

Forum

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HB1234's merit pay, bonuses for select educators, and the phase-out of tenure will divide teaching staffs and harm education, Kloucek told the *Press & Dakotan*.

"This is an easy way to undermine local control," he said. "This (new law) is a model provided by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). This will hurt public education if it goes through. It's intended to lead to private schools and vouchers."

"The state tried teacher bonuses before, and it didn't work," he said. "Is a bonus or merit pay worth pitting teacher against teacher? They should be working together. This isn't going

to help performance, and it doesn't solve the problem. It just creates more resentment. You're going to lose good teachers."

Kloucek also argued that tenure is needed to protect teachers from retribution for decisions made in the classroom or during school activities.

"If you want to get rid of bad teachers, you can do that now," he said.

While HB1234 captured headlines, the Legislature acted on a number of other issues, Hunhoff said.

"With term limits, we are seeing faster action on legislation," she said. "This year, everything (in the news) was about HB1234. But there were other things important that didn't get attention."

Hunhoff noted a number of those issues: the handling of defendants facing multiple drunk-driving charges, joint custody in divorce cases, perpetual funds for

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FRANK KLOUCEK

cemeteries, the posting of notices for public meetings, health issues, synthetic marijuana, limiting the number of appeals for convicted murderers, register of deeds' fees and indigent burials and cremation.

Carson warned the state needs to remain focused on a tight budget. He noted about \$50 million in federal funding cuts for South Dakota next year.

"Depending on the federal

elections, it's possible to see more cuts come down (in order to) put the federal budget in line"

South Dakota has benefited from one of the mildest winters on record and a robust farm economy that has helped the state weather the national recession.

"But if the ag economy doesn't go forward, we are going to have trouble balancing the budget," he said. "Right now, it will take until 2015 to get back to where we

were (economically) in 2008."

Kloucek also expressed concern about the state's reliance on federal funding.

The two men disagreed during discussion about the defeat of HB1106, which would have restored funding for certain salary and expense reimbursement programs relating to veterans' service officers.

"We took testimony from the veterans service officers and commanders," Carson said. "Not once did I hear a county commissioner come to testify that they needed this money."

Kloucek disputed the statement.

"The county commissioners did show up," he said. "You say you didn't hear it, but that's because you didn't listen."

On another issue, Carson said he thought the wage increase for state workers was too high. However, he was pleased that the hike

was targeted at those who make less money.

"It's the correctional officers, highway patrolmen, snowplow drivers — they put their lives on the line every day and work to make South Dakota a better place to live," he said.

Kloucek expressed opposition to state assistance for out-of-state companies, particularly when South Dakota programs are hurting. He used the example of cuts in the Extension service and rural programs.

"I have been in the Legislature for 22 years, and every year there are new challenges," he said. "I never used to ever worry about the loss of rural infrastructure, but now I do."


Kloucek pointed to the efforts made by legislators to do what's right for the state.

"We don't always get it right, but we try to make South Dakota better," he said.

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