

16 Apply For Seat On Neb. Board Of Regents

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Sixteen people have applied for an open seat on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

Gov. Dave Heineman’s office announced the names Friday. The candidates are vying for the southeast Nebraska district seat that was held by former Regent Lavon Heidemann. Heidemann was chosen to serve as the new lieutenant governor.

The applicants are Janice Bostelman of Brainard; Craig Buescher of South Bend; Leon Deunk of Cortland; Steve Glenn of Pawnee City; Michael Jones of David City; Sara York Kenney of Eagle; Janet A. Palmtag of Nebraska City; George Pinkerton of Beatrice; Mike Powers of Palmyra; Barton Dean Ruth of Rising City; Robert M. Schafer of Beatrice; Ben Steffen of Humboldt; Roger Wehrbein of Plattsmouth; Bradley Worman of Nelson; Susan Wurtele of Plattsmouth; and Susan Meyerly of Lincoln.

Chambers To Present Bill Abolishing Death Penalty

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A state lawmaker who wants to abolish Nebraska’s death penalty will present his repeal proposal to a state panel next week.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha will offer the bill Wednesday to the Legislature’s Judiciary Committee.

Chambers is an outspoken death-penalty opponent who has repeatedly tried to end the practice. He returned to the Legislature after a four-year hiatus imposed by term limits.

His measure would replace the death penalty with a sentence of life without the possibility of parole. In the bill, Chambers rails against the death penalty as a failure that has harmed the state’s reputation for fairness, decency and respect for human dignity.

Daugaard Approves Longer Abortion Wait

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard on Friday announced that he signed a bill extending in some cases what is already the nation’s longest waiting period for a woman to receive an abortion.

Women seeking abortions in South Dakota currently must wait three days after seeing an abortion clinic doctor before they can have the procedure. The bill makes it so weekends and holidays do not count in calculating the three-day waiting period.

Supporters say the change ensures women have time to receive required counseling at pregnancy help centers, which discourage abortions.

Opponents say the measure could hamper many women seeking abortions.

Highway Patrol Dog Retires After 11 Years

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol is retiring its explosive-sniffing Belgian sheepdog.

Jet started his career with the Highway Patrol in 2003 as a police service dog trained to detect odors of different compounds that could be used to construct explosive devices.

Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Craig Price says Jet has been used to sweep through the State Capitol building and other locations. He also helped to detect recently fired weapons during various events, like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Jet’s official retirement day was Wednesday.

Elections Chief Backs Study Of Voter ID Bill

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska’s elections chief is recommending an interim study to determine whether the state needs legislation that would require government-issued photo identification to vote.

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale says he’s generally supportive of adopting a voter ID measure, but says a bill before the Nebraska Legislature this session could be the strictest among the 33 states that have voter ID laws and “may be stronger than Nebraska needs.”

Gale says the strict requirements in the bill would be costly.

The bill was introduced by Sen. Charlie Janssen of Fremont.

Janssen, a Republican candidate for governor, has introduced similar measures before. Last year, a similar bill died after supporters failed to stop a filibuster against it.

S.D. Panel OKs State Budget

BY CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press

PIERRE — The South Dakota Legislature’s budget-writing committee recommended a \$4.1 billion state budget Friday after its members wrangled most of the day on whether to give more money to schools and medical facilities that treat the poor.

The House and Senate planned to vote on the budget Friday, the final day of the main run of this year’s legislative session. But no vote had been taken as of Friday night.

The four Democrats on the Joint Appropriations Committee voted against the spending measure, arguing the Legislature should give more money to support the ongoing spending in education and medical care. Majority Republicans said the budget takes care of schools and medical facilities while supporting other priorities.

“It feels to me like we’re putting big business before people, before kids,” Sen. Billie Sutton, D-Burke, said.

After the panel voted to reject extra funding for nursing homes and other facilities that rely heavily on Medicaid, the state-federal program that provides health care

for poor people, House Appropriations Chair Fred Romkema said lawmakers had to make tough votes to balance the budget.

“We’re making some painful decisions here,” Romkema told the dozens of state officials, lobbyists and other lawmakers who watched the Appropriations Committee meet over much of the day. “We don’t have the money in the budget. We don’t relish these votes. We’re looking for a balanced budget for South Dakota.”

The committee rejected most of the 59 proposed changes to the budget. The panel’s recommended spending plan made few changes in Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s recommended budget, which gives roughly 3 percent ongoing increases to K-12 schools, universities and the hospitals and other facilities in the Medicaid program.

