

# The Press & Dakotan

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861  
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**Published Daily  
Monday-Saturday**  
Periodicals postage  
paid at Yankton, South  
Dakota, under the act of  
March 3, 1979.  
Weekly Dakotan  
established June 6, 1861.  
Yankton Daily Press and  
Dakotian established April  
26, 1875.  
Postmaster: Send  
address changes to Yankton  
Daily Press & Dakotan,  
319 Walnut, Yankton, SD  
57078.

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The Yankton Daily  
Press & Dakotan is a  
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ed Press, the Inland  
Daily Press Association and  
the South Dakota  
Newspaper Association.  
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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

## Obama's Retreat On Education Reform

**BLOOMBERG VIEW:** As he approaches his last year in office, President Barack Obama seems weirdly passive about protecting one of his signature domestic achievements: education reform. It's a mistake that will undermine future efforts to help American students compete and succeed.

Obama once could claim to have one of the boldest education agendas of any president in recent history. Then, in October, he announced he would seek to limit testing. And now he's indicated he'll sign the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act, a bill that reflects Republicans' unhealthy suspicion of the federal government and Democrats' unhealthy trust of teachers' unions. In other words, the worst of both worlds.

The legislation would weaken or eliminate every major piece of Obama's education agenda. His five-year Race to the Top grant program, for example, was widely admired: It offered more than \$4 billion in federal funding to states that took specific steps to improve student performance. Because of Race to the Top, more states set higher standards, allowed charter schools to expand, intervened in failing schools, and used data to evaluate teachers and principals.

The federal government is no longer distributing Race to the Top grants. Yet if Obama signs the Every Student Succeeds Act, his successor would be hard-pressed to create something similar, because the new law would make it very difficult to create a state-based incentive program.

The legislation would also remove qualifications on some federal education funding, sharply reducing the Department of Education's ability to hold states accountable for student performance.

States would still be required to conduct annual tests and report results by race and income, and they would still be required to intervene in failing schools. But they could weigh factors other than test scores and student performance — such as teacher engagement — to determine whether schools are meeting standards. A state could determine that all its schools are succeeding even if they have low test scores and high dropout rates, and there wouldn't be much the Department of Education could do about it.

The legislation would also weaken the federal government's ability to encourage states to use data as part of evaluations for teachers and principals, a trend that unions have been fighting for years. Research shows that the best way to improve schools is to put effective teachers in classrooms. This bill would make it easier for schools to leave failing teachers in place without giving them assistance and insisting on improvement.

Of course, nothing prevents states from setting their own high standards and using data to evaluate teachers and principals — and it would be great if all states did just that. Many Republicans insist that they largely support these reforms; they just don't want the federal government involved. But experience shows that without federal oversight and enforcement, many states tend to take the path of least resistance.

Instead of demanding changes to the bill, the White House seems content to praise its aims and the spirit of compromise that led to it. There's much to be said for bipartisanship. But not when both parties are wrong.

### 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 Thursday, Dec. 10, the 344th day of 2015. There are 21 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Dec. 10, 1905, the O. Henry short story "The Gift of the Magi" was published in the New York Sunday World Magazine under the title "Gifts of the Magi."

**On this date:** In 1520, Martin Luther publicly burned the papal edict demanding that he recant, or face excommunication.

In 1817, Mississippi was admitted as the 20th state of the Union.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt became the first American to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to mediate an end to the Russo-Japanese War.

In 1915, the Irving Berlin song "I Love a Piano" was copyrighted by Berlin's music company in New York.

In 1931, Jane Addams became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; the co-recipient was Nicholas Murray Butler.

In 1948, the U.N. General Assembly adopted its Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In 1950, Ralph J. Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the first black American to receive the award.

In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, saying he accepted it "with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind."

In 1967, singer Otis Redding, 26, and six others were killed when their plane crashed into Wisconsin's Lake Monona.

In 1972, baseball's American League adopted the designated hitter rule on an experimental basis for three years.

In 1984, South African Bishop Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1994, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize, pledging to pursue their mission of healing the anguished Middle East.

**Ten years ago:** A Nigerian jetliner crashed while landing in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, killing all but two of the 110 people on board. A U.N. conference on global warming ended in Montreal with an agreement by more than 150 nations (not including the United States) to open talks on mandatory post-2012 reductions in greenhouse gases. Chief U.N. nuclear inspector Mohamed ElBaradei accepted

the Nobel Peace Prize. Former Sen. Eugene McCarthy, 89, died in Washington. Actor-comedian Richard Pryor, 65, died in Encino, California. Reggie Bush was named winner of the Heisman Trophy (however, Bush forfeited the trophy in 2010 because of improper benefits he'd received while a star running back at Southern California).

