

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

Levy: Only One Choice For County

The Yankton County Commission has a tough decision to make today (Wednesday) — but really, it has only one choice. The commissioners are scheduled to meet today to decide whether to pursue a new taxation levy for roads and bridges, as provided by a new law passed last winter by the Legislature. Faced with numerous infrastructure issues and not enough money to begin paying for them, the commissioners have little choice but to approve the levy and raise taxes in order to pay for those needed repairs.

This reality became clear during a public information meeting Monday night. The plain truth is, there is no way Yankton County can tackle these repairs without instituting the levy. The measure passed by the Legislature allows for a maximum levy of 90 cents per \$1,000 of valuation, or \$84.15 per \$100,000 of non-agricultural land and \$1.62 per acre on agricultural land. The funds generated by this levy can only be used for roads and bridges, of which Yankton County has plenty: There are more than 260 miles of paved roads and dozens of bridges of varying sizes and degrees of disrepair. It's estimated the cost of repairing just a mile of road can run up to \$200,000.

Deteriorating infrastructure is an epidemic across this country, and governing bodies ranging from federal entities down to township boards are confronting a long list of fixes that need to be made to roadways and bridges. (This creates an interesting quandary, as County Commission chairman Todd Woods pointed out Monday night: In trying to figure out where to spend limited dollars, do you fix the bridges or do you fix the roads that lead to them?) With tight funding sources and very thin reserves, new taxation appears to be the only way to make the needed repairs.

The levy was created in such a way that it cannot be taken on casually or recklessly. A county must prove that it is already doing everything in its power to address these needs without the mechanism. That includes having a wheel tax in place, which Yankton County does. And if even those things aren't enough, the levy becomes an option.

It's a new tax, which no one likes, but there is no practical alternative. The county needs good roads for its residents and to promote economic growth. The taxpayers demand good roads and are constantly communicating with county commissioners about nuisance roadways and bridges. Plus, the James River bridge on old Highway 50 between Yankton and Mission Hill needs replacement, and that will be a major burden.

The commissioners really have no choice, and they should endorse the levy when they hold their special meeting today to meet the July 15 deadline for the new tax. It's the best course for the county, which cannot limp along with crumbling roadways that will not get better one their own.

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IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, July 15, the 196th day of 2015. There are 169 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 15, 1971, President Richard Nixon delivered a televised address in which he announced that he had accepted an invitation to visit the People's Republic of China.

On this date: In 1799, French soldiers in Egypt discovered the Rosetta Stone, which proved instrumental in deciphering ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

In 1834, the Spanish Inquisition was abolished more than 3 1/2 centuries after its creation.

In 1870, Georgia became the last Confederate state to be readmitted to the Union. Manitoba entered confederation as the fifth Canadian province.

In 1932, President Herbert Hoover announced he was slashing his own salary by 20 percent, from \$75,000 to \$60,000 a year; he also cut Cabinet members' salaries by 15 percent, from \$15,000 to \$12,750 a year.

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman was nominated for another term of office by the Democratic national convention in Philadelphia.

In 1954, a prototype of the Boeing 707, the model 367-80, made its maiden flight from Renton Field south of Seattle.

In 1964, Sen. Barry M. Goldwater of Arizona was nominated for president by the Republican national convention in San Francisco.

In 1975, three American astronauts blasted off aboard an Apollo spaceship hours after two Soviet cosmonauts were launched aboard a Soyuz spacecraft for a mission that included a linkup of the two ships in orbit.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter delivered his "malaise" speech in which he lamented what he called a "crisis of confidence" in America.

In 1985, a shockingly gaunt Rock Hudson appeared at a news conference with actress Doris Day (it was later revealed Hudson was suffering from AIDS).

In 1992, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton was nominated for president at the Democratic national convention in New York.

In 1995, Park Seung-hyun, a 19-year-old sales clerk, was rescued after being buried in the rubble of the Sampoong Department Store in Seoul, South Korea, for 16 days.

