

Bakken Briefs

School enrollment is strong

Schools in and around Divide County remained largely consistent in enrollment on the first day of class compared with last year.

Ray and Powers Lake saw increases in enrollment, as did West-by (Montana), which saw the largest change with the addition of 11 students.

The largest decrease was at Tio-ga, down 10 from a year ago. Divide County, Grenora and Burke Central were each down by less than 10.

Ray’s enrollment of 455 marks a new high for the school district, up six from a year ago.

It’s the ninth year in a row Ray has reached a new high in initial enrollment, according to the figures reported by the school each year.

“I think that the city of Ray has done a great job of marketing itself, and the school has a good reputation,” Superintendent Kris Kuehn said.

--The Journal, Crosby Airport works on land buy

The Stanley City Council and Stanley Municipal Airport board agreed to set up a joint committee to come to an agreement on the purchase of land for a new crosswind runway.

North Dakota Aeronautics Commission Executive Director Kyle Wanner was also in attendance Aug. 21 to discuss the \$250,000 grant the airport received to facilitate the purchase.

Council member Chad Hysjulien said the original consensus when the process began was that any portion of the property not needed for the airport project would be turned back to the city to be available for development and to put back on the property tax rolls.

Wanner said the airport would want to retain that property for future projects, but the city could purchase it or the airport could lease it.

--Mountrail County Promoter, Stanley

Williams backs power plant

The Williams County Commission has agreed to offer tax-exempt conduit bonds to Basin Electric Power Cooperative for an almost \$4 billion generation station to be built in the county.

Matthew Kolling, senior staff counsel for Basin Electric, presented the idea to the commissioners at their meeting Aug. 19.

Bison Generation Station, a natural gas-fired combined-cycle power plant to be located near Epping, is “a fairly large project,” Kolling noted.

Commercial operation for the \$3.9 billion project is targeted to begin in 2030.

“As we are building out the Bakken and building out our generation facilities, this is an avenue that provides us with some flexibility and some lowered interest costs in order to get big facilities built,” Kolling said of the program.

--Williston Herald

Minot State adds preschool

Midwest Montessori officially opened its doors Aug. 22 with a grand-opening celebration.

The preschool and child care center is located at 812 8th St. NW in Minot, just south of Model Hall on land owned by the Minot State University Development Foundation.

“The preschool and daycare will benefit a wide range of individuals in our community, especially MSU early childhood education students by providing hands-on learning opportunities,” said Rick Hedberg, foundation executive director.

Owned and operated by Caleb and Courtney Heilman, Midwest Montessori accommodates children from 6 weeks to 6 years old.

“The project has been over three years in the making, and we’re just so proud of what it has come to be,” Courtney Heilman said.

--Minot Daily News

US 85 set to expand again

The executive director of the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Association reported progress on plans to expand another segment of U.S. Highway 85 in North Dakota to four lanes.

The 19.5-mile segment south of Watford City, from the Long X Bridge to the state Highway 200 junction, is set to be bid this fall but will require two years of construction due to the challenging Badlands terrain, Cal Klewin said.

“It’s one of the most expensive stretches along the entire corridor,” Klewin told the McKenzie County Commission in an update on Aug. 19.

The project received a \$55 million federal grant and \$100 million in state matching funds.

The proposed next phase, from Highway 200 to Belfield, is in the planning stage, with construction expected between 2027 and 2029.

--McKenzie County Farmer, Watford City

Mercer seeks new offices

The Mercer County Commission has expressed possible interest in the purchase and renovation of an old building in Beulah that could be used for county services in the future.

Currently, Mercer County pays rent to house some of its offices and services in other buildings. Although the purchase and maintenance of a large building would be costly, commissioners said they were interested to see if those costs would be justified by reducing rental expenses.

J2 Studios President James Devine presented the commission on Aug. 6 with a proposed floor plan for the former A1 Auto Repair building.

Departments being considered in the proposal include the extension, parole, veterans, youth service, public health, social services and weed board offices, among others.

