

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

Be Thankful For Our Firefighters

ARGUS LEADER, Sioux Falls, April 19: Thank you, volunteer firefighters.

Thank you for putting your lives on the line to save people and property.

You are mayors, mechanics, business owners, teachers and farmers.

You have given up your holidays, your free time and sacrificed your day jobs to protect others. You don't get paid, or if you do, it's very little. You don't receive benefits.

You jump out of bed at night when your town needs you. And you do it not knowing whether it will be your last call.

Valley Springs volunteer firefighter Steve Ackerman's last call came after 10 p.m. on April 12.

His crew was the first to respond to a house fire in Brandon. The blaze started in the basement, and homeowner David Smith was inside.

Smith was found and was later pronounced dead at a Sioux Falls hospital. Later, a team of three from Valley Springs re-entered the home to put out some hot spots.

Ackerman never made it back outside.

Forty-three firefighters have died in the line of duty in South Dakota since 1924. More than 20 of them worked for volunteer departments.

Across South Dakota, in the towns between Sioux Falls and Mitchell and Rapid City, there are volunteer firefighters who are the first on the scene at car accidents, medical emergencies, grass fires and home fires.

They do it with less training than a professional. They do it with equipment that isn't as high-tech. But they do it because they love their town. They do it because they love their neighbors.

And we don't thank them enough. We don't appreciate them until it's our burning house they are running into or our child they are tending to after a car accident.

We don't appreciate them until one is gone.

So thank you, volunteer firefighters.

Thanks to all the first responders.

Thank you, Steve Ackerman.

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The View page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the PRESS & DAKOTAN. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, April 27, the 117th day of 2015. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On April 27, 1865, in America's worst maritime disaster, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000. Cornell University was established as New York Gov. Reuben E. Fenton signed a measure approving its charter.

On this date: In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1777, the only land battle in Connecticut during the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Ridgefield, took place, resulting in a limited British victory.

In 1805, during the First Barbary War, an American-led force of Marines and mercenaries captured the city of Derna, on the shores of Tripoli.

In 1822, the 18th president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, was born in Point Pleasant, Ohio.

In 1925, the song "Yes, Sir! That's My Baby" by Walter Donaldson and Gus Kahn was published by Irving Berlin, Inc. of New York.

In 1938, King Zog I of the Albanians married Countess Geraldine Apponyi de Nagy-Apponyi.

In 1941, German forces occupied Athens during World War II.

In 1965, broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow died in Pawling, New York, two days after turning 57.

In 1967, Expo '67 was officially opened in Montreal by Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson.

In 1973, Acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray resigned after it was revealed that he'd destroyed files removed from the safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who had shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was remembered at an outdoor funeral service attended by all five of his successors at the Nixon presidential library in Yorba Linda, California.

Ten years ago: Touting technology as a way to solve the country's energy problems, President George W. Bush called for construction of more nuclear power plants and urged Congress to give tax breaks for fuel-efficient hybrid and clean-diesel cars. Russian President Vladimir Putin became the first Kremlin leader to visit Israel. The Airbus A380, the world's largest jetliner, made its maiden flight as it took off from Blagnac, France, and returned four hours later.

Five years ago: Defending his company against blistering criticism, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs, Lloyd Blankfein, told a Senate hearing that clients who'd bought subprime mortgage securities from the Wall Street powerhouse in 2006 and 2007 came looking for risk "and that's what they got." Former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was extradited from the United States to France, where he was later convicted of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence. Thomas Hagan, the only man to admit shooting Malcolm X, was freed on parole. University of Washington president Mark Emmert was selected as president of the NCAA.

One year ago: Two 20th-century popes who'd changed the course of the Roman Catholic church become saints as Pope Francis honored John XXIII and John Paul II; Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI joined him in the first celebration of Mass by a serving and retired pontiff in the church's 2,000-year history. In a rare acknowledgement, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called the Nazi Holocaust "the most heinous crime" of modern history. A tornado tore through parts of Arkansas, killing 16 people. Lydia Ko birdied the final hole for her third LPGA Tour victory and first as a professional in the inaugural Swinging Skirts LPGA Classic, three days after celebrating her 17th birthday.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Anouk Aimee is 83. Actress Judy Carne is 76. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 73. Rhythm-and-blues singer Cuba Gooding is 71. Singer Ann Peebles is 68. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 67. Rhythm-and-blues singer Herbie Murrell (The Stylistics) is 66. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 66. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 64. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 56. Actor James Le Gros (groh) is 53. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 50. Singer Mica Paris is 46. Actor David Lascher is 43. Actress Maura West is 43. Actress Sally Hawkins is 39. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 37. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 37. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 36. Actress Ari Graynor is 32. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 31. Pop singer Nick Noonan (Karmin) is 29. Actor William Moseley is 28. Actress Emily Rios is 26. Singer Allison Iraheta is 23.

