

S.D. Voters Reject Teacher Merit-Pay Plan

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota voters have rejected Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s plan to give bonuses to top teachers, phase out tenure and recruit candidates for critical teaching jobs.

The Legislature approved the Republican governor’s proposal earlier this year, but the state’s main teachers union, the South Dakota Education Association, collected enough signatures to put the measure on the ballot for a public vote.

Daugaard argues the measure will improve student achievement. But opponents contend it could hurt the quality of education because teachers might stop collaborating to help students as they compete for bonus money.

The plan would have given annual \$5,000 bonuses to the top 20 percent of teachers in each school district and provided scholarships and bonuses to recruit teachers in critical fields.

Nelson Wins Seat On S.D. Utilities Commission

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairman Chris Nelson has been elected to a new term on the panel that regulates grain warehouses and natural gas, electric and telephone utilities in the state.

The 48-year-old Republican defeated Democratic challenger Nick Nemec, a 54-year-old farmer and former state lawmaker from Holabird, for a four-year term on the commission.

Nelson is a former secretary of state who was appointed nearly two years ago to fill a vacancy on the PUC.

Nemec had criticized Nelson and other members of the PUC for not doing enough to protect farmers who lost money when they sold sunflowers to a failed grain-buying company that cannot pay them. Nelson countered that the commission did everything it could under current law to protect those farmers.

S.D. Airmen Returning From Southwest Asia

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Twenty-seven members of the South Dakota Air National Guard who served half a year of duty in Southwest Asia are returning home.

The Guard says the members of the 114th Security Forces Squadron are returning to Sioux Falls on commercial flights late Wednesday.

The airmen deployed in April to provide security and law enforcement services at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

Apartment Fire Prompts Evacuations

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — An early morning apartment fire in Sioux Falls prompted evacuations and caused at least one apparent injury.

The fire began about 4 a.m. Tuesday in the middle building of a complex with five apartment buildings. The Argus Leader newspaper reports that residents of the neighboring buildings were let back into their homes about 5:15 a.m.

KELO-TV reports that one person was taken from the middle building on a stretcher and transported from the scene by ambulance.

Voters Expand Official Impeachment Rules

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraskans have approved a measure that adds campaign misdeeds to the reasons elected officials can be impeached.

Before Tuesday’s vote, elected officials could only be impeached for actions they took while in office.

The measure was placed on ballot by the Legislature.

Sen. Bill Avery of Lincoln sponsored the impeachment measure to close a loophole exposed by the case of former University of Nebraska Regent David Hergert.

Hergert was impeached and removed from office for manipulating campaign finance laws when he ran for election in 2004.

Avery says the only reason Hergert was able to be impeached was that he signed a false campaign finance report after taking ofice.

S.D. Farmers Finish Up Row Crop Harvest

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Farmers in South Dakota have been finishing up the row crop harvest, hauling grain and embarking on fall tillage thanks in part to fairly quiet weather this past week.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says in its weekly crop and weather report that farmers have also been haying, fertilizing and moving cattle to stubble fields as they prepare for winter.

Soil temperatures recovered somewhat in places as dry soil conditions responded to slightly warmer air temperatures.

Winter wheat was 33 percent emerged, behind the five year average of 93 percent emerged. Ninety-five percent of the sunflower crop was harvested, ahead of last year’s 91 percent and the five year average of 59 percent.

Cattle conditions are rated 74 percent good to excellent, 23 percent fair and 3 percent poor.

GOP Retains Control Of Neb. Legislature

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Nebraska Legislature will remain solidly Republican next year, with the GOP easily crossing the minimum threshold needed to maintain control of the senate.

The election was the first since lawmakers approved new political districts based on 2010 Census numbers. Though the one-house Legislature is officially nonpartisan, votes on hot-button issues such as tax policy and the death penalty often fall along party lines.

Republicans have long outnumbered Democrats by roughly a 2-1 ratio, and they needed to win only one race to hold their majority in the 49-member Legislature. In the last session, GOP lawmakers held 33 seats to Democrats’ 15. Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford was a Republican but re-registered as an independent.

Party identification traditionally hasn’t meant as much in the one-

house Legislature as in other states. Lawmakers neither hold formal party meetings, as they do in other states, nor elect party leaders.

But party unity became an issue in April, when a handful of Republican lawmakers defied Gov. Dave Heineman and joined Democrats to extend prenatal care benefits to illegal immigrants. Heineman was outraged and singled out Speaker Mike Flood, a fellow Republican.

On that issue, as well as a sales-tax bill for cities among others, many see growing pressure on lawmakers who vote their conscience and not their party.

Omaha Sen. Heath Mello, a Democrat, wondered before Tuesday’s election what will happen to “independent-minded” lawmakers who weren’t afraid to challenge the governor when they disagreed.

Nebraska Republican Party Executive Director Jordan McGrain argued that last session’s votes, especially regarding prenatal care, demonstrated the need for party

unity. The GOP has advocated for ridding the Legislature of its official nonpartisan status, arguing that Democrats use it to downplay their political leanings in conservative districts.

“I think what has become clear — especially after this last session — is that the magic number really isn’t 25,” McGrain said, referring to the simple majority needed to pass a bill.

