

# art OF VERMILLION

## Serving The Community

**Sonia Hernandez**  
For the Plain Talk

Clay-Union Electric, located on Cherry Street, was South Dakota's first electric cooperative. Created in 1937, it is still going strong today, servicing 900 square miles while contributing to the local community in positive ways.

The creation of Clay-Union Electric emanated from the New Deal policies under Franklin D. Roosevelt. In an effort to provide electricity to remote areas, the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) was created in 1935 by executive order, providing federal funds to bring electricity to rural America.

South Dakota's initial organization was known as the Fairview Electric Association, but the group did not have enough members to begin with and their loan application was consequently denied.

Rural electric leaders eventually got enough signatures to get the loan approved. In 1937, after two years of hard work, their efforts resulted in the construction of 67 miles of lines enabling electricity to flow through Clay-Union electric's lines.

Today, the electric cooperative boasts 1,150 miles of energized lines, half of which are underground, servicing 2,800 members who are at the center of the cooperative.

Clay-Union Electric General Manager John Gors emphasizes the importance of cooperatives and how they benefit their members.

"Co-ops are not regulated by the Public Utilities Commission," says Gors. "Just the nature of co-ops means that it's member-owned and democratic. One member, one vote. Everybody stands equal."



Clay-Union Electric has provided electricity for over 75 years. Pictured are the Clay-Union Electric employees.

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regulates rates and services, while Clay-Union is held accountable by its members and board of directors. The board of directors is elected by district, and members vote on a total of five representatives from their respective districts.

"We try to remind members that co-ops are special," says Gors. "We want to make them feel included, and we think that has value."

The cooperative is allowed to manage its own affairs without going through the regulatory processes with the PUC, which ends up saving members money. Because Clay-Union is a non-profit, any excess profit is allocated back to its members through a capital credit account.

"\$200,000 a year goes back to our

members," says Gors. "We have paid millions back."

Clay-Union employs 17 people who live in town or own homes in the community. The cooperative also strives to actively take part in the community in various ways through scholarships and member events.

"We hold a Member Appreciation Day and pancake feed every year," says Gors. "And we also support after prom programs."

Every year, Clay-Union sends one high school sophomore or junior to Washington, D.C. for a Youth Tour. These students are chosen based on a submitted essay, and receive an all-expense paid tour to the nation's capital.

"We also offer a Scholar of the

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## Froke Reports On 2015 Legislative Session

**By Sarah Wetzel**  
For the Plain Talk

Superintendent Mark Froke took the opportunity Monday to present the results of the 2015 Associated School Boards of South Dakota recap of the legislative session.

According to the summary presented, there has been a two percent increase in funding despite low revenue projections. This came through Senate Bill 53 and brings the per-student allocation to around \$4,877 for the 2015-16 school year. This is an increase of \$96 per student.

The tax levies have also been adjusted through Senate Bill 53, setting the commercial levy at \$8.72 per thousand dollars of valuation, the agricultural levy at \$1.56 per thousand dollars of valuation and owner occupied levy at \$4.07 per thousand dollars of valuation.

Senate Bill 54 was also passed which increases state aid for the schools and makes adjustments to funding for special education programs, setting the tax levy for special education at \$1.40 per thousand dollars of



**Mark FROKE**

valuation. No change was made to the Capital Outlay fund although multiple bills were introduced.

A task force will be assembled to study the teacher shortage plaguing the state.

"Assembling the task force shows us that Gov. Daugaard is listening to the education community, legislators and the public that there is indeed a crisis in education," ASBSD Executive Director Wade Pogany was quoted to say in the legislative summary.

It is unclear whether the teacher shortage comes as a result of too many teachers retiring from the work force, not enough teachers entering or schools expanding their programs creating too many openings among other possible causes.

The Vermillion School District is experiencing the

shortage as well.

"We have some openings and we've seen very few applicants," Froke said at the Monday meeting. "Middle school math for example is a very critical area for us."

