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Meade County News

PROVIDING NEWS FOR: Sturgis and Meade County , Including Faith, Union Center, Red Owl, White Owl, Enning, Howes Corner, Mud Butte, Fairpoint, Plainview, Elm Springs, Box Elder, Piedmont, Summerset, Marcus and Maurine and everything in between.



Sturgis Scoopers

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VOL. 1 ISSUE11

Sturgis, SD Thursday September 2, 2026

Live & Online

Brandon Bennett

news@MeadeCoNews.com

Bennett STURGIS—The community of Sturgis, businesses, city government and the Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau hosted the annual Community Appreciation picnic at Harley Davidson Rally Point Plaza to basically say thank you to Sturgis residents for letting the motorcycle rally take over the town.

Burgers, hot dogs and chips were provided and were served by volunteers.

There was one final race and Flannel provided live music. Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau Assistant Director Kadence Gleason said they're happy to welcome the community. "We serve over 700 community members and it's a great way to show support for the community and we also have 20 nonprofits here tonight," she said.

She added U.S. Food and the Loud American donated the food and Lynn's Dakota Mart donated the fee for the band along with other businesses.

Additional Photos A-6

Community Appreciation Picnic



Attorney General Jackley Names Marlys Big Eagle As State's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Person Specialist

PIERRE— South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley announces that Marlys Big Eagle, an enrolled member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and resident of Fort Thompson, SD, has been named as the state's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Person Specialist.

"Marlys has spent her career helping victims of violence and families looking for missing loved ones," said Attorney

General Jackley. "Her credibility with tribal communities, law enforcement, and prosecutors makes her an outstanding choice."

Big Eagle served 27 years with the United States Department of Justice including 23 years as the Supervisory Victim Witness Coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office in South Dakota and 4 years at the Executive Office for United States Attorneys in Washington, D.C. as the DOJ's first Native American Outreach Services Liaison for Missing or Murdered Indigenous Person cases occurring in Indian Country.

She has been honored for her efforts to help victims and her service to Indian Country as a recipient of the U.S. Attorney General's Award for Exceptional Service in Indian country.

"I am deeply honored to be selected to assist families of missing or murdered Indigenous persons as they seek answers and confirmation about what may have happened to their loved ones," said Big Eagle.

"I look forward to working alongside other MMIP stakeholders and partners to help bring answers, support, and justice to these important cases."

The MMIP program is part of the South Dakota Attorney General's Office.



Marlys Big Eagle, new South Dakota Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Specialist

DOT Presents Lazelle Street Project

Brandon Bennett

news@MeadeCoNews.com

Dakota Department of Transportation presented its plan to improve Lazelle Street at a meeting August 27th at the Community Center gym.

Staff with the DOT and JEO Consulting, who helped put together the plan, were on hand to answer questions. Just FYI: The last time any grading, paving and storm sewer work was done was in 1968. Traffic signals and lights were last updated in 1999. And the last service improvements were in 2021.

Traffic in 2025 daily was 9,102 vehicles and in 2045 that number is expected to be 14,217. Truck traffic averages about 4 percent. Safety, infrastructure upgrades and a sub-standard pedestrian facilities are reasons for the project.

Improvements planned include a five-wide section, improved sidewalks, storm sewer and lighting and signals. Mike Carlson is the project engineer out of the Rapid City office. "What we need to do is remove the old surfacing and the drain structure, they've all reached the end of their cycle, replace the curb and gutter, the sidewalk and we'll put

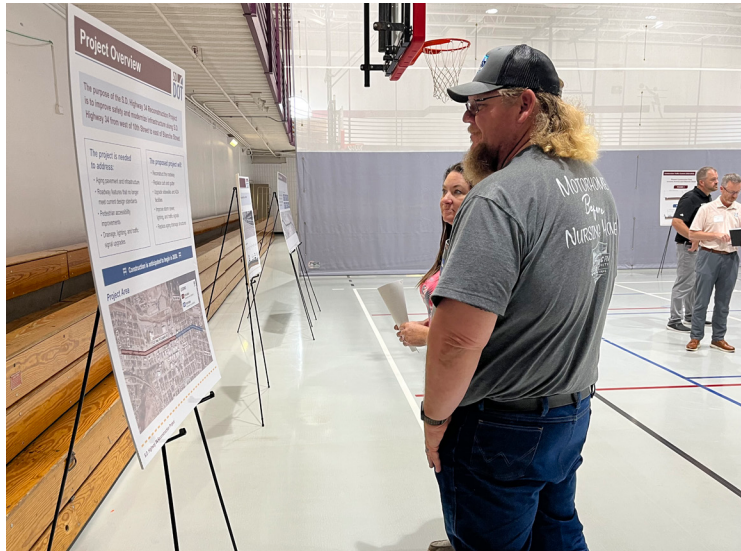
new lights back in and traffic signals," said Carlson. He added residents will be able to get around the project site by utilizing Main or Sherman Streets.

