

Daugaard Mulls Mount Rushmore Offer

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard is considering the federal government's offer Thursday to let the state use its own money to reopen Mount Rushmore National Memorial during the government shutdown, but he first wants to see how much that would cost.

Federal officials said they will allow states to pay to reopen some national parks that were closed because of the shutdown but would not give control of those parks to states.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell called Daugaard early Thursday to discuss the possibility that South Dakota could pay to reopen Mount Rushmore.

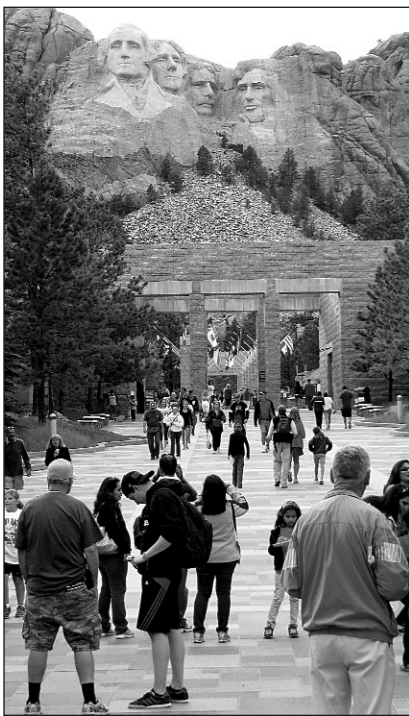
"The governor is open-minded to it. He really appreciates the federal government's willingness to evaluate other options. When we get the numbers, he'll consider it more fully," Dusty Johnson, Daugaard's chief of staff, said Thursday.

"The fact they're willing to consider working with state governments, that's a good thing," Johnson said.

Daugaard still prefers his earlier offer to use state employees to keep Mount Rushmore open with limited services. But Johnson said the federal government is only offering to let the state pay for federal employees go back to work at the Black Hills mountain carved with the faces of U.S. Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

"We've got plenty of folks who know how to run a park and great law enforcement agents who understand how to do law enforcement in a park setting," Johnson said.

Daugaard would also consider using state money to keep Badlands National Park or other national parks in South Dakota open, but that also depends on



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard is considering the federal government's offer Thursday to let the state use its own money to reopen Mount Rushmore National Memorial during the government shutdown. This photo taken in July shows a typical crowd at the monument.

the cost, Johnson said. Federal officials have said they will provide those costs soon, but have not said when, he said.

The governor's original plan to use state employees to keep Mount Rushmore open would cost very little, but the federal plan could be expensive, Johnson said.

Desi Frederick, manager of Iron Creek Leather and Gifts in Keystone, said the closure of Mount Rushmore has hurt her

business and others in the town that caters to visitors just a few miles from the monument.

"Every business in Keystone has seen a hit from it," she said.

Frederick wants to see Mount Rushmore reopened, but she said the federal government should pay for it.

Nort Johnson, president of the Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes Association, which has more than 500 business members, said he hopes Mount Rushmore reopens soon because its closure is cutting profits for tourism businesses. He's glad the governor is considering using state money to reopen it, but believes the operation should be funded by the federal government.

Many vacationers are upset to find Mount Rushmore closed, Johnson said.

"They want to get in and have a little time with our monument. That's what every American deserves. That's why it's been federally funded forever," he said. "I hope they come to their senses soon in Washington and allow the American public to get on with their vacations and allow our businesses to get on with their work."

Meanwhile, the National Park Service is reopening a highway pull-out area from where tourists can view and photograph Mount Rushmore. Hundreds of tourists had complained that Park Service rangers placed cones along a highway to prevent them from pulling over to take photos of the landmark, the *Rapid City Journal* reported.

Patricia Trap, deputy director of the National Park Service's Midwest region, said the agency never intended to ruin anyone's view of the monument.

The agency has a limited number of rangers available during the shutdown, so areas that could not be monitored were blocked with cones for safety reasons, she said.

Heineman Criticizes Vet Service Officer's Letter

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Dave Heineman admonished a veterans service officer on Thursday for asking the federal government to withhold funding for a new veterans home in Kearney that would replace the aging facility in Grand Island, where the officer works.

Heineman called Donald Shuda's request "outrageous" in an open letter to local and state officials in Grand Island, and he urged them to condemn it. The home has operated in Grand Island for 126 years, and the decision to relocate it has drawn heavy criticism from the city's elected officials and business groups.

