

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

So South Dakota Beats Out Mars ...

OK, a new state ad campaign built on the silly hook "Why die on Mars when you can live in South Dakota?" actually isn't as bad as we first feared it might be when we heard about it. In fact, it's borderline clever, as long as no one takes it too seriously.

The 30-second ad, created by the governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED), is a quick-hitting piece that basically says this: People are lining up to book a seat on a one-way flight to Mars, where the landscape is barren and there is no oxygen — so why not live in South Dakota, which is billed as: "Progressive. Productive. And abundant in oxygen."

Bear in mind this isn't a serious argument, but rather a unique way of getting the attention of young people who have so far seemed immune to the more serious selling points about no state income tax, a lower cost of living, a good quality of life and so forth.

According to a report in the *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, the campaign is geared to appeal to young people who "are saturated with media," stated Mary Lehecka Nelson, the director of marketing for GOED. "Something needed to hook them, and we know that demographic spends a lot of time talking about trending topics."

So as such, perhaps it has some merit.

However, if the ad is designed to get people's attention, what are we to sell them once we have it?

That's where the serious work comes in.

Once these prospective residents are checking us out, they will likely be less amused by the dead-last ranking in teachers' salaries, the high ranking for government corruption — South Dakota ranked eighth in the nation in that category, according to a study released last summer by the University of Hong Kong and Indiana University — or the fact that six of the 10 poorest counties in the nation are here.

Perhaps they might get excited about South Dakota constantly being named one of the most business-friendly states in the country, even though low wages have helped contribute to that sparkling rating.

And the lack of an income tax could be enticing, but it also comes with a problem, according to a 2013 study by the Institute of Taxation and Economy Policy: "South Dakota's imbalanced tax system, with its heavy reliance on sales and excise taxes, is pushing the state's impoverished taxpayers deeper into poverty. The state's lack of a personal income tax has been a major contributor to its reputation as a 'low tax state,' but it comes at a steep price in terms of higher tax rates on low-income families."

Honestly, this state does have some good selling points that made it an attractive place to live, which is why many of us live here. It's frustrating sometimes that those factors are sometimes overwhelmed by other elements that are real concerns.

So, South Dakota has some work to do if it wants to not only attract but also keep people here. No, we're not Mars, but we're going to need a little more than that to really turn things around.

kmh

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IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, April 22, the 112th day of 2015. There are 253 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On April 22, 1915, the first full-scale use of deadly chemicals in warfare took place as German forces unleashed chlorine gas against Allied troops at the start of the Second Battle of Ypres in Belgium during World War I; thousands of soldiers are believed to have died.

On this date: In 1864, Congress authorized the use of the phrase "In God We Trust" on U.S. coins.

In 1889, the Oklahoma Land Rush began at noon as thousands of homesteaders staked claims.

In 1930, the United States, Britain and Japan signed the London Naval Treaty, which regulated submarine warfare and limited shipbuilding.

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. forces began invading Japanese-held New Guinea with amphibious landings at Hollandia and Aitape.

In 1952, an atomic test in Nevada became the first nuclear explosion shown on live network television as a 31-kiloton bomb was dropped from a B-50 Superfortress.

In 1954, the publicly televised sessions of the Senate Army-McCarthy hearings began.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson opened the New York World's Fair.

In 1970, millions of Americans concerned about the environment observed the first "Earth Day."

In 1983, the West German news magazine Stern announced the discovery of 60 volumes of personal diaries purportedly written by Adolf Hitler; however, the diaries turned out to be a hoax.

In 1990, pro-Iranian kidnappers in Lebanon freed American hostage Robert Polhill after nearly 39 months of captivity.

In 1994, Richard M. Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, died at a New York hospital four days after suffering a stroke; he was 81.

In 2000, in a dramatic pre-dawn raid, armed immigration agents seized Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy at the center of a custody dispute, from his relatives' home in Miami; Elian was reunited with his father at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington. Broadway producer Alexander Cohen died in New York at age 79.

Ten years ago: Zacarias Moussaoui pleaded guilty in a federal courtroom out-

side Washington D.C. to conspiring with the September 11 hijackers to kill Americans. (Moussaoui is serving a life prison sentence.) President George W. Bush named General Peter Pace to be the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Five years ago: The Deepwater Horizon oil platform, operated by BP, sank into the Gulf of Mexico two days after a massive explosion that killed 11 workers. The NCAA announced a 14-year, \$10.8 billion deal with CBS and Turner Broadcasting under which every game during an expanded March Madness schedule would be broadcast live nationally for the first time in the tournament's 73-year history.