Ten years ago: A federal appeals court ruled that a Guantanamo detainee who once was Osama bin Laden's driver could be tried by a military tribunal. (However, the Supreme Court struck down the tribunals in June 2006, saying they violated U.S. and international law. Saïm Ahmed Hamdan was later convicted by a military court of material support for terrorism and sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison, but his conviction was tossed out

by a federal appeals court; Hamdan was given credit for time served and freed.) Bankrupt energy company Enron Corp. agreed to pay a settlement of up to \$1.5 billion to resolve claims that it had gouged California and other western states during the 2000-2001 energy crisis.

Five years ago: After 85 days, BP stopped the flow of oil into the Gulf of Mexico using a 75-ton cap lowered onto the well earlier in the week. The Securities and Exchange Commission announced that Goldman Sachs & Co. would pay a record \$550 million penalty to settle charges that the Wall Street giant had misled buyers of mortgage investments. Argentina became the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage.

One year ago: Israel resumed heavy bombing of Gaza after the Islamic militant group Hamas rejected an Egyptian truce plan and instead unleashed more rocket barrages at the Jewish state. A suicide bomber blew up a car packed with explosives near a busy market and a mosque in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least 89 people. At least 22 people died when a Moscow subway train derailed during rush hour.

Today's Birthdays: Author Clive Cussler is 84. Actor Ken Kercheval is 80. Former Sen. George V. Voinovich, R-Ohio, is 79. Actor Patrick Wayne is 76. Actor Jan-Michael Vincent is 71. Rhythm-and-blues singer Millie Jackson is 71. Rock singer-musician Peter Lewis (Moby Grape) is 70. Singer Linda Ronstadt is 69. Rock musician Artimus Pyle is 67. Arianna Huffington, co-founder of The Huffington Post news website, is 65. Actress Celia Irmir is 63. Actor Terry O'Quinn is 63. Rock musician Marky Ramone is 59. Rock musician Joe Satriani is 59. Country singer-songwriter Mac McAnally is 58. Model Kim Alexis is 55. Actor Willie Aames is 55. Actor-director Forest Whitaker is 54. Actress Lolita Davidovich is 54. Actress Shari Headley is 52. Actress Brigitte Nielsen is 52. Rock musician Jason Bonham is 49. Actress Amanda Foreman is 49. Actor Kristoff St. John is 49. Rock musician Phillip Fisher is 48. Rhythm-and-blues singer Stokley Carmichael is 48. Actor-comedian Eddie Griffin is 47. Actor Stan Kirsch is 47. Actor Reggie Hayes is 46. Actor-screenwriter Jim Rash is 44. Rock musician John Dolmayan is 43. Actor Scott Foley is 43. Actor Brian Austin Green is 42. Rapper Jim Jones is 39. Actress Diane Kruger is 39. Actress Lana Parrilla is 38. Rock musician Ray Toro (My Chemical Romance) is 38. Actress Laura Benanti is 36. Actor Travis Fimmel is 36. Actor Taylor Kinney is 34. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kia Thornton (Divine) is 34. Actor-singer Tristan "Mack" Wilds is 26.

Thought for Today: "A sure way to lose happiness, I found, is to want it at the expense of everything else." — Betty Davis, American actress (1908-1989).

