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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

GOP And Congress: Will Things Change?

PUBLIC OPINION, Watertown (Dec. 30): When Congress convenes next month, Republicans will control both the House and Senate while President Obama begins the final two years of his presidency.

To call Obama a lame duck president is being generous. Considering how fellow Democrats running for office last month all but pushed him aside to boost their chances of winning on Election Day, Obama might be more of a cooked goose than a lame duck. Things don't look any better for him entering 2015 as 2016 is another election year and an outgoing president with a less than stellar record won't be of much help to any Democrat seeking office. With that on the table, fellow Democrats may want even less to do with him this election than last.

So what does all this mean on Capitol Hill? Does having Republicans in control and Democrats steering clear of the president mean a new dawn of cooperation and progress? Does it mean the end of gridlock and the restoration of government by compromise rather than government by confrontation?

Nope. Not only can you expect more of the same it might even get worse.

As hard as that is to imagine, it's not beyond the realm of possibility considering that control of Congress, both houses, is again at stake in 2016 as is the White House.

In the 2014 midterms the Republicans had the best possible chance in years to win more seats in both the Senate and House. Democrats were defending seats in mainly Republican states and since term limits were imposed on presidents, five out of the six two-term presidents have lost seats in Congress after re-election — an average of 29 in the House and six in the Senate, according to election analyst Charlie Cook. Republicans made the most of the opportunity at hand and increased their control of the House and captured the Senate by gaining 9 seats, three more than needed to secure a majority.

In 2016, 34 of the 100 U.S. Senate seats are up for election and those seats are held by 10 Democrats and 24 Republicans. In the next election there won't be a defending president to tilt the scale for or against anybody. But with both parties almost certain to have contested primaries for their presidential nominations, that could have a major impact on congressional races, especially for Republicans.

How so? Republicans may control both houses of Congress but the party is split between establishment Republicans and far-right conservatives like tea party backers and the religious right. That could lead to infighting in Congress pitting moderates against the far right. That could hurt Republicans on both sides and make getting anything done in the next two years just as hard as it was the past few. Then throw in a lame duck — or is it a cooked goose — president who just may decide to go out swinging his veto pen and the picture gets even cloudier.

Then keep in mind that if all the political infighting that could happen does happen how it might affect the 2016 election, especially Senate seats. Many of the Senate seats held by Democrats up for election in 2014 were in predominantly Republican states. In 2016, the roles are reversed as many of the 24 Senate seats held by Republicans are in predominantly Democratic states. The pendulum could swing in favor of the Democrats then just as easily as it did for Republicans this time.

So how does this affect Congress? If congressmen are more worried about getting re-elected than normal, chances are they're not going to risk rocking the boat back home. That means there won't be many of them going out on a limb to actually get things done and that means we can expect more of what we've been seeing the past few years.

Of course all this is speculation and a lot could happen between now and election day 2016. But one thing we've learned over the past few years is that compromise, cooperation and concessions are dirty words for many folks on Capitol Hill and not to be discussed in any manner, shape or form. And as long as that continues, regardless of which party is in control, the end result is almost certain to be business as usual or perhaps even worse.



Capitol Notebook

Passages Defined SD Politics In '14

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — We said goodbye to some major South Dakota newsmakers and said hello to their successors in 2014.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Tim Johnson retired, after 28 years in Congress and eight years as a legislator. He turned 68 on Dec. 28.

His successor is Republican U.S. Mike Rounds, who served eight years as governor and 10 years as a state senator. He turned 60 on Oct. 24.

South Dakota's new secretary of state, Shantel Krebs, took her oath Friday.

Krebs, 41, served 10 years as a legislator from Minnehaha County. A Republican, she replaced Jason Gant, a Republican, who served one term and didn't seek re-election after Krebs made her candidacy official.

She set a tone last month by working ahead with the state Board of Elections on possible legislation.

Supreme Court Justice John Konenkamp retired after 20 years as a steady hand on South Dakota's high court. His successor, chosen by the governor, is former Circuit Judge Janine Kern.

Kern brings significant experience in juvenile justice matters. With her appointment, women hold two of the Supreme Court's five seats for the first time.

South Dakota lost a dedicated member of the state Board of Regents when Randy Morris of Spearfish died of cancer at age 65 in November. He had served since July 2001 on the board that oversees South Dakota's public universities.

