

### Child Welfare Group Projects \$2M Shortfall

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A private, nonprofit agency that manages child welfare cases in the Omaha area is projecting a \$2 million annual shortfall in its budget, based on what it currently receives in state aid.

Judy Rasmussen, treasurer of the Nebraska Families Collaborative, told lawmakers Wednesday that her organization expects to incur \$57 million in expenses in the current fiscal year, but will only receive \$55 million from the state.

The amount is based on a contract signed as part of last year's child welfare overhaul.

Kerry Winterer, the CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services, says the payments are based on a detailed analysis of the caseloads in Douglas and Sarpy counties.

Winterer says state officials were already planning to renegotiate the contract, but they believe the rate is fair.

### Hastings Bank Fined \$220,000 By Regulators

HASTINGS, Neb. (AP) — Hastings State Bank was fined \$220,000 by federal regulators for unsound practices just before the bank was acquired by Pinnacle Bank last year.

The *Hastings Tribune* reports that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation recently released details of the enforcement action against the bank.

Hastings State Bank paid the fine outlined in the December order and agreed to hire a compliance officer to make sure consumer laws are being followed.

### Sioux Falls Promotes Smoke Alarm Giveaway

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls Fire Rescue is giving away smoke alarms to people who cannot afford them.

A city ordinance requires smoke alarms in each sleeping room, the area in the immediate vicinity outside sleeping rooms, and at least one on each floor.

The department will also provide assistance to those people who need help installing the alarms.

More information can be found at [www.siouxfalls.org/fire](http://www.siouxfalls.org/fire).

### 'Top Chef' To Open Pastry Shop In Sioux Falls

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A pastry chef who gained national fame as a winner of the Bravo network's "Top Chef: Just Desserts" TV show plans to open a shop in South Dakota's largest city.

Chris Hanmer won the second season of the TV competition. His wife, Caryn, is from Sioux Falls. Hanmer tells the *Argus Leader* that they wanted to bring big-city sweets to the relatively small downtown this spring.

The shop will be called CH Patisserie, named for the initials Hanmer and his wife share with their 20-month-old daughter, Carys. The business will be on South Phillips Avenue.

Hanmer confirmed the store plans in an email to The Associated Press. The shop will sell desserts such as French macaroons, bonbons and cookies. It will also offer pastry classes.

### Man Sentenced For Sexually Explicit Texts

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A 44-year-old Omaha man who sent more than 1,000 sexually explicit messages to underage teenage girls has been sentenced to four years' probation.

Omaha television station KMTV reports that Clarence Weber was sentenced in Douglas County District Court on Tuesday. Weber must also register as a sex offender and take a sex risk assessment.

He had pleaded guilty in November to one count of enticement by electronic device.

Police say they either found or had evidence of more than 1,000 messages between Weber and the victims. Investigators say that in some cases, Weber would ask the girls to send photos of themselves.

# Closed Meetings Proposal Rejected

BY CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press

PIERRE — A split South Dakota legislative panel on Wednesday rejected requiring state and local boards and commissions to record closed meetings after opponents argued the move could stifle debate and lead to the disclosure of sensitive information.

The Senate Local Government Committee voted 4-3 to kill the measure, which would have required boards and commissions to keep minutes and recordings of all closed meetings. Those recordings would have been sealed unless someone complained that a meeting had been illegally closed. A judge then would have reviewed the minutes and recording to determine if they could be used in the legal complaint against the board or commission.

The bill's main sponsor, Sen. Al Novstrup, R-Aberdeen, said recordings would provide the best evidence of whether a board

or commission met in a closed session to discuss issues that should have been handled in public. Such meetings can be closed to the public only for discussions about personnel issues, student performance, litigation or contracts, employee contract negotiations, pricing strategies by public owned businesses, and certain economic development matters.

"The court would listen to that tape and that would solve the problem of what happened. The evidence would be very clear on what happened," Novstrup said.

Those minutes and recordings would protect the public interest in open government and provide proof that a board had acted properly, he said.

Representatives of city councils, county commissions and school boards said such recordings could eventually lead to disclosure about sensitive information about government employees, students and legal disputes.

"I suggest to you, it is a road of danger for us," said Richard Tieszen, a Pierre lawyer representing the Sioux Falls School Board.

Wade Pogany, executive director of the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, said the presence of a tape recorder could discourage a school board from having a full discussion about important issues, such as the abuse of a student.

"They're going to pull back because of that tape recorder," Pogany said.