However, lawmakers noted that the Legislature in recent days approved separate bills that give extra money on a one-time basis to school districts and the medical facilities that treat poor residents. One of those special spending measures gives schools an extra one-time boost in state aid of 1 percent, or \$5.8 million. Technical schools get an extra \$200,000. And all Medicaid providers got an extra

1 percent one-time increase, with nursing homes and other facilities that are heavily dependent on Medicaid money getting extra help.

The measure would spend nearly \$4.1 billion in the budget year beginning July 1. About \$1.33 billion will come from state general tax funds, up about \$29 million from this fiscal year. Another \$1.7 billion comes from federal funds, with about \$1.1 million coming from other funds dedicated to specific uses such as roads.

Daugaard had left some money uncommitted in his budget proposal, and the Legislature is spending about \$33 million in one-time money on schools, Medicaid, a new economic development program and other projects.

The committee rejected a request by Rep. Susan Wismer, D-Britton, to add \$5.8 million to give schools an extra 1 percent in ongoing state aid. She said school districts need ongoing money because they cannot make long-term plans with one-time money that may not be granted in future years.

But Rep. Dean Wink, R-Howes, said the Legislature cannot make long-term funding commitments while facing uncertainty caused by federal budget problems and the

possibility that South Dakota will be hit by drought for a second straight year.

House Democratic Leader Bernie Hunhoff of Yankton asked the committee to change Medicaid to provide prenatal care to pregnant women who are in the country illegally. The governor supported the proposal, but the committee rejected it on mostly party lines.

The committee approved spending another \$2 million to shore up a pension fund for workers at the former State Cement Plant, which the state sold more than a decade ago. Another \$4 million from the treasury will be transferred to an economic development fund to replace incentive payments given to two businesses last year when the state had no incentive program to lure businesses to South Dakota.

Other changes endorsed by the committee include \$500,000 for grants to help schools upgrade their computer technology, \$500,000 for equipment upgrades at technical institutes, and \$159,000 to help Northern State University continue providing some courses online to school districts that lack science or math teachers.

Daugaard Signs Bill To Arm School Teachers

BY DIRK LAMMERS  
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed into law Friday a measure allowing the state’s school districts to arm teachers and other personnel with guns, the first of its kind since the Connecticut school shooting.

Supporters say the so-called sentinels could help prevent tragedies such as December’s shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., in which 20 students and six teachers died. The law will go into effect July 1.

The bill’s main sponsor, Rep. Scott Craig, R-Rapid City, said he started working with federal law enforcement officials on the measure in early November, and the Connecticut tragedy weeks later “only affirmed the rightness of this bill.” He said the measure does not force a district to arm its teachers or force teachers to carry a gun.

“There’s no mandating of anything. It’s provisional. It’s a take-it-or-leave-it bill,” he said.

South Dakota doesn’t stand

alone on this issue. For a dozen years, Utah has allowed teachers and others with concealed carry licenses to wear a gun in a public school. A couple of school districts in Texas have been given written authorization to allow guns in schools. And legislatures in other states, including Georgia, New Hampshire and Kansas, are working on measures similar to South Dakota’s.

Several representatives of school boards, school administrators and teachers opposed the bill during committee testimony last month. They said the measure could make schools more dangerous, lead to accidental shootings and put guns in the hands of people who are not adequately trained

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ROB MONSON

to shoot in emergency situations.

Rob Monson, executive director of School Administrators of South Dakota, said his group opposes the bill because it fails to address key issues, such as school building safety, mental health and fire and emergency response.

“We were really hoping that they would look at doing a more comprehensive study of school safety overall, and not sort of jump right into arming people in our schools and thinking that is the answer to it all,” Monson said.

But Craig said a number of school board members and administrators voiced support for the bill.

“There are plenty of school districts that let us know that they’ve

wanted this, and they’ve wanted this kind of provision for quite some time,” he said.

On Monday, the South Dakota House voted 40-19 to accept the Senate version of the bill, which added a requirement that a school district must decide in a public meeting whether to arm teachers and others. Another Senate amendment allowed school district residents to push a school board’s decision to a public vote.

Craig said he couldn’t say how a typical district would implement a sentinel policy, as those decisions will be made locally.

“They get to work out the details in the days ahead,” he said. “They’ve just kind of been waiting and watching to see if this even would pass.”

Monson said school districts are going to want to know how the bill’s passage will affect them.

“Our biggest challenge right now will be answering all the questions that school boards and administrators are going to have about liability issues and all the other pieces that haven’t been put in place yet,” Monson said.

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**5-Time Heart Attack Survivor**

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