



# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861  
*Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078*

## OPINION | OUR VIEW

### City On Right Path With Water Issue

When it comes to the City of Yankton's water plant plans, there are no easy options. There are no completely painless courses of action. And there is no way the city can sidestep this issue any longer. Based on what we have been seeing and hearing from the City Commission, we believe Yankton is on the right course toward finding the best path available to address the city's

water issues. That course must include spreading as much of the \$26 million burden for the upgrades as possible to all users, particularly those who use the most water.

The city has made clear its intention of finding its own solution to the situation. On Monday, the City Commission dismissed a proposal from B-Y Water to meet a portion of Yankton's water needs.

Last month, city finance officer Al Viereck laid out several options to the city commissioners for funding the proposed improvements to Yankton's water intake system. Some of the funding options called for a property tax opt-out, while others employed variations of surcharges, which would be assessed each month before a drop of water is consumed, and/or consumption fees. All proposals also include borrowing money from the State Revolving Fund (SRF).

Any proposal that calls for using property taxes — and thus calling for an opt-out of the property tax freeze — seems inherently flawed. The biggest hang-up is that some of the city's biggest water users enjoy property tax exemptions and, thus, would not shoulder a direct impact from the process. That means more of the burden would be shifted elsewhere to those who use less water. That simply does not seem fair or practical. Plus, passing an opt-out of the property tax freeze has become a dicey proposition in recent years, and the numbers here make it more unattractive: If all \$26 million were to be culled from property taxes, the average increase in equalized value for every \$100,000 of property value would be \$262 annually. And we reiterate, the largest users would not be subject to this increase.

Instead, the better approaches call for a combination of surcharges and consumption fees that could raise the funds while also spreading the burden/pain around.

One proposal would add a \$13.62 surcharge to the bill, then charge \$5.33 for every 1,000 gallons used (the average consumer uses 5,000 gallons a month), with the average residential user facing a monthly fee of \$40.27.

Another proposal would establish the \$13.62 surcharge, but then not charge the consumption fee until the first 1,000 gallons are used, with a charge of \$5.85 per 1,000 gallons following that first 1,000-gallon threshold. It's estimated the average residential user would be charged \$37.02 per month. However, 501 customers would see no increase in their bills. While this method would promote water conservation, in theory, it does move away from the principle of shared burden that we believe would work best in this situation.

It should be noted that a level of \$35 per month in charges for the average water user who consumes 5,000 gallons is needed to achieve a 10 percent discount on the SRF loan. The use of property taxes would not bring the rates of the highest water users — those immune from the tax increase — to the \$35 level needed to qualify for the discount. That casts still more doubts on the feasibility of the property tax route.

City officials appear to be moving in a direction that steers clear of the property tax pot and toward surcharges and usage. In the long run, this is the wisest and fairest approach to the problem.

kmh

## THE VIEWS PAGE

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at [views@yankton.net](mailto:views@yankton.net).

## TODAY IN HISTORY

### By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, June 12, the 163rd day of 2013. There are 202 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On June 12, 1963, civil rights leader Medgar Evers, 37, was shot and killed outside his home in Jackson, Miss. (In 1994, Byron De La Beckwith was convicted of murdering Evers and sentenced to life in prison; he died in 2001.)

**On this date:** In 1776, Virginia's colonial legislature became the first to adopt a Bill of Rights.

In 1898, Philippine nationalists declared independence from Spain.

In 1920, the Republican national convention, meeting in Chicago, nominated Warren G. Harding for president on the tenth ballot; Calvin Coolidge was nominated for vice president.

In 1939, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum was dedicated in Cooperstown, N.Y.

In 1942, Anne Frank, a German-born Jewish girl living in Amsterdam, received a diary for her 13th birthday, less than a month before she and her family went into hiding from the Nazis.

In 1956, the Flag of the United States Army was officially adopted under an executive order signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1963, one of Hollywood's most notoriously expensive productions, "Cleopatra," starring Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton and Rex Harrison, opened in New York.

