

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

School Funding Needs More Than Big Ideas

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS (July 2): The one-room school-house days are over.

Today, education — and teacher recruitment and retention — is big business. And it's competitive.

If you don't believe that, look to one of our area school districts. At Mobridge-Pollock, a signing-bonus policy has been instituted.

Teachers and administrators who signed their 2015-16 contracts were eligible for a \$2,000 signing bonus. Support staff was eligible for \$750 bonuses.

The Mobridge-Pollock School District used federal impact aid money, which the district gets because some of its land (such as along the Missouri River) does not contribute to property taxes. That's a creative solution to South Dakota's ongoing teacher shortage.

But the real story might be this: Mobridge-Pollock is still looking for two math teachers for its high school — even with the bonus. And the bonus has not been enough to keep teachers in every case, Superintendent Tim Frederick said.

This underlines the constant funding battle South Dakota schools face. Even when schools have the money to offer, sometimes getting a full slate of great teachers is difficult.

Mobridge-Pollock's bonus idea is the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that would appeal to Gov. Dennis Daugaard's Blue Ribbon Task Force on education funding.

Last week, the task force met in Aberdeen to brainstorm with the public around one question: "What possibilities are there for meaningfully funding K-12 education for our kids and our communities?"

While we are firm supporters in creative thinking and great ideas such as signing bonuses, when appropriate, we also are suspicious of folks who say we can cut our way to success.

That's not been a model that has shown any great promise in South Dakota.

School districts here for too long have gone without.

And while the task force might generate some great ideas, it will still likely be up to the South Dakota Legislature — traditionally not a friend of schools — to support those ideas.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. states' education spending averaged \$10,700 per pupil in 2013. In South Dakota, that number is \$8,470, putting our state in the bottom 10 for spending.

Belt-tightening is a given, but at some point, our state lawmakers and Gov. Daugaard — the people who truly hold the purse strings — need to step up and make meaningful education funding a priority.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, July 6, the 187th day of 2015. There are 178 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On July 6, 1945, President Harry S. Truman signed an executive order establishing the Medal of Freedom. Nicaragua became the first nation to ratify the United Nations Charter.

On this date: In 1415, Czech church reformer Jan Hus, condemned for heresy, was burned at the stake in Konstanz in present-day Germany.

In 1535, Sir Thomas More was executed in England for high treason.

In 1777, during the American Revolution, British forces captured Fort Ticonderoga.

In 1865, the weekly publication "The Nation," the self-described "flagship of the left," made its debut.

In 1917, jazz trumpeter and singer Louis Armstrong died in New York at age 69.

In 1933, the first All-Star baseball game was played at Chicago's Comiskey Park; the American League defeated the National League, 4-2.

In 1944, an estimated 168 people died in a fire that broke out during a performance in the main tent of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Hartford, Connecticut.

In 1957, Althea Gibson became the first black tennis player to win a Wimbledon singles title as she defeated fellow American Darlene Hard 6-3, 6-2.

In 1964, the movie "A Hard Day's Night," starring The Beatles, had its world premiere in London. The British colony Nyasaland became the independent country of Malawi.

In 1971, jazz trumpeter and singer Louis Armstrong died in New York at age 69.

In 1988, 167 North Sea oil workers were killed when explosions and fires destroyed a drilling platform. Medical waste and other debris began washing up on New York City-area seashores, forcing the closing of several popular beaches.

In 1994, 14 firefighters were killed while battling a several-days-old blaze on Storm King Mountain in Colorado.

Ten years ago: New York Times reporter Judith Miller was jailed after refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating the leak of undercover CIA operative Valerie Plame's identity (Miller was jailed for 85 days before agreeing to testify). London was selected to host the 2012 Olympics. The Group of Eight summit opened in Gleneagles, Scotland. L. Patrick Gray, the acting FBI director during Watergate, died in Atlantic Beach, Florida, at age 88. Author Evan Hunter (aka Ed McBain) died in Weston, Connecticut, at age 78.

