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Economic Development

Ricketts eyes new business incentives ([Lincoln Journal Star](#))- Gov. Pete Ricketts told business and civic leaders Thursday that he's prepared to propose improvements in Nebraska's package of business investment and job creation tax incentives. Those possible improvements are on the table along with possible tax cuts as the governor begins to shape his 2017 legislative agenda, Ricketts said. Following his remarks, Ricketts said he has asked Courtney Dentlinger, director of the Department of Economic Development, to work with State Tax Commissioner Tony Fulton to see how increased tax incentives and additional tax cuts might work within the framework of anticipated state revenue. Ricketts said he is not prepared to say whether he might recommend income tax cuts, perhaps along with additional property tax reduction, after focusing on property tax cuts during his first two years in office.

Nevada, Queensland to strengthen collaboration in mining ([Elko Daily Free Press](#))- Gov. Brian Sandoval is advancing relations between Nevada and Queensland to strengthen collaboration in mining and other industries. Sandoval and the Premier of Queensland Annastacia Palaszczuk signed a statement of intent Thursday in Australia. "Queensland's focus on innovation presents a unique opportunity to help propel many of our key industries into the future," said Sandoval. Mining was also the focus of the delegation when the Sandoval had a meeting with David Camerlengo, Queensland's trade and investment commissioner for North America as well as an opportunity to talk about Nevada's role in mining innovation with Dr. Anthony Lynham, Minister for Natural Resources.

Herbert: Despite leading the nation, work remains to be done ([The Spectrum](#))- On Thursday, members from several rural Utah counties gathered on the campus of Southern Utah University for their 29th annual meeting. On hand were several speakers to give presentations on a wide array of subjects, including Gov. Gary Herbert and Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox, among others. While Utah is leading the country economically, there is still a large divide between urban and rural Utah with many counties suffering from "generational poverty," Cox said. Herbert told of a meeting with former Texas Gov. Rick Perry where he praised Utah's economy earlier this year, stating, "Every governor in the country is thinking, what do I need to do to catch Utah?" "Overall we are doing well, but we have pockets of areas that are not doing as well," Herbert said. "My benchmark for us to make a determination if we are succeeding is to answer this question: where are your children and grandchildren going to be living when they set up their households?"

Healthcare

Aerial spraying has 'killed a lot of mosquitoes' in Zika-struck Florida ([The Washington Times](#))- Federal and state officials said Thursday that aerial spraying "killed a lot of mosquitoes" that might be carrying the Zika virus across Miami, as President Obama and his Democratic allies prodded Republicans to return from a summer recess and cut a deal over federal funding to combat the disease. Florida Gov. Rick Scott, a Republican, said the number of insect-derived infections in the artsy Wynwood neighborhood is holding steady at 15. The Florida Department of Health ruled out transmission in a 10-block section of the square mile it identified as most at risk, according to the governor, who said locals shouldn't be afraid to frequent cafes and other businesses in the neighborhood as long as they protect themselves from mosquito bites. At the same time, Mr. Scott implored Congress to free up more money, saying Florida had posted \$26 million and could use federal support.

Nebraska's improvement in processing SNAP benefits means state is no longer in danger of losing \$17M in federal funds ([Omaha World-Herald](#))- Nebraska no longer risks losing \$17 million in federal funds because of its public benefits call center system. Courtney Phillips, CEO of the State Department of Health and Human Services, announced Thursday that the state is meeting federal standards for processing food assistance applications on time. USDA officials sent Nebraska a warning letter in January 2015 because Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program applications were taking too long to get processed through the problem-plagued AccessNebraska system. Federal regulations say SNAP applications must be processed within 30 days in most cases and seven days in expedited cases. Fixing the problems with AccessNebraska has been one of Gov. Pete Ricketts' top goals for HHS. He talked about the importance of the system during his State of the

State speech earlier this year.

Budget & Tax

(South Dakota) House passes budget bill, ending special session ([Bismarck Tribune](#))- A bill intended to eliminate a projected budget shortfall of nearly \$310 million breezed through the North Dakota House of Representatives this morning following debate on the floor, completing the work of lawmakers in a rare special session. Senate Bill 2379, introduced by Republican leadership, passed by an 82-8 vote and was signed by Gov. Jack Dalrymple shortly after passage. Seven Democrats and one Republican voted against the bill, with four members absent. "This bill accomplishes what needed to be done by taking us to the end of the biennium with a balanced budget. We have some hard work ahead of us, but we are now on course to develop a sound budget plan for the 2017-19 biennium," Dalrymple said in a statement issued after signing SB2379. The bill leaves about a \$28,000 ending fund balance for the biennium ending June 30, 2017.

