

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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## OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

# The NRA And The Surgeon General

**READING (Pa.) EAGLE (March 24):** The National Rifle Association's attack on President Barack Obama's surgeon general nominee is a too-common tale of corrupted power and political cowardice. It's also, apparently, on the verge of derailing Dr. Vivek H. Murthy's candidacy.

No doubt many NRA backers will blindly rejoice, but we caution that this story should dismay both guns-rights advocates and gun-control proponents.

Because the crux of the NRA's smear campaign simply bears no relevance to Murthy's would-be role as the country's top doctor. Murthy is Yale- and Harvard-educated ... But the NRA began aiming its political guns at Murthy in a bullying February letter to Senate leaders, writing, "(There is a) likelihood he would use the office of surgeon general to further his pre-existing campaign against gun ownership." ...

It's true that Murthy advocates an assault-weapons ban and mandatory training. Patching gunshot victims' gaping wounds when he was an emergency-room doctor likely helped shape Murthy's position that gun ownership is more a harmful than a helpful right.

Still, the NRA's arguments are specious. Forget that at his confirmation hearing Murthy testified he had no intention of using the surgeon general's post to advance a gun-control platform, because Murthy's intent has little to do with the fact that a surgeon general has no role in gun-regulation formation.

It's also a rich irony that the NRA would concern itself with accurate public-health information, given its open role as lobbyist ...

Despite this nonconnection between Murthy's guns stance and a surgeon general's role, the White House is reportedly recalibrating its strategy on Murthy, and 10 Democrats from heavily pro-gun states have hinted they'd vote against him.

Shame on the NRA for exerting its alarmist might against a qualified candidate not in lockstep with its one-way agenda. Shame on Obama for not having Murthy's back. And shame on those Democrats for their me-first approach to politics.

## SPEAK UP!

■ Share your thoughts with us. Write to the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** on topic of the day or in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to [views@yankton.net](mailto:views@yankton.net).

## ON THIS DATE

### By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, March 27, the 86th day of 2014. There are 279 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On March 27, 1964, a Good Friday, Alaska was hit by a magnitude 9.2 earthquake (the strongest on record in North America) and tsunamis that together claimed about 130 lives.

**On this date:** In 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon sighted present-day Florida.

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 1884, the first telephone line between Boston and New York was inaugurated.

In 1912, first lady Helen Herron Taft and the wife of Japan's ambassador to the United States, Viscountess Chinda, planted in Washington 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 1968, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (gah-GAH-rihn), the first man to orbit the Earth, died in a plane crash.

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.

In 1998, the Food and Drug Administration approved the drug Viagra, made by Pfizer, saying it had helped about two-thirds of impotent men improve their sexual function.

**Ten years ago:** Nearly half a million people surrounded Taiwan's presidential office and blocked major streets to protest their country's disputed presidential election. Shizuka Arakawa of Japan was the surprise winner at the women's world figure skating championships in Dortmund, Germany; Americans Sasha Cohen

and Michelle Kwan placed second and third.

**Five years ago:** President Barack Obama launched a fresh effort to defeat al-Qaida terrorists in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, ordering in 4,000 more troops. A suicide bomber set off an explosion at a packed mosque in Pakistan near the Afghan border, killing at least 48 people. The rising Red River broke a 112-year record and threatened the dikes fortifying Fargo, N.D. The main suspect in the Phoenix serial shooter attacks, Dale Hausner, was sentenced to death for six murders that had put the city on edge for nearly two years. (Hausner committed suicide in an isolation cell in June 2013.) Mutual fund pioneer Jack Dreyfus died in New York at age 95. Former NBC News economics reporter Irving R. Levine died in Washington at age 86.

**One year ago:** Lawyers for Colorado theater shooting suspect James Holmes said he would plead guilty to the attack that killed 12 people and serve the rest of his life in prison to avoid the death penalty. (Prosecutors rejected the offer.) Former South African President Nelson Mandela was admitted to a hospital for pneumonia (he was discharged 10 days later).