In an effort to attract teachers, Senate Bill 132 was passed which gives districts the option to offer a signing bonus or other reimbursements to potential teachers. This bill does not go into effect until July 1.

Senate Bills 91 and 92 were also passed, appropriating \$150,000 each to the South Dakota need-based grant program and the South Dakota critical teaching needs scholarship program.

Five pay proposals in the form of House Bills 1092, 1114, 1115, 1204 and Senate Bill 144 were deferred.

Controversy flared up with the discussion of transgender student sports participation.

According to Froke, the debate centered on whether each individual school district should be in charge of their own policies in this area or if the state should create a uniform policy for all to abide by.

Previously they have passed a transgender policy

which states that parents and students need to submit a notice to the Activities Association with their birth certificate and a doctor certification of the change.

"Certain legislators got ahead of that and said that the association shouldn't be meddling in that," Froke reported. "It should be up to the individual districts. It was quite a heated thing out in the legislature this year. It was defeated and then it would come back a number of times."

According to Froke, it was finally decided that the Activities Association will circulate a survey to the school districts to discover what they would prefer in this area. The issue will return to the legislature next year with the results of the survey.

House Bills 1091 and 1125 were passed which clarify procedures dealing with recording and posting school board meeting minutes.

Senate Bill 189 was voted down which means public dollars will not be utilized to cover the cost of students attending private schools.

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## USD Offers Interest-Free Textbook Loans

The University of South Dakota will offer undergraduate students an interest-free, \$500 loan to help them buy books and supplies starting with the Fall 2015 semester.

"We know students have a lot of expenses at the beginning of each semester, and we don't want anyone to delay buying their textbooks because of cash flow," said Sheila Gestring, USD chief financial officer. "We are offering this as a pilot program to see if students find it helpful."

"Students will be able to charge up to \$500 worth of books and class supplies at the USD Bookstore and pay for them over the rest of the semester on their USD bill," she said.

The program is open to any full-time, undergraduate student who is taking at least one class face-to-face on the Vermillion campus. There is no requirement to prove financial need.

The \$500 charge account will be available starting three weeks before classes begin and will continue for two weeks into the semester, said Angela Miller, manager of the Barnes & Noble bookstore in the Muenster University Center.

The bookstore will have a list of students who are eligible for the charge account, and students will visit the bookstore in person to take advantage of the program.

"At this time the \$500 loan is not available on our website," Miller said. "But that is something we may look at in the future. Students can use it on all textbooks in the store whether they rent or buy, new or used, hard copy or digital books."

Gestring and Miller said they will evaluate the response to the pilot program to see if any changes will be needed in the future.

## Beacom's MBA Rated One Of World's Top

The Beacom School of Business at the University of South Dakota has one of the world's best online MBA programs, according to the QS Distance Online MBA ranking.

QS Distance Online Ranking looks at numerous MBA programs around the world and ranks only 25 of them. Selection focuses on 18 indicators including quality of students and faculty, diversity, completion rates, employability of students upon graduation, and the overall MBA experience. The methodology employed by QS Distance Online MBA Ranking put USD's online MBA 23rd globally. USD's program was one of 12 online programs from the United States to achieve global ranking by QS.

"Our online MBA consistently receives the highest rankings from rating agencies," said Venky Venkatachalam, dean of the Beacom School of Business. "This global ranking truly reflects the high value our program delivers - high-quality learning experiences at a very affordable cost."

The full QS Distance Online MBA Ranking 2015 can be viewed at [www.TopMBA.com/onlineMBA](http://www.TopMBA.com/onlineMBA).

## Calling-All-Coyotes Auction Tops \$267,000

SIoux FALLS —The second annual Calling-All-Coyotes auction held Friday evening at the Sioux Falls Convention Center raised more than \$267,000 which will help support South Dakota student-athletes.

The night included silent and live auctions, live music, drinks, hors d'oeuvres and dinner. More than 500 people attended the event, which included many South Dakota student-athletes, coaches and staff members.

