

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

State Should Keep Websites Updated

RAPID CITY JOURNAL, Rapid City (Aug. 23): If you can't trust information to be current on an official state of South Dakota website, where does the taxpayer, resident or the curious turn to find out why? And isn't accurate and up-to-date information particularly important when it concerns state laws and the constitution?

In a search for an answer, a *Rapid City Journal* reporter contacted Jason Hancock, the director of the South Dakota Legislative Research Council, which maintains the state website for the state constitution and codified laws.

His response: "That's a good question. ... I would have to ask some questions about what impediments there might be."

In the meantime, 117,620 people visited his website in the past 12 months and thought they learned that South Dakota has banned corporate farming and imposed term limits on U.S. senators and representatives, laws that have been invalidated by the courts.

A lack of training, resources and staff time, and, yes, politics are among the reasons cited by others for the state's apparent reluctance to post an accurate version of the state's laws on its own website.

While we don't expect any changes anytime soon at the state level, this is an important reminder that government is not always the most reliable source of information and if left unchecked can make it difficult for the average citizen to learn exactly what their elected officials are doing.

In the most recent legislative session, for example, a number of lawmakers sponsored House Bill 1167, which would have allowed local governments to post the minutes from public meetings and public notices on a website of their choosing rather than in a designated local newspaper, which is where they have appeared for decades.

In successfully fighting similar legislation that has been introduced several times in recent years, the South Dakota Newspaper Association pointed out the inherent flaws of a governmental body that only is accountable to itself when disseminating information.

And what is happening — or not, depending upon your perspective — with the Legislative Research Council's website is a good example of why the newspaper association has opposed bills that would allow government agencies to self-publish legal notices and minutes from meetings.

How can the public expect local governments to faithfully honor these requirements when state government itself fails to do so? Where would one go to complain if local government employees, who often claim they are overworked and underfunded, do not abide by a state law that requires self-publishing in a timely and accurate manner? State government?

And if these changes were made would they even be reflected on the state's website of codified laws? Hopefully, that's a question that will never have to be asked.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, August 31, the 243rd day of 2015. There are 122 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 31, 1965, the U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in voting to establish the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

On this date: In 1886, an earthquake with an estimated magnitude of 7.3 devastated Charleston, South Carolina, killing at least 60 people, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1888, Mary Ann Nichols, believed to be the first victim of "Jack the Ripper," was found slain in London's East End.

In 1939, the first issue of Marvel Comics, featuring the Human Torch, was published by Timely Publications in New York.

In 1941, the radio program "The Great Gildersleeve," a spinoff from "Fibber McGee and Molly" starring Harold Peary, debuted on NBC.

In 1954, Hurricane Carol hit the northeastern Atlantic states; Connecticut, Rhode Island and part of Massachusetts bore the brunt of the storm, which resulted in some 70 deaths.

In 1962, the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago became independent of British colonial rule.

In 1972, at the Munich Summer Olympics, American swimmer Mark Spitz won his fourth and fifth gold medals in the 100-meter butterfly and 800-meter freestyle relay; Soviet gymnast Olga Korbut won gold medals in floor exercise and the balance beam.

In 1980, Poland's Solidarity labor movement was born with an agreement signed in Gdansk that ended a 17-day-old strike.

In 1985, Richard Ramirez, later convicted of California's "Night Stalker" killings, was captured by residents of an East Los Angeles neighborhood.

In 1986, 82 people were killed when an Aeromexico jetliner and a small private plane collided over Cerritos, California. The Soviet passenger ship Admiral Nakhimov collided with a merchant vessel in the Black Sea, causing both to sink; up to 448 people reportedly died.

In 1989, Britain's Princess Anne and her husband, Capt. Mark Phillips, announced they were separating after 15 years of marriage.

In 1997, a car crash in Paris claimed the lives of Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed

and their driver, Henri Paul.

