

Omaha: Woman Dies In Hit-And-Run

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A 63-year-old woman has been killed in a hit-and-run collision in north-central Omaha. Omaha police say Kathleen Benes, of Valparaiso, died at the scene of the accident Sunday afternoon. She was driving east on Maple Street when her car was struck from behind by another sedan. The impact knocked her car into oncoming traffic, where it was struck by a westbound pickup. The pickup driver was hospitalized. Police say the sedan driver drove away, followed by a witness in his car. The witness called 911 and shared information that led officers to the sedan. They arrested the sedan driver, who was identified as 35-year-old Justin Ayers, of Omaha. He remained in custody on Monday. It's unclear whether he has a lawyer who could be contacted to comment about the accident.

Omaha: 1 Arrested In Fatal Stabbing

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Omaha police say they have arrested a man after a fatal stabbing in a boarding house. Officer James Shade says the suspect was arrested before 2 a.m. Monday in the late Sunday stabbing. Shade says the injured man, whose identity wasn't released, was taken to the Nebraska Medical Center in critical condition and later died. Shade says no other suspects are being sought in the incident. He says the name of the man in custody will be released later Monday.

Sioux Falls Incident Involves Shots Fired

STIOUX FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls police arrested two suspects in a weekend incident they say involved a hammer, a vehicle ramming and a shooting. Authorities say a woman driving a sport utility vehicle intentionally rammed a car Saturday evening, and a man with a handgun got out of the Jeep and fired several rounds as the car's three occupants fled. They escaped unharmed. The man earlier in the day had allegedly tried to attack the car with a hammer. The two suspects were apprehended as they tried to flee the area in a different vehicle. Authorities say a dispute involving the people in the two vehicles apparently sparked the incident.

SD Winter Wheat Crop Continues Slide

STIOUX FALLS (AP) — The condition of South Dakota's winter wheat crop continues to decline. The Agriculture Department says in its latest crop report that 35 percent of the winter wheat is rated in good condition, with no producers reporting an excellent rating. A report earlier this month showed that 49 percent was graded in good condition, with zero excellent. The report says 22 percent of the winter wheat is poor or very poor. The opposite was true for cattle and calf conditions, which were rated 89 percent good or excellent. Calving progress was 34 percent complete. Sheep and lamb conditions were 85 percent good or excellent. Lambing progress was at 70 percent.

Man Dies In ATV Rollover Near Sisseton

STIOUX FALLS (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says a Browns Valley, Minnesota, man was killed when his all-terrain vehicle rolled over near Sisseton. The patrol says 76-year-old Clarence Pistorius was pinned under his ATV. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The accident happened about 8 p.m. Sunday eight miles northeast of Sisseton. Authorities say speed appears to be a factor in the crash. Pistorius was not wearing a helmet.

Death Of College Student Ruled Suicide

CHADRON, Neb. (AP) — Dawes County authorities say the death of a 19-year-old Chadron State College student was a result of suicide. The body of Fatima Larios, of Seaside, California, was found in a campus residence hall around 2:30 a.m. on Jan. 31. Acting as county coroner, Dawes County Attorney Vance Haug says evidence and autopsy results show that Larios died of asphyxia because of hanging. Larios was a high school softball standout who played last year as a freshman at NCAA Division 1 Austin Peay before transferring to Chadron State last summer.

Think Tank: Nebraska Has Cut Taxes

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A report by a Nebraska tax-policy think tank says the state has cut taxes significantly over the last decade, reducing the revenue available for other priorities. The OpenSky Policy Institute said Monday that tax cut packages enacted since 2005 are expected to cost the state \$840 million in revenue per year by 2024. Income tax cuts are expected to account for \$487 million of the reductions. The group says the decreased revenue has contributed to the growing reliance on property taxes. The group, which often emphasizes the need for school funding, says the decline leaves less money available for K-12 schools and state services.

SD Only State Obama Hasn't Visited

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — President Barack Obama will visit Utah on Friday for his first visit to the state as president. White House spokesman Eric Schultz says Obama will visit Hill Air Force Base in northern Utah to speak about the economy. The trip will mark the 49th state that Obama has visited since becoming president. South Dakota is the only state still awaiting a presidential trip.

Nebraska

Term-Limit Expansion
Bill Wins Initial Approval

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A measure that would let voters decide whether Nebraska lawmakers should serve an extra four years in office under term limits won initial approval Monday. Senators advanced the proposed ballot measure for the 2016 general election with a 27-12 vote, despite uncertainty over key details. It must be approved twice more before it can appear on the ballot. Under the proposal, lawmakers could serve up to three consecutive four-year terms in office, and supporters say it could be changed to allow a maximum of two six-year terms instead. Sen. Paul Schumacher of Columbus said he introduced the measure to help preserve institutional knowledge in the one-house Legislature. Schumacher pointed to senior staff members in the Legislature who have "kept the institution on track" in recent years, but are nearing retirement age. Under a voter-approved constitutional amendment, lawmakers have been limited to two consecutive four-year terms since 2006.

"The longer you are here, the more you realize what you don't know and how valuable experience is."

