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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Driving For The Taxpayers' Benefit

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (June 27): It's disappointing that the Lincoln firefighters union is resisting the experiment to see if it would be effective and save taxpayer money to send firefighters to medical calls in a pickup truck.

The union wants to stick with the traditional practice of sending fully equipped fire trucks to all calls.

Lincoln Fire and Rescue started the experiment in 2012. The first year Station 1 used the pickup 49 times. Last year, firefighters at the station used it only 11 times.

Finally, Chief John Huff told the firefighters at the station to take the pickup out on all medical calls or explain why they did not. The union challenged the order.

The premise of the experiment seems reasonable enough. Why send the big rig to a report of someone who has fallen on a downtown street and seems dazed?

A department analysis of the experiment over a period of months showed that the pickup cost 71 cents a mile to operate, compared to \$4.03 a mile for a fire engine.

About four of every five calls for service the department receives are medical in nature.

Similar experiments are being conducted in other parts of the country, and some fire and rescue departments have begun using the socalled alternative response vehicles for some calls.

The Lincoln fire union contends the savings are small, and that they come at the expense of safety.

"Arriving without the appropriate vehicle, tools or equipment not only delays the ability to resolve the emergency, it also now requires that an additional crew respond from further away, reducing the fire and EMS coverage in their assigned area," interim union President Ron Trouba Jr. said in a statement.

Later, Trouba said the union "is confident that if and when the public is presented all data concerning coverage, response times, true and correct vehicle costs or perceived savings, they will stand in support of citizen safety and not alternative methods that are inaccurately marketed as efficient.

The union also thinks it can put an end to the experiment on grounds the chief's order violates the union's collective bargaining agreement in clauses relating to work conditions. The fire chief thinks otherwise

But if the advantages of responding to all calls with a big fire truck are as clear cut as the fire union members seems to think it is, why don't they just let the experiment play out and remove all doubt?

Like it or not, a fire and rescue operation must always find a place between the public's desire for fire protection and emergency service and the cost the public is willing to pay. The union should support efforts that might make Lincoln Fire and Rescue more efficient.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press Today is Monday, July 7, the 188th day of 2014. There are 177 days left

Today's Highlight in History: On July 7, 1865, four people were hanged in Washington, D.C., for conspiring with John Wilkes Booth to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln.

On this date: In 1846, U.S. annexation of California was proclaimed at Monterey after the surrender of a

Mexican garrison. In 1898, the United States annexed Hawaii.

In 1919, the first Transcontinental Motor Convoy, in which a U.S. Army convoy of motorized vehicles crossed the United States, departed Washington, D.C. (The trip ended in San Franergy company's collapse. (Lay was later convicted of fraud and conspiracy, but died in July 2006 before he could be sentenced.) Jeff Smith, pub-lic television's popular "Frugal Gourmet" until a sex scandal ruined his career, died at age 65.

Five years ago: Some 20,000 people gathered inside Staples Center in Los Angeles for a memorial service honoring the late king of pop, Michael Jackson, who was tearfully described by his 11-year-old daugh-ter, Paris-Michael, as "the best father you could ever imagine." Britain unveiled a Hyde Park memorial to mark the fourth anniversary of the London transit system bombings that claimed 52 victims. Pope Benedict XVI called for a new world financial order guided



VIEWS PAGE: Views@yankton.net

Capitol Notebook Susan Wismer Makes A Point In Susy Blake

BY BOB MERCER State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The question stopped coming after a few days. Maybe it was because of my answer.

I would simply shrug my shoulders when people asked about Susy Blake of Sioux Falls as the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor.

Then I would say she did have one truly amazing achievement while she was in the Legislature. An idea so good that the Republi-

can majorities in the House and the Senate had to pass it. It was her solution to the prob-

lem of food-tax refunds. Many people from low-income

households weren't applying to get their money back. The refund program had become an embar-

rassment to Republicans. They passed the refund program in 2004 at the request of then-Gov. Mike Rounds, a Republican.

It served as a defense against a ballot measure that called for repealing the sales tax on many food purchases.

Voters rejected the tax repeal. It received 123,210 yes votes and 255,855 no votes.

But not many people went through the steps to get their refunds. Because of the low volume, administrative costs were relatively high.

Eight years later, Susy Blake submitted what would be her final piece of legislation. She proposed abolishing the refund program and giving the money to Feeding South Dakota.

It was a home run. Of her 23 co-sponsors in the two chambers, 11 were Republicans.

Sen. Corey Brown, R-Gettysburg, correctly identified the constitutional weakness of her legislation. Because it named a specific organi-

Brown could have made sure the bill died. Instead he made sure it lived.

