

### Man Says He Accidentally Shot 2 Teens

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — An Omaha man says he was shooting at a stop sign when the bullets accidentally wounded two teenagers.

A police officer testified Tuesday at a preliminary hearing in Douglas County Court that 21-year-old Davonte Hill told him he did not fire his gun at the two 16-year-old boys during the June 8 incident.

The officer said Hill first denied involvement in the shooting but later changed his story.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports one teen is recovering from a foot injury and another is recovering from a thigh wound.

Authorities say Hill shot the teens as they were walking with friends. He faces two counts of felony assault and two counts of use of a weapon to commit a felony. Court records do not list an attorney.

### RC Man Died Of Blunt Force Trauma

RAPID CITY (AP) — Preliminary autopsy results for a Rapid City man who was found dead in an alley indicate he died from blunt force trauma and strangulation.

Officers found 47-year-old Myron Rock in an alley behind the Cold Stone Creamery in Rapid City on Sunday morning.

Police have charged 18-year-old Michael Hand with one count of second-degree murder. Hand made his initial court appearance in Pennington County Tuesday morning. His bail was set at \$500,000.

Police spokeswoman Tarah Heupel says police were initially called around 5:30 a.m. Hand and another man had entered a Walgreens in Rapid City and told an employee to call 911.

After speaking with both men, officers found Rock in the nearby alley. He was badly beaten.

Heupel says full autopsy results for Rock may take several weeks.

### Police: Gambling Parents Left Kids In Car

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A Dell Rapids couple is facing abuse charges after police say the parents left their three kids outside in a car while they gambled at a Sioux Falls casino.

Police were called to Deuces Casino early Tuesday morning. A bystander reported that the parents were alternating watching their kids in the car while gambling. The bystander told police eventually the 7-year-old, 5-year-old and 8-month-old girls were left alone in the car.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says officers found the 5-year-old girl crying and screaming while the other two kids were sleeping.

Nathan Dale Ostermeier, 29, and Betsy Rae Hansen, 26, were inside the casino gambling. Both have been charged with three counts of abuse or neglecting a minor.

Clemens says they suspect the couple had been using methamphetamine that night.

### Man Makes Plea Deal In Pipe Blast Case

OSCEOLA, Neb. (AP) — A 63-year-old David City man has made a deal with prosecutors and been convicted of seven counts stemming from a pipe explosion that seriously injured a teenage relative on Independence Day last year.

Russell Hilger pleaded no contest to attempted felony assault, misdemeanor reckless assault and five counts of criminal mischief, the *Columbus Telegram* said. He made the pleas last week in Polk County District Court, after prosecutors reduced the felony assault charge. Sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 3.

Hilger told an investigator that he just wanted to make a big bang, so he put black powder into a 2-foot-long pipe that was an inch in diameter and was welded to a base plate. He said he stuffed in three towels as he'd been taught once by a rodeo clown.

Hilger set off the device during a July Fourth family gathering last year at Ernst Lake, which sits a few miles south-southwest of Columbus.

The blast sent pipe pieces everywhere, hitting five vehicles, penetrating a cabin wall and tearing through a nearby tent.

Inside the tent was Lauren Campbell, 14 at the time, who was hit in the abdomen. She lost her spleen and part of her pancreas but otherwise has recovered.

Hilger is her great-uncle. Hilger didn't face any explosives-related charges, said prosecutors, because the gunpowder-and-steel pipe didn't meet the law's description of a bomb or destructive device. His stated intent was to make a big bang, prosecutors said, not to hurt anyone.

### Backyard Beekeeping To Be Legal In RC

RAPID CITY (AP) — Bee proponents in Rapid City have received some sweet news: Backyard beekeeping is on the way to being legal.

The City Council on Monday voted unanimously to begin work on revising city rules to allow hobby hives in residential areas, after more than a dozen proponents swarmed the meeting. Beehives currently are allowed only on city properties zoned for agricultural use.

The city's Legal and Finance Committee earlier denied a request by John and Christine McDowell to allow residential beekeeping, but City Councilman Chad Lewis says comments since then have shown "overwhelming support" for bees.

