

ND Looks At Even More Abortion Restrictions

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota lawmakers who approved what would be some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the U.S. are now considering outlawing all abortions.

The "personhood" measures would ban abortions by defining human life as beginning with conception. It's drawing opposition from some doctors who say it could cause problems for infertile couples seeking to use in vitro fertilization to conceive, but supporters insist that's addressed in the legislation.

The state Senate passed two personhood measures last month, and the House could vote as soon as Tuesday. One of the bills the proposal a state law and another is a resolution that would put the definition into the state constitution, if passed by voters.

North Dakota is one of several states with Republican-controlled Legislatures and GOP governors that is looking at abortion restrictions, but the state could go further than any other in challenging the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision that legalized abortion.

Last week, the Legislature last week sent Gov. Jack Dalrymple what would be two of the most restrictive abortion laws in the U.S., banning abortions as early as six weeks in a pregnancy and on the basis of genetic defects such as Down syndrome. North Dakota also would be the first to adopt a personhood law if that measure passes. Abortion-rights activists have vowed to fight the measures in court.

Mountain Lion Hunting In SD Hits A Lull

RAPID CITY (AP) — Game wardens in South Dakota say it is unlikely that the state-set quota of 100 mountain lions will be killed during this year's hunting season.

KEVN-TV reports that with only two weeks left in the season, only 49 lions have been killed, including 29 females. The season limit is 100 total lions or 70 females.

No lion has been killed for nearly two weeks. The last one killed was on March 6 in Pennington County.

Last year's season ended a month early after 70 lions were killed. Seventy was the quota last year.

Neb. Opens China Trade Office In Shanghai

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska has officially opened its first China trade office in Shanghai.

The new office is part of a push by Gov. Dave Heineman to help Nebraska businesses tap lucrative international markets. Heineman celebrated the opening Monday in Lincoln.

Heineman says value-added agriculture exports are a key growth area between Nebraska and China.

The Nebraska Center in China represents a gateway for Nebraska companies entering and expanding in China. Services will include business counseling, promotion of products and services, and help in identifying potential business partners. The center will also concentrate on attracting more Chinese investment to Nebraska.

Grace Gui, formerly of Omaha, will serve as the office's executive director in China. Gui served as a system and senior database administrator for Stapes in Omaha from 2001 through 2012.

R.C. Police Arrest Man For Threatening Clerk

RAPID CITY (AP) — Rapid City police have tracked down and arrested a 21-year-old man for threatening to shoot a convenience store clerk.

Police say Alexander Quintana of Rapid City entered a convenience store early Monday morning and threatened the clerk.

The *Rapid City Journal* reports that officers found Quintana a short time later in Canyon Lake Park.

Debate Continues On Neb. Tax Board Measure

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Lawmakers are continuing to debate a measure that would create a state tax modernization commission.

The Legislature failed to reach a vote on Monday on the bill, which would launch a comprehensive study of Nebraska's tax climate.

Sen. Paul Schumacher of Columbus introduced the legislation to address a tax system that many view as outdated.

The panel would include all members of the Legislature's Revenue Committee, and other committee heads. Members would meet until December 2015. The committee would then dissolve, unless lawmakers reauthorize it.

Sen. Ernie Chambers has mounted a filibuster on the bill. Chambers argued Monday that legislation isn't needed for lawmakers to study the state tax system.

Prison Officer, Inmates Hurt In Traffic Crash

DEADWOOD (AP) — A South Dakota corrections officer and some state prison inmates were injured when a vehicle transporting the inmates was involved in an accident in the northern Black Hills.

The state Corrections Department reports that the officer was taking seven inmates from the Rapid City Minimum Unit to a work site near Deadwood when the vehicle slid into the ditch and rolled along U.S. Highway 14A early Monday morning.

One of the inmates was airlifted to Rapid City Regional for treatment. The remaining six inmates were taken to the Lead-Deadwood Regional Hospital, where one was treated for an injured shoulder and two were treated for minor injuries. The other three inmates were not injured.

The correctional officer was treated and released at Sturgis Regional Hospital.

Neb. Event Promotes Emergency Planning

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska planners will have a chance to learn lessons from the extended 2011 protests in Wisconsin, a school shooting in Omaha and other real-life emergencies.

