

Retirement Could Change To 67 For S.D. Public Jobs

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Retirement would be pushed two years deeper into the future under a proposal that trustees for the South Dakota Retirement System are considering.

SDRS covers state government including state universities and many county, city and school employees who work for governments that are voluntary members of the system.

The later retirement ages — 67 for most jobs, 57 for public-safety positions — would apply to people hired after the new plan takes effect if it is adopted.

The trustees aren't proposing the older retirement ages for current SDRS members. They would remain covered by their existing plan.

Adding the new plan would require support from the trustees and then would need approval from the Legislature and the governor.

The trustees waded through a lengthy presenta-

tion Thursday from their outside actuary consultants.

"There is a lot of work to do on it yet. This is a broad concept," Rob Wylie, the administrator for SDRS, told his board.

He said the meltdown of the financial markets less than a decade ago is forcing the look at a new plan for future employees.

"This is all prompted by what happened in 2008 and 2009," Wylie said.

Consultant Paul Schrader described the proposal as "a restructuring" and "a very big deal."

He said people are living longer and likely will need to work longer to make a pension system balance.

"It may have been a mistake to encourage people to retire so early," Schrader said.

He added. "People are going to have work longer to get the same benefit — not a lot longer."

A feature of the plan under discussion is a variable benefit contribution that would be 1.5 percent of the

employee's annual pay.

The employee and employer would still contribute 12 percent total — 6 percent on each side — for most jobs, and larger amounts for public safety and judicial positions, as they now do.

The new system would be balanced on an assumption that normal costs for the system would be 8.99 percent, with a risk management contribution of 1.85 percent and the 1.5 percent variable benefit contribution.

The hope is the variable benefit contribution would return 7.5 percent annually with a range of 4 percent to 11 percent.

The basic cost of living adjustment for the new plan would be a minimum of 1 percent and a maximum of 3.1 percent. The current system's COLA ranges from 2.1 percent to 3.1 percent, depending on the system's financial status each year.

Another change would be in calculating final average compensation on which the retirement benefit would be based.

Currently a three-year average is used. The proposal for the new plan would be a five-year average.

Trustee Jim Hansen of Pierre asked the board to direct the staff to bring a formal legislative proposal to the September meeting so it can be tweaked for possible final approval at the December meeting.

That would allow the proposal to be taken to the 2016 session of the Legislature in January.

"It's high time we take the bigger step right now," Hansen said.

Other trustees seemed hesitant about proceeding yet and instead wanted to see other financial calculations within the framework of age-67 retirement.

They voted to have other options brought back for the September meeting.

Wylie said he would work to get the information distributed before then and might hold a conference call, possibly during the second week of August.

Man Gets 20 Years For Making Meth

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — The U.S. attorney says an eastern Iowa man who caused a fire that damaged six mobile homes while attempting to manufacture meth has been sentenced to 20 years in federal prison.

U.S. District Judge Linda Reade on Thursday sentenced 27-year-old Michael Landon Monroe Lala to prison after he pleaded guilty in January to attempting to manufacture meth.

In a plea agreement, Lala acknowledged that in November 2013 he was cooking meth in a mobile home in Hiawatha when a bottle tipped over, causing a fire that destroyed the structure and damaged five neighboring mobile homes.

In the agreement, Lala also admitted making meth many times between 2012 and 2014.

After his 20 years in prison, Lala must serve three years of supervision. There is no parole in the federal system.

District Considers Giving Free Meals

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Omaha school district is considering expanding a pilot program that provided free meals to all students in six schools, regardless of the children's ability to pay.

Omaha district officials described the initial rollout in January as successful, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported. Families didn't have to worry about how they would pay for their children's lunch, and school staff could focus more on food prep and less on collecting money.

Since the school year is done, officials want to explore how to spread the free lunch program to more campuses, said Tammy Yarmon, the district's nutrition services director.

Omaha was one of two districts in Nebraska to participate in a federal initiative, called the Community Eligibility Provision, this year that pushed for schools with high concentrations of low-income students to serve free meals to all. Schools can participate in the program if at least 40 percent of their students already receive public benefits, such as food stamps or welfare.

In Iowa, participating districts included Council Bluffs and Des Moines.

The federal initiative allows districts to serve free meals to all without requiring them to collect the usual free and reduced-price meal applications that eligible families have to fill out at the beginning of each school year.

