

DoD Investing In ND Research To Enhance U.S. Battery Materials Development

Senator John Hoeven recently announced that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has formed a partnership with Talon Metals in North Dakota to fund research into methods for enhanced recovery of nickel from U.S. domestic nickel mineral formations. Such research will:

- Increase domestic capacity for battery manufacture.

- This builds upon a Department of Energy (DOE) award Hoeven secured last year for Talon Metals to construct a battery materials manufacturing facility in Mercer County, North Dakota.

- Strengthen U.S. supply chains for critical industries and defense priorities, including unmanned aviation.

- Reducing reliance on battery and mineral supplies from adversarial nations like China and Russia.

As a member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Committee, Hoeven worked to establish and fund this new partnership. The senator secured nearly \$2.5 million for the initiative in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and has included \$4 million in the Senate's FY2025 appropriations legislation that could be used to expand the partnership.

"Between this fiscal year and last, we are working to provide more than \$6 million for this new partnership between Talon Metals and the DoD. This initiative aligns closely with the manufacturing facility we're working with Talon to build in North Dakota and will address a growing priority for both our national security and our economy - battery supply chains," said Hoeven. "By enhancing the productive capacity of our domestic nickel

formations, we can ensure a better mineral supply for U.S. industry and a more secure battery supply for our military missions. That's a win across the board."

Strengthening U.S. Defense Supply Chains

The announcement came as part of Hoeven's ongoing efforts to build a more secure supply chain for unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and other industries that are important to current and future U.S. military operations, but have traditionally relied heavily on batteries produced in China. Accordingly, Hoeven:

- Worked to advance the nearly \$115 million DOE award for Talon to begin the design, permitting and construction of the battery materials manufacturing facility in North Dakota.

- The project will not only support the creation of good-paying jobs in western North Dakota, but will benefit the state's coal industry through potential future utilization of coal ash from coal-fired power stations in Mercer County.

- Continues his efforts to support the operations of companies like Packet Digital.

- The company has been expanding its operations in North Dakota due to partnerships Hoeven has worked to establish between it and the Navy, Air Force and Space Force.

- Hoeven has helped secured more than \$35 million in defense research and development funding for Packet Digital from FY2021-FY2024.

- The company is using the latest round of funding to develop a new 80,000 square-foot battery cell production facility.

Will ND Expand School Choice? If So, What Would It Look Like?

By Mike Moen,
Prairie News Service

North Dakota students will soon be on holiday break. When they return, state lawmakers are expected to debate giving families financial support related to school choice.

The controversial idea might look different this time, but similar arguments remain.

School vouchers have been a thorny issue, with a number of conservative-led states pushing to set aside funding for families to enroll their kids in private schools.

Opponents say that needlessly takes away money from public schools. A voucher bill was vetoed in North Dakota in 2023, but school choice backers are crafting a different plan.

Sheila Peterson is a public-school physical education teacher at Wachter Middle School in Bismarck who is monitoring what's happening. "Every kid has the fundamental right to a good education, that is so important," said Peterson. "So, if we're saying there's something that's missing and there's monies available, why aren't we funding our public education system to provide those pieces that are missing?"

Peterson, a member of the union ND United and the 2024 North Dakota Teacher of the Year, suggested beefing up mental health services, or focusing on reducing class sizes.

She said that might help renew or restore faith in public schools.

AARP Fraud Alert: Airline Call Center Scams

With the holiday travel season fast approaching, scammers are ready to cash in on travelers eager for help with last-minute flight changes and cancellations. Don't let a fake customer service agent derail your trip, or drain your wallet. Here's what you need to know to stay ahead of airline call center scams.

Just because an airline customer service helpline number appears at the top of internet search results doesn't mean it's legitimate. Search results can be filled with fraudulent phone numbers, and scammers are constantly finding new ways to get their numbers to show up at the top of results.

Beware of any number tied to

NDSU Extension And SDSU Extension To Host Free Virtual Workshops About Aging

North Dakota State University Extension and South Dakota State University Extension are hosting a series of free aging well workshops. These workshops are offered as live Zoom webinars.

