

SD Funds For Retirees, Jobless Workers Back On Track

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Their latest reports show South Dakota's trust funds for government retirees and jobless workers have regained their footing financially.

Both the South Dakota Retirement System and the state unemployment insurance program hit rough spots during and after the 2008-2009 recession.

But both are in positive conditions again.

The SDRS investments are poised to finish the 2014 fiscal year on June 30 in a more than fully funded position that is stronger than one year ago.

The unemployment insurance fund meanwhile hit its target for

the first quarter of calendar 2014 and appears on track to finish 2015 with a desired balance of \$78 million even after employer contributions are reduced.

SDRS relies on mandatory employer and employee contributions and investment growth to make its pension payments.

The UI fund runs on mandatory employer contributions.

Out of necessity businesses were socked with higher contribution rates and surcharges, as the UI program went broke during the depth of recession.

A federal loan was required to keep benefits flowing to workers who had lost jobs through no fault of their own.

The loan was repaid, the surcharges were repealed and the Leg-

islature during the 2014 session adjusted the UI rates downward for 2015.

The proof is in the financial condition of the fund, which had a balance of \$58.7 million after the first quarter this year. It is expected to finish 2014 with a balance of \$75.9 million.

"So it looks like very good decisions were made and we're on track for the goals that were set," state Labor Secretary Marcia Hultman told members of the state unemployment insurance advisory committee at a meeting earlier this month.

The investment books won't close for fiscal 2014 for SDRS until later this month. But if state investment officer Matt Clark and his staff in Sioux Falls can finish with a

12.5 percent gain from the 2013 market value, SDRS will have a funded ratio — market value vs. expected liabilities — of 109 percent and a cushion of \$799 million.

A variety of corrective actions were taken in recent years by the Legislature and by the retirement system's board of trustees to bring SDRS back into financial balance, along with the top-tier financial performances by the investment office.

The market value was below liabilities in 2009, 2010 and 2012. But big returns on investments in 2013 put a surplus on the books again, with a funding level of 103 percent, and the expectations this year are to finish with market value at 109 percent of liabilities.

The system's trustees received a presentation at their June 5 meeting about making adjustments to account for increasing life expectancies.

Longer lives mean liabilities will increase because retirees will receive benefits for more years.

That will require the system to generate more money, through possibilities such as higher contribution rates, or shift to older ages for retirement benefits to start, or some combination.

Trustees will continue their discussions in the months ahead. Any significant changes such as contribution rates and retirement ages would require the Legislature's approval at some point whether in 2015 or after.

3 Inmates Set To Die; First Since Oklahoma's Botched Execution

BY JIM SALTER
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Convicted killers in three states were facing executions within a 24-hour period starting Tuesday night, potentially the first lethal injections in the nation since a botched execution in Oklahoma seven weeks ago.

All the states planning executions — Florida, Georgia and Missouri — refuse to say where they get their drugs, or if they are tested. Lawyers for two of the condemned inmates have challenged the secretive process used by some states to obtain lethal injection drugs from unidentified, loosely regulated compounding pharmacies.

Nine executions nationwide have been stayed or postponed since late April, when Oklahoma prison officials halted the execution of Clayton Lockett after noting that the lethal injection drugs weren't being administered into his vein properly. Lockett's punishment was halted and he died of a heart attack several minutes later.

"I think after Clayton Lockett's execution everyone is going to be watching very closely," Fordham University School of Law professor Deborah Denno, a death penalty expert, said of this week's executions. "The scrutiny is going to be even closer."

Marcus Wellons was set to die Tuesday night in Georgia, followed six hours later

by John Winfield, who faces execution at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday in Missouri. John Ruthell Henry's execution is scheduled for 6 p.m. Wednesday in Florida.

Georgia and Missouri both use the single drug pentobarbital, a sedative. Florida uses a three-drug combination of midazolam hydrochloride, vecuronium bromide and potassium chloride.

Despite concerns about the drugs and how they are obtained, death penalty supporters say all three convicted killers are getting what they deserve.

Wellons was convicted in the 1989 rape and murder of India Roberts, his 15-year-old neighbor in suburban Atlanta. Soon after the girl left for school, another neighbor heard muffled screams from the apartment where Wellons was living. Later that day, a man told police he saw a man carrying what appeared to be a body in a sheet. Police found the girl's body in a wooded area. She had been strangled and raped.

The Georgia State Board of Pardons and Poles on Monday denied clemency to Wellons, leaving his fate in the hands of the courts.

In Missouri, Winfield had been dating Carmelita Donald on and off for several years and fathered two of her children. Donald began dating another man. One night in 1996, in a jealous rage, Winfield showed up

outside Donald's apartment in St. Louis County and confronted her, along with two friends of hers.

Winfield shot all three women in the head. Arthea Sanders and Shawnee Murphy died. Donald survived but was blinded.

