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Dems Seek Wage Vote

Party, Unions Want Ballot Measure To Raise SD Minimum Pay

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — The South Dakota Democratic Party and some labor unions are seeking a statewide public vote on a measure that would raise the state's minimum wage.

If the labor unions and Democratic Party collect at least 15,855 valid petition signatures before Nov. 4, next year's general election ballot would include a proposed law that would raise the state minimum wage from the current \$7.25

an hour to \$8.50 an hour beginning in January 2015.

The measure also would raise the minimum wage each year to account for inflation. Tipped employees also would benefit from the proposed change, which would fix their minimum wage at 50 percent of the regular minimum wage. That would be \$4.25, much higher than the current \$2.13 minimum wage for tipped workers.

The South Dakota Legislature has consis-

tently resisted efforts to boost the state minimum wage above the federal minimum wage, which is currently \$7.25 an hour.

Zach Crago, interim executive director of the South Dakota Democratic Party, said an increase in the state minimum wage would boost the economy by giving workers more money to

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City's BID Tax Sees Healthy Beginning

After 3 Months, Partial Income Is At 25% Of The Annual Estimate

BY DEREK BARTOS

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Nearly three months into the collection of a \$2-per-night tax charged for overnight stays at certain hotels, Yankton's new Business Improvement District (BID) has generated roughly 25 percent of its projected income for 2013 despite receiving no funds from two of its five members.

The BID, which was approved by the Yankton City Commission in January and began charging the tax in April, includes hotels within city limits with 25 or more rooms. Smaller facilities can volunteer to be included.

Yankton City Finance Officer Al Viereck told BID board members at their meeting Wednesday morning that the city has collected \$20,198 to date for the months of April, May and June. However, that number is incomplete, he said, considering that both the Days Inn and Super 8 hotels have not contributed any funds to date.

"We're still communicating with the other two, so hopefully that will get done shortly," he said.

Viereck said that the city could penalize the businesses up to 10 percent, file liens or shut off the hotels' water for failure to comply with the ordinance. However, the BID board members agreed those steps were not yet necessary.

"As long as we're communicating, I'm not too worried yet," Viereck said. "I'm hoping it will happen soon so we won't have to take any drastic measures."

The reported income also does not include a third hotel's taxes for the month of June, as the business still has until the July 20 deadline to submit those funds.

With incomplete data, Viereck said it is difficult to know if the

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Towering Tassels



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

What a difference a year makes. Last summer at this time, corn crops in the Yankton area were in the process withering under the punishment of a hot, dry summer. But this year, after a spring and an early summer of good rains, area crops look healthy and lush, with this cornfield west of Yankton exploding in tassels reaching up to the skies. Some heat figures to be in store for today (Thursday), with temperatures expected to climb into the mid-90s. Readings are expected to cool into the mid 80s by Saturday, with a chance of thunderstorms. For weather details, see page 2.

Viborg Rolls Out Carpet For Annual Festival

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF

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VIBORG — Visitors come from near and far for Danish Viking Days, but Soren Pape Poulsen will likely have traveled the farthest of all.

Poulsen serves as mayor of Viborg, Denmark, the namesake for the modern-day Turner County community. He will make a special appearance at this year's celebration, running Friday through Sunday.

Danish Viking Days chairman Paul Chris-

tensen said Poulsen literally came looking for the local celebration.

"(Poulsen) found us. He stumbled across our website and was traveling in the United States," Christensen said. "He contacted City Hall to see if it was possible to make a visit to Danish Viking Days in the States. That's no problem on our part. He seems very interested in Viborg."

The Danish mayor is paying the local visit as part of his national tour.

"He's traveling with his 80-year-old father, who speaks no English," Christensen said. "Vi-

borg is one of the largest cities in Denmark, but it has a lot of farm country around the city and has terrain similar to our own. When our ancestors came over here, they commented on how much Viborg, South Dakota, reminded them of their home in Viborg, Denmark."

Poulsen will speak to Friday's leadership luncheon, where local officials provide an annual update on school, city and county progress. Leaders also give reports on areas

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AP: Senators Reach Deal On Student Loans

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators have reached a bipartisan deal to restore lower interest rates on student borrowers.

The breakthrough came Wednesday, one day after lawmakers huddled with President Barack Obama at the White House. Lawmakers are expected to vote as early as Thursday on the deal that would lower rates before students return to campus.

The deal would offer students lower interest rates through the 2015 aca-

ademic year but then rates were expected to soar. Undergraduates could face rates as high as 8.25 percent, while graduate students would see rates as high as 9.5 percent and parents' rates would top out at 10.5 percent.

The deal is described by Republican and Democratic aides who insist on anonymity because they are not authorized to discuss the ongoing negotiations by name.

The bipartisan proposal is the latest to emerge from

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EMILY NIEBRUGGE/P&D

A group of cyclists who represent the Bike & Build organization were housed at the First United Methodist Church in Yankton Wednesday night. A few members from the group of 23 are pictured wearing their Bike & Build T-shirts in front of the trailer that travels with them. The group began a cross-country trip in Rhode Island in June and will finish in Washington this August. Along the way the bikers assist affordable housing organizations across the country with projects they have already started.

Bicyclists Go Extra Mile For Affordable Housing

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE

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Unable to say good-bye to the group devoted to affordable housing, Emily Wells and Samantha Thomas are biking across the country for their second time.

Bike and Build, Inc., is a non-profit organization that is committed to affordable housing. The organization offers eight cross-country bike trips each summer, and a group of 18-25 year old riders stopped in Yankton Wednesday night at the First United Methodist Church. The group of 23 cyclists began travel-

ing from Providence, R.I., June 13, and will end their 3,900-mile trip in Seattle, Wash., Aug. 18.

"Biking across the country is our hook, our way we get people's attention, but our cause is affordable housing," Wells said.

In order to participate on the ride, each biker must raise \$4,500 to help fund the trip costs and donate to affordable housing efforts and organizations nationwide. At the end of the trip, each cyclist chooses where they want to individually donate \$500, and the rest is donated to organizations and causes the

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