Good Government

(Illinois) Pension 'spikes' exposed to sunshine ([Illinois Times](#))- It's been a not-so-secret secret in Illinois for decades, and state lawmakers are trying to drag the infamous "pension spike" into the sunlight – at least among local governments. A law signed by the governor last week requires local governments to disclose at a public meeting any pay raises for employees about to retire. The new law doesn't apply to employees in collective bargaining units. Gov. Bruce Rauner signed House Bill 5684 into law on July 28. Under the state's rules for municipal pensions, a retiree's benefit calculation is based in large part on her or his salary. There are many tactics to inflate the salary used for that calculation, like taking early payouts for unused vacation time or getting a salary bump just before retiring. The new law signed last week requires municipal governments to disclose at a public meeting that an employee who has given notice of intent to retire is about to receive a raise or lump sum payment over 6 percent.

Transportation

Governor Baker to sign Uber, Lyft legislation ([Boston.com](#))- Governor Charlie Baker will sign legislation regulating ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft on Friday, reports The Boston Globe. The landmark legislation will mandate driver background checks, regulate insurance requirements and toll rates, and allow pickups from Boston's main convention center and airport. It will also require the companies pay a 20-cent per-ride fee. That money will go to Massachusetts cities and towns, the state, and a fund to "provide financial assistance to small businesses operating in the taxicab, livery, or hackney industries," reports the Globe. Massachusetts will join the ranks of 34 other states that have passed legislation for the ride-hailing industry.

Education

McCrory touts tuition-lowering plan ([Daily Advance](#))- Something had to be done to lower the cost of tuition at North Carolina universities and to lessen student loan debt, said Gov. Pat McCrory. The answer: An experimental plan that lowers tuition to \$500 per semester at Elizabeth City State University and two other state universities. The governor was at ECSU to tout the new NC Promise Tuition Plan, included in the recently signed state budget. Under NC Promise, starting in 2018 in-state tuition for undergraduates attending ECSU, Western Carolina University and UNC-Pembroke will be just \$500 per semester. For out-of-state undergraduates, tuition will be \$2,500 per semester. "We're decreasing the cost, and in many ways that's especially going to help middle-class and lower-income students afford college, which they may have been rejecting," McCrory said. "So, we hope for an increase in applications, raising of standards and lessening of debt for students once they leave."

Energy

(Nevada) Supreme Court rules against referendum on rooftop solar rates ([Las-Vegas Review-Journal](#))- The Nevada Supreme Court on Thursday ruled unanimously against a referendum for the Nov. 8 general election ballot that could have restored net metering to rates more favorable to the rooftop solar industry and its customers. to delay new rooftop-solar rates. The court, which heard arguments on Question 5 last Friday, said the "description of effect" required to explain the effect of the measure to those signing the petition was "not only inaccurate and misleading, but also argumentative." The decision means voters will not get to decide whether to overturn the 2015 law that allowed the Nevada Public Utilities Commission to impose new, higher charges for rooftop solar customers. NV Energy filed the grandfathering proposal last month and has asked the PUC to take expeditious action on the request. A similar measure is also expected to be introduced in the 2017 legislative session by Gov. Brian Sandoval's administration. In a response to the ruling, Mari St. Martin, communications director for Sandoval, said: "Governor Sandoval has been working to restore the original rates for rooftop solar customers for several months."

Environment

New Mexico still holding EPA accountable for Gold King Mine spill into Animas River ([KOB4](#))- Aug. 5 marks one year since the United States Environmental Protection Agency accidentally triggered a release of mine waste water from the Gold King Mine into a tributary of the Animas River. New Mexico has since filed a lawsuit against the EPA and state of

Colorado. Today state officials say the fight and long-term monitoring are not over. The governor assured them that the state will continue to protect citizens, while also working to make sure the river is safe for animals, people and agriculture. "We will not stop making sure that the EPA is held accountable," said Governor Martinez. So far the state has not received all the reimbursement they requested from the EPA and NMED tells KOB they only have a tenth of the funding required for long term monitoring.