In 1967, the Supreme Court, in *Loving v. Virginia*, struck down state laws prohibiting interracial marriages.

In 1982, a crowd estimated at up to 1 million people gathered in New York's Central Park to demand a superpower freeze on nuclear weapons.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan, during a visit to the divided German city of Berlin, publicly challenged Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev to "tear down this wall."

In 1991, Russians went to the polls to elect Boris N. Yeltsin president of their republic.

In 1994, Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were slashed to death outside her Los Angeles home. (O.J. Simpson was later acquitted of the killings in a criminal trial, but was eventually held liable in a civil action.)

**Ten years ago:** U.S. fighter jets bombed a suspected terrorist camp and troops stormed through Sunni Muslim towns in Iraq, seeking Saddam Hussein loyalists in one of the biggest American military assaults since the war began. Israel killed seven Palestinians in its third rocket

attack in 24 hours. Air France turned the oldest of its Concordes over to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Academy Award-winning actor Gregory Peck died in Los Angeles at age 87.

**Five years ago:** In a stinging rebuke to President George W. Bush's anti-terror policies, a deeply divided Supreme Court ruled that foreign detainees held for years at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba had the right to appeal to U.S. civilian courts to challenge their indefinite imprisonment without charges. Three heavily armed robbers stole two Pablo Picasso prints, "The Painter and the Model" and "Minotaur, Drinker and Women," plus two paintings by other artists from a museum in Sao Paulo, Brazil. (The works were later recovered.) Taiwan and China agreed to set up permanent offices in each other's territory for the first time in nearly six decades.

**One year ago:** Attorney General Eric Holder fended off Republican demands that he appoint a special counsel outside of the Justice Department to look into national security leaks. Democrat Ron Barber, who almost lost his life in the Arizona shooting rampage that wounded former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, won a special election to succeed her. Elinor Ostrom, 78, an Indiana University political scientist who to date is the only woman to have been awarded a Nobel Prize in economics, died in Bloomington, Ind.

**Today's Birthdays:** Banker/philanthropist David Rockefeller is 98. Former President George H.W. Bush is 89. Singer Vic Damone is 85. Songwriter Richard Sherman is 85. Actor-singer Jim Nabors is 83. Jazz musician Chick Corea is 72. Sportscaster Marv Albert is 72. Singer Roy Harper is 72. Pop singer Len Barry is 71. Rock singer-musician John Wetton (Asia, King Crimson) is 64. Rock musician Bun E. Carlos (Cheap Trick) is 62. Country singer-musician Junior Brown is 61. Singer-songwriter Rocky Burnette is 60. Actor Timothy Busfield is 56. Singer Meredith Brooks is 55. Actress Jenilee Harrison is 55. Rock musician John Linnell (They Might Be Giants) is 54. Rapper Grandmaster Dee (Whodini) is 51. Actress Paula Marshall is 49. Actress Frances O'Connor is 46. Actor Rick Hoffman (TV: "Suits") is 43. Actor Jason Mewes is 39. Actor Michael Muhney is 38. Blues musician Kenny Wayne Shepherd is 36. Actor Wil Horneff is 34. Singer Robyn is 34. Actor Dave Franco is 28. Country singer Chris Young is 28. Rap group MC Jay are 14. Actor Rylan Malgarini is 21.

**Thought for Today:** "It is impossible to defeat an ignorant man in argument." — William Gibbs McAdoo, American government official (1863-1941).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*Take the child and His mther, and flee to Egypt. Matthew 2:13.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

# A Nation Of Divisions

BY ROBERT B. REICH  
Tribune Media Services

Conservative Republicans in our nation's capital have managed to accomplish something they only dreamed of when Tea Partiers streamed into Congress at the start of 2011. They've basically shut down Congress. Their refusal to compromise is working just as they hoped: No jobs agenda. No budget. No grand bargain on the deficit. No background checks on guns. Nothing on climate change. No tax reform. No hike in the minimum wage. Nothing so far on immigration reform.

