

### Stable Transportation Funds Wanted

PIERRE (AP) — State officials in Pierre and federal lawmakers in Washington are scrambling to figure out how to shore up funding for roads and bridges.

State Transportation Secretary Darin Bergquist on Wednesday spoke before a U.S. Senate panel during a hearing on the need for long-term federal transportation financing. Without a fix or a long-term solution, the Highway Trust Fund will become insolvent at the end of May.

South Dakota officials are also pushing to update state and local funding for transportation infrastructure.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has put forward a proposal that raises roughly \$50 million in new road and bridge funding.

State Sen. Mike Vehle has a proposal he's sponsoring from a task force that met before session that would raise more than \$100 million in its first year.

### Two Injured After Cell Tower Collapse

SCOTTSBLUFF, Neb. (AP) — Two men were transported to the hospital after getting trapped under a collapsed cell phone tower near Scottsbluff.

The *Star-Herald* reports the two were trapped under a Viera Wireless tower that collapsed Wednesday. The Scottsbluff Fire Department responded to the scene.

Scottsbluff Fire Chief Dana Miller says responders were told one man fell about 10 feet, and the other fell more than 20 feet in the collapse. The tower is currently under construction.

Miller says the collapse occurred while the area was under a wind advisory.

In a prepared statement, Viera Executive Vice President Mike Felicissimo says a wind gust caused a section of the tower to shift. He says one man injured his leg and the other had shoulder pain, but both are doing well and receiving treatment.

### Neb. Retirees Ask For Expanded Tax Cut

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's civilian and military retirees are once again asking lawmakers for tax breaks, saying a package approved last year didn't go far enough.

The groups argued their case Wednesday as the Revenue Committee examined three proposed tax exemptions for Social Security benefits and military retirement pay.

One measure would provide a tax exemption to Nebraskans who are at least 65 years old. Another would give tax breaks to military retirees who live in Nebraska while working and collecting retirement income. A third would phase out Nebraska's tax on Social Security income.

Senators are expected to focus on property taxes this year, but the committee chairman, Sen. Mike Gloor of Grand Island, says senators could also make changes to income tax exemptions.

The bills are LB63, LB165 and LB267

## South Dakota Senate Agrees Tax Is Not A Fee

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Most of the state's Republican senators agreed Wednesday that a tax isn't the same as a fee.

The Senate voted 24-11 to adopt a resolution declaring the difference between the two methods for raising revenue.

Three Republicans — Brock Greenfield of Clark, Phil Jensen of Rapid City and Deb Soholt of Sioux Falls — joined the eight Democratic senators in opposing the resolution's adoption.

The lead Senate sponsor, Republican Dan Lederman of Dakota Dunes, acknowledged the resolution doesn't have any legal effect.

But he said it was an important step to assure citizens that South Dakota's state government is attempting to operate at the lowest level of taxation.

Lederman said the purpose of a tax is to ensure each person receives a fair share while those who want more pay the cost through a fee.

Sen. Jim Peterson, D-Revillo, differed, saying people don't care whether something is called a tax or a fee when they pay it.

"I tell you it doesn't matter whether we come with a resolution like this or not," said Peterson, a 13-year veteran of the Legislature's tax committees. "They're concerned with the money that comes out of their pocket. I think this is a needless resolution."

Sen. Angie Buhl O'Donnell, D-Sioux Falls, asked Lederman to explain why a motorist pays a gas tax to run a vehicle and a registration fee for the vehicle.

Responded Lederman: "It's because you own a vehicle and there's a lot of people out there who may not own a vehicle."

Buhl O'Donnell replied, "I don't think they see a big difference if we as a legislative body say it's a tax or a fee."

The House of Representatives passed the tax and fee resolution earlier this week.

There were better relations Wednesday over a resolution supporting the continuation of federal support for the D.C. Booth fish hatchery at Spearfish.

"I think I have a resolution here we can all agree on," said Sen. Bob Ewing, R-Spearfish.

"We don't want to see these artifacts moved to another city," Ewing said.

Peterson said he and his wife visit the hatchery every year and find something new.

"It is one of the jewels that everybody in South Dakota should discover," Peterson said.

The vote was 35-0.

### Legislative Roundup

## Mickelson Wants Voters To Act On Tech Institutes

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — It's a new decade and so must be time to debate again how South Dakota's public technical institutes should be governed. This time, the proposal is to place the four institutes under the state Board of Regents.

Rep. G. Mark Mickelson, R-Sioux Falls, wants to put the question before the voters of South Dakota in the 2016 general election.

Mickelson introduced House Joint Resolution 1004 on Wednesday seeking a constitutional amendment that would put the regents in charge.

The tech institutes are currently operated by local school districts at Watertown, Mitchell, Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

The regents currently

oversee the six traditional state universities at Aberdeen, Brookings, Madison, Vermillion, Rapid City and Spearfish, as well as three university centers at Pierre, Sioux Falls and Rapid City, and a variety of other off-campus courses in other communities and over the Internet.

The Legislature struggled in 2007 over legislation that would have created a state board of technical institutes.

Among the many cosponsors of Mickelson's resolution are the Watertown-area delegation of Sen. Ried Hollen, Rep. Roger Solum and Rep. Lee Schoenbeck and the Mitchell-area lawmakers Sen. Mike Vehle, Rep. Tona Rozum and Rep. Joshua Klumb.

The resolution also has many lawmakers as cosponsors from Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

• HIGH PRAISE: Two mem-

bers of the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission received Senate confirmation to new terms Wednesday.

Cathy Peterson of Salem and Barry Jensen of White River attended their confirmation hearings Tuesday and spoke to the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard recently reappointed Peterson and Jensen to the commission. Both have connections to the Legislature.

Rep. Kent Peterson, R-Salem, is a son of Cathy and Steve Peterson. He is serving his first year as legislator.

"It is truly a privilege to be part of this," she told the committee about serving on the commission. She said the family tries to enhance hunting opportunities as part of the farm and ranch operations.

Jensen, a rancher, is a former House member. He served in the 2001-2002 and 2005-2006 terms.

Sen. Jim Peterson, D-Revillo, and Sen. Mike Vehle, R-Mitchell, recalled serving with Jensen and praised him.

"I found him to be a very independent thinker, a fair man," Sen. Peterson said.

Vehle said one of the people who influenced him as a first-term representative was Jensen. "He always found the common denominator," Vehle said.

After the Senate committee endorsed their confirmations, a former legislator and current GFP commission member, Paul Dennert of Columbia, crossed the room to congratulate them.

Dennert is serving this legislative session as a lobbyist for South Dakota Budget and Policy Institute.

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