

**More Oil Shipped Through E. Neb.**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The number of trains carrying at least 1 million gallons of crude oil across eastern Nebraska each week has more than tripled.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports that BNSF railroad recently provided updated figures to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

BNSF says it is moving about a dozen oil trains through eastern Nebraska each week. That's up from three trains a week last summer.

Federal transportation officials ordered the railroads last spring to notify states about trains carrying at least 1 million gallons of crude oil after a string of fiery derailments.

BNSF also modified its route in Nebraska to reduce the number of oil trains that pass through Lincoln.

**Offutt Cancels This Year's Air Show**

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The annual air show at Offutt Air Force Base won't be held this year because of planned construction.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports that air show fans in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa will have to drive several hours to find one in 2015.

Maj. James Lee with the 55th Wing says the air show is being cancelled because Congress approved funding for a taxiway project at Offutt this year.

The Air Force plans to spend roughly \$7 million to repave part of a taxiway that's normally used for static displays and spectators at the air show. The Air Force Thunderbirds were expected to headline this year's show.

Lee said he expects the air show to return in 2016.

**BHSU Students Creating Super Bowl Ad**

RAPID CITY (AP) — Students at Black Hills State University are getting a shot at creating their own advertisement for the college that will air locally in western South Dakota during the Super Bowl.

To find the best commercial, school officials are holding a contest in which students must focus their advertisements on the school's new tagline, "Where Anything Is Possible." The school will select the best advertisement submitted and it will be broadcast by the NBC affiliate in the Black Hills, the *Rapid City Journal* reported.

"We are looking for student input because this is their university," said Kimberly Talcott, a spokeswoman at the university. "We really want student input and student ownership of the marketing campaign."

The finished product will air during the game and is expected to be seen by about 75,000 people.

Depending on how many entries they receive, school official said they may use some of the videos and advertisements that don't win for university events and other marketing purposes.

A full video is not required for entry into the contest. Storyboards for videos, rough concept sketches and ad copy will be considered, too.

Winners will receive prizes including iPads, cash and gift certificates, Talcott said.

**Deadwood Revamping Monuments**

DEADWOOD (AP) — Snapping selfies in front of Deadwood Monument markers is about to become less of a gamble.

The Deadwood City Commission recently granted funding to renovate the areas surrounding the six monuments in the city. The monuments are popular photo opportunities for tourists, but their high-traffic locations mean that stopping for a quick photograph isn't the safest, the *Black Hills Pioneer* reports.

Officials say the forthcoming project will make it safer for drivers to pull off the highway and memorialize their trip to Deadwood in front of the city's monuments, like one featuring a painting of the infamous outlaw Wild Bill Hickok that sits at the junction of U.S. Highway 85 and 385.

"While stopping there for the photo op, we want to make it convenient and safe," said Deadwood Historic Preservation Officer Kevin Kuchenbecker.

Officials also plan to install interpretive signs that will describe the significance of the monument markers and possibly encourage them to download a "Deadwood App," which would teach them about the history of the former Old West town, Kuchenbecker said.

Landscape architect Matt Fridell said his company plans to start preliminary work on the project and said bidding for contractors could begin by late spring.

Kuchenbecker said the cost of the project still isn't known.

**Fire Damages Building In Schuyler**

SCHUYLER, Neb. (AP) — A bakery in downtown Schuyler has been heavily damaged by fire, but firefighters were able to keep the flames from spreading.

The *Columbus Telegram* reports the fire was reported around 8:45 p.m. Saturday.

Schuyler Fire Chief Brad Sock says the building that caught fire was used as a bakery and kitchen for Tienda Mexicana Chichihualco across the street.

Sock says the fire was an accident caused by cooking in the kitchen.

Firefighters from Schuyler, David City and Howells worked for roughly an hour to extinguish the fire.

The building sustained roughly \$75,000 damage and nearby Homestead Bank sustained some smoke damage. But there weren't any injuries.

**Service Project Aims To Help Women**

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A group of organizations in Sioux Falls are working together to help women in need in the area.

The organizations are collecting feminine product donations for the local group The Banquet, which provides free meals, school supplies, hygiene products and other items to low-income individuals in Sioux Falls.

The *Argus Leader* reports that the organizations' efforts to collect feminine products are part of National Day of Service, which will be marked Monday. The organizations' cause was inspired by a woman who stopped by The Banquet with her husband and baby. She was in desperate need of feminine products and had to use her baby's last diaper to get by.

Donations will be accepted from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday at Fresh Produce in downtown Sioux Falls.

**Fleetwood Mac Cuts Neb. Concert Short**

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Fleetwood Mac had to cut a Nebraska concert about an hour short Saturday night after drummer Mick Fleetwood became ill.

Stevie Nicks told the crowd of roughly 14,000 at Lincoln's Pinnacle Bank Arena that Fleetwood was throwing up backstage before the end of the 90-minute show.