Five years ago: Queen Elizabeth

II addressed the United Nations for the first time since 1957 during her first New York visit in over 30 years; she then laid a wreath at ground zero. President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed talk of a rift at a White House meeting. The Obama administration filed suit in Phoenix to block Arizona's toughest-in-the-nation immigration law. (In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out major parts of the law, but upheld the power of police to check the immigration status of those they stop for other reasons.) Lindsay Lohan was sentenced to 90 days in jail and 90 days in a residential substance-abuse program after a judge found the actress had violated her probation in a 2007 drug case by failing to attend alcohol education classes. (Lohan ended up serving 14 days behind bars and was released on Aug. 2.)

One year ago: Israel arrested six Jewish suspects in the slaying of a Palestinian teenager who was abducted and burned alive, apparently in retaliation for the killings of three Israeli teenagers. Novak Djokovic won his second Wimbledon title and denied Roger Federer his record eighth by holding off the Swiss star in five sets, 6-7 (7), 6-4, 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-4.

Today's Birthdays: Former first lady Nancy Reagan is 94. Actor William Schallert is 93. Singer-actress Della Reese is 84. The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is 80. Actor Ned Beatty is 78. Singer Gene Chandler is 75. Country singer Jeannie Seely is 75. Actor Burt Ward is 70. Former President George W. Bush is 69. Actor-director Sylvester Stallone is 69. Actor Fred Dryer is 69. Actress Shelley Hack is 68. Actress Nathalie Baye is 67. Actor Geoffrey Rush is 64. Actress Allyce Beasley is 64. Rock musician John Bazz (The Blasters) is 63. Actor Grant Goodeve is 63. Country singer Nanci Griffith is 62. Retired MLB All-Star Willie Randolph is 61. Jazz musician Rick Braun is 60. Actor Casey Sander is 60. Country musician John Jorgenson is 59. Former first daughter Susan Ford Bales is 58. Hockey player and coach Ron Duguay is 58. Actress-writer Jennifer Saunders is 57. Rock musician John Keeble (Spandau Ballet) is 56. Actor Brian Posehn is 49. Political reporter/moderator John Dickerson (TV: "Face the Nation") is 47. Actor Brian Van Holt is 46. Rapper Inspectah Deck (Wu-Tang Clan) is 45. TV host Josh Elliott is 44. Rapper 50 Cent is 40. Actress Tia Mowry is 37. Actress Tamera Mowry is 37. Comedian-actor Kevin Hart is 36. Actress Eva Green is 35. Actor Gregory Smith is 32. Rock musician Chris "Woody" Wood (Bastille) is 30. Rock singer Kate Nash is 28. Actor Jeremy Suarez is 25.

Thought for Today: "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently." — Rosa Luxemburg, Polish-German revolutionary (1871-1919).

FROM THE BIBLE

Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." Exodus 24:7. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

