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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Athletic Commission Is A Practical Idea

We understand where Gov. Dennis Daugaard was coming from last Friday when he bristled at the notion of backing a bill that would establish a state athletic commission to oversee mixed martial arts competitions.

What we don't really get is what the governor thinks will happen if the bill is defeated.

The measure, Senate Bill 84, calls for the establishment of such a board to oversee "boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts competitions" in the state.

You might say that the governor is no fan of mixed martial arts, which can sometimes also include "cage fighting."

"I'm offended that the state would legitimize cage fighting and the bloody violence these kinds of spectacles create," he stated last Friday, adding that it was "absurd and ridiculous" to consider mixed martial arts a sport.

If you've ever seen a mixed martial arts contest, you may see his point. To the untrained eye — of which we admit to pleading guilty, by the way — a mixed martial arts fight looks a lot like an alley fight. There's far more to it than that, of course, but it does tend to be more violent — and some may say pointless — than boxing.

That's what Daugaard sees when he comes across such a match while surfing through television channels, for instance.

However, what he also sees, whether he likes it or not, is a "sport" that is immensely popular in some places and with some people. "Cages matches" take place in many communities — they've been held in Yankton, for instance — and the national trend indicates that these things are not going away. If anything, the popularity of mixed martial arts looks primed for continued growth.

Therefore, what does the governor think will happen if SB84 is defeated? Does he believe mixed martial arts will disappear? Does he think cage matches will no longer take place?

No, this sport or activity or whatever you want to call it isn't going anywhere. It's going to continue across the state — it will likely continue to grow — and the dangers of unregulated matches will also escalate.

The Legislature actually passed a bill establishing an athletic commission back in 2009, but the governor's office never appointed any commissioners to the board, thus rendering the legislation moot. The commission's lease on life expired last year.

This new proposal comes in the wake of increasing injuries in mixed martial arts. Notably, a 26-year-old Sturgis fighter died last spring after suffering a seizure. This has prompted a new effort by State Sen. Mark Johnston of Sioux Falls to establish a commission that can oversee the safety of the sport

The commission, which would operate at no cost to taxpayers (it would be funded by fees imposed by the commission), can also help promote mixed martial arts bouts, as well as professional boxing. If these events are going to happen, it would behoove this state to ensure that they are conducted safely, would it not?

SB84 would also have the governor appoint just one of the proposed five commissioners, meaning there might actually be a commission this time that could bring some enforceable safety guidelines to mixed martial arts events.

So, our recommendation to the governor and to anyone else is: You may not like mixed martial arts, but you can't fight it. Instead, let's make it as safe as possible.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 30, the 30th day of 2013. There are 335 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On Jan. 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. The first episode of the "Lone Ranger" radio program was broadcast on station WXYZ in Detroit.

On this date: In 1649, England's King Charles I was beheaded.

In 1862, the ironclad USS Monitor was launched from the Continental Iron Works in Greenpoint, N.Y., during the Civil War.

In 1882, the 32nd president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was born in Hyde Park, N.Y.

In 1948, Indian political and spiritual leader Mohandas K. Gandhi, 78, was shot and killed in New Delhi by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu extremist. (Godse and a co-conspirator were later executed.)

In 1962, two members of "The Flying Wallendas" high-wire act were killed when their seven-person pyramid collapsed during a performance at the State Fair Coliseum in Detroit.

In 1963, French composer Francis Poulenc died in Paris at age 64.

In 1964, the United States launched Ranger 6, an unmanned spacecraft carrying television cameras that crash-landed on the moon, but failed to send back images.

In 1968, the Tet Offensive began during the Vietnam War as Communist forces launched surprise attacks against South Vietnamese provincial capitals.

In 1972, 13 Roman Catholic civil rights marchers were shot to death by British soldiers in Northern Ireland on what became known as "Bloody Sunday."

In 1973, the rock group KISS performed its first show at a club in Queens, N.Y.