Thought for Today: "The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it." — Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965).

FROM THE BIBLE

Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Terrific Tourney

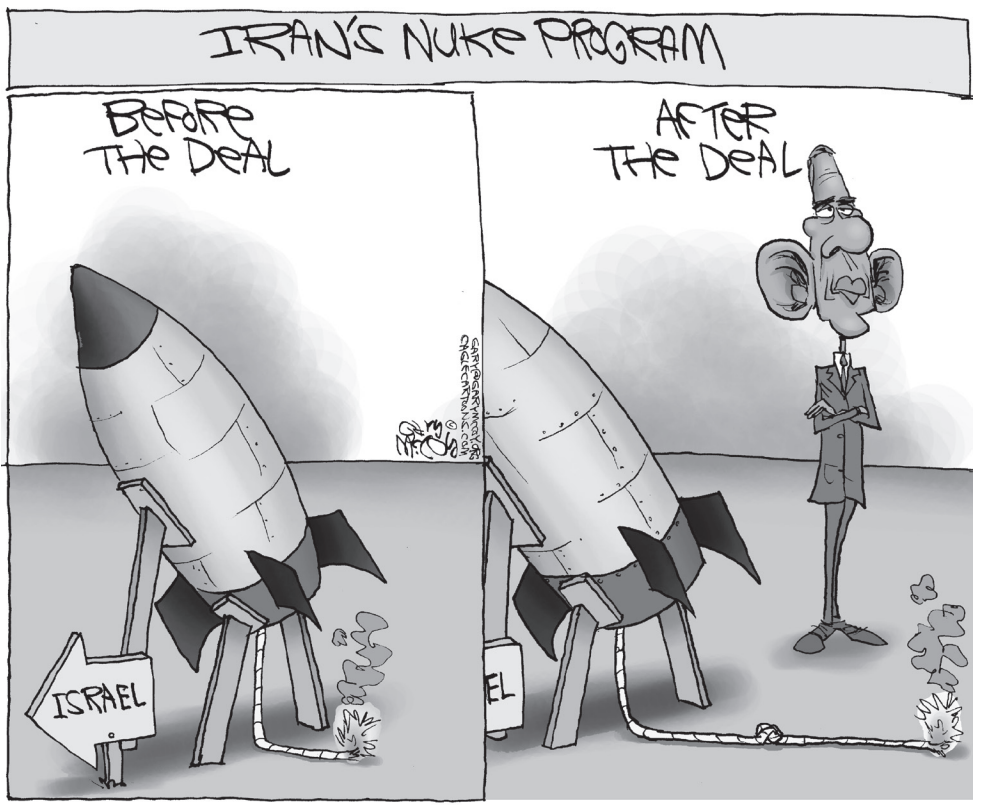
Yankton Basketball Inc.
We would like to thank everyone involved in making this year's 25th anniversary Hansen-Haas Memorial Tournament a continued success.

A special thank you to the individual volunteers who worked as refs, T-shirt/gate sales, book and clock keepers and all the facility janitors. Without your generous volunteerism our tournament would not be possible. Thank you to MMC and the basketball programs, and

the Yankton School District/SAC for facility use. Thank you to Boller Printing/Observer, P&D and KVHT for great tournament coverage. Thank you to all the businesses who donated food and beverages for the appreciation supper as well as Sh-Booms and Hy-Vee for the preparation.

Lastly, thank you to all the great businesses who continue to sponsor our tournament every year. We look forward to moving forward as the Hansen-Haas Tournament.

Thanks again for all your support!



Capitol Notebook

Brown May Slide Over To Senate's Other Top Post

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The next two weeks will set the candidates and possibly the outcomes for the secret caucus leadership elections among Republican state senators May 9.

New faces will hold all three spots in this mid-term shake-up caused by resignations of Tim Rave of Baltic and Dan Lederman of Dakota Dunes.

Rave was leader of the Senate Republicans' super-majority of 27. Lederman was assistant leader.

The current Senate president pro tem is Corey Brown of Gettysburg. He intends to be the new leader for the Senate Republicans.



Bob MERCER

He appears unchallenged. Brown doesn't plan to attempt to fill both jobs. That creates an additional and highly significant vacancy.

The president pro tem is top officer among senators and is elected from all 35 senators regardless of political party affiliation.

The president pro tem makes committee assignments and has an interesting shared role with the lieutenant governor.

The lieutenant governor, currently Republican Matt Michels of Yankton, is president of the Senate. That duty is set by the state Constitution.

As president, the lieutenant governor presides over the Senate's daily proceedings during the legislative session.

The lieutenant governor also has the power to cast a tie-breaking vote if one occurs while presiding.

