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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Keeping Gun Rights In Perspective

There are a multitude of opinions being expressed about gun issues, especially in the current post-Newtown climate. Subsequently, there are numerous proposals being tossed around currently to curb gun-related violence. Conversely, we're seeing a renewed burst of intransigent opposition by supporters of Second Amendment rights (and the perceived boundaries attached to them) in response to these calls. All this has set the stage for a flurry of proposed laws all across the country addressing the issue, one way or another. South Dakota's school sentinel law, which would empower school districts to arm its personnel, is one such example. It has worked its way through both chambers in Pierre and is on its way to Gov. Dennis Daugaard for his signature — even though we have yet to meet a teacher or a school official who actually likes the bill. One grandstanding measure did not make it so far in Pierre. On Monday, the House State Affairs Committee killed a bill that would have officially endorsed a legislative opinion that the U.S. Constitution bars the federal government from restricting gun ownership. Not really a law so much as a proclamation, the bill was defeated by an 8-4 margin. Variations on this kind of legislation have appeared all across the country since Newtown and the renewed push for tightening some gun laws. While some proposals have been more adamant and aggressive, the South Dakota version was merely a defiant declaration of intent. Committee chair David Lust of Rapid City was correct when he pointed out Monday that this bill was “clearly resolution material” and not the stuff of a real law. Legislation like this and many others must make you wonder occasionally if some people are placing guns on an almost deifying pedestal in our culture. Yes, our freedoms — including the Second Amendment provisions — are important, but ALL freedoms have limits and responsibilities. Even the freedoms of speech and religion are subject to these reins. But just vow to do something about guns, and it's practically like uttering blasphemy in some people's eyes. Contrast this treatment of the gun issue with, say, our treatment of voting rights in this nation. There are problems with voter suppression efforts in some parts of the country, which is a terribly embarrassing image. Laws are being crafted, or have been enacted, to make the simple act of voting — which is THE cornerstone of our participatory democracy — ever more difficult for some people to do. Last week, a case was heard in the Supreme Court over repealing key provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act — which at long last opened the doors to fair elections in some southern states; in the debate, Justice Antonin Scalia at one point referred to this legislation, which guarantees equal voting access, as a “racial entitlement.” Thus, it seems we can apparently tolerate numerous wars over the mere right to vote, but guns are sacrosanct: above reproach, beyond the reach of control and immune from any designs to place even the most logical curbs on them. That is a compellingly bizarre picture. The bill defeated in Pierre Monday was a small piece of this odd portrait. As such, it needed to be defeated. What we must have now is some levelheaded perspective on an emotional issue that is spinning off in too many delirious directions — on both sides.

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OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed. ■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind. ■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses. ■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue. ■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, March 6, the 65th day of 2013. There are 300 days left in the year.
Today's Highlight in History: On March 6, 1933, a national bank holiday declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt aimed at calming panicked depositors went into effect. (The holiday was supposed to last four days, but was extended until it was gradually lifted starting March 13.)
On this date: In 1836, the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, fell to Mexican forces after a 13-day siege.
In 1853, Verdi's opera "La Traviata" premiered in Venice, Italy.
In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Dred Scott v. Sandford that Scott, a slave, was not an American citizen and could not sue for his freedom in federal court.
In 1912, Oreos sandwich cookies were first introduced by the National Biscuit Co.
In 1933, Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak, wounded in an attempt on then-President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt's life the previous month, died at a Miami hospital at age 59.
In 1944, U.S. heavy bombers staged the first full-scale American raid on Berlin during World War II.
In 1953, Georgy Malenkov was named premier of the Soviet Union a day after the death of Josef Stalin.
In 1967, the daughter of Josef Stalin, Svetlana Alliluyeva appeared at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi and declared her intention to defect to the West.
In 1970, a bomb being built inside a Greenwich Village townhouse by the radical Weathermen accidentally went off, destroying the house and killing three group members.
In 1973, Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck, 80, died in Danby, Vt.
In 1983, in a case that drew much notoriety, a woman was gang-raped atop a pool table in a tavern in New Bedford, Mass., called Big Dan's; four men were later convicted of the attack.
In 1988, the board of trustees at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., a liberal arts college for the deaf, selected Elisabeth Zinser, a hearing woman, to be school president. (Outraged students shut down the campus, forcing selection of a deaf president, I. King Jordan, instead.)
Ten years ago: A somber President George W. Bush readied the nation for war against Saddam Hussein, hurling some of his harshest invectives yet at the Iraqi leader during a prime-time news conference. The United States ratified a treaty on cutting active U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear warheads by two-thirds. Democ-

