

Agency: Keystone XL Corridor Avoids Sandhills

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska environmental regulators say a new proposed corridor for the Keystone XL pipeline still crosses areas of fragile, sandy soil, even though it avoids what they defined as the Sandhills.

A report released Tuesday says the 2,000-foot-wide corridor runs through land that could erode, and passes near unconfined aquifers that supply drinking water to residents and livestock. Officials say most of the aquifers lie near the town of Stuart.

Regulators say pipeline developer TransCanada should carefully consider a route that avoids the aquifers, and document what safety precautions the company takes if doing so is not possible.

The pipeline is expected to carry Canadian crude oil through Nebraska on its way to Texas refineries. The report is part of an effort to find a route that avoids environmentally sensitive areas.

Jackley: No Violations By SOS Gant, Powers

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says his office finds no evidence of criminal violation by the Secretary of State's office from an employee operating an online business that sells campaign materials.

Sen. Stan Adelstein of Rapid City asked Jackley to look into Dakota Campaign Store, which was run by secretary of state employee Pat Powers. Powers has since resigned.

Jackley on Tuesday said that the voluminous emails, Internet usage and computer files provided yielded no evidence of illegal activities by Powers or Secretary of State Jason Gant.

The office of Secretary of State Jason Gant supervises elections, and Adelstein wanted Jackley to look into alleged impropriety and conflict of interest.

Trial Begins Over Nebraska Sex Offender Laws

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A federal trial is under way in Lincoln over a challenge to changes made in Nebraska's sex offender laws in 2009.

Three dozen sex offenders claim the state went too far. The *Lincoln Journal Star* says the case before U.S. Senior District Judge Richard Kopf, which began Monday, is expected to last two weeks.

If the state wins, convicted sex offenders would be forced to disclose to law enforcement the online names they use and sites where they've posted comments. They would also be banned from using social networking sites, instant messaging and chat rooms that can be used by minors.

Defense attorneys say the law violates First Amendment rights. Prosecutors say sex offenders can look at websites, so long as they aren't communicating.

West Fargo Business To Expand Into S.D.

PIERRE (AP) — A West Fargo, N.D.-based wire and cable harness manufacturer is expanding into South Dakota with a location in De Smet.

The South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development says Sheyenne Dakota Inc. is expected to create 30 jobs over the next three years.

The company will use a building De Smet constructed in 2009 to attract a new business and spur local economic development. It's expected to begin operations in De Smet by early September.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard says De Smet was proactive in generating the opportunity for community growth.

Kerrey, Fischer Top \$1 Million In Fundraising

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska U.S. Senate hopefuls Bob Kerrey and Deb Fischer each raised more than \$1 million in the latest reporting period, according to new campaign finance disclosures.

Kerrey, a former Democratic governor and U.S. senator, reported \$1.53 million during the two-month reporting period that ended June 30. Fischer, a Sandhills rancher and Republican state senator, raised nearly \$1.3 million.

The fundraising came in the midst of several ads aired by out-of-state groups, which have targeted Kerrey. The conservative group American Crossroads, founded by GOP strategist Karl Rove, aired nearly \$270,000 in ads in June that targeted Kerrey. In April, the group Americans

for Prosperity founded by the Koch brothers criticized Kerrey as a New Yorker trying to peddle liberal policies in Nebraska.

Kerrey finished the period with \$1.3 million in cash-on-hand, while Fischer reported \$1.1 million for the race that has attracted national attention and ad money, according to federal campaign finance records. They are running to replace Democratic U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, who is not seeking re-election.

Fischer has led Kerrey in most polls, and her campaign says the financial support reflects her promises to reduce spending and taxes.

"Our strong fundraising quarter shows that Nebraskans are tired of overspending, overtaxing and overregulating," Fischer said.

Kerrey's campaign highlighted his financial showing as a sign that people are warming to his message of bipartisanship and compromise. Kerrey campaign manager Paul Johnson said the support illustrates the desire for a candidate with "a well-established history of working across party lines to tackle our nation's most pressing problems, including deficit reduction and economic growth."

