

# 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 Dakotian established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotian established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

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The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian is a member of the Associated Press, the Inland Daily Press Association and the South Dakota Newspaper Association. The Associated Press is entitled exclusively to use of all the local news printed in this newspaper.

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CARRIER DELIVERY  
1-month . . . . \$12.09  
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## OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

# Two Takeaways From SOTU Speech

**CHICAGO TRIBUNE (Jan. 29):** State of the Union addresses are about big ambitions, and Tuesday night's didn't disappoint. Barack Obama's many priorities — job creation, middle-class earnings, infrastructure spending and all the others — are the unfinished business of a president aware (and no doubt uneasy) that, in three years, he belongs to history.

How many of those aspirations can he achieve? Of 24 proposals in last year's address, *Washington Post* fact-checkers rate five as accomplished, four as partially complete and 15 — notably gun control, immigration reform and a minimum wage hike — as dead letters. And at first glance, this year's prognosis wouldn't be that upbeat.

The Obamacare rollout soured many Americans on government-as-change-agent. Twitchy members of Congress avoid bold votes in election years. And Obama's approval ratings have tumbled. From the *Post*'s report on its new poll with ABC News: "Just 37 percent (of respondents) say they have either a good amount or a great deal of confidence in the president to make the right decisions for the country's future, while 63 percent say they do not. Those numbers are the mirror image of what they were when he was sworn into office in 2009." Ouch.

Tuesday night, Obama didn't dwell on his lost 2013. There was an oblique nod to his gridlock with Congress last year: "Let's make this a year of action." The subtext: He has to wonder whether, if his signature health overhaul doesn't succeed, his presidency totals one year of managing through a financial crisis, followed by a biblical seven years of lean.

That's why his staffers have been broadcasting the message that Obama will try to circumvent Congress by marshaling his powers of office. Presidents of both parties have done that although it's often a frustrating way to rule: Congress can thwart (or refuse to fund) executive orders that lack the force of law. And subsequent presidents can undo those orders as breezily as they were written.

Listening to Obama, though, we heard two takeaways that should be his realistic agenda before the acceleration of presidential campaigning in 2015 certifies his lame-duckery. The point isn't that he can get Congress to do his bidding; he cannot. On these two issues, though, he can help Republicans and Democrats realize that it's in their best interests to do as he asks. ...

That's a spectacularly accurate if too limited prediction of all that a reform to federal taxes and transfer programs could deliver. Even before his presidency began, Obama was saying the right things about the unsustainability of entitlement benefits; in budget wrangles with Republicans he has agreed to Medicare reforms.

Imagine the potential power of a president who'll never run again gathering his economic priorities into one package. A path to debt reduction, encouragements to hire more workers, elimination of tax deductions and credits that tend to benefit the wealthy, incentives to drive new growth: In one afternoon, Obama's policy team could draft an omnibus plan for financing federal operations, expanding the nation's workforce and assuring that today's benefits will exist for tomorrow's retirees. Stable and lower tax rates, paid for by scaling back those runaway deductions and credits, would benefit individuals and employers alike.

During Obama's presidency, efforts at a "Go Big" finance deal always have flopped. Now, as a second-term with goals he wants to accomplish, he's liberated. He can bundle his proposals in bows appealing to both parties. Granted, with Obama inclined to govern by executive order rather than joust with Congress, this wouldn't be easy. But it could be done. Democrats and Republicans proved that with their tax mega package late in Ronald Reagan's presidency.

Immigration reform, coupled with a rescue of federal finances and entitlement programs? Good for Obama, good for the historians who'll grade him — and good for the future of America.

## SPEAK UP!

■ Share your thoughts with us. Write to the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** on a topic of the day or in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to [views@yankton.net](mailto:views@yankton.net).

## ON THIS DATE

### By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Jan. 30, the 30th day of 2014. There are 335 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Jan. 30, 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.

**On this date:** In 1649, England's King Charles I was executed for treason.

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 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. The first episode of the "Lone Ranger" radio program was broadcast on station WXYZ in Detroit.

In 1939, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Tennessee Electric Power Co. v. Tennessee Valley Authority*, upheld the right of the federally-owned TVA to compete with private utilities.

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 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 1974, President Richard Nixon delivered what would be his last State of the Union address; Nixon pledged to rein in rising prices without the "harsh medicine of recession" and establish a national health care plan that every American could afford.