The three presentations will be held January 15, February 19 and March 19. All presentations start at 10 a.m. and last one hour. They are free to attend, and attendees can sign up as individual viewers or invite a group as a watch party host.

Ideal watch party hosts include Extension offices, senior centers, libraries or community centers.

"We are excited to partner with local experts to offer these educational opportunities on important health and wellness topics which contribute to aging well," says Jane Strommen, NDSU Extension gerontology specialist.

On January 15, Dr. Joseph Rees, a geriatrician with Avera Health in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will kick off the series by presenting why exercise is vital throughout life and even more so as people age. Dr. Rees will describe how his patients benefit from exercise and will explain the advantages of different types of exercise and tips on how to incorporate them into everyday life.

HPIA Detection In Dairy Cattle Reinforces The Importance Of Consuming Pasteurized Milk

The recent detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in dairy cattle, first identified in March 2024 and again on December 2 in California, underscores the critical importance of consuming pasteurized milk, says Shaundra Ziemann-Bolinske, North Dakota State University Extension food systems coordinator.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. milk supply is safe to drink, as long as the milk is pasteurized.

"Pasteurization is a proven process that heats milk to a high temperature for a specific time, destroying disease-causing germs, including HPAI," explains Ziemann-Bolinske. "Viral fragments detected after pasteurization are harmless; they simply show that the virus is dead and cannot affect human health."

The FDA maintains that unpasteurized (raw) milk is a high-risk food, potentially contaminated with pathogens, both bacteria and viral, that can cause serious illness. Pasteurized milk, however, retains all the nutritional benefits (vitamins, minerals and protein) without the associated health risks. This reminder comes as studies confirm that pasteurization effectively inactivates HPAI and other pathogens, ensuring the safety of milk.

Milk safety has greatly improved since the implementation of pasteurization, which continues to

A lawmaker drafting a bill says it wouldn't be a voucher program, but instead an Education Savings Account, where parents would get money to pursue a variety of support services.

State Senator Michelle Axtman (R-Bismarck) plans to introduce the ESA bill, and said such a marketplace is superior to vouchers, which she called an outdated approach to improving school choice.

Axtman said her measure would cover all students, including those from public systems, who might need extra support in rounding out the education they're getting. "Whether that be a summer STEM camp," said Axtman, "or occupational therapy for a need, or dyslexia services, or just tutoring in math, or a language course that isn't offered in a rural community."

Axtman stressed that her plan wouldn't divert money from K-12 funding.

Aimee Copas, executive director of the North Dakota Council of Education Leaders, said she is leery of ESAs, but said they could be meaningful if lawmakers ensure fairness in distributing aid.

Plus, she said North Dakota already does a good job in tapping into the spirit of school choice. "We probably have more school choice and opportunities," said Copas, "than almost any state in the nation."

a result labeled as "Sponsored" or "Ad." In addition, don't call number that appear in wacky fonts or next to odd emojis; this is a common tactic scammers use to make their numbers both visually pop and appear towards the top. Lastly, remember to slow down. For instance, if your flight is canceled, you typically don't need to pay to be rebooked. Any "agent" requesting a credit card to do so likely only has their own wallet at heart.

Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam. Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatch-network.

On February 19, Dakota Witzel, an assistant professor with SDSU, will discuss mental health in older age. She will help to dispel some misconceptions about how mental health looks in older age. This session will teach how to spot the difference between conditions like depression and dementia, how to reach out to friends and family who may be experiencing mental health challenges and how to support better well-being.

On March 19, Susan E. Johnson-Drenth, a certified elder law attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation, will provide updates on elder law and estate planning in 2025. Johnson-Drenth is the president of JD Legal Planning PLLC, a Fargo, North Dakota law firm focused on estate planning, elder law, probate, probate litigation, guardianship, and trust law, including special needs trusts for people with disabilities.

To register for any of the presentations, visit ndsug.org/aging-wells25.

For more information about this workshop, or for questions about hosting a watch party, contact Jane Strommen at 701-231-5948 or jane.strommen@ndsug.edu.

safeguard public health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), prior to the introduction of pasteurization in 1938, milk and dairy products were responsible for 25 percent of food-borne disease outbreaks. By 2016, that number dropped to less than 1 percent.

