

Wilson Trailer Lays Off Workers In Iowa

SIoux CITY, Iowa (AP) — Wilson Trailer Co. is laying off 68 workers at its plants in Sioux City and Moberly, Mo., citing a slow-down in the national economy and bad weather in crop-producing states.

The Sioux City-based company produces livestock, grain, flatbed and gooseneck trailers. Demand fell this year in the wake of a multitude of bad weather, from flooding along the Missouri River to drought in some Midwest and southern states.

Human Resources Director John Kreber says the company hoped to avoid the layoffs, but the reductions became necessary. Employees were told of the decision at a meeting in late September. The layoffs are effective Oct. 31.

Omaha Man Arrested After Police Standoff

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — An Omaha man faces several charges after he was arrested after a standoff with police.

Authorities say 50-year-old Scott Dawson was taken into custody on Wednesday. Police were called to a house on a report of a possible suicidal person who has fired a gun in the yard.

Officers tried unsuccessfully to contact Dawson, but located his wife, who said he was alone in the house. She also told officers she was the victim of domestic violence.

Police say Dawson refused to come out. Officers then heard a shot fired inside the home. Police entered the house and found Dawson unharmed. He faces attempted murder, terrorist threats and weapon charges.

His case is not listed on the online court system, and it's not known if he has an attorney.

S.D. Regents Reduce Credit-Hour Requirement

VERMILLION (AP) — Students at South Dakota's six public universities are going to be able to graduate a little quicker starting next summer.

The Board of Regents voted Wednesday to adopt a new policy that reduces the number of credit hours students need in order to graduate with an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Under the new policy, students working toward a bachelor's degree will need to earn 120 credit hours, down from the previous 128 hours. Associate degree programs will require 60 credit hours, down from the previous 64.

Regent's executive director Jack Warner said the change should help some students graduate earlier and with less debt.

He said 120 credit hours is the common minimum standard across the county for a bachelor's degree.

Their Targets Donation Jars In Lincoln

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Lincoln police are looking for a thief who's stealing charity donation jars from businesses.

Police believe three burglaries early Wednesday are related because the culprit took the jars and not the usual burglar's fare of the cash register.

The businesses — Skorohod Service station, a McDonald's restaurant and a LensCrafters — were hit within three hours of each other. Police say the thief broke glass doors to get inside. In two of the thefts, only the charity jars were taken. Cigarettes were stolen along with the charity jar from the other business.

S.D. Woman Selling Anti-Bush Vanity Plates

RAPID CITY (AP) — Two South Dakota vanity license plates that called for the impeachment of former President George W. Bush are for sale on eBay.

Heather Morijah and Curt Finnegan put their expired MPEACHW and IMPCH W plates on the Internet auction site recently as part of their plans to sell their house in Rapid City and move to Oregon, according to *The Rapid City Journal*.

"Maybe that'll help with the moving expenses," Morijah told the *Journal*.

The plates drew media attention when the state tried to recall them in 2007 after someone complained they were offensive. But Morijah resisted and the American Civil Liberties Union said it was free speech. The state relented and Morijah continued to use the plates on the front of her car after she moved to Pennsylvania.

License plates can't be sold on eBay until they've been expired for at least three years. Morijah's plates expired four years ago.

There had been no bids on the plates as of late Wednesday afternoon. Morijah said she hopes to find a buyer with a special interest in the plates — Al Gore, perhaps.

Mountain Lion Killed In Crash With Car In Western S. Dakota

RAPID CITY (AP) — A woman suffered minor injuries when her car collided with a mountain lion west of Rapid City. The lion was killed.

Pennington County Sheriff's Sgt. Greg Foster tells the *Rapid City Journal* that the lion ran in front of the woman's car in the dark Tuesday night and she couldn't avoid hitting it.

The woman suffered scratches on her arms when the car's air bag deployed. She did not require hospitalization.

State wildlife officials were picking up the lion carcass.

Drug Test Requirement May Be Proposed

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — A South Dakota lawmaker may ask next year's Legislature to consider a bill that would require people to take drug tests before getting unemployment benefits, state Labor Secretary Pam Roberts said Wednesday.

However, federal law prohibits states from requiring drug tests to determine whether people are entitled to unemployment benefits or payments from other federal assistance programs, Roberts said.

Roberts said Rep. Tom Jones, D-Viborg, has talked with department officials about introducing a bill requiring applicants to pass a drug test before getting jobless benefits. She said she told him he needs to talk to South Dakota's congressional delegation because a change in federal law would be required to

allow such testing.

Jones did not immediately return telephone calls seeking comment Wednesday.

Roberts talked about the proposal during a meeting of the state Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council. She said if a bill requiring drug testing for people seeking jobless benefits is introduced in the 2012 legislative session, she would probably have to testify that it would not be legal.

Council member Paul Aylward of Huron, a labor union official, said he is offended by the proposal.

"We're picking out unemployed workers and by inference saying they're all on drugs. I don't think there's any evidence of that," Aylward said.

Similar bills that would have required or encouraged drug testing before people get welfare benefits were rejected earlier this year by the Legislature. Supporters said it

would help people stop using illegal drugs and would make sure tax money is spent wisely, but opponents said it was impractical and would deny services to children whose parents failed drug tests.

