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## The Morality Brigade

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Media Services

We're still legislating and regulating private morality, while at the same time ignoring the much larger crisis of public morality in America.

In recent weeks Republican state legislators have decided to thwart the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which gave women the right to have an abortion until the fetus is viable outside the womb, usually around 24 weeks into pregnancy.

Legislators in North Dakota passed a bill banning abortions after six weeks or after a fetal heartbeat had been detected, and approved a fall referendum that could ban all abortions by defining human life as beginning with conception. Lawmakers in Arkansas have banned abortions within 12 weeks of conception.

These legislators worry about fetuses, but they've shown little concern for what happens to children after they're born. They and other conservatives have been cutting funding for child nutrition, health care for infants and their mothers, and schools.

The new House Republican budget gets a big chunk of its savings from programs designed to help poor kids. The budget sequester already in effect takes aim at programs like Head Start, designed to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children.

Meanwhile, the morality brigade continues to battle same-sex marriage.

Despite the Supreme Court's willingness to consider the constitutionality of California's ban, no one should assume a majority of the justices will strike it down. The court could just as easily decide that the issue is up to the states, or strike down California's law while allowing other states to continue their bans.

Conservative moralists don't want women to have control over their bodies or same-sex couples to marry, but they don't give a hoot about billionaires taking over our democracy for personal gain or big bankers taking over our economy. Yet these violations of public morality are far more dangerous to our society because they undermine the public trust that's essential to both our democracy and economy.

Three years ago, at the behest of a right-wing group called Citizens United, the Supreme Court opened the floodgates to big money in politics by deciding corporations were "people" under the First Amendment.

A record \$12 billion was spent on election campaigns in 2012, affecting all levels of government. Much came from billionaires like the Koch brothers and casino magnate Sheldon Adelson — seeking fewer regulations, lower taxes and weaker trade unions.

They didn't entirely succeed, but the billionaires established a beachhead for the midterm elections of

2014 and beyond.

Yet where is the morality brigade when it comes to these moves to take over our democracy?

Among the worst violators of public morality in recent years have been executives and traders on Wall Street.

Recently, JPMorgan Chase, the nation's biggest bank, was found to have misled its shareholders and the public about its \$6 billion "London Whale" losses in 2012. This is the same JP-Morgan Chase that's led the charge against the Dodd-Frank Act, designed to protect the public from another Wall Street meltdown and taxpayer-funded bailout.

Lobbyists for the giant banks have been systematically taking the teeth out of Dodd-Frank, leaving nothing but the gums.

The so-called "Volcker Rule" intended to prevent the banks from making risky bets with federally insured commercial deposits — itself a watered-down version of the old Glass-Steagall Act — still hasn't seen the light of day.

Republicans and Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee passed bills to weaken Dodd-Frank — expanding exemptions and al-

lowing banks that do their derivative trading in other countries (i.e., JPMorgan) to avoid the new rules altogether.

Meanwhile, House Republicans voted to repeal the Dodd-Frank Act in its entirety, as part of their budget plan.

And still, no major Wall Street executives have been held accountable for the wild betting that led to the near meltdown in 2008. Attorney General Eric Holder says the big banks are too big to prosecute.

Why doesn't the morality brigade complain about the rampant greed on the Street that's already brought the economy to its knees, wiping out the savings of millions of Americans and subjecting countless others to joblessness and insecurity — and seems set on doing it again?

What people do in their bedrooms shouldn't be the public's business. Women should have rights over their own bodies. Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.

But what powerful people do in their boardrooms is the public's business. Our democracy needs to be protected from the depredations of big money. Our economy needs to be guarded against the excesses of too-big-to-fail banks.

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Robert REICH

## Why Can't Every Day Be Like Easter?

BY DANNY TYREE

CagleCartoons.com

Although it usually gets overshadowed by "Blue Christmas" in yuletide radio rotation, I still enjoy the Elvis Presley version of "Why Can't Every Day Be Like Christmas?"

Fans of the Scripture found in John 3:16 might well ask "Why Can't Every Day Be Like Easter?"

The short answer is that it would be an affront to those outside the Christian faith, it would run contrary to human nature and the emotions would soon be taken for granted.