Republicans are guaranteed at least 24 seats next year. Fourteen GOP lawmakers are not up for re-election, three of their seats are uncontested and seven races pit Republican against Republican.

Twelve of the contests are between Republicans and Democrats, and the GOP only needs to win one to maintain a majority.

In April, at the height of the prenatal care debate, the state’s Republican Party sent an email to supporters singling out state Sen. Kate Sullivan, a Cedar Rapids Republican who voted in favor of the measure. She is facing a challenge from

fellow Republican Brook Curtis in Tuesday’s election.

McGrain said party leaders have put greater emphasis on a candidate’s adherence to core Republican beliefs.

“If you’re a Republican, it’s certainly important that the candidate running in your district is a Republican,” McGrain said. “They’re going to be with you on less government regulation, lower taxes, cutting spending, doing things similar to your ideology.”

Months later, it was clear Heineman remains frustrated with defiant Republicans, saying they don’t always need to agree with him, but should most of the time.

“Certainly, you look for someone who shares your common beliefs, your value system, and they’re probably with you 90 percent of the time,” he said. “But I think Ronald Reagan was right when he said that if someone’s with you 80 or 90 percent of the time, that’s a friend.”

Results Of South Dakota Ballot Issues

By The Associate Press

REFERENDUM 14 - LARGE PROJECT FUND
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 118,507 - 42 percent No, 164,260 - 58 percent
REFERENDUM 16 - TEACHER INCENTIVES
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 96,000 - 32 percent x-No, 203,344 - 68 percent
INITIATIVE 15 - SALES TAX INCREASE
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 128,254 - 43 percent No, 171,512 - 57 percent
AMENDMENT M - CORPORATE RESTRICTIONS
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 81,912 - 29 percent x-No, 196,408 - 71 percent
AMENDMENT N - LEGISLATIVE TRAVEL
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 106,304 - 36 percent No, 185,810 - 64 percent
AMENDMENT O - CEMENT PLANT TRUST
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 159,553 - 57 percent No, 122,611 - 43 percent
AMENDMENT P - BALANCED BUDGET
627 of 735 precincts - 85 percent Yes, 184,174 - 64 percent No, 101,489 - 36 percent

Romney Carries S.D. In Presidential Race

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Mitt Romney won South Dakota’s three electoral votes Tuesday, continuing the GOP’s domination of presidential politics in the heavily Republican state.

Neither Romney nor Democratic President Barack Obama campaigned in South Dakota, as both sides focused their efforts on competitive states with more electoral votes. No Democratic presidential candidate has carried South Dakota since 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson prevailed over Republican Barry Goldwater.

Some South Dakota voters favored Romney because they believe he can cut federal spending and jumpstart a struggling economy.

“I think he’ll get better control of the spending issues in Washington than Obama could,” said Chad Hank, 39, an insurance office manager from Tea.

Dennis Nelson, a 56-year-old truck driver from Philip, liked Romney’s business experience.

“I think the man’s a businessman,” he said. “He knows how to do things.”

The economy and health care, two of the big issues in the presi-

dential race, also played big roles in the fight between Republican Rep. Kristi Noem and Democratic challenger Matt Varilek for South Dakota’s lone seat in the U.S. House.

Varilek, a 37-year-old former congressional staffer, accused Noem of supporting Republican plans that he said would wreck Medicare, the health care program for retirees, and give tax breaks to the wealthy.

Noem, a 40-year-old farmer and former state lawmaker, accused Varilek of supporting tax increases on middle-class families and small businesses and backing the health care overhaul she contends would increase costs instead of reducing them.

“The repeal of Obamacare is important,” said Tim Rabb, a 53-year-old chiropractor from Sioux Falls who voted for Romney and Noem.

Varilek also hammered Noem for missing many House committee meetings and failing to get a farm bill passed before Congress recessed for the election. She said she attended most of the meetings she was accused of missing and missed others because she couldn’t be in two meetings in once.

That issue struck home with Mike Sanovia, 47, a marketing

representative in Sioux Falls who said he voted for Varilek because Noem had missed meetings.

“Kristi is not there, and she’s going back and forth on our dime,” Sanovia said.

But Rabb, the chiropractor, said he voted for Noem because she’s done a good job in her first two years in Congress. He was leery of Varilek because he had worked for several U.S. senators.

“He’s been in government all his life, so he doesn’t have much business experience,” Rabb said.

South Dakota voters on Tuesday also were electing state lawmakers and two members of the three-member Public Utilities Commission, which regulates electric, natural gas and telephone utilities.

Voters also were deciding some ballot issues, including a plan to boost the state sales tax from 4 percent to 5 percent, with the extra money split between schools and Medicaid. Also on the ballot was Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s plan to give merit pay to teachers.

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Mike Stevens

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AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE

WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY

Wednesday, November 7

7:40 am MMC President
(Dr. Joseph Benoit)

8:15 am Hy-Vee Foods
(Chef Staci)

8:45 am Miss South Dakota USA
(Jessica Albers)

Thursday, November 8

7:40 am Yankton Chamber
(Carmen Schramm)

8:15 am Yankton Conv/Vis Bureau
(Lisa Scheve)

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