Roberts said when she attended a recent national meeting of state labor officials, the group was split on whether to ask Congress to change the law so drug testing would be allowed to determine whether people qualified for jobless benefits.

She said she is not aware of any state that has tried to deny unemployment benefits to people who fail drug tests. But some states are considering making people who are already receiving unemployment benefits take drug tests to see if they meet requirements for being available for work.

The Labor Department has no money to pay for drug testing, so such testing would have to be funded with money provided by the Legislature, Roberts said.

Fired Neb. Prison Worker Appeal Rejected

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A federal appeals court on Wednesday rejected a former Nebraska prison employee's claims that he was wrongly fired after he refused a vehicle search.

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' opinion upheld the dismissal of Brian True's second attempt at arguing his constitutional right against unreasonable searches had been violated.

True was fired in 2007 after refusing to allow a supervisor to search his car at the Lincoln Correctional Center. The request was part of a random search of employees' vehicles meant to prevent inmates from obtaining

contraband, a policy still used in Nebraska.

True consented to searches, under protest, twice before in 2007, but turned down a request in April 2007 after concluding the state was on shaky legal ground.

A three-judge panel of the appeals court on Wednesday upheld the lower court's finding that such random searches are reasonable, following testimony that community custody inmates sometimes have access to the prison parking lot without direct supervision.

True's attorney, Robert Creager of Lincoln, said True would ask the full court to review the case.

"It was a matter of principal," Creager said of True's objection to the vehicle searches. "In order

to vindicate the principal, he had to refuse and see if they would discipline him for the refusal, or recognize that his right to refuse under the Fourth Amendment trumped any policy that they would have had authorizing warrantless, suspicious-less, random searches."

The Nebraska Attorney General's office declined comment on the ruling.

In its first opinion in the case last year, the appeals court rejected True's argument that because visitors are not subjected to car searches, state officials had violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment by searching employees' cars.

The state has an interest in securing prisons and preventing the spread of contraband, the ap-

Iowa Panel Backs Gas Tax Increase To Fund Road Work

BY MIKE GLOVER
Associated Press

ANKENY, Iowa — Iowa should raise the state's gasoline tax by 8 cents to 10 cents per gallon and increase new vehicle registration fees to collect up to \$280 million annually to fund road repairs, a special committee recommended Wednesday.

Supporters of the plan say that funding level would let officials fix the worst roads.

"I don't see any viable alternative," said Allan Thoms, one of the heads of the Governor's Transportation 2020 Citizens Advisory Commission.

The panel, which was appointed by Gov. Terry Branstad, also recommended that the state review the gasoline tax every two years. The state's 22 cents per gallon gasoline tax has not been increased since 1989. One cent goes toward cleaning leaking underground tanks, while the other 21 cents pay for road work.

The recommendations, which include raising new vehicle registration fees from 5 percent to 6 percent of the purchase cost, will be sent to the state's Department of Transportation, which will decide what it seeks from the Legislature.

"We heard overwhelmingly from people that we need money for roads," Nancy Richardson, who co-heads the panel with Thoms, said of a series of public hearings the group held statewide.

"They think roads need work and they're deteriorating."

Gov. Terry Branstad said he wants to study the recommendations before taking a position.

"It is premature to take a stand on something until you know all the information," Branstad said. "I would certainly encourage legislators not to stake out a position until they know all of the facts."

Sen. Tom Rielly, D-Oskaloosa, who heads the Senate Transportation Committee, said he'll push the higher gasoline tax effort when lawmakers convene in January.

"We have a constitutionally protected road use tax fund where the expenses are far exceeding the revenues that are coming in," Rielly said.

Republican Rep. Dave Tjepkes of Gowrie, who heads the House Transportation Committee, said he'll also press the effort, but other key lawmakers were more cautious and some conservatives warned against pushing an election year tax increase.

"In October, I'm not ruling anything in or anything out," said House Speaker Craig Paulsen, R-Hiawatha. "I suspect we'll see the report and then we'll hear from Iowans."

Iowa Will Seek To Opt-Out Of No Child Left Behind

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa Department of Education officials have notified their federal counterparts that the state will seek a waiver from requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

State officials have criticized the law as being too rigid and argued it relied too heavily on standardized test scores. They also said it's one-dimensional and doesn't accurately measure how well schools are performing.

Education Department Director Jason Glass said Iowa officials have developed their own rigorous standards and can implement them in a way that ensures students make progress each year.

Glass noted that federal officials have encouraged states to seek a waiver from the federal law, as long as they develop their own systems for measuring the progress students are making. Glass said the formal waiver request will be filed in February.

President Barack Obama's administration announced in August that states were being encouraged to seek a waiver from the law, which requires states to show that a higher proportion of students are reaching proficiency in math and science.

The plan that Glass announced called for linking teacher pay to performance in the classroom as well as setting new testing standards for students, along with developing other methods of measuring student performance. He said measuring performance of a healthy and active child involves more than a single test score, though testing is part of the measurement.

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