



Sunny With Above Average Temps

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Pauline Phillips, The Original 'Dear Abby' Passes Away At Age 94.

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South Dakota

Senate Panel OKs University Funding Plan

Money Would Increase Based On Performance, State Taxes

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — A South Dakota Senate panel on Thursday approved a plan intended to give state universities their fair share of any increases in state revenue while tying some of the funding to the schools' performance in priority areas.

The Education Committee voted unanimously to send the bill to the full Senate for further debate.

The measure does not require that the governor and the Legislature fund higher education at any particular level, but it suggests a formula for funding the six public universities.

Under the proposed formula, university funding would increase each year by the same percentage that overall state general tax collections rise.

The universities would first get extra funding to account for inflation, up to a maximum of 3 percent. The schools then could get extra funding based on their performance in expanding research and producing graduates in math, science, engineering, technology and other critical fields. Finally, the universities could get added money to cover increased enrollment and new programs.

The state's four technical institutes would not be covered by the proposed funding formula, but those two-year schools would be included in other provisions that provide for an ongoing review of policies, goals and performance measures in higher education.

Tad Perry of Fort Pierre, a former legislator who helped develop the proposal, said the measure seeks to fund the universities in line with higher education's goals.

Jack Warner, executive director of the state Board of Regents, said the board supports funding based on performance measures. The board, which governs the universities, currently allocates money among the schools based on such measures, he said.

"Our major goals are to improve student success and produce new graduates. The state needs more workers. It needs more highly educated workers," Warner said. The university system also stresses research that can be used to boost the state economy, he said.

The bill would create a new state council that includes officials from the governor's office, legislators and schools to make annual recommendations

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MOON AND STARS



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

With a waxing crescent moon looking down from the winter sky, a City of Yankton employee works Thursday afternoon at putting up one of the patriotic banners that normally fly from the light poles along Broadway. The banners had been replaced by Christmas-themed banners. Thursday was a good day for the task, with the mercury climbing to 39 degrees. Temperatures could reach 50 degrees today (Friday), but a dramatic drop is expected toward the end of the weekend. For forecast details, see page 2A.

Late Tax Return Date Creates Challenges For Filers

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is planning not to accept income tax returns until Jan. 30, and at least one local tax preparer believes that decision has created some confusion among the public.

"Business has been slower so far this year, and I think it's because people have that misconception that they can't go in and have their work done prior to the 30th," said Guy Stone, owner of the local H&R Block.

The truth is, returns can be prepared by taxpayers or their third-party preparers right now.

"The preparer will hold them and release them as soon as the IRS is accepting them," Stone said.

Jason Dendinger, an owner of Milbrath-Saylor Bookkeeping and Tax Services, said he hasn't seen an impact on business but is preparing for a deluge of work in a small window of time due to IRS delays.

"There is a list of (tax) forms right now where the IRS hasn't even set a release date yet," he said. "If your return contains one of those, we don't know when we'll be able to complete it. That's going to put a crunch on us, because we're going to have all the information but we're not going to be able to finish it. I'm working on what I can now to stay ahead of it, because I know that crunch is coming."

Dendinger said the late release of forms could lead to more deadline extensions being filed for this year.

In addition to electronic filing, or e-filing, the IRS will not process paper tax returns before the anticipated Jan. 30 opening date. The agency said there is no advantage to filing on paper prior to that, and added that tax returns will occur much faster by using e-file with direct deposit.

The IRS had planned to open e-filing on Jan. 22, which is the method more than 80 percent of taxpayers used to submit their taxes last year. However, Congress enacted some tax law changes Jan. 2 as part of the American Taxpayer Relief Act. In response, the IRS had to update some forms and complete the programming and testing of its processing systems.

As alluded to by Dendinger, not everyone will be able to file on Jan. 30.

A small percentage of taxpayers, including those who claim residential energy credits, depreciation of property or general business credits, are not expected to be able to start filing until late February or into March because of the need for more extensive form and processing systems changes. Most of those in this group file more com-

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S.D. Tourism Economic Impact Up 5 Percent

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — The tourism industry's impact on South Dakota's economy grew by 5 percent last year, even though the state sweltered through a hot and dry summer, Gov. Dennis Daugaard said Thursday.

The nearly \$2 billion economic impact includes direct spending by visitors, spending by companies that supply tourism businesses, advertising spending and private investment in facilities.

"The bottom line is tourism is a job-creating, revenue-producing industry," the governor said.

The report on tourism's economic im-

pact was released in conjunction with the state's annual tourism conference. The report was done by IHS Global Insight, the firm that also does economic forecasting to help South Dakota put together its annual state budget, Daugaard said.

Daugaard said tourism generated about \$291 million in state and local tax revenues last year, or nearly 19 percent of all state and local tax collections. Tourism also supported more than 27,700 jobs, or about one out of every 11 jobs in the state, he said.

About three-quarters of tourist spending came from visitors from other states, Daugaard said.

"That's the kind of money we like

spent — other people's money," he said.

State Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen said another report shows the state's marketing efforts are successful in attracting visitors and generating economic activity. For every dollar the Tourism Department spends advertising the state as a vacation destination, South Dakota receives \$5 in tax revenue, he said.

South Dakota has focused recent marketing efforts to attract visitors from Kansas City and Des Moines, Iowa, Hagen said. The Tourism Department plans to begin advertising in the Chicago areas in the next few years, he said.

"We have a lot of room to grow," Hagen said.

Corps Seeks Input For Work On Audubon Bend Near Yankton

BY LINDA WUEBBEN
P&D Correspondent

WYNOT, Neb. — The U.S. Corps of Engineers is looking for a framework for future development of Audubon Bend 12 miles downstream of Yankton on the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR).

A hearing for the development of a conceptual site plan was held Wednesday evening in Wynot. The Corps is interested in public comment concerning how the area is developed and gave area landowners and residents the opportunity to make written comment, audio comments on a recorder or talk directly to Corps personnel.

Audubon Bend was purchased with the intent to restore it to its original condition so it would provide habitat to native wildlife and fish. Recreational activities are

also in the mix to be offered as the area is developed.

Located 1 1/2 miles north of Wynot, the Audubon Bend property lies between river miles 794 and 790. The 2,372-acre parcel is within the 59-mile segment of the MNRR. The land was purchased in 2009 by the Corps from a local landowner through the Willing Seller Program. The area was purchased as part of the Missouri River Recovery Program and targeted to be restored to its native habitat as it was in the 1950s and '60s before landowners moved in.

This restoration of habitat due to past river management practices is made possible through the Missouri River Fish & Wildlife Mitigation Project. Along with the Willing Seller Program, there is a community compensa-



PHOTO: LINDA WUEBBEN

Jerome Stratman and Jim Suing, both of St. Helena, study a conceptual plan for the Audubon Bend area in Cedar County during a public meeting held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wednesday night in Wynot.

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