

Nebraska

AG Targets Drugs, Human Trafficking As Priorities

BY ANNA GRONEWOLD
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — With a neighboring state making history as one of the first to legalize marijuana, Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson is throwing his weight behind a bill proposing harsher penalties for possession of controlled substances.

In a news conference Thursday afternoon, Peterson said the bill would be a priority this session. While legalized pot has "brought out the best of Colorado's entrepreneurial spirit," its easy access has created a risk for Nebraska's young people, he said.

The measure, introduced by Sen. Matt Williams of Gothenburg, increases penalties for both synthetic marijuana, often marketed as K2, and edibles, such as brownies, butter and candy. Current laws treat possession of both edibles and K2 as equivalent to possessing less than an ounce of marijuana.

But Peterson said edibles, often marketed as novelties to young people, contain a highly concentrated amount of THC, the active ingredient in cannabis, and pointed to a Northwestern University and Harvard Medical study linking casual marijuana use to brain abnormalities. The bill increases possession to a class IV felony, which Peterson said would warn Nebraska parents and youth of the drug's harmfulness. Peterson believes the multi-million-dollar pot industry in Colorado downplays the drug's long-term effects.

"My prediction would be in five years, maybe less than that, we'll have some pretty good data as to why this social experiment in Colorado was so bad," Peterson said.

As the legislature gears up to tackle overcrowding in a prison system at more than 159 percent capacity, Peterson acknowledged that if the bill passes, the state could see more low-level arrests.

"We think there are manageable things to do in the Corrections Department, but what we can't compromise in that

corrections challenge: you can't compromise public safety," he said.

Peterson's second priority bill, sponsored by Sen. Jim Scheer of Norfolk, would increase penalties for pandering and for men who solicit prostitutes.

In a national report card by Shared Hope International, an anti-trafficking nonprofit, Nebraska received a D rating for its effectiveness in fighting sex trafficking.

Peterson said weak penalties encourage traffickers to work in Nebraska rather than neighboring states like Iowa with harsher penalties.

"I think in Nebraska we find it completely unacceptable that there would be any kind of message or any type of suggestion that in Nebraska it's more acceptable to do the practice of human trafficking," Peterson said.

The bill would also allow for property of convicted sex traffickers to be seized and would provide court-supervised support for minors who are trafficked.

\$11.5M Sought For Custer State Park Improvements

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The state Game, Fish and Parks Department is asking the Legislature for a loan of \$11.5 million for improvements and additional facilities at Custer State Park, including \$500,000 for a world-class movie about bison that would be shown in the new visitor center being built near the park's busy east entrance.

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission received a briefing Thursday about the legislation and the plans for repaying the money.

The loan would allow construction to proceed in 2015, while state officials look for a larger bond offering that involves other state projects.

The goal is to find a tax-exempt bond package on which GFP would piggyback, so a lower rate of interest could be obtained on the borrowing needed for the Custer work, according to Chris Peterson, GFP's director of administration.

The bonds would be used to repay state government's general fund for the \$11.5 million plus interest.

Revenue to repay the \$11

million for the improvements would come from franchise fees paid by the park's concession operator, while money to repay the \$500,000 for the movie would be collected through a 3 percent promotion fee charged on purchases made in the park by visitors, said Doug Hofer, director for the state Division of Parks and Recreation.

The commission adopted changes last month that extended the Custer State Park concession lease by five years to 2027 and added 4 percent more of franchise fee that takes effect in 2016. That would raise the franchise fee to 14.4 percent of gross receipts.

US Hotels and Resorts Management Inc. and Regency CSP Ventures, both based in South Dakota, hold the lease. David Sweet of Sioux Falls is chief executive officer for both companies.

Among the projects covered by the \$11 million would be construction of three large reunion cabins and one honeymoon cabin.

"The bill (SB 50) mirrors the 2007 legislation, which was the last time we did a big bonding package for Custer State Park," Hofer said.

Hagel Recalls Army, Vietnam Roots As He Exits

BY ROBERT BURNS
AP National Security Writer

FORT BLISS, Texas — With a stop at this desert Army post on the last leg of his farewell tour as Pentagon chief, Chuck Hagel came full circle.

In 1967, a 20-year-old Hagel arrived at Fort Bliss for basic training, soon to be shipped to Vietnam for a life-changing war experience that gave him the distinction, nearly a half-century later, of being the only enlisted combat veteran to serve as secretary of defense.

Hagel is unlikely to be remembered as among the most accomplished defense chiefs, although he took on several tough problems including the transition out of a U.S. combat role in Afghanistan and trouble inside the U.S. nuclear missile corps.