Ten years ago: New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin said there was "a significant number of dead bodies in the water" following Hurricane Katrina; Nagin ordered virtually the entire police force to abandon search-and-rescue efforts and instead stop increasingly hostile thieves. President George W. Bush, who viewed the devastation from Air Force One, pledged to do "all in our power" to save lives and provide sustenance but cautioned that recovery of the Gulf Coast would take years. Some 1,000 people were killed when a religious procession across a Baghdad bridge was engulfed in panic over rumors of a suicide bomber.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama ended the U.S. combat mission in Iraq, declaring no victory after seven years of bloodshed and telling those divided over the war in his country and around the world: "It is time to turn the page."

One year ago: On the Sunday talk shows, leaders of the House and Senate intelligence committees prodded President Barack Obama to take decisive action against what they said were growing threats from Islamic State militants on U.S. soil.

Today's Birthdays: Japanese monster movie actor Katsumi Tezuka is 103. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Frank Robinson is 80. Actor Warren Berlinger is 78. Rock musician Jerry Allison (Buddy Holly and the Crickets) is 76. Actor Jack Thompson is 75. Violinist Itzhak Perlman is 70. Singer Van Morrison is 70. Rock musician Rudolf Schenker (The Scorpions) is 67. Actor Richard Gere is 66. Olympic gold medal track and field athlete Edwin Moses is 60. Rock singer Glenn Tilbrook (Squeeze) is 58. Rock musician Gina Schock (The Go-Go's) is 58. Singer Tony DeFranco (The DeFranco Family) is 56. Rhythm-and-blues musician Larry Waddell (Mint Condition) is 52. Actor Jaime P. Gomez is 50. Baseball pitcher Hideo Nomo is 47. Rock musician Jeff Russo (Tonic) is 46. Singer-composer Deborah Gibson is 45. Rock musician Greg Richling (Wallflowers) is 45. Actor Zack Ward is 45. Golfer Padraig Harrington is 44. Actor Chris Tucker is 43. Actress Sara Ramirez is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Tamara (Trina & Tamara) is 38.

Thought for Today: "When you pray, rather let your heart be without words than your words without heart." — John Bunyan (1628-1688).

FROM THE BIBLE

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18.
Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Positive Response

Steven Stockland, Volin

This is in response to Kim Dale letter (Press & Dakotan, July 7):

Thank you, Kim. Your letter was A-No. 1. I couldn't have written it any better. I hope you will write more.

I have read several negative letters — scoff at them. Remember, Satan tempted Jesus several times. Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan."

Who should we follow? Satan or the Son of God? It is not a hard choice to make.

I hope that all readers say and read the Reflections article on page 5B of the Aug. 7 *Press & Dakotan*. If you haven't read it,

you better get a copy. It could change your life. Wow!

Wonderful Effort

Dores Allan, Yankton

Our thanks for an excellent avenue to celebrate the Riverboat Days theme, "Red, White and Blue" goes to David Hosmer for his display honoring our veterans. The Old Mill was an atmosphere to revitalize our memories of the war years and our heroes. The pictures, historical data and the memorabilia created a moving experience to enjoy.

Thank you for the time and tactful effort, Dave. We're proud of this weekend.



Capitol Notebook

SDHSAA Is Headed To More Democracy

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — A few days ago, our board of directors took another big step making the South Dakota High School Activities Association more responsive to the members and the public.

Notice the use of our.

The SDHSAA belongs to all of us.

The kids might be gone from your and my households, but we still pay sales tax and property taxes for our public schools.

We all have a stake in what the association's staff and the directors decide and do.

That big step on Thursday was giving member schools the opportunity to refer some board actions to a general vote of the membership.

Now any decision by the directors "that involves a substantial (or) significant capital expense or that requires adding additional personnel" can be referred to the vote of the membership.

The trigger is filing a petition with the executive director within 45 calendar days with signatures from either at least 30 superintendents if the policy affects all member schools.

If the policy affects a specific class of schools, then signatures are needed from 25 percent of the superintendents from schools in that class for the referral vote to proceed.

During the referral, the decision is on hold.

The voting by schools is to be completed within 45 days of the petition's receipt.