**Today's Birthdays:** Dance company director Arthur Mitchell is 80. Actor Julian Glover is 79. Actor Jerry Lacy is 78. Hall of Fame racer Cale Yarborough is 75. Actor-director Austin Pendleton is 74. Actor Michael York is 72. Rock musician Tony Banks (Genesis) is 64. Rock musician Andrew Fariss (INXS) is 55. Jazz musician Dave Koz (kahz) is 51. Movie director Quentin Tarantino is 51. Rock musician Derrick McKenzie (Jamiroquai) is 50. Rock musician Johnny April (Staind) is 49. Actress Talisa Soto is 47. Actress Pauley Perrette is 45. Singer Mariah Carey is 44. Rock musician Brendan Hill (Blues Traveler) is 44. Actress Elizabeth Mitchell is 44. Actor Nathan Fillion is 43. Hip-hop singer Fergie (Black Eyed Peas) is 39. Actress Megan Hilty is 33. Actress Emily Ann Lloyd is 30. Actress Brenda Song is 26. Pop singer/songwriter Kimbra is 24. Actress Taylor Aetian is 19.

**Thought for Today:** "A sheltered life can be a daring life as well. For all serious daring starts from within." — Eudora Welty, American author (1909-2001).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." Hebrews 4:6-7 NLT. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis*

## YOUR LETTERS

### Bingo Fun!

**Lincoln Elementary School PTA**

The Lincoln Elementary PTA would like to extend sincere thanks to those who donated prizes or snacks for our recent Family Bingo Night that took place on March 6. Prizes and/or supplies were donated from the following businesses: Ace Hardware, Affordable Self Storage, Applied Engineering, Carmike Theatre, Dairy Queen, First Dakota, Floor Tec, Home Federal, Hy-Vee, Meridian Title, Services Center Federal Credit Union, Thrivent Financial, and Wal-Mart. These were in addition to those prizes provided by individual members of the Lincoln PTA, and the PTA itself. All students were ensured a prize. If a student did not obtain a prize

with a Bingo, a book or poster could be selected (donated by Lincoln Elementary and the Lincoln PTA).

Thank you to the two PTA families who donated Bingo "calling" supplies and slider Bingo cards, as well as to Avera Yankton Care Center's Activities Department who previously donated Bingo cards when upgrading theirs. These donated supplies can be utilized at this annual PTA event, as well as future school and classroom activities. A final thank you is extended to the PTA parent and Lincoln staff volunteers who gave of their time during the event. Thanks to your generosity, students and their families were able to enjoy a fun evening together at their school.

STAR TRIBUNE  
SDK

"...AND FINALLY,  
AS IF YOU NEED IT,  
SOMETHING TO  
REMEMBER ME BY..."



## Writer's Block | William Kerr

# A Rule By Minority?

BY WILLIAM KERR

For the Press & Dakotan

I always thought, and read, that democracy was majority rule, and that our forefathers founded this country on the basis of majority rule to avoid their experience of rule by a few nobles (who called themselves royalty) who had all the power over the rest of the people called peasants. Which had been going on for centuries. (I did read of an early democracy in Athens way back even before the dark ages, but it hadn't survived for long.)

Is there any doubt that we are now practically being ruled by a minority? Some of the proof is that in polls on abortion and gun control the majority of our citizens want less limitation on abortion and more limitation on gun ownership, but our laws seem to be just about the opposite. Another potential proof is that the top 1-percent-income citizens now own 49 percent of the enterprises and property in this country and that is very close to the 1 percent owning the majority. Then too, the vast majority of us (78 percent or more) have lost faith in our elected representatives doing what we want. How could this happen when we started out as a majority rule country?

Here are some ways it happens:

- The minority has stayed solidly united on a single big issue. For most of the 20th century, the Southern states have been solidly Democratic except for the issue of civil rights (race). They have managed to win many civil rights' battles in the past, and more recently stimulated the Supreme Court to roll back the protections of the Voting Rights Act so that state legislatures could use such things as very reduced voting hours (most blacks and Hispanics work long hours to make a living), requiring a registration document to vote and requiring passing a urine test for drugs in order to vote. Currently, the minority also has another big issue they are solidly working that was mentioned above: abortion.

- The liberals and moderates in Congress don't seem to have any issues to promote and support like a minimum wage required by law (which should now be \$10 an hour), or strong support for Social Security and Medicare (which have both paid their own way since inception despite Congress stealing \$2.6 trillion from the Social Security Trust fund to make up for the revenue shortfall due to continuing tax reductions for the rich), or to oppose the idea of reducing Social Security and Medicare payments to recipients to reduce our debt. Or even, as The Economist magazine has suggested, to sell off some assets to pay down the

# My Trip To The Pot Shop

BY MICHELLE MALKIN

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PUEBLO WEST, Colo. — It's 9 a.m. on a weekday, and I'm at the Marisol Therapeutics pot shop. This is serious business. Security is tight. ID checks are frequent. Merchandise is strictly regulated, labeled, wrapped and controlled. The store is clean, bright and safe. The staffers are courteous and professional. Customers of all ages are here.