Yvonne Taylor, director of the South Dakota Municipal League, said allegations of improperly closed meetings are now handled by the state's Open Meetings Commission, which can hold hearings on alleged violations and issue reprimands for violations of the open meetings law. The commission has dealt with only about three dozen cases since it was created about six years ago, but county commissions, city councils and school boards have had about 50,000 to

60,000 meetings in that time, she said.

"We don't have a problem out there," Taylor said.

But Dave Bordewyk, general manager of the South Dakota Newspaper Association, said the Open Meetings Commission has handled few cases involving the alleged improper closing of meetings because there's no way to know what was discussed in those meetings. Boards and commissions could easily record closed meetings, he said.

"Digital recorders do not cost that much. I don't think it's a heavy burden to provide them," Bordewyk said.

Rapid City Mayor Sam Kooiker also urged the committee to pass the bill, saying minutes and recordings could be used to prove a board or commission did not violate the law.

"I think this offers protection to the community and also to elected officials," Kooiker said.

# Neb. Lawmakers Consider Axing Social Security Tax

BY ALISSA SKELTON  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Several Nebraska lawmakers shared proposals Wednesday to get rid of taxes on Social Security benefits aimed at making Nebraska a more appealing place to retire.

The Legislature's Revenue Committee heard from three lawmakers Wednesday and is scheduled to hear several more proposals Thursday related to exempting retirement benefits from taxation.

Lawmakers are looking into this issue after advocates and reports painted Nebraska's tax law as unfriendly to baby boomers. In 2012, Kiplinger magazine rated Nebraska the sixth worst tax friendly states for retirees. Nebraska is among six states that tax Social Security benefits at the same rate as the federal government.

Omaha attorney James Cavanaugh, a supporter of exempt-

ing Social Security taxes, argues that seniors have paid into the fund for their whole working lives and deserve not to have the income taxed. Advocates also say seniors are leaving Nebraska to go to states with more favorable tax climates.

Nebraska law currently allows people making less than \$25,000 per year and couples earning less than \$32,000 to be exempt from all Social Security tax. Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist said those numbers haven't changed since 1984 and need to rise with inflation. He said about 39 percent of Social Security recipients' benefits were taxed in 2005.

Nordquist introduced a bill that would exempt Social Security income taxation for individuals with incomes of \$60,000 per year or less and for couples earning \$80,000 or less. This proposal would cost the state more than \$31 million per year. AARP, the Nebraska State Education Association Retired and the Nebraska

Alliance for Retired Americans support Nordquist's bill.

Fremont Sen. Charlie Janssen proposed a similar bill — almost identical to what Nordquist proposed last session — that would exempt all Social Security income from taxation. Janssen's proposal would cost the state more than \$81 million per year.

Earlier this month, Gov. Dave Heineman's unveiled his proposal to scrap individual and corporate income taxes, which would also eliminate taxation of Social Security and retirement income.

Janssen said he wouldn't have introduced a bill had he known that several other senators were working on the same legislation.

Columbus Sen. Paul Schumacher said he is concerned about the cost of the bills introduced by Nordquist and Janssen. Lawmakers would have to consider reducing funding in other areas, such as education, to give seniors a break on Social Security income, he said.

Schumacher asked Nordquist how he could justify shifting the tax burden onto the younger generation. Nordquist said seniors would spend the money in Nebraska, which would help the local economy.

"I think we should be putting money back in the pockets of seniors who need the money," Nordquist said.

Sen. Sue Crawford of Bellevue offered another bill that would cost the state more than \$6 million. Crawford's bill would exempt tax on several types of retirement income, including Social Security, for those still working. Exemptions would be allowed for couples earning less than \$60,000 per year and individuals earning less than \$30,000. She said the bill would target retirees of various professions most likely to be engaged in the economy while "ensuring we are able to keep our commitments to local schools and Nebraska families."

## Kid Scoop

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### HIBERNATION

Use the special Hibernation Code below to learn some incredible facts about one deep winter sleeper—the woodchuck!

Help the Woodchuck Find His Bedroom

Standards Link: Visual Discrimination: Eye-hand co-ordination.

### Do Not Disturb!

Each August the woodchuck, also known as a groundhog, goes on an eating binge.

He starts to eat and eat and eat. A layer of fat that is at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch thick forms on its body.

Before it gets sleepy, the woodchuck builds an underground home with tunnels and rooms, with a soft mattress of grass and leaves in the bedroom. As the weather gets colder in the fall, the fat woodchuck heads for its bedroom.