Brown's amendment removed Feeding South Dakota and said the Department of Social Services could make grants from the leftover money.

> The Senate approved the revised version 26-9* and the House agreed 61-6.

Blake served in the state House of Representatives from 2009 through 2012. She didn't introduce any legislation in her first session.

In her second, she sponsored one bill. It became law. HB 1189 prohibited insurers from asking whether a person was a victim of domestic violence.

Her third year saw Blake introduce three bills. All failed. In her fourth and final session, Blake put in the Feeding South Dakota idea.

One point Rep. Susan Wismer of Britton is trying to make, as the Democratic nominee for governor, is there can be better ways to reach budget decisions.

She opposes many cuts made in 2011 by Republicans at Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard's request.

That's the beauty of her choice of Susy Blake to be her running mate. Susy Blake very much proves Susan Wismer's point.

— The nine senators who voted against the amended version were Republicans Art Fryslie of Willow Lake, Tom Hansen of Huron, Phyllis Heineman of Sioux Falls, Kent Juhnke of Vivian, Elizabeth Kraus of Rapid City, Bruce Rampelberg of Rapid City, Tim Rave of Baltic, Larry Rhoden of Union Center and Mike Vehle of Mitchell.

- Six House members voted against the final version. They were Republicans Lance Carson of Mitchell, Brian Gosch of Rapid City, Jenna Haggar of Sioux Falls, Shawn Tornow of Sioux Falls, Kim Vanneman of Ideal and Dean



Bob

MERCER

Sally Whiting Jo Ann Wiebelhaus Brenda Willcuts Jackie Williams

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CISCO temper 6, 1919.) In 1937, the Second Sino-Japan-

ese War erupted into full-scale conflict as Imperial Japanese forces attacked the Marco Polo Bridge in Beijing. In 1941, U.S. forces took up posi-

tions in Iceland, Trinidad and British Guiana to forestall any Nazi invasion, even though the United States had not yet entered the Second World War.

In 1952, the Republican National Convention, which nominated Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower for president and Sen. Richard Nixon for vice president. opened in Chicago.

In 1954, Elvis Presley made his radio debut as Memphis, Tennessee, station WHBQ played his first recording for Sun Records, "That's All Right."

In 1964, the National League staged a come-from-behind ninth-inning victory as it defeated the American League 7-4 in the All-Star Game played at New York's Shea Stadium.

In 1976, President and Mrs. Gerald R. Ford hosted a White House dinner for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.

In 1981, President Ronald Reaaan announced he was nominating Arizona Judge Sandra Day O'Connor to become the first female justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1983, 11-year-old Samantha Smith of Manchester, Maine, left for a visit to the Soviet Union at the personal invitation of Soviet leader Yuri V.

Andropov. In 1987, Lt. Col. Oliver North began his long-awaited public testimony at the Iran-Contra hearing, telling Congress that he had "never carried out a single act, not one," without authorization.

Ten years ago: Former Enron chairman Kenneth Lay was indicted on criminal charges related to the en-

FROM THE BIBLE

Show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. James 2:1. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Honored

Pat Nolz, Yankton

I would like to take this time to thank the Yankton Elks Lodge No. 994 for presenting me with the Enrique S. Camarena Award. Thanks to Jim Van Osdel, John Cornette and Sheriff Jim Vlahakis for the wonderful ceremony.

From the Yankton Police Department, I would like to thank Chief Brian Paulson for his part in the nomination and words during the ceremony. Lt. Mike Burgeson, Sgts. Dean Larson and Jason Foote and Cpl. Brad Parker for their nomination letters.

I would like to give a special

ethics, dignity and the search to the common good in the third encycli-cal of his pontificate.

One year ago: A de Havilland DHC-3 Otter air taxi crashed after tak-ing off from Soldotna, Alaska, killing all 10 people on board. Andy Murray became the first British man in 77 years to win the Wimbledon title, beatng Novak Djokovic 6-4, 7-5, 6-4 in the

