

MIDWEST DIGEST

Neb. CSI Awaits Verdict In Tampering Case

PLATTSMOUTH, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska judge began considering the fate Friday of a crime-scene investigator charged with felony evidence tampering.

Douglas County CSI director David Kofeod is accused of planting blood evidence in 2006 to bolster a case against two suspects in a double-murder case. Those men were charged and spent months in jail before being cleared.

In closing arguments delivered Friday at the end of a five-day trial, Kofeod's attorney, Steve Lefler, said prosecutors have presented only speculation. He argued they didn't do enough to "put the mark of a convicted felon and dirty cop" next to Kofeod's name.

But Kofeod's explanation of accidental cross-contamination just doesn't add up, special prosecutor Clarence Mock said.

While investigating the murders of Wayne and Sharmon Stock of rural Murdock nearly four years ago, Kofeod said he found a speck of Wayne Stock's blood in a car linked to two original suspects. The blood was the only evidence tying Matthew Livers — the Stocks' nephew — and Nicholas Sampson to the shotgun slayings.

Livers and Sampson were eventually cleared, and investigators followed DNA evidence to two others — Jessica Reid and Gregory Fester of Horicon, Wis. Both pleaded guilty in the Stocks' deaths and are now serving life in prison.

Kofeod was acquitted on related federal charge last year.

Neb. Gov's Mind Unchanged On Prenatal Care

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Reports that women plan on getting abortions have not changed Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman's opposition to a bill to allow some illegal immigrants and other women to continue receiving state-funded prenatal care.

Asked about the reports on Friday, Heineman said there hasn't been confirmation of abortions. He said that illegal immigrants shouldn't receive taxpayer benefits and that he hoped the women wouldn't get abortions.

Heineman said he wouldn't speculate on what his stand would be if there were confirmed reports.

The women have said they can't afford prenatal care on their own. Lawmakers have shelved a bill that would have allowed the women to continue receiving the care provided until federal officials told the state it breaking Medicaid rules.

R.C. Chief Says Officers Followed Policy

RAPID CITY (AP) — The Rapid City police chief says he regrets the outing of a lesbian Air Force sergeant led to her military discharge, but his officers followed department protocol.

Steve Allender on Friday released the results of an internal investigation of the handling of information regarding Jene Newsome's sexual orientation. The investigation was sparked by a complaint from the ACLU.

Newsome's discharge under the "don't ask, don't tell" policy came after police officers saw an Iowa marriage certificate in her home and told officials at the nearby Ellsworth Air Force Base. The ACLU claims the officers violated Newsome's privacy.

Allender says the department did nothing wrong, but will review its policies and meet with members of the gay and lesbian community.

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Subsidies Link S.D. House Hopefuls

Three Of Four GOP Candidates Linked; Herseth Sandlin's Family Had Link

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Three of the four candidates in the U.S. House race in South Dakota have close ties to federal farm subsidies, even as the issue of growing federal deficits emerges as a central issue in the campaign.

The subsidies have been a favorite target of budget hawks who complain they're pork barrel spending that aid wealthy farmers and distort market prices. But they also have the solid backing of rural-state lawmakers — both Republicans and Democrats — who argue they're an important safety net for America's farmers.

That support for farm subsidies is likely to continue from South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat, regardless of who wins in November.

State Rep. Kristi Noem, R-Castlewood, is a partner in the Racota Valley Ranch, which received almost \$3 million in subsidies from 1995 to 2008, according to figures compiled by the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit organization that collects and analyzes farm subsidy data. As of 2009, Noem had a 16.9 percent ownership stake in Racota Valley.

Her brothers and mother bought her out last year, she said.

Democratic Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin's father, former state lawmaker Ralph Lars Herseth, received \$929,347 from 1995 to 2008. Herseth Sandlin said she has not directly benefited from her family's subsidies.

Secretary of State Chris Nelson said he received a modest amount of subsidies in the past, but not since about 2001. His late father, Myrle Nelson, received \$62,224 in subsidies from 1995 to 2003, the year he died.

The only candidate in the race who doesn't have a tie to subsidies is state Rep. Blake Curd, R-Sioux Falls, a surgeon.

Curd, Nelson and Noem are

seeking the Republican nomination to challenge Herseth Sandlin in November. But don't look for agriculture subsidies to be a big point of contention, says one political science professor.

"I'm guessing that while agriculture subsidies are sometimes a slightly guilty secret for some farmers, I can't imagine they would be easy to use as a political

weapon," said Ken Blanchard of Northern State University.

Many candidates for office in South Dakota have ties to subsidies, especially when family members are factored in. Subsidies are a part of life here, and somebody who criticizes them risks irritating the agriculture industry, Blanchard said.

Like the other Republicans in

the race, Noem has entered because she opposes recent federal spending policies. But when it comes to farm subsidies, she said they're necessary to the country's ag sector. They preserve the industry, which makes the country more secure. South Dakota in particular has experienced disasters, and Racota Valley has benefited from disaster assistance.

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S.D. Man Gets 50-Year Sentence In Beating Death

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A Sioux Falls man has been given a 50-year sentence in the beating death of his girlfriend last spring in their apartment.

Michael Ashko Shimayil was sentenced Thursday for manslaughter. The 30-year-old pleaded guilty in December and, in return, prosecutors dismissed nine other charges.

Shimayil's girlfriend, Bakita Mohammed, was found beaten and unconscious on April 30. She died May 13.

Shimayil has said in court that he hit her with a length of PVC pipe but doesn't remember how many times after three or four swings.

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