l to r): Vanessa Rockne, Sarah Ekeren, Kelsey Fitzgerald, Kelsey Butler, Mikala Hora. Not picture: Student managers Courtney Fender, Whitney Specht and Janessa Ekeren

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