A drum technician played "Go Your Own Way" for Fleetwood. Then Christine McVie played piano and sang "Songbird" with guitarist Lindsey Buckingham before the band ended the show.

Fleetwood Mac said Sunday in a statement online that it plans to perform its next scheduled show in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Tuesday.

**Nebraska**

**New Attempt To Exempt Cigar Bars From Smoking Ban**

BY MARGERY A. BECK  
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Jake's Cigars and Spirits in Lincoln is preparing to inform customers they can no longer smoke inside, just as soon as a letter from the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission arrives instructing it and 10 other cigar bars in the state to turn in their specialty licenses.

Now, some state lawmakers are working to again exempt cigar bars from the state's public smoking ban — even after the Nebraska Supreme Court last year declared lawmakers' first attempt to allow cigar patrons to light up unconstitutional.

While the intent of the bill, introduced by Sen. Tyson Larson of O'Neill, is clear, its ability to stand up to a constitutional challenge is not.

The state Supreme Court's ruling last August stemmed from a lawsuit by the owner of Big John's Billiards in Omaha, who was seeking to allow his customers to smoke in the pool hall as they had done for years before the 2009 ban was enacted.

The high court's opinion didn't restore Big John's smoking policy, but it did throw out an exception allowing smoking in cigar bars. The exception amounted to unconstitutional special legislation and didn't conform to the purpose of the ban, "which is to protect the public and employees from the dangers of secondhand smoke," the court said.



Larson

Larson, chairman of the General Affairs Committee, has introduced a bill, co-sponsored by Sen. Colby Coash of Lincoln, that would restore smoking in cigar shops, saying allowing the activity doesn't interfere with the original intent of protecting the public from second-hand smoke.

The bill also makes distinctions between "cigar aficionados," characterized as those who pair cigars with high-end liquors and take an hour or longer to enjoy a cigar, and cigarette smokers who are "simply satisfying an addiction."

"We have a legal product here, and people should be able to enjoy legal products in establishments that want to offer them," Larson said. "I'm not trying to repeal the Clean Indoor Act by any means. We're trying to return cigar bars to the status quo. We live in a capitalist, free-market society, and businesses should be able to provide legal products as they see fit."

The owners of Big John's couldn't have said it better, their attorney, Ted Boecker, said. The language in Larson's bill only highlights that it's an effort to grant a special privilege to a select group while denying it to others, he said.

"It strikes my clients as a little surprising that there would be legislators ... who are focused on elite, cigar-smok-

ing aficionados who drink cognac, as opposed to hardworking people who may want to drink a beer, smoke a cigarette and play pool," Boecker said.

If lawmakers want to protect free-market values, they could create a special liquor license for which any establishment can apply, Boecker said. It would allow smoking inside and require warning signs, disclosures to employees and special ventilation, allowing the public to decide whether to patronize a place that allows smoking.

"In other words, it's freedom of choice, which my client thinks is more in line with American values than giving some sort of special treatment to cigar-smoking aficionados who drink cognac and scotch," Boecker said.

Anthony Schutz, a University of Nebraska associate law professor, said the bill could work, as courts tend to give deference to legislation when lawmakers make their intent clear — even if the reasoning behind the intent is challenged.

But Schutz said the bill would be stronger if it included language spelling out the Legislature's intent to keep economic harm from cigar bars.

"I could see an argument being made that ... the presence of smokers in a cigar bar is fundamental to that business," Schutz said. "If we eliminate (smoking), it has a profound impact on that business, as opposed to eliminating the ability to smoke in just a regular bar or any other establishment."

**Nebraska**

**Ricketts: Lowering Taxes, Balancing Budget Doable**

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Pete Ricketts says he's confident Nebraska can balance its budget this year while chipping away at the taxes that he says are hindering job growth.

The Republican governor said the state needs to continue its focus on lowering property taxes this year, but he acknowledged the work will require a multi-year effort.

"It's not something we'll just do once and claim victory," Ricketts said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It will be an ongoing process. We'll suggest solutions, and others will have solutions as well."

Ricketts will present his budget recommendations to lawmakers Thursday in his first State of the State address since taking office Jan. 8.

Though he declined to give specifics, the new governor has repeatedly said his top priority is lowering property taxes. Ricketts said he's spent "easily over 70 hours" reviewing the state budget with advisers, and believes he and lawmakers can pass sustainable reforms this year.

The speech and budget will add detail to the broad themes Ricketts highlighted in his inaugural speech earlier this month: Reducing regulations, attracting higher-paying jobs to Nebraska and improving education. Ricketts has also pledged to collaborate with the Legislature.

"Our goal is to build on the foundation of the people who came before us, and to come together to solve our problems," Ricketts said.

Sen. Heath Mello of Omaha, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said he believes Ricketts and lawmakers generally agree on this year's priorities. In addition to property taxes and education, Mello said they'll need to work together to fix problems in Nebraska's corrections and health and human services departments.