rats blocked President Bush's nomination of Miguel Estrada to a federal appeals court.
Five years ago: A Palestinian killed eight students at a Jewish seminary in Jerusalem before he was slain. Twin bombings in a shopping district in Baghdad killed at least 68 people and wounded 130 others.
One year ago: In Super Tuesday contests, Republican Mitt Romney narrowly won in pivotal Ohio, seized a home-state victory in Massachusetts, triumphed in Idaho, Vermont and Alaska, and won easily in Virginia — where neither Rick Santorum nor Newt Gingrich was on the ballot. Santorum won contests in Oklahoma, Tennessee and North Dakota, while Gingrich won in Georgia. Former Texas tycoon R. Allen Stanford was convicted in Houston of bilking his investors out of more than \$7 billion through a Ponzi scheme he'd operated for 20 years. (Stanford was sentenced to 110 years in prison.) Six British soldiers patrolling near the border between Helmand and Kandahar provinces in Afghanistan were killed by a bomb.
Today's Birthdays: Orchestra conductor Julius Rudel is 92. Former FBI and CIA director William Webster is 89. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan is 87. Author Gabriel Garcia Marquez is 86. Orchestra conductor Lorin Maazel is 83. Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova is 76. Former Sen. Christopher Bond, R-Mo., is 74. Actress-writer Joanna Miles is 73. Actor Ben Murphy is 71. Opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa is 69. Singer Mary Wilson (The Supremes) is 69. Rock musician Hugh Grundy (The Zombies) is 68. Rock singer-musician David Gilmour (Pink Floyd) is 67. Actress Anna Maria Horsford is 66. Actor-director Rob Reiner is 66. Singer Kiki Dee is 66. Rock singer-musician Phil Alvin (The Blasters) is 60. Actor Tom Arnold is 54. Former child actress Suzanne Crough is 50. Actor D.L. Hughley is 49. Country songwriter Skip Ewing is 49. Actor Shuler Hensley is 46. Actress Connie Britton is 46. Actress Moira Kelly is 45. Actress Amy Pietz is 44. Rock musician Chris Broderick (Megadeth) is 43. NBA player Shaquille O'Neal is 41. Country singer Trent Willman is 40. Country musician Shan Farmer (Ricochet) is 39. Rapper Beanie Sigel is 39. Rapper Bubba Sparxxx is 36. Rock musician Chris Tomson (Vampire Weekend) is 29. Actor Eli Marienthal is 27. Actor Jimmy Galeota is 27. Actor Dillon Freasier (Film: "There Will Be Blood") is 17. Actress Savannah Stehlin is 17.
Thought for Today: "Learn by others' mistakes because you do not live long enough to make them all yourself." — Author unknown.

FROM THE BIBLE

Who do you say that I am? Matthew 16:15. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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What Would RFK Do?

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

With the sequester now beginning, I find myself thinking about Robert F. Kennedy — and 46 years ago when I was an intern in his Senate office.

The nation was going through a difficult time in 1967. America was deeply split over civil rights and the Vietnam War. Many of our cities were burning. The war was escalating.

But RFK was upbeat. He was also busy and intense — drafting legislation, lining up votes, speaking to the poor, inspiring the young.

I was awed by his energy and optimism, and by his overriding passion for social justice and the public good. (Within a few months he'd declare his intention to run for president. Within a year he'd be dead.)

The nation is once again polarized, but I don't hear our politicians talking about social justice or the public good. They're talking instead about the budget deficit and sequestration. At bottom, though, the issue is still social justice.

The austerity economics on which we've embarked is a cruel hoax — cruel because it hurts those who are already hurt the most; a hoax because it doesn't work.

The trickle-down economics on which Republicans base their refusal to even discuss closing tax loopholes for the wealthy is a proven failure — proven because it's been tried before, by Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush; a failure because nothing has trickled down.

Taxes have been cut on the wealthy, but the real median wage keeps dropping and the rate of poverty keeps rising. Now, 22 percent of American children are living in poverty.

Yet in the months (or years) ahead, federal money



Robert
REICH

will be reduced for poor schools, child nutrition, preschools and mental-health services.

Some 3.8 million people who have been unemployed for more than six months will see their jobless benefits cut.

Some 600,000 low-income women and children will no longer benefit from the federal nutrition program for women and toddlers.

Lower-income Americans are already suffering disproportionately from high unemployment. But they will bear even more of the burden of joblessness as the economy slows because of the sequester.

Meanwhile, America has become far more unequal than it was in 1967. Then, the richest 1 percent got 9 percent of the nation's total income and paid a top marginal tax of 78 percent (and an effective rate, after deductions and credits, of 54 percent).

Now, the richest 1 percent get more than 20 percent of the nation's income and pay a marginal tax of 39 percent (and an effective rate of 23 percent — or, if you're in Mitt Romney's league, less than 19 percent). The richest 400 Americans have more wealth than the bottom 150 million combined.

If Robert Kennedy were alive today, he'd condemn the Tea Party Republicans (and the Koch Brothers and other billionaires who fund them) for violating the basic ideal of social justice that is the moral foundation of this nation.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future." He blogs at www.robertreich.org.