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:** Former French Prime Minister Alain Juppe was found guilty in connection with a party-financing scandal and declared ineligible for public office.

ble for public office for 10 years (later reduced to one year on appeal). NASA's Mars rover Opportunity spied hints of a mineral that typically forms in water — a finding that could mean the dry and dusty Red Planet was once wetter and more hospitable to life.

**Five years ago:** Michael Steele was elected the first black chairman of the Republican National Committee. President Barack Obama signed a series of executive orders that he said should "level the playing field" for labor unions in their struggles with management. Ingemar Johansson, who stunned the boxing world by knocking out Floyd Patterson to win the heavyweight title in 1959, died in Kungsbacka, Sweden. Former Alabama Gov. Guy Hunt died in Birmingham at age 75.

**One year ago:** In a dramatic appeal before the Senate Judiciary Committee, wounded former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords urged Congress to enact tougher curbs on guns, saying, "too many children are dying" without them. Israel conducted a rare airstrike on a military target inside Syria amid fears President Bashar Assad's regime could provide powerful weapons to the Islamic militant group Hezbollah. Patty Andrews, 94, the last surviving member of the singing Andrews Sisters trio, died in the Los Angeles suburb of Northridge.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actress Dorothy Malone is 89. Producer-director Harold Prince is 86. Actor Gene Hackman is 84. Actress Tammy Grimes is 80. Actress Vanessa Redgrave is 77. Chess grandmaster Boris Spassky is 77. Country singer Jeanne Pruett is 77. Country singer Norma Jean is 76. Former Vice President Dick Cheney is 73. Rock singer Marty Balin is 72. Rhythm-and-blues musician William King (The Commodores) is 65. Singer Phil Collins is 63. Actor Charles S. Dutton is 63. World Golf Hall of Famer Curtis Strange is 59. Actress-comedian Brett Butler is 56. Singer Jody Watley is 55. Actor-filmmaker Dexter Scott King is 53. The King of Jordan, Abdullah II, is 52. Actor Norbert Leo Butz is 47. Country singer Tammy Cochran is 42. Actor Christian Bale is 40. Rock musician Carl Broemel (My Morning Jacket) is 40. Pop-country singer-songwriter Josh Kelley is 34. Actor Wilmer Valderrama is 34. Actor Jake Thomas is 24.

**Thought for Today:** "History repeats itself in the large because human nature changes with geological leisureliness." — Will (1885-1981) and Ariel Durant (1898-1981), American historians.

## FROM THE BIBLE

*Does not wisdom call? Proverbs 8:1.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



## Point Of View | Tom Jones

# School Funding Discussed

BY SEN. TOM JONES

D-District 17 (Viborg)

Our South Dakota State Department of Education gave three days of testimony to the State Joint Appropriations Committee this past week. The information they gave exhibited the care they have for our K-12 students and our four state technical schools. Their presentation began with the Presidents of our technical schools located in Watertown, Sioux Falls, Mitchell and Rapid City.

We can be proud of the success these schools have enjoyed, including the percentage (71) of their students graduate in three years or less. They are number one in the nation. Currently, there are 6,460 students enrolled in one of these schools.

A common problem our technical schools have along with our other facets of education in South Dakota is the increased burden on students for paying their education bills. South Dakota ranks last among the seven surrounding states in the percentage of state and local aid we provide for them. South Dakota provides 28 percent; Minnesota, 33 percent; Iowa, 35 percent; Montana, 35 percent; North Dakota, 34 percent; Wyoming, 58 percent; and Nebraska, 59 percent.

The second and third days K-12 was addressed by our Secretary of Education and her staff. Our total student population across the state is estimated to be 131,250 for the 2014-15 school year. Issues discussed included: teacher shortages and opt-outs. Let me give you an example of each. A superintendent told me that he had two openings this past fall for teachers. He had two applicants. He also said he was very fortunate that both applicants were good ones. Concerning opt-outs, 66 of our 151 school districts passed opt-outs. That's 44 percent. That does not include districts that failed in their attempt or attempts



Jones

for an opt-out. Remember, when an opt-out is passed the amount becomes the sole responsibility of the tax payers in their district. When the state school funding formula was initiated (during Gov. Janklow's terms), it was to come closer to equalizing funding for every student.