--Hazen Star

Strong Public Schools, Strong North Dakota

By Nick Archuleta, ND United President

As a new school year begins across North Dakota, students from Wahpeton to Williston, and from Bathgate to Bowman are back in our schools, making them hum with the excitement and promise of another year of learning. The return of students to school is more than a seasonal milestone. It is a reminder of the essential role our public schools and teachers play in sustaining our communities and securing our future.

In North Dakota, our schools are not just places where children learn math, reading, and science. They are often the cultural and social centers of our towns, especially in rural areas. Friday night football games, school concerts, and community gatherings all revolve around the local school. In many small towns, the school is the beating heart of the community, the one institution that ties generations together and keeps rural life vibrant.

At the center of this work are our teachers and education support professionals. North Dakota’s educators do more than instruct; they nurture, inspire, and guide. Whether in a small elementary school on the prairie or in a bustling high school in ND’s more urban areas, teachers meet students where they are and help them reach their potential. These education professionals know their students by name, communicate with their families, and place our kids at the center of their best intentions. Most importantly, they

educate every student who walks, runs, or rolls through their school-house doors. That is the obligation and passion of every public-school teacher.

Strong public schools are the key to North Dakota’s future. Our economy depends on a well-educated workforce ready to lead in fields like agriculture, energy, health care, education, public service, and technology. If we want our young people to stay in our state and build their lives here, we must provide them with schools that prepare them for success and communities that value their talents.

But strong schools don’t happen by accident. They require stable funding, policies that recognize the unique needs of rural districts as well as urban districts, and fair salaries that keep great teachers in our classrooms. Given the importance and impact of public schools in ND, when we shortchange our schools, we are shortchanging our communities and limiting opportunities for our children.

This school year, I encourage all North Dakotans to celebrate, support, and protect the public schools that hold our communities together. Let’s honor our teachers for the difference they make in the lives of students every single day. Because when we invest in our schools, we are not just funding education, we are building stronger communities, creating opportunities, and securing the future of North Dakota. Our kids deserve nothing less, and neither do we.

West-To-East Natural Gas Pipeline Will Help Unlock Potential Of ND Communities

By Gov. Kelly Armstrong

Whoever said “you can never have too much of a good thing” likely never faced a dilemma like the one we have with natural gas in North Dakota.

On one hand, we have communities that need natural gas to grow and support economic development but have no way of getting it.

On the other hand, natural gas production in western North Dakota continues to set records as the Bakken matures, with no large-scale pipeline to move this stranded asset from west to east.

Fortunately, a solution is within reach.

The North Dakota Industrial Commission recently took a crucial step toward bridging the natural gas gap between east and west.

We voted to begin contract discussions with WBI Energy Transmission for the state to purchase transport capacity on a proposed natural gas pipeline that would run from McKenzie County in the heart of the Bakken to Mapleton and Ellendale in southeastern North Dakota.

This is no small commitment. To support WBI building the pipeline, the state would backstop up to \$50 million of pipeline capacity per year for up to ten years, for a possible investment of \$500 million. As WBI secures commitments from private businesses to use the natural gas, and they’re already lining up, the state will transfer its pipeline space to those businesses.

In short, we’re taking an excess energy product that’s stranded in the Bakken and moving it across the state to people who need it.

That means a cheaper source of power and heat for homeowners and businesses in our communities as they look to grow their economies.

It means oil producers can maintain and increase their output, versus having to curtail production to stay within state goals for reducing the flaring of natural gas at the wellhead.

And it means the abundant oil and gas tax revenues that support everything in North Dakota from schools, hospitals and highways to airports, tax relief and the Legacy Fund, will continue to flow into state coffers for decades to come. Since 2015, the state has collected more than \$22.7 billion in oil and gas tax revenue.

As I said in my first State of the State address in January. For as valuable as natural gas is, it’s actually a detriment to our state budget because it limits our ability to grow. To reduce flaring and increase oil production, we need to move our gas, and we must work with industry to build out pipeline infrastructure.

Last week’s Commission vote sends a strong signal to the private sector that North Dakota is open for business and serious about offloading our natural gas. We appreciate the current Legislative Assembly authorizing the \$50 million per year, expanding on a similar proposal from the 2023 session.