"This night represents everything that is great about the University of South Dakota, our student-athletes and our supporters," said USD Associate Athletic Director Jon Schemmel. "This is such an exciting time for Coyote athletics and we were all able to celebrate student-athlete accomplishments and the future of this program together."

"Thank you to our sponsors, Howling Pack Board and Auction Committee for making this night possible. Our development staff, which includes Chris Kassin, Erica Schilling, Elliot Powell and Torie Buberl, is the best and deserves all the credit for preparing and operating such a wonderful event."

## Veterans Townhall Meeting Planned

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will be hosting a Veterans Town Hall Meeting Friday, May 1, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. at the DAV Department of South Dakota Convention at the Holiday City Centre, 100 W. 8th St., Sioux Falls, South Dakota. All veterans are invited to this Veterans Town Hall Meeting. Invitations have been sent to Congressional Delegation Staff of South Dakota, Veterans Employment Representatives, VA Medical Center Directors, and VA Staff.

There will be questions and answers concerning the VA budget, health care funding, medical healthcare, veterans benefits, full concurrent receipt, veterans legislation, veterans employment and preference, claims processing, agent orange, post traumatic stress disorder, treating traumatic brain injuries (TBI), Persian Gulf Syndrome, nursing home care, and other information for our veterans and their families.

## CAFO

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the state pulls its water supply from shallow aquifers.

"When talking about a public water supply, and letting a large CAFO go in, something could go wrong and then the system is lost," he said. "What is the need? I guarantee somewhere down the line the system will have to be replaced. Leaks will happen."

Chairman Jay Bottolfson questioned Gilbertson about what was being allowed in other counties; in particular he wanted to know if there are counties that do allow large CAFOs over shallow aquifers.

"Most, if not all, strongly discourage that kind of development," Gilbertson said. "However, you need to remember that zone B is the water supply that will be needed 5-10 years down the road."

Bottolfson also noted that the proposed change from the large, medium and small categories to align with the states Class A, Class B and Class C, is causing confusion and suggested that instead they keep the original designation with the state classification in parenthesis.

Other issues discussed included:

- That the cap does not violate any laws;
- That the state's attorney is still researching the setback issue because timing could be an issue and could cause administrative difficulties;

- The fact that the board doesn't have a current zoning map, because it is being completed now to show the well head protection areas, and the current map goes by parcels which doesn't reflect the different zones.

One of the board members questioned how an item that had originally been requested as a clarification, became removal and changing of the ordinance.

"There has to be a good

reason for the change that is shared by the community" Bottolfson said. "It is our job to reflect the wishes of everyone, if many oppose the cap, why choose that option?"

He also noted that he understands the need for the cap to rise due to the economics of scale on what farmers need to be able to operate in order to make a profit.

Board member and county commissioner Travis

Mockler said his primary concern was with the limits on dairy operations.

"The dairy number needs to be removed," he said. "Maybe we need to consider keeping the cap but allow variances where operators can prove they know how to operate a clean operation and they can then expand to say that 7,000 cap."

Currently, dairy operations are capped at 3,200.

"Dairy operations are not coming here because they can't make it work here," Mockler said. "If they can prove they can do a good job and want to expand why wouldn't we allow that? It would be a conditional use permit. They would still have to come to the board to apply and show they are doing a good job."

Following the discussion, the board agreed to table the

item, and proposed touring larger operations to see how they are set up and the precautions used.

*The Clay County Planning and Zoning Board is Jay Bottolfson (Chairman), Joe Hubert, Marty Gilbertson, Travis Mockler (County Commission Representative), Jerry Prentice.*

# The Tender Land

By Aaron Copland

Saturday, May 2 – 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, May 3 – 3:00 p.m.

AALFS Auditorium  
Inside Slagle Hall

\$10 Adults/ \$5 Students with I.D. & Children  
Tickets at the Door

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