

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

Seat Belts And Your Choice

The choice is yours.

That's a well-used, weather-worn phrase that is redeemed only because it exudes the simplest of truths.

For our purposes today, it applies to the use of seat belts when we drive a car or truck. The belts are there for a reason — actually, a lot of them — and they offer a handy safeguard to anyone in a moving vehicle.

But in South Dakota, the choice of wearing them is really yours. Sure, there's a law on the books about wearing seat belts, and it could get you ticketed if you don't buckle up. But it isn't a primary offense, which means you can only get a ticket if you are first stopped for something else. So, it's more like a minor "piling on" offense as opposed to a genuine legal threat.

However, the potential consequences of not using seat belts are clear.

That was spelled out in a recent report from the state Department of Public Safety. It reported that, during the period between 2008-2013, motorists who did not wear seat belts died at a greater frequency than those who used them.

In 2013, for instance, 61 of the 103 people who died on South Dakota roadways in 2013 were not using seat belts. Of those 61, 41 were ejected from their vehicles.

This year so far, 15 of the 18 traffic fatalities did not wear a seat belt.

This is part of the reason why the Office of Highway Safety has begun a new ad campaign promoting the use of seat belts when you are in a car, either as a driver or a passenger.

It only makes sense. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) the use of seat belts reduces the risk of serious crash-related injury and death by almost half. That speaks volumes.

And yet, a lot of South Dakotans don't listen. The CDC reports that this state ranks dead last — in more ways than one — in seat belt used at just 67 percent. (That figure badly trails not only the national average (86 percent) but also the averages of our bordering states: Nebraska is 79 percent, Iowa is 92 percent, Minnesota is 94 percent, North Dakota is 81 percent, Montana is 76 percent and Wyoming is 77 percent.) Not surprisingly, South Dakota's vehicular death rate per 100,000 people was also higher than the national average in every age category.

Those are disturbing facts that must not be ignored.

There have been efforts to toughen the seat belt law and to increase fines, but these efforts have failed. The aforementioned statistics tend to point that out, and yet, they don't seem to sway many opinions about the need for action.

What's really needed is a concerted effort by motorists to take such safety into their own hands. If the change cannot be encouraged in Pierre, it must be fostered by the public: Seat belts save lives.

The choice really is yours.

kmh

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, April 15, the 105th day of 2015. There are 260 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On April 15, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln died nine hours after being shot the night before by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater in Washington; Andrew Johnson became the nation's 17th president.

On this date: In 1715, the Yamasee War began as members of the Yamasee tribe attacked English settlers in colonial South Carolina.

In 1850, the city of San Francisco was incorporated.

In 1912, the British luxury liner RMS Titanic foundered in the North Atlantic off Newfoundland more than 2 1/2 hours after hitting an iceberg; 1,514 people died, while less than half as many survived.

In 1945, during World War II, British and Canadian troops liberated the Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had died on April 12, was buried at the Roosevelt family home in Hyde Park, New York.

In 1955, Ray Kroc opened the first franchised McDonald's restaurant in Des Plaines, Illinois.

In 1960, a three-day conference to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. (The group's first chairman was Marion Barry.)

In 1974, members of the Symbionese Liberation Army held up a branch of the Hibernia Bank in San Francisco; a member of the group was S.L.A. kidnaper victim Patricia Hearst, who by this time was going by the name "Tania" (Hearst later said she'd been forced to participate).

In 1985, South Africa said it would repeal laws prohibiting sex and marriage between whites and non-whites.

In 1986, the United States launched an air raid against Libya in response to the bombing of a discotheque in Berlin on April 5; Libya said 37 people, mostly civilians, were killed.

In 1989, 96 people died in a crush of soccer fans at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, England. Students in Beijing launched a series of pro-democracy protests; the demonstrations culminated in a government crackdown at Tiananmen Square.

In 1990, legendary actress Greta Garbo died in New York at age 84. The comedy sketch show "In Living Color" premiered on Fox TV.

In 2013, two bombs packed with nails and other metal shards exploded at the Boston Marathon finish line, killing two

women and an 8-year-old boy and injuring more than 260. (Suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is on trial; his brother and alleged accomplice, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, died in a shootout with police.)

Ten years ago: A Paris hotel fire killed 24 people, many of them African immigrants. A Russian Soyuz rocket blasted off from the Central Asian steppes, catapulting three crew members on a two-day journey to the International Space Station. The final first-run episode of the situation comedy "8 Simple Rules" aired on ABC.

Five years ago: An ash cloud from an Icelandic volcano drifted over northern Europe, causing the largest disruption of flights since the 2001 terror attacks. President Barack Obama, visiting the Kennedy Space Center, predicted his new space exploration plans would lead American astronauts to Mars and back in his lifetime. Civil rights leader Benjamin Hooks, onetime executive director of the NAACP, died in Memphis, Tennessee, at age 85.

One year ago: Boko Haram terrorists kidnapped some 276 girls from a school in northeastern Nigeria. Survivors, first responders and relatives of those killed in the Boston Marathon bombing marked the first anniversary of the attack with tributes that combined sorrow over the loss of innocent victims with pride over the city's resilience. Five young people were stabbed to death in Calgary, Alberta, Canada; suspect Matthew Douglas de Groot has been charged.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Roy Clark is 82. Author and politician Jeffrey Archer is 75. Rock singer-guitarist Dave Edmunds is 72. Actor Michael Tucci is 69. Actress Lois Chiles is 68. Writer-producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomson is 68. Actress Amy Wright is 65. Columnist Heloise is 64. Actor Sam McMurray is 63. Actress-screenwriter Emma Thompson is 56. Bluegrass musician Jeff Parker is 54. Singer Samantha Fox is 49. Olympic gold, silver and bronze medal swimmer Dara Torres is 48. Rock musician Ed O'Brien (Radiohead) is 47. Actor Flex Alexander is 45. Actor Danny Pino is 41. Actor Douglas Spain is 41. Actor Luke Evans is 36. Rock musician Patrick Carney (The Black Keys) is 35. Actor-writer Seth Rogen is 33. Actress Alice Braga is 32. Rock musician DeMar Hamilton (Plain White Ts) is 31. Actress Emma Watson is 25. Actress Maisie Williams (TV: "Game of Thrones") is 18.