This comes as an exciting time for our economy, with major projects in the agriculture and technology sectors proposed or coming online in North Dakota, including value-added processing plants and data centers.

One need they all have in common is power. And with this west-to-east pipeline, North Dakota will be even better positioned to meet that demand, helping our communities reach their full potential and paving the way for a more prosperous and energy-secure future for our citizens.

North Dakota Best In Class Program Marks 5th Anniversary

As the Best in Class program marks its fifth anniversary, North Dakota Health and Human Services (HHS) has received new funding to expand the program and provide more children with high-quality early childhood experiences.

HHS recently announced that 64 early childhood programs and 94 classrooms across North Dakota are participating in Best in Class which focuses on giving children in the year before kindergarten a strong start. The program invests in early childhood providers who are committed to delivering engaging, meaningful, high-quality experiences to children and their families.

By participating in Best in Class, programs receive guidance from a dedicated coach and access to professional development that strengthens teaching practices, classroom environments and family engagement. The program provides early childhood providers and families with the resources and support needed to help children grow.

Expanding access to Best in Class is a key component of North Dakota’s early childhood strategy. Since its launch in the 2021-2022 program year, the program has grown steadily. It began with 24 programs, 28 classrooms and 371 children. To date, the program has seen a 260 percent increase in children served statewide over five years.

“We know that quality early childhood experiences help give children a strong start,” said Kay Larson, HHS early childhood director. “When we invest in our youngest citizens, we are investing in stronger families, a more prepared workforce and a brighter future for all.”

Participating programs are monitored, evaluated and supported to help ensure that investments deliver real benefits for children. Best in Class is grounded in more than 25 years of research on the key elements of quality in early childhood showing that access to quality early childhood experiences can create long-lasting positive outcomes for children’s development and future success.

Award amounts for the 2025-2026 program year range from \$15,000 to \$120,000 per classroom, based on factors such as the number of children served and total operating hours.

Programs providing a minimum of 400 hours of quality early childhood experiences over at least a 32-week period are eligible to apply for funding. Matching funds are required, and eligibility does not guarantee funding. Programs must

apply and be selected to participate.

For the 2025-2026 program year, Best in Class celebrates its fifth anniversary by welcoming 64 programs and 94 classrooms, up from 57 programs and 81 classrooms last year. This growth highlights the strong commitment of North Dakota providers and families to quality early childhood experiences.

To learn more about Best in Class and view the list of participating programs, visit www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/early-childhood-services/best-in-class.

Best in Class participating programs are: Alexander Public School; Altru Family YMCA, Grand Forks; Belcourt School, Tiny Turtles; Carrington Public School; Cavalier Public School; Central Cass Public School; Coyote Pups Learning Den, CHI Williston; Coyote Pups Learning Den, Life Church Williston; Circle of Friends Preschool and Child Care, Valley City; Drayton Public School; Dunseith Elementary School; Edgeley Public School; Elgin/New Leipzig School; Emerado Public School; Finley-Sharon Public School; Garrison Public School; Grafton Century Elementary School; Griggs County Central Public School; Hazen Public School; Hope-Page Public School; Kiddie Korral 2.0 Child Care Center; Killdeer Public School; Kindred Public School; Lakota School District; LaMoure Public School; Littleville-Marion Public School; Little Scholars Preschool; Maple Valley Public School; Mapleton Public School; Max Public School; Mayville State University - Head Start, Mayville, Hillsboro, Larimore; Midway Public School; Mohall-Lansford-Sherwood Public School; Montpelier Public School; Mt. Pleasant School District; New England Public School; New Rockford-Sheyenne Public School; North Border School District, Pembina, Walthalla; North Sargent Public School; Northern Cass School District; Park River Area School; Pingree-Buchanan Public School; Powers Lake Public School; Ragamuffins Ranch Daycare; Richland #44 School District; Rugby Public School; Sargent Central Public School; Sawyer Public School; Solen Public School, Cannon Ball Elementary; South Heart Public School; St. John’s Public School; Underwood Public School; Valley City Public School; Valley-Edinburg School District; Williston Basic School District; Westhope Public School; Wishek Public School; YMCA of Northern Sky, Fercho - Fargo, Schlossman - Fargo, South - Fargo, West Fargo.