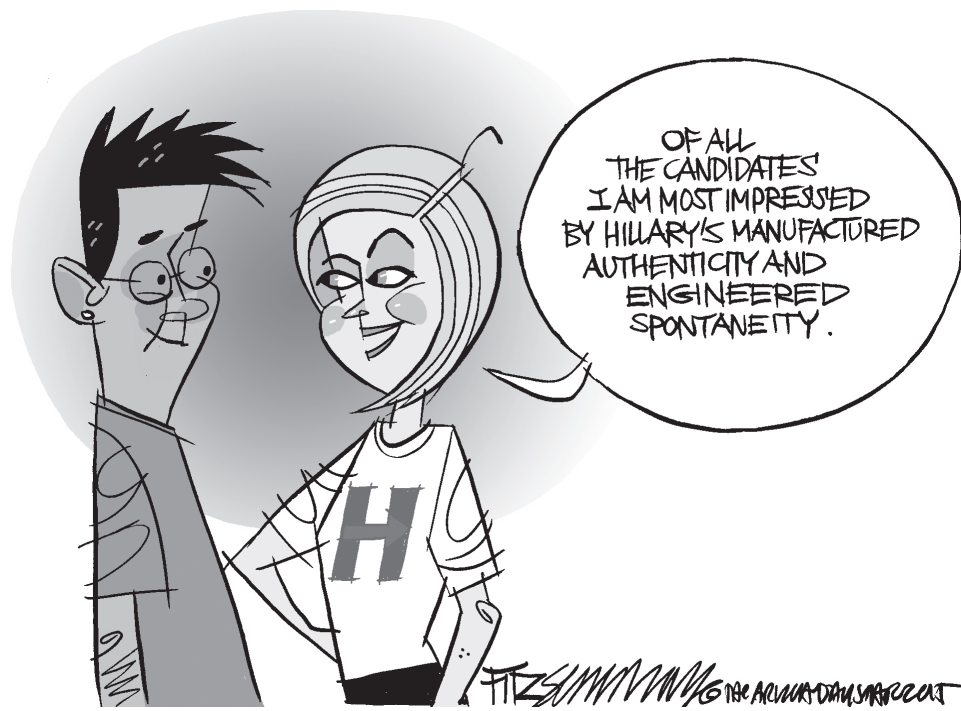
One year ago: In a blow to affirmative action, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld, 6-2, a voter-approved change to the Michigan Constitution forbidding the state's public colleges to take race into account in admissions. Vice President Joe Biden told Ukrainian political leaders the United States stood with them against "humiliating threats" and encouraged them to root out corruption as they rebuilt their government. Albert Pujols became the first major leaguer to hit his 499th and 500th homers in the same game, driving in five runs to help the Los Angeles Angels beat the Washington Nationals 7-2.

Today's Birthdays: Actor George Cole is 90. Actress Charlotte Rae is 89. Actress Estelle Harris is 87. Singer Glen Campbell is 79. Actor Jack Nicholson is 78. Singer Mel Carter is 72. Author Janet Evanovich is 72. Country singer Clevie Francis is 70. Movie director John Waters is 69. Singer Peter Frampton is 65. Rock singer-musician Paul Carrack (Mike and the Mechanics; Squeeze) is 64. Actor Joseph Bottoms is 61. Actor Ryan Stiles is 56. Baseball manager Terry Francona is 56. Comedian Byron Allen is 54. Actor Chris Makepeace is 51. Rock musician Fletcher Dragge is 49. Actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan is 49. Actress Sheryl Lee is 48. Actress-talk show host Sherri Shepherd is 48. Country singer-musician Heath Wright (Ricochet) is 48. Country singer Kellie Coffey is 44. Actor Eric Mabius is 44. Actor Ingo Rademacher is 44. Rock musician Shavo Odadjian (System of a Down) is 41. Rock singer-musician Daniel Johns (Silverchair) is 36. Actress Cassidy Freeman is 33. Actress Michelle Ryan is 31. Actress Amber Heard is 29.

Thought for Today: "What's vice today may be virtue tomorrow." — Henry Fielding, English novelist (born this date in 1707, died in 1754).

