

# The Press & Dakotan

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**OPINION OTHER VIEWS**

## Public Should See Food Stamp Totals

**ARGUS LEADER, Sioux Falls (Feb. 8):** This government program has everything it needs to attract widespread public attention:  
— A huge tax-funded budget  
— Wide potential for fraud and abuse  
— Needy children's well-being on the line.  
So, when the program's administrators insist on secrecy, it's not surprising that people object.

We're talking about the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also known as the food stamp program. And until recently, the USDA, the department administering the program, has seemed oblivious to the need to inform the public on how much money is spent where and on what food products. Forget trying to see how many potato chips and energy drinks were purchased versus apples and bananas. That information isn't available.

USDA won't even release the total dollars spent at individual stores. In fact, almost none of the pertinent information related to this \$73.7 billion federal program is available for public review.

The *Argus Leader* has been battling in federal court for release of important food stamp spending information for more than three years. We are asking for the amount of money paid to each grocery store, gas station and big box store that is licensed to accept food stamps.

The totals hopefully may shed light on where food stamp money is being spent in this state and others. It could lead to a discussion of what nutritional food options are offered for participants, particularly in rural areas, and even potentially could indicate fraud in usage.

A federal court of appeals panel has decided in favor of the *Argus Leader's* request for this information, yet the USDA continues its fight. Last month the federal court battle entered its third round as the USDA now turns to new arguments in its effort to keep SNAP records closed.

Ours certainly is not the only voice calling for release of food stamp data. In recent years, Congressional leaders and nutrition advocacy groups also have pushed for information to see if the federally funded program is being administered in the best way possible to encourage healthy food choices and to prevent fraud.

Perhaps due in part to these efforts, the USDA last week announced that it would release a pair of surveys focusing on what participants in the SNAP program buy.

The USDA has been studying whether data from participants' electronic benefit transfer cards can be collected and if point-of-sale food buys using the cards differ from typical purchases made by non-SNAP participants.

These studies are encouraging first steps but come nowhere near the transparency that should be demanded of this program and its administrators.

The USDA has a responsibility to taxpayers to be open in reporting how federal food stamp money is spent. There also should be regular reviews of program procedures and routine accounting of vendors and participants — all made available to the public.

There simply is no practical reason for this important information to remain hidden.

**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, Feb. 16, the 47th day of 2015. There are 318 days left in the year. This is Presidents Day.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Feb. 16, 1945, American troops landed on the island of Corregidor in the Philippines during World War II.

**On this date:** In 1804, Lt. Stephen Decatur led a successful raid into Tripoli Harbor to burn the U.S. Navy frigate Philadelphia, which had fallen into the hands of pirates during the First Barbary War.

In 1862, the Civil War Battle of Fort Donelson in Tennessee ended as some 12,000 Confederate soldiers surrendered; Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's victory earned him the nickname "Unconditional Surrender Grant."

In 1868, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was organized in New York City.

In 1923, the burial chamber of King Tutankhamen's recently unearthed tomb was unsealed in Egypt by English archaeologist Howard Carter.

In 1937, Dr. Wallace H. Carothers, a research chemist for Du Pont who'd invented nylon, received a patent for the synthetic fiber.

In 1959, Fidel Castro became premier of Cuba a month and a half after the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista.

In 1961, the United States launched the Explorer 9 satellite.

In 1968, the nation's first 911 emergency telephone system was inaugurated in Haleyville, Alabama.

In 1977, Janani Lumum, the Anglican archbishop of Uganda, and two other men were killed in what Ugandan authorities said was an automobile accident.

In 1988, seven people were shot to death during an office rampage in Sunnyvale, California, by a man obsessed with a co-worker who was wounded in the attack. (The gunman, Richard Farley, is on death row.)

In 1994, more than 200 people were killed when a powerful earthquake shook Indonesia's Sumatra island.

In 1998, a China Airlines Airbus A300-600R trying to land in fog near Taipei, Taiwan, crashed, killing all 196 people on board, plus six on the ground.

**Ten years ago:** The NHL canceled what was left of its decimated schedule after a round of last-gasp negotiations failed to resolve differences over a salary cap — the flash-point issue that had led

to a lockout. Israel's parliament gave the final approval to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements.

**Five years ago:** Officials reported the capture of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Afghan Taliban's No. 2 commander, by a joint CIA and Pakistani team. (Baradar was set free by Pakistan in Sept. 2013 in hopes he could help jumpstart Afghanistan's peace process.) President Barack Obama announced more than \$8 billion in new federal loan guarantees to build two nuclear reactors in Georgia.

**One year ago:** U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, during a visit to Indonesia, called climate change perhaps the "most fearsome" destructive weapon and mocked those who denied its existence or questioned its causes, comparing them to people who insist the earth is flat. Carmelo Anthony made an All-Star record eight 3-pointers and scored 30 points, and the Eastern Conference overcame 38-point efforts by Kevin Durant and Blake Griffin for a 163-155 win. At the Sochi Games, Kjetil Jansrud won the fourth straight Olympic super-G gold medal for Norway; Andrew Weilbrecht of the United States wound up second while American teammate Bode Miller and Jan Hudec of Canada tied for third. (Miller, at 36, became the oldest ever Olympic Alpine medalist.)

