

Education

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other states. The groups suggested new revenue sources including a corporate income tax and a \$1 tax on hotel rooms. Other suggestions included flexibility in spending education dollars and consolidating more school districts.

But mostly, the educators called on legislators to make K-12 funding a priority and to treat schools as an investment rather than an expense. They called on lawmakers to quit “shirking your responsibilities” by shifting the burden to local taxpayers with a reliance on opting out of the state property-tax limit.

“We have lost faith in the Legislature and the state of South Dakota,” one group said. “We need to restore some of the faith we have. Throw politics out the door.”

They also called for creating a positive message about South Dakota teachers and for encouraging more students to enter education.

South Dakota Secretary of Education Melody Schopp, a task force member, agreed with the need to focus on a positive message and on finding answers.

“What are the real issues and how do we find

solutions?” she asked. “We are done celebrating the problem.”

Teacher recruitment remains a nationwide problem, Schopp said. South Dakota needs to attract and retain teachers, she said. The state may also need to look at issues such as its number of school districts, its use of technology and how to reshape its classrooms.

Schopp hears many of the same concerns from South Dakota educators.

“We were in Rapid City (for a meeting) the day after the opt-out failed, and it was a huge letdown for educators. They felt bruised,” she said. “However, we hear teachers (across the state) have morale issues. We need to build their morale back up.”

GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT

Wednesday’s turnout in Yankton provided more encouragement that South Dakotans recognize the issues facing education, Sly said.

“It’s a balancing act. There are many challenges,” she said. “Not everyone will be happy (with the task force recommendations), but they’re not happy now.”

Sly acknowledged the skepticism surrounding the Blue Ribbon committee, given that South Dakota has had 11 task forces in 17 years dealing with educa-

tion funding. However, she pointed to the Blue Ribbon task force’s size and diverse membership, along with holding meetings across the state for grass roots input.

“Some things may be different than we have ever done before. And if people want the status quo, we’ll hobble along like we have been,” she said. “Ultimately, this is the beginning. The legislators are the determining factor.”

Daugaard’s leading role in the task force can play a major difference in influencing lawmakers, Sly said.

“Right now is the listening round. It’s everything the Legislature has to buy in,” she said. “It takes

(two-thirds) of the Legislature to pass a tax increase – plus one, the governor (who needs to sign the legislation).”

Soholt has seen the business community show a willingness to step up with backing for education if there are efficiencies and a value for the dollar.

South Dakota faces many challenges, including widely differing needs among schools with rapid growth, small schools and isolated schools, Soholt said. After 20 years, the time may come to revisit the state funding formula, she said.

Past education task forces have laid the foundation for the current Blue Rib-

bon effort, Soholt said. She senses awareness among South Dakotans of the issues facing K-12 schools.

“The public says, ‘We see it, we hear it,’” she said.

State Sen. Billie Sutton (D-Burke), a task force member, said he has seen a great deal of frustration among South Dakotans concerning school funding. In particular, he has seen the challenges for small school districts.

“It’s coming to a head, and the rest of the Legislature is taking note,” he said.

Sutton spoke of the need for another funding source for education. “In South Dakota, we have a lot of pressure on our sales tax. Two-thirds of our state

budget comes from sales tax. That can be good, and it can be bad,” he said.

While Sutton has heard naysayers about the Blue Ribbon task force, he sees the need to take some action. In particular, he sees Republican Daugaard’s leadership as critical in swaying the heavily GOP Legislature.

Public pressure will also play a key role, Sutton said. “If people back the task force, we have a very good shot at getting something done,” he said.

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NAACP

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Spokane openly worry about the damage all this has done.

“I think it is a setback,” said Virla Spencer, 36, who is black.

Spokane, a city of 210,000, is 90 percent white, and about 2 percent black. The Aryan Nations, a neo-Nazi organization, was for decades based nearby, north of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Its members exported violence and crime throughout the region.

Dolezal, who lives in Coeur d’Alene, resigned Monday as president of the Spokane branch of the NAACP, saw her biography removed

from the website of Eastern Washington University, where she was a part-time African studies instructor, and was fired as a freelance newspaper columnist.

Dolezal, who appears quite fair and with straight blond hair in childhood photos, now presents a light brown complexion. She told an NBC interviewer that her dark curly hair is “a weave.”

She told the “Today” show that she started identifying as black around age 5 and that she “takes exception” to the contention she tried to deceive people.

But Angela Jones, an NAACP member, said it was the “ultimate betrayal” for Dolezal to describe herself as African American in the black community.

FIFA

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crisis by announcing his plans to resign.

Blatter, who has not appeared in public since, is a target of the U.S. federal agencies who are working with Swiss authorities.

Lauber said Wednesday he “does not exclude” interviewing Blatter and FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke in the future.

They are not, however, currently under suspicion in a Swiss case prompted by FIFA’s own criminal complaint against “persons unknown” last November.

The football body sent Lauber a 430-page investigation report submitted by Garcia, a former U.S. Attorney who resigned from FIFA last December protesting that his work had been misrepresented.

Lauber’s office opened a case for suspected “criminal mismanagement and money-laundering” in the bidding contests which involved 11 nations seeking votes from a 24-man FIFA executive committee.

Giving a first detailed account of his ongoing case, Lauber said the 53 “suspicious bank relations” were filed to comply with Switzerland’s regulations against money laundering.

Some of the 53 transactions are among 104 incidents previously notified to Swiss and American federal authorities, he said.

The American case alleged that senior FIFA voters received \$10 million in bribes to support South Africa’s successful bid for the 2010 World Cup. Valcke has acknowledged signing off the transfer from a FIFA account on behalf of South African officials, but said the payment had been approved by Julio Grondona, the former chairman of the finance committee who died last year.

Lauber would not be drawn on whether the South African case was also within the scope of his investigation.

“This is a dynamic process,” Lauber said. “It could really go everywhere and

that is why I don’t want to tell you which direction I put my focus.”

Lauber, who led units specializing in organized crime in Switzerland and money laundering in Liechtenstein, said Wednesday that his task force is analyzing nine terabytes of data.

Lauber’s team has also picked up one of Garcia’s lines of inquiry into payments linked to a friendly match between Argentina and Brazil played in Doha two weeks before the FIFA vote. Both countries had long-serving delegates on FIFA’s executive committee.

An executive with Swiss-based marketing agency Kentaro, who worked with the Brazil team in 2010, told The Associated Press he gave evidence to Swiss police on May 27.

Lauber said Kentaro was “a very interesting and very good company” which cooperated with the probe.

The Swiss case could dig deeper into corruption allegations than Garcia, who could not compel some FIFA voters to meet with him and did not have subpoena powers to gather key evidence.

“I have coercive measures and I am independent,” Lauber said at a news conference called after his re-election by federal lawmakers for a four-year mandate.

Lauber’s team sought to speak in Zurich last month with 10 current and former FIFA executive committee members who took part in the December 2010 hosting votes.

FIFA was thrown into crisis on May 27 with dual raids in Zurich on a luxury downtown hotel and its own headquarters two days before its presidential election. Blatter won despite the crisis.

The Swiss case started much later than the American investigation, which began in 2011. Four men, including former FIFA executive committee member Chuck Blazer of the U.S., entered guilty pleas which were unsealed last month and 14 have been indicted.

Lauber described FIFA as the injured party in his case, which could yet implicate its senior officials.



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