Since existing widths of the right of way is 66 feet the DOT may have to purchase additional right of ways as needed or have temporary easements as needed.

The department will with property owners in the right

of ways and will also coordinate with utilities like electric utilities and cable companies as well as natural gas utilities. The DOT will abide by federal law when it comes environmental, social and economic concerns.

Comments need to be made by September 11, 2026 to Jacob Rosecky, Road Design Engineering Manager at the SDDOT. His email is jacobrosecky@state.sd.us



Citizens gathered at **Community Center** gymnasium to learn of DOT plans for **Lazelle Street Project**. MCNews Photo more photos A6

Hey Everybody There Was Another Fire North Of Town!



Thanks to the tremendous work of firefighters the Bear Butte Fire was quickly contained.



Action from **Scooper** season opener loss. Robert Allison Facebook Photo

Pierre Govs Beat Scoopers on Opening Night

Terry Anderson

KBHB Sports

PIERRE, SD – The #1

ranked team in 11AA football, the Pierre Governors, lived up to their top billing with a 42-6 drubbing of the Sturgis Scoopers on Saturday at Hollister Field.

The Govs found the end zone twice in the first quarter, with a 49-yard touchdown run by Porter Hunsley and a 67-yard TD catch by Will Danburg from Jeren Deal to give Pierre a 14-0 lead headed into the second.

Deal found Thomas Snyder with a 21-yard strike with 7:14 left before halftime to give the Govs a 21-0 lead. Sturgis engineered a drive and moved the ball downfield on their next possession, capitalizing with a 25-yard scoring run by Zhoel Irion. The extra point was blocked and Pierre led 21-6 with 3:29 left before intermission.

The Govs started their next drive at their own 20, then moved the ball to the 38-yard line. Deal hit wideout Carter Schiefelbein for a 17-yard gain and the Govs had good field position at the Scooper 45. Deal called his own number on the next play, scampering into the

end zone from 45 yards out for another Pierre touchdown. The Govs led 28-6 at the half.

It was all Pierre in the second half, with a 5-yard rushing score from Hunsley and a 32-yard touchdown pass from Deal to Schiefelbein, both in the third quarter, to wrap up the scoring. The 42-6 lead by Pierre meant a running clock for the remainder of the contest. Governor kicker Carter Templeton was a perfect 6-of-6 on extra points.

Pierre (1-0) racked up 462 yards of total offense and were led by junior quarterback Jeren Deal, who ran for 101 yards and one score and threw for 237 yards and three TDs. The Govs had one turnover, an interception, and three penalties for 30 yards. Hunsley had five carries for 69 yards and two scores.

Sturgis (0-1) had 270 yards of offense, 130 on the ground and 140 yards passing. Senior quarterback Austin Flohr was 8-of-17 passing for 126 yards. Tight end Gage West had a great game for the Scoopers, with 100 yards receiving on six catches. Irion finished with 19 carries for 92 yards and a touchdown.

Sturgis hosts 11AAA Rapid City Central (0-1) on Friday night at Woodle Field.

FEMA to reimburse eight South Dakota counties, three tribes for storm-related infrastructure fixes

Members of Oglala Sioux Tribe also eligible for individual assistance for flooding

John Hult
South Dakota SearchLight

The federal government will reimburse up to 75% of public infrastructure repair costs from storms that hit eight South Dakota counties and two Native American reservations in late June and early July, the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Wednesday.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe, meanwhile, is in line for the same level of reimbursements for repairs to public infrastructure caused by storms in early June, and individual tribal members will be eligible for financial aid to cover some property losses from that incident.