The FDA's milk safety program prohibits milk from sick cows from entering the food supply chain. The program, along with the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, ensures that milk and dairy products produced in the U.S. are among the safest in the world.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service recently launched its National Milk Testing Strategy. While North Dakota currently does not require testing of raw milk samples, investigations continue.

There are no confirmed cases of HPAI in North Dakota livestock, although neighboring Minnesota and South Dakota reported positive cases in July. The FDA is working with industry, federal and state partners to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the federal-state milk safety system.

For more information on HPAI from NDSU Extension, visit ndsug.org/HPIApub, or search online for the CDC's Raw Milk: Know the Facts publication.

Dakota Datebook: Christmas Gifts

By Sarah Walker

The nature of the Christmas gift has changed over time. In the 19th Century novel "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, Ebenezer Scrooge's clerk Bob Cratchit only wanted some extra coal and food for his family.

Another famous story of Christmas gifts first appeared in December 1905, written by William Sidney Porter, better known as O. Henry. In "The Gift of the Magi" a young woman, Della, cuts and sells her long hair to purchase a Christmas gift for her husband, Jim, a chain for his pocket watch. Jim, on the other hand, had sold his watch to buy Della combs for her hair.

Today, trees are displayed replete with piles of presents. Black Friday, the "first day of Christmas shopping," is often celebrated as much as Thanksgiving, the holiday it follows. And in 2005, Cyber Monday emerged, the big online shopping day after the Thanksgiving weekend. So, Christmas shopping has long been a part of the season, whether by computer, in stores, or by catalog.

On December 18, 1919, the Hope Pioneer newspaper in Steele County urged its readers and last-minute

shoppers to take advantage of newspaper ads, stating: "Holiday buying is greatly facilitated where people study newspaper advertising in advance. If they go to the stores without much idea what they are going to buy, it takes a lot of looking and questioning before they make up their minds. If they have read the advertising carefully, they have a clear idea of what they want. They should be able to say, 'Let me see that article you advertised in The Pioneer, I think it is about what I want.'"

Of course, the Pioneer also encouraged its readers to use proper manners:

"People should do this Christmas shopping in a patient and good-tempered spirit. They must remember that clerks at that time and flustered, and can't be expected to always manifest a perfect disposition. Some people get all out of temper if they are delayed in being waited upon. If they find themselves tempted to say a sharp word, they should reflect that if they had made their purchases a month ago, they would have secured better attention. Defects in store service are due to the failure of the public to anticipate its wants." Always good advice.

Cramer, Murphy Introduce Legislation To Improve Vision Care Quality

Two Vision Benefit Managers (VBM) dominate the vision insurance market, providing coverage to two-thirds of Americans with vision benefits. These VBMs often own the frame and lens manufacturers and control which labs an optometrist can use, resulting in less autonomy for providers and more limited choices for their patients.

U.S. Senators Kevin Cramer (R-ND) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) introduced the Vision Lab Choice Act of 2024 to allow clinicians to use the medical labs of their choosing and lower costs for both patients and doctors. Specifically, the legislation would amend Title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to allow optometrists to choose the best labs and suppliers for their practice, ensuring patients receive high-quality, personalized vision care.

"Vision Benefit Managers are often a hurdle to optometrists and eye care specialists providing the best care to their patients," said Cramer. "Expanding consumer choice benefits patients when service is

improved. I joined Senator Murphy in introducing the bipartisan Vision Lab Choice Act of 2024, so doctors will have more autonomy over which labs they work with and where they source their materials."

"Right now, VBMs control practically every part of the vision industry - the insurance plans, the manufacturers for frames and lenses, the vision labs - and they use that power to eliminate choice and drive up costs for doctors and patients," said Murphy. "This bill would solve a small piece of that problem by making sure optometrists aren't forced to use a VBMs preferred vision lab. Instead, they'll have the freedom to choose labs that lower costs and cut wait times for patients."

