



Adler

By David Adler

Freedom of the press is the light of democracy. Without it, all hope for government of, by, and for the people is crushed.

Thomas Jefferson knew this. He once wrote that if he had to choose between a government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, he would not hesitate to choose the latter. That's because he understood that the indispensable condition for the development of a free people in a free society is

## “When the Light of Democracy Goes Dark: Arresting Journalists”

freedom of the press. Although Jefferson was neither a delegate to the Constitutional Convention nor a member of the First Congress that wrote the Bill of Rights, his rationale for a free press was shared by those who enshrined it in the First Amendment. Freedom of the press, he believed, was the people's right to know. At that juncture in June of 1789, the then novel and democratic theory that freedom of discourse is essential to the existence and security of free government became a pillar of republican thought that governs still.

That's why the Trump Administration's chilling arrest of two journalists—Don Lemon and Georgia Foot—has shaken the foundations of our freedom to the core. Lemon, a veteran journalist and former anchor of CNN, and Foot, a freelance reporter based in Minneapolis, have been charged

with conspiring to violate the civil rights of parishioners at Cities Church, and blocking access to a house of worship. The charges are dubious, factually weak and a continuation of President Donald Trump's very public vendetta against Lemon.

Lemon and Foot were, in fact, reporting the interruption of church services by a group of activists, protesting the activities of the pastor, who reportedly serves as the acting director of an ICE field office. The journalists made it clear, while on air, repeatedly, that they were reporting the demonstration, not participating in it. Nevertheless, officials arrested the reporters for practicing journalism. In this arrest, the Trump Administration has criminalized journalism. That's the way of Putin, Orban and other authoritarian leaders who have arrested reporters as a means of silencing an

independent press that can hold governmental officials accountable through exposure of corruption and the abuse of power. The authoritarian playbook, scholars tell us, emphasizes the elimination of a free and independent press as one of the first, key steps to concentrating power in the hands of the executive. That is the authoritarian way, not the American way.

Readers will recall President Trump's dangerous and demeaning treatment of journalists since his first campaign for the presidency. Trump has called reporters “human scum” and “the enemy of people.” His verbal assaults on female reporters have been particularly nasty: “piggy,” “stupid” and “ugly.” At campaign stops, he has encouraged violence against reporters. News organizations filing stories that he doesn't like are “fake news.” And such networks should “lose their li-

censes.” Trump has made no secret of his dislike for Lemon. Unlike previous presidents, including Ronald Reagan, who occasionally criticized stories written about them, none engaged in Trump's hate mongering, for they recognized the central, indeed, integral importance of freedom of the press to American democracy.

My affection for freedom of the press has been a life-long love affair. Newspaper coverage of the Pentagon Papers represented for me a coming-of-age experience, the revelation by a free press of abuse of power, corruption and deceit so profound that the indispensability of an independent press became part of my DNA. The intrepid journalism that broke the Watergate story and brought down a crooked president affirmed those early sensations and deepened the

Jeffersonian values that define me still. As a devoted admirer of a free and fiercely independent press that can inform, and thus serve, the citizenry, it is easy to discern in the arrest of Lemon and Foot an imminent disaster. The existence of a free press that can inform the people about the activities of their government, denizens of Russia under Putin and Hungary under Orban will tell you, is an enormous privilege, for it protects the public's right to know, the foundation for self-government. It was with good reason that James Madison described freedom of the press as one of “choicest” of the “great rights of mankind” and sought to secure it in our Constitution. An injury to freedom of the press is an injury to us all. Without a free press, truth and facts become elusive, and the light of democracy goes dark.

## Moorhead man hiding in trunk with pound of meth faces federal charges

FARGO, N.D. (Valley News Live) - A man arrested while hiding in a vehicle's trunk with more than a pound of methamphetamine now faces federal drug trafficking and weapons charges, according to court documents filed in U.S. District Court.

Braden Poitra, 24, was charged Jan. 20 with felon in possession of a firearm, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

West Fargo police and the Metro Area Street Crimes Unit stopped a vehicle Sept. 23, 2025, while searching for Poitra, who had outstanding warrants for at-

tempted murder, robbery, and felon in possession of a firearm from a Sept. 17 incident in Fargo.

Officers found Poitra hiding in the trunk and arrested him on the warrants, according to an affidavit from an ATF Task Force Officer.

A search of the vehicle turned up approximately 646 grams of methamphetamine, 6.4 grams of fentanyl powder, 5.7 grams of Xanax, and a Taurus 9mm pistol near where Poitra was located in the trunk, court documents state.

