

## Thousands Attend Pipeline Protest Concert

NELIGH, Neb. (AP) — Roughly 8,000 people filled a northeast Nebraska farm Saturday to hear Willie Nelson and Neil Young perform at a concert organized by opponents of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports politicians and activists spoke to the crowd on Art and Helen Tanderup's farm about the pipeline project between performances.

Young said before the concert that he thinks it's important for America to use more renewable energy, and he supports people who are trying to offer solutions.

"Stand up and be creative and have ingenuity and come up with solutions so we're not just complaining about problems, we're solving them," Young said. "That is what America needs to do."

The proposed TransCanada Keystone XL pipeline needs presidential approval to proceed because it crosses the U.S.-Canada border. But that decision remains on hold while Nebraska's Supreme Court considers whether the 2012 law used to approve the Keystone XL's path across the state is valid.

Pipeline critics worry it could contribute to pollution and contaminate groundwater if there is a leak.

TransCanada says the pipeline, which it first proposed in 2008, would have advanced safety features to prevent and detect leaks. Supporters say the project would create construction jobs and bolster a friendly source of oil.

Further delays in the pipeline project will add to the volume of crude oil on railroads across the United States and Canada, said TransCanada spokesman Mark Cooper.

"Delaying the Keystone XL means encouraging the loss of good jobs for Nebraskans and more than \$20 million a year in annual property taxes to counties for schools, roads and other infrastructure once the Keystone XL is at full capacity," Cooper said.

The Keystone XL pipeline is designed to carry oil from Canada across Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. TransCanada also has proposed connecting it to the Bakken oil field in Montana and North Dakota.

The southern leg of the pipeline between Oklahoma and Texas is already operational.

Organizers of the concert from Bold Nebraska and the Cowboy and Indian Alliance promise to keep up the pressure in the hope of persuading President Barack Obama to reject it.

"We are not just going to protest and leave," said Oglala Lakota President Bryan Brewer. "We're going to stop it."

After Young and Nelson performed for about an hour each, members of the audience marched into one of the Tanderup's fields to form a human chain across the pipeline's proposed path.

Sales of the \$50 tickets for the concert generated about \$385,000, but it cost roughly \$100,000 to hold. Organizers didn't have available Saturday an exact total of the proceeds — which will be split between Bold Nebraska, the Indigenous Environmental Network and the Cowboy and Indian Alliance.

## South Dakota

# More Students To Talk At Indian Ed. Summit

BY KEVIN BURBACH  
Associated Press

PIERRE — Native American educators in South Dakota attending their annual summit want to hear more this year from a key stakeholder: students.

The South Dakota Indian Education Summit begins Sunday in Pierre and continues through Tuesday. The summit brings together educators from public, tribal and Bureau of Indian Education schools in an effort to solve education issues Native American students face in the state.

This year, the summit is bringing in more current and former Native American students to give attendees a first-hand perspective, said Marta Neuman, an administrative assistant in the South Dakota Office of Indian Education.

Students, ranging from elementary to college-level, will sit on panels and talk with attendees about their educational experiences and where they've gone or hope to go, Neuman said.

"The audience seems to really appreciate seeing the students there and getting their perspective," said Neuman, who added there will be about 25 students in all who will participate in panels and presentations, like the one from Tim McGowan and 12 of his high school students.

McGowan, a counselor at Rapid City Cen-

tral High School, is an adviser to the "Cobbler 2 Cobbler" program, a nationally-renowned peer mentoring initiative that McGowan says is one of the most successful in the country. About a quarter of the students at Rapid City Central are students of color — about 22 percent are Native American — making the high school the state's most diverse, he said.

McGowan and his peer mentors will demonstrate how they work with students at the summit and why they're so successful.

"Our students that have been mentored have a much higher connectedness to the school, less decision-making around maladaptive decisions and they're tied into trusted adults at a higher level," he said.

