

MIDWEST DIGEST

Gov. Likes Parts Of Parks Drinking Plan

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Gov. Dave Heineman says he likes the way Nebraska Game and Parks crafted a plan that would allow alcohol in Nebraska's state parks, but will hear more from residents before he makes up his mind on the proposal.

During a call-in radio show Monday sponsored by the Nebraska Broadcasters Association, Heineman said he liked parts of the proposal that would ban kegs of beer and drinking between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

He also said he liked that Game and Parks could continue to ban drinking at some state parks if officials deemed it necessary.

The governor said he is no rush to make a decision on the proposal made by state park commissioners in May. Nebraska has had a ban since 1995, after alcohol fueled rowdy parties and violence at Lake McConaughy.

Appliance Money Gone In Four Days

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraskans have used up the \$1.7 million available for rebates on energy-efficient appliances.

The Nebraska Energy Office reported Monday that the money ran out early Saturday, about four days after the program began.

Similar programs in other states have lasted for months, in others just a matter of days. Iowa's money was used up in hours.

The rebates of \$100 to \$250 are mainly paid for with federal stimulus dollars meant to jolt the economy.

There are six Energy Star products the rebates will be applied to: central air conditioners; clothes washers; refrigerators; dishwashers; air-source heat pumps; and natural gas and propane furnaces.

S.D. Returning Unused Swine Flu Vaccine

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — State officials are sending more than 17,000 doses of swine flu vaccine back to suppliers as outdated trash.

The doses, which were once in high demand, are being sent in Pierre to the manufacturer McKesson in Tennessee. Another 100,000 or more are in the hands of the health system.

Last fall, residents waited in arenas and doctors' offices for shots or nasal mist as the vaccine was scarce. But fears of a new flu wave this spring never developed.

State Epidemiologist Lon Kightlinger says each hospital has unused doses of vaccine for the illness, which is also called H1N1.

Federal records said 37 percent of South Dakotans got vaccine, third best among U.S. states.

Roosevelt Expressway Meetings Set

DICKINSON, N.D. (AP) — Four public meetings are planned in western North Dakota on the first phase of a proposed four-lane highway from Rapid City, S.D., to the Canadian border.

The Theodore Roosevelt Expressway would pass through north-west South Dakota, western North Dakota and northeast Montana. It is the northern third of a larger four-lane proposal called the Ports to Plains Alliance that involves upgrading roads starting in Laredo, Texas, and running through nine Plains states.

The first phase of the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway involves upgrading two-lane roads to "super two" status by widening shoulders, and adding passing lanes and turning lanes.

Meetings are set July 21 in Belfield and Bowman, and July 22 in Williston and Watford City.

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S.D. Group Plans Campaign For Medical Marijuana

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press Writer

PIERRE — Supporters of a South Dakota ballot measure that would legalize marijuana for medical purposes have spent very little money so far, but a group leader said the campaign could become costly before voters decide the issue in November.

"This could get very expensive," said Emmett Reistroffer of Sioux Falls, chairman of the campaign committee Yes for Compassion, Yes on 13!

The committee plans to hire field workers and recruit volunteers to explain the measure to voters and register supporters to vote, Reistroffer said. The campaign also hopes to advertise on television and radio, he said.

A similar measure narrowly failed in 2006, getting 48 percent of the vote.

"We would hate to see a repeat of 2006," Reistroffer said. "It was such an emotional loss for the patients. We have to make sure we pass it this time."

Staci Eggert, executive director of the South Dakota Sheriffs' Association, said law enforcement officials are likely to oppose the medical marijuana measure because it would cause problems enforcing drug laws. A number of organizations plan to meet in a week or so to discuss whether to set up a campaign committee to fight the measure, she said.

Opponents of the measure have not yet registered any campaign committee with the secretary of state's office.

In its campaign finance report for the first half of the year, Yes for Compassion reported that it received \$5,046, mostly from the organization that worked last year to get the issue on the ballot. It spent \$1,644, mostly for travel and advertising, and had \$3,402 on hand as of June 30.

The organization also got \$2,800 in services from supporters, including \$1,800 in consultation from the Marijuana Policy Project in Washington, D.C., a national organization that advocates removing criminal penalties for marijuana

use and making marijuana available for medical use.

Reistroffer said the South Dakota campaign so far has been funded almost entirely with local support, but national groups like the Marijuana Policy Project may help fund the fall campaign.

Mike Meno, communications director of the Marijuana Policy Project, said the organization might help finance the South Dakota ballot campaign. However, he said the organization has not yet decided which state ballot campaigns it will support or what kind of aid it will provide.