The annual infrastructure protection conference for businesses and government officials will be held next Tuesday and Wednesday in La Vista. State and federal homeland security officials bring in experts on a variety of topics for the event.

U.S. Attorney Deborah Gilg says the goal is to make sure the state is ready for emergencies no matter what kind. Besides the Occupy Wisconsin protests, this year's conference will also discuss drought, radiological shipments passing through the state, cyber security concerns and workplace violence.

South Dakota

Piper Asks Court For New Trial

BY DIRK LAMMERS

Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — An attorney for an Alaska man facing the death penalty in South Dakota asked the state Supreme Court on Monday to throw out his client's conviction and sentence because he didn't understand that he could be sentenced by a judge rather than a jury.

Briley Piper admitted to his role in the March 2000 killing of 19-year-old Chester Allan Poage near Spearfish. His attorney, Steve Miller, said Piper pleaded guilty because he believed if he chose a jury trial, a jury would also have to sentence him. A lower court judge confirmed that misconception, even though Piper had the option of being tried by a jury and sentenced by a judge.

"We're not just talking about a jury waiver here," Miller said. "We're talking about the entire decision as to whether go to trial on the merits or not."

Paul Swedlund, assistant attorney general, said if Piper understood that a hung jury was his ticket to a life sentence, he would have wanted a jury trial to ensure a jury sentencing. But Piper wanted a court sentencing, he said.

"Feigning remorse to a dispassionate sentencing court was the best card that Piper had to play, and pleading to that same sentencing judge was an indispensable part of that sentencing," Swedlund said.

Swedlund said it's not incumbent on the court to correct defense strategies, an argument challenged by Justice Glen Severson.

"That may be true, but here we're looking at the voluntariness of a plea, which is due process," Severson said.

Piper and Elijah Page of Athens, Texas, both pleaded guilty to the slaying in 2001 and were sentenced to death by a judge. Their lawyers later said they believed Piper and Page had a better chance of avoiding the death penalty if the judge

sentenced them because a jury would be swayed by the brutal nature of the crime.

Piper appealed, and the state Supreme Court eventually overturned his death sentence by ruling that a jury, not a judge, should decide his fate.

Justice John Konenkamp said the high court recognized the bad advice in that previous ruling and dealt with the issue.

"We remedied what he said was the problem and now he's saying, 'No that's not the real problem. The problem is now I want a trial on everything,'" Konenkamp said.

Miller said Piper should get to enter a new plea, not be shackled to a plea made on bad advice.

Page voluntarily ended his appeals and was put to death in July 2007 in South Dakota's first execution in 60 years. A third suspect, Darrell Hoadley, of Lead, was convicted by a jury that sentenced him to life in prison without possibility of parole.

Late-Winter Storm Affecting Travel Across The Dakotas

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A late-winter storm shut down schools and caused travel problems Monday throughout much of North Dakota and eastern South Dakota.

Motorists in many areas were advised not to travel or to use extreme caution because of blowing snow. The wind was forecast to gust up to 60 mph in northeastern South Dakota.

"It doesn't take a whole lot of snow with these strong winds to cause problems," National Weather

Service meteorologist Ryan Vipond told the *American News* in Aberdeen. Ice also was a problem on roads in the region, according to KELO-TV.

The North Dakota Transportation Department late Monday afternoon issued a statement saying no travel was advised overnight for the eastern part of the state due to high winds causing near blizzard conditions with blowing snow, areas of near zero visibility, scattered snow drifts, compacted snow

and continuous ice on roads.

A travel alert remained in effect for northwestern North Dakota, where officials said challenging winter driving conditions persisted.

Parts of eastern North Dakota were expecting more than half a foot of snow. The National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning for much of eastern North Dakota and for northeastern and east central South Dakota.

Many schools started late or

called off classes for the day. Personnel at Minot Air Force Base in north central North Dakota who were not considered "essential" were allowed to come to work late.

People had to be rescued from more than two dozen stranded vehicles on Interstate 29 between Fargo and Wahpeton in southeastern North Dakota late Sunday and early Monday, Highway Patrol Capt. Bryan Niewind told *The Forum* newspaper.

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