



Pierre Report

Bill Tackles Medical Waste

BY STATE SEN. JEAN HUNHOFF
R-District 18 (Yankton)

Last week was a busy week in committees and floor action.

HB 1208 prohibits the unlawful release of medical waste and provides for a penalty. This came about because a free-standing clinic in Sioux Falls was putting medical waste into the recyclable garbage collection. The result is that employees of the recycling company that picks up garbage are being exposed to medical waste that could ultimately impact their health.

The garbage collectors had contacted DENR but their response was that their oversight was over solid waste and not medical waste. In South Dakota, free standing clinics are not regulated by state law. Therefore there is no regulatory oversight for medical waste at these settings. The bill was unclear as to who would receive the misdemeanor if the medical waste was found in garbage to be recycled. As chairperson of the committee, I recognized the risk for exposure for employees of the garbage company was high so we deferred action on the bill. This would provide the sponsor time to amend the bill to identify who was responsible and could be charged for the violation. The bill will be heard on Friday.

HB 1126 was introduced to eliminate the Board of Massage Therapy. It appears that since inception of the board, there has been varying interpretations of the rules by executive directors resulting in division within the profession. The profession is divided between licensure and registration or a combination of both.

There is an attempt to reach a compromise that would support each of the factions and provide consumer safety when seeking massage therapy services in South Dakota. The bill is scheduled to be heard on Friday.

This Wednesday, both House and Senate Health and Human Services committees will meet jointly to hear public input on the topic of expansion of Medicaid. The Legislature has listened to a presentation from the Governor's Office and DSS and from the Council of State Government consultant on the pros and cons of expansion. Wednesday's hearing is to provide citizens of the state their opportunity for input. There is no bill to be acted upon, so the hearing will take testimony and close with no action. If there was to be expansion of Medicaid, dollars would be needed in FY14's budget. This would require an amendment to the general bill either through Joint Appropriations Committee prior to sending the bill to each House or on the floor as the bill is being debated.

Local government heard six bills on Friday.

- SB240 was an attempt to impose a real estate transfer fee that would go to townships. Townships continue



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to struggle for dollars as landowners are dwindling in numbers. This was perceived by members of the committees and myself as a new tax to generate revenue. The bill was sent to the 41st day.

- In the spirit of open government, SB 180 was introduced to expand the information relating to publications of payroll information. Current law requires publication of salaries. The bill proposed adding a total dollar amount that would encompass benefits the employee is receiving. Therefore there would be two numbers listed salary and benefit total. This would include municipal, school and county levels of government. There was discussion to include all state employees. The response was that reference to state employees is in another statute and this would not be the appropriate statute to amend for that purpose. There was opposition to the bill from the newspaper association because concern of using a website versus publication in the newspaper. I did vote to support the bill and it was passed out of committee.
- SB 130 brought a flurry of emails from auditors. The bill was attempting to change the absentee voting time from 45 days to 18 days prior to the election and to require auditors to have Saturday hours available for absentee voting. There never was a rationale given for the bill as the bill sponsor at the beginning of the hearing had an amendment that removed any changes for absentee voting time frames and open hours on Saturday. The amendment stated that absentee voting would end at 5 p.m. on the day before the election. The Secretary of State and auditors supported the amendment as the flurry of last-minute absentee requests on voting day creates much confusion in the office. The bill passed out of committee.
- SB 165 was a bill to provide authority to establish special purpose districts for libraries. This was coming from Hot Springs. They wanted to provide library services to their rural community. There was much discussion as municipal tax payers were already supporting the library in their community. This would potentially create another level of government for taxing library services. The bill was sent to the 41st day.

Emails are continuing to come in concerning HB 1135, which is access to public waters on private land. It is pitting the landowners against the fishermen. This is been a learning opportunity as to previous state law and Supreme Court ruling regarding public access to waters covering private land. If you have input or questions, contact me at sen.jeanhunhoff@state.sd.us or call 665-1463.

The Price Of A Decent Society

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

Raising the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$9 should be a no-brainer.

Republicans say it will cause employers to shed jobs, but that's baloney. Employers won't outsource the jobs abroad or substitute machines for them because jobs at this low level of pay are all in the local personal-service sector (retail, restaurant, hotel and so on), where employers pass on small wage hikes to customers as pennies more on their bills.

States that have set their minimum wage closer to \$9 than the current federal minimum don't have higher rates of unemployment than do states still at the federal minimum.

This doesn't mean we could raise the minimum to \$15 or \$20 without having a negative effect on jobs. It just means we can raise it modestly.

We raised the minimum wage in 1996, when I was secretary of labor. Republicans claimed it would kill jobs then, too. It didn't. In fact, job growth accelerated.

A mere \$9 an hour translates into about \$18,000 a year. That's still under the poverty line. Most workers at the minimum wage aren't school kids. They're breadwinners for their families, desperately trying to make ends meet.

When you add in the Earned Income Tax Credit and food stamps, it's barely possible for someone receiving a \$9 minimum wage to rise above poverty. But even the poverty line of about \$23,000 understates the true cost of living in most areas of the country.

