



Showers In The Morning

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NSA Data Collection Power Is Curtailed

Surveillance Powers Set To Lapse With No Deal In Senate

BY ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The National Security Agency is losing its authority to collect Americans' phone records in bulk, after GOP Sen. Rand Paul stood in the way of extending the fiercely contested program in an extraordinary Sunday Senate session.

But that program and several other post-Sept. 11 counter-terror measures look likely to be revived in a matter of days. With no other options, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, in an about-face, reluctantly embraced a House-passed bill that would extend the anti-terror provisions that expire Sunday at midnight, while also remaking the bulk phone collections program.

Although the lapse in the programs may be brief, intelligence officials warned that it could jeopardize Americans' safety and amount to a win for terrorists. But civil liberties groups applauded as Paul, who is running for president, forced the expiration of the once-secret program made public by NSA contractor Edward Snowden, which critics say is an unconstitutional intrusion into Americans' privacy.

The Senate voted 77-17 to move ahead on the House-passed bill, the USA Freedom Act, which only last weekend fell three votes short of the 60 needed to advance in the Senate.

For McConnell, it was a remarkable retreat after objecting ferociously that the House bill would make the bulk phone collections program dangerously unwieldy by requiring the government to search records maintained by phone companies.

"It's not ideal but, along with votes on some modest amendments that attempt to ensure the program can actually work as promised, it's now the only realistic way forward," McConnell said.

The White House backs the House bill. White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said in a statement: "The Senate took an important — if late — step forward tonight. We call on the Senate to ensure this irresponsible lapse in authorities is as short-lived as possible. On a matter as critical as our national security, individual senators must put aside their partisan motivations and act swiftly."

But the Senate adjourned without final action on the bill after Paul asserted his prerogative under Senate rules to delay a final vote for several days.

"This is what we fought the revolution over, are we going to so blithely give up our freedom? ... I'm not going to take it anymore," Paul declared on the Senate floor, as supporters wearing red "Stand With Rand" T-shirts packed the spectator gallery.

More In Store



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

The resounding success of 2014's improved Rockin' Ribfest in Yankton didn't come without some hitches. One fix for this Saturday's event is the addition of nine more food vendors and more portable toilets.

Yankton Ribfest Organizers Seek To Build On 2014 Success

BY JEREMY HOECK
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With a year to evaluate how the first Yankton Rockin' Ribfest at Memorial Park fared, committee members have made some small alterations for this year's event, based on feedback they received.

The goal for the ninth annual Ribfest, which will be held this Saturday, was to build on the momentum seen a year ago, according to co-chairperson Kristy Wyland.

"Everybody had a good time, but you remember the things that aren't quite right," Wyland said. "We never imagined we would have that many people, that we would grow that big, that fast."

Although the 2014 event — which was previously held in downtown Yankton for seven years — attracted 15,000 visitors, a pair of consistent complaints were mentioned: The vendors ran out of food and there were not enough toilets.

"We never imagined we would have that many people, that we would grow that big, that fast."

KRISTY WYLAND

In an effort to rectify those issues, the Ribfest committee brought in nine additional vendors for this year's event (an increase from seven) and 38 additional portable toilets (an increase from 24).

"We tried to take all of those comments from last year and work on them for this year," Wyland said. Issues such as those were perhaps understandable,

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JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Fourteen students from regional agencies took part in a K9 First Responder & Tactical K9 First Aid course last weekend in Yankton. Hosted by Yankton County EMS and Yankton County Search & Rescue, the course provided training for first responders to deal with potential injuries to dogs.

K9 Class Draws Eager Participants

BY JEREMY HOECK
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What if a first responder was faced with an injury to a police or search & rescue K9? How would they treat the dog?

Those were key questions addressed during a first-of-its-kind course — officially called a K9 First Responder & Tactical K9 First Aid — over the weekend in Yankton.

Hosted by Yankton County Emergency Management and Yankton County Search & Rescue, the instructional event attracted students not only from both Yankton agencies, but also from agencies from Pennington County (S.D.), Iowa, Nebraska and Colorado.

"Before the class, one of those things we all wondered was, 'What do we do if it's a dog?'" said Mark Nickles, a paramedic with Yankton County EMS. "Now, we're put in a position where we can help them too."

The course was led by K9 Medic and provided those in attend-

ance (14 in all) with basic medical skills in the event that a dog would be injured while on the job.

"Dogs are becoming more prevalent in jobs like these," said Amanda Jackson, a K9 handler with Yankton County Search & Rescue. "We just want to make sure we're providing for them."

Because the course was the first of its kind in Yankton and the surrounding area, agencies from multiple states saw the importance of making the trip, according to Jackson.

"It was hard for us to find anything like this in the area," she said. "We've definitely drawn from a wide area. They (K9 Medic) wanted to get the right information out there."

What the students were taught weren't necessarily skills they don't already use in their job, but the purpose was to educate on the proper techniques for a dog.

"A lot of it is the same stuff; the

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South Dakota

Insurance Risk Pool Sees \$2.4M Surplus

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — With Obamacare in place, state government is winding down a medical risk pool that began more than a decade ago for South Dakotans who wanted to buy health insurance.

About \$2.4 million of cash is expected to remain in the risk pool after all final claims are paid. What would become of the \$2.4 million pitted the governor and the Legislature against one another during the 2015 legislative session.

Weeks of maneuvering ultimately put \$1 million into direct control of the Legislature for a purpose that wasn't specifically identified, while the other \$1,420,000 transferred to the general fund for state government's daily operations.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard originally asked for the full \$2,420,000 to be put in the general fund. The Legislature didn't agree.

The Senate Appropriations

Committee removed that transfer language from a broader piece of legislation that sought to make various amendments to the existing 2015 budget.

The Senate then passed SB 55 on Feb. 25 without the \$2,420,000 transfer from the risk pool.

The House Appropriations Committee on March 6 partially reversed course and approved language for SB 55 to transfer \$1,420,000 from the risk pool to the general fund.

That left \$1 million on the table for some other purpose. The crisscross happened March 9, in the House committee.

The panel held a hearing on SB 99, legislation sponsored by the two appropriations chairs, Sen. Deb Peters, R-Hartford, and Rep. Justin Cronin, R-Gettysburg.

Peters said she introduced SB 99 in a much different form on Jan. 27, as a placeholder to be used for another purpose later in

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Friday Blaze

Yankton Firefighters responded Friday night to three miles east of the Highway 81 and 121 junction to a house fire reported by a passerby. A fire was discovered in the main floor of a two-story abandoned home. The house was checked for the exterior for any occupants; after being deemed empty, the structure was allowed to burn down for safety reasons. This is the second structure that firefighters responded to in 2015 that was abandoned. No cause was found. Firefighters were on the scene for about two hours. (Photo: Yankton Fire Department)

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