It's as if an entire branch of the federal government — the branch that's supposed to deal directly with the nation's problems, not just execute the law or interpret the law but make the law — has gone out of business, leaving behind only a so-called "sequester" that's cutting deeper and deeper into education, infrastructure, programs for the nation's poor, and national defense.

The window of opportunity for the president to get anything done is closing rapidly. Even in less partisan times, new initiatives rarely occur after the first year of a second term, when a president inexorably slides toward lame-duck status.

But the nation's work doesn't stop even if Washington does. By default, more and more of it is shifting to the states, which are far less gridlocked than Washington. Last November's elections resulted in one-party control of both the legislatures and governor's offices in all but 13 states — the most single-party dominance in decades.

This means many blue states are moving further left, while red states are heading rightward. It's as if we're seceding from each other without going through all the trouble of a civil war.

Minnesota's Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, for example, now controls both legislative chambers and the governor's office for the first time in more than two decades. The legislative session that recently ended resulted in a tax hike on top earners, to be used for early-childhood education and state universities. Minnesota also legalized same-sex marriage and expanded the power of trade unions to organize.

On the other hand, Kansas is about to shift taxes away from the wealthy and onto the middle class and poor by reducing the state's income tax and substituting a higher sales tax. And North Carolina millionaires are on the verge of saving at least \$12,500 a year from a pending income-tax cut even as sales taxes are raised on services that lower-income residents depend on.

Gay marriages are now recognized in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Colorado and Washington state permit the sale of marijuana. California is expanding a pilot program to allow nurse practitioners to perform abortions. Guns are harder to buy in New York and Connecticut.

But other states are heading in the opposite direction. They're enacting laws restricting access to abortions so



Robert  
**REICH**

tightly as to arguably violate the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. In Alabama, the mandated waiting period for an abortion is longer than it is for buying a gun. Meanwhile, some states are expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act while others are refusing to.

The states are even diverging on immigration, filling the void left by Washington's inaction. If you're an undocumented young person, you're eligible for in-state tuition at public universities in 14 states. But you might want to avoid even driving through Arizona, where state police are allowed to investigate the immigration status of anyone they suspect is here illegally.

Federalism is as old as the Republic, but not since the real Civil War have we witnessed such a clear divide between the states on such central issues affecting Americans.

Some might say this is a good thing. It allows more of us to live under governments and laws we approve of. And it encourages experimentation: Better to learn that a policy doesn't work at the state level than after it's

harmful the entire nation. As the jurist Louis Brandeis once said, our states are laboratories of democracy.

But the trend raises three troubling issues.

First, it leads to a race to the bottom. Over time, middle-class citizens of states with more generous safety nets and higher taxes on the wealthy can become disproportionately burdened as the wealthy move out and the poor move in, forcing such states to reverse course. If the idea of "one nation" means anything, it stands for us widely sharing the burdens and responsibilities of citizenship.

Second, it doesn't take account of spillovers. Semi-automatic pistols purchased without background checks in one state can easily find their way to another state where gun purchases are restricted. By the same token, a young person who receives an excellent public education courtesy of the citizens of one state is likely to move to another state where job opportunities are better. We are interdependent. No single state can easily contain or limit the benefits or problems it creates for other states.

Finally, it can reduce the power of minorities. For more than a century, "states rights" has been a euphemism for the efforts of some whites to repress or deny the votes of black Americans. Now that minorities are gaining substantial political strength nationally, devolution of government to the states could play into the hands of modern-day white supremacists.

A great nation requires a great, or at least functional, national government. The Tea Partiers and other government-haters who have caused Washington to all but close because they refuse to compromise are threatening all that we aspire to be together.

*Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of "Beyond Outrage," now available in paperback. He blogs at [www.robertreich.org](http://www.robertreich.org).*

are that thousands of new agents will be needed.

In addition to deciding which organizations qualify for tax exempt status, as in the case of tea party and patriot organizations recently targeted for prolonged, special scrutiny, our nation's revenuers will also be redefining "religious." Determining whether a religious or charitable institution qualifies for tax-exempt status has always been part of the IRS' dubious bailiwick, but Obamacare has upped the ante by requiring some religious affiliates to provide health care — such as contraception — that violates their conscience.

Whatever one's personal positions on reproductive matters, the historically higher standard of individual conscience has been scuttled by the Obama administration in deference to a universal health care plan that leaves the definition of religious organization and, therefore, conscience to a bureaucracy of accountants.

Even if one were disinclined to care much about other people's moral beliefs, there's something disconcerting about the Conga Line detail determining what constitutes religious enough. Those deemed not truly religious will be denied conscience protections, as has already occurred. Among other consequences, many charitable organizations that have served society's least fortunate will have to shutter their doors, inviting new legions to rely on taxpayer-funded social services.

Or is this, indeed, the point? Dependency, after all, is a constituency with life tenure.

Such concerns may seem remote, but freedom of conscience is fundamental to other freedoms we similarly take for granted. Obamacare largely dismisses such considerations and its punitive nature soon will be felt by more than those burdened by conscience. Come next January, as insurance rates climb and many businesses opt to pay government fines, sending their workers into government exchanges, all those people who believed, as promised, that they could keep the insurance they like will learn otherwise. Oops.

At the center of these disappointments and revelations will be the nation's new, expanded army of tax enforcers — this time examining not just your beliefs but your medical records.

No worries. Once you're medicated, the anxiety passes quickly. Eventually you will forget when everything wasn't absurd. And you will never be alone again. Ever.

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Kathleen  
**PARKER**

# Crisis Of Faith In Government

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — It is reassuring that in the midst of so much government dysfunction, the IRS has resolved the question of when and whether to tax tanning beds under the Affordable Care Act.

Do not be concerned about that giddiness you feel. You are not having a nervous breakdown but are suffering a symptom commonly associated with recognition that the absurd has become the accepted norm — and that you are, in fact, alone.

Indeed, the IRS' tanning ruling comes in the nick of time. Amid incessantly breaking news — NSA surveillance, IRS political targeting, DOJ seizing, and CIA shuffling — Americans were beginning to feel that no one over the age of 12 was in charge. The finger-pointing and blame-shifting have been a feast of cannibalizing acronyms.

"The CIA did it."  
"IRS pleads the fifth."  
"They've gone rogue in Cincinnati."  
What? No DOJ to rehab?  
But the night is young.

Lest you wilt from suspense, the tanning bed challenge has been resolved as follows: Obamacare, the concision of which even President Obama prefers to the name "Affordable Care Act," calls for a 10 percent sales tax every time some pale face exposes himself to potentially harmful, cancer-causing rays, thus affecting everyone's health insurance premiums. (Note to tanning bed businesses: Buh-bye, now).

But, wait, there's an exception: If such beds are offered as part of a gym or fitness center at no extra charge, no tax will be imposed.

Note to citizens: If you have inferred from the preceding that "risky" behavior will result in higher taxes, you get a blue ribbon in dot-connecting. Please join the NSA.

Despite the IRS' impressive resolution of the tanning bed conundrum, one is struck by the unfortunate timing of its several displays of (a) incompetence and/or (b) ideologically driven harassment — just when the agency is charged with implementing and overseeing large swaths of Obamacare.

As you doubtless recall from your careful reading of the health care legislation way back in 2009, the act includes at least 47 new tax provisions. Also, recall that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the ACA's individual mandate (you must buy insurance or else) by categorizing the mandate as a tax.

Which is to say, the IRS has some big work ahead. No one seems to know how much, though running estimates

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