Besides, the proposed increase would put more money into the hands of families that desperately need it, allowing them to buy a bit more and thereby keep others working. A decent society should do no less.

Some conservatives say "decency" has nothing to do with it. Who has the right to decide what's decent? They say we should let the "market" decide what people are paid.

This is one of the oldest conservative canards in existence, based on the false claim that there's something called a "market" that exists separate from society. But there's no "market" in a state of nature, just survival of the fittest.

A society necessarily determines how the "market" is to be organized. Standards of morality and decency play a large role in those decisions.

We set minimum standards for worker safety and con-



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sumer protection. Those standards may raise the cost of labor or of the goods and services we buy. But that's a price we're willing to pay.

We decide young children shouldn't be in the labor force. Imagine how cheaply we could get our roofs shingled if 10-year-olds would do it for a couple of bucks an hour. (Maybe we'd have to throw in an ice cream cone.) But we don't allow this, either.

We do our best to prevent lots of things from being bought and sold — slaves, dangerous narcotics, babies, votes, sex with children, machine guns and nuclear material. Why not just leave it up to the "market"? Because most of us don't want a market that includes these sorts of transactions.

We decide that citizens shouldn't have to buy certain things that should instead be available to everyone free of charge (paid in effect by all of us through our taxes) — clean drinking water, K-12 schools, safe bridges, protection from violence, public parks. Why not leave all these up to the "market" and require everyone pay for them individually? That's not the kind of society we want to live in.

Opinions may differ about what decency requires, of course. But we hash this out in our democracy. Sometimes we decide certain proposed minimum standards are too costly or inefficient, or they can't be enforced, or they impose unwarranted constraints on our freedoms.

Different societies come up with different answers. Handguns are banned in most other advanced nations, for example. Workers have more protections than they do in the United States. Minimum wages are higher. Taxes on the wealthy are higher. Health care is more universally available.

Every society must necessarily decide for itself what decency requires. That's the very meaning of a "society."

Don't fall for the mindless assertion that "markets" know best. Markets are human creations, requiring human beings to decide how they are structured and maintained.

The toughest questions we're facing today — whether, and how much, to raise the minimum wage; whether, and how, to restrict the availability of guns; whether, and how, to expand health care coverage — inevitably require us to define what we mean by a decent society.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future." He blogs at www.robertreich.org.

when you see them.

I would also like to take this time to remind everyone that Paula Jones has been an excellent Auditor for many years. She has worked countless hours and gone above and beyond for all of us. Nobody wanted to correct this tax problem more than her, because she loves her job and cares deeply for Yankton County. Let's all take time to thank her for her service over many years and support her now.

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Sequestration:
Another Deadline?

With the nation once again facing another apocalyptic economic showdown, there were two things you should know as of this writing:

- We are just a mere week away from the deadline for what's being called sequestration, in which painful, across-the-board cuts will be enacted upon the U.S. budget that could hurt millions of Americans and derail the economy;
- As you read this, Congress is on a break.

That pretty much sums up the state of economic decision-making in this country. And it certainly does not generate a lot of confidence.

The \$1.2 trillion in dreaded sequestration cuts, which would impact everything from education and social programs to defense spending, are looming larger by the day. No one in Washington seems to want to cross that deadline, and yet not many lawmakers seem willing to do much about it.

And once again, the United States looks economically incompetent. As it was with the artificial fiscal cliff showdown that was settled in the earliest hours of January, the self-inflicted sequestration drama once again shows our lawmakers to be over their heads in steering the largest economy on the planet.

In fact, the very reason we are facing the sequestration showdown is because D.C. has done precious little to address the nation's budget issues. It stems from the Budget Control Act of 2011, a slapdash compromise concocted during a previous showdown; the sequestration cuts, targeted at both mandatory and discretionary spending, were designed as a threat — and, therefore, a motivator — for finally getting the two sides to settle on a plan that would begin curbing our debt.

As you can tell, the threat was wasted.

Meanwhile, there is a lot of worrying going on elsewhere. State and city officials around the nation are alarmed, as are representatives from practically every facet of our society that counts on federal cash for some aspect of doing business. In South Dakota, for example, the Legislature is struggling with budget numbers until it knows what on earth Washington is going to do.

At this point, no one knows what will happen at midnight March 1; between now and then, we are likely to be riding the same kind of roller coaster we endured during the "fiscal cliff" headache of six weeks ago.

And, just like the fiscal cliff, this is unnecessary. It is an artificial crisis created by people who seem more interested in playing chicken with the economy — and, by extension, the rest of us in the country who need to see a sense of direction and certainty coming from those we send to Washington — than reasonably finding answers.

Frankly, this is America at its worst: partisan, petty, self-serving and economically self-destructive. In this sense, we look like laughingstocks to the rest of the world.

This cannot go on.

