

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Technology And Water Supplies

OMAHA WORLD-HERALD (July 16): It's no surprise that a large portion of venture capital goes toward the "cool" stuff. Stuff such as phone apps that help people improve the way they do social networking, order pizza or keep up with Hollywood celebrities.

That's fine, but it's encouraging to read in *Modern Farmer* magazine that some investors are turning their attention to supporting innovative ideas for efficient water use.

Technology that promotes prudent use of this essential resource for agriculture and other needs might not sound cool to some, but that is just the type of scientific advancement 21st-century agriculture needs. At present, less than 1 percent of U.S. venture capital goes toward water-efficiency breakthroughs.

Reporting by Circle of Blue, a research/journalist group that studies water issues, recently pointed out a key reason why the world needs technological innovation on water needs:

"Aquifers that nourish some of the richest farmland and the largest countries are under stress. Aquifers in California's Central Valley, India's Ganges Plain, the grasslands of northern China and the Arabian Peninsula are all shrinking."

Water scarcity has dramatically reduced cattle numbers in the southern Plains and spurred the state government in Kansas to rework its water laws and begin a process for crafting a 50-year statewide water plan.

In Nebraska — which leads the nation with 8.3 million acres in irrigation — a state water task force this year developed legislation that's launched a statewide collaboration to strengthen water sustainability.

Meanwhile, the ongoing drought in California is projected to spur farmers to let 800,000 acres lie fallow this year due to water shortages. The catastrophic drought has spurred some Bay Area investors to begin putting money into new ideas for water sustainability.

This issue relates directly to the University of Nebraska's Daugherty Water for Food Institute and its annual conference, set for October. The annual event attracts water experts from around the world.

Development of water-efficiency technology may never be considered as cool as phone apps, but in a world facing growing water and food challenges, such investment is critical for urban and rural folks alike.

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.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, July 28, the 209th day of 2014. There are 156 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 28, 1914, World War I began as Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

On this date: In 1540, King Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, was executed, the same day Henry married his fifth wife, Catherine Howard.

In 1655, French dramatist and novelist Cyrano de Bergerac, the inspiration for a play by Edmond Rostand, died in Paris at age 36.

In 1794, Maximilien Robespierre, a leading figure of the French Revolution, was sent to the guillotine.

In 1821, Peru declared its independence from Spain.

In 1928, the Summer Olympic games opened in Amsterdam.

In 1932, federal troops forcibly dispersed the so-called "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans who had gathered in Washington to demand payments they weren't scheduled to receive until 1945.

In 1945, a U.S. Army bomber crashed into the 79th floor of New York's Empire State Building, killing 14 people. The U.S. Senate ratified the United Nations Charter by a vote of 89-2.

In 1959, in preparation for statehood, Hawaiians voted to send the first Chinese-American, Republican Hiram L. Fong, to the U.S. Senate and the first Japanese-American, Democrat Daniel K. Inouye, to the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he was increasing the number of American troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 "almost immediately."

In 1976, an earthquake devastated northern China, killing at least 242,000 people, according to an official estimate.

In 1984, the Los Angeles Summer Olympics opened.

In 1989, Israeli commandos abducted a pro-Iranian Shiite Muslim cleric, Sheikh Abdul-Karim Obeid, from his home in south Lebanon. (He was released in January 2004 as part of a prisoner swap.)

Ten years ago: The Democratic National Convention in Boston nominated John Kerry for president. A car bomb exploded outside a police station used as a recruiting center in Baqouba, Iraq, killing 70 Iraqis. Francis Crick, a Nobel Prize-winning scientist who co-discovered the double-helix structure of DNA, died in San Diego at age 88.

Five years ago: The Senate Judiciary Committee approved Judge Sonia Sotomayor to be the U.S. Supreme Court's first Hispanic justice, over nearly solid Republican opposition. Anti-abortion activist Scott Roeder pleaded not guilty in Wichita, Kansas, to killing late-term abortion provider George Tiller. (Roeder was later convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison.) The Rev. Frederick J. Eikerenkoetter II, better known as "Reverend Ike," who preached the gospel of material prosperity to millions nationwide, died in Los Angeles at age 74.