Gov. Larry Rhoden requested a presidential disaster declaration from the Trump administration in late July, in a letter laying out \$4.5 million in public property damage from a storm system that moved through the state between hoden said, first in a Tuesday evening social media post and again in a press release on Wednesday, that President Donald Trump called him directly to tell him about approving the state’s request for a disaster declaration.

On X, Rhoden shared a post from Trumpin which the president wrote “South Dakota is a special place, which I won by Historic margins, three times,

and I will always deliver BIG for them.”

The disaster declaration for the state as a whole will reimburse public property repair costs in Beadle, Bennett, Buffalo, Day, Hand, Hughes, Hyde and Stanley Counties, along with the Crow Creek and Lower Brule reservations. Roads, power systems, parks, recreation areas and public facilities were damaged in the storm, with the heaviest impacts in Hyde and Beadle counties.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe President Boyd Gorneau told South Dakota Searchlight on Wednesday that the tribe lost some center-pivot irrigation systems on its agricultural land in the storm.

FEMA sent a press release on disaster declarations for South Dakota on Wednesday, but the release did not include dollar figures.

A FEMA spokesperson told Searchlight the reimbursement isn’t limited to the \$4.5 million in damage cited in Rhoden’s request to President Trump, whose post said he’d “approved” \$3.4 million — a figure that would cover 75% of the cost to repair that damage.

The actual amount paid in reimbursement will be based on the cost to repair infrastructure, the spokesman said, provided local governments and state officials adhere to FEMA guidelines and protocols.

The same will be true for the Oglala Sioux Tribe’s public infrastructure. The tribe, which



: Matilyn Kerr, left, and sister Brittany Kerr watch as a skid-steer loader pulls a tree from Brittany Kerr’s yard in **Highmore, South Dakota**, on June 29, 2026, after a severe storm that morning. (Photo by Meghan O’Brien/South Dakota Searchlight)

requested a disaster declaration separately, was hit with flash flooding June 2-4 after a heavy rain and hail storm.

During the first round of storms, according to the National Weather Service, “6 to 7 inches of rain fell in a short period, causing streets and ditches to fill extremely quickly,” in addition to strong winds and hail. A tornado touched down near Ideal in Tripp County the following day, damaging mostly agricultural land.

The individual assistance program, part of the FEMA announcement for the tribe, will

allow residents to work with FEMA to obtain “grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and families recover from the effects of the disaster,” the spokesperson wrote in an email.

A separate press release from FEMA on the tribal disaster declaration said that tribal members who experienced losses in the storms “should document their damage, keep any receipts for repairs, and file a claim with their insurance provider.”

“Information on how individuals may apply for federal disaster assistance will be announced when it is available,” the press release said.

The FEMA spokesperson said the tribe has not requested a disaster declaration for a more recent hailstorm, which dropped baseball-sized hail on some areas of tribal land, damaging school buses and homes and forcing a delayed start to the school year.

The tribe’s public information officer did not immediately return calls and emails seeking comment on Wednesday.

Attorney General Jackley Credits Law Enforcement with Arrest in Youth Sexual Abduction

PIERRE— South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley credits South Dakota law enforcement with the arrest in a youth sexual abduction case Monday afternoon.

Attorney General Jackley said the state’s Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC) was notified Monday afternoon by Wyoming authorities who were searching for a vehicle involved in the abduction of a 15-year-old female from Sundance, WY.

Highway Patrol troopers

stopped the vehicle on I-90 near the Aurora County line, east of Plankinton.

The stop occurred less than one hour after South Dakota authorities had been first notified.

The adult male suspect was identified as Dalton Renollet, 36, of Maricopa, AZ.

He has been charged with one count of Sexual Contact with a Minor in Aurora County.

The female victim was safely recovered.

Wyoming authorities had initially been working with

Utah thinking that Renollet was taking the female back to Arizona. License Plate Readers (LPR) technology located the suspect’s vehicle in South Dakota.

“A 15-year-old abducted and traumatized girl has been brought to safety by the excellent work of law enforcement.