As the successor to Morris the governor named a former circuit judge, John Bastian of Belle Fourche, who retired in 2013 after 20



Bob MERCER

years on the bench and a previous 10 years in the state office of attorney general.

Dusty Johnson left state government to take a private sector job in Mitchell, where his family continued to live. He was highly important and effective as chief of staff for Gov. Dennis Daugaard during the past four years.

Johnson previously was elected twice to the state Public Utilities Commission.

Jeff Vonk retired as state secretary of Game, Fish and Parks and Doneen Hollingsworth retired as state secretary of health.

The permanent replacement for Vonk will be Kelly Hepler, who grew up in South Dakota and has spent his professional career since 1979 with the Alaska department.

Hepler will start in a few months. Doug Hofer, director for the state Division of Parks and Recreation, will be interim secretary.

A permanent successor to Hollingsworth hasn't been named. She held the post since 1995. Many will miss her friendly spunk but raw-milk advocates won't miss her fire.

Kim Malsam-Rysdon, a member of the governor's senior staff, is interim secretary.

Vern Larson retires, again, from statewide office, this time as commissioner of school and public lands. The governor turned to the former state auditor and state treasurer to fill the vacancy left by the early departure of commissioner Jarrod Johnson in 2013.

Ryan Brunner, like Larson and Johnson a Republican, won election Nov. 4 as the new commissioner of school and public lands.

Larry Rhoden of Union Center decided to seek the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate rather than re-election to the state Senate. He put in 14 strong years as a legislator. He was a real presence.

Point Of View

Vaccinating Saves Lives

BY GOV. DENNIS DAUGAARD
South Dakota

For those who grew up in the 1950s and early 1960s, measles was almost a childhood rite of passage.

Fifty years ago there were half a million cases and 500 deaths reported in the United States every year. South Dakota experienced over 10,000 cases of measles during the peak years before the 1960s. Since the 1950s, measles and several other diseases — smallpox, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and mumps — have been either controlled or eliminated in South Dakota.

What accounts for this tremendous shift in public health? Improved nutrition, widespread understanding of how diseases are transmitted and improved sanitation have all played a role.

But by far the single most important factor in saving lives from contagious disease is childhood vaccinations. Thanks to Jonas Salk — who developed the polio vaccine — and others like him, people are living longer and more productive lives.

Unfortunately, measles is trying to make a comeback in the United States. Measles is a highly contagious airborne disease that causes permanent brain damage in one in every 1,000 patients. It is fatal in three of every 1,000 patients. The majority of those who contract measles in the United States are preschoolers, adolescents and young adults who were not vaccinated.

As I write this, the state Department of



Daugaard

Health has confirmed six cases of measles in South Dakota. After 17 years without a single case, we've had 6 confirmed cases in one week.

Why? Because even though vaccinations are proven to prevent disease and save lives, some choose against vaccination. Avoiding vaccination has been a recent trend.

As the memory of these diseases fades into the past, too many people seem to forget the risk of not vaccinating children. Unsubstantiated and discredited theories about side effects have created unreasonable anxiety. Medical professionals, repeated scientific studies and organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics agree that vaccination is vital and safe.

I recognize that there are extreme circumstances where a child may not be able to receive specific vaccines because of a severe allergy or condition. In South Dakota, we also allow people to forgo a vaccination for religious reasons. But for the overwhelming majority of people, vaccines are safe and reliable.

Not vaccinating doesn't just affect you and your kids. It puts others at risk as well. Just as the polio vaccine protected millions of children from disease in the 1950s, vaccines save lives today. Vaccination is just as necessary today as it was decades ago.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defending EPA

Dave L. Wegner, Sioux Falls
A terrifying omnibus budget bill has passed both House and Senate. Among its many disastrous provisions, EPA is to be disallowed from regulating greenhouse gas emissions that are produced by farm-related activities. Such emissions comprise a huge 10 percent of total U.S. carbon gas emissions. EPA's funding has also been drastically cut.

Furthermore, the 2015 session in Pierre may pass legislation written by EPA/lobbyist, ALEC, further obstructing CROA and the Clean Power Plan at the state level.

Global temp could possibly increase to

over 7° F (4° C) by 2100. Human survival is quite iffy under those conditions. Science tells us to expect increased incidents of climate impacts and recovery expense.

The U.S. has minimal experience in dealing with certain peril. Even during the cold war years of 1946-1989, actual war with Russia was never a sure thing. Yet, the U.S. managed to expend a cumulative \$20 trillion dollars to counter that perceived threat.