**Five years ago:** The Norwegian Nobel Committee honored Chinese literary critic Liu Xiaobo, imprisoned for urging political reform, by presenting his \$1.4 million Nobel Peace Prize diploma and medal to an empty chair. A federal jury in Salt Lake City convicted street preacher Brian David Mitchell of kidnapping and raping Elizabeth Smart. (Mitchell was later sentenced to life in prison.)

**One year ago:** Current and former CIA officials pushed back against the Senate Intelligence Committee's report released the day before which concluded that the United States had brutalized scores of terror suspects during interrogations, calling the report a political stunt by Senate Democrats which tarnished a program that saved American lives. NFL owners moved quickly and unanimously to change the league's personal conduct policy, announcing it would hire a special counsel to oversee initial discipline.

**Today's Birthdays:** Soap opera creator Agnes Nixon is 88. Former Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yetter is 85. Actor Tommy Kirk is 74. Actress Fionnula Flanagan is 74. Pop singer Chad Stuart (Chad and Jeremy) is 74. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ralph Tavares is 74. Actress-singer Gloria Loring is 69. Pop-funk musician Walter "Clyde" Orange (The Commodores) is 69. Country singer Johnny Rodriguez is 64. Actress Susan Dey is 63. Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich is 59. Jazz musician Paul Hardcastle is 58. Actor-director Kenneth Branagh is 55. Actress Nia Peeples is 54. TV chef Bobby Flay is 51. Rock singer-musician J Mascis is 50. Rock musician Scot Alexander (Dishwalla) is 44. Actress-comedian Arden Myrin is 42. Rock musician Meg White (The White Stripes) is 41. Rapper Kuniva (D12) is 40. Actor Gavin Houston is 38. Violinist Sarah Chang is 35. Rock musician Noah Harmon (Airborne Toxic Event) is 34. Actor Patrick John Flueger is 32. Actress Raven-Symone is 30.

**Thought for Today:** "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." — Amy Carmichael, American missionary (1867-1951).

### FROM THE BIBLE

*And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:23. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

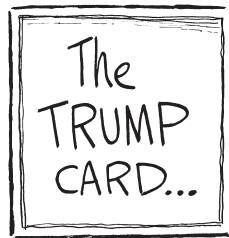
#### Response

**Jill Sternquist, Yankton**  
I cannot begin to express my gratitude and awe at how swiftly and precisely the Yankton School District has handled the recent incident with outside individuals finding their way into the high school.

From the repeat phone calls, the police presence and now the implementation of locked doors

all in less than a week of the incident makes me realize why I moved back to this town: so my kids could get a great education and be able to feel safe doing it.

Thanks to the teachers, administration and staff for all you do and many thanks to the police department. You all often have thankless jobs but we do appreciate all you do for our families!



## Waging A War Outside The Box

BY KATHLEEN PARKER  
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WASHINGTON — Americans looking for a Snuggly Bear and a blanket to ease their anxieties about the Islamic State will have to become more comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty.

From President Obama's recent terror speech in the Oval Office to Donald Trump's terrifying, race-baiting, religion-testing rebuke in South Carolina, there is little to console those seeking either instant gratification from Obama or sanity from the leading Republican presidential candidate.

While Trump speaks to fear with anti-Muslim rhetoric that builds a wall around our national essence, the president attempts to soothe with reason and inspirational rhetoric more befitting a nation that hasn't just suffered a horrific terrorist slaughter.

Obama's speech was never going to satisfy critics and those convinced they know the better route. But the fact of the speech alone — appropriately solemn in recognition of the fact that the killings in San Bernardino, Chattanooga and at Fort Hood were terrorist attacks — spoke volumes. And though he identified the California terrorists as Islamic State-inspired, he surely disappointed those insistent in their own cultish fashion that Obama refuses to name the enemy and, therefore, can't defeat him. An absurdity. A dead terrorist is a dead terrorist by any name.

Obama's further reiteration of his current course left wanting those longing for the more-comforting certitude of the cheerleader with a megaphone. And those hoping for a declaration of the usual sort of war — thousands of ground troops in Syria and Iraq — were doubtless disappointed, as well as affirmed in their belief that Obama doesn't get it. Or that he's only trying to preserve his legacy as the non-war president, a trope favored by the right.

But realistically, what president chooses to ignore a necessary war? Who wants to be remembered as the cowardly commander in chief who allowed the world to slip into darkness and despair? No one, and certainly not Obama.

The problem for the president is that the war he is waging feels like a long-term strategy without benefit of the short-term. If not ground troops, then what? There is no good answer. This is a new kind of war requiring fresh approaches. The old templates don't apply because they actually work against us. As soon as we put boots on the ground, the Islamic State is rewarded with the war it wants, with the propaganda machine it can't otherwise replicate, and with the martyr-



Kathleen PARKER

dom its members welcome. Are Americans really ready to watch their military men and women beheaded and burned alive?

