

MIDWEST DIGEST

National Farmers Union Convention At Rapid

RAPID CITY (AP) — Rapid City is hosting the National Farmers Union's annual convention.

The event began Sunday and runs through Tuesday at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center.

South Dakota Farmers Union President Doug Sombke says farmers and ranchers will get to help set the policy the organization follows when it talks to members of Congress.

Sombke says it's also a chance to show off South Dakota to the rest of the country.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack is scheduled to give the keynote address Monday at 11:45 a.m.

Construction Begins On New Military Center

COLUMBUS, Neb. (AP) — Work is set to begin on a new military facility in Columbus.

A public groundbreaking ceremony for the \$8 million Armed Forces Readiness Center will be held at 1:30 p.m. Monday. Construction is expected to be done in February.

The project is a collaboration of the Nebraska Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve.

The 46,000-square-foot facility will replace the Guard's current readiness center, which was built in 1956. It will become home to the Guard's 87-member 1075th Transportation Company and the Reserve's 45-person 45th Military Police.

Sioux Falls Vet. Says 7 War Medals Stolen

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A footlocker containing seven medals from the Vietnam War has been stolen from a veteran's business in Sioux Falls.

Sixty-year-old Thomas Graham says the footlocker also had his correspondence and souvenirs from the war.

He says its those sentimental items — not the thousands of dollars in tools that were also taken — that he's anxious to get back.

Graham was in the Marines from 1969 to 1973 and served two tours in Vietnam.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens says there are no suspects in the Tuesday night burglary at Graham's salvage business.

'Tea Party' Activists Protest Reform Bill

RAPID CITY (AP) — About 50 "tea party" activists turned out in Rapid City to protest the health care reform bill before Congress.

Saturday's "Kill the Bill" rally outside the Pennington County courthouse was organized by Republican state Rep. Gordon Howie of Rapid City.

Howie says there are opportunities to increase access to health care, but the measure before Congress isn't the answer.

Howie is among five candidates seeking the GOP nomination for governor. Others are Lt. Gov. Dennis Daugaard, state Sen. Dave Knudson, former Brookings Mayor Scott Munsterman and Buffalo Gap rancher Ken Knappe. State Sen. Scott Heidepriem of Sioux Falls is the lone Democrat in the race.

Neb. CSI Chief Headed To Trial — Again

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Douglas County's chief crime-scene investigator is headed to a second trial over allegations of wrongdoing in a 2006 double-murder case that led to two innocent men being charged and jailed for months.

David Kofod faces a single count of evidence tampering in Cass County where his trial starts Monday. He was acquitted on related federal charges in September. Both cases stem from his work four years ago investigating the murders of Wayne and Sharon Stock of rural Murdock.

To prove his case, special prosecutor Clarence Mock intends to use a past case to show Kofod intentionally planted blood evidence in the Stock murders.

Alliance Manager Resigns Amid Concerns

ALLIANCE, Neb. (AP) — The Alliance city manager has resigned amid concerns over her handling of some issues.

Pam Caskie tendered her resignation Thursday night after City Council's seven-hour executive session.

City Attorney Larry Miller wouldn't give reasons for Caskie's departure, but says the council was uncomfortable with how she handled certain issues. He did not elaborate.

Caskie had been city manager since November 2005. Miller has been appointed acting city manager.

Dog Trapped On Neb. River Returns Home

WISNER, Neb. (AP) — A dog trapped on an ice floe on the swollen Elkhorn River in Cuming County has returned home.

Rick Jacobs of Wisner says his dog became stranded on a chunk of ice in the river on Wednesday. He paddled out in a canoe and tried to rescue the dog, but the ice broke free and floated down the river before he got there.

Wisner says he feared the dog would be crushed by the ice. But the dog returned home a day later — tired but in good shape. Jacobs says someone saw him along the road and brought him back.

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USD's Volk Symposium To Address Ethics

VERMILLION — Cynthia Cooper will present her award-winning lecture, "Ethical Leadership for the 21st Century" at The University of South Dakota during the 2010 Arthur A. Volk Accounting Symposium/Ethics Lecture at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 23, at the Wayne S. Knutson Theater.