EPA isn't the enemy, but the public is seemingly being duped into believing otherwise. Nature simply isn't as resilient as people once thought. Be ever mindful that elected officials have other masters beyond those who actually cast ballots.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Jan. 5, the fifth day of 2015. There are 360 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Jan. 5, 1925, Democrat Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming took office as America's first female governor, succeeding her late husband, William, following a special election.

On this date: In 1781, a British naval expedition led by Benedict Arnold burned Richmond, Virginia.

In 1895, French Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, convicted of treason, was publicly stripped of his rank. (He was ultimately vindicated.)

In 1905, the National Association of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals was incorporated in New York State.

In 1914, auto industrialist Henry Ford announced he was going to pay workers \$5 for an 8-hour day, as opposed to \$2.34 for a 9-hour day. (Employees still worked six days a week; the 5-day work week was instituted in 1926.)

In 1933, the 30th president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, died in Northampton, Massachusetts, at age 60. Construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge. (Work was completed four years later.)

In 1949, in his State of the Union address, President Harry S. Truman labeled his administration the Fair Deal.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed assistance to countries to help them resist Communist aggression in what became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

In 1964, during a visit to the Holy Land, Pope Paul VI met with Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople in Jerusalem.

In 1970, Joseph A. Yablonski, an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the United Mine Workers of America, was found murdered with his wife and daughter at their Clarksville, Pennsylvania, home. (UMWA President Tony Boyle and seven others were convicted of, or pleaded guilty to, the killings.) "All My Children" premiered on ABC-TV.

In 1975, "The Wiz," a musical version of L. Frank Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" featuring an all-black cast, opened on Broadway.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan announced he was nominating Elizabeth Dole to succeed Drew Lewis as secretary of transportation; Dole became the first woman to head a Cabinet department in Reagan's administration, and the first to head the DOT.

In 1994, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, for-

mer speaker of the House of Representatives, died in Boston at age 81.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush opened a new drive for caps on medical malpractice awards, contending the limits would lower health care costs. The bodies of 18 young Iraqi Shiites taken off a bus and executed in Dec. 2005 were found in a field near Mosul. Cpl. Wassaf Ali Hassoun, a Marine charged with desertion in Iraq after mysteriously disappearing from his post was again declared a deserter — this time for failing to report to his U.S. base. (Hassoun turned himself in to military authorities in June 2014.) Eris, the largest dwarf planet of the solar system, was identified by astronomers at the Palomar Observatory in California.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama scolded 20 of his highest-level officials over the thwarted Christmas Day terror attack on an airliner bound for Detroit, taking them jointly to task for "a screw-up that could have been disastrous" and should have been avoided. The U.S. and British embassies in Yemen reopened their doors after a two-day closure prompted by security concerns.

One year ago: The Iraqi military tried to dislodge al-Qaida militants in Sunni-dominated Anbar province, unleashing airstrikes and besieging the regional capital. Acting with a court order, the family of Jahi McMath, a 13-year-old California girl declared brain dead after a tonsillectomy, removed her from a California hospital to be cared for elsewhere.

Today's Birthdays: Former Vice President Walter F. Mondale is 87. Actor Robert Duvall is 84. Juan Carlos, former King of Spain, is 77. Singer-musician Athol Guy (The Seekers) is 75. Talk show host Charlie Rose is 73. Actress-director Diane Keaton is 69. Actor Ted Lange is 67. Rhythm-and-blues musician George "Funky" Brown (Kool and the Gang) is 66. Rock musician Chris Stein (Blondie) is 65. Former CIA Director George Tenet is 62. Actress Pamela Sue Martin is 62. Actor Clancy Brown is 56. Singer Iris Dermont is 54. Actor Ricky Paull Goldin is 50. Actor Vinnie Jones is 50. Rock musician Kate Schellenbach (Luscious Jackson) is 49. Dancer-choreographer Carrie Ann Inaba is 47. Actress Heather Paige Kent is 46. Rock singer Marilyn Manson is 46. Actor Shea Whigham is 46. Actor Derek Cecil (TV: "House of Cards"; "Treme") is 42. Actor Bradley Cooper is 40. Actress January Jones is 37. Actress Brooklyn Sudano is 34.

Thought for Today: "It is the job that is never started that takes longest to finish." — J.R.R. Tolkien, English author (1892-1973).

FROM THE BIBLE

And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. Luke 1:63. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.