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Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

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(800) 743-2968
NEWS FAX:
(605) 665-1721
ADVERTISING FAX:
(605) 665-0288
WEBSITE:
www.yankton.net
EMAIL ADDRESS:
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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

No More Delays On Food Safety

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (Aug. 3): Proposed new rules aimed at improving the safety of imported food were bottled up so long that some advocates were worried that the Obama administration had lost the political will to put them into effect.

Now that a lawsuit finally pried them loose, the administration should keep them moving along toward final approval.

At least eight of 19 multistate outbreaks of foodborne illness since January 2011 have been linked to imported foods, according to food safety experts at Pew Charitable Trusts.

And Friday, government food safety officials said the outbreak of illness caused by the cyclospora parasite was linked to salad mix from a Mexican farm that was served at Olive Garden and Red Lobster restaurants in Nebraska and Iowa.

The amount of imported food — especially fruits and vegetables — consumed by Americans has been rising steadily.

Currently about 15 percent of the food eaten in the United States comes from outside its borders. About 20 percent of the fresh vegetables and 50 percent of the fresh fruit purchased by Americans came from outside the country.

Less than 2 percent of that food was inspected by the Food and Drug Administration.

The proposed new rules have been praised widely by food safety advocates, and some industry sources.

The rules aim to make food importers accountable for verifying that foreign growers and other producers are adhering to effective food safety practices. It also establishes a system for certifying third-party auditors who would check foreign food production facilities.

According to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, foodborne illnesses kill almost 3,000 people a year.

It's been more than 2 1/2 years since the Food Safety Modernization Act was passed by Congress.

Now that 120-day comment period for the new rules finally has been opened, FDA officials said it will still be two to three years before the new rules are implemented.

At that rate that means thousands more will die of food-borne illness before the new program is in place.

The FDA has signed deadline after deadline in implementing the new food law, the first overhaul of food safety laws in about 70 years. It took 18 months and a court order before the new rules on import food emerged. Now the Obama administration has to keep pushing to finish the job.

YOUR D.C. LAWMAKERS

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SEN. TIM JOHNSON: 136 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-5842; Sioux Falls Phone: (605) 332-8896; email: <http://johnson.senate.gov/emailform.html>

SEN. JOHN THUNE: United States Senate SR-493, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (866) 850-3855; Sioux Falls Phone: (605) 334-9596; Fax: (202) 228-3855; Web: thune.senate.gov.

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NEBRASKA

SEN. DEB FISCHER: 825 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-6551; email: N/A

SEN. MIKE JOHANNIS: 1 Russell Courtyard, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-4224; email: log.on.at

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ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Aug. 12, the 224th day of 2013. There are 141 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 12, 1953, the Soviet Union conducted a secret test of its first hydrogen bomb.

On this date: In 1813, Austria declared war on France.

In 1867, President Andrew Johnson sparked a move to impeach him as he defied Congress by suspending Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.

In 1898, fighting in the Spanish-American War came to an end.

In 1902, International Harvester Co. was formed by a merger of McCormick Harvesting Machine Co., Deering Harvester Co. and several other manufacturers.

In 1912, comedy producer Mack Sennett founded the Keystone Pictures Studio in Edendale, Calif.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt nominated Hugo Black to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1944, during World War II, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., eldest son of Joseph and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, was killed with his co-pilot when their explosives-laden Navy plane blew up over England.

In 1960, the first balloon communications satellite — the Echo 1 — was launched by the United States from Cape Canaveral.

In 1962, one day after launching Andrian Nikolayev into orbit, the Soviet Union also sent up cosmonaut Pavel Popovich; both men landed safely August 15.

In 1978, Pope Paul VI, who had died August 6 at age 80, was buried in St. Peter's Basilica.

In 1985, the world's worst single-aircraft disaster occurred as a crippled Japan Air Lines Boeing 747 on a domestic flight crashed into a mountain, killing 520 people. (Four people survived.)

In 1988, the controversial movie "The Last Temptation of Christ," directed by Martin Scorsese, opened in nine cities despite objections by some who felt the film was sacrilegious.

Ten years ago: Liberia's leading rebel movement agreed to lift its siege

of the capital and vital port, allowing food to flow to hundreds of thousands of hungry people.

Five years ago: Declaring "the aggressor has been punished," the Kremlin ordered a halt to Russia's devastating assault on Georgia — five days of air and ground attacks that had left homes in smoldering ruins and uprooted 100,000 people. Michael Phelps won the 200-meter freestyle for his third gold medal at the Beijing Games.

One year ago: The U.S. men's basketball team defended its title by fighting off another huge challenge from Spain, pulling away in the final minutes for a 107-100 victory and its second straight Olympic championship. The victory by the men's basketball team gave the United States its 46th gold medal in London, the most ever by Americans in a "road" Olympics. The U.S. won 104 medals overall. With a little British pomp and a lot of British pop, London brought the curtain down on the Olympic Games with a spectacular pageant. Rory McIlroy won the PGA Championship with a 6-under 66 for an eight-shot victory at Kiawah Island, S.C.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Dale Bumpers, D-Ark., is 88. Actor George Hamilton is 74. Actress Dana Ivey is 72. Actress Jennifer Warren is 72. Rock singer-musician Mark Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 64. Actor Jim Beaver is 63. Singer Kid Creole is 63. Jazz musician Pat Metheny is 59. Actor Sam J. Jones is 59. Actor Bruce Greenwood is 57. Country singer Danny Shirley is 57. Pop musician Roy Hay (Culture Club) is 52. Rapper Sir Mix-A-Lot is 50. Actor Peter Krause is 48. International Tennis Hall of Famer Pete Sampras is 42. Actor-comedian Michael Ian Black is 42. Actress Yvette Nicole Brown is 42. Actress Rebecca Gayheart is 42. Actor Casey Affleck is 38. Rock musician Bill Uechi (Save Ferris) is 38. Actress Maggie Lawson is 33. Actress Dominique Swain is 33. Actress Imani Hakim is 20.

