

WESTERN TRADER

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ISSUE NO. 21

DINING • ARTS • ENTERTAINMENT • EVENTS



LUCAS OLSON — Lucas Olson will bring his music to the Miner Brewing Company this Saturday, May 25. Olson is a Spearfish-based neo-soul jazz guitarist that lives way down deep in the pocket. His grooviness creates a sonic soul sauna for your ears. [Submitted Photo]

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(Local Events Listings)

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Poll: Nearly half of South Dakotans have unfavorable view of Noem

By Stu Whitney
South Dakota News Watch

Nearly two-thirds of South Dakotans said Gov. Kristi Noem damaged her credibility in her latest book rollout, and nearly half said they have an unfavorable view of the second-term Republican, according to a scientific poll of 500 registered voters co-sponsored by South Dakota News Watch.

As for Noem's bid to become former President Donald Trump's vice-presidential nominee in 2024, nearly 60 percent of South Dakotans said she should not be chosen, including 55 percent of Republicans. The poll was also sponsored by the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota. The governor's favorability based on personal popularity was 39 percent, down 13 points from a similar poll conducted in October 2020. Nearly half of respondents (48 percent) said they had an unfavorable opinion of Noem, which is double the number from 2020.

Mason-Dixon Polling and Strategy conducted the statewide survey May 10-13, several days after the governor cut short her book publicity tour and returned to South Dakota. "No Going Back," her second book, was published May 7.

Media coverage focused on revelations in the book about Noem killing an unruly family hunting dog and fabricating a meeting with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un.

The controversy, and Noem's response, has sent her political prospects into a spiral not just nationally but in the Mount Rushmore State, said Jon Schaff, a political science professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen.

"These numbers are worse than I expected, quite frankly," said Schaff. "What it tells you is that some of the issues coming out of the book not only damaged her

national ambitions, but they put a serious damper on future statewide ambitions she might have had."

Noem did not respond to News Watch interview requests for this story made through Ian Fury, her chief of communications.

**'Disappointment,
embarrassment' after
book fallout**

Poll respondents were selected randomly from a telephone-matched South Dakota voter registration list that included landline and cellphone numbers. Quotas were assigned to reflect voter registration by county. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

The poll showed that 52 percent approve of Noem's job performance as governor, while 46 percent disapprove. An April analysis of Morning Consult polling data showed Noem with a job-performance approval rating of 59 percent, with disapproval at 38 percent.

Noem's overall favorability, which includes a politician's character traits and personality, took a larger hit, especially within her own party. While 81 percent of Republican respondents approved of Noem's job performance, that number dipped to 58 percent when respondents were asked if they had a favorable opinion of her.

By comparison, Trump had a favorable rating among Republicans of 70 percent.

"I think those numbers speak to voters' ability to distinguish between the job she's doing as governor and her likability as a person," said Julia Hellwege, an associate political science professor at USD and incoming director of the Chiesman Center.

Perhaps most notable is the fact that criticism and mockery of Noem's book launch have come from all sides of the political and media spectrum, from traditionally liberal "Saturday Night Live" to conservative

Fox News.

"Regardless of what party you belong to, it's not a great look for the state," said Hellwege. "When we're getting 'Saturday Night Live'-type attention in a negative way, there's some disappointment and embarrassment wrapped up in that."

**Could book fallout
impact Senate race?**

Noem's book, promoted as being "packed with surprising stories and practical lessons," coincided with her rising national profile and status as one of the front-runners to be chosen as Trump's running mate for his rematch against Biden.

The 52-year-old Castlewood native was the betting favorite to get the VP nod as recently as January by OddsChecker.com.

A of May 17, the same betting site lists her as 49th in the race behind fringe political figures such as conservative commentator Candace Owens and University of Colorado football coach Deion Sanders.

If the book fallout prevents her from becoming the VP nominee or getting an administration position if Trump wins, it could also impact Noem's next move in South Dakota politics.

There has been speculation that she could make a run for U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds' seat in 2026. Political experts said the recent controversies and negative media attention could change the dynamic of that race.

"You're only talking two years from now, and it's not like Mike Rounds is in a weak political spot," said Schaff. "She would not be the first politician to find herself in a kind of scandal and rehabilitate herself over time. Such things are possible. But these poll numbers show that she's in a little bigger hole than I would have expected."

**Voters: Killing of Noem
family dog was wrong**

One of the book's most revealing passages involved the killing of a 14-month-old female puppy named Cricket after the dog ruined a pheasant hunt with unruly behavior about 20 years ago.

