



# NORTH DAKOTA STATE AND LOCAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER

CI/KR Ticker

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## **NORTH DAKOTA AND REGIONAL**

### **North Dakota Law Accidentally Lists Fake Critical Minerals Based on Coal Lawyers' Names**

A landmark North Dakota law approved this year accidentally lumped in two fake names in a list of critical minerals that appear to be inspired by coal company lawyers who worked on the bill. The inclusion of fictional substances is being called an embarrassment by one state official, a possible practical joke by coal industry leaders and mystifying by the lawmakers who worked on the bill. The fake minerals are friezium and stralium, apparent references to Christopher Friez and David Straley, attorneys for North American Coal who were closely involved in drafting the bill and its amendments. Straley said they were not responsible for adding the fake names. Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring questioned the two substances listed in state law during a Wednesday meeting of the North Dakota Industrial Commission, which is poised to adopt rules based on the legislation.

Source: <https://northdakotamonitor.com/north-dakota-law-accidentally-lists-fake-critical-minerals>

### **North Dakota Receives \$199 Million in Federal Grant for Rural Health Care**

The federal government has awarded \$199 million to North Dakota for the first year of a five-year grant program centered on improving rural health care across the nation. The allocation of the funds, which has to be formally approved by the Legislature in a special session scheduled to begin on Jan. 21, will focus on four areas: Workforce, preventive care and healthy eating, bringing high-quality health care closer to North Dakotans and connecting technology and data with medical providers. The Legislature will have limited opportunity to make any changes to how the funds will be used. North Dakota Health and Human Services submitted an application earlier this fall for the state's share of the \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Program, with legislative input, and the state is expected to adhere to the funding plan laid out in the application.

Source: <https://northdakotamonitor.com/north-dakota-receives-199-million-for-rural-health-care/>

### **North Dakota Hearing Wrestles with Scope of Federal Water Regulation**

Agriculture and construction industry representatives on Friday backed a proposed federal rule limiting federal authority over wetlands, ditches and groundwater, while others said protecting those areas is essential. The Trump administration is proposing a narrower definition of Waters of the U.S., a term that has proven slippery to pin down where federal authority over waterways ends. It is key to the Environmental Protection Agency's enforcement of the Clean Water Act, passed in 1972. The EPA listening session was in North Dakota at Bismarck State College, hosted by Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., and the EPA. Cramer said the proposed rule provides clarity, prevents federal government overreach, and is in line with the most recent Supreme Court decision on the issue, Sackett v. EPA in 2023. Property developers said the broad rules under the Biden and Obama administrations delayed the permitting process and added to the cost of projects.

Source: <https://northdakotamonitor.com/north-dakota-hearing-wrestles-with-federal-water-regulation/>

### **North Dakota Farmers not set up for Success in 2026**

North Dakota's farmers are looking for higher profits but things may get worse before they get better, ag industry experts say. The U.S. Department of Agriculture in December announced its Farmer Bridge Assistance, a payment program to help farmers survive what was a disastrous 2025 for many producers. North Dakota has set up its own loan programs to help farmers through economic hardship and to recover from storms that wiped out storage bins, making producers more dependent on short-term markets. Bank of North Dakota President Don Morgan said there is "prolonged stress" on the ag industry, and 2026 will likely not provide much relief when it comes to profits. He said the loans backed by the state-owned bank are not just meant to get farmers into 2026 but also into 2027. Morgan said the bank will help farmers with "as much as a working capital break as we can." The bank is taking applications until June 30, 2026.

Source: <https://northdakotamonitor.com/north-dakota-farmers-not-set-up-for-success-in-2026/>

## **NATIONAL**

### **Graves Statement on Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern Merger Application**

Statement of Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) on the merger application of Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern before the Surface Transportation Board (STB): "The proposed Union Pacific Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railroad merger would create America's first true transcontinental railroad. Their promised commitment to significantly invest in a more efficient rail network, increase safety, and enhance competition is encouraging. However, with a merger of this size I want to ensure the STB is deliberative in assessing what potential effects this would have on the system as a whole." This merger will be the first to occur under the STB's newer rules for major rail consolidations.

Source: <https://transportation.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=409251>

### **Committee Approves Bill to Protect Air Traffic Control System from Government Shutdowns**

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved legislation to protect the U.S. National Airspace System during any lapses in federal funding, additional aviation measures, bills to improve water quality throughout the nation and emergency communications at federal buildings, a resolution approving the move of the FBI headquarters to the Ronald Reagan Federal Office Building in Washington, DC, and more. The Committee approved legislation to ensure that the aviation system and safety in the United States will not be jeopardized again by any potential government shutdowns. Under the Aviation Funding Solvency Act, we will be able to tap into an existing, but little-used, source of aviation funding to ensure that air traffic controllers and other FAA professionals responsible for the safety and efficiency of our airspace will be paid when there's a lapse in federal funding," said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO).