Symone Winfield, the daughter of Donald and John Winfield, is among those asking Gov. Jay Nixon for clemency. A federal judge granted a stay of execution last week on a claim that a prison worker dropped plans to write a letter in support of clemency due to intimidation from staff. A three-judge panel of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals late Monday upheld the stay, and the state appealed for a hearing before the full 8th Circuit.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court is considering Winfield's argument that Missouri's lethal injection drug, obtained from an unnamed source with no acknowledgement of how it is tested, poses a risk of pain and suffering for the inmate. A similar appeal on behalf of Wellons was before the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In Florida, the state is moving ahead with the execution despite claims that Henry is mentally ill and intellectually disabled. The state claims anyone with an IQ of at least 70 is not mentally disabled; testing has shown Henry's IQ at 78, though his lawyers say it should be re-evaluated.

Central City Board Okes Deal For Superintendent

CENTRAL CITY, Neb. (AP) — The Central City school board voted to approve a settlement and accept the resignation of the district superintendent, ending months of tumult following the firing of a popular football coach.

The board took the action Monday regarding Candace Conradt. Once she signs the agreement, the district will pay her a total of \$142,000 over 12 months, beginning in July. Her resignation becomes effective June 30.

Conradt didn't immediately return messages left by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Board President Dale Palser said Conradt's original contract was supposed to last through 2016, but the board previously negotiated a year off the duration.

A district statement said Conradt had "improved student and staff achievement, technology and school safety during her tenure."

"Central City Public Schools has benefited measurably from her skills and leadership over the past six years," the statement said.

Howls of protest followed the April 2013 firing of high school football coach Darin Garfield, which district officials never publicly explained. Some district residents con-

cerned about the firing said it wasn't the only issue.

"There were just problems that spiraled out of control and made the school environment toxic," district resident Angie Knight told The Grand Island Independent (<http://bit.ly/Ulp14L>) at the meeting Monday.

The residents organized into a group called Time for Change, Time to Move Forward and pushed for Conradt's ouster and began recall drives against three board members.

The recall petitions said: "We believe that recall of (the board members) is warranted due to lack of responsiveness to concerns raised by public and staff, lack of oversight and failure to require accountability from administrators, failure to provide leadership to improve our school."

The group succeeded in their efforts against one member, Kent Malm, who'd been on the board for more than 25 years.

The county clerk ruled that the recall petitions against board members Palser and Steve Belitz were invalid, because petitioners hadn't complied with a requirement that each page must state whether those circulating the petitions were volunteers or paid circulators.

County

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to insure it is done correctly. (The work on the septic system) has to be done by Sept. 1. (The DENR) will allow some reasonable extensions, but if those extensions aren't met, the park can be condemned and shut down. I think the motivation is there to get it correct."

Among the things that will have to be done are having no more than three homes connected to a septic tank with a sufficient drainage field, securing manholes and updating electrical outlets, according to Garrity. "It sounds like something

that needed to be addressed," Commissioner Donna Freng said. "It was pretty scary."

Garrity said the owner of the property, who lives out of state, has been more cooperative than in the past.

"He gave me his personal email and cell phone," he stated. "I hear from him once a week. If I have to call him, he is answering his cell phone. It's better."

In other business Tuesday, the commission:

- Agreed to hire an additional paramedic for Yankton County EMS;
- Agreed that a drainage study should be done before replacing a culvert that recently washed out in Walsh-town Township along 298th Street. Concern was ex-

pressed that the previous culvert was not big enough to handle the flows through box culverts upstream along Highway 46;

- Agreed to seek a bid to address the problem of water coming in through windows at the Yankton County Extension Office;

- Appointed Commission Chairman Bruce Jensen to a board that is preparing for the archery 2015 World Youth Championships that will be held in Yankton; and

- Appointed Jeff Gudahl to the Yankton County Planning Commission.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.

Releases

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"Reductions in releases are part of our normal flood risk reduction measures," Farhat stated. "Proactively reducing Gavins Point Dam releases now will help lower some of the peak water stages on the Missouri River downstream later this week. We will continue to monitor conditions in the basin and make additional release adjustments as necessary."

The total volume of water stored in the mainstem reservoir system is currently 58.1 million acre-feet (MAF), occupying 2 MAF of the 16.3 MAF combined flood control storage zones.

"The reservoirs are well positioned to handle the extra water that will be stored due to these reductions in releases," Farhat said.

Releases from Fort Randall Dam, the next reservoir upstream of Gavins Point, have also been cut to minimize the increase in the Gavins Point reservoir level. Fort Randall releases have been stepped down from 22,000 cfs to 11,000 cfs. Reductions in Fort Randall releases take about one and a half days to reach Gavins Point.

Public safety and protection of critical infrastructure are the Corps' top priorities. People are urged to exercise care near rivers with high flows, and to avoid walking or driving on or near levees. Banks can be undercut and fall into the river without warning. The Corps works closely with state and local emergency responders to inspect, advise and assist communities with professional engineering expertise and materials during flood fights.

Hartington

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"With the completion of the fiber development, everyone without service will be able to take advantage of the extremely high speeds available," Dendinger said. "This provides the opportunity for all users to utilize the fiber to expand personal and business growth."

In order to start this new development, Hartleco had to replace connections with fiber cables and install new optical interfaces at subscriber locations such as businesses, homes and farms.

"Broadband offers rural communities greater access to education, healthcare, business and social services and opens the door to increased global competition," said Moul.

You can follow Jordynne Hart on twitter at twitter.com/hartjordynne

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