Beyond specific presentations, Mary Stadick Smith, a spokeswoman with the Department of Education, said every year the summit also takes on broad, perennial issues, like low graduation rates.

Graduation rates for Native American students typically hover around 46 percent, Stadick Smith said, compared to about 82 percent for all students in the state.

In addition to student presenters, the summit this year will also showcase student and adult artists from around the state, hoping to teach attendees more about the importance of Native American culture in the classroom.

"It's good place for people to get a little more cultural awareness," Neuman said.

## Nebraska

# Gov. Hopefuls Promise Action On Property Taxes

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Property taxes have surfaced as a key issue in Nebraska's race for governor, with the candidates offering drastically different approaches for easing the burden on farmers, ranchers and homeowners.

Republican Pete Ricketts and Democrat Chuck Hassebrook are both trying to persuade voters that their approach would help reduce the tax, which has soared in rural counties even as commodity prices have fallen. Ricketts unveiled a property tax plan earlier this month, and Hassebrook said his renewable energy platform would generate local tax revenue to offset what property owners must pay.

Ricketts said lowering property taxes would be "absolutely the No. 1 priority" if he were elected, given his conversations with voters and the public feedback lawmakers received at a series of tax hearings.

"I think we need to do more because the citizens of Nebraska are telling us that we need to do more," Ricketts said.

Ricketts said he would work to reduce unfunded state mandates for school districts, cities and counties, and would oppose efforts to add more financial burdens in the future. He said he met recently with Lynn Rex, director of the League of Nebraska Municipalities, to discuss how the state can curtail its mandates on city governments to help lower their costs.

Many of the expenses passed down to local governments are small, but collectively they make it harder for local officials to control their budgets, Ricketts said. He pointed to the state's new suicide-prevention training requirements for teachers, saying the idea was worth pursuing but it shouldn't be forced on schools.

Ricketts said he wouldn't



rule out restoring state aid to local governments that was cut during a 2011 budget crunch, but he argued the better approach was to reduce the expenses imposed on them by the state. Cities and counties have said the state-aid cuts are partly to blame for rising property taxes.

Restoring state aid "is not going to be very high on my priority list," Ricketts said. "It's a temporary fix. The next governor or the next Unicameral could just come along and change it. And that's what happened: When times were tough, that funding got cut."

Hassebrook said he would work to lower property taxes, but he'd prefer that most of the benefits go to owner-occupied farms and landowners who actually live in Nebraska. He pointed to CNN founder Ted Turner, who owns large swaths of land in the Nebraska Sandhills and millions of acres throughout the western United States.

"Ted Turner doesn't need property tax relief as badly as small family farms and low-income families," Hassebrook said.

Hassebrook said property taxes have increased in part because of state spending cuts that shifted expenses to cities and counties. To reduce some of the cost, Hassebrook said he would support reimbursing counties that house state prisoners in their jails.

Hassebrook said he would work to attract new wind farms, noting a 200-turbine wind farm would generate about \$25 million in taxes over 20 years, and that money could offset current property taxes.

Hassebrook said he also

would push to collect sales taxes that aren't paid by Internet retailers. The state could put that revenue toward property tax reductions and local government services, while "leveling the playing field" for Nebraska-based companies that pay sales taxes, he said.

Both candidates said they would support lowering the percentage of farmland that can be taxed from 75 percent of market value to 65 percent, but lawmakers in recent years have rejected the idea.

They split on whether to use cash reserves for property tax reductions, with Ricketts endorsing the idea and Hassebrook saying it's not sustainable.

Farm and ranching groups plan to pursue property tax reform again in 2015, but major changes could take years, said Nebraska Farm Bureau president Steve Nelson.

"On a scale of 1 to 10, some of our members think it's a 12," Nelson said. "It's not just how high the property taxes are. It's the imbalance of who pays."

Nelson, whose group endorsed Ricketts, said many members want the taxable value of farmland lowered and money put into the state property's tax credit fund.

Larry Dix, executive director of the Nebraska Association of County Officials, said Nebraska lawmakers and governors have wrestled with the issue for decades.