Returning from the hunt, wrote Noem, she stopped to talk to a local family and Cricket jumped out of the truck and attacked the family's chickens one at a time, "crunching it to death with one bite, then dropping it to attack another."

"I hated that dog," she wrote in the book. "At that moment, I realized I had to put her down."

Nearly six in 10 of statewide poll respondents (58 percent) said they felt that the shooting of the dog was not justified, compared to 38 percent who said it was justified. Among female respondents, 65 percent said the shooting was not justified, compared to 50 percent of males.

**Nobody saying 'You're
about to step in it'**

Another passage from the book that drew criticism was a reference to meeting the notoriously reclusive North Korean dictator when she served on the House Armed Services Committee in Congress.

Trump met with Kim Jong Un several times as president, significant encounters that would have been highly unlikely for someone in Noem's position. Without any congressional records to back it up, the story was widely disputed, and Noem's staff and publisher, Hachette Book Group, said corrections would be made.

But in an interview on CBS' "Face the Nation" on May 5, the governor didn't offer a clear explanation of how the mistake happened or if she even acknowledged the error.

The News Watch poll asked registered voters: "Does Noem's decision not to answer questions and address some of the issues she raised in her book dam-

age her credibility with you?"

Statewide, 62 percent said yes, while 34 percent said no and 4 percent were undecided. Those saying that Noem's credibility was damaged included 86 percent of Democrats, 48 percent of Republicans and 68 percent of Independents.

The book rollout and ensuing public relations crisis challenged an administration marked by cabinet and staff turnover, including five chiefs of staff. Noem has not named a sixth chief of staff after the June 2023 departure of Mark Miller, her former general counsel.

"People in leadership need to have at least one person who can tell them no and not be afraid they're going to lose their job over it," said Schaff, who was appointed by Noem to the state's Social Studies Content Standards Commission in 2022. "That typically falls to a chief of staff. If the governor is in a situation where there is nobody around to say, 'You're about to step in it,' then I would say that she's been ill-served."

**West River support of
Noem is strongest**

Noem's geographic support within the state remains strongest West River, where 59 percent of respondents said they approve of her job performance, compared to Sioux Falls Metro (54 percent). East River South and East River North were both at 46 percent.

The governor's overall favorability was 43 percent West River, the highest of the four regions.

Regarding shooting the family dog, 43 percent of West River respondents said the killing was justified, compared to 31 percent in the Sioux Falls area, which includes Minnehaha and Lincoln counties in the poll groupings.

Noem carried Pennington County (mostly Rapid City) with 61 percent of the vote in her 2022 re-

election over Democratic challenger Jamie Smith, compared to 53 percent in Minnehaha County (mostly Sioux Falls).

**Women, younger voters
more critical of Noem**

As seen in past polls, Noem's support among male voters is stronger than with females. While 61 percent of male respondents approved of her job performance, that number was 44 percent for women.

However, both men (30 percent) and women (29 percent) surveyed were against the South Dakota governor being named Trump's running mate. Both men (61 percent) and women (63 percent) also said that Noem's reluctance to address some of the issues raised in her book damaged her credibility with them.

Younger registered voters had the lowest evaluation of the governor in most categories, including job performance (34 percent) and overall favorability (26 percent).

Job performance approval of Noem from the youngest group was dramatically lower than respondents ages 35-49 (54 percent), 50-64 (61 percent) and 65-plus (51 percent).

Younger voters were also more critical of Noem's puppy anecdote, with 71 percent of respondents ages 18-34 saying it was not justified, compared to 51 percent for ages 50-64 and 52 percent for ages 65-plus.

Mason-Dixon has a rating of 2.6 (3 is maximum) from FiveThirtyEight and ranks 30th out of 277 pollsters analyzed by the statistical site.

This story was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a nonpartisan, non-profit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewswatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact Stu Whitney at stu.whitney@sdnewswatch.org.