FROM THE BIBLE

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. Isaiah 65:24. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



The Perils Of A 'Flexible Economy'

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

These days it's not unusual for someone on the way to work to receive a text message from her employer saying she's not needed right then.

Although she's already found someone to pick up her kid from school and arranged for child care, the work is no longer available and she won't be paid for it.

Just-in-time scheduling like this is the latest new thing, designed to make retail outlets, restaurants, hotels and other customer-driven businesses more nimble and keep costs to a minimum.

Software can now predict up-to-the-minute staffing needs on the basis of information such as traffic patterns, weather and even sales merely hours or possibly minutes before.

This way, employers don't need to pay anyone to be at work unless they're really needed. Companies can avoid paying wages to workers who'd otherwise just sit around.

Employers assign workers tentative shifts, and then notify them a half-hour or 10 minutes before the shift is scheduled to begin whether they're actually needed. Some even require workers to check in by phone, email or text shortly before the shift starts.

Just-in-time scheduling is another part of America's new "flexible" economy — along with the move to independent contractors and the growing reliance on "share economy" businesses, like Uber, that purport to do nothing more than connect customers with people willing to serve them.

New software is behind all of this — digital platforms enabling businesses to match their costs exactly with their needs.

The business media consider such flexibility an unalloyed virtue. Wall Street rewards it with higher share prices. America's "flexible labor market" is the envy of business leaders and policymakers the world over.

There's only one problem. The new flexibility doesn't allow working people to live their lives.

Businesses used to consider employees fixed costs — like the costs of factories, offices and equipment. Payrolls might grow or shrink over time as businesses expanded or contracted, but from year to year they were fairly constant.

That meant steady jobs. And with steady jobs came steady paychecks along with regular and predictable work schedules.

But employees are now becoming variable costs of doing business — depending on ups and downs in demand that may change hour by hour, possibly minute by minute.

Yet working people have to pay the rent or make mortgage payments, and have to keep up

with utility, food and fuel bills. These bills don't vary much from month to month. They're the fixed costs of living.

American workers can't simultaneously be variable costs for business yet live in their own fixed-cost worlds. They're also husbands and wives and partners, most are parents, and they often have to take care of elderly relatives. All this requires coordinating schedules in advance — who's going to cover for whom, and when.

But such planning is impossible when you don't know when you'll be needed at work.

Whatever it's called — just-in-time scheduling, on-call staffing, on-demand work, independent contracting or the "share economy" — the result is the same: no predictability, no economic security.

This makes businesses more efficient, but it's a nightmare for working families.

Last week, the National Employment Law Project reported that 42 percent of U.S. workers make less than \$15 an hour.

But even \$20 an hour isn't enough if the work is unpredictable and insecure.

Not only is a higher minimum wage critical. So are more regular and predictable hours.

Some states require employers to pay any staff who report to work for a scheduled shift but who are then sent home — at least four hours pay at the minimum wage.

But these laws haven't kept up with software that enables employers to do just-in-time scheduling and inform workers minutes before their shift that they're not needed.

In what may become a test case, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman last week warned 13 big retailers — including Target and Gap — that their just-in-time scheduling may violate New York law, which requires payments to workers who arrive for a shift and then are sent home.

We need a federal law requiring employers to pay for scheduled work.

Alternatively, if American workers can't get more regular and predictable hours, they at least need stronger safety nets.

These would include high-quality preschool and after-school programs, unemployment insurance for people who can only get part-time work and a minimum guaranteed basic income.

All the blather about "family-friendly workplaces" is meaningless if workers have no control over when they're working.

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

Voting Issues

Harry Baltzer, Huron

I am a person of more than 80 years of age. When I was a youngster my father had to pay a one dollar poll tax before he could vote. Eventually that tax was determined to be undemocratic and was repealed, so all citizens of legal age could vote without paying any money.

Now in order for me to vote, I have to buy a \$20 official picture ID from the DMV.

That, of course, discourages many other eligible voters who haven't much money from bothering to vote and that includes many Native Americans, Chicanos and Blacks.

It is argued that the official picture ID prevents rampant voter fraud. But I keep hearing and reading that in no part of the country is that a significant problem.

P&D 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/.

SECURITY: "Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe." — Thomas Jefferson

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: It's Your Right To Know!