### Nebraskan Pleads Guilty In Buggy Crash

PAWNEE CITY, Neb. (AP) — A woman whose car collided with a horse-drawn buggy carrying two Amish people to church in southeast Nebraska has pleaded guilty to misdemeanor vehicular homicide.

Online court records show that on Monday in Pawnee County District Court, Vivian Cockrell, of Pawnee City, also pleaded guilty to misdemeanor misuse of a learner's permit. She'd been alone in her car, which prosecutors said violated one of the conditions on her learner's permit: that she must be accompanied by a licensed driver.

A sentencing date was not set, because Judge Daniel Bryan Jr. removed himself from the case, the *Lincoln Journal Star* said. He said defense attorney Benjamin Beethe asked him to recuse himself because Cockrell thought the judge would be too harsh.

Bryan declined to elaborate, other than saying, "I feel this case is no different than a guy or gal who is driving drunk."

Beethe didn't immediately return a call Tuesday from The Associated Press.

Prosecutors said Cockrell was driving the Cadillac on July 21, 2013, that struck the buggy carrying Fannie Yoder, 21, and her 17-year-old brother Reuben as they rode to church. Reuben Yoder died and Fannie Yoder was critically injured.

The crash occurred on Nebraska Highway 8/50 east of Pawnee City. Investigators said there was no evidence that Cockrell swerved or hit her brakes to avoid hitting the buggy or that sun glare or road conditions contributed to the accident.

"She should have perceived the vehicle in front of her," said Pawnee County Attorney Jennifer Stehlik-Ladman.

# South Dakota Moves To Curb Goose Population Rise

BY NORA HERTEL  
Associated Press

PIERRE, — South Dakota moved Tuesday to curb a goose population explosion by more than doubling the number of birds hunters can kill per day.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission members set hunting quotas for most geese seasons as well as the antelope season. Hunting licenses are adjusted by state officials to help control wildlife populations.

Commissioners gave initial approval to a plan allowing hunters 50 light geese a day, up from 20. The ideal population of these geese in the state is about 1 million, while there are currently about 15 to 25 million.

The light geese category includes snow geese, blue geese and the smaller Ross' geese. The large numbers of snow geese are causing problems when they migrate north. They strip vegetation and alter the soil chemistry, making it difficult for plants to replenish, said Rocco Murano, senior waterfowl biologist for the department.

Murano said the federal officials have been watching these geese since the late 1990s, coordinating efforts to reduce their numbers.

Commissioner H. Paul Denert asked department officials if the 50 geese limit might lead to waste and whether there are other methods of population control.

"This is the first step. It may not have a real big impact on the population," said Tony Leif, director of the Division of

Wildlife in the department.

He said if the state makes this effort, other population control mechanisms may be more socially acceptable in the future.

Commissioners also gave initial approval to changes in duck licenses, which will likely allow for more blue-winged teal harvesting in the first 16 days of the season. The waterfowl proposals, including duck and light geese will be open for public comment at the commission's August meeting, which will take place in Fort Pierre like the current meeting.

After receiving public comment Tuesday, commissioners finalized the antelope hunting season, reducing the number of resident licenses by 27 percent.

Game, Fish and Parks officials hope to increase antelope numbers in the state from around 55,000 to 68,000, give or take 15 percent. These animals, also called pronghorns, are most densely concentrated in the Northwestern part of the state. Department staff updated the state's management plan for antelope, which commissioners are reviewing.

Plans to finalize the wild turkey hunting season were delayed, as the commission voted to make a change that requires public comment. Because the population has been declining, commissioners voted to allow 2 instead of 5 licenses per person.

Other changes already in place reduced the size of the hunting area for turkeys and shortened the season by a month.

## Several Preserve Operators Seek 30-Pheasant Daily Bag

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

FORT PIERRE — The operator of a Seneca pheasant hunting business asked Tuesday that hunters be allowed to take 30 roosters per day at South Dakota preserves.

The current limit is 20. It was increased from 15 in 2009.

Sal Roseland presented the draft of a petition seeking the rule change from the state Game, Fish and Parks Commission.

"Our total goal today was to get the conversation going," Roseland said.