Dual credits were explained in length. It simply means that if you take a college-level course in high school, students can earn both high school and college credit from one of our four state universities for the same course. The cost for the college credit is \$40 per credit hour, which is considerably less than the normal charge. The average cost in college is \$300.00 per credit hour.

It's also my understanding that if a student takes the ACT and doesn't quite score well enough to enter college without taking remedial courses, he or she can take these classes in addition to their regular classes during their senior year of high school at no cost. This can save time and money when they enter college.

I hope the above two paragraphs give some insight to several of you.

On Friday, the Senate Appropriations listened to several bill hearings. SB 27 allowed up to \$500,000 transfer from the Natural Resources Fund to the State Conservation Commission. It passed 9-0. SB 31 authorized a \$94,000 payment for reimbursement for a rural physician who has completed the needed requirements. It passed 9-0. Finally SB 32 passed 9-0 a transfer of \$1,900,000 of General Funds and \$21,100,000 of Federal monies for the National Guard Armory construction and land in Watertown.

Once again, if you have questions or would like to contact me concerning a bill, my e-mail address is [sen.jones@state.sd.us/](mailto:sen.jones@state.sd.us/).

## Writer's Block

# This Is Not So Charitable

BY WILLIAM KERR

For the Press & Dakotan

Did you ever wonder what charitable and non-profit agencies that do not function by helping individuals with food, clothing and shelter, but go to bat for us all with private and governmental agencies actually accomplish?

Agencies like: Center for Community Change, Children's Defense Fund, Earth Justice, Government accountability Project, Limit Congressional Terms and Public Citizen?

Most of them send out newsletters to donors, but if you're not a donor you usually don't get such information.

The following is a good example of one success of one such agency.

The problem involved generic drug labeling. Most of us elders and many others use generic drugs because they are far less expensive than the original patented drugs, but only available after the original patent runs out.

A lady (we'll call her Ethel) taking a generic drug, appropriately prescribed by her physician, began making grotesque, involuntary movements typical of a severe neurological disorder. She sued the manufacturer for failure to warn her of the risk of these symptoms. By 2010 when the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court this agency filed an amicus brief in support of Ethel.

In 2011 the case came to court. Federal law at that time said that the generic drug must be labeled the same as the original patented drug. So, since Ethel's vial was labeled correctly (no mention of a risk) Ethel had no case.



William KERR

While the manufacturers of the patented product had the freedom and incentive to later change their label when risks became known, the generic manufacturer had no such freedom. They just had to use the same labeling as the original label of the original drug. So, in effect, the Supreme Court granted the generic manufacturers immunity from such lawsuits and left the public at risk. Never mind the possible suffering of many others, as Ethel had suffered, from the same set of circumstances.

(Just reading that paragraph, you would think it should be a normal procedure to make follow-through changes like that, wouldn't you?)

The supportive agency then (in 2012) filed a change of rules petition with the Federal Drug Administration.

They also involved the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in working out legislation that could correct the problem. In June 2013, with the help of this Judiciary committee's expertise and medical advice, the agency issued a study that showed the possible harmful public health consequences of the prior Supreme Court decision and recommended legislation to correct the situation.

In November 2013, the Federal Drug Administration gave their answer to the supportive agency providing generic manufacturers with the freedom and incentive to make label changes when such risks are discovered after the drug has been put on the market.

This story gives you some idea of the intricacy and difficulty of keeping all phases of "the law" up to date and in balance.

The name of the agency involved is "Public Citizen." Maybe you have heard of them.

## YOUR LETTERS

### Even-Handedness

Roger Meyer, Yankton

If Mr. Jensen is serious about mean-spirited rhetoric in columns and letters, he should refrain from using the same (*Press & Dakotan*, Jan. 27). While attacking conservative (not far-right) columnists for using the word clueless, he uses it to criticize them.

I suspect that Mr. Jensen is really offended by the columnist's criticism of the Obama Administration's inept (I suppose that is offensive, but it is true) handling of foreign affairs,

health care and the national debt. If he would look behind the curtain, he would find that the far-left columnists in this paper (Leonard Pitts and Robert Reich) use language equally as mean-spirited if not more so in attacking their conservative opponents. In fact the editor of this newspaper himself has used the word "stupid" in referring to the Supreme Court and "idiot" in attacking certain policies of conservative legislators.

Criticism should be even-handed, but then when did one ever expect even-handedness or indeed fairness from the left?

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:** "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." — **THE FIRST AMENDMENT to the U.S. Constitution**

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