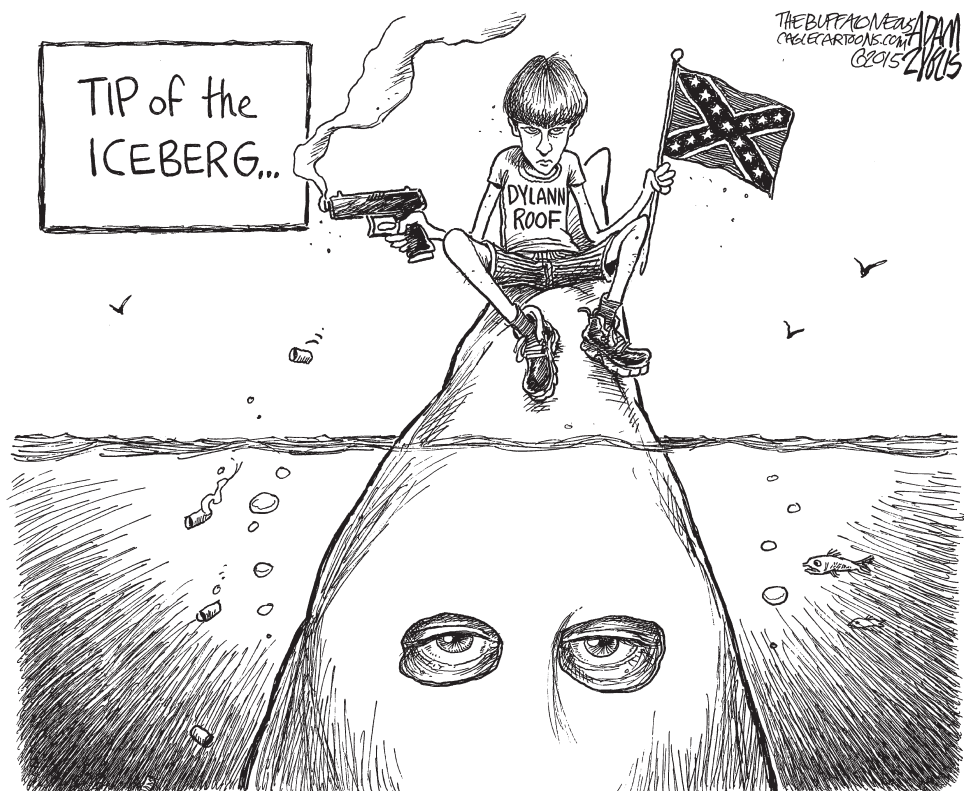
Pointing Out Racism

Fernande Bitsos, Yankton

Thank you, Mr. Hertz, for your excellent and "true" description of racism (Press & Dakotan, June 23). It does exist unfortunately in the good USA, especially when we are confronted and SHOCKED by ISIS beheading or burning human beings. Yet, when a young American man — thoroughly RACIST — walks in, and is welcomed in an African-American Christian Church, spends nearly an hour listening to sermons

and viciously started shooting more than once at nine parishioners, his "racism" could not have been described in any other way as some so-called good citizens would like to.

Hopefully your commentary will remind people to reflect on America's past history of Southern Plantations, slaves, sale of slaves (thus breaking families), unpunished hanging of slaves, plantation owners rape of slave women ... one would wonder "who" should be hated, the African black slaves or the American White owners?



Pierre Report

GOAC Meets In Summer Session

BY REP. JEAN HUNHOFF

R-District 18 (Yankton)

The Government Audit & Operations Committee (GOAC) met in Pierre on June 29.

• The first agenda item was discussion of the corrective action plans for audit findings for the Single Audit Report for the FY ended June 30, 2014, for the Department of Revenue (DOR). The audit recommended that controls needed to be implemented to ensure that bank taxes are accurately recorded and distributed on the State's accounting system.

The department reported they had converted to a new IT program and during the conversion there were inconsistencies that had occurred impacting the collection system. In addition, the department had hired a Bank Franchise Tax Specialist to focus on implementing processes and procedures to maintain accuracy and timeliness in the collections. They are also moving to an electronic system to further improve the process.

There also was an audit recommendation regarding the controls to be implemented to ensure cigarette distribution reports are submitted timely to the DOR and also reviewed to ensure that reversions to tribal reservations are accurate. The Department has assigned two staff to review the reversions for proper distribution and tracking. They are working to improve the process to identify the distributors selling cigarettes to tribal businesses. Again much of the process involves paper rather than electronic means. The state currently stores and manages the physical inventory of cigarette stamps. The Department did say they were researching how other states manage this process. Apparently there are vendors that do the storage and distribution of the stamps for some states. This is an option that will be further discussed by the department.

• The Department of Motor Vehicles presented an update to the title change time frame that vehicle owners were experiencing.

The Director stated that the department daily receives somewhere between 1,800-2,500 title change requests. Over the last five years, the title change requests have gone from 357,401 in 2010 to 407,892 projected in 2015.

Five key elements are used when evaluating a motor vehicle title application:

- proper chain of ownership,
- proper title assignment,
- odometer disclosure,
- damage disclosure (repealed effective

July 1)

— and Lien notation.

This process is also entrenched in paper data.

The department said the goal for title change requests is to complete within two weeks. An analysis of time frames on title change requests in surrounding states was anywhere from eight weeks in Minnesota to the least being six weeks in Nebraska and North Dakota.

In the discussion, the committee consistently asked for more electronic means in all the processes that were addressed in the audit findings and recommendations.

• The Department of Social Services provided an overview of Behavioral Health Services in South Dakota.

Behavioral Health work groups were established in 2011 by Gov. Daugaard after reorganization of behavioral health services. The work group subcommittees were: Commitment Laws, Essential Services, Geriatric Services and Prevention Services. Recommendations were made from each of the subcommittees and implemented.