During an interview at the Fargo Police Department, Poitra acknowledged he is a convicted felon prohibited from possessing firearms, according to the affidavit. He admitted the firearm

and methamphetamine found in the trunk belonged to him.

Poitra told investigators he purchased about one pound of methamphetamine in Fargo earlier that day, trading a different firearm and \$2,500 for the drugs, court documents state.

The Sept. 17 incident that led to the initial warrants involved a shooting in Fargo. According to previous court documents, Poitra and another suspect, Dennis Salinas Jr., arrived at a residence around 4:30 p.m. that day. A witness told police he overheard the pair discussing a hit-and-run incident where they allegedly shot at another driver.

When a victim arrived at the

house to pick up keys to a borrowed pickup truck, Poitra and Salinas demanded the keys, court documents state. When the victim refused because he didn't know them, Poitra brandished a pistol and ordered the victim to empty his pockets.

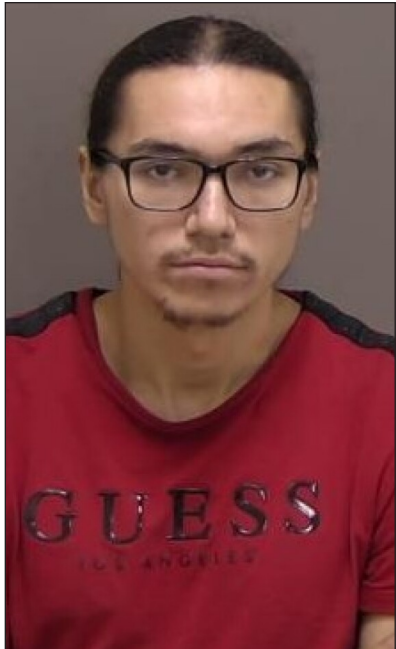
After the victim handed over keys, his phone, and wallet, Salinas allegedly told Poitra to shoot the victim, according to court documents. Poitra fired at the victim, missing once before shooting him in the leg as he tried to flee. Surveillance audio captured the victim yelling, “Please don't shoot me.”

Poitra has three prior felony convictions in Minnesota, includ-

ing aggravated robbery in 2020, second-degree assault with a dangerous weapon in 2023, and fifth-degree controlled substance possession in 2024, according to the federal affidavit.

State charges against Poitra related to the Sept. 17 incident, including attempted murder, robbery, reckless endangerment, and aggravated assault, were dismissed Jan. 29 in Cass County District Court. Poitra had pleaded not guilty to those charges in December.

The federal charges focus on drug trafficking and weapons possession from the Sept. 23 arrest and do not include counts related to the shooting.



Braden Poitra



## 23 years from now

*Decisions made today can have ramifications for decades to come.*



Zeleznik

By Joe Zeleznik

Forester  
NDSU Extension

How tall will a tree grow in 23 years?

That's a very specific question. A lot of factors go into figuring out the answer.

What tree species is it? Is it planted in a good site, with plenty of sunlight, water and nutrients? How big was the tree when it was planted? Have there been any problems, such as insects, diseases or wildlife damage? The list can go on.

As I look in my own yard, I see two 20-year-old trees, each over 30 feet tall. They're fast-growing species and are planted in a good site. Not all trees are so impressive.

Regardless, these trees remind me of the long-term decisions we make. In September 2002, when I moved to North Dakota, a little green insect was discovered in southeast Michigan, killing all the ash trees there. The scientists studying the problem called it emerald ash borer, EAB for short.

It took quite a while, but EAB finally made its way to North Dakota back in 2024, near Edgeley. Last week, it was discovered in Fargo.

This news isn't surprising. We've been expecting it for quite a while.

Each of these finds reminds me of the challenges of managing long-lived plants such as trees. The decisions we make today can have ramifications for decades to come.

For most of the state, there's still plenty of time to make those decisions. EAB travels very slowly on its own – about a half-mile each



This Mongolian linden in Fargo, North Dakota, is less than 23 years old and growing fast. (NDSU photo)

year. For folks in and around that find north of Edgeley, as well as those in the Fargo area, the time to make decisions is getting shorter. In the next five to 10 years, the infestation will be well established in those areas, and a lot of ash trees will be dead or dying.

What do you plan to do with your ash trees?