In 1981, an estimated 2 million New Yorkers turned out for a ticker-tape parade honoring the freed American hostages from Iran.

In 1993, Los Angeles inaugurated its Metro Red Line, the city's first modern subway.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush put allies on notice that diplomacy would give way to a decision on war with

Iraq in "weeks, not months." Wary world leaders and congressional critics urged patience and demanded proof of Iraq's transgressions. Richard Reid, the British citizen and al-Qaida follower who'd tried to blow up a trans-Atlantic jetliner with explosives hidden in his shoes, was sentenced to life in prison by a federal judge in Boston.

Five years ago: John Edwards bowed out of the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. Rudy Giuliani dropped out of the Republican presidential contest and endorsed front-runner and longtime friend John McCain. The Federal Reserve cut a key interest rate for the second time in just over a week, reducing the federal funds rate by a half point to 3 percent.

One year ago: All European Union countries except Britain and the Czech Republic agreed to sign a new treaty designed to stop overspending in the eurozone and put an end to the bloc's crippling debt crisis. A reactor at a northern Illinois nuclear plant shut down after an electrical insulator failed (the Unit 2 reactor at the Byron Generating Station resumed operating a week later).

Today's Birthdays: Actress Dorothy Malone is 88. Producer-director Harold Prince is 85. Actor Gene Hackman is 83. Actress Tammy Grimes is 79. Actress Vanessa Redgrave is 76. Chess grandmaster Boris Spassky is 76. Country singer Jeanne Pruett is 76. Country singer Norma Jean is 75. Former Vice President Dick Cheney is 72. Rock singer Marty Balin is 71. Rhythm-and-blues musician William King (The Commodores) is 64. Singer Phil Collins is 62. Actor Charles S. Dutton is 62. World Golf Hall of Famer Curtis Strange is 58. Actress-comedian Brett Butler is 55. Singer Jody Watley is 54. Actor-filmmaker Dexter Scott King is 52. The King of Jordan, Abdullah II, is 51. Actor Norbert Leo Butz is 46. Country singer Tammy Cochran is 41. Actor Christian Bale is 39. Rock musician Carl Broemel (My Morning Jacket) is 39. Pop-country singer-songwriter Josh Kelley is 33. Actor Wilmer Valderrama is 33. Actor Jake Thomas is 23.

Thought for Today: "The excellent becomes the permanent." — Jane Addams, American social worker and Nobel Peace laureate (1860-1935).

FROM THE BIBLE

I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people. 1 Timothy 2:1. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

The GOP Crack-Up

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

Soon after President Obama's second inaugural address, Speaker of the House John Boehner said the White House would try "to annihilate the Republican Party" and "shove us into the dustbin of history."

Actually, the GOP is doing a pretty good job annihilating itself. As Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal put it, Republicans need to "stop being the stupid party."

The GOP crack-up was probably inevitable. Inconsistencies and tensions within the GOP have been growing for years — ever since Ronald Reagan put together the coalition that became the modern Republican Party.

All President Obama has done is finally find ways to exploit these inconsistencies.

Republican libertarians have never gotten along with social conservatives, who want to impose their own morality on everyone else. Shrink-the-government fanatics in the GOP have never seen eye to eye with deficit hawks, who don't mind raising taxes as long as the extra revenues help reduce the size of the deficit. The GOP's big-business and Wall Street wing has never been comfortable with the nativists and racists in the party who want to exclude immigrants and prevent minorities from getting ahead. And right-wing populists have never got along with big business and Wall Street, which love government as long as it gives them subsidies, tax benefits and bailouts.

Ronald Reagan papered over these differences with a happy anti-big-government nationalism. His patriotic imagery inspired the nativists and social conservatives. Reagan gave big business and Wall Street massive military spending. And his anti-government rhetoric delighted the party's libertarians and right-wing populists.

