

Appeals Court OKs Prison Sentence

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A federal appeals court has upheld the two-year prison sentence for a 31-year-old Omaha man convicted of aiming a laser pointer at a jetliner. The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday rejected Michael Smith's defense that he didn't believe the laser would reach the airliner, saying federal law doesn't require prosecutors to show he intended to hit the aircraft. Smith is the first person convicted in Nebraska under the federal law signed by President Barack Obama in February 2012 making it a crime to aim laser beams at aircraft or its flight path. Police say they found Smith in his backyard on July 11, 2012, pointing a laser at a plane shortly after an airline pilot reported a laser being beamed into his cockpit as he was landing.

Body Pulled From Rapid City Pond

RAPID CITY (AP) — Rapid City police are investigating the death of a 55-year-old man whose body was found in a local pond. Emergency officials were called to Memorial Pond about 9:30 a.m. Friday. They recovered the body and scheduled an autopsy for later in the day. Police identified the man but did not immediately release his name because relatives had not yet been notified.

SD Has First West Nile Case Of The Year

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota has its first confirmed case of West Nile virus this year. The state Health Department says the case is in a Hughes County resident who is in his or her 20s. The person was not hospitalized. State Epidemiologist Lon Kightlinger is reminding people to protect themselves from the virus, which is spread by mosquitoes. Since 2002, the state has documented more than 2,000 West Nile cases and 32 deaths. People can reduce their risk of getting the virus by using insect repellent, limiting time outdoors and getting rid of standing water where mosquitoes can breed.

Court Orders New Trial For Wyo. Man

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Supreme Court has again thrown out the conviction of Wyoming man accused of posing as a licensed car dealer and ordered a new trial in the case. Thomas Merchant, of Cheyenne, Wyoming, has twice been convicted of being an unlicensed dealer after prosecutors said Merchant bought 19 vehicles from the Nebraska Auto Auction in June 2011. The business said the checks Merchant wrote for the vehicles bounced, and that Merchant included a fake dealer's license number on paperwork that also indicated Merchant was a "wholesale" dealer. His first conviction was reversed last year because of improperly admitted evidence. He was again tried and convicted and sentenced to 12 to 26 years in prison. On Friday, the Nebraska high court vacated his second conviction, citing faulty jury instructions.

Omaha Attorney Suspended Indefinitely

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The law license of an Omaha attorney has been suspended indefinitely by the Nebraska Supreme Court. The high court on Friday cited findings by the Nebraska Counsel for Discipline that Nick Simon had violated his oath of office as an attorney in nine counts related to his mishandling of immigration matters. The nine counts generally allege misconduct, incompetence, failure to communicate and failure to act diligently. The soonest Simon can seek reinstatement is June 1, 2015. He also faces two years of monitored probation if he is reinstated. A business phone for Simon rang unanswered Friday. A home phone number for him could not be found.

Wife Of Crazy Horse Sculptor Honored

CRAZY HORSE (AP) — The Crazy Horse Memorial lit up Thursday evening with a special ceremony to honor Ruth Ziolkowski, the late wife of Crazy Horse sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski. Organizers for the "night blast," which lit up the memorial with large balls of fire, say the ceremony also commemorates the 138th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn. Crazy Horse fought against Col. George Custer during the famous battle. Ruth Ziolkowski died at age 87 on May 21 from cancer at age 87. Speakers at the ceremony remembered her as "grandmotherly" but also as a "strong person" that helped finish her husband's work. The death of Ziolkowski triggered a yearslong succession plan at Crazy Horse Memorial that transfers leadership to three people.

Nebraska

Officials Seek Prisoners Released Too Early

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska mistakenly released hundreds of prison inmates over several years because corrections officials miscalculated their sentences, and law enforcement is seeking to re-incarcerate about two dozen of them, Gov. Dave Heineman said Friday. Heineman said that the state let 306 inmates out of prison early because of the errors, which were first reported by the Omaha World-Herald earlier this month. Officials will not pursue the 257 who would have completed their sentences by now, assuming that they've stayed out of trouble. Three others have died since they were released, and five have successfully completed their parole. "Obviously, there was a mistake made," Heineman, a Republican, said. "The individuals who made those mistakes are going to be held accountable."