He abruptly resigned on Nov. 24 under pressure from President Barack Obama, cutting short a tenure that never seemed to gain full traction after starting on a sour note in February 2013 with a contentious Senate confirmation hearing. Hagel agreed not to leave until his successor was in place; Ashton Carter, the nominee, is expected to be confirmed by the Senate in February.

Mindful that his time atop the U.S. military is ending, Hagel came to Fort Bliss to speak Thursday at the Army Sergeants Major Academy, the professional military education program for non-commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers, and to take a trip down memory lane at



Hagel

an Army post that traces its roots to the Indian wars of the mid-19th century.

It was his first return visit. Much has changed — not least

the fact that the soldiers here now are all volunteers. In Hagel's day, the ranks were filled with draftees, many reluctant or resentful, many unsuited for the rigors of combat.

In his remarks at the academy, Hagel recalled the harsh life of a recruit in the Army of the 1960s.

"You are often asked, 'How dumb are you? How could you be so stupid?' That's a hard one to answer, actually," he said.

Hagel toured the base, which now is home to the Army's 1st Armored Division. It was the final stop on a three-day farewell tour that also took him to Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in California and aboard the USS America, the Navy's newest amphibious assault ship, as it cruised off San Diego.

In a 2002 oral history interview for the Library of Congress, Hagel recalled arriving here on a train from his home state of Nebraska. He facetiously described Fort Bliss as "that garden spot" in the desert outside of El Paso.

"Oh, it was hot," he said. "Sand, desert, rocks."

He remembered arriving in the pre-dawn darkness in May 1967 with a few other

young Nebraskans, minds whirling with wonder and worry at what lay ahead.

"You get a very abrupt awakening when the drill sergeant starts screaming at you," Hagel recalled. "A new jarring gong of reality set in. And from that moment on it was a different world."

He remembered his drill sergeant promising to toughen up the newcomers, "because if I fail, you get your head blown off in Vietnam."

On Dec. 4, 1967, Hagel left for the war and spent a year in Vietnam as an infantryman, rising to the rank of sergeant.

He returned home with two Purple Hearts for war wounds — including severe burns to his face and shrapnel that lodged in his chest from a Claymore mine detonation — and a new appreciation for how hardship can be a source of strength.

"It probably did as much to shape me and mold me and affect me as any one experience I ever had in my life," he said in an unusually reflective moment Tuesday at Whiteman Air Force Base. "Everything I have done in my life I have drawn on that experience in the military."

After Vietnam, Hagel attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha on the GI Bill. He served as deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration during the Reagan administration and later co-founded a cellular telephone network. He won election to the Senate as a Republican in 1996 and served two terms.

During his two years as Obama's secretary of de-

fense, Hagel rarely talked in detail about his war experiences, even in front of soldiers who might have sensed a bond with a former sergeant from a distant generation. Aides say Hagel is naturally reluctant to highlight his Vietnam experience, feeling the spotlight should be on the challenges faced by today's troops.

When he did mention it during troop talks, he would often say he served "back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth," and leave it at that.

Hagel did well in basic training at Fort Bliss. He was honored as the outstanding leader among boot camp soldiers, and was chosen for a top-secret program to train with a new weapon: the Red-eye missile, the first U.S. shoulder-fired heating-seeking missile.

He did Redeye missile training at the White Sands Missile Range adjacent to Fort Bliss and had orders to deploy to Germany. But Hagel had other ideas. He decided he'd rather go to Vietnam, where the U.S. was getting more deeply involved amid a rising tide of war protests in the U.S. He got his orders changed — and overcame official suspicion that he was crazy for having done so.

Looking back on it all, Hagel says one of the more important lessons was, "You cannot force things in life." At age 68 and his Pentagon tenure coming to a close, he has no specific plan for the future. He intends to do what he says he has always done.

"I've let the currents take me," he said, "and that's what I'm going to do this time and see what happens."

OBITUARIES

Vivian Simonsen

Vivian Faye (Huber) Simonsen, age 87, of Yankton, South Dakota, died Tuesday, January 13, 2015 at Avera Sister James Care Center in Yankton.

Funeral Services will be 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 17, 2015, at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home in Yankton with Pastor Mark Ostrem officiating. Burial will be in the Garden of Memories Cemetery in Yankton.

Visitation is from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Friday, January 16, 2015 at the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home.