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Frontier Bar & Grill Daily 11 am to 9 pm Closed Tuesday	Heart of the Hills Exxon Daily 5 am - Midnight	Big Thunder Bar & Grill 605-666-GOLD (4653) Daily 7 am - 3 pm	The Berm (Food Truck) Wednesday - Saturday 11:30am - 6pm	Cambria Coffee & Decker's Market Monday-Friday 7am-5 pm Saturday 7am-2pm Sunday 8 am - Noon	
Gold Pan Saloon Sun-Thursday 2pm - close Fri - Saturday 2pm - close	Miner Brewing Company Daily 11 a.m. -7 p.m	Big Thunder Coffee Cabin Daily 7 am - Noon	Two Cows Creamery & Bistro Mon-Thurs 11am-8pm Fri & Sat 11am-9pm Sunday 11am-7pm	Decker's Market - Deli Monday - Saturday 7 am - 8 pm Sunday 8 am - 7 pm	
Hjem AM Friday 8am - 11am Satutrday & Sunday 8 am - Noon	Prairie Berry Winery Daily 10 am - 6 pm	Eno's Pizza & Pub Mon-Thurs 11am -9pm Friday-Sunday 11am-10 pm	Heaven Scent Bakery Wednesday - Monday 10am - 5pm	Hot Stuff Pizza Daily 5 am - 6 pm	
Horatio's Homemade Ice Cream Wed - Sun - Noon - 9 pm Mon - Noon -7 pm	Silver Dollar Saloon Monday -Thursday 1pm - 10 pm Fri - Sun Noon - 10 pm	Keystone Country Store Daily 7 am to 9 pm	Wandering Bison Coffee Mon,Tues, Thurs 7am-3pm Fri & Saturday 3pm-6 pm Sunday 8am-3pm	Taco John's Daily 11 am - 10 pm	
Laughing Water Restaurant Daily 10:30 am - 7 pm	Taqueria Los Camelinas Monday-Friday 4pm-7 pm Saturday 11 am-2 pm	Turtle Town Monday-Saturday 10 am until 6 pm Sunday 10 am until 5 pm	Winner's Circle Sunday-Thursday 10am-8:45pm Friday & Saturday 10am-9:45pm	Hannah's Heavenly Treats Tuesday - Friday 7 am - 2 pm Saturday 7- 10	
Maria's Mexican Restaurant Monday - Saturday 6:30 - 10 am, 11 am - 3 pm 4:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Tin City Saloon Friday-Wednesday 11am - 8 pm	Xanterra@ Mt. Rushmore Daily 8 am - 9 pm		Howdy Bakery Thursday, Friday, Saturday 8am-6pm Sat. 9am - 4pm	
Miner's Cup Monday - Saturday 6:30 am - 1:30 pm	1880 Train High-liner Eatery Daily 8 am - 5 pm	Carver's Cafe @ Mt. Rushmore 8 am - 4:30 pm		Hi-16 Cafe Thursday - Sunday 7 am - 9 pm	
Pizza Mill Monday- Saturday 11 am - 8 pm					
CALL TODAY TO PLACE AN AD Kate Najacht: 605-440-1248 for more information					

BLACK HILLS

Live

LIVE MUSIC - LOCAL EVENTS

Wednesday 5-22

Custer Area Chamber of Commerce Open House

Men's Breakfast Bible Study
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
7:30 AM

Custer County Commission
Custer County Courthouse
Custer, SD
8 AM

Heart and Vascular Screening
Custer City Hall
Custer, SD
8 AM to 6 PM
\$25

Seniors Functional Fitness
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Seniors Bridge Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
10 AM - 3 PM

Vinyl Record Club
Custer County Library
Custer, SD
5 PM

Julie Frye-Mueller Prop. Tax Elimination Forum
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
5:30-8 PM

Disciples of God
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Hermosa, SD
5:30 PM

Bible Study
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
6 PM

Crossroads Church Xtreme Youth Group
Crossroads Church
Custer, SD
6:30 PM

Thursday 5-23

Custer Area Chamber of Commerce Open House

Heart and Vascular Screening
Custer City Hall
Custer, SD
7 AM to 4 PM
\$25

YMCA Story Time
Custer County Library
Custer, SD
10 AM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1 PM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant *LIVE*
The Hills Finest
Custer, SD
5-8 PM

Trivia Night
HippieRockStar Boutique
Wine & Beer Bar
Hill City, SD
6 PM

Life Struggles Suicide Prevention Group
Custer VFW
Custer, SD
6 PM

Trivia Night
Custer Beacon
Custer, SD
6:30-8 PM

Civil Air Patrol
Custer County Airport
Custer, SD
7 PM

Friday 5-24

Custer Area Chamber of Commerce Open House

Seniors Coffee Club
Hill City Center Small Room
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Community Food Pantry
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
9 AM - 11 AM

Hill City Seniors Flow & Relax Yoga
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Story Time
Hill City Public Library
Kids' Annex
Hill City, SD
9:30 AM

Creation Station
Custer County Library
Custer, SD
10 AM

Memorial Day Grave Decorating
Custer Cemetery
Custer, SD
5 PM



MONDAYS AT MT. RUSHMORE BREWING CO. — Black Hills Native, solo, acoustic and fan favorite artist Brent Morris sings classic country music inspired by all of the late great country music stars, including Chris LeDoux. Morris will perform on the deck at Mt. Rushmore Brewing Company all summer long. Join him for a boot-stomping good time. [Submitted Photo]