Cooper, an internationally-recognized speaker on business ethics, will share the story of how her team unraveled the fraud at WorldCom — the largest fraud case in United States history. The author of "Extraordinary Circumstances," a book that discusses her experiences as a corporate executive, Cooper previously served as the chief audit executive for MCI until July 2004. Prior to joining MCI, she worked in public accounting in Atlanta, Ga., for PricewaterhouseCoopers and Deloitte & Touche.

In 2002, Cooper was named one of *Time Magazine's* "Persons of the Year." Two years later, she was inducted into the AICPA Hall of Fame — the first woman to receive this distinction. Cooper is also a past recipient of the American Accounting Association's Accounting Exemplar Award, presented annually for notable contributions to professionalism and education in accounting practice or education. She is the first woman to receive this award. Cooper received her undergraduate degree in accounting from Mississippi State University and her master's of accountancy from the University of Alabama.

S.D. Public Colleges Want More Graduates

BY STEVE YOUNG
The Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS — In a state where one in seven residents has some college experience but no degree, South Dakota higher education officials are vowing to do better.

Recently, the Board of Regents announced that South Dakota was joining 16 other states bent on increasing the number of adults with college degrees or credentials.

By sharing best practices from those other states and tapping into national expertise, the board hopes it can reverse trends where half of students who start out at South Dakota's public or private colleges don't graduate within six years, and where three of 10 freshmen at the state's six public universities are gone by the time their sophomore years roll around.

"South Dakota has some of the nation's best and brightest college students," Gov. Mike Rounds said. "We would like to see them all finish what they started."

There are many reasons why they don't, said Sam Gingerich, the regents' vice president for academic affairs. Students run out of money. They come to college lacking ability in math, English and writing and grow impatient trying to catch up through remedial classes. They sour on their majors and think it will take too long to go into something else. Or they become frustrated when they decide to transfer to another institution, but the credits they've earned don't come with them.

The regents know the names and residences of 2,657 South Dakotans who left school without a degree in the past five years, even though they had completed three-

fourths of their coursework, Gingerich said. Those are the people in particular the regents want to focus on first, he said.

They are elementary education majors who reached their last semester and decided they didn't want to teach, Gingerich said. Or they're nursing majors who took years of focused coursework only to decide nursing was not for them.

To switch into biology or other related majors might require another year or two of study, he said. So the regents are talking about a bachelor degree of general studies that would allow such students to earn a diploma with only another semester of work.

"Getting that degree, whatever it is, is important," Gingerich said. "A degree does open doors when they get into the work force."

Tom Sugar, senior vice president at Complete College America, said his group will work with participating states to remove barriers to students succeeding, including improving transfer policies.

"If you go to a state public institution to get a two-year associate degree, you should be able to transfer to a four-year institution and be recognized as a junior," Sugar said. "There should also be no question that if you transfer from one four-year public institution to another, there will be no hassles."

Sugar and others said there should be better ways to handle remedial classes required of college students who fail standardized testing in math, English and composition.

A student who falls two points short on a standardized exam shouldn't have to pay \$500 for a semester-long remedial course, including books, and not earn college credit for it, Sugar said, adding, "we have to start thinking more broadly."

Gingerich agreed, saying South Dakota was going to roll out new options for remedial courses this fall, including online tutorials and labs, with an emphasis on getting students into the remediation quicker and done sooner.

Complete College America also thinks states can keep more students on track if there are more financial incentives.

Until a year ago, South Dakota was the only state without a needs-based scholarship program, Gingerich said. That changed when last year's Legislature authorized such a program, though it provided no funding. The regents were able to tap some foundation dollars to earn a federal match, resulting in \$177,000 that was disbursed in the current school year to needy students, said Paul Turman, associate vice president of academic affairs for the Board of Regents.