He is part of the Roseland family that runs an 18,000-acre farming, ranching and hunting operation that is about halfway between Aberdeen and Pierre.

The standard daily limit is three roosters for hunters who aren't on preserves.

Jim Dailey, who operates Dakota Ridge preserve near Clear Lake, joined Roseland in speaking to the commission.

"We just have more people wanting to shoot more birds," Dailey said. "If somebody wants to buy something, it's only natural we would want to sell it to them."

Dailey said he has three groups that would like to shoot more than 20 birds per day.

Roseland said he has about 10 groups that would.

Commission chairman John Cooper of Pierre said there was "a lot of blue sky" in the men's argument that all sides would benefit.

Cooper suggested they put more work into the petition and better explain the benefits that would result, before they formally submit it.

GFP Secretary Jeff Vonk said the proposal could use more details.

"It's probably going to be a controversial issue," commissioner Barry Jensen of White River said. "You really want to get it in order for the next one (meeting)."

# Group Plans To Fight Minimum Wage Ballot Measure In Nebraska

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A taxpayer advocacy group announced plans Tuesday to campaign against a ballot measure to increase Nebraska's minimum wage, while some of the state's largest business groups remained undecided about their involvement.

The president of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom said his group will try to defeat the measure, which is expected to appear on the November ballot. Several Nebraska business groups that oppose an increase were still deciding whether they will actively campaign against it or help finance groups that do.

The measure would increase Nebraska's minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour — the same as the federal minimum — to \$9 an hour by 2016. Supporters need about 80,000 valid signatures to get the measure on the ballot, and last week they submitted nearly 135,000 for verification. Backers of the measure argue that the buying power of Nebraska's minimum

wage has fallen relative to the cost of goods and services.

The opposition campaign will include guest editorials in newspapers, a public speaking tour and social media to raise money and generate support, said Doug Kagan, president of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom. Kagan said the Omaha-based group will rely on local chapters in Columbus and O'Neill for support, but still needs to build a statewide network.

Kagan acknowledged that the campaign to defeat the measure faces an uphill battle. Minimum wage proposals submitted to voters in recent years have overwhelmingly won approval, even in conservative states.

"I think that in those other states where it passed, the anti-minimum wage campaigns haven't been that strong," Kagan said. "We're hoping to have a strong campaign so that we can explain the pitfalls of the minimum wage."

Voters in New Jersey approved an \$8.25 an hour minimum wage last year, and in 2006 voters approved minimum

wage increases in Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and Ohio. In addition, state officials in California, Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island each raised minimum wages, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Kagan said a higher minimum wage would increase the cost of goods and services and make it harder to keep employees in industries where labor is a major cost. In addition, he said, Nebraska's relatively low unemployment has already created a state worker shortage that naturally pushes wages higher.

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry has adopted a formal position that the state's minimum wage should mirror the federal minimum wage. But Barry Kennedy, the chamber's president, said his group doesn't have any immediate plans to fight the ballot proposal. Most of the group's member businesses already pay more than the minimum wage, Kennedy said.

"We haven't had any of our members express concerns,"

Kennedy said.

The Nebraska Restaurant Association opposes a higher minimum wage, but the group will wait until it knows for sure that the measure has qualified for the ballot.

"These signatures still have to be validated, county by county," said Jim Partington, the group's executive director.

Nebraska's minimum wage was last increased in 2009. Twenty-one states have minimum wages above the federal minimum.

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### Pressler Invites Obama To SD To Talk Health Care

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Independent U.S. Senate candidate Larry Pressler is inviting President Barack Obama to South Dakota for a conference on the president's signature health care law.

The former Republican senator on Tuesday sent a letter inviting Obama to Pressler's hometown of Humboldt to talk about how to fix the act so it fits rural and small-town South Dakota.

He says despite pleas from many Republicans to repeal the law, the country has passed the legislation and lawmakers need to build on it and make it better.

Pressler says he'd be surprised if Obama accepts the open invitation, but he'd host the conference even after the November election.

Pressler, former Republican Gov. Mike Rounds, Democrat Rick Weiland and independent Gordon Howie are seeking the seat being vacated by retiring Sen. Tim Johnson.

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