Time To Get Out Of The Weeds

BY MICHAEL REAGAN
CagleCartoons.com

America's got some serious problems to solve. Our Obama Economy is still stuck in a ditch by the side of the road.

Our campaigner in chief is running around the country pushing for higher taxes and no spending cuts and crying, "The federal sky will fall!" if Congress doesn't stop the puny 10 percent sequester from happening.

In Washington the incompetents and cowards in Congress can't get our fiscal house in order, and they're too stupid or self-serving to realize they are wrecking the greatest economic machine humans have ever created.

We have a budget to balance and an immigration problem. We're spending trillions we don't have and promising tens of trillions more in benefits our grandchildren can never repay.

And what are many of my fellow Republicans and conservatives in Washington — and the media — doing while America is being towed down the road to Greece?

They're thrashing around in the political weeds, wasting their breath complaining about petty political things that may boost the ratings of talk shows but are otherwise meaningless.

For example, one of the outrages of the week involves the White House being accused of selling access to President Obama in exchange for \$500,000 donations to his latest pet advocacy group.

Are these Republican and conservative friends of mine kidding? Were they born yesterday?

The parties in power in Washington have been selling access to their powers and privileges forever.

That's why libertarians want to keep the federal government as small, weak and limited as possible, so that when Washington politicians are bought off, they can do as little harm to the country as possible.

Another example this week of Republicans making a partisan mountain out of a molehill is their attack on former Obama press mouthpiece Robert Gibbs for not telling reporters what he knew about the administration's secret drone program.

Conservatives looking for dirt on Obama and liberal commentators like Rachel Maddow and Jon Stewart



Michael
REAGAN

went to town over Gibbs' silence.

But it was just another petty complaint du jour. The White House doesn't tell reporters everything it's doing or planning. It never did, whether it was the date for D-Day, our U-2 flights over the USSR or the raid to kill Osama.

My father invaded Grenada and didn't tell Congress in advance. He even forgot to tip off his buddy Margaret Thatcher, whose airspace had to be crossed by our warplanes.

The most ridiculous complaint of the week made by people on our side of the political fence was their reaction to Michelle Obama's appearance on the Oscars broadcast.

They acted like it was an impeachable offense. But the first lady handing out a best-picture award at an Oscar ceremony is not something Republicans should waste a second of their time on.

It's not new and not a Democrat thing. On Jan. 20, 1985, Ronald Reagan — who, if I recall, was a Republican — performed the opening coin toss for the Super Bowl game via television from the White House.

The first lady's appearance at the Oscars was something my father and my mother — his first wife, Academy Award-winning actress Jane Wyman — would have applauded, not booed.

It's time for Republicans and conservatives to get serious. The country is burning down like ancient Rome, but we're wasting our time and energy attacking Democrats for petty or nonexistent crimes that do nothing but hike TV ratings and give partisan bloggers fresh ammunition to shoot in the air.

It's time for us to start fighting about the things that really matter. It's time to come out of the weeds and start concentrating on the stuff that matters to the guy with no job or the business owner with high taxes, not the stupid stuff like Michelle Obama's "Oscar Moment."

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder of the email service reagan.com and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at www.reagan.com and www.michaelereagan.com. Send comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com. Follow reaganworld on Twitter.

YOUR LETTERS

Pipeline Problems

Gail Johnson, Tyndall

A recent article on the XL Pipeline (*Press & Dakotan*, Feb. 20) not affecting the climate misses the mark on the great impact the pipeline could have on American natural resources.

In fact, "Keystone Pipeline 1, which began operation in 2010, has had at least 35 spills in the U.S. and Canada. In its first year, the spill frequency for Keystone's U.S. segment was 100 times higher than the TransCanada forecast." (Cornell University Global Labor Institute, GLI).

South Dakota has had 5 leaks from Keystone 1. Fortunately the leaks have been small; however, one of the leaks in North Dakota spilled 21,000 gallons on one farm. The pipeline will cross 1,748 bodies of water including the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers and the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer.

Tar sand oil contains toxic materials — bitumen and diluents — that sink and make cleanup more difficult than the cleaning of conventional oil.

Keystone is constructed with an inferior quality of

pipe than what is typically used in pipeline construction, guaranteeing we'll see more leaks. These pipes aren't able to withstand the corrosive effects of the crude and will hasten the failure of the pipeline. Sadly, the EPA approved use of the inferior pipe.

TransCanada had originally estimated this project will create 3,500-4,000 jobs but raised that estimate to 20,000 jobs after opposition to the project gained momentum. The State Department's report to Congress in January 2012 concluded that their job numbers were greatly inflated. Currently there are approximately 570,000 jobs in the agriculture industry that could be adversely affected by oil and water contamination from the pipeline.

TransCanada has stated that the pipeline will give it better access to foreign markets and allow it to raise its prices. There goes the theory of cheaper fuel for U.S. markets.

Given all of this, it's surprising that Keystone XL would be considered for construction. This project jeopardizes our water supplies, our soil and our agriculture and tourism industries.