There's a middle-aged woman at the counter nearby who could be your school librarian. On the opposite end of the dispensary, a slender young soldier in a wheelchair with close-cropped hair, dressed in his fatigues, consults with a clerk. There's a gregarious cowboy and an inquisitive pair of baby boomers looking at edibles. A dude in a hoodie walks in with his backpack.

And then there's my husband and me. The dispensary is split in two: "recreational" on one side, "medical" on the other. Medical customers must have state-issued cards and doctor's approval. The inventory is not taxed, so prices are lower on that side. On the recreational side, where I'm peering at mysterious jars of prickly green goods, "Smoke on the Water" is thumping from stereo speakers. Yes, there's a massive banner advertising a Tommy Chong appearance, and issues of *High Times* are on display. But the many imposing signs posted on the wall emphatically warn: No smoking, no open drug consumption, and absolutely no entry allowed into the locked lab where the cannabis plants sit under bright lights.

Before I tell you how and why my hubby and I ended up at Marisol Therapeutics, some background about my longtime support of medical marijuana: More than 15 years ago in Seattle, while working at *The Seattle Times*, I met an extraordinary man who changed my mind about the issue. Ralph Seeley was a Navy nuclear submarine officer, pilot, cellist and lawyer suffering from chordoma, a rare form of bone cancer that starts in the spine. He had undergone several surgeries, including removal of one lung and partial removal of the other, and was confined to a wheelchair.

Chronically nauseous from chemotherapy and radiation, weak from a suppressed appetite, and suffering excruciating pain, Seeley turned to marijuana cigarettes for relief.

Contrary to cultural stereotype, Seeley was far from "wasted." While smoking the drug to reduce his pain, he finished law school — something he couldn't have done while on far more powerful "mainstream" narcotics, which left him zonked out and vomiting uncontrollably in his hospital bed after chemo. Seeley had the backing of his orthopedic doctor and University of Washington School of Medicine oncologist Dr. Ernest Conrad. He took his plight to the Washington state supreme court, where he asserted a constitutionally protected liberty interest in having his doctor issue a medical pot prescription.

The court rejected Seeley's case for physician-

debt for a little breathing room.

- By developing a common identity. "While the Tea Party comprises many grassroots organizations only loosely connected to each other, it is united by a shared set of beliefs that have been codified and spread by conservative media outlets. Polls show that most Tea Party members watch Fox News. This key outlet helped to create and sustain the Tea Party mobilization." ("The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism," by Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol and John Coggan)

- By forming interest groups. "How are gun rights activists able to defeat even the most modest gun control bills when the majority of Americans claim to want such legislation?" asks Gregory Koger in the book "Filibustering: A Political History of Obstruction in the House and Senate." "The answer is organized groups: Gun activists have them, gun control advocates don't."

- By clever use of the rules. The filibuster was abolished in the House during the late 19th century but is still part of the Senate rules. "Republicans routinely deploy it to stymie any legislation that can't muster three-fifths of the chamber's votes," Koger noted.

- One other way it happens is when the 1 percent make large donations to elected representatives and senators, who then favor the donors with votes that reduce taxes for the rich, as well as restrictions on banks and corporations so they can take more advantage of us. Then when recessions occur, the banks and some corporations get bailed out and a lot of the rest of us lose jobs, income, food stamps, etc., to pay for it. We would expect elected Republicans to be thus supported, but they are not alone. Many elected Democrats have also accepted this bribe. It saves them appearing around their district, listening to citizens' desires and raising campaign funds.

In the final analysis, we have to admit that the majority of us who vote have brought this upon ourselves — and even non-voters have to share that responsibility. But even those of us who vote have not used that vote judiciously, and have not unselected those who don't do our bidding, nor have most of us written, telephoned or e-mailed our wishes to those elected.

Once again, democracy is not free. We 99 percent have enough votes to get back majority rule if we pay more attention to what is going on, communicate our wishes to our elected representatives and unselect them if they do not do our will. I think it was Woody Guthrie who said, "We lost by politics, we can win by politics."

prescribed marijuana, arguing that the government's interest in preserving an "interlocking trelis" of costly and ineffective War on Drug laws trumped his