Advocates of the program say it ensures that no students go hungry during the school day, especially those whose families are too embarrassed to apply for lunch subsidies. Federal meal reimbursements cover the cost of the meals.

Man Gets Workers' Comp After Injury

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court says a man who broke his ankle running away from a co-worker on whom he played a prank is entitled to workers' compensation.

The court released a ruling Thursday that the state Department of Labor incorrectly denied benefits to concrete laborer Jason Petrik.

Petrik tricked his co-worker into giving up his seat in an air-conditioned truck on a hot day at a construction site in August 2012. He broke his ankle jumping over a trench while his co-worker chased him.

Petrik's employer argued that he shouldn't get benefits because the company's rules bar horseplay.

But the Supreme Court reversed a lower court ruling, deciding that Petrik's horseplay wasn't a "substantial deviation" from his normal work and therefore happened while he was on the job.

State Elections Panel OKs New Technology

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The state Board of Elections approved use of four additional devices for voting and counting ballots in South Dakota and adopted an assortment of small rule changes Thursday for the 2016 elections.

The four types of machines are products from Elections Systems and Software, a company based in Omaha, Neb.

They include a basic counting device, a high-speed tabulating device, the company's version of an AutoMARK machine for persons with disabilities, and the company's ExpressVote Universal Voting machine that also can be used by persons with disabilities.

Election officials from the South Dakota Secretary of State office tested the four machines as required under state law and state regulations.

"That was an all-day process and it was very thorough," Secretary of State Shantel Krebs said.

The state board's approval is necessary for counties to use a specific device.

"I do think they pass fine and should be recommended to the counties," Brandon Johnson, the office's Help America Vote Act coordinator, told the state board.

The four board members participating in the meeting voted in favor of approval.

Minnehaha County Auditor Bob Litz said he was "very interested" in using the ExpressVote machine for absentee voting in 2016. He said it could eliminate "human error potential" in matching the correct ballot to the specific absentee ballot.

"We've looked at them and we think they may have some benefits for elections in South Dakota," Litz said.

The board also adopted a variety of rule changes proposed by election officials. The next stop is consideration by the Legislature's Rules Review Committee.

One of the changes, for example, would instruct voters to completely fill in the ovals declaring their choices on a ballot.

Another would clarify that recounts in

elections voted in more than one county should be requested from the secretary of state except for municipal and school candidates.

Krebs said her office received many inquiries after the April local elections about recount procedure.

A current rule would be repealed that requires a municipality to publish a public notice there won't be a municipal election. State law doesn't require it.

One proposal dealing with applications for absentee ballots was held back at Krebs' request because she said she has received mixed comments from county auditors.

Three members of the state board — Linda Lea Viken of Rapid City and Drew Duncan and Dick Casey of Sioux Falls — weren't able to participate in the meeting Thursday.

"We want to make sure we continue that conversation," Krebs said.

Archery

From Page 1A

clude before 1:30 p.m.

Wenande is most excited for the head-to-head competition that can be seen during the finals matches.

"It'll be the cream of the crop," she said. "The finals will be a venue built right in front of the archery center where it's head-to-head competition for third and fourth, first and second place."

The compound finals match will take place Saturday, June 13, and recurve on Sunday, June 14, tentatively beginning at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. both days.

There is not just one closing ceremony, Wenande explained. Each division's finals act as a closing ceremony. That decision is made in part due to television broadcast that will be seen by billions around the world.

According to Wenande, as far as watching the event, spectators should consider

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NANCY WENANDE

two things. She says there will be many archers shooting and from distances that can best be viewed with binoculars. She also touched on being respectful to the diverse group of archers and their competing styles.

"Some teams will be really loud and others will be quieter," she said. "As far as etiquette goes, spectators will be able to gauge off of how other teams are reacting."

The public is asked to park at the Best Western Kelly Inn and utilize a walking trail that connects from the hotel to the two fields behind the complex. Trails will also connect the archery complex to the fields so attendees can walk through the vendors. For those with

a mobile disability, parking is available at the archery complex.

Wenande said the scheduled times are not final and subject to change.

"I'm excited that it's finally here," she said. "Overnight, (the complex) is going to transform from two empty fields to a world class competition venue."

On-site tournament updates can be found at the Press&Dakotan Staff blog at www.pressdakotan.wordpress.com.

Find posts on social media from P&D and others by using the #WAYC15 hashtag.

Follow @alyssasobotka on Twitter.



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