FROM THE BIBLE

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

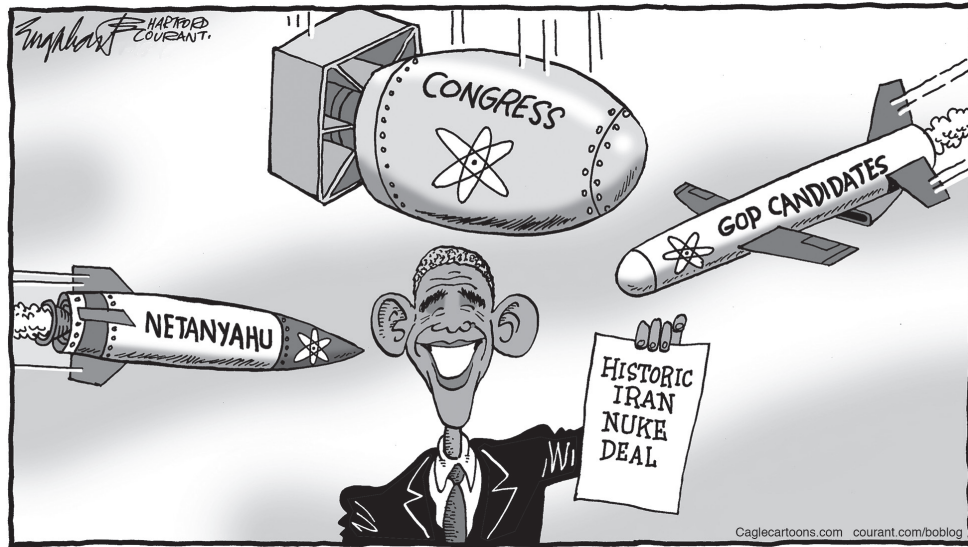
Facility Follow-Up

Dan Rafferty, Yankton
I want to thank the Yankton School District for conducting the public meeting about renovations to Crane Youngworth Field or Williams Field.

One of my comments might be misunderstood. When I was discussing tradition and still being down at Walnut, I meant the

old high school location in what is now Walnut Village.

Even though the majority of views expressed were different than mine, I know whatever direction the school board chooses, it will be a success because people do care about this issue. I wish the school board and administration officials good luck in this discernment process.



Executive Order May Derail Money Train

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Content Agency

President Obama is said to be considering an executive order requiring federal contractors to disclose their political spending. He should sign it immediately.

But he should go further and ban all political spending by federal contractors that receive more than half of their revenue from government.

Ever since the Supreme Court's shameful Citizens United decision in early 2010, big corporations have been funneling large amounts of cash into American politics, often secretly.

That's bad enough. But when big government contractors do the funneling, American taxpayers foot the bill twice over: We pay their lobbying and campaign expenses. And when those efforts nab another contract, we pay for stuff we often don't need.

This is especially true for defense contractors, the biggest federal contractors of all.

A study by St. Louis University political scientist Christopher Witko reveals a direct relationship between what a corporation spends on campaign contributions and the amount it receives back in government contracts.

A case in point is America's largest contractor, Lockheed Martin. More than 80 percent of Lockheed's revenues come from the U.S. government, mostly from the Defense Department.

Yet it's hard to say Lockheed has given American taxpayers a good deal for our money.

For example, Lockheed is the main contractor for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter — the single most expensive weapons program in history, and also one of the worst. It's been plagued by so many engine failures and software glitches that Lockheed and its subcontractors practically had to start over this year.

Why do we keep throwing good money after bad?

Follow the money behind the money. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Lockheed's political action committee spent more than \$4 million on the 2014 election cycle and has already donated more than \$400,000 to candidates for 2016.

The top congressional recipient of Lockheed's largesse is Mac Thornberry (R-Texas), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Second-highest is Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-New Jersey), chair of the defense

subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. Third is Kay Granger (R-Texas), the defense subcommittee's vice chair.

Lockheed also maintains a squadron of Washington lawyers and lobbyists dedicated to keeping and getting even more federal contracts. The firm spent more than \$14 million lobbying Congress last year.

Remarkably, 73 out of Lockheed's 109 lobbyists are former Pentagon officials, congressional staffers, White House aides or members of Congress.

You and I and other taxpayers shouldn't have to pay Lockheed's lobbying expenses, but these costs are built into the overhead Lockheed charges the government in its federal contracts.

And we shouldn't foot the bill for Lockheed's campaign contributions, but these are also covered in the overhead the firm charges — including the salaries of executives expected to donate to Lockheed's political action committee.