This incident demonstrates how valuable technology can be in protecting the public and assisting officers to locate a vulnerable juvenile and bring her to safety within an hour,”

said Attorney General Jackley. “I remain committed to strict safeguards and oversight to ensure this technology protects the public from serious crimes with strong protections in place to safeguard personal privacy.”

Attorney General Jackley has announced plans to propose legislation to ensure that technology is used solely for legitimate law enforcement purposes with strong protection for the public’s privacy.

He is working with legislators, law enforcement, and

prosecutors on legislation to establish clear standards and safeguards for law enforcement’s use of this and similar technology, ensuring it is used responsibly, with appropriate oversight and consequences for any misuse.

The Aurora County State’s Attorney’s Office is prosecuting the South Dakota case.

Other charges are expected to be filed in Wyoming. The defendant is presumed innocent under the U.S. Constitution.

Governor of South Dakota seeks federal help for damages from summer storms

Mackenzie Huber
South Dakota Searchlight

Gov. Larry Rhoden has asked the federal government to help pay for nearly \$4.6 million in damage to public property in South Dakota caused by storms late last month and early this month.

Wind gusts of 100 miles an hour or more tore through central and eastern South Dakota between June 28 and July 3, hitting Hyde and Beadle counties the hardest.

Hyde County estimates \$2.8 million in damages to public property due to a June 29 “mini-derecho,” as classified by the National Weather Service’s Storm Prediction Center. Wind gusts of up to 131 miles per hour downed trees and powerlines, snapped wind

turbine towers in half and left Highmore residents without power for days.

A July 3 storm in east-central South Dakota left “devastation” in Huron as well, Rhoden said in a press release, where a tornado with peak winds of 90 mph followed by wind gusts of up to 106 families toppled trees and damaged multiple buildings in areas including the South Dakota State Fairgrounds. Beadle County suffered almost \$897,000 in public property

damage.

Bennett, Buffalo, Day, Hand, Hughes and Stanley counties, along with the Crow Creek and Lower Brule reservations, were also included in the request.

Rhoden’s disaster declaration, signed on Wednesday, opens the door to possible assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. If FEMA approves the declaration, it would pick up 75% of the price of repairs to

public property. Counties would pay 15%, and the state would pay 10%.

Mackenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota’s Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.



Inmates assist with the cleanup effort at the **South Dakota State Fairgrounds** in Huron in early July 2026 after a tornado and windstorm hit the area. (Courtesy of the South Dakota Department of Corrections)

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Arts In Action

Sturgis Area Arts Council

South Dakota Driver Licensing Launches New Driver's License Design

PIERRE— The South Dakota Driver Licensing Program is introducing a new driver's license and identification card design this month.

The new cards feature advanced security technology to help prevent fraud and identity theft, including updated printing methods and embedded design elements that make the credentials more secure and harder to replicate. The design also includes a modernized layout to improve readability and usability for both customers and law enforcement.