The woodchuck curls up into a ball and falls into such a deep sleep that it appears dead. This is called **hibernation**. Its heart slows from  $\heartsuit$  beats per minute to only about  $\heartsuit$ . Its body temperature drops from  $\heartsuit$  degrees Fahrenheit to about  $\heartsuit$ . A hibernating woodchuck could be rolled around like a ball, and it would not wake up!

Standards Link: Life Science: Understand how animals can adapt to their environment.

### THE Hibernation Code

	= 0		= 1		= 2		= 3		= 4
	= 5		= 6		= 7		= 8		= 9

Use the code to tell what time you do each of the following:

Example: If you do homework at 4:30, show it this way...  $\heartsuit$   $\heartsuit$   $\heartsuit$   $\heartsuit$   $\heartsuit$   $\heartsuit$

**Do Homework**      **Start School**      **Eat Lunch**      **Take a Bath**      **Go to Bed**

Standards Link: Math: Associate symbols to numerals; compare time to realted events.

Extra Extra

### Winter Weather Forecast

Look at your newspaper's weather forecast for the coming week. Then search through the newspaper and circle words that could be used to describe the expected weather conditions.

Standards Link: Research: Use the newspaper to locate information.

### Kid Scoop Puzzler

One summer day, blood with HIT taken from a hibernating woodchuck was injected into a lively one.

Result: HIBERNATION

Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

Standards Link: Reading Comprehension.

### Double Double Word Search

WOODCHUCK      Find the words in the puzzle. Then look for each word in this week's Kid Scoop stories and activities.

CHEMICAL	R E T N I W L L A E
HOME	W Y H A C O D E C M
SCARCE	U O R N N O E R I A
SLEEP	H L E I E D A Y S T
CODE	C H E M I C A L P T
ANIMALS	O C D A S H O M E R
WINTER	B U I L T U S I E E
WAKE	N M A S H C N U L S
BUILT	A N R W A K E L S S
LUNCH	
THREE	
DAYS	
MATTRESS	

Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognized identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

### FROM THE Kid Scoop LESSON LIBRARY

www.kidscoop.com

### Get to the Roots

Find words in the newspaper that have suffixes and/or prefixes. For each word that you find, circle the root word and underline the prefix and/or suffix.

Standards Link: Vocabulary: Identify suffixes and prefixes.

### Write On!

### Easter Bunny Spotted

Send your story to:  
Press & Dakotan  
C/o Noelle Schlechter  
319 Walnut Street  
Yankton, SD 57078  
605-665-7811, ext 112

Write a news story about a sighting of the Easter Bunny. Be sure to tell *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*.

Deadline: February 24      Published: Week of Mar. 24  
Please include your school and grade.

### Weekly Writing Corner

### Wake Up!

Students describe what they believe it is like to wake up after sleeping through the winter.

Could you imagine if I woke up and found myself sleeping like Sleeping Beauty? I would be terrified. I would get up and look around and ask the talking animals where I am. Then I would go back to sleep so that they wouldn't eat me! That's what I would do.

**Cristina, 5th grade**

I would see flowers blooming and little animals waking up. The sun would be shining. Maybe some kids would be playing outside.

**Delaney, 2nd grade**

I am a rabbit. My name is Ryan. I hibernate. I go to sleep through the winter and wake up in the spring. My favorite season is summer because it does not get cold and the lowest degree in summer is 80F.

**Ian, 2nd grade**

I wake up, tired and confused. When I went to bed it was below freezing and the snow was seven feet high. Now it's raining lightly and there are rainbows and flowers everywhere. I went outside and saw my neighbors. I asked what season it was, they said spring. I almost fell down! I had slept through the winter. I ran back inside to check my bed for magic or any wizards. When I found nothing, I screamed and ran into the door. Now that I'm done, I think I'm going to sleep through the summer.

**Mikayla, 5th grade**

I'm a black bear getting ready to hibernate through the winter. I'm eating a lot of food so I won't starve. I lie in my den through the winter and finally wake up in the spring. I'm wobbly, stepping out of my den, yawning and stretching. I see the beautiful, colorful flowers with the sun in my face. The bees are buzzing and the birds are chirping, and there is more snow. I see the yummy looking berries and fruits on the trees and begin to get hungry. I climb the tree and smell the fresh air. It's finally spring!

**Kelly, 5th grade**

### How Do Animals Know When to Hibernate?

Scientists have found a special chemical in the blood of hibernating animals. They call it **HIT** or Hibernation Inducement Trigger. Although they do not know what this chemical is, they do know that it appears when one of three things happens:

- the days become shorter and there is less light
- there is a big drop in temperature
- food is scarce