Source: <https://transportation.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=409239>

### **Energy Secretary Ensures Indiana Coal Plants Remain Open to Prevent Blackouts in Midwest**

U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright today issued emergency orders to keep two Indiana coal plants operational to ensure Americans in the Midwest region of the United States have access to affordable, reliable, and secure electricity heading into the winter months. The orders direct CenterPoint Energy, the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO), and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (MISO) to take all measures necessary to ensure specified generation units at both the F.B. Culley and R.M. Schahfer generating stations in Indiana are available to operate. Certain generation units of the coal plants were scheduled to shut down at the end of 2025. The reliable supply of power from these coal plants is essential for keeping the region's electric grid stable.

Source: <https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-secretary-ensures-indiana-coal-plants>

### **Energy Department Launches Breakthrough AI-Driven Biotechnology Platform at PNNL**

U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright launched a new chapter to secure American leadership in autonomous biological discovery yesterday alongside scientists and private partners at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL). As part of his visit to PNNL, Secretary Wright commissioned and signed the Anaerobic Microbial Phenotyping Platform (AMP2). PNNL scientists believe AMP2 will be the world's largest autonomous-capable science system for anaerobic microbial experimentation. The platform supports the Trump Administration's recently announced Genesis Mission, which calls on the Department of Energy (DOE) to transform American leadership in science and innovation with the development of artificial intelligence (AI).

Source: <https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-launches-breakthrough>

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **U.S. to get 30 Million to 50 Million Barrels of Oil**

President Donald Trump said Tuesday that Venezuela would be providing 30 million to 50 million barrels of oil to the U.S., and he pledged to use proceeds from the sale of this oil "to benefit the people" of both countries. The White House is organizing a meeting Friday with U.S. oil company executives to discuss Venezuela, which the Trump administration has been pressuring to open its vast-but-struggling oil industry more widely to American investment and know-how. Representatives of Exxon, Chevron and ConocoPhillips are expected to attend the White House meeting, according to a person familiar with the matter who requested anonymity to discuss the plans.

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trump-u-s-to-get-30-million-to-50-million-barrels>

### **Taiwan Comments Prompt China to Ban Certain Exports to Japan**

China has banned exports of some rare earth elements and other items to Japan that could be used for military purposes, straining already tense relations between the two countries following the Japanese prime minister's recent remarks on Taiwan. The sweeping restrictions on so-called dual-use items – goods, services and technologies that have both civilian and military applications – are effective immediately, China's Ministry of Commerce said in a statement. While the ministry did not specify the impacted exports, a catalog of dual-use items published by the ministry includes rare earths, advanced electronics, aerospace and aviation components, drones and nuclear-related technology, among other items.

Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/06/business/china-japan-export-controls-intl-hnk>

### **Developing Countries Projected to use 25% More Energy as Living Standards Improve**

In 2050, more people and growing economies will drive higher demand for the energy sources that enable modern living, even as efficiency gains enable per capita energy use to decline in developed economies. The global population is projected to rise by > 1.5 billion people by 2050, a 20% increase from today, and nearly all of that growth will occur in developing countries. Over that same time period, global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to nearly double, with developing nations growing twice as fast as developed nations. By 2050, the developing world will account for more than half of global GDP, up from about 40% today. The combination of 1.5 billion more people and a global economy that is projected to nearly double in size drives about 25% higher energy use in developing countries in 2050 versus today.

Source: <https://corporate.exxonmobil.com/sustainability-and-reports/global-outlook/developing>

### **Bentley Systems acquires Talon Aerolytics and Pointivo Technology**

Bentley Systems, the infrastructure engineering software company, has announced the acquisitions of Talon Aerolytics and the technology and technical expertise of Pointivo. These acquisitions, which closed in December, significantly strengthen Bentley's asset analytics portfolio, which applies digital twins and AI to help owner-operators improve asset performance and resilience across infrastructure sectors. Bentley Asset Analytics includes Open Tower iQ for telecommunication towers and Blynscy for road networks. The new acquisitions extend Bentley's offerings in both telecommunications and electric utilities, enabling integrated digital workflows that support global 5G deployments and grid modernisation. As next-generation networks and electrification imperatives drive unprecedented demand, these capabilities empower infrastructure owners to digitise, analyse and optimise assets at scale.

Source: <https://infra.global/bentley-systems-acquires-talon-aerolytics-and-pointivo-technology/>

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