One year ago: Pope Francis' historic trip to his home continent of South America ended after a marathon week in Brazil. In southern Italy, 39 people were killed when a tour bus plunged into a ravine. An armed thief stole a \$136 million diamond collection from a jewelry show at the Carlton International Hotel in Cannes, France. William Warren Scranton, 96, a former presidential candidate, ambassador to the U.N. and Pennsylvania governor, died in Montecito, California. Actress-singer Eileen Brennan, 80, died in Burbank, California.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Andrew V. McLaglen is 94. Actor Darryl Hickman is 83. Ballet dancer-choreographer Jacques d'Amboise is 80. Musical conductor Riccardo Muti is 73. Former Senator and NBA Hall of Famer Bill Bradley is 71. "Garfield" creator Jim Davis is 69. Singer Jonathan Edwards is 68. Actress Linda Kelsey is 68. TV producer Dick Ebersol is 67. Actress Sally Struthers is 66. Actress Georgia Engel is 66. Rock musician Simon Kirke (Bad Company) is 65. Rock musician Steve Morse (Deep Purple) is 60. CBS anchorman Scott Pelley is 57. All-country-rock musician Marc Perlman is 53. Actor Michael Hayden is 51. Actress Lori Loughlin is 50. Jazz musician-producer Delfeayo Marsalis is 49. Former hockey player turned general manager Garth Snow is 45. Actress Elizabeth Berkley is 42. Singer Afroman is 40. Country musician Todd Anderson (Heartland) is 39. Rock singer Jacoby Shaddix (Papa Roach) is 38. Country singer Carly Goodwin is 33. Actor Dustin Milligan is 29. Actor Nolan Gerard Funk is 28. Rapper Soulja Boy is 24. Pop/rock singer Cher Lloyd (TV: finalist "The X Factor") is 21.

Thought for Today: "It is impossible to write ancient history because we lack source materials, and impossible to write modern history because we have far too many." — Charles Peguy, French poet and writer (1873-1914).

FROM THE BIBLE

Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil. Matthew 5:37. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

All Wet?

Jim Van Osdel, Yankton
A couple years ago, an acquaintance lamented the fact he had to pay a substantial water bill, in the several hundreds of dollars, to the City of Yankton. I told him I had a very small water bill. He wanted to know why. I replied that the grass in my lawn is four inches tall when I am done mowing, that the taller grass shades itself and, thus, does not need to be watered. But, he sniffed, he liked his

lawn looking nice and he needed to water. Your choice, I concluded.

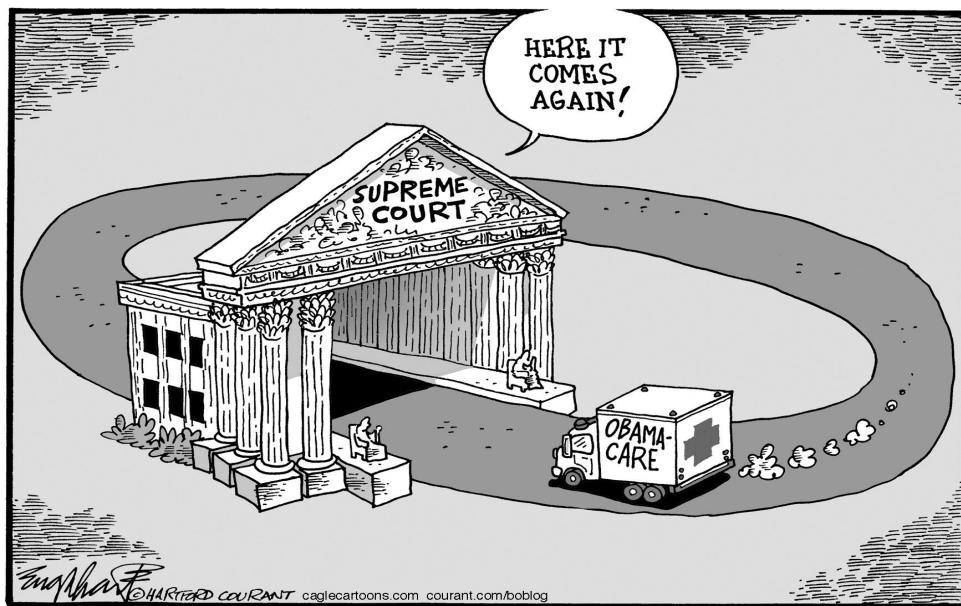
Now, the school budget is overdrawn and taxpayers are told the lines have been drawn tight. I would like to know what the cost is to the taxpayers for watering school property lawns in a summer of unprecedented rainfall. One of the coffee table visitors remarked the other day that one of the school's lawn irrigation systems was in operation while it was raining. "Why would they be on at all this year," was the table topic of the moment.