"It's one thing to take a look at it," he said. "It's a little more difficult to solve it."

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## Guard Members Back From Afghanistan

SIoux FALLS (AP) — South Dakota Army National Guard soldiers have returned to the U.S. after a nearly nine-month deployment in Afghanistan.

The soldiers are members of the Guard's 1,742nd Transportation Company that is based in Sioux Falls and Flandreau. The soldiers are at Fort Hood, Texas, where they will spend up to two weeks before returning to South Dakota.

The group deployed approximately 160 soldiers in December to provide transportation support and convoy security as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

This is the third mobilization for the transportation company. It was deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003-2004 and in support of Operation Desert Shield/Storm in 1990-1991.

## Boy Playing With Lighter Burns House

MITCHELL (AP) — A fire in Mitchell that left a single-story home completely destroyed was started by an 8-year-old child playing with a butane lighter, authorities said Friday.

The Mitchell Fire Division responded to a fire on Thursday evening at the home of Mavis Peneaux, who rents from Boyd Reimnitz, according to *The Daily Republic*. Eight people were in the house at the time of the fire, but no one was injured.

Sgt. Ryan Erickson told the newspaper that the child was playing with the lighter and accidentally ignited three mattresses that were stacked against the side of the house. The mattress then started the house on fire, he said.

When firefighters arrived, the house was engulfed in flames. Before the first fire engine arrived on scene, Assistant Fire Chief Paul Morris said there was enough smoke in the neighborhood that firefighters called for backup.

Morris said firefighters had the fire out within 3 to 5 minutes because of how small the house is.

"It didn't take them long," Morris told the newspaper. "It's pretty tiny."

The house is considered a total loss.

"It's still standing, but you're not going to remodel it," Morris said.

## Tribes Want Boarding School Lands

RAPID CITY (AP) — Sixteen tribes from South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska want the federal government to turn over to tribal care the three parcels of land where an American Indian boarding school sat in the late 1800s.

Tribal members petitioned the government to release the roughly 165 acres of land to federal tribal trust, the *Rapid City Journal* reported Sunday. The parcels are considered spiritual land guaranteed to the Sioux Nation under the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie.

"We're just waiting for the government, and as you know, that takes time," said Gay Kingman, the executive director of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, which also backs the petition.

The boarding school opened its doors in 1898 under federal assimilation policies. It was one of dozens of government-operated schools where students were forced to speak English and were punished when they were caught speaking in their native tongues.

Children from tribes in the Northern Plains were funneled into roughly 1,200 acres dedicated by the federal government to the Rapid City Indian Boarding School. A 1928 government-commissioned report found that Indian children at boarding schools were severely punished, malnourished, overworked and poorly educated. The failed school closed in 1933, and the land eventually was dissolved into the lots that remain under tax-free federal trust.

Only the Sioux San Hospital, an original structure of the facility, continued to operate when the school was shuttered, the newspaper reported.

Kingman said the hospital would remain under control of the Indian Health Service. She added that the hospital has been a focal point for the Native American community.

"All of the tribes had people who attended the boarding school," Kingman said. "I can't say enough about what we're trying to do here. The Sioux San Hospital itself means so much to our people."

## Incentives Sought For Neb. Breweries

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Craft beer brewers and farmers are asking state lawmakers to create incentives for breweries that use primarily Nebraska-grown hops, barley and other produce.

The Lincoln Journal Star reports that a few Nebraska beer brewers have used locally-grown hops and malting barley, but that there is not enough grown in Nebraska to accommodate all local brewers.

That means most local brewers must import grains from Wisconsin and hops from the Pacific Northwest.

Several Nebraska brewers testified Friday before the Legislature's Agriculture and General Affairs committees. The hearing was part of an interim study.

It's unclear what form any incentives might take, but Nebraska wineries that source at least 75 percent of their agricultural products from within Nebraska get a beneficial tax rate.

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