The sequestration cuts have the capacity to do real economic damage, and as a result derail the slowly growing economic recovery. Allowing this spitting match to get this far is an indictment, not merely a criticism. It is a bleak commentary on our system that such people have their hands on the controls. Our elected problem-solvers are the problem, it seems, and not the solution.

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THE VIEWS PAGE

The PRESS & DAKOTAN Views 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 to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, Feb. 20, the 51st day of 2013. There are 314 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Feb. 20, 2003, a fire sparked by pyrotechnics broke out during a concert by the group Great White at The Station nightclub in West Warwick, R.I., killing 100 people and injuring about 200 others.

On this date: In 1792, President George Washington signed an act creating the U.S. Post Office.

In 1809, the Supreme Court ruled that no state legislature could annul the judgments or determine the jurisdictions of federal courts.

In 1839, Congress prohibited dueling in the District of Columbia.

In 1862, William Wallace Lincoln, the 11-year-old son of President Abraham Lincoln and first lady Mary Todd Lincoln, died at the White House, apparently of typhoid fever.

In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an immigration act which excluded "idiots, imbeciles, feebleminded persons, epileptics, insane persons" from being admitted to the United States.

In 1933, Congress proposed the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to repeal Prohibition.

In 1938, Anthony Eden resigned as British foreign secretary following Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's decision to negotiate with Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. bombers began raiding German aircraft manufacturing centers in a series of attacks that became known as "Big Week."

In 1962, astronaut John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard Project Mercury's Friendship 7 spacecraft.

In 1965, the Ranger 8 spacecraft crashed on the moon, as planned, after sending back thousands of pictures of the lunar surface.

In 1971, the National Emergency Warning Center in Colorado erroneously ordered U.S. radio and TV stations off the air; those stations heeded the alert, which was not lifted for about 40 minutes.

In 1998, Tara Lipinski of the U.S. won the ladies' figure skating gold medal at the Nagano Olympics; Michelle Kwan won the silver.

Ten years ago: Former Air Force Master Sgt. Brian Patrick Regan was convicted in Alexandria, Va., of offering to sell U.S. intelligence to Iraq and China but acquitted of attempted spying for Libya. (Regan was later sentenced to life without parole.) A

17-year-old Mexican girl mistakenly given a heart and lungs with the wrong blood type received a second set of organs at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina; however, Jessica Santillan suffered brain damage and later died.

Five years ago: A U.S. Navy cruiser blasted a disabled spy satellite with a pinpoint missile strike that achieved the main mission of exploding a tank of toxic fuel 130 miles above the Pacific Ocean. Space shuttle Atlantis and its crew returned to Earth, after delivering a new European lab to the international space station.

One year ago: Russian President Dmitry Medvedev held an unprecedented meeting with opposition leaders, who said they were encouraged by his promises to make it easier for anti-Kremlin parties to take part in elections. Former senator and astronaut John Glenn celebrated the 50th anniversary of his history-making space flight at Ohio State University by kicking off a forum about NASA's future.

Today's Birthdays: Gloria Vanderbilt is 89. Author-screenwriter Richard Matheson is 87. Actor Sidney Poitier is 86. Racing Hall of Famer Bobby Unser is 79. Actress Marj Dusay is 77. Jazz-soul singer Nancy Wilson is 76. Racing Hall of Famer Roger Penske is 76. Singer-songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie is 72. Hockey Hall-of-Famer Phil Esposito is 71. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is 71. Movie director Mike Leigh is 70. Actress Brenda Blethyn is 67. Actress Sandy Duncan is 67. Rock musician J. Geils is 67. Actor Peter Strauss is 66. Rock singer-musician-producer Walter Becker (Steely Dan) is 63. Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown is 62. Country singer Kathie Baillie is 62. Actor John Voldstad is 62. Newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst is 59. Actor Anthony Stewart Head is 59. Country singer Leland Martin is 56. Actor James Wilby is 55. Rock musician Sebastian Steinberg is 54. Comedian Joel Hodgson is 53. Basketball Hall-of-Famer Charles Barkley is 50. Rock musician Ian Brown (Stone Roses) is 50. Actor Willie Garson is 49. Actor French Stewart is 49. Actor Ron Eldard is 48. Model Cindy Crawford is 47. Actor Andrew Shue is 46. Actress Lili Taylor is 46. Singer Brian Littrel is 38. Actress Lauren Ambrose is 35. Actor Jay Hernandez is 35. Country musician Coy Bowles is 34. Actress Majandra Delfino is 32. Singer-musician Chris Thile is 32. Actor Jake Richardson is 28. Singer Rihanna is 25.

Thought for Today: There is no hope of joy except in human relations." — Antoine de Saint-Exupery, French author-aviator (1900-1944).

FROM THE BIBLE

The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good. Matthew 12:35. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

Freng: Patience Appreciated

Donna Freng, Yankton
Yankton County Commissioner

I would like to thank those who were inconvenienced by the recent problems the county has faced for their patience and understanding.

I would also like to thank all of the county employees who stepped up and continue to work hard to get us over this hurdle. Please show your appreciation