The 10 largest federal contractors are all defense contractors, and we're indirectly paying all of them to lobby Congress and buy off politicians.

To state it another way, we're paying them to hire former government officials to lobby current government officials, and we're also paying them to bribe current politicians — all in order to keep or get fat government contracts that often turn out to be lousy deals for us.

Fifty-four years ago, President Dwight Eisenhower warned of the dangers of an unbridled "military-industrial complex," as he called it. Now it's a military-industrial-congressional complex. After Citizens United, it's less bridled than ever.

That's why President Obama shouldn't stop with an executive order requiring government contractors to disclose their political contributions. He should ban all political activities by corporations getting more than half their revenues from the federal government. That includes Lockheed and every other big defense contractor.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on Netflix, iTunes and Amazon.

Pope Should Stick To Religion?

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Content Agency

"A new command I give you: love one another." — John 13:34

So said a troubled rabbi named Jesus 2,000 years ago in his Last Supper with his disciples. Shortly afterward he was captured, tortured and executed. The Bible says that three days later, he rose from death. The faith founded upon that resurrection claims, according to the Pew Research Center, upwards of 2 billion adherents worldwide.

Ponder that. On a planet of 7 billion souls, roughly one out of every three of us is governed by that simple, difficult command. Or, at least, so it is in theory. The reality, of course, is another matter.

If that command were taken seriously by 2 billion people — or even any significant portion thereof — can you imagine what that might look like? Would children still run barefoot through the favelas stacked high above Rio? Would women still struggle to get by on less than \$3 a day in the shanties of Freetown? Would the streets of Miami still be home to the mentally ill? Would a child in Baltimore still be sitting in class, hungry? Would corporations still be people?

Last week, Pope Francis went to South America. And, as has become routine for this pope, he upset some people. In addresses to the faithful, he offered a bare-knuckles critique of the excesses of capitalism. While conceding the need for economic growth, the pontiff excoriated a model that concentrates wealth at the top and leaves the poor to scramble for the remains.

"Dung of the devil," he called it. "A new colonialism," he called it. "A subtle dictatorship," he called it.

"As Christians," he told an audience in Paraguay, "we have an additional reason to love and serve the poor; for in them we see the face and the flesh of Christ, who made himself poor so as to enrich us with his poverty."

This was not well-received in some quarters, particularly in the United States where unfettered capitalism is regarded by some as a kind of secular religion. Patrick Buchanan probably spoke for many when he wrote in a column,

"Pope Francis is the infallible custodian of [the] truths Christ taught. Is that not sufficient, Your Holiness? Why not leave the socialist sermons to Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren?" It is telling that Jeb Bush and Rick Santorum made a similar argument last month in criticizing a papal letter on the environment.

The pope, they say, should stick to religion — to "making us better people," as Bush put it — and leave the state of the world to others. But if you understand the "new command" Jesus left his followers, then you know this is a distinction without a difference: faith requires concern for the state of the world.

It's fascinating. Jesus said absolutely nothing about same-sex marriage. But if the pontiff had issued a fiery blast against the practice, it is the safest of bets that Buchanan, Bush and Santorum would be cheering him, and no one would dare lecture him to stay in his lane.

By contrast, Jesus spoke repeatedly and eloquently about the obligation to care for those in need — "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine," he says in the book of Matthew, "you did for me." Yet the pope has somehow crossed a line when he speaks about the victimization of the vulnerable?

That's the nonsensical judgment of those for whom "faith" evidently imposes no burden, demands no change, requires only a vague effort to become a better person. Yet you will find no such complacency in Jesus' "new command."

"Love one another," he said. And love is not talk. Love is compassion in action. It is intolerance of suffering. It is urgent empathy. And it is something 2 billion of us are told to give. Candidly, most of us don't seem to take the command all that seriously. But this pope inspires you to wonder:

What would the world be like if we did?

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