Pallbearers are Vivian's grandsons: Joseph Simonsen, Jeffrey Simonsen, Barry Simonsen, Charles Simonsen, Craig Rye and Terry Rye. Honorary pallbearers are her granddaughters: Cori Moser, Jennifer Eickhoff, Sara Braxton, Karli Rye, Jennifer Williams, and Kristen Plank.

Vivian Faye (Huber) Simonsen was born December 24, 1927 to Charles A. and Hazel (Anderson) Huber in Yankton, South Dakota. Vivian, the second of four children, joined her older sister, Fern and was



Simonsen

later joined by a sister, Bernice and a brother, Duane. She grew up on the family farm north of Yankton, attended country school north of Yankton and graduating from Yankton High School. Vivian married the love of her life, Wilbert "Willie" Simonsen on February 7, 1946 at the Congregational Church in Yankton. To this union of over 55 years, four children were born: Don, Bob, Russ and Sherry. Viv and Willie farmed and raised their family in the Mayfield area for over 52 years, only moving to Yankton after Willie suffered a stroke in 1997 and retired. Vivian worked for Gurney's Seed and Nursery in Yankton for over 30 years, retiring when Gurney's was sold and closed in 2000.

Viv and Willie had a love for dancing. They could often be found at the Moose Lodge in Yankton, sharing good times with family and friends, dancing many polkas and waltz's. She was a member of Our Redeemer

Lutheran Church in rural Irene, South Dakota, the VFW Auxiliary, and the Women of the Moose in Yankton. Viv loved to play bingo, put puzzles together, and watch Tiger Woods play golf until her struggle with Alzheimers made enjoying even these simple things too much for her. Vivian moved to Autumn Winds Assisted Living in Yankton in April of 2012 and resided there until making the move to Avera Sister James Nursing Home in Yankton in November of 2014.

Vivian loved her family and especially her husband, Willie. After Willie died on September 15, 2001, Viv decided if he couldn't dance anymore, neither would she. There is great comfort in knowing that Vivian is now in heaven with not only her Lord, but with Willie, full of smiles and dancing to their hearts content.

Survivors include her four children: Donald (Lynette) Simonsen of Rapid City, South Dakota; Robert (Corliss) Simonsen of Yankton; Russell (Lori) Simonsen of Yankton; and Sheryl (David) Rye of Irene, South Dakota; 12 grandchildren; 19 great grandchil-

dren; two sisters-in-law, Jackie Simonsen of Yankton and Betty Stuen of Rockford, Illinois; brother-in-law, Marvin Wilcox of Yankton; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Willie; two sisters, Fern Rempp and Bernice Connell; brother, Duane Huber; six sisters-in-law: Inez Simonsen, Dorothy Simonsen, Midge Simonsen, Marge Simonsen, Esther Wilcox, and Doris Huber; seven brothers-in-law: Chris Simonsen, Gilbert Simonsen, Jens Simonsen, Oscar Simonsen, Henry Simonsen, Glenn Connell and Phil Rempp.

To post an online sympathy message or to view the video tribute visit wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
January 16, 2015


WINTZ & RAY
FUNERAL HOME and
CREMATION SERVICE
Online condolences at:
www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com

Wallace Fischer

Wallace "Wally" Andrew Fischer, 71, of Yankton died Thursday, Jan. 15, 2015, at

Avera Yankton Care Center. Arrangements are pending with the Wintz & Ray Funeral Home and Cremation Service in Yankton.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Donald "Tiny" Hladky
10:30 AM, Friday
Wintz & Ray Funeral Home
Yankton

Vivian Simonsen
10:30 AM, Saturday
Wintz & Ray Funeral Home
Yankton

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Agnes Nooney

Agnes M. Nooney, 99, of Yankton passed away Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2015, at the Sanford Vermillion Care Center, Vermillion.

Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 19, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Yankton, with the Rev. Robert Wullweber officiating. Burial will be approximately 1 p.m. at St. Columba Catholic Cemetery in Mayfield.

Visitations will begin at 6 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home and Crematory, Yankton with a 7 p.m. rosary followed by a

7:30 p.m. Scripture service. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.

Velma I. Nordby

Velma I. Nordby, 90, of Coleridge, Nebraska, died Thursday, Jan. 15, 2015, at the Park View Haven Nursing Home in Coleridge.

Funeral Services are pending at the Wintz Funeral Home in Coleridge.

To send an online message to the family, visit www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com.

www.yankton.net

WINTER CRAZY DAYS
January 16th - 18th
Fri. 10am - 9pm
Sat. 10am - 5:30pm
Sun. Noon - 5pm

YANKTON MALL
2101 Broadway, Yankton, SD
605-665-5999