While doing nothing is always a management option, I don't recommend it with ash trees around homes or in urban areas in the long run. Dead ash trees are brittle and dangerous. Removing a dead tree around a home or near power lines is awfully expensive.

Some people are already removing their ash trees and planting different species. This is a great option, as it reduces future risk and diversifies the urban forest – or even just your yard.

Other people have decided to treat their ash trees. Several potential chemical treatments can be used to control EAB. Emamectin

benzoate, in particular, is highly effective. However, it must be injected into the stem every two or three years, which can get a bit pricey.

To be clear, we don't recommend chemical treatments unless EAB has been found within 15 miles of your location. Definitely, that covers all of the Fargo-Moorhead metro area. But most of the state is well outside that range. As mentioned above, EAB spreads slowly, so it could be a long time before it reaches your location.

Long-term injections when EAB isn't in your area yet, could be a waste of money. If we had started injecting ash trees when I moved to North Dakota in 2002, it would have been a huge investment without a lot of return. However, if we had removed an ash tree and planted a new one, we could have a 30-foot tree by now.

Okay, maybe a 20-foot tree is more realistic.

### SECTION 000200

#### INVITATION TO BID

Notice is hereby given that

**ROLETTE COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY  
ROLLA, NORTH DAKOTA**

will accept bids for

**LOW INCOME HOUSING REHABILITATION  
ROLETTE COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY  
ROLETTE & DUNSEITH, ND**

According to Drawings and Specifications prepared by Michael J. Burns Architects, Ltd., Moorhead, Minnesota, 56560.

Electrical Prime Bids will be received for Electrical Work only.

Sealed proposals will be received by the Architect until **2:00 PM, local time, Monday, February 23, 2026**. Bids must be delivered before the time and date indicated above to Michael J. Burns Architects, Ltd. located at 824 Center Avenue, Moorhead, MN, 56560 where bids will be publicly opened and read aloud. Architect will also send out a Teams Meeting invite prior to the bid opening to Contractors listed on the Planholders List that would like to attend the Bid Opening virtually.

Documents may be examined at:

Michael J. Burns Architects, Ltd., Moorhead, Minnesota  
FM Builders Exchange, 1010 Page Drive, Fargo, ND  
Grand Forks Builders and Traders Exchange, Grand Forks, ND  
Bismarck Builders Exchange, Bismarck, ND  
Minot Builders Exchange, Minot, ND  
Plains Builders Exchange, Sioux Falls, SD  
Minnesota Builders Exchange (MBEX)

All Bidders that would like to be placed on the Plan Holder's List or secure electronic copies of the proposed Bid Documents shall e-mail: [luke@mjbaldt.com](mailto:luke@mjbaldt.com)

**Envelopes containing bids must show on the front face the Contractor's name, address and be endorsed: “Low Income Housing Rehabilitation, Rolette County Housing Authority, Rolette & Dunseith, ND.”**

Each Bid shall be accompanied by two separate envelopes. The first envelope shall contain a Bidder's Bond in a sum equal to (5%) five percent of the full amount of the Bid, executed by the Bidder as principal and by a surety company authorized to do business in this state, conditioned that if the principal's Bid be accepted and the contract awarded, within ten days after notice of award, will execute and effect a contract in accordance with the terms of the Bid and a contractor's bond as required by law and the regulations and determinations of the governing board. Per NDCC 48-01.2-05(4) the envelope with the bidder's security should contain the North Dakota Contractor's license or certification of renewal issued by the secretary of State. The Contractor must be licensed for the highest amount of his bid combination including alternates. Such license must have been in effect at least 10 days prior to the date of the bid opening.

The second envelope marked “Bid Proposal”, shall contain the two copies of the Bid Form supplied with the Bidding documents or through addenda. The envelope containing Bid Proposal shall acknowledge receipt of all addenda both on the envelope and the Bid Proposal form.

No bids will be read or considered which do not fully comply with the North Dakota bond and license requirements. Any deficient bid submitted shall be resealed and returned to the bidder.

Bid security shall be made payable to Rolette County Housing Authority, Rolla North Dakota. Bid security of the two lowest Bidders will be retained until Contract has been awarded and executed, but no longer than 30 days.

The Owner reserves the right to reject any or all Bids and to waive informalities therein.

There will not be a pre-bid walkthrough.

Published for Rolette County Housing Authority, Rolla, North Dakota by their authority.  
Dated this 2nd day of February 2026.  
By: Terry Hanson, Executive Director

**END OF SECTION 00 0200**