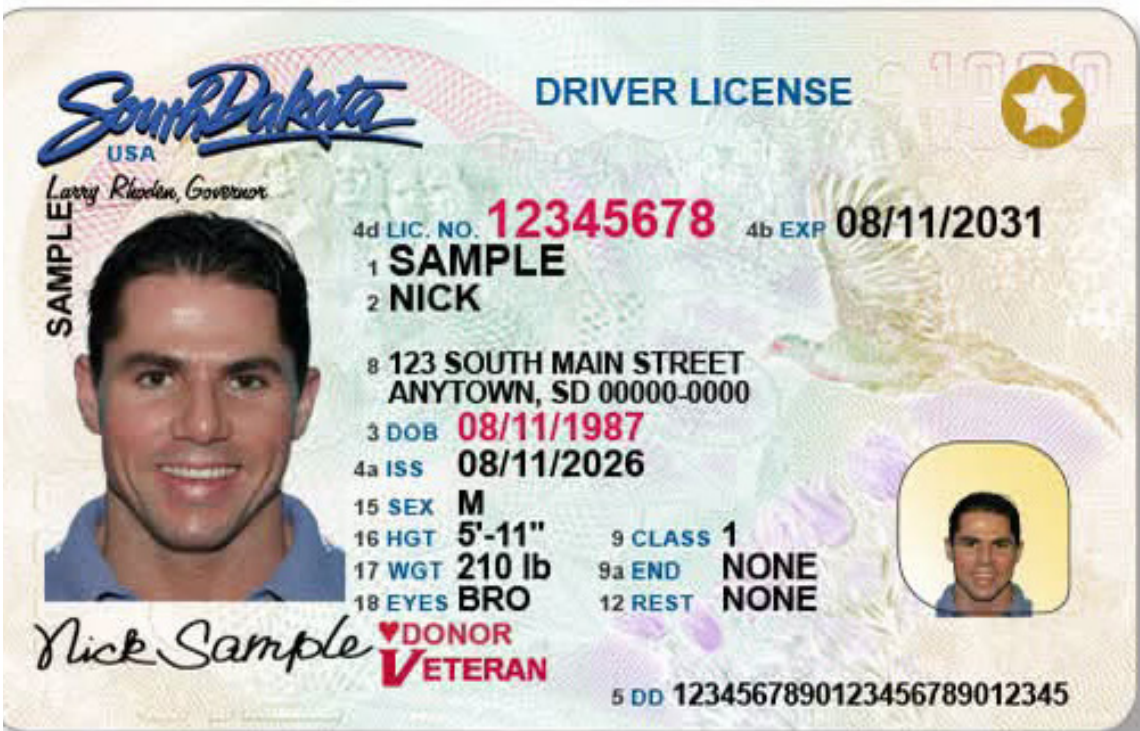
"This redesign ensures that South Dakota continues to provide secure, reliable credentials that keep pace with evolving technology," said Jeannelle Yitagesu, Driver Licensing program manager. "We're proud that the new

cards also highlight the beauty and character of our state."

Driver License Exam Stations across South Dakota will begin issuing the new design throughout the month of September, with roll-out dates varying by site as each office transitions to the updated system. Residents will receive the new-style driver's licenses and ID cards during renewal or when applying for new credentials. Existing licenses will remain valid until their expiration date. No immediate action is required from current cardholders.

For more information, visit the Driver Licensing website at dps.sd.gov or contact your local Driver Exam Station.

Driver Licensing is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



Why the rushed Postal Service plan for mail-in voting has states in a panic

Jacob Fischler
South Dakota SearchLight

President Donald Trump's executive order placing new restrictions on mail-in voting would assign state officials a Herculean task to reach compliance before the crucial midterm elections.

The order directed the U.S. Postal Service to strictly regulate the envelope design of mail-in ballots and to collect voter data from each state through an online portal, among other things.

The Postal Service has argued in court that its rule is not an election regulation, but is within the agency's purview as a standard for a specific type of mail.

But some state officials tasked with fitting their systems to the new regulations say it presents massive — if not impossible — challenges to reach compliance for the November midterms, when voters will decide whether to continue Republican control of the U.S. House and Senate.

Ballot designs and printing are typically done months in advance

of ballots being sent to voters, which begins this week. North Carolina is set to mail out ballots for the Nov. 3 general election on Friday.

"In some States, it would be impossible at this point to comply with the last-minute rollout of USPS' novel ballot-verification program," more than 20 Democratic-led states suing to block the order said in a Wednesday court filing. "In other States, there will be chaos."

The states presented a list of tasks state and local elections administrators would have to complete.

That list includes: redesigning ballot envelopes and obtaining USPS approval "on an unprecedented timetable," purchasing new envelopes, developing technological systems to meet barcode standards in the rule, uploading voter-specific information to the USPS portal that they have not yet received access to and training state and local officials and voters on the new standards.

"Each step of this process is fraught with an extreme risk of error," they said.

'Courts will stop it'

Because of the unworkable timeline and a general principle not to change voting policy too close to an election, officials believe courts will ultimately block the rule from going into effect for this year.

"There's a pretty universal feeling that the courts will stop it from happening," Katy Owens Hubler, the director of elections at the National Conference of State Legislatures, said in an interview.

"In general, you don't want to be changing things right before the election. So in a lot of ways, it is already too late. Part of the rule relates to the absentee ballot envelopes themselves. And ... almost universally, those have already been designed and printed."

A Massachusetts federal judge has paused the rule from taking effect through Sept. 11 while multiple legal fights play out.