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Jeremy Bulloch is 70. Actor William Katt is 64. Rhythm-and-blues singer James Ingram is 63. Actor LeVar Burton is 58. Actor-rapper Ice-T is 57. Actress Lisa Loring is 57. International Tennis Hall of Famer John McEnroe is 56. Rock musician Andy Taylor is 54. Rock musician Dave Lombardo (Slayer) is 50. Actress Sarah Clarke is 44. Rock musician Taylor Hawkins (Foo Fighters) is 43. Olympic gold medal runner Cathy Freeman is 42. Actor Mahershala Ali (TV: "House of Cards"; Film: "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay" films) is 41. Singer Sam Salter is 40. Electronic dance music artist Bassnectar is 37. Rapper Lupe Fiasco is 33. Actress Chloe Webber is 29. Pop-rock singer Ryan Follese (Hot Chelle Rae) is 28. Rock musician Danielle Haim is 26. Actress Elizabeth Olsen is 26. Actor Mike Weinberg is 22.

**Thought for Today:** "There are two kinds of man: the ones who make history and the ones who endure it." — Camilo Jose Cela, Nobel Prize-winning Spanish author (1916-2002).

**FROM THE BIBLE**

*I am the vine; you are the branches. John 15:5.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Trash Talk**

**Sharon Kostroun, Yankton**  
The City of Yankton asks everyone to put a lid on their trash can. We do that.

But the city garbage service is not as good. They throw our

can and never replace the lid. When the wind blows, we can't find the trash can or lid.

I know that with the wind our can goes down the street, but they could put the lids back on our can, so at least when we look for them, they are together.



**Presidents' Day 2015**

## 'With Charity For All'

*This is Presidents' Day in the United States, a holiday that officially began in 1885 with the commemoration of the birth of the nation's first president, George Washington. (The birthday had actually been recognized as a holiday of sorts since 1800.) It was first established on Feb. 22, which was Washington's birthday. In 1971, the general commemoration was moved to the third Monday in February (as a means of consolidating holidays in order to create more three-day weekends for workers) and was named Presidents' Day, seen as an honoring not only of Washington but also Abraham Lincoln, or 16th president, who was born on Feb. 12. His, too, was a birthday long recognized by Americans. Now, Presidents' Day is generally considered to be a day to honor all our presidents.*

*To commemorate this day, we offer our readers Lincoln's second inaugural address, delivered March 4, 1865, just more than a month before his death. It was perhaps the most important "second inaugural" speech ever given, coming as it did at the very end of the bitter, murderous Civil War. It spelled out the terms and the attitudes of a post-war America, and called upon all Americans to loom within themselves and display "charity for all."*

Fellow-Countrymen:  
At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war — seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over



Lincoln

the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while

the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh."

If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

**Capitol Notebook**

## In Pierre, Legislators' Conflicts Are In The Eye Of The Beholder

**BY BOB MERCER**  
State Capitol Bureau

**PIERRE** — In the past few weeks, Gov. Dennis Daugaard twice appointed former state legislators to important state boards.

He didn't wait one year after they had left office, as the South Dakota Constitution can be read to require.

Instead, an alternative reading guided the timing of these picks.

The latest is former Sen. Tom Jones, a Democrat from Viborg. He didn't seek re-election in 2014. Jones fills a vacant seat on the state Board of Economic Development.

The board makes decisions on the state's low-interest loans to new and expanding businesses. The board also decides on recipients of various state grants and on recipients of tax refunds for new and expanding businesses.

Jones was a natural pick. While a senator, he was one of four legislators assigned to participate in the board's meetings as a non-voting member.

Those four slots were added by the Legislature in 2013 to help provide oversight when the new business project tax-relief program and new grants programs were placed under the board.

The Legislature also required in 2013 that Board of Economic Development appointments become subject to Senate approval.

That move coincidentally came in the wake of Gov. Daugaard's appointment of Rob Skjonsberg to the board in January 2013.

Skjonsberg, whose previous business experience was in banking, was chief of staff for then-Gov. Mike Rounds throughout his first term and into his second.

Skjonsberg left to work for ethanol company Poet and later returned to the Rounds fold, receiving a top job at the Fischer-Rounds insurance and real estate business.

When he returned, Skjonsberg also moved into public affairs consulting, forming a business with former Sen. Bob Gray, R-Pierre, and former Barnett, Rounds and Daugaard aide Jason Glott.

Skjonsberg then became campaign manager for Rounds' run for the U.S. Senate. After Rounds' election on Nov. 4, Skjonsberg eventually agreed to be his Senate chief of staff.

He resigned recently from the board.

At the time of his appointment to the board, a surprising number of state Senate members indicated they would vote against him.

That is, until they realized there wouldn't be one. Senate confirmation wasn't yet required for the board. Jones doesn't bring that level of contention.

But the constitution, in Article III Section 12, prohibits a member of the Legislature from receiving any contract with the state or a county during the legislator's term and one year after.

The question becomes, is an appointment for which a member receives a daily amount of pay and expenses a contract?

Daugaard also appointed David Lust of Rapid City to the State Board of Medical and Osteopathic Examiners last month.

Lust, the former House Republican leader, was term-limited in the House after his 2013-14 term.

Daugaard previously named others less than a year after they left the Legislature: Jim Peterson to the South Dakota Lottery Commission in 2011 (he now is in the Senate again); and

Chuck Turbiville and Jim Putnam to the South Dakota Lottery Commission effective in 2013.

The Senate confirmed them, without the constitutional question coming up.



Bob  
MERCER