The president pro tem presides over the Senate's proceedings when the lieutenant governor isn't present.

The last time Michels missed a full day in the Senate was so long ago that it doesn't come to memory.

Presuming Brown is chosen May 9 as Senate Republican leader, the Senate as a body

wouldn't choose a new president pro tem until lawmakers start the 2016 session on Jan. 12.

It seems unlikely the new president pro tem would shuffle the various committee assignments such as chairmen and vice chairmen.

The president pro tem appoints all legislative employees for the Senate, assigns bills to committees during session and makes seating assignments.

There is an interim decision, however, regarding seats on the Legislature's Executive Board.

Brown, because he is president pro tem, automatically serves on the board. So did Rave and Lederman because of their leader and assistant leader posts.

Brown would seem to continue on the board if he is chosen Republican leader.

There are three other Senate Republicans already on the board chosen by their caucus. They are Phyllis Heineman of Sioux Falls, Jim White of Huron and David Omdahl of Sioux Falls.

The new president pro tem in 2016 would automatically become a member of the board and would immediately become its chairman.

The Legislature adopted a new law in 2014 that rotates the chairmanship between the House speaker in odd years and Senate president pro tem in even years.

House Speaker Dean Wink, R-Howes, is the current chairman.

Brown is in his fourth consecutive term in the Senate and therefore is prohibited by the state Constitution from seeking re-election as a senator in 2016.

That means a vacancy again in 2017 for Senate Republican leader. It makes the caucus election for assistant leader on May 9 much more significant.

Together, the results for assistant leader and president pro tem might tell much about the Senate's tone, direction and agenda through 2018.

What's Partisan About Fact?

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

"Obama is a Muslim," it said. "That is a FACT." As best I can recall — my computer ate the email — that was how the key line went in a reader missive that had me doing a double take last week. It was not the outlandish assertion that struck me, but, rather, the emphatic claim of its veracity. We're talking Shift-LOCK and all-caps so there would be no mistaking: "Obama is a Muslim. That is a FACT."

Actually, it is not a fact, but let that slide. We're not here to renew the tired debate over Barack Obama's religion. No, we're only here to lament that so many of us seem to know "facts" that aren't and that one party — guess which — has cynically nurtured, used and manipulated this ignorance for political gain.

Consider a recent trio of studies testing the effectiveness of fact-checking journalism. They were conducted for the nonpartisan American Press Institute, and their findings actually offer good news for those of us who fret over the deterioration of critical thinking and the resultant incoherence of political debate.

Researchers found, for instance that, although still relatively rare, fact-checking journalism has been growing fast and saw a 300 percent rise between 2008 and 2012. Also: Most Americans (better than 8 in 10) have a favorable view of political fact-checking. Best of all, exposure to fact-checking tends to increase respondent's knowledge, according to the research.

But like stinkweed in a bouquet of roses, the studies also produced one jarringly discordant finding: Republicans are significantly less likely to view fact-checkers favorably. Among those with lower levels of political knowledge, the difference between Republican and Democratic voters is fairly small — 29 percent of Republicans have a favorable view, versus 36 percent of Democrats. Surprisingly, among those with higher levels of knowledge, the gap is vast: 34 percent of Republicans against 59 percent of Democrats.

The traditional rejoinder of the GOP faithful whenever you bring up such disparities in per-



Leonard PITTS

ception is that they mistrust "mainstream media" because it is biased against them. Putting aside the dubious validity of the claim, it's irrelevant here. Fact-checking journalism is nonpartisan. One would be hard-pressed, for example, to paint PolitFact as a shell for the donkey party given that it regularly dings Democrats and gave President Obama ("If you like your health plan, you can keep it") its uncoveted Lie Of the Year award for 2013.

That being the case, one can't help but be disheartened by this gap. What's not to like about journalism that sorts truth from falsehood? What's partisan about fact?

Nothing — you'd think. Except that, for Republicans something obviously is.

Perhaps we ought not be surprised given the pattern of party politics in recent years. On topics as varied as climate change, health care, terrorism and the president's birthplace, GOP leaders and media figures have obfuscated and prevaricated with masterly panache, sowing confusion in the midst of absolute clarity, pretending controversy where there is none and finding, always, a ready audience of the fearful and easily gullible.

As political strategy, it has been undeniably effective, mobilizing voters and energizing campaigns. As a vehicle for leadership and change, it has been something else altogether. When you throw away a regard for fact, you throw away the ability to have effective discourse. Which is why American political debates tend to be high in volume and low in content. And why consensus becomes impossible.

The API statistics documenting the lack of GOP enthusiasm for fact-checkers ought to tell you something. Who could have a problem with a fact-checker? He or she is your best friend if what you're saying is true.

You would only feel differently if what you're saying is not.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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The View page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the PRESS & DAKOTAN. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.