The proposal originally called for a 60 percent majority to overturn a decision. But directors Linda Whitney of Sanborn Central and Sandy Klatt from the Brandon school board amended the threshold to a simple majority.

The vote Thursday was unanimous in favor by the seven directors present.



Bob

MERCER

Referrals are part of South Dakota's government tradition on the state and local levels. As the state flag proclaims: "Under God the people rule".

So it seems appropriate the SDHSAA would apply the same principle.

The directors during their strategic planning session Wednesday and during the regular business meeting Thursday repeatedly talked about the need for more transparency by the organization.

Jason Uttermark of Aberdeen Central is chairman, and Steve Morford of Spearfish is vice chairman. With Whitney, Klatt and Roger Bordeaux of Tiospa Zina tribal school, they form a nucleus for openness.

The three freshly elected directors — David Planteen of Langford school board, Moe Ruesink of Sioux Valley High School and Bud Postma of Madison High School — seem to be of similar mind.

The board and the association have seen major changes in the past three years. The tipping point was the attempt to take an extra dollar from sale of each playoff ticket.

School officials didn't waste any time that fall contacting legislators about their dissatisfaction.

The result was a new state law in 2014 requiring the association to follow South Dakota's open-meeting and open-record laws. SDHSAA also must report annually to a legislative committee.

Leading the way was Sen. Corey Brown, R-Gettysburg, along with Rep. Timothy Johns, R-Lead, and then-House Speaker Brian Gosch, R-Rapid City.

The directors currently are crossways with many legislators on transgender athlete policy. That issue will be up to the Legislature next year.

The key point is the directors are moving fast in the right direction overall.

Vester Flanagan Has Made Witnesses Of Us All

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

"I've seen enough. I don't want to see any more" — Bruce Springsteen, "Cover Me"

When terrorists beheaded *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in 2002 and posted video of the killing online, I refused to look.

I explained my reasoning in this space. To watch that video, I wrote, knowing it was staged specifically to fill me with revulsion and fear, would feel like cooperating with the monsters who killed him. It would make me an accomplice.

I didn't want to see. I didn't want that blood on my soul.

Not long after that column appeared, I did see Pearl die. The video of his killing showed up in my inbox, sent by a stranger. Before I even knew what was going on, a terrorist was on my computer screen holding up the head of this 38-year-old husband and expectant father.

And I learned a sobering truth about murder and media in the new millennium. Increasingly, the decision about what we will and will not see is not ours to make. Increasingly, we are at the mercy, not simply of murderous monsters, but also of our own friends, family and colleagues who act as their henchmen, forwarding, re-tweeting and re-posting their grisly misdeeds as casually as neighbors in another age might have shared recipes over the back fence.

If there were ever any doubt about that, what happened last Wednesday morning on live local television in Roanoke, Virginia, just laid them to rest. It wasn't just that former WDBJ news reporter Vester Lee Flanagan II shot and killed two former colleagues — news reporter Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward — as they interviewed local official Vicki Gardner, who was wounded but is expected to survive.

Wretched as it was, that kind of event is ordinary in America, the fabric of any given Wednesday. But Flanagan, who committed suicide as police closed in on him hours later, went well beyond the wretched ordinary. He filmed the murder with his cellphone, tweeted



Leonard

PITTS

about it, posted the video on Facebook. For good measure, he faxed his manifesto to ABC News; it is said to be a 23-page rant in which Flanagan, who was black and gay, blames racism, homophobia, the Charleston massacre and micromanaging former bosses for sending him over the edge. He also expresses his dislike for whites, Latinos and blacks and his admiration for the mass killers who shot up Columbine High and Virginia Tech.

In other words, he curated this murder, used tools of social media — and traditional media — to manage it like a PR campaign. In essence, he provided us his press kit. And while that bespeaks a deranged man's incomprehensible narcissism, it also suggests a canny understanding of his target audience: us.

Indeed, within hours, the video of Flanagan's atrocity was so ubiquitous online that Ella, one of my colleagues, posted that she was signing off for the day after being ambushed by

it. She was, she wrote, just "being silly" with Facebook friends, and the next thing