Still, some aspects of Easter are worth exporting to other parts of the year.

- Easter egg hunts. Maybe a scant few goodies wind up "as lost as last year's Easter egg," but for the most part we present youngsters with an ATTAINABLE GOAL. This is in sharp contrast to the way we expect future generations to pay off the national debt. At Easter we let the kids enjoy fantasies such as the Easter Bunny, not fantasies such as "No, we'll never wind up like Europe."

- Easter reverence and the cherished memories of deceased loved ones give us a chance to think about something bigger than ourselves. Too often the only thing we can think about bigger than ourselves is our FUTURE selves, after we've downed a few more super-sized meals.

- At Easter a few extra Christians muster up the courage to get up early on Sunday morning, perhaps even for a sunrise service, without the mantra "It's my one day to sleep in." (Perhaps a small portion of these intrepid souls will even continue the ritual, instead of spending the next several months comforting

themselves with the knowledge that the inalienable right to "sleeping in" one day a week is enshrined in the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Versailles and the Sermon On The Mount.)

- Easter is a time when you can turn to someone of a differing political view, say "He is risen" and receive a civil, sincere response of "He is risen, indeed." This is nothing like the rest of the year, when such an utterance would elicit a muttered response of "What kind of racist remark was that?" or "How can I truncate that sound bite to make him sound bad?"

- Watching a passion play can fill us with a spirit of sacrifice and forgiveness that really should last throughout the year. That's because the actor playing Christ makes it through the entire Crucifixion/Resurrection saga without once complaining "NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)," "What's in it for me?" or "I got mine, now good luck getting yours."

- While some individuals may give up all semblance of humility when pursuing sartorial perfection, there's something to be said for a new Easter outfit. Too often we abandon all self-respect and go "Easter parading" in public with clothing more ragged than what the missionaries encounter in the most impoverished countries. Don't get me started on the T-shirt slogans that would make an Easter lily wilt.

- The hope, optimism and rebirth of spring and Easter would be good to have throughout the year, when dealing with abusive relationships, dead-end jobs or seemingly insurmountable social issues.

I hope my Christian and non-Christian friends alike will find something about Easter to incorporate in the remainder of this trying year.

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## THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

## Johnson Leaving On His Own Terms

Frankly, few of us can honestly say they were surprised when Sen. Tim Johnson announced Tuesday afternoon that he would not seek a fourth term in 2014.

Since the dark final days of 2006, when the South Dakota Democrat suffered a life-threatening brain injury, Johnson's health has been a concern, either overtly or subconsciously, ever since.

Thus, Johnson's announcement that he would not run again, that his long political career will be over, seemed like the right move and the right ending to a solid career of service for a man who has shown us a strength and a determination that any of us would be blessed to have.

In the pantheon of politicians in South Dakota's history, Johnson's career, when it does at least wind up, may not be remembered as vividly as the likes of (in no particular order) George McGovern, Karl Mundt, Tom Daschle or John Thune, each of whom became (or in Thune's case, has become) national faces for their respective parties.

But when Johnson leaves the Senate in early 2015, he will have spent 28 years in Washington as either a representative or a senator, turning in a solid career as a public servant. And if you insist on looking at the political logistics, he became a successful Democratic senator in a Republican state, drawing supporters from both parties and working for the greater good of the people of South Dakota.

Certainly, it hasn't always been easy. Johnson faced two brutal senate races — against then-incumbent Sen. Larry Pressler in 1996 and against then-Rep. Thune in 2002. In both instances, his races drew the kind of national attention that South Dakotans were unaccustomed to, and Johnson showed himself to be a skilled fighter in the political arena.

In a way, those fights steered him for his greatest battle, which began in late 2006 when he fell ill. He was left with slurred speech and he is sometimes forced to use a scooter to get around, but even these impediments haven't really slowed him. The incident could not extinguish his fire to serve his people.

Johnson persevered in what will long stand as his greatest triumph.

On Tuesday, the senator at long last said he'd had enough. You can't really begrudge him that desire to rest, not after his long years of service and all that he has endured in recent years.

