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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Ratify The UN Disabilities Treaty

LOS ANGELES TIMES (July 28): The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should not be controversial: It requires equal access for the disabled and bans discrimination against them in all countries that sign on. There is no question that the Senate should ratify it. The only issue is why it has any opponents at all.

Modeled after the landmark Americans With Disabilities Act, the treaty has been ratified by 146 countries and the European Union and has legions of supporters in the United States — veterans groups of different generations, business and civic leaders. It also has bi-partisan roots: The George W. Bush administration participated in drafting it and President Obama signed it. Although there are a number of Republicans who oppose it, Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona) is an outspoken advocate, as is former Republican Sen. Majority Leader Bob Dole, who was disabled during his service in World War II. Now 91 and using a wheelchair, Dole recently made his second poignant trip to the Capitol to promote the treaty, urging former colleagues to vote for what he called “not a Republican or a Democrat treaty.”

In late 2012, many did vote to ratify it — 61 senators, in fact. But treaties need 67 votes, a two-thirds majority of the Senate. The treaty was opposed by 38 Republican senators, many of whom argued that it would undermine U.S. sovereignty and cede too much decision-making authority to the United Nations. Strong opposition also came from vocal advocates for home schooling who were alarmed by a passage in the treaty that they believe might override parents’ ability to make decisions about their own disabled children. In fact, the treaty does nothing of the sort.

The bottom line is that the treaty does not trump or alter U.S. laws or those of individual states. And if there is any lingering doubt of that among skeptics, the treaty’s backers in the Senate say they will add clarifying language as part of the ratification process to make sure there are no ambiguities. Senate ratification will bring U.S. influence and innovation to other countries that are in the process of expanding access and opportunity for the disabled. This treaty isn’t about parents losing authority over their kids or the U.S. losing sovereignty over its citizens. It’s about access for the disabled, and a world in which they can travel and thrive without facing discrimination. That’s something we all should want. The Senate should finally ratify this treaty.

Russia On The Hot Seat

BOSTON HERALD (July 30): European leaders are now convinced that imposing harsher sanctions on entire sectors of the Russian economy is worth the price they’ll pay (literally) on the homefront. And the White House yesterday announced the U.S. is also preparing sanctions targeting the broader Russian economy. President Obama says the sanctions with “bigger bite” will make a weak Russian economy even weaker.

We’d like to think it will all make a difference to Vladimir Putin, but that view seems optimistic in the extreme.

Sanctions imposed thus far have done little to deter Putin or his proxies battling in eastern Ukraine, even in the wake of global condemnation for the downing of a civilian passenger jet by Russian-backed separatists.

The U.S. upped the pressure this week by releasing images that point to the locations inside Russia from which artillery has been fired over the border into Ukraine. Russia responded to the release by labeling the satellite images “fakes.” But really, what else can Putin’s minions say?

The announcement of the sanctions yesterday was accompanied by new demands that Russia end its aggression in eastern Ukraine. But Secretary of State John Kerry himself said the Russians have indicated not “a shred of evidence that they really have a legitimate desire to end the violence and end the bloodshed.” Leaving the rest of us with barely a shred of hope.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, July 31, the 212th day of 2014. There are 153 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 31, 1964, the American space probe Ranger 7 reached the moon, transmitting pictures back to Earth before impacting the lunar surface.

On this date: In 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette, a 19-year-old French nobleman, was made a major-general in the American Continental Army.

In 1875, the 17th president of the United States, Andrew Johnson, died in Carter County, Tennessee, at age 66.

In 1919, Germany’s Weimar Constitution was adopted by the republic’s National Assembly.

In 1930, the radio character “The Shadow” made his debut as narrator of the “Detective Story Hour” on CBS Radio.

In 1933, the radio series “Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy,” made its debut on CBS radio station WBBM in Chicago.

In 1942, Oxfam International had its beginnings as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was founded in England.

In 1954, Pakistan’s K2 was conquered as two members of an Italian expedition, Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli, reached the summit.

In 1964, country singer-songwriter Jim Reeves, 40, and his manager, Dean Manuel, were killed when their private plane crashed in bad weather near Nashville.

In 1972, Democratic vice-presidential candidate Thomas Eagleton withdrew from the ticket with George McGovern following disclosures that Eagleton had once undergone psychiatric treatment.

In 1973, Delta Air Lines Flight 723, a DC-9, crashed while trying to land at Boston’s Logan International Airport, killing all 89 people on board.

In 1989, a pro-Iranian group in Lebanon released a grisly videotape showing the body of American hostage William R. Higgins, a Marine lieutenant-colonel, dangling from a rope.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Moscow.

Ten years ago: The Vatican issued a document denouncing feminism for trying to blur differences between men and women and threatening the institution of families based on a mother and a father. Actress Virginia Grey died in Woodland Hills, California, at age 87.

Five years ago:

Three American tourists were arrested by Iran on suspicion of espionage while hiking along the Iraq-Iran border. (Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal were sentenced to eight years after being convicted on spy-related charges, but were released after more than two years; Sarah Shourd was released on health grounds after 14 months.) Space shuttle Endeavour and its seven astronauts returned to Earth, completing a long but successful construction job that boosted the size and power of the international space station.