That's the next phase, after we complete this phase. ... There's no way this should have occurred." The World-Herald report revealed that the Department of Correctional Services failed to follow two Nebraska Supreme Court rulings that spelled out the proper way to calculate prison sentences. Inmates who are ordered to serve a mandatory minimum sentence first have to complete that term before they start receiving "good time" credit, which cuts their remaining sentence in half. An unspecified number of former inmates were returned to custody on Thursday as the prison roundup began. Arrest warrants were issued out of eight Nebraska counties, but state officials declined to name the former inmates out of concern for the safety of law enforcement officials who may have to re-arrest them. The Nebraska State Patrol was working with local and federal law enforcement. Some former inmates qualify for furlough programs, and one is being paroled. Attorney General Jon Bruning said the inmates being pursued generally have one to four years remaining on their sentences. Many are habitual criminals, he said, but most are not considered dangerous. Bruning said those who are returned will receive credit for the time they spent outside of prison. "Each individual case is different," Bruning said. "We're trying to protect the public on one hand, and be empathetic in the fact that some of these guys are out, have found jobs and have started to be productive citizens. We're trying to balance all of that." The governor's office said 20 to 25 warrants were issued out of Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Scotts Bluff, Colfax, Dawson, Gosper and Hall counties. One example of the sentence

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Obama Rips GOP In Economic Salvo

BY JOSH LEDERMAN
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Blasting the GOP as wilfully indifferent to American struggles, President Barack Obama issued a rebuke Friday to Republican attempts to thwart his economic agenda, offering a stark contrast that Democrats hope will yield electoral success in November. Obama's remarks at a picturesque lake in Minneapolis were billed by the White House as a speech on the economy. But as Obama ripped into his political foes before 3,500 cheering supporters, the political undertones were less than subtle. "They don't do anything, except block me and call me names," an indignant Obama said against a backdrop of sailboats and a band shell shaped like a castle. He insisted that as the nation works to restore middle-class prosperity after the recession, congressional Republicans are the only holdout.



ELIZABETH FLORES/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT
President Barack Obama speaks to a crowd gathered at the Lake Harriet Bandshell, Friday, June 27, 2014, in Minneapolis.

Playfully warning his audience that he was in the mood to "say what's on my mind," Obama accused Republicans of letting greed and gridlock perpetrate an economic system that is rigged against American families. He said he gets the sense that Republicans just don't get what Americans are going through.

"The basic attitude is everybody is just crazy out there. If you read the fine print, it turns out the things you care about, right now, Democrats are proposing," Obama said. That's why Obama is moving ahead without Congress, he said. In the absence of congressional cooperation,

Obama's administration has been pursuing executive actions he can take unilaterally. It's a strategy that's drawn indignation from Republicans, prompting House Speaker John Boehner to announce plans to sue the president for exceeding his authority. "They decide they're going to sue me for doing my job," Obama quipped. But Michael Steel, a spokesman for Boehner, said that it is Obama and Democrats who are blocking House-passed bills to create jobs. "The president keeps doubling down on policies that have failed to increase prosperity," Steel said. Still, the president's election-year salvo put a sharp edge on a populist argument Democrats across the country are making as they work to persuade voters that they — not Republicans — are on the side of the middle class. With Obama's approval ratings sagging, Democrats are seeking to

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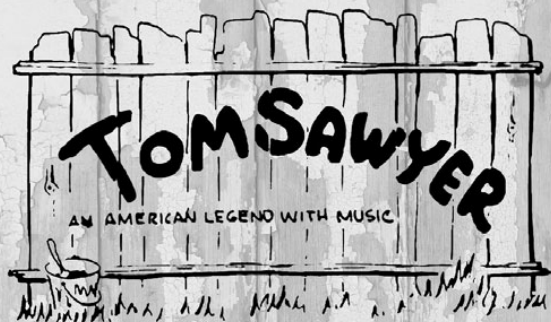
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