Once the economy improves, the regents would like to see the state invest, say, \$500,000 for that program, Turman said. The Board of Regents thinks it could get matching foundation and federal dollars to turn that into \$2 million to \$2.5 million.

"We think that will help with those needy students who are so difficult to retain," Turman said.

That's part of the goal, said Jack Warner, executive director for the Board of Regents. That, he added, is why South Dakota has joined this alliance.

"For this state and our country to be competitive, six of 10 young adults will need to hold a post-secondary degree or credential of value in the labor market by 2020," Warner said. "We are ... focused on several strategies to build that pipeline of young workers in South Dakota."

S.D. Simplifying Renewable Energy Incentives

BY DIRK LAMMERS
Associated Press Writer

SIoux FALLS — South Dakota is trying to streamline its complex maze of tax incentives for small renewable energy projects.

A bill that passed the Legislature last week rewrites state law to make the first \$50,000 of the assessed value of a small to medium renewable energy property, or 70 percent of the assessed value if that figure is greater, exempt from real property tax.

That means residents won't have to do anything to get the tax benefit, and assessors won't have to revisit properties to and change their numbers because of a few rooftop solar panels or a small wind turbine, said Public Utilities Commissioner Dusty Johnson.

"We're not going to penalize you for investing in renewable energy," he said. "That's what current state law does."

The existing structure provides varying incentives for wind, solar, hydroelectric, hydrogen, biomass and geothermal projects, Johnson said, but it's a confusing mess of credits in which "everybody sort of had their own little tax carve out."

He estimates that of the 180 or so small renewable energy projects in South Dakota, only a few have bothered to fill out the paperwork.

"It was confusing enough in which very few people did it, and as a result, it was an incentive that wasn't working," Johnson said.

Rep. David Lust, R-Rapid City, learned of those challenges firsthand when he went to his county

offices to apply for geothermal system incentives.

"I was the first person that anyone in that office could recall that ever applied for this program," Lust said. "They couldn't find the forms."

The bill, which applies to renewable energy facilities of less than 5 megawatts of capacity, provides a more streamline and efficient process so people can take advantage of incentives already in law, Lust said.

The new policy will take effect July 1 if signed by the governor.

That's not given as the legislation was opposed in committee by the state Department of Revenue and Regulation, but the bill did pass both legislative chambers with veto-resistant majorities, 26-7 in the Senate and 64-3 in the House.

Michael Kenyon of the state Department of Revenue and Regulation told the House State Affairs Committee that allowing permanent exemptions for proj-

ects all the way up to 5 megawatts of capacity will cost municipalities money.

Yvonne Taylor, director of the South Dakota Municipal League, said her organization supports wind energy, "but we don't think you should pick local pockets to pay for it."

Johnson said South Dakota does a lot to encourage big wind projects, and fairness would dictate that the state provide similarly favorable treatment for small renewable energy projects.

Some residents who have installed home-based solar systems have been hit with property tax increases that eat up all of their utility bill savings, he said.

Restructuring tax policy is part of a three-part effort to encourage small energy projects.

The commission has also encouraged investor-owned utilities to make it easier for residents to connect with the grid, and it has worked with municipalities on developing local ordinances that allow for small wind projects, Johnson said.

He said many small renewable energy projects don't provide a great payoff today, but technology is driving down costs and they may be more profitable at some point down the road.

"This bill is less about today and more about the future," Johnson said.

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NOTICE OF MEETING OF LOCAL REVIEW BOARD

SDCL 10-11-13

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN That the governing body, sitting as a Review Board of Mission Hill (N.) Township/Municipality, Yankton County, South Dakota, will meet at the Vangen Lutheran Church in Mission Hill, South Dakota on MONDAY, the 15th day of March 2010 (being the 3rd Monday in March) at 7:00 pm for the purpose of reviewing and correcting the assessment of said taxing district for the year, 2010, and to conduct other business as needed.

All persons considering themselves aggrieved by said assessment are required to notify the clerk of the local board no later than March 15, 2010, at noon.

Laurie J. Becvar, Clerk
Mission Hill Township (N)

Dated March 1, 2010



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