Heineman and officials in Grand Island and Hall County have sparred over the state's decision since it was announced in July.

Grand Island, Kearney, Hastings and North Platte competed for the project, which was first suggested in 2009 by state Sen. Mike Gloor, of Grand Island. Grand Island ranked third in the state's open bidding process, behind Kearney and Hastings.

"Since Grand Island came in third, your Veterans Service Officer now opposes



Heineman

serve a new home."

Heineman's letter was addressed to Gloor, Grand Island Mayor Jay Vavricek and Pam Lancaster, chairwoman of the Hall County Board of Supervisors. Heineman said he hoped they would continue to show support for the new facility, even though Grand Island didn't win.

Shuda sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs last month urging it to withhold funding for the Kearney project until further study could be completed. Shuda said he believed the current facility could be refurbished.

"A new governor for Nebraska will be installed in less than one and a half years and hopefully politics will not be a deciding factor as it currently is," Shuda's letter said. "In my opinion, you have the power within the palm of your hand to do what is right and just for our veterans."

In response, the Department of Veterans Affairs said

federal funding for a new Central Nebraska Veterans Home," Heineman said. "That's outrageous. Our veterans need and deserve a new home."

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In response, the Department of Veterans Affairs said

it will respect the governor's right to choose the facility's location, as long as the state can demonstrate that a new facility will serve the current veteran population's needs while meeting VA standards.

"The process for determining the location of a replacement facility for a state veterans home is made by the state," Marci Mylan, director of the VA's Nebraska-Iowa Health Care System, said in a Sept. 26 letter to Shuda. "The Department of Veterans Affairs is not part of the process, nor do they have any decision making authority in determining the right location."

Shuda said Thursday that he supported federal funding for the facility, but he had hoped that the federal government would first review an "alternative proposal" submitted by Grand Island. The proposal suggests renovating some buildings at the Grand Island home, and replacing others. Shuda said he sent the letter on behalf of a member of the Grand Island Veterans Home, who specifically asked that it go to Washington and not Lincoln.

Heineman has said Grand Island's alternative proposal could create confusion at the federal level, which might

jeopardize the project's funding.

"My hope was that nothing would happen at least until this alternative proposal would get submitted, so it could be considered," Shuda said. "I don't think anybody in Grand Island, from the city to the county level, has ever said not to support federal funding. But there are questions about how the decision was arrived at."

Shuda specifically took issue with the three-member site selection committee that reviewed all of the proposed sites for the new veterans' home. All three panel members were from the governor's administration, and Shuda said he would have preferred a larger committee with state senators and community members. Shuda said a broader approach such as that was used for the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in Bellevue.

"I'll be the first to say I have nothing against the folks in Kearney," Shuda said. "But no one should be offended or outraged that Grand Island is trying to support its community, its employees and its veterans, and retain the veterans' home here."

Heavy Rain On Horizon For Western S. Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Western South Dakota residents still recovering from last weekend's snowstorm now have rain and possible flash-flooding to look forward to.

A storm system moving into the area is expected to bring rain and strong winds Friday, according to the National Weather Service.

"This will be a warmer system, so the only snow we expect at this time should be in the very high elevations of the Black Hills at this point," meteorologist Jeff Schild told the *Rapid City Journal*.

Last weekend's storm dumped up to 4 feet of snow in the Black Hills, cutting power to about 30,000 customers, killing tens of thousands of cattle, damaging numerous buildings, bringing travel to a standstill and shutting down schools and public offices.

The new system could

bring an inch of rain to some areas, which could lead to flash flooding, Schild said.

"We already have higher stream flows from the runoff that is occurring from the past weekend storm," he said.

The weather service has posted a flood watch for much of western South Dakota for Thursday night through Saturday morning, along with a high wind watch. Residents should brace themselves for strong northwest winds of 35 to 45 mph and gusts of up to 60 mph across the region, Schild said.

"You might want to be a little selective about where you park," he said, referring to all of the hanging tree limbs from last weekend's blizzard.

The weather is forecast to be mostly clear on Saturday, but more rain is expected Sunday.

Daugaard, Thune Visit Blizzard Region

RAPID CITY (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard and U.S. Sen. John Thune flew over areas hard hit by a weekend snowstorm that killed thousands of animals.