Maps for the Behavioral Regions were presented and HSC admissions from the regions included: 331 admissions from Region 1, which is western South Dakota; Region 2: 188 admissions, which is the middle of South Dakota; Region 3: 282 admissions, which is the northeast portion of the state; Region 4: 490 admissions, which is the southeast corner; and Region 5: 539 admissions, which is the greater Sioux Falls area.

• GOAC is asking departments for outcome measures to assess if dollars expended are resulting in successful programming. Substance abuse services measured the percentage of clients in FY 14 that were not readmitted to services after their discharge. South Dakota's percentage was 91 percent compared to a national average of 54 percent.

The Criminal Justice Initiative provides evidence based services to justice involved clients. The individual is referred to evidence based programming based on a validated risk



J. Hunhoff

instrument tool to determine needs for substance abuse and criminal thinking services. Services are available in every judicial circuit.

There are 15 community providers in the regions providing substance abuse curriculum and four community providers providing criminal thinking curriculum. There also

is a rural pilot program in the Fifth (Brown County) and Sixth (Winner) Judicial Circuits via technology.

Of the FY 15 Criminal Justice referrals received to date, 99 percent were able to be serviced in the community. The criminal thinking services program is six months in length, with the substance abuse services program being 4 months. There is also a six-month after-care substance abuse program. To date, 72 percent of substance abuse treatment referrals are currently receiving services or have successfully completed treatment. Seventy-one percent of criminal thinking referrals are currently receiving services or have successfully completed treatment.

The measurement outcomes focus on the utilization behavioral services post participation in the program. This would be reflected in decrease in the Medicaid costs of hospitalization and decrease use of emergency room services. Preliminary data show a reduction in ER visits equating to 335 less claims. Average cost per ER claim is \$5,566. Hospital days were decreased by 1,290 days. Average hospital claim was \$1066 per day. These results are from a DSS perspective.

The Judicial system data outcomes will be focusing on keeping the individuals out of prison reducing incarceration costs.

One issue that continues to be a problem for some counties is forensic evaluations, which are evaluations that are performed to assist the court in determining competency to stand trial or criminal responsibility of a defendant charged with a crime. A defendant may be in jail awaiting trial. By law, counties are responsible for any necessary forensic evaluations on defendants charged with a crime.

Not a responsibility of the state or the HSC, but as a courtesy to counties to help defray their costs, HSC performs three forensic evaluations per month. They are conducted by HSC psychiatrists and take a substantial amount of time and staff resources. Counties are charged the \$600 admission fee, but do not pay the daily rate. The fee does not cover the costs for patient care nor the state's costs to conduct the evaluation.

There is a backlog of these evaluations and therefore costs continue to escalate for the counties, and this is especially true for Minnehaha County. A meeting was held between DSS and the stakeholders from Minnehaha County to discuss this issue and ways to facilitate more evaluations in the community. The reality is forensic evaluations are not part of the mission of HSC. The question is should this service continue to be provided or should the counties access the private sector? The discussion included what resources are available in the state to facilitate the evaluations.

• The Committee received a written report on the actions by the Associated School Board to address the shortfall in its health insurance program.

Effective July 1, the SDSDBF will transition third-party administration to Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Dakota. The new arrangement will allow the percentage of billed charges to increase from 28 percent to 43 percent plus access to Wellmark's national and global network. The transition will also reduce the number of unique health plans offered from 268 to 8, effective July 1, 2015. With the reduction in the number of plans, efficiency in claim processing will improve. There will be a pharmacy benefit manager in place which will assist in managing costs in that arena.

In addition to the transition to Wellmark, SDSBF expanded the scope of work with Consulting, LLC, to assist in strategic planning and TPA transition and contracted with AON, a globally renowned actuarial firm, to provide detailed biannual IBNR analysis, an annual funding study, claims analysis and other duties as directed by the fund. The fund also hired Eide Baily as the CPA firm.

The next scheduled meeting is Aug. 25. The agenda will be posted on the Legislative Research Council website.

If you have questions/concerns, please contact me at 665-1463.

WRITE US: Letters, Yankton Press & Dakotan, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57