The bill is endorsed by the American Optometric Association, National Consumers League, Patients Rising, Hispanic Leadership Fund, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Global Policy Initiative, and the Black Women's Health Imperative.

Next Generation 9-1-1 Achieves Important Milestone In Dakotas

Public safety has reached a new milestone in North Dakota and South Dakota. The Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) system has proven it can accurately route emergency calls made from near the border to the appropriate state, allowing for faster response to emergencies.

NG9-1-1 is migrating the network that it operates on from a telephone line-based technology to internet protocol (IP) based. This allows for geospatial call routing, where the call is directed to the 9-1-1 call center - known as a public safety answering point (PSAP) - based on the caller's physical address. Challenges in routing 9-1-1 calls arise when made from near the state border.

Recently, a call was made into the DRN (formerly Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative) phone system from one of their customers across the border in South Dakota. Because DRN is in North Dakota, the call was sent to the North Dakota emergency services network. However, based on the geospatial data, the system successfully routed the call directly to South Dakota emergency services. This was all done seamlessly, without delay or the need for other actions.

This exemplifies North Dakota's

significant progress in NG9-1-1. Working with originating service providers like DRN as well as Dakota Carrier Network and the South Dakota Department of Public Safety, both states are realizing the benefits of Next Generation 9-1-1.

Jason Horning, North Dakota's NG9-1-1 program manager stated, "We have struggled considerably with finding cost-effective ways to handle out-of-state originating service providers (OSPs) which have a very small number of wireline subscribers in our state. This deployment demonstrated that it may not be necessary to directly connect out-of-state OSPs to our emergency services network, allowing them to leverage their existing connectivity to the state in which they primarily do business."

North Dakota is still evaluating this initial deployment and working to document the requirements necessary to make it a repeatable configuration. "There are details we are still working through but clearly this is possible and may serve as a model for other out-of-state OSPs that we engage in an effort to make sure every North Dakota and South Dakota resident receives the proper PSAP on initial delivery," says Horning.

EPA Resolves Arrow Pipeline Air Pollution Violations

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced a consent agreement with Arrow Pipeline, LLC, resolving Arrow Pipeline's Clean Air Act violations on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, North Dakota.

EPA observed visible smoke (particulate) emissions and hydrocarbon emissions, comprising of volatile organic compounds and potentially toxic hazardous air pollutants, from multiple Arrow Pipeline natural gas compressor stations on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation during a routine inspection in June 2023. EPA also found that the company failed to meet records management requirements under its operating permits. Arrow Pipeline corrected the violations and agreed to pay a \$450,000 penalty as part of the consent agreement.

"I'm encouraged Arrow Pipeline has taken steps to properly address its air pollution violations on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation," said KC Becker, EPA Regional Administrator. "This successful outcome demonstrates EPA's commitment to protecting Tribal communities that are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of poor air quality."

Arrow Pipeline owns and operates seven compressor stations on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation which include engines, tanks

and flares that help move natural gas through the pipeline. These stations are subject to permit requirements enforced by EPA under the Clean Air Act.

During its evaluation, EPA detected visible smoke (particulate) emissions from a flare and hydrocarbon emissions from closed vent systems controlling vapors from hydrocarbon liquid storage tanks, violating the terms of Arrow Pipeline's Clean Air Act permits. Arrow Pipeline also failed to operate, monitor and maintain records in accordance with engine requirements in the permits.

Industrial sources of pollution like Arrow Pipeline are subject to requirements of Clean Air Act permitting programs that help prevent emissions of air pollutants. Learn more about these permit programs in North Dakota and how they protect human health and the environment on the EPA Region 8 website.

Fedorchak Appointed To House Energy And Commerce Committee

The House Republican Steering Committee selected Congresswoman-elect Julie Fedorchak (R-ND) to serve on the Committee on Energy and Commerce in the 119th Congress.

"I'm honored and humbled to be selected by my colleagues to serve on the Committee on Energy and Commerce. With the Committee's broad jurisdiction, I'll have a hand in developing policies affecting North Dakotans the most, including unleashing American energy production and jobs, improving rural health care options, and furthering access to broadband," Fedorchak said.