Celebrate Recovery
Crossroads Church
Custer, SD
Meal at 6 PM
Lesson at 6:30 PM

Neon City ft. Jonathan Jacky *LIVE*
Custer Beacon
Custer, SD
7-10 PM

Saturday 5-25

Yes, We're Open: Tours, Trains and Helicopters, Oh My!
Keystone, SD

Black Hills Volkssport Association Walk
Outlaw Ranch
Custer County, SD
8-11 AM

Coffee with the Mayor
Elizabeth's Coffee Company
Hill City, SD
10 AM

Chess Club
Pringle Community Center
Pringle, SD
5-7 PM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant *LIVE*
The Hills Finest
Custer, SD
5-8 PM

Miner Brewing Music Series Presents Lucas Olson *LIVE*
Miner Brewing Co.
Hill City, SD
6 PM

U.S. Air Guitar Championships *LIVE*
Custer Beacon
Custer, SD
6-10 PM

Sunday 5-26

Yes, We're Open: Tours, Trains and Helicopters, Oh My!
Keystone, SD

Adult Bible Study
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
4-5:30 PM

Jimmy Ray & The Stingers *LIVE*
Gold Pan Saloon
Custer, SD
5-8 PM

KISS AA Meeting
Keystone Community Center
Keystone, SD
6 PM



COMING TO THE BEACON — Neon City, which will perform Friday night at the Custer Beacon, has emerged as a groundbreaking force in the contemporary music scene, embodying a fusion that transcends traditional boundaries. This five-piece neo-jazz band blends the rich textures of R&B, soul, hip-hop, jazz and electronica into a genre-defying musical experience. [Submitted Photo]

Monday 5-27

Memorial Day

Seniors Functional Fitness
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Memorial Day Ceremony
Cold Springs Cemetery
Custer County, SD
9 AM

Memorial Day Ceremony
Pringle Cemetery
Pringle, SD
10 AM

Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony
Hill City Cemetery
Hill City, SD
10 AM

Memorial Day Ceremony
Custers Cemetery
Custer, SD
11 AM

Custer Rotary Club
Custer Senior Center
Custer, SD
Noon

Hill City Seniors Mahjong
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1-3 PM

Brent Morris *LIVE*
Mount Rushmore Brewing Co.
Custer, SD
6 PM

AA Meeting
Lighthouse Assembly of God
Hill City, SD
7 PM

Mile High Garden Club
Custer, SD
Call 673-4598

Tuesday 5-28

Hill City Seniors Flow & Relax Yoga
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
10:30 AM

Zonta
Custer County Library
Custer, SD
1 PM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1-3 PM

Seniors Knitting & Crocheting Group
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1-3 PM

Hill City Common Council Meeting
City Hall
Hill City, SD
5:30 PM

Hermosa Planning & Zoning
Hermosa Town Hall
Hermosa, SD
6 PM

Beginner Line Dance Lessons
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
6:30 PM
\$20 per class

Beginner Country Swing Lessons
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
7:45 PM
\$20 per class

Book Club: The Saints of Swallow Hill by Donna Everhart
Hill City Public Library Kids' Annex
Hill City, SD
5 PM

Celebrate Recovery
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
5:45 PM

Wednesday 5-29

Men's Breakfast Bible Study
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
7:30 AM

Seniors Functional Fitness
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Seniors Bridge Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
10 AM - 3 PM

The Little White Church Youth Group Summer Kickoff
Grapes and Grinds/Holy Terror
Keystone, SD
4-8 PM

Disciples of God
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Hermosa, SD
5:30 PM

Crossroads Church Xtreme Youth Group
Crossroads Church
Custer, SD
6:30 PM

Bingo
Custer Beacon
Custer, SD
6:30 PM

Thursday 5-30

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1 PM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant *LIVE*
The Hills Finest
Custer, SD
5-8 PM

Trivia Night
HippieRockStar Boutique
Wine & Beer Bar
Hill City, SD
6 PM

Jimmy Ray & The Stingers *LIVE*
Chute Rooster
Hill City, SD
6-8 PM

Civil Air Patrol
Custer County Airport
Custer, SD
7 PM

Friday 5-31

Yes, We're Open: Travelers' Come Play With Us During Local's Weekend
Keystone, SD

Seniors Coffee Club
Hill City Center Small Room
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Community Food Pantry
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
9-11 AM

