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INSIDE TODAY



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County, State Races Shaping Up

From P&D Staff Reports

As the Tuesday deadline approaches for candidates to turn in nominating petitions for the June 5 primary election, local county and state races are beginning to take shape.

On the legislative end, incumbent Sen. Jean Hunhoff (R-Yankton) is the only candidate for the District 18 Senate race.

For the two District 18 House seats, House Minority Leader Bernie Hunhoff (D-Yankton) announced Thursday that he will seek re-election.

Two Republicans also told the *Press & Dakotan* Thursday that they are seeking House seats.

Yankton attorney and former Yankton School Board member Michael Stevens said he filed his petition Thursday.

Thomas D. Stotz, treasurer of the Yankton County Republicans and a chiropractic physician, also announced his candidacy.

"I am committed to representing the issues and concerns of the citizens of Yankton County with the strong voice of experience and leadership and with the respect and honor the people deserve," he said in a press release.

Several other candidates from the Democratic and Republican parties are rumored to be throwing their hats into the House race, but the *Press & Dakotan* has not seen any official confirmation.

RACES | PAGE 2A

Yankton's PPC Ratings Lowered

Fire Protection Improvements Could Mean Lower Premiums

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Residents in the Yankton area could see their property insurance premiums go down this year thanks to improvements in fire protection.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) has lowered the Public Protection Classification (PPC) ratings for the City of Yankton and the Yankton Fire Protection District from a "5/10" to a "3/8b." These ratings take effect April 1.

"It's really good for the community and a good effort by everyone to get it done," said Tom Kurtenbach, the Yankton Fire Chief. "In the long run, it should save everyone who pays property insurance premiums some money."

It's difficult to pinpoint just how the rating change will affect property owners, he said, because the use of the information differs by insurance company.

"I'm not going to tell anyone that their insurance premiums are necessarily going to go down right away, because we just

went through a couple years of wind and hail losses," Kurtenbach added. "Whether the fire insurance premium going down will offset the wind and hail going up, who knows? But it will certainly help control those premium costs."

Yankton joins just a handful of South Dakota communities that have achieved a rating as low as a "3."



Kurtenbach

City Manager Doug Russell said the rating represents the efforts of numerous entities, including but not limited to:

- the preparation, effort and commitment of the fire department to improve the rating;
- the capacity of the dispatching center;
- the orderly planning, development and maintenance of the water supply system;
- the community's investment in the new fire station; and

RATING | PAGE 14A

Decision 2012

School Board Hopefuls Sign In

Strict Format Used In First Candidate Forum

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Yankton School Board candidates at a forum Thursday evening had a strict set of rules to follow.

Three of the five individuals running for two open seats on the school board attended the event at JoDean's Steakhouse and Lounge. It was organized by the We The People Yankton Committee, a group that advocated against the school district's defeated Feb. 28 property-tax opt-out.

The school board election will be held April 10.

Committee member Wayne Wurth explained to D.G. "Butch" Becker, Matthew Pietz and Michael "Moose" Welch that they would be asked a series of questions by three moderators. In response to each question, the candidates could hold up a sign with a "yes" or "no" answer, or they could abstain if they did not feel comfortable with the question.

Clarifications, he said, were not allowed.

Current School Board president and candidate Kathy Greenway did not attend the meeting and said in advance that she disagreed with the format. Mark Westerman was also absent.

The candidates were asked a



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

From left, D.G. "Butch" Becker, Matt Pietz and Michael "Moose" Welch use these hand-held signs during Thursday night's school board candidate debate to indicate how they voted in the recent Yankton School District opt-out. According to the debate format, the candidates could only respond with a "yes" or "no" sign, or pass on responding, to the questions posed to them. Two candidates, Kathy Greenway and Mark Westerman, did not participate in Thursday's forum.

total of 22 questions during the course of about 15 minutes. The audience was given a checklist with the questions so candidate answers could be ticked off as the forum proceeded.

Some of the questions and answers were as follows:

Will you bring up a motion for the Yankton School District to get out of health care self-insurance and go back to a group plan?

- Becker — Yes

- Welch — Abstain
- Pietz — Abstain

Would you define the self-insurance fund of approximately \$8.2 million at First Dakota Bank as an over-charge on health care premiums over the past years?

- Becker — Yes
- Welch — Yes
- Pietz — Yes

Would you be in favor of a pri-

vate contractor taking over the busing of the students at the Yankton School District?

- Becker — Abstain
- Welch — Abstain
- Pietz — Abstain

How did you vote on the two-year, \$2.8 million opt-out at YSD 63-3 on Feb. 28, 2012?

FORUM | PAGE 3A

Obama Defends Action On Pipeline

BY KEN THOMAS
Associated Press

CUSHING, Okla. — President Barack Obama firmly defended his record on oil drilling Thursday, ordering the government to fast-track an Oklahoma pipeline while accusing Congress of playing politics with a larger Canada-to-Gulf Coast project.

Deep in Republican oil country, Obama said lawmakers refused to give his administration enough time to review the controversial 1,170-mile Keystone XL pipeline in order to ensure that it wouldn't compromise the health and safety of people living in surrounding areas.

"Unfortunately, Congress decided they wanted their own timeline," Obama said. "Not the company, not the experts, but members of Congress who decided this might be a fun political issue decided to try to intervene and make it impossible for us to make an informed decision."

Facing fresh criticism from Re-



Obama

OBAMA | PAGE 3A

Ness Honored With Cornerstone Award



PHOTO: AFFORDABLE EXPRESSIONS
Longtime Yankton banker and community booster Larry Ness, left, was honored Tuesday with the Cornerstone Award during the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce's annual banquet. He is shown with incoming Chamber president Gary Dybsetter, center, and outgoing president Doug Ekeren.

BY DEREK BARTOS
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As Larry Ness looks back on nearly three decades' worth of his contributions to the Yankton community, no single effort stands out to him.

"Times change," said the CEO and chairman of the board of First Dakota National Bank. "Over the years, you get involved in one thing or another, and it's really a hot subject at the time. Then, five years later, no one can remember it. That's just the way it is."

While that may be true, Ness' entire body of work has not gone unnoticed, and those contributions were recognized earlier this week when he was awarded the Yankton Area

Chamber of Commerce Cornerstone Award during the Chamber's annual banquet held at Minerva's Grill and Bar.

The Cornerstone Award is given to an individual who has played an integral role in helping others. The candidates considered for the award have made significant contributions to the community by selfless acts of time and contributions throughout their life in Yankton.

"I'm very grateful and appreciative of the recognition for things that I've tried to do since I've been around Yankton the past 28 years," Ness said. "Not everything turned out well, but I've had some good things happen in the community, and it's fun to be a part of those things. We've got a lot of people in this com-

munity that do so much and are willing to stick their neck out. It makes Yankton a great place to live. It's very much enjoyable to work with those people and make for a better community."

Ness' long list of contributions to the community made him an easy choice for the award, said Carmen Schramm, director of Chamber services. These include assisting with the financial and leadership needs of individuals, events, schools, non-profits, the arts and many other causes.

"We couldn't even list all of them in the program, because it would have gone on too long," she said with a laugh.

Ness has served on multiple

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