Thus, Obama and his advisers have focused on alternative means of defeating a monster that feeds on atrocity and hate. Strategic hits, special operations, counterterrorism propaganda and so on. At home, he seems to say, fight hate with love, fear with resilience, monsters with the superior force of good. By comparison, admittedly, Trump sounds both decisive and definitive.

But — this is no joke — Trump is also the most dangerous person to emerge on the American political scene in decades. As president, he would be the most dangerous man on the planet.

I've often objected in my column to invoking Hitler as popular analog because it trivializes the suffering and slaughter of the Jews. Now I'm not so sure. Remember that before there could be a Holocaust, there was the identification of the Jewish race as the enemy. Trump's identification of Muslims as "the problem," with his threat of a Muslim registry and a religious test at the border, sounds terribly familiar.

Two facts to consider: First, we need the help of the world's 1.6 billion — and this nation's 3 million — Muslims if we hope to defeat terrorists who justify their barbarism with their interpretation of Islam. Second, our best defense against radicalization of Muslim-Americans is inclusiveness. By marginalizing our own Muslim community through rhetoric, we vastly increase the risk of radicalization and recruitment.

Obama understands this. He also understands that another ground war in the Middle East risks our becoming entrenched in endless battle against an enemy that can inspire insurgencies indefinitely.

Few doubt that we could easily take over Iraq and Syria in a replay of shock-and-awe, but then what? Invading another Muslim country feeds right into the Islamic State's playbook and installs a Crusader vs. Caliphate narrative for millennia — or whatever foreshortened era we invent.

Again, ambiguity and uncertainty are our companions for now and probably for a while. In the meantime, our intersecne squabbles about our own nation's principles couldn't be a better holiday gift to the butchers-in-waiting. And Trump, by dividing us from within, is the enemy's hero.

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleen-parker@washpost.com.

### Writer's Block

## Coping With The Wrath Of 'Bad' Angels

BY LINDA WUEBBEN  
P&D Correspondent

It's time to call a spade a spade. You know, tell it like it is, let it all hang out, how do you really feel.

What happened in Paris is evil. And evil seems to be in abundance around the world. Since the "bad" angels were thrown out of heaven by the "good" angels, their main purpose has been to play with humanity, because bad things to happen and with Satan as their leader, they are having a hey day.

We don't have to look very far to see the effects right here. Alcohol, drugs and immorality seem to touch people everywhere and many times it happens too close to home. Our best friends and even we lose our jobs, maybe eventually our homes and then people who we thought were good friends seem to abandon us or distance themselves from a broken-down situation altogether.

I have heard talk about the new generation, the new millennials. The young trophy generation who receive medals for participation and have never learned the shattering disappointment of losing or coming in second. They are rarely told NO and speak out strongly for social justice and equality. Respect for elders and authority has flown the proverbial coop.

What a life! I mean, to always be right, never have anyone question you, never be intimidated by anyone, always get your way, never give in to anyone.

Wow! Would the world keep spinning? You get the message. I could go on forever. Are we to blame? Did we "let" this happen? For many, it feels like the world is spinning out of control, especially to someone who likes to hang on to everything around them, seize

control and whip the peasants into shape. There is despair, depression and general woe to us.

I can't answer those deep questions. But I do have hope. I do believe good will overcome evil and I do believe there are good people are out there ... at least I hope they are out there somewhere! Fixing what's wrong with society starts very close to home. It may sound cliché but it's the truth. We can't start at the top; we need a grassroots operation.

Teach the new generation they will not always win, not always be on top, not always have that great job, the best cars, the newest phones. None of us can. There are always consequences. There will come a time when they will hit rock bottom; everyone does at some point in their life. Prepare them to handle disappointment and believe in themselves again.

Remember, everyone you meet is a human being and has feelings, goals, wants and needs just like you. Be kind in your relationships. Think before you tear someone down. Gossip less and welcome the good in life more. If you are God-fearing, you will feel good about yourself and God will love you more and more; and if you're not, it will just make you feel better.

Positivity can become habit-forming, a pleasant character-building moment, a game-changer. But along with that hope for the future, we need a strong will and steel-toed shoes because not everyone will be pleased with sappy love songs. So, yes we will have to deal with ISIS, for even evil has to learn they won't always win.

Treat everyone you meet with honesty and good will. A mantra for the season we are in surely — but we should remember to continue it all year round.



Linda WUEBBEN

THE BUFFALO NEWS  
CARTOONISTS  
OCT 2015