If you don't have the money, raise the mower cutting height and shut off the irrigation. That's what some of us taxpayers have to do to meet our tax obligations.

And speaking of water use or abuse, I'd like to know the amount the City of Yankton spends on irrigation. The way the City water bills have been hiked, there must be a budgeted amount. Sure, I realize the Broadway boulevard needs to look nice but, again, why in a summer of unprecedented rainfall cannot the sprin-

gleders be shut off when it rains at least once a week? I do not water my grass and, believe me, the grass seems to keep growing.

And the irrigation system on 27th Street boulevard leading to Fox Run is always leaking. It obviously never gets shut off and that water leaking under and coming up through the expansion breaks of 27th Street cannot be doing the concrete any good at all when it freezes.



Capitol Notebook

Change For Cropland Could Impact Other Property Types

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Across South Dakota, farmers have been facing large increases in the property taxes on their cropland in recent years.

In many counties they could face even larger increases come 2020.

That is the year when a state restriction is scheduled to expire.

The restriction, set in state law, currently limits the increases in assessed values of agricultural properties.

Assessments are the county-assigned values on which property taxes are levied.

State law restricts the assessment increases to 25 percent per year for agricultural land. But that protection comes off for the taxes payable in 2020.

What is looming for cropland is important for all property owners to know.

The tax load, potentially, could shift among classes of property if agricultural assessments continue increasing faster than assessments on other properties.

This could mean more tax burden on crop producers and less tax burden for homeowners, business people and ranchers, depending on the county.

In 2008 the Legislature adopted a new system that assesses the values of agricultural properties based on their potential agricultural income.

The first rounds of property taxes paid under this productivity approach came in 2011.

Agricultural properties were split into categories of cropland and non-cropland. A complex formula uses soil type, crop planted, prices and yields to reach the productivity values.

There have been three trends since the new approach took effect.

All but one of the 66 counties will be at the correct productivity values for non-cropland for 2015. The exception is Lake County.



Bob MERCER

But only six counties will be at the correct productivity values for cropland in 2015. They are Clay, Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, Sanborn and Union.

All of the other 60 counties had more than a 15 percent difference between where the average 2014 assessed values were per acre of cropland and where they would be for 2015 if productivity was fully used.

But because of the limits on assessment increases, none of those counties will catch up for 2015.

That includes 15 counties more than 50 percent behind.

They are Brown, Butte, Campbell, Corson, Day, Dewey, Edmunds, Faulk, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Perkins, Shannon, Walworth and Ziebach.

Brown County, for example, had an average assessed value on cropland of \$1,365.81 for 2014. Based on the productivity value, the average should be \$2,106.47 for 2015.

But because of the state law that limits the annual increases per year, the Brown County average value per acre of cropland will only rise the maximum 25 percent to \$1,707.26 for 2015.

Brown County's cropland assessments should go up an average of 56 percent per acre but won't. Non-cropland assessments need to increase 3.5 percent and will.

What it means is non-cropland owners generally are paying at productivity values while the cropland owners generally aren't.

Eventually they will.

For taxes payable in 2014, agricultural property assessments totaled \$27 billion. Owner-occupied homes had total assessments of more than \$25.2 billion. Commercial assessments were more than \$15 billion. Utilities totaled more than \$1.5 billion.