But Reagan's coalition remained fragile. It depended fundamentally on creating a common enemy: communists and terrorists abroad, liberals and people of color at home.

On the surface, Reagan's GOP celebrated Norman Rockwell's traditional, white middle-class, small-town America. Below the surface, it stoked fires of fear and hate of "others" who threatened this idealized portrait.

In his first term, Obama seemed the perfect foil: a black man, a big-spending liberal and, perhaps (they hissed), not even an American. Republicans accused him of being insufficiently patriotic. Right-wing TV and radio snarled that he secretly wanted to take over America and suspend our rights. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell declared that unseating Obama was the GOP's first priority.

Point Of View

Transparency And Technology

BY TIM L. WALTNER

South Dakota Newspaper Association

Remarkable technological advances in recent years have changed the way we do countless things. Phones once tethered to walls have become portable devices that are now wireless hand-held computers. Financial transactions no longer require cash, checks or, increasingly, plastic cards. GPS systems have made asking for directions obsolete. Cameras no longer require film.

Technology has dramatically altered virtually every aspect of our lives. We communicate with each other in ways that only a few years ago seemed to be science fiction. That has touched our personal lives as well as the way we do business. And that includes the way in which government operates.

That reality led the Open Government Task Force convened last year by Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Attorney General Marty Jackley to recommend including new methods of communication in the transparency and accountability that are the bedrock of open government. The result is HB 1113, which expands the definition of teleconference "to include certain meetings conducted through electronic text colloquy and to require the retention of certain records of text colloquy meetings for public inspection."

"Colloquy" is a legal-technical term meaning discussion. Don't let the word throw you; it's simply conversation. If an email goes out to the mayor and full city council, a school board or a county commission and asks for them to reply to the group, that's a conversation. If they were having that conversation — all of them face to face — that would be an official meeting — open and public. But, as of now, if it's email or text, it's not public.

While the law already says that teleconferences conducted by elected officials are subject to open meeting laws, elected officials can now have a similar group conversation via email or text and there is nothing that makes that conversation open and public. Common sense says that's just not right.

Conceivably, an entire agenda for an elected body could be discussed using email or text messaging. While that's unlikely, here's one example of what could happen.

An email goes out to the full school board and asks for comments about a proposal to phase out the district's art program. Everyone is invited to share his or her views. Everyone weighs in and a majority agrees that the district can no longer afford to fund the art program.

As the law now stands, the public is excluded from observing that discussion. And while no official action can be taken until the board meets in an official session, the discus-



Robert REICH

But it didn't work. The 2012 Republican primaries exposed all the cracks and fissures in the GOP coalition.

The party offered up a Star Wars barroom of oddball characters, each representing a different faction — Bachmann, Perry, Gingrich, Cain, Santorum. Each rose on the strength of supporters and then promptly fell when the rest of the party got a good look.

Finally, desperately, the Republican Party turned to a chameleon — Mitt Romney — who appeared acceptable to every faction because he had no convictions of his own. But Romney couldn't survive the general election because the public saw him for what he was: synthetic and inauthentic.

The 2012 election exposed something else about the GOP: its utter lack of touch with reality, its bizarre incapacity to see and understand what was happening in the country. Think of Karl Rove's delirium on Fox News on election night.

All of which has given Obama the perfect opening — perhaps the opening he'd been waiting for all along.

Obama's focus in his second inaugural — and, by inference, in his second term — on equal opportunity is hardly a radical agenda. But it aggravates all the tensions inside the GOP. And it leaves the GOP without an overriding target to maintain its fragile coalition.

In hammering home the need for the rich to contribute a fair share in order to ensure equal opportunity, and for anyone in America — be they poor, black, gay, immigrant, female or average working person — to be able to make the most of themselves, Obama advances the founding ideals of America in a way that the Republican Party is incapable of opposing yet also incapable of uniting behind.