Thought for Today: "Wisdom is born, stupidity is learned." — Russian proverb.

FROM THE BIBLE

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." Galatians 3:11. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Capitol Notebook

Early-Voting Forces A Debate About Access

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Want to vote early in the 2014 state and federal elections?

You can mail an application to your county auditor asking for an absentee ballot to be mailed to your home. Then, make your picks and mail the ballot back.

That seems simple enough.

You can also go to your county's courthouse and do it all there in person. That seems pretty simple, too.

So why do we have controversy about voting rights in South Dakota regarding early voting?

Because some people don't want to use the mail option and they don't want to drive, or get rides, as far as they currently do.

That was the reason why, in 2012, Secretary of State Jason Gant reached an accommodation to put an early-voting center in Shannon County on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Shannon County is one of two unorganized counties in South Dakota (Todd County, on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, is the other). Shannon County contracts with Fall River County for election services.

People naturally thought driving from Shannon County to Hot Springs was too far.

The presumption, then, seems to be that a county should have an early-voting center, even when it doesn't operate a courthouse or run its own elections.

In the Shannon County case, Gant used federal funds under the Help America Vote Act to pay for the early-voting center.

He pledged funding through the 2018 elections for the center, at total cost up to \$111,000.

Now comes the Four Directions organiza-

tion, which works to turn out voters in reservation areas. Its leaders want to expand the early-voting center concept.

They want Gant to use HAVA money to pay for additional early-voting centers in Fort Thompson, Eagle Butte and Wanblee.

This isn't just about driving distance. This is about racial geography.

Four Directions wants people who live in those reservation areas to receive special accommodations that aren't available in the rest of South Dakota.

People at Fort Thompson need to drive a half-hour to Gann Valley to visit

the Buffalo County courthouse. People at Eagle Butte need to drive to the Ziebach County courthouse at Dupree or the Dewey County courthouse at Timber Lake. Wanblee is in Jackson County, whose courthouse is up at Kadoka.

So what about people in Groton, who have to drive to Aberdeen? Or people in Wall, who have to go Rapid City? Or south Sioux Falls, when the Lincoln County seat is at Canton?

Lyman County's seat is Kennebec, but there are three larger communities of Lower Brule, Oacoma and Presho. Burke, the seat of Gregory County, is half the size of Gregory.

Those examples illustrate the challenge. We don't have any standards set by the Legislature for proximity of early-voting centers or the size of communities that should have them.

The only guide is the one set incidentally by Gant in 2012, amid the federal court case over Shannon County: A county without a courthouse should have an early-voting center.

Setting standards is a discussion the state Board of Elections and the Legislature should have, soon.

Point Of View

Prepping For The State's 125th

BY GOV. DENNIS DAUGAARD

R-South Dakota



Daugaard

When my grandson, Henry, turned one year old in July, our family and friends gathered with us to celebrate his special day. We enjoyed a nice meal together and then watched Henry attempt to eat his birthday cake and open his presents. As a one-year-old, Henry probably doesn't quite grasp the birthday concept yet, but it was important for us to celebrate.

Regardless of our age, we should all take the time to recognize the significant milestones in our lives. Whether it's a birthday, anniversary, confirmation or graduation, it's important for loved ones to come together and celebrate.

One momentous occasion worth celebrating is quickly approaching us — South Dakota is about to reach its 125th anniversary.

More than 125 years ago, Arthur C. Mellette, who would later become the state's first governor, had a vision for the southern half of the Dakota Territory and led the movement for statehood. When a friend of Mellette's — U.S. Senator Benjamin Harrison — was elected to the presidency, South Dakota was admitted into the Union.

Gov. Mellette and the first South Dakotans struggled in those first few years. Drought and overly-optimistic predictions of settlement negatively impacted the economy and hurt farmers and ranchers. Additionally, the first Governor dealt with tension from tragedies like the Wounded Knee Massacre and the murder of Sitting Bull.

YOUR LETTERS

The Same-Sex Issue

Darlene Wadleigh, Mt. Vernon

I'm watching the local evening news and see all this hoopla about these same-sex couples getting married and kissing each other, and I'm wondering what Jesus would say if HE was in human form here on Earth today? Jesus preached the Law of the Old Testament when HE spoke to the people in the New Testament, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." Matthew: Chapter 5: Verse 17.

Just because people are changing their behavior in society (and more are doing it), does this make it right for our government to enact a law to make it legal when most of these people have "no clue" about the Bible or even set foot inside of a church to ask God to come into their lives to guide and lead them in the right direction?

I refuse to believe if they invited Jesus into their lives and asked Him to guide and lead them in the right direction, Jesus would say, "Yes it's OK to be gay and get married." The Holy Spirit is very strong when you walk with the Lord, and the Holy Spirit will help you to discipline your mind, thoughts and behavior on same-sex partners.

These government officials cannot abuse God's laws just because they have gotten away with it before. They lie when they say they need marriage for benefits. Their union cannot bear children, and they should not be allowed to adopt any children because, in a dysfunctional household, most of them will grow up to commit crimes, murders or be child molesters, as it has already been proven that children born to single parents commit more crimes.

The only reason God has not set fire and brimstone down on us yet is because the gay people are not the majority of the people here on Earth.