They did an aerial assessment of the blizzard damage and livestock losses Thursday afternoon.

State officials estimate at least 10,000 to 20,000 head of livestock died, but that estimate will likely rise as more information is gathered.

Some ranchers in western South Dakota have reported losing 50 percent or more of their cattle.

U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem says she plans to see the damage firsthand on Sunday, depending on the House of Representatives schedule.

The state's congressional delegation vowed to push for quick passage of the stalled farm bill because it's the best way to provide financial help to ranchers.

S. City Retailer Plans \$17M Expansion

SIOUX CITY, Iowa (AP) — A Sioux City-based retailer is planning an estimated \$17 million expansion of a warehouse that will create at least 15 new jobs.

The *Sioux City Journal* reports Bomgaars Supply plans to begin construction next spring of a 150,000-square-foot addition to its existing warehouse in Sioux City.

Sioux City and the state have pledged more than \$3.5 million in tax incentives.

The additional space will let the retailer keep up with demand for the merchandise it sells at 66 stores in six states.

Bomgaars considered sites in Nebraska and South Dakota before deciding to stay in Sioux City, where the business began in 1944.

The Sioux City Council is expected to seek the incentives from the Iowa Economic Development Authority, which will consider the matter Oct. 18.

S.D. Inmate Appealing Life Sentence

WATERTOWN (AP) — A South Dakota state prison inmate from Watertown who was given a life sentence when she was a teenager is trying to get the sentence overturned.

Jessi Owens was 17 when she pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the 1998 hammer beating death of David Bauman. Authorities say Owens and another teen went to Bauman's house to steal money.

A U.S. Supreme Court decision last year said mandatory life-without-parole sentences for juvenile homicide offenders violates the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. KWAT radio reports that the now-33-year-old Owens has filed a motion claiming she received an illegal sentence.

Owens appeared before Judge Robert Timm on Wednesday. He will issue a ruling later.

ND Pipeline Spills 20K Barrels Of Oil

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The state Department of Health says an oil pipeline owned by Tesoro spewed 20,600 barrels of crude oil in a wheat field in northwestern North Dakota.

Environmental geologist Kris Roberts says the spill was discovered on Sept. 29 by a farmer harvesting wheat.

Roberts says cleanup crews have been on site since then and have recovered about 1,165 barrels of oil. A barrel is 42 gallons.

Roberts says the spill covers an area the size of about seven football fields. He says the spill has been contained and no water sources have been contaminated.

Tesoro officials did not immediately return telephone calls from The Associated Press seeking comment on Thursday.

A.G.'s Office Investigating Use Of Stun Gun On Girl

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota investigators are determining whether a Pierre police officer acted properly when he used a stun gun on an 8-year-old girl.

Police Chief Bob Grandpre said he and Hughes County State's Attorney Wendy Kloeppner asked for the outside review.

"I don't want to minimize this incident. I understand why it has received the attention it has and should have. It's got my attention," Grandpre said.

An officer arrived Oct. 4 at the girl's home, where a baby sitter was present, in response to a report of a suicidal girl. Grandpre said. She was holding a knife to her chest and refusing to drop it. At one point, she turned it toward the officer and then put it back to her chest, he said.

The officer was standing 5 or 6 feet away from the girl when the stun gun was deployed; the prongs hit her chest and stomach.

Grandpre said the girl recovered quickly, communicated with officers and was checked over at the scene by ambulance personnel. She eventually was taken to a

hospital and kept there for 24 hours before being released to her parents.

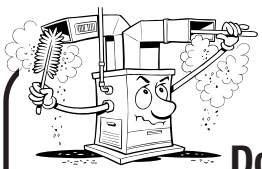
He said his department's initial review showed the three officers involved acted appropriately, but he wants an independent review by the South Dakota Attorney General's Office to give the public an unbiased report.

"I'd like to think they think they're getting nothing but the truth from me, but I also understand we don't want any appearance of bias in what we're saying here either," Grandpre said.

The girl's parents have said the officer should be disciplined for using excessive force and they haven't ruled out legal action.

The police chief declined to release the name of the officer who used the stun gun or the officer's personnel records, saying he does not release such information.

Personnel records and police investigatory reports are confidential under South Dakota law, according to the attorney general's office. Some information about police calls for service can be released, but that does not include the name of the officer involved.



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