History and demographics are on the side of the Democrats, but history and demography have been on the Democrats' side for decades. What's new is the Republican crack-up — opening the way for a new Democratic coalition of socially liberal young people, women, minorities, middle-class professionals, and what's left of the anti-corporate working class.

If Obama remains as clear and combative as he has been since Election Day, his second term may be noted not only for its accomplishment but also for finally unraveling what Reagan put together. In other words, John Boehner's fear may be well-founded.

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.



Waltner

sion that led to the decision remains hidden from public view. The board meets, votes and since the entire discussion was conducted by email, no one knows what led to the decision; there's no official record of that discussion.

Common sense says that's just not right.

Elected officials have accepted the framework in which they do the people's business for decades. That includes notice of meetings, posted agendas and holding those meetings in public. It's at the heart of how we function as a democracy and as a republic.

A changing world requires adaptation. That's something the 33-member task force, which included representatives of news organizations, state officials, law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and officials from cities, counties and school districts, recognized last summer. That's why it recommended including "electronic text colloquy" in open meetings and records laws. And that is why the governor and attorney general have moved this legislation forward.

Speaking to newspaper editors last week, Gov. Daugaard spoke about the importance of this issue.

When people think of teleconference, Daugaard said "You're thinking of someone on the phone. But if you're texting each other and you're replying to all, really, if you think about it, that's no different. It's just a different way of chatting back and forth and those should be subject to the open meeting notices and the texts would need to be an open record."

Gov. Daugaard clearly gets it. Now it's up to our legislators.

The measure gained a slim 7-6 approval from the House State Affairs Committee last week and is headed for a vote by all representatives in the House. Contact your representatives and tell them to vote yes on HB 1113. You can call them at 773-3851 or you can find contact information on the S.D. Legislative Research Council's website.

HB 1113 deserves full support in the House and then the Senate. Regardless of technological advances and forms of communication, the principle of open and public debate is critical. Our legislators need to know that we, the people, expect nothing less than full support to maintain that ideal. It's a matter of common sense.

Waltner is publisher of the Freeman Courier and the Hutchinson Herald, Menno. He also serves on the South Dakota Newspaper Association's First Amendment Committee.

documentation indicates that South Dakota farmer's reduced tillage practices together with no-till and high-yielding corn dominant rotations have increased soil organic matter.

No-till cuts erosion 98 percent and corn's massive deep root systems protect ground water by scavenging leached fertilizer nutrients and bringing them back to the surface. No-till includes more than one-third of U.S. crop acres plus trending toward capturing half of U.S. acres within 10 years.

Today the vast majority of U.S. farmers largely use the reduced tillage practices that

South Dakota farmers use making nearly all of our farmland a gigantic carbon sink if substantially increased corn acres are included in crop rotations. Sustainable farming is optimized as farmers continue the trend toward cover crops plus diverse minimum and no-till corn rotations that today also significantly reduce agriculture's nitrous oxide GHG emissions and commercial nitrogen requirements.

Diverting adequate soybean/other acres to corn ethanol acres will make sustainable farming possible plus still produce a similar amount of protein as distiller's proteins thus causing

little market disruption.

Conversely, increasing switch grass or sod acres on a comparable scale will significantly reduce food supplies, causing chaotic grain market disruptions.

Importantly, opening markets for higher octane E30 ethanol blends will incentivize increasing corn acres also growing farmland's cumulative carbon sink. Most importantly, E30 slashes carcinogenic/mutagenic emissions associated with benzene type octane enhancers dramatically reducing their medical costs and related tragedies.

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YOUR LETTERS

Sustainability

Orrie Swayze, Wilmot

Increasing corn acres substantially is our best opportunity to make agriculture sustainable. Today's reduced tillage, cover crops, and corn rotations are reversing farming's historic, unsustainable mining of soil carbon: Even no-till farming will mine soil carbon unless corn or other C4 genetics' almost miraculous water efficiencies are utilized to produce enormous quantities of biomass above and below ground. SDSU's review of 25 years of soil sample