"Congratulations to Congresswoman Julie Fedorchak on being appointed to the Energy and Commerce Committee. Julie brings vital experience as an energy regulator and will be an important part of our efforts to restore America's energy dominance and lowering energy prices for Americans," said Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY).

Fedorchak is the first freshman Member of Congress in fourteen years to be sealed on the Energy and Commerce Committee upon assuming office, one of three "A" Committees in the House of Representatives typically reserved for more senior members.

"I'm grateful to Chairman-elect Brett Guthrie and the Steering

Committee Members for trusting me with this opportunity. Their appointments show a real commitment to placing Members where they can make the biggest difference - helping to solve problems and make life better for Americans. And as always, thank you to the people of North Dakota for electing me to be your voice in Washington," she stated.

Fedorchak's extensive energy background includes twelve years as a North Dakota energy regulator where she regulated five multi state monopoly utilities, permitted more than \$15 billion of energy infrastructure, and advocated for market rules and policies to support reliable and affordable energy resources. She also stood up to the Obama administration over the Dakota Access pipeline and led the fight against the Biden administration's over-regulation of the coal industry. Fedorchak was elected president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), where she helped shape energy and utility policy at a national level, and completed her term in mid-November.

The Committee, first established in 1795, is the oldest legislative Committee in the House of Representatives and has jurisdiction over health care, energy, environment, technology, data privacy and security, broadband, and much more.

The Pipeline Fight Continues After ND Industrial Commission Permits Summit's CO2 Wells

Landowners and grassroots advocacy organizations vow to continue fighting after an unsurprising decision from the Industrial Commission. The North Dakota Industrial Commission, comprised of Governor Doug Burgum, the Attorney General, and the Agricultural Commissioner, approved Summit Carbon Solutions' permits for Class VI injection wells. Summit's permit in Minnesota was also granted last week by the state's Public Utilities Commission.

Summit proposes to use these wells to inject carbon dioxide (CO2), captured from 57 ethanol plants across Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, a mile underground in Oliver and Mercer counties, beneath the homes of residents and the larger communities.

The underground storage of CO2 has been associated with potential hazards due to the nature of the chemical, including its corrosiveness and the risks it may pose to public safety. Recently, an underground breach occurred at an ADM-operated sequestration facility in Decatur, Illinois, the first commercial geologic sequestration operation in the United States. CO2 corroded that equipment, allowing the gas to migrate beyond the defined storage zone, narrowly avoiding the acidification of an aquifer that serves as a source of drinking water. Summit proposes to use the same grade material in North Dakota that was corrupted by carbon dioxide at the Decatur facility.

"While not surprising, given Governor Burgum's outspoken support for carbon capture and sequestration, this decision will only cause the opposition to Summit's risky project to dig in their heels. While North Dakota's policymakers are for this project, we have polling that proves that most North Dakotans do

not want this project. Furthermore, recent incidents in Illinois, where CO2 leaked underground, demonstrate that we do not know enough about this technology to use North Dakota as a testing ground. Even Summit has stated that they cannot know the impacts of carbon dumping until they do them," said Scott Skokos, Dakota Resource Council.

"We never expected any other outcome from this commission, particularly given Governor Burgum's business and political relationship with Summit's major investment partner, Continental Resources. At the end of the day, the predictable decision won't make a difference to the widespread project resistance - we'll continue doing everything we can to topple this stacked deck in order to protect the property rights and wellbeing of North Dakotans," said Emma Schmit, Bold Alliance Pipeline Fighters Director.

Summit continues to face significant challenges as it encounters multiple permit appeals and local zoning regulations across the pipeline's five-state footprint. Separate lawsuits over the Public Service Commission's permitting decision have been launched by landowners and by Burleigh County. Additionally, the Northwest Landowners Association is suing the state over its amalgamation law (which allows the state to take away landowners' mineral rights without the usual legal remedies granted by Eminent Domain).

Visit the North Dakota Industrial Commission's meeting where the decision was discussed, and the press release online at <https://pipelinefighters.org/news/press-release-the-pipeline-fight-continues-after-north-dakota-industrial-commission-permits-summits-co2-wells/>.

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