Tammy Patrick, the chief programs officer at the National Association of Election Officials, a nonpartisan industry group for state and local elections officials, said in a court declaration filed Aug. 28 the timeline was unwork-

able for the midterms.

"None of the Rule's requirements can feasibly be implemented before the November 3, 2026, General Election," she wrote.

"Administration of the 2026 election is already well underway, with timelines, budgets, and staffing already set, many of which are unmovable or unchangeable."

The rule's requirements "will place new and heavy burdens" on election offices whose budgets are

"already constrained," she added.

Election officials and USPS began preparing for the 2026 election months ago, she said. And states already set funding levels.

"The infeasibility of the Rule for election officials is obvious when you consider the calendar and preparation for the 2026 general election next to the Rule's requirements and implementation," she wrote.

Post Office Contd. A5

Sturgis Man Sentenced To Prison On Child Pornography Charges

RAPID CITY— A Sturgis man has been sentenced to six years and three months in prison after being sentenced on child pornography charges.

Carl Wahl, 55, was convicted of receipt of child pornography and possession of child pornography. Wahl was initially indicted for the charge by a federal grand jury in February of 2025. He pleaded guilty on April 1st. Prosecutors say between May and August of 2023, the South Dakota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force received CyberTips for investigation. A search warrant for Wahl's

residence and electronic devices was obtained. Several of Wahl's electronic devices, including his HP laptop and his two cell-phones, were examined and all three devices contained visual depictions of child sexual abuse material that Wahl knowingly and intentionally viewed, possessed, and received using the internet. Wahl was also ordered to serve five years of supervised release, and ordered to pay a \$100 special assessment to the Federal Crime Victims Fund for each charge. Wahl was also ordered to pay \$30,285 in restitution.

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Jonathan Ellis & Joe Sneve

Post OfficeContd. from A3

The rule would force states to push through in a matter of weeks what should take a year, Matthew Weil, the vice president for democracy and bipartisanship at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington think tank, said.

“A year of lead time is the best practice before any new policy,” he said.

Envelope design

Some of the requirements themselves are not objectionable, according to experts.

The standards for envelope design, for example, largely codify best practices the Postal Service has recommended for years.

But the rule also requires that USPS approve each design, possibly through an online portal that has yet to be introduced and has reportedly seen major problems in development.

Nationwide, there are about 40 mail design analysts who would be qualified to judge mail ballot designs. Asking every state, and many counties that have their own designs, to submit them at the same time would be unworkable.

“If even a fraction of election offices has to submit their new envelopes and materials ... before the 2026 election, it would take weeks for USPS to work through the sudden volume,” Patrick wrote.

A similar problem could face election offices seeking to order printing of new ballots and envelopes, she said. The turnaround time for new envelopes could stretch 12 to 16 weeks, she said.

Despite those obstacles, the rule would mean any ballots that do not fit the new specifications would be rejected, possibly stopping many voters from casting ballots.

IT problem

Like the implementation of ballot envelope standards, the rule’s requirement that states electronically share voter files with the federal government has suffered from a rushed process, according to an explosive whistleblower complaint published Tuesday.

The Postal Service lacks the capacity to implement the executive order, David Becker, the executive director of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, said in a statement Tuesday.

“They secretly rushed development of the technology the order demanded, trying to piece it together in a few months rather than taking the time required for a proper rollout,” he said. “This slapdash effort is guaranteed to result in significant problems just weeks before the election, potentially disenfranchising thousands of voters.”

Owens Hubler said states have not yet gained access to the portal.

“It’s a pretty big (information technology) project to have done very quickly,” she said. “And I don’t know that anybody’s actually seen it yet. So, that’s another aspect of putting it into place before the election that could be pretty tough.”

The Bipartisan Policy Center predicted the difficulty in building the portal in a July 6 comment on the notice of proposed rulemaking by the USPS. The center noted that state and local officials would have difficulty complying.

“Whether election officials can meet this burden at all depends on the successful deployment of a tool that does not yet exist,” the group wrote. “Building, testing, deploying, and training election officials to use a portal before October 4 (the beginning of the 30-day window during which election



A Utah County election worker picks up mailed ballots from the **United States Postal Service** office on Oct. 26, 2020 in Provo, Utah. (Photo by George Frey/Getty Images)

officials will be supplying lists to USPS) will be an enormous undertaking, and the risk of delay in the deployment of this portal is significant.”