Arizona also has a ballot measure this fall to legalize medicinal marijuana; California has an initiative on the November ballot to legalize possession of the drug and tax it.

The South Dakota proposal would legalize the limited use of marijuana to treat severe debilitating pain, nausea, seizures and other medical problems. Those eligible would include people suffering from cancer, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and other diseases.

Supporters argue that marijuana helps ease the pain, muscle spasms and nausea that can accompany chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

The state Health Department would issue registry cards to patients whose doctors certify they have medical needs that could be treated with marijuana. Qualified patients and their designated caregivers could not be arrested or prosecuted for having up to one ounce of marijuana.

Reistroffer said the South Dakota measure would be more restrictive than those approved in the 14 states that allow medical marijuana.

"It does not allow for driving under the influence of the medicine, using it around children or doing it in public, and the amount the patients would be limited to would be the most strict nationwide," Reistroffer said. "What we're asking for is very sensible, very modest and simply protects the patients without asking any more than that."

Yankton Residents Happy About 'Barefoot Bandit' Arrest In The Bahamas

By The Associated Press

Residents of Yankton are happy about the arrest in the Bahamas of the fugitive known as the "Barefoot Bandit," who is believed to have struck in at least three South Dakota cities last month.

Colton Harris-Moore, from Camano Island, Wash., was arrested over the weekend, after two years of staying ahead of the law by stealing cars, powerboats and airplanes.

Police in Yankton said they confirmed through fingerprints and DNA that it was Harris-Moore who broke into hangars at the city airport in June. He also is believed to be the person who broke into a Yankton home and scared the family. Police believe he also stole a car that later turned up in Norfolk, Neb.

"We didn't quite believe it in the beginning until we heard reports of this guy making his way across the country and breaking into airports and stealing airplanes and cars," said Jake

Hoffner, who owns Hoffner Flying in Yankton.

"The bottom line is that justice is served and hopefully we can learn from this," he said.

Harris-Moore also is the prime suspect in a break-in at the Pierre airport terminal in which rental car keys were stolen. Police Detective Sgt. Derald Gross said investigators believe Harris-Moore drove a stolen vehicle to that city from Spearfish.

Gross said authorities believe Harris-Moore planned to steal a rental vehicle at the Pierre airport but was scared away by employees arriving early for work. Officers discovered that keys were missing, and secured the vehicles so they could not be taken.

Yankton flight instructor John Lillevoed said he was "very excited" about the arrest.

"I think everybody who's had to deal with him is very glad that he'll be behind bars for a long time," he said. "He's invaded our space."

Lawsuit Claims Omaha Woman's Death Caused By Contraceptive

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press Writer

OMAHA, Neb. — The estate of an Omaha woman who died while using the NuvaRing contraceptive is suing its makers, claiming the device caused a deadly blood clot.

The lawsuit filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Omaha says 43-year-old Ann Tompkins of Omaha died in February 2009, about five months after she began using NuvaRing.

The lawsuit seeks damages from various pharmaceutical companies that currently or at one time manufactured and sold the contraceptive, including Merck & Co., which last year acquired former maker Schering-Plough. Also named are Dutch biopharmaceutical Organon BioSciences NV, its U.S. divisions and its parent company Akzo Nobel NV, all bought by Schering-Plough in 2007.

The lawsuit, believed to be the first filed out of Nebraska targeting NuvaRing, does not list the amount in damages being sought, but asks for actu-

al damages related to such things as funeral costs and lost wages, as well as wrongful death and punitive damages.

Attorney Mark Weber of Omaha, who filed the Nebraska suit, said he expects it to be consolidated with others from around the country in federal court in St. Louis.

Ronald Rogers, spokesman with Merck, said he had not seen the Nebraska case and could not comment specifically on it, but noted "we are vigorously defending the company in the NuvaRing litigation."

Tompkins, a mother of two, was found dead in her home by a family friend on Feb. 23, 2009,

and an autopsy showed that a blood clot in one of her lungs caused the death, Weber said.

The lawsuit accuses the makers of NuvaRing of, among other things, over-promoting the contraceptive while providing too little warning of the risks of blood clots to users.

NuvaRing, which was launched in the summer of 2002, is a hormonal contraceptive inside a flexible ring that is inserted in the vagina and left in place for three weeks out of every month. It slowly releases two hormones into the vaginal wall: ethinyl estradiol, a type of estrogen widely used in contraceptives, and a progestin called etonogestrel.

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