

S.D. Senate Endorses Amendment On Taxes

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Senate has endorsed a proposed constitutional amendment that would require a two-thirds vote to pass any ballot measure imposing a new tax or increasing an existing one.

A two-thirds vote is already required in the Legislature to pass a new tax or increase the rate of an existing tax. But ballot measures imposing or increasing a tax can now be passed with only a simple majority in a statewide vote.

The proposed amendment would require a two-thirds vote on any ballot issue that creates or increases a tax.

The proposed amendment also would clarify that if a tax is expiring, a two-thirds vote would be needed to extend it.

If the House endorses the proposal, voters in 2014 would decide whether to change the South Dakota Constitution.

SD Man Dies During Weekend Blizzard

REDFIELD (AP) — A Redfield man has died after he abandoned his car during this past weekend's blizzard.

Spink County Sheriff Kevin Schurch tells KSFY-TV that 58-year-old Kevin Cranston was found on Monday morning. Cranston was reported missing Sunday evening after he did not return from work.

Schurch says searchers found Cranston's car and later found his body about a half mile away.

Cranston's funeral is set for Friday at 10:30 a.m. at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Redfield.

Motorcyclists Seek Change In Neb. Laws

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers are considering a bill that would let motorcyclists and bikers run red lights if no other vehicles are around and the stoplight doesn't turn green after two minutes.

Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher told the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee on Tuesday that the bill is needed because traffic sensors don't always pick up motorcyclists, leaving them waiting at the stop light for too long.

The Nebraska Sheriffs' Association and the city of Lincoln oppose the bill. The Nebraska Sheriffs' Association says the bill would be difficult to enforce.

Lincoln assistant city engineer Randy Hoskins says allowing cyclists to enter the intersection when the traffic light is red is a safety risk. He says he would prefer city workers fix problematic sensors.

Fight Follows Omaha Murder Sentencing

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A fight broke out between relatives of a murdered man and the man who had just been sentenced to prison for the Omaha crime.

Authorities say 34-year-old Antonio McNichols was sentenced Tuesday morning to 30-35 years for second-degree murder, five years on a weapons charge and 12-15 years on another weapons charge. He'd pleaded no contest and was convicted of killing 26-year-old Davarus Neelon in January 2012.

Douglas County Courthouse officials say Tuesday's dispute broke out while the relatives were in a courthouse elevator. Officers used pepper spray to break up the melee. One person suffered a foot injury, and two people were arrested.

Family Dr. Training Might Shorten In SD

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota educators are discussing shortening medical school from four years to three for students pursuing careers as family doctors.

The Sanford-University of South Dakota School of Medicine is trying to move more physicians into cities and rural areas across the state.

Family Medicine Chairman Bruce Vogt tells the *Argus Leader* there's a discussion nationwide about getting more people into the primary care workforce more quickly.

Discussion in South Dakota is in the early stages. But medical school associate professor Susan Anderson says an accelerated program also would save money for future family doctors.

A change would need the approval of the dean, faculty, the university and the state Board of Regents. Executive Director Jack Warner says the Regents would need assurances that three-year doctors would be skilled.

Neb. Legislator Eyes Ag Loan Program

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska lawmaker is pushing legislation to create an interest-free loan program for counties that the state has designated as "livestock friendly."

Sen. Ken Schilz of Ogallala presented the bill Tuesday to the Legislature's Agriculture Committee. Counties designated by the state as "livestock friendly" could borrow from the state at no cost to finance roads and bridges that are frequently used to haul livestock.

The bill has won support from prominent agriculture groups. But Sen. Ernie Chambers, who sits on the committee, called it an "iffy proposition" that establishes no way for the state to reclaim its money if a county fails to repay a loan.

Chambers says the bill would also divert money away from other priorities.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture has designated 21 counties as "livestock friendly."

S.D. Senate Nixes Animal Cruelty Law

BY CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press

PIERRE — A measure that sought to make aggravated cruelty to dogs, cats and horses a felony was rejected by a South Dakota legislative panel Tuesday after state officials and representatives of agricultural groups said it would have conflicted with existing laws that effectively combat animal abuse.

The Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee voted 7-1 to kill the bill, which supporters said would help catch and treat mentally disturbed people who often mistreat animals before harming people.

Animal rights groups have said South Dakota and North Dakota are the only states without felony penalties for animal mistreatment. The North Dakota Senate has approved such a bill, which now awaits action by the House.

South Dakota law currently makes inhumane treatment of animals a misdemeanor carrying a maximum penalty of up to one year in jail and a \$2,000 fine. The bill would have established a new crime of aggravated cruelty to dogs, cats and horses, a felony

punishable by up to up to two years in prison and a fine of \$4,000. Aggravated cruelty would have been defined as malicious and intentional mistreatment, torture or cruel treatment resulting in the serious injury, illness or death of a dog, cat or horse.

State Veterinarian Dustin Oedekeven said existing laws work well to deal with cases of cruelty, abuse and mistreatment of animals. The new crime proposed in the bill would have conflicted with existing laws and caused confusion among law enforcement officers, he said.

A study two years ago by legislators, law officers, veterinarians and animal rights groups found there was no need to change South Dakota law, Oedekeven said.

"The tools are already in place to address complaints of inhumane treatment of animals in South Dakota," Oedekeven said.

Rep. Ann Hajek, R-Sioux Falls, a co-sponsor of the bill, said a key provision would have allowed a judge to order the psychological evaluation of anyone convicted of animal cruelty. Studies have shown that many people convicted of murder, rape, domestic abuse and other violent crimes started by

abusing animals, she said.

"It can be a sign of future violent acts," Hajek said.

Shari Kosel of Lead said she started working to get such a bill passed five years ago after a neighbor's dog was tortured. She said the bill was promoted by South Dakota residents, not by any outside animal rights group.

The bill's main sponsor, Sen. Stan Adelstein, R-Rapid City, offered to change the bill to exclude horses and clarify that accepted animal competitions would not be considered cruelty. However, the committee killed the bill without discussing his proposed changes.

The measure would not have applied to hunting, fishing, trapping, branding and any activities that are customary in farming and ranching.

But the South Dakota Farm Bureau, South Dakota Farmers Union and a host of other agricultural groups opposed the bill, arguing it was poorly written and not needed.

State Agriculture Secretary Walt Bones said existing laws outlaw animal abuse.

"No one can condone the abuse of animals," Bones said. "Being an opponent of this bill should not imply we are not in favor of taking

care of our animals."

Sen. Shantel Krebs, R-Renner, the committee chair, said lawmakers care about animal welfare, but the bill was written without any input from agricultural groups. She said the bill's supporters should work with agricultural groups to come up with a version acceptable to farmers, ranchers and others.

The bill passed by the North Dakota Senate would make animal cruelty a felony. In cases of abuse, neglect and abandonment, a first offense would be a misdemeanor and second within five years would be a felony.

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Sug. Retail \$499	<b>\$299</b>
Chantel Plush	
Sug. Retail \$499	<b>\$299</b>
Dustin Euro Top	
Sug. Retail \$699	<b>\$399</b>
Evendale Super Pillow Top	
Sug. Retail \$849	<b>\$99</b>
Gaitland Plush	
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Gel Grandiose Plush	
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