"The Bible says that there is a time for every season under heaven," he said in a press release. "It is now our season to spend more time with our six grandchildren and in the state we love."

When Johnson does leave office, it could fairly be said that did well for South Dakotans, and that he did Vermillion proud. More than that, he will be leaving on his own terms, which speaks volumes given the road he has traveled.

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### 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.

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- 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 27, the 86th day of 2013. There are 279 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On March 27, 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon sighted present-day Florida.

**On this date:** In 1625, Charles I acceded to the English throne upon the death of James I.

In 1794, Congress approved "An Act to provide a Naval Armament" of six armed ships.

In 1836, the first Mormon temple was dedicated in Kirtland, Ohio.

In 1912, first lady Helen Herron Taft and the wife of Japan's ambassador to the United States, Viscountess Chinda, planted the first two of 3,000 cherry trees given as a gift by the mayor of Tokyo.

In 1933, Japan officially withdrew from the League of Nations.

In 1942, American servicemen were granted free mailing privileges.

In 1958, Nikita Khrushchev became Soviet premier in addition to First Secretary of the Communist Party.

In 1964, Alaska was hit by a powerful earthquake and tsunamis that killed about 130 people.

In 1968, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first man to orbit the Earth, died in a plane crash.

In 1973, "The Godfather" won the Academy Award for best picture of 1972, but its star, Marlon Brando, refused to accept his Oscar for best actor. Liza Minnelli won best actress for "Cabaret."

In 1977, 583 people were killed when a KLM Boeing 747, attempting to take off, crashed into a Pan Am 747 on the Canary Island of Tenerife.

In 1980, 123 workers died when a North Sea floating oil field platform, the Alexander Kielland, capsized during a storm.

**Ten years ago:** Serbian police killed two major suspects in the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Russia's Evgeni Plushenko won his second World Figure Skating Championships title, edging

American Tim Goebel at the MCI Center in Washington D.C. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paul Zindel died in New York at age 66.

**Five years ago:** The Pentagon said Defense Secretary Robert Gates had ordered a full inventory of all nuclear weapons and related materials after the mistaken delivery of ballistic missile fuses to Taiwan.

**One year ago:** A JetBlue Airways captain ran through the cabin of a New York-to-Las Vegas flight yelling about religion and terrorists before he was locked out of the cockpit, then tackled and restrained by passengers. (Clayton Osborn was charged with interference with a flight crew; he was found not guilty by reason of insanity.)

The leaders of South Korea, the United States and China issued stark warnings about the threat of nuclear terrorism during the final day of a nuclear summit in Seoul that was upstaged by North Korea's long-range rocket launch plans. Award-winning poet Adrienne Rich, 82, died in Santa Cruz, Calif. Art critic Hilton Kramer, 84, died in Harpswell, Maine.

**Today's Birthdays:** Dance company director Arthur Mitchell is 79. Actor Julian Glover is 78. Actor Jerry Lacy is 77. Hall of Fame racer Cale Yarborough is 74. Actor-director Austin Pendleton is 73. Actor Michael York is 71. Rock musician Tony Banks (Genesis) is 63. Rock musician Andrew Farriss (INXS) is 54. Jazz musician Dave Koz is 50. Movie director Quentin Tarantino is 50. Rock musician Derrick McKenzie (Jamiroquai) is 49. Rock musician Johnny Apple (Staind) is 48. Actress Talisa Soto is 46. Actress Pauley Perrette is 44. Singer Mariah Carey is 43. Rock musician Brendan Hill (Blues Traveler) is 43. Actress Elizabeth Mitchell is 43. Actor Nathan Fillion is 42. Hip-hop singer Fergie (Black Eyed Peas) is 38. Actress Megan Hilty is 32. Actress Emily Ann Lloyd is 29. Actress Brenda Song is 25. Pop singer/songwriter Kimbra is 23. Actress Taylor Atelian is 18.

**Thought for Today:** "Often the test of courage is not to die but to live." — Vittorio Alfieri, Italian dramatist (1749-1803).

### FROM THE BIBLE

*And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he broke down and wept. Mark 14:72. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis*

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