Today's Birthdays: Musician-conductor Doc Severinsen is 87. Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCul-lough is 81. Rock star Ringo Starr is 74. Comedian Bill Oddie (TV: "The Goodies") is 73. Singer-musician War-ren Entner (The Grass Roots) is 71 Rock musician Jim Rodford is 69. Actor Joe Spano is 68. Pop singer David Hodo (The Village People) is 67. Country singer Linda Williams is 67. Actress Shelley Duvall is 65. Actress Roz Ryan is 63. Actor Billy Campbell is 55. Actor Robert Taylor is 54. Rock musician Mark White (Spin Doctors) is 52. Singer-songwriter Vonda Shepard is 51. Actor-comedian Jim Gaffigan is 48. Rhythm-and-blues musician Ricky Kinchen (Mint Condition) is 48. Actress Amy Carlson is 46. Actress Jorja Fox is 46. Actress Cree Summer is 45. Actress Robin Weigert is 45. Actress Kirsten Vangsness is 42. Actor Troy Garity is 41. Actress Berenice Bejo is 38. Actor Hamish Linklater is 38. Olympic silver and bronze medal figure skater Michelle Kwan is 34. Rapper Cassidy is 32 Country singer Gabbie Nolen is 32.

Actor Ross Malinger is 30. Thought for Today: "It takes people a long time to learn the difference between talent and genius, especially

thank you to my first grade

teacher Dores Allan, who sur-

the ceremony. Doris also pre-

sented me with an elk pin that

belonged to her grandfather. I

Doris remembered me after all

special teachers are. They help

guide you through your grow-

ing years and remember you

long after. Last but not least,

thank you to all of my family

and friends for attending the

Thank you to everyone that

gave a "Congratulations," this

ceremony and sharing the

evening with me.

means a lot.

am very much honored that

of these years. It shows how

prised me with her presence at

zation, it was prohibited as what's known as a special bill

Getting Hobby Lobby Right

BY MICHAEL REAGAN

CagleCartoons.com

Hillary Clinton called the Hobby Lobby decision "deeply disturbing."

The White House reacted like the world had just ended.

Harry Reid promised that Democrats in Congress would "fight to preserve women's access to contraceptive coverage and keep bosses out of the examination room.

All this liberal hysteria followed the Supreme Court's ruling on Monday that for-profit employers who have religious objections cannot be forced to provide their employees with contraception coverage under the rules of ObamaCare.

The challenge to what's left of ObamaCare in the Hobby Lobby case was brought to the Supreme Court by Hobby Lobby, a national chain of craft stores owned by evangelical Christians from Oklahoma.

Hobby Lobby's owners, and the owners of other businesses that supported them, weren't seeking to deprive their 13,000 employees of all contraception coverage in their health plans, just certain kinds that they had religious and moral objections to.

The business owners didn't want to be forced by ObamaCare mandates to provide the morning-after pill and certain intrauterine devices because they considered those contraceptive methods to be the equivalent of an abortion.

Of course, liberals and progressives - i.e., most of the mainstream Bicoastal media don't care what a bunch of religious people from Oklahoma think.

Freedom of religion my hat. Barack, Hillary and Harry believe "free" contraception for every American woman is a new constitutional right — and companies should be forced to pay for every dime of it.

Hillary, showing her famous empathy for poor people like her, blurted out her knee-jerk spin:

'It's very troubling that a sales clerk at Hobby Lobby who needs contraception, which is pretty expensive, is not going to get that service through her employer's health care plan because her employer doesn't think she should be using contraception."

Hillary got it doubly wrong. She made it seem that contraception is affordable only to non-rich people like her and that Hobby Lobby was seeking to deny its employees all

contraception coverage.

Wink of Howes

But exaggeration and fear-mongering is part of the Democrat game plan. They want all women to think the Hobby Lobby ruling is just the latest campaign in the never-ending Republican/conservative war on

women.

Democrats already are sending out emails, trying to raise money and rally voters to fight the assault on their contraceptive "rights."

They're accusing Hobby Lobby's owners of wanting to force their religious beliefs on women, yet Democrats think it's perfectly moral and just to use government to force their non-religious beliefs on the owners.

The news media, of course, played along with Democrats. Instead of treating the Supreme Court's decision as news — and explaining what

it did and did not mean for women and business owners - the media focused on the politics and the war on women.

The reality of the Hobby Lobby ruling is that no one is telling women they can't get contraceptives. What they are saying is that in some cases you are going to have to pay for them yourself.

What a concept! BYOC — Buy Your Own Contraceptives!

I have a question for all you poor women, like Hillary, who think that having to pay for your own contraception is some sort of government oppression:

Did you ever think of asking the man you're having sex with to buy his own condoms? Or do you think the government should provide those also?

Nobody's taking your contraceptive options away. You still have plenty of choices. Purchase your own birth control. Don't have sex. Get a new job.

Nobody is forced to go to work for Hobby Lobby or any other company. If you're not happy with your employer's contraception benefit package, find another job where they'll provide all the free things you want.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder of the email service reagan.com and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at www.reagan.com and www.michaelereagan.com. Send comments to

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