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Nebraska

Heineman Gives His Final State Of State Address

Calls For Reform Of Taxes, Prisons In Nebraska

BY GRANT SCHULTE AND
CHRISTINE SCALORA
Associated Press



Heineman

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Dave Heineman called on lawmakers Wednesday to cut taxes and reject an expansion of Medicaid in Nebraska, while promising a quick fix for the state's overcrowded prisons.

Heineman outlined his plans in his final State of the State address to lawmakers at the Capitol. The Republican governor repeated his call for a property- and income-tax cut package during this year's 60-day legislative session, arguing that it would help struggling families, farmers, ranchers and small-business owners.

"We need higher paying jobs to reverse the decline in Nebraska's median family income," Heineman said. "We need higher paying jobs to increase the state's population, and growing jobs requires a more competitive tax environment."

Heineman began his speech with criticism of the federal health care law, a major issue in this year's 60-day legislative session.

Opponents blocked an attempt to expand the state's Medicaid program during last year's session, and supporters this week introduced a revamped measure. The federal government offered to pay the full cost of covering new enrollees until 2016, at which point the federal share would gradually decrease to 90 percent by 2020.

"President (Barack) Obama and his White House political operatives are trying to pressure Nebraska into expanding Medicaid, but Nebraska will not be intimidated by the Obama administration," Heineman said. "We have researched and studied the Medicaid expansion issue carefully, thoughtfully and methodically. The responsible choice is to reject this optional Medicaid expansion."

Lawmakers are also looking at ways to reduce overcrowding in Nebraska's prison system, with a focus on expanding mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and on closer supervision of inmates most likely to reoffend.

Heineman called on lawmakers to reform the state's "good time" law for prisoners, which automatically awards one day of credit to inmates for every day served. The governor and Republican Attorney General Jon Bruning are pushing

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After Meeting, Napa Project Still In Limbo

Zoning For Proposed Grain Facility Put On Hold

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Citing a need for more information, the Yankton County Planning Commission decided Tuesday night to table two zoning requests from Dakota Plains Ag Center in relation to a large grain shuttle facility.

Representatives of the company seeking to build the up to \$50 million development at Napa junction asked for the delay.

As the discussion approached the 90-minute mark, it became clear that the 13-member commission was not ready to rezone the property from agricultural to commercial use and grant a conditional-use permit to build a grain storage facility on the site.

"There is certainly a part of me that is very excited about this project," Planning Commissioner Cynthia Franklin-Guenther said. "It's not often that we get some good economic development for this county. I'm very excited about what the possibilities are. But as a body being concerned about the citizens of the county and making sure we're not putting undue burdens on them, we need more information before we grant this to you."

The decision to table the matters was unanimous.

The first hour was devoted to asking Matt Winsand, the general manager of Dakota Plains, and Toby Morris, who works for Dougherty and Company and is assisting Dakota Plains through the planning process, questions about the project, as well as taking input from the public. During the final 30 minutes, Planning and Zoning Administrator Patrick Garrity asked the board to keep the county's comprehensive plan in mind while considering what he termed a "complex" project.

"The comprehensive plan doesn't say we don't want development. It doesn't say we can choose and say what kind of development we want," he said. "But it does say that we have to be very cognizant of the fact that we cannot put development projects on the backs of our citizens. Our citizens are not going to be expected to carry development projects. The development projects have to have a return on investment."

Garrity went on to express concerns about what he views as a lack of information provided about the project.

"When we're talking about something of this kind of scale, I



Garrity



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Toby Morris, who works for Dougherty and Company and is assisting Dakota Plains Ag Center through the planning process for a proposed large grain shuttle facility northwest of Yankton, addressed the Yankton County Planning Commission this week.

Davis Focusing On Repealing South Dakota Death Penalty

(Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series looking at the death penalty debate in the South Dakota Legislature. Today's story looks at area officials' role in the issue.)

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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BURBANK — As a Catholic deacon, Denny Davis supports pro-life causes, including repeal of the death penalty.

Still, the Burbank man — who attends St. Agnes Church in Vermillion — didn't think a mealtime encounter in late 2012 would launch him into the capital punishment debate.

"I saw (state senator) Bernie Hunhoff when I was having lunch in Yankton. I told him that we needed to do something about repealing the death penalty," Davis said. "He told me to go ahead and come up with a bill."



Davis

Davis admitted the legislator's response caught him by surprise, but he decided to pursue action.

Davis took his involvement with the issue one step further. He now serves as director of South Dakotans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (SDADP). The organization has helped draft a bill in the 2014 Legislature, repealing capital punishment.

"We are seeking to have first-degree murder reduced to life in prison without parole," he said. "My efforts have nothing to do with argument or criticism. This is a non-partisan issue. It's about life."

Davis emphasized he's not advocating that criminals go unpunished.

"We're not saying to let these guys go, that they

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Mead Project Seeking Wish-List Donations



ROB NIELSEN/P&D

Ben Brunick of Chalkstone Woodworking helps prepare a window frame that will be installed in the Mead Building later this year in one of the building's temporary workshops. Project coordinators are asking the public for donations of tools and equipment to help the renovation progress.

BY ROB NIELSEN
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As the project to restore the Mead Building on the former campus of the Human Services Center continues, the Yankton community is being given an opportunity to contribute to the renovation. A wish list of items the project needs for further construction is in the works.

Coordinator Gregg Homstad — who's worked with the project since October — said the need for donations is great with a task such as the revitalization of the Mead Building.

"Since I've been a part of the project, we've decided that we have some items that we'd want some input from the community for," Homstad said. "We're looking for any assistance that people are willing to give; either tools or equipment — and, of course, the tool that fits every project is financial."

The list, which is expected to be published on the Dakota Territorial Museum's

website later this week, includes a number of items the project needs from the next few weeks to the next few years. Items will be added to the wish list as needed.

"As we come to doing some of the fur-ing out of the walls, it would be nice to have a drywall lift, which is about a \$300 item," Homstad said. "We've got floor maintenance that'll need to be performed on a regular basis, so we'd be looking at a commercial-grade floor buffer and floor scrubber (\$500-\$2,000). As we're proceeding, a variety of hand tools are always useful — cordless tools, we've got a few items right now. But as we get into spring, we'll be running more people, more crew working inside and outside so we definitely will have more use for hammers, cordless tools, extension cords and all the things that go into any construction or re-construction project. If I could really dream big, a Bobcat would be great to help with some of the construction material outside."

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