The Postal Service did not respond to a message seeking comment Wednesday.

In a Tuesday statement, a spokesperson said the agency was finalizing the portal’s development, and called it “just one part of a broader, year-round effort” to ensure election mail is properly handled.

“The Postal Service is now finalizing the portal and will soon make it available to election officials who voluntarily wish to familiarize themselves with the platform,” the spokesperson said. “USPS will also provide tools, presentations,

and other resources to help election officials understand the platform and make informed decisions about whether and how they wish to use it.”

Universal mail states

States that already mail ballots to every registered voter, and the large jurisdictions within those states, may have an easier time meeting the standards, Owens Hubler said. If they are not already in compliance, they likely have a relationship with a commercial printer that could possibly handle a short order.

But smaller, less-resourced counties and states that don’t have a robust mail-in voting program may have more trouble finding last-minute fixes.

The eight states that have

universal mail voting — California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington — “will be affected, but everyone’s affected,” Owens Hubler said. “And I think it is important to think of the ones that just don’t have to do this as often. They may, in the end, be more affected.”

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

South Dakota Searchlight is part of States Newsroom, the nation’s largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.

Hill “was unable to participate” in the June 2 primary election, the lawsuit says.

State says it’s yet to see lawsuit

Hill and the League are represented by lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota and the ACLU Foundation, a lawyer from the Sioux Falls law firm Heidepriem Purtell Siegel Hinrichs, and attorneys for the Campaign Legal Center, a non-partisan legal aid organization in Washington, D.C., founded more than two decades ago by a former member of the Federal Election Commission.

Kathryn Johnson, president of the League of Women Voters’ South Dakota chapter, said in a press release that the state’s approach to the proof-of-citizenship issue “has not only effectively shut down our League’s ability to register new voters, but it has pointlessly

caused voter confusion and made voting harder.”

Andrew Malone, a lawyer with the ACLU of South Dakota, said in the release that the case is about making sure the state’s new law is administered “in compliance with federal mandates.”

“There is no proof of widespread voter fraud or evidence of non-citizens voting that justifies a law that imposes burdensome show-your-papers requirements for eligible voters to cast their ballots,” Malone said.

Tony Mangan, spokesman for South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley, told South Dakota Searchlight on Monday evening that the office had yet to be served with the lawsuit. Secretary of State Monae Johnson and a spokesman for her office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

State of South Dakota faces lawsuit over proof-of-citizenship voter registration law

Nonprofit and Sioux Falls man challenge implementation of law that creates a class of ‘federal only’ voters

John Hult

SouthDakotaSearchlight.com



A nonprofit organization and a Sioux Falls voter filed a lawsuit Monday in federal

court over the implementation of South Dakota’s new proof-of-citizenship requirement for voter registration. Senate Bill 175, passed by lawmakers and signed into law by Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden in March, requires documentary proof of citizenship from people registering to vote.

That proof can take forms including a birth certificate, passport, driver’s license, non-driver’s identification card or tribal identification card, or “any other type of acceptable documentary evidence of citizenship” under federal law. Photocopies are acceptable for any of the documents except driver’s licenses or state or tribal ID cards.

People who don’t provide those documents are registered but receive a “federal-only” ballot, meaning one that lists only candidates for federal offices such as the president and Congress, but not state or local offices.

In addition to proof of citizenship, the new law requires a person to provide a physical address in South Dakota, other than a mail-forwarding service or post office box, to be registered for voting in state and local elections.

That provision enforceable at the time of registration or upon a request for an absentee ballot targets people such as full-time recreational vehicle drivers who may receive forwarded mail and register their vehicles in the state but otherwise don’t live there.

An analysis of voter data by South Dakota Searchlight in May showed that about 1,500 people in South Dakota had been registered as “federal only.”