ND School Boards To Give New Public Comment Law A Test

By Mike Moen, Public News Service

As North Dakota schools welcome back students, the boards overseeing their districts have a new state law to comply with dealing with public comments at open meetings.

The law took effect on August 1 and requires all local governing bodies, including school districts, to allow residents to speak at every regular meeting. Supporters said the change is needed because they felt some boards around the state were too restrictive.

Amy De Kok, executive director of the North Dakota School Boards Association, said the new law comes at a time when there is great pressure on those deciding local education matters.

“Communities are asking tougher questions about funding, lawmakers are adding more and more strings to the dollars that they provide,” De Kok outlined. “We are still hearing largely, I think, on a national stage, calls for reform of public education.”

Historically, school boards have been nonpolitical but there has been a larger influence of candidates and parents demanding districts take up

“culture war” issues. The Association had opposed the initial bill the Legislature considered this past spring, calling it too broad without reasonable limitations. Backers touted compromises along the way, including limiting topics to the current agenda or from the previous meeting.

In talking to its members about the changes, the Association acknowledges the need for inviting the public to learn more about local school decisions, while keeping the heated rhetoric at bay. In crafting their policies under the new law, De Kok stressed school boards need to make clear what kind of conduct is out of line.

“Interruptions, defamatory remarks or persistent personal attacks, generally shouldn’t be allowed,” De Kok explained.

De Kok added it is important for public boards to hear valid criticism but cautioned disrespectful behavior can interfere with the need to conduct business. She also alluded to ensuring those in the audience follow decorum, suggesting heckling and prolonged clapping can be a form of intimidation to others in attendance.


Dr. Susan Asheim
is now seeing patients
on Mondays and Wednesdays
from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
inside the Optometry Clinic of Stanley!
Located at 102 S Main Street, Stanley ND 58784.

PREMIER
CHIROPRACTIC

Call and
schedule
your
appointment
today
701-838-0090



Oil, Gas & Mineral Law



PRINGLE & HERIGSTAD, P.C.
SCOTT M. KNUDSVIG
ATTORNEY AT LAW
2525 ELK DRIVE
PO BOX 1000 · MINOT, ND 58702
Phone (701) 852-0381
1-800-735-4064
www.pringlelaw.net

MISSOURI RIVER ROYALTY CORPORATION (MRRC)

*Leasing and Buying
Core Bakken minerals!*



*Please contact Sander Kopseng at 701-226-6128
or at skopseng@unitedenergycorp.com*



**SONSHINE
CARWASH**

Truck Wash ~
Car Wash ~ Dog Wash
911 4th St. SW, Stanley
Dog Wash Now Available!
Exterior and Interior
Detailing Available
Cars, Trucks, Campers, etc.
Call for Appointment:
(701)629-8960



Shade Tree Experts Business since 1974

R & C Tree Service
Now Working in the Area

Complete Tree Service:
Trimming & Removal
Stump Removal

Modern Equipment
Excellent Work - Fair Price - Free Estimates
License & Bonded Insured

**CALL J.P. Roberge 701-334-0381
or toll-free 1-800-334-1518**

Credit Cards Accepted

**City of Palermo
Final Budget Meeting Notice**

The Palermo City Council will meet on September 9, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at 339 Broadway Street to finalize the 2026 budget. Any person may appear at this time and make inquiries concerning the budget. If anyone would like to look at the budget before this time, you may contact Kathryn Meckle at 629-0138. The regular city council meeting will take place following the budget meeting.

Kathryn Meckle, City Auditor

**NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS
2026 BUDGET HEARING**

Notice is hereby given that the preliminary budget for the City of Plaza, ND, for calendar year 2026 has been received by the City Council and is on file in the office of the City Auditor, where it can be examined by any taxpayer. Notice is also given that the City Council will meet in the City Office, on Monday, September 15, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers to hear any objections to the budget and to adopt the final budget and make the annual tax levy for the 2026 calendar year.

Pemina Yellow Bird, City Auditor