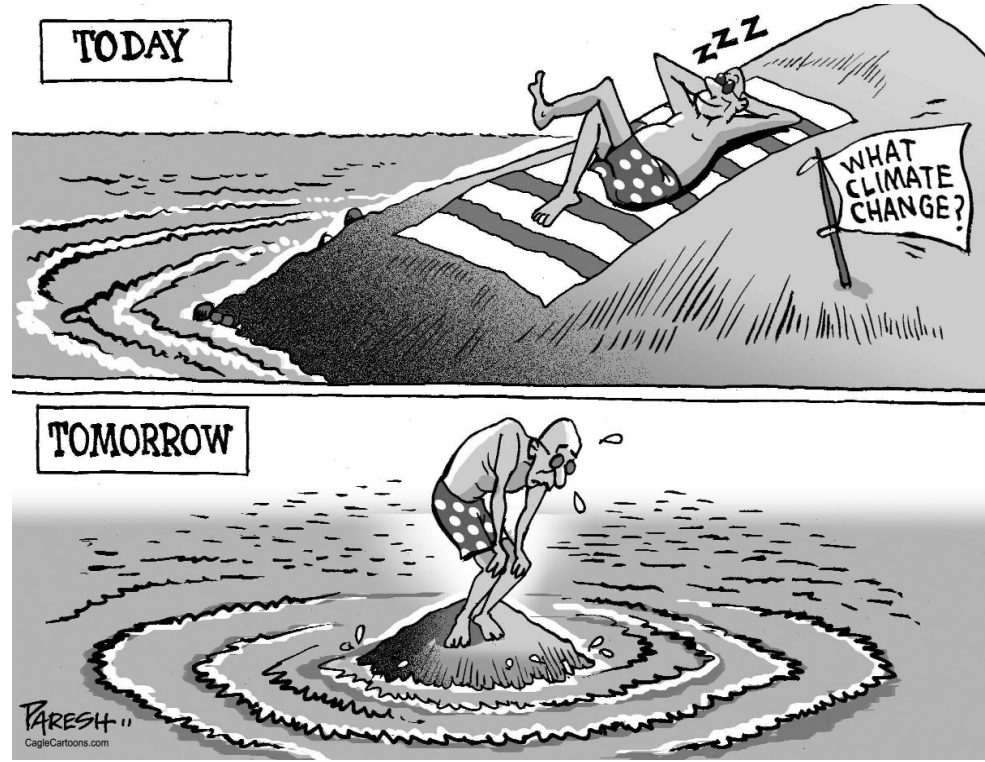
One year ago: President Barack Obama’s national security team acknowledged for the first time that, when investigating one suspected terrorist, it could read and store the phone records of millions of Americans. Voters in Zimbabwe went to the polls in national elections that were won by President Robert Mugabe amid opponents’ allegations of fraud.

Today’s Birthdays: Actor Don Murray is 85. Jazz composer-musician Kenny Burrell is 83. Actor Geoffrey Lewis is 79. Actress France Nuyen is 75. Actress Susan Flannery is 75. Singer Lobo is 71. Actress Geraldine Chaplin is 70. Former movie studio executive Sherry Lansing is 70. Singer Gary Lewis is 69. Actor Lane Davies is 64. International Tennis Hall of Famer Evonne Goolagong Cawley is 63. Actor Barry Van Dyke is 63. Actor Alan Autry is 62. Jazz composer-musician Michael Wolff is 62. Actor James Read is 61. Actor Michael Biehn is 58. Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick is 58. Rock singer-musician Daniel Ash (Love and Rockets) is 57. Entrepreneur Mark Cuban is 56. Rock musician Bill Berry is 56. Actor Wesley Snipes is 52. Country singer Chad Brock is 51. Musician Fatboy Slim is 51. Rock musician Jim Corr is 50. Author J.K. Rowling is 49. Actor Dean Cain is 48. Actor Ben Chaplin is 45. Actor Loren Dean is 45. Actress Eve Best is 43. Retired NFL quarterback Gus Frerotte is 43. Actress Annie Parisse is 39. Actor Robert Telfer is 37. Country singer-musician Zac Brown is 36. Actor-producer-writer B.J. Novak is 35. Actor Eric Lively is 33. Country singer Blaire Stroud (3 of Hearts) is 31. Singer Shannon Curfman is 29. Actor Rico Rodriguez is 16.

Thought for Today: “The art of life is to show your hand. There is no diplomacy like candor. You may lose by it now and then, but it will be a loss well gained if you do. Nothing is so boring as having to keep up a deception.” — E.V. Lucas, English author and critic (1868-1938).

FROM THE BIBLE

And He said to them, “Do you not yet understand?” Mark 8:21.
Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Writer’s Block | William Kerr

What Will Our World Be Like In 2050?