The lawsuit alleges that South Dakota’s rollout of the proof-of-citizenship requirement has disqualified eligible voters over erroneous minutiae

and failed to offer them a realistic shot at fixing problems with their registration application. The lawsuit asks a judge to force the state to:

- Accept photocopies of driver’s licenses, tribal IDs and nondriver IDs for voter registration.
- Rescind guidance requiring in-person registration for people who use such IDs as proof of citizenship.
- Make sure registrants designated as federal-only are offered accurate explanations as to why they’ve been denied access to state and local ballots.
- Offer voters registered as federal-only an opportunity to challenge the designation.

The lawsuit also seeks a ruling that the non-acceptance of photocopies for state and tribal IDs violates the U.S. Civil Rights Act, and asks the state to pay the plaintiffs’ attorney fees.

Group’s proposed rule changes previously rejected

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, nonprofit group that holds registration drives, provides voter education and lobbies on voting rights issues. Members of its South Dakota chapter argued before the state’s Board of Elections for rule changes earlier this summer that would have addressed the issues raised in their lawsuit. The board voted the changes down 5-2, ruling that the League lacked the legal standing to propose them.

The League’s lawsuit, which also includes a Sioux Falls man named Jaysen Hill as a plaintiff, names South Dakota Secretary of State Monae Johnson, the state Board of Elections and each board member as defendants.

The lawsuit says the League’s representatives have tried to work with Johnson’s office to fix what they see as issues with the law’s administration, but that her office has been unwilling to do so.

The complaint says Minnehaha County registered Hill as federal-only after he applied to register by mail, sending a photocopy of his state identification card in May.

The card showed his address, the lawsuit says, but the letter

he received telling him he’d be registered federal-only said he’d failed to provide a physical address. Hill was “confused” about the letter, which the lawsuit says is a form letter sent to those registered as federal-only. Hill “now believes he was registered as a federal-only voter because he submitted a photocopy of a state identification card,” the lawsuit says, running afoul of the requirement to present the actual ID card.

“It was never made clear to Plaintiff Hill by any state or local officials that he was registered as a federal-only voter because he failed to provide documentary proof of citizenship, nor is it clear to Plaintiff Hill how he should go about fixing his application.”



A voter fills out a ballot at a Brandon polling place during the runoff election for the **South Dakota Republican** nomination for governor on July 28, 2026. (Photo by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

437PROJECT

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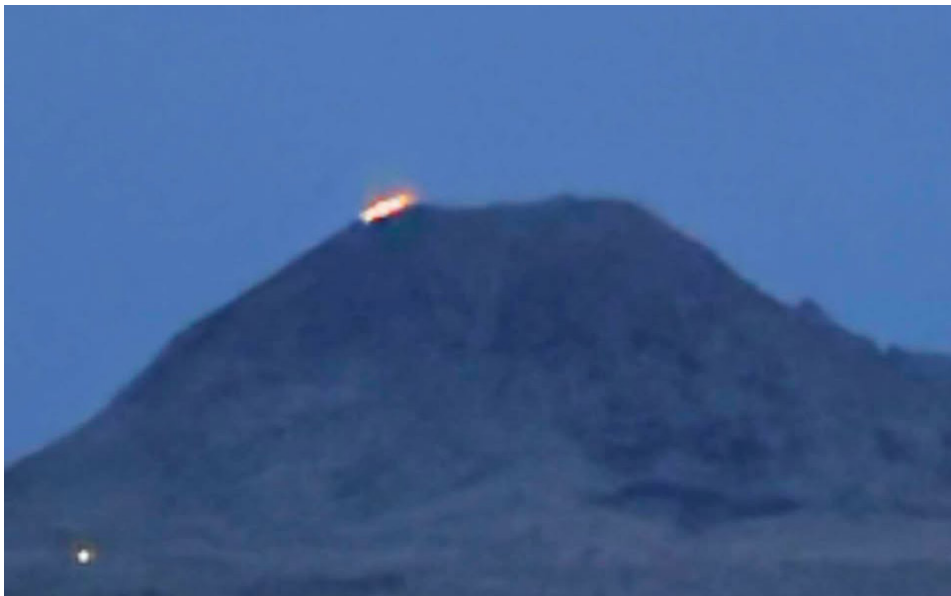
Sturgis

THURSDAY, SEPT. 17

4-5:30 PM MST

Join us at Compass Point as The 437 Project comes to town on their journey across the state!

Bear Butte Fire Photos



Community Appreciation Photos