SEN. PAUL SCHUMACHER

"The longer you are here, the more you realize what you don't know and how valuable experience is," Schumacher said. The proposal wouldn't apply to any current senators and would be phased in starting in 2020. Schumacher said he supports term limits, but that new senators face a steep learning curve. He said he personally prefers allowing two six-year terms because it matches the time given to U.S. senators and the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. Voters may resist the idea. A constitutional amendment that restricted lawmakers to two consecutive four-year terms won statewide approval in 2000. A 2012 ballot measure to let senators serve three four-year terms was rejected by a nearly two-to-one margin. Advocates for term limits said they prevent lawmakers from becoming career politicians and guarantee a steady supply of fresh faces and new ideas. But even

some supporters have said term limits give more power to experienced lobbyists and political parties. Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion argued last week that, if the measure passes, lawmakers should have to serve three four-year terms instead of two six-year terms. Kintner said shorter terms force senators to stand for election more often and keeps them more accountable to their constituents. Some supporters backed term limits as a way to oust former Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers. Chambers, who served nearly 40 years, is well-known for his intimate knowledge of legislative rules and his ability to single-handedly block bills. Term limits forced him from office in January 2009, but he was re-elected in 2012 after sitting out the minimum time required. Terms limits ushered in 17 new state senators this year, accounting for more than one-third of the Legislature.

South Dakota

Lawmakers Want Habitat Report

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — A panel of state lawmakers decided Monday the South Dakota Community Foundation board of directors shall report on July 20 how the foundation used \$350,000 approved by the Legislature this month for improving wildlife habitat. HB 1192 started as a \$1.5 million request from Gov. Dennis Daugaard to establish a matching-funds program for habitat work. The amount gradually came down to \$350,000 because state revenues now appear tighter than forecasted four months ago. The Legislature's Joint Committee on Appropriations

approved a letter of intent to the foundation Monday. The letter says the \$350,000 shall be held separate from the foundation's endowment. The letter requires the money go for operating costs on a matching basis dollar for dollar with private contributions and donations received by the foundation's conservation fund. The legislators also want the foundation's board of directors to update the bylaws for the conservation fund to reflect the requirements in the new law. The legislation authorizes the state Bureau of Finance and Management to be responsible for approving vouchers and the state audi-

tor will draw warrants to pay those amounts. The spending can begin immediately. "I believe they already have the \$350,000 match in place," Sen. Larry Tidemann, R-Brookings, said. The governor had announced the \$1.5 million request last year as part of the emphasis he placed on restoring South Dakota's population of wild pheasants. South Dakota has become regarded in the past two decades as offering the best pheasant hunting in the nation. Among other letters of intent approved by the legislators Monday: • The current formula already in rule will be used for

distributing approximately \$1 million of leftover student support to the four public technical institutes at Watertown, Mitchell, Rapid City and Sioux Falls; • The Daugaard administration will report on the new captive insurance programs for state government to legislators "at every opportunity possible" in the words of Rep. David Anderson, R-Hudson; and • All of the current and future budget amounts, including tourism tax receipts, shall travel with the Office of History, the State Historical Society and the Cultural Heritage Center as they are shifted from the state Department of Tourism to the state Department of Education.

BNSF Adds New Rules For Crude Oil Trains

BY JOSH FUNK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — BNSF has started taking additional safety measures for crude oil shipments because of four recent high-profile derailments in the U.S. and Canada, the railroad said Monday. Under the changes, BNSF is slowing down crude oil trains to 35 mph in cities with more than 100,000 people and increasing track inspections near waterways. The Fort Worth, Texas, based railroad also is stepping up efforts to find and repair defective wheels before they can cause derailments. BNSF spokesman Michael Trevino said these additional safety efforts were imposed last week in response to the recent derailments, including one involving a BNSF train earlier this month near Galena, Illinois, and the Mississippi River. "The recent incidents involving crude trains, including our own event in Galena, has led us to believe that we must take further action," Trevino said. In February, a 100-car Canadian National Railway train hauling crude oil and petroleum distillates derailed in a remote part of Ontario, Canada. And less than two days later, a 109-car CSX oil train derailed and caught fire near Mount Carbon, West Virginia, leaking oil into a Kanawha River tributary and

burning a house to its foundation. The worst of these crude oil derailments happened July 6, 2013, and involved a runaway train that killed 47 people in the town of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, just across the U.S.-Canada border from Maine. The number of rail accidents remains relatively small compared to total rail traffic, but fiery accidents involving crude oil are increasing because U.S. and Canadian oil production is booming. Railroads hauled 493,126 tank cars of crude oil last year, up from 407,761 in 2013 and just 9,500 cars in 2008 before boom took off in the Bakken region of North Dakota and Montana as well as in Canada. BNSF, which is owned by Omaha-based Berkshire Hathaway Inc., hauls much of the oil produced in the Bakken region. Trevino said the railroad had already doubled the frequency of track inspections

near waterways; now it will inspect the track 2.5 times more often than regulations require. BNSF, like the other major freight railroads, uses a system of trackside detectors to identify wheels and axles that are beginning to fail. Trevino said the railroad will begin removing flawed wheels sooner to help prevent derailments. These new BNSF efforts go beyond the voluntary measures railroads agreed to last year when the industry pledged to slow crude oil

trains to 40 mph in metropolitan areas and report route information to emergency responders. "The freight rail industry shares the public's concern over recent high-profile incidents and we recognize, as part of a shared responsibility with shippers, more has to be done to further advance the safe movement of this product," said Ed Greenberg, spokesman for the Association of American Railroads trade group.

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