BY WILLIAM KERR

For the Press & Dakotian

If you knew that just 36 years from now, up to a billion people on our planet would be fleeing their homes on islands and coastal areas because of rising waters and that those of us who do not have to move because of rising waters would be developing emotional “homesickness” for the climate we used to have (or so predicts *Smithsonian* magazine), what would you be willing to do starting now to prevent that?

And if you knew that life everywhere would get more dangerous because of a crime rate rising by 4.19 cases per 100,000 people per degree of hotter temperature, and that northern states’ winters would last just two weeks instead of months and our summers would be like those now in Texas and Louisiana, what would you be willing to do starting now to avoid that?

And social disruption — things like domestic violence, police violence and even war — are all increased by hotter weather?

All of the above conditions have been forecast by scientists for the year 2050.

One scientist conducted an interesting experiment: He got a friend to drive up to a green light and stop and recorded the length of time before the motorist behind honked or shouted at the motionless car. He found that for every degree of temperature rise, there was a corresponding decline in the time before the motorist behind made objection with horn or mouth.

Not only are we humans more violent prone with temperature rises, but along with that, we might well have diminishing resources along with rising population, diminishing economic conditions and diminishing food supplies.

We know that it is mainly the increase of carbon dioxide in our air that is causing global warming. And we know that burning coal and oil to generate electricity is one of the biggest sources of the carbon dioxide. Another gas that contributes to global warming is methane gas from manure left laying around, especially on large farms, ranches and feed lots. Then there is automobile exhaust which also puts carbon dioxide in the air.

We also know that one way to reduce the carbon dioxide going into the air is to use renewable energy that produces no carbon dioxide — that is, solar, wind and geothermal energy.

So, according to *The Nation* magazine,

what are you willing to do now to avoid reaching the above conditions by the year 2050?

Use less electrical energy in your home?
Car pool and drive less to use less gasoline or oil?

Eat less beef?
Have renewable energy installed at your home?

Or, more to the point, are you also willing to promote more governmental creation of renewable energy immediately and requiring that manure either be changed into fertilizer or treated to eliminate the methane gas to avoid the predicted 2050 conditions?

How? By writing, emailing or calling your elected representatives and telling them what you want them to do.

And here’s more: The scientific consensus is that human civilization cannot survive a temperature increase this century of more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

We’ve already warmed the earth this century by 0.8 degrees Celsius and have only 1.2 degrees left before we are done in.

We are already beyond the point of no return, called the tipping point, so we can’t reduce the amount of CO2 already in our atmosphere, but with a maximum effort we can slow or stop the increase in CO2 into our atmosphere and slow or stop the corresponding temperature rise and extend the time left when the earth will still be habitable for humans.

It seems to me that we have one big weapon at our disposal that can change things. That is our vote. If we want to change the conditions predicted by our scientists for 2050, we have to get serious about un-electing those who are not pushing for lots more renewable energy immediately, eliminating the use of coal and oil in electric generating plants, regulating the disposal of cattle manure and reducing the overall inequality brought about by letting the rich spend as much as they want to elect those who will do their will rather than “legislate the will of the people” as our Constitution requires.

An outstanding example of not legislating the will of the people is the current legislation on abortion and gun control. On every poll I have seen a very large majority of “the people” have wanted more gun control and less restriction on abortion. Instead we have no increase on gun control and more and more restriction on abortion overall.

Your vote can make the difference. Think of it like a muscle ... use it or lose it!



William KERR

YOUR LETTERS

SD And Marijuana

John Magnuson, Yankton
It’s time that South Dakota reforms laws prohibiting the use of marijuana by law-abiding citizens. While this view is almost politically incorrect and is not expressed in political circles as being viable, it ought to be.

Marijuana is less harmful than tobacco, alcohol, aspirin and pharmaceutical pain killers, yet the common chemical of THC in marijuana is safe and effective for common pain relief, treatment for PTSD, for nausea, and as an appetite stimulant, for asthma, glaucoma and as a sleeping aid. These claims are well substantiated and appear in readily accessible common literature available to all of us. Marijuana was commonly used for these reasons since antiquity and was only prohibited during the hysteria of reefer madness, which began in the 1930s and accelerated in the 1960s.

A *New York Times* bestseller, “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander, chronicles how anti-drug laws have brought about the mass incarceration of people of color and have demoralized neighborhoods due to selective enforcement practices. The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the developed world and has spent billions on a hypocritical drug war that has failed miserably and which never should have been waged to begin with. This book should be mandatory reading for all federal prison wardens and for Yankton’s local law enforcement officers, respectfully. A cost benefit analysis in changing our state laws would save on law enforcement and bring in

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTIAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTIAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer’s full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net/.

new taxes creating a positive cash flow of up to a billion dollars annually.

South Dakota should approve recreational use of marijuana, should approve it as a cash crop, should fund university studies to determine commercial uses and should tax all sales as seen fit. Tax monies should be used to support the advanced education of our youth in technical and appropriate professional fields. It’s time to end an ill-advised, puritanical prohibition of a weed that grows wild on our CRP land and is used by many. Let’s end the black market, end devastating incarceration, regulate it and tax it.

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**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: It’s Your Right To Know!