The state faces a projected \$50 million shortfall in its next two-year budget, which lawmakers are constitutionally required to balance. The overall budget is projected to top \$8 billion.

Mello said most of the projected shortfall is due to budget requests made by prison and health and human services administrators. The Department of Health and Human Services has requested \$16.5 million to repay the federal government for child welfare expenses that weren't properly documented.

"We know those are key



Ricketts

areas that we've got to address," Mello said. "The issue is how we're going to address each individual item that's been requested."

Farm and ranching groups are once again pushing to cut property taxes, which have soared along with ag-land values for the last seven years.

"I'm very optimistic that we can get something done," said Steve Nelson, an Axtell farmer and president of the Nebraska Farm Bureau. "Lots of people have been talking about this issue for several years now. You have a newly elected governor who's made this a high priority, and the Legislature really gets it."

Ricketts pointed to studies by the Washington-based Tax Foundation, which ranks Nebraska as having the 14th highest property taxes nationally. Nebraskans paid an average of \$1,566 in annual property taxes, according to the think tank, although some ag-land owners have reported paying more than half of their gross income.

Nebraska has no direct control over property tax levies, which are set by counties, school boards and other local governments, but the state can indirectly influence the taxes in a variety of ways. Last year they added \$25 million annually to a state fund that offsets property taxes, for a yearly tax credit of \$74.11 on property valued at \$100,000.

Ricketts unveiled a plan during his campaign to reduce the percentage of taxable value of farmland from 75 percent to 65 percent of its market value. The plan called for caps on valuation increases, more money for property tax credits, and a review of unfunded state mandates on the local governments that levy property taxes.

Nelson said his group supported those steps and wants a review of Nebraska's school-aid formula, a major piece of the budget that determines what districts have to generate locally through property taxes.

The governor said taxes and over-regulation have created barriers to new job growth. Ricketts said he would work to streamline the state's permitting process so it's faster, and push back against national regulations by "shedding light on bad practices" to try to pressure the federal government.

**South Dakota**

**Soybean Producers Talk Food Safety In New Ad Campaign**

BY JANELLE ATYEO  
Tri-State Neighbor

SIoux FALLS (AP) — City dwellers in South Dakota will have the chance to get to know the people who farm the rural land surrounding them a little better.

The South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council is letting the farmers talk in a new advertising campaign aimed at dispelling misconceptions about farming and food safety. Starting in January, television, print and radio ads will spread the message of the Hungry for Truth campaign to the most urban South Dakotans in Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

The research council crafted its message over the past couple years, meeting with focus groups in Sioux Falls and Rapid City and hiring a professional marketing company. A phone survey conducted last spring by a professional research company reached 600 people across South Dakota.

It showed that food safety was the top concern when South Dakotans thought about farming — particularly what pesticides, antibiotics, growth hormones and modified genes do to the food on their plates.

Two-thirds of those surveyed said companies should be required to label GMO foods. Such respondents tended to be women, seniors and those living on the western side of the state.

It's time to speak up and correct some of the misconceptions that people have, said Jeremy Freking, executive director of South Dakota Soybean.

While the survey showed that people don't trust farming technology, they do trust farmers themselves.

Nine out of 10 people in South Dakota personally know someone who farms. Consumers understand that most South Dakota farms are family-run, and they believe farmers are doing the right things when it comes to promoting food quality over making a profit.

Still, there's a growing disconnect between the urban dweller and the people who grow their food. "People tell us they want to know more about farming today. There's no one better to tell them

**"People deserve to know the facts about farming today, and we have nothing to hide."**

JOHN HORTER

than farmers themselves," Freking said.

A website that launched this month, www.hungryfortruthsd.com, features an interactive roundtable video of farmers talking about what they do. It's meant to mimic a dinner table discussion.

Marc Reiner farms near Tripp and is chairman of the South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council. He said the campaign will help consumers feel better about the food they eat. The message is needed today, he said, because of rumors being spread by groups who don't like the way farmers operate. Farmers want people to know how crops are grown and how animals are treated, he said.

"People deserve to know the facts about farming today, and we have nothing to hide," added John Horter, who farms near Andover, and is president of the South Dakota Soybean Association.

This is the first major campaign that the soybean research council has taken on. The council is working with Hy-Vee and Karl's TV and Appliance on special promotions meant to encourage people to join the conversation, and members will be at events next year including Restaurant Week and the Sioux Empire Fair in Sioux Falls and the Summer Concert Series and Taste of South Dakota in Rapid City.

They're aiming to reach 39 million people through the TV ads, 1.5 million through print advertising and another 11 million to 12 million online. For now, the soybean council is the sole entity behind the campaign, but directors said they're open to other commodity groups joining in, as the message isn't specific to soybeans. They plan to run the campaign for more than a year but didn't have an exact target for how much they'd spend.

The campaign is funded with checkoff dollars.

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