Fischer on Monday unveiled a new, 30-second television ad that cast Kerrey as an out-of-touch New Yorker who's desperate to win the election. The ad touts Fischer's 2007 vote to approve the state's largest tax cut, her work with Gov. Dave Heineman on budget issues and her pledge to repeal the federal health care law.

South Dakota Looking To Boost College Graduates

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A South Dakota legislative group studying how to graduate more students from public universities and technical institutes will keep an eye on a pilot program that rewards schools for success.

The Postsecondary Education Study Committee is studying how the state invests money in higher education and what that investment produces. Sen. Mark Johnston, R-Sioux Falls, told the *Argus Leader* that he thinks officials should look closely at a performance-based funding model.

"Whether it's graduation rate or job placement in a course of study, I think we just need two or three performance measures to agree on," he said.

The state Board of Regents has initiated a pilot program that will direct \$6 million to public universities based on the schools' production of graduates.

"What we're doing with this is extending a signal to institutions that what they do with their ex-

isting students matters," said Jack Warner, the board's executive director. "If we can stay on the path of increasing success rates and graduates, the financial incentives might be working, and that would figure into the funding formula discussion."

The Postsecondary Education Study Committee first met June 27 in Pierre and will gather at least two more times, studying such matters as how to make it easier for students to turn technical education studies into bachelor's degrees, and how valuable research investment is to economic development.

"Another priority for performance is to focus on research and research growth," Warner said.

"We think research has a lot of economic benefits. So the question is, as research benefits go up, is that something that can be rewarded? And if they go down, then the institution could lose dollars."

Prosecutors In N.D., S.D. Warn About Human Trafficking

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Top federal prosecutors from North and South Dakota have added human trafficking to their list of crimes affecting Native Americans at an increased rate in the two states.

U.S. attorneys Brendan Johnson of South Dakota and Timothy Purdon of North Dakota said during a conference on family violence Tuesday that both states are seeing more cases of girls and young women being recruited for prostitution and drug rings.

Three new indictments for human trafficking have been handed down in South Dakota in the last three months, Johnson said.

"You have people who treat their victims like they're not humans," Johnson said after talking to a group that included police, social workers, prosecutors, counselors and community leaders.

The operations are formed mainly in populated areas, but American Indian girls are particularly at risk, the prosecutors said.

Some of them were recruited by a Sioux Falls-area man who was convicted last year of sex trafficking of a child.

"These young girls were brutalized. They were humiliated," Johnson said.

Brandon Thompson, 28, of Tea, S.D., was sentenced to life in prison on the sex trafficking charge.

"This is one area where the federal government has gotten it right," Johnson said of the penalty.

A recent sex trafficking case in North Dakota involved several victims from the Fort Berthold Reservation. Dustin Morsette, 22, of New Town, was convicted of sex trafficking, sexual abuse, drug trafficking and witness tampering. He is awaiting sentencing.

Authorities said Morsette recruited minors and young adults to be part of a gang he described as the Black Disciples. He allegedly forced gang members to distribute marijuana for him and engage in sex acts with him.

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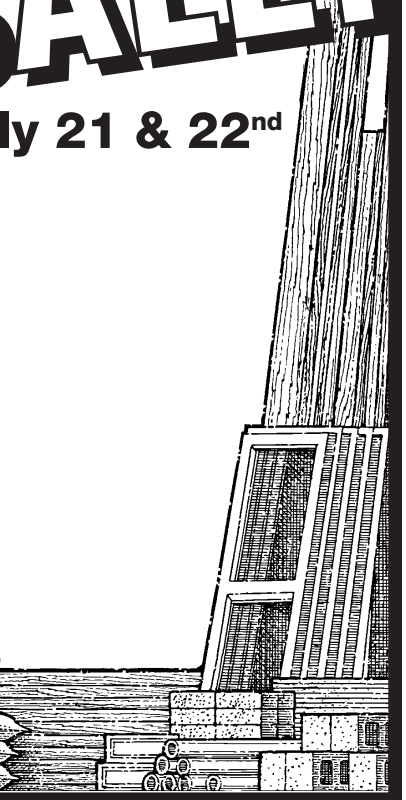
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