Thought for Today: "We do not know what we want and yet we are responsible for what we are — that is the fact." — Jean-Paul Sartre, French philosopher (born 1905, died this date in 1980).

FROM THE BIBLE

As the Father has loved Me, so have I love you. Abide in My love. John 15:9. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

Sometimes it's good when Justice isn't so blind.



Clinton's Candidacy: A Defining Moment?

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

It's a paradox.

Almost all the economic gains are still going to the top, leaving America's vast middle class with stagnant wages and little or no job security. Two-thirds of Americans are working paycheck to paycheck.

Meanwhile, big money is taking over our democracy.

If there were ever a time for a bold Democratic voice on behalf of hardworking Americans, it is now.

Yet I don't recall a time when the Democratic Party's most prominent officeholders sounded as meek. With the exception of Elizabeth Warren, they're pussycats. If Paul Wellstone, Teddy Kennedy, Robert Kennedy or Ann Richards were still with us, they'd be hollering.

The fire now is on the right, stoked by the Koch brothers, Rupert Murdoch and a pocketful of hedge-fund billionaires.

Today's Republican firebrands, beginning with Ted Cruz, blame the poor, blacks, Latinos and immigrants for what's been happening. They avoid any mention of wealth and power. Which brings me to Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Sunday she told America she was running for president. "The deck is still stacked in favor of those at the top," she said. "Everyday Americans need a champion, and I want to be that champion."

The right words, but will she deliver?

Some wonder about the strength of her values and ideals. I don't. I've known her since she was 19 years old, and I have no doubt where her heart is. For her entire career she's been deeply committed to equal opportunity and upward mobility.

Some worry she's been too compromised by big money — that the circle of wealthy donors she and her husband have cultivated over the years has dulled her sensitivity to the struggling middle class and poor.

But it's wrong to assume great wealth, or even a social circle of the wealthy, is incompatible with a deep commitment to reform — as Teddy Roosevelt and his fifth cousin Franklin clearly demonstrated.

The more relevant concern is Hillary Clinton's willingness to fight.

If she is to get the mandate she needs for America to get back on track, she will have to be clear with the American people about what is happening and why — and what must be done.

For example, she'll need to admit that Wall Street is still running much of the economy, and still out of control.

So we must resurrect the Glass-Steagall Act and bust up the biggest banks, so millions of

Americans don't ever again lose their homes, jobs and savings because of Wall Street's excesses.

Also: Increase taxes on the rich in order to finance the investments in schools and infrastructure the nation desperately needs.

Strengthen unions so working Americans have the bargaining power to get a fair share of the gains from economic growth.

Limit the deductibility of executive pay, and raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Oppose trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership designed to protect corporate property but not American jobs.

And nominate Supreme Court justices who will reverse the Citizens United decision

I'm not suggesting a long list. Democratic candidates too often offer mind-numbing policy proposals without explaining why they're important.

Clinton should use such policies to illustrate the problem, and make a vivid moral case for why such policies are necessary.

In recent decades, Republicans have made a moral case for less government and lower taxes on the rich, based on their idea of "freedom." They talk endlessly about freedom, but they never talk about power. It's power that's askew in America — concentrated power that's constraining the freedom of the vast majority.

Clinton should make the moral case about power: for taking it out of the hands of those with great wealth and putting it back into the hands of average working people.

Such a voice and message make sense politically. The 2016 election will be decided by turnout, and turnout will depend on enthusiasm.

If she talks about what's really going on and what must be done about it, she can arouse the Democratic base as well as millions of independents and even Republicans who have concluded, with reason, that the game is rigged against them.

The question is not her values and ideals. It's her willingness to be bold and to fight, at a time when average working people need a president who will fight for them more than they've needed such a president in living memory.

This is a defining moment for Democrats, and for America. It is also a defining moment for Hillary Clinton.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on Netflix, iTunes and Amazon.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Honoring Volunteers

Tony Burke, Sioux Falls

Executive Director, American Red Cross serving Eastern South Dakota

The American Red Cross serving Eastern South Dakota is honoring its volunteers and the work they do in the community during National Volunteer Week, April 12-18.

Last year in the region, our volunteers responded to more than 400 disasters to help families who faced home fires and other disaster situations such as the tornado in Wessington Springs and flooding in Canton. They trained 31,173 people in lifesaving skills and assisted more than 1,000 military members, veterans and their families in times of emergency.

I invite the public to join us and become a Red Cross volunteer. Go to www.redcross.org/southdakota to learn more about the many ways people can help and how to submit a volunteer application.

The Red Cross Home Fire Prevention Program, in an effort to grow resilient communities, offers another way to volunteer and help

reduce the number of home fire injuries and deaths. Volunteers are going door-to-door in neighborhoods at high risk for fires to install smoke alarms, perform blood pressure checks and teach people about home fire prevention and disaster preparedness. In the region, nearly 1,500 smoke alarms have already been installed with the assistance of local fire departments and coalition partners. Several campaigns are planned throughout the region in the coming months including one in Sioux Falls on April 18 and one in Huron on June 13.

If you are interested in helping when a disaster strikes our community, download the Team Red Cross app. This free app allows people to sign