Hill City Seniors Flow & Relax Yoga
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Story Time
Hill City Public Library
Kids' Annex
Hill City, SD
9:30 AM

Fairy Garden Workshop
HippieRockStar Boutique
Wine & Beer Bar
Hill City, SD
6 PM

Brent Morris *LIVE*
Chute Rooster
Hill City, SD
6 PM

Celebrate Recovery
Crossroads Church
Custer, SD
Meal at 6 PM
Lesson at 6:30 PM

Saturday 6-1

Yes, We're Open: Travelers' Come Play With Us During Local's Weekend
Keystone, SD

Coffee with the Mayor
Elizabeth's Coffee Company
Hill City, SD
10 AM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant *LIVE*
The Hills Finest
Custer, SD
5-8 PM

Buffalo Gap Community Dance *LIVE*
Buffalo Gap Community Center
Buffalo Gap, SD
7 PM

Karaoke *LIVE*
Custer Beacon
Custer, SD
7-11 PM

Sunday 6-2

Yes, We're Open: Travelers' Come Play With Us During Local's Weekend
Keystone, SD

Custer Community Action Team Food Distribution
CAT Building, Corner of N. 6th and Lincoln streets
Custer, SD
10 AM to 1 PM

KISS AA Meeting
Keystone Community Center
Keystone, SD
6 PM

Monday 6-3

Community Food Pantry
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
9-11 AM

Custer Basketball Camp
Custer Jr./Sr. High School Gym
Custer, SD
First through Third Grade Boys and Girls 9-10 AM
\$35
Fourth through Seventh Grade Boys and Girls 10 AM to Noon
\$65
Eighth through 12th Grade Girls Noon to 2 PM
\$65
Eighth through 12th Grade Boys 2-4 PM
\$65

Custer Rotary Club
Custer Senior Center
Custer, SD
Noon

Hill City Seniors Mahjong
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1-3 PM

Hill City Planning and Zoning Meeting
City Hall
Hill City, SD
5:30 PM

Custer City Council
Custer City Hall
Custer, SD
5:30 PM

Financial Peace Class
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
6-8 PM

Brent Morris *LIVE*
Mount Rushmore Brewing Co.
Custer, SD
6 PM

Hermosa Neighborhood Watch
Hermosa Town Hall
Hermosa, SD
6 PM

Chick Chat and Crafts
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
6:30 PM

AA Meeting
Lighthouse Assembly of God
Hill City, SD
7 PM

Buffalo Gap Town Board
Buffalo Gap Town Hall
Buffalo Gap, SD
7 PM

Tuesday 6-4

Primary Election

Hill City Public Library Free Summer Program: Plant

Custer Basketball Camp
Custer Jr./Sr. High School Gym
Custer, SD
First through Third Grade Boys and Girls 9-10 AM
\$35
Fourth through Seventh Grade Boys and Girls 10 AM to Noon
\$65
Eighth through 12th Grade Girls Noon to 2 PM
\$65
Eighth through 12th Grade Boys 2-4 PM
\$65

Flowers with the Hill City Evergreen Garden Club
Hill City Boys & Girls Club
Hill City, SD
10 AM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1-3 PM

Custer Piecemakers Quilt Guild
Custer Lutheran Fellowship
Custer, SD
1:30 PM

Celebrate Recovery
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
5:45 PM

Hermosa Town Board
Hermosa Town Hall
Hermosa, SD
6 PM

Wednesday 6-5

Men's Breakfast Bible Study
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
7:30 AM

Driver's License Exams
Custer County Courthouse
Annex Pine Room
Custer, SD
8 AM to 5 PM

Hill City Seniors Flow & Relax Yoga
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
9 AM

Women's Group
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
10 AM - 12 PM

Seniors Bridge Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
10 AM - 3 PM

Hill City Seniors Lunch Bunch
Downtown Deli & Bakery
Hill City, SD
11:30 AM

Keystone Town Board Meeting
Keystone Community Center
Keystone, SD
5 PM

Youth 5 Points Hike
The Little White Church
Hill City, SD
6-9 PM

Crossroads Church Xtreme Youth Group
Crossroads Church
Custer, SD
6:30 PM

Thursday 6-6

Custer County Commission
Custer County Courthouse
Custer, SD
8 AM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD
1 PM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant *LIVE*
The Hills Finest
Custer, SD
5-8 PM

Trivia Night
HippieRockStar Boutique
Wine & Beer Bar
Hill City, SD
6 PM

Civil Air Patrol
Custer County Airport
Custer, SD
7 PM

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