It marks the first time since 2001 that agricultural assessments were the largest group ahead of owner-occupied homes.

The shift is starting.

Michelle Malkin

The Workers Obama Robbed

BY MICHELLE MALKIN

Creators.com

The White House pretended to champion American workers this week with gimmicky initiatives on federal job training and "workplace innovation." But far from the Beltway dog-and-pony show, a group of American workers ruthlessly shafted by the Obama administration was finally getting some real support — and inching toward justice.

It was five years ago this summer that 20,000 white-collar nonunion workers from Delphi (a leading auto parts company spun off from GM in 1999) had their pensions sabotaged as part of a rotten White House deal with Big Labor. Two court rulings this summer have given the victims hope. Their plight must not be forgotten.

Remember when Washington rushed to nationalize the U.S. auto industry with \$80 billion in taxpayer "rescue" funds and avoid contested court termination proceedings? Behind closed doors, the Obama administration's auto team schemed with labor bosses from United Automobile Workers to preserve union members' costly pension funds by screwing over their nonunion counterparts. The federally backed Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp., which had the fiduciary duty to represent the best interests of all the Delphi workers, helped sacrifice the nonunion employees at the UAW altar. While union pensions were topped up with tax-subsidized auto bailout funds, nonunion pensioners were left high and dry.

In addition, the nonunion pensioners lost all of their health and life insurance benefits. The abused workers — most from hard-hit northeast Ohio, Michigan and neighboring states — had devoted decades of their lives as secretaries, technicians, engineers and sales employees at Delphi/GM. Some workers saw up to 70 percent of their pensions vanish.

Last year, the Office of the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program confirmed what Delphi workers maintained from the start: They were victimized because, in the words of the IG, they had "no leverage." No crony ties. No deep pockets. No legal representation during President Obama's closed-door negotiations with Big Labor donors.

As GOP Rep. Mike Turner put it, the IG report gave lie to the White House claim that it did not influence the bankruptcy process. "The administration thwarted the bankruptcy process for a politically expedient outcome," Turner said. Treas-

ury used "their influence to make certain that the outcome was politically desirable to the administration, and the Delphi salaried retirees (lost) their pensions."

The Delphi workers have fought for five cruel years to force Treasury and the PBGC to disclose the full truth. The scheming feds have defied the workers' public records requests and withheld more than 7,000 pages of critical emails and documents from the workers, who've been mired in time-consuming litigation that has cost millions of dollars.

"For more than four years, U.S. taxpayer-paid government lawyers have taken advantage of every procedural roadblock, the law allows to hide emails and other evidence that the court has ordered be given to us," the Delphi Salaried Retirees Association explained. "President Obama has ignored our direct appeal that he order a review of his Auto Task Force's handling of our pension plan during the expedited GM bankruptcy directed by Treasury."

But here are some glimmers of hope: Last month, U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan in Washington ordered Treasury to cough up documents from Obama's auto team leading up to the termination of the Delphi workers' pensions. And on Monday, U.S. District Court Judge Arthur Tarnow in Detroit ruled that the PBGC can no longer sit on documents requested by Delphi salaried retirees suing for full restoration of their pensions.

Tarnow blasted the feds for their foot-dragging: "PBGC has been under court order since March 9, 2012, to respond to plaintiff's discovery requests and has only asserted boilerplate objections. Filing boilerplate objections to discovery requests is tantamount to filing no objections at all. The court strongly condemns the practice of asserting boilerplate objections to every discovery request." In addition, the inspector general for the PBGC has agreed to a request from House Republicans to investigate federal delays on the workers' pension determinations.

The next time Democrats claim to care about American workers, remember the sacrificial lambs of Delphi, their heartache and their ongoing legal battle against stonewalling bureaucrats. The crony-driven Obama culture of corruption built that.

Michelle Malkin is the author of "Culture of Corruption: Obama and his Team of Tax Cheats, Crooks and Cronies" (Regnery 2010). Her e-mail address is malkinblog@gmail.com.