

# The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

## Changing Min. Wage Betrays Voters' Trust

**THE DAILY REPUBLIC, Mitchell (Feb. 19):** About three months have passed since South Dakota voters decided to raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.50 an hour. Less than two months have gone by since the increase took effect.

And already some state senators want to adjust the pay wage scale again.

On Wednesday, the Senate agreed to create a new minimum wage of \$7.50 for people younger than age 18. The law is called Senate Bill 177, which now heads to the House of Representatives.

We can see both viewpoints on setting this new minimum wage for workers younger than 18, as all 26 Republican senators voted in favor of the law and all seven Democrats opposed it.

We believe there should be equal pay for equal work, no matter the age of an employee.

But we also recognize that the purpose of having a minimum wage is to pay someone a wage they can live off to support the essentials. And most people younger than 18 are living with their parents. They typically don't need to support themselves.

While we haven't fully decided whether we agree with the premise of this law, we think legislators are going against the will of the people in moving forward with it.

Last November, voters decided that the overall minimum wage would be \$8.50. The majority decided to pass minimum wage increase by a 55-45 margin.

Sen. Billie Sutton, a Democrat from Burke, argued Wednesday that SB 177 overturns a decision made by voters in November.

Sutton explained there was nothing on the ballot about lower minimum wages for workers who are younger than 18. It was simply for anyone earning minimum wage.

"That vote is a betrayal of the public's vote to improve the minimum wage," he said Wednesday.

Well put. Whether this law would be beneficial logistically is a separate argument. We're against this bill simply because it was only about three months ago that voters decided the parameters of our state's minimum wage.

Voters decided the minimum wage for any employee should be \$8.50.

That law has been in effect since Jan. 1. Do we really have enough proof that there already needs to be a change?

We don't think so.

For five years, the minimum wage was set at \$7.25 and was finally raised at the beginning of this year. Let's keep it the way the voters decided, at least for a while longer than a couple months.

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The View 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 on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.

IN HISTORY

**By The Associated Press**  
Today is Monday, March 2, the 61st day of 2015. There are 304 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On March 2, 1965, the movie version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway musical "The Sound of Music," starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, had its world premiere at New York's Rivoli Theater.

**On this date:** In 1793, the first president of the Republic of Texas, Sam Houston, was born near Lexington, Virginia.

In 1836, the Republic of Texas formally declared its independence from Mexico.

In 1865, Congress established the position of Naval Judge Advocate General.

In 1877, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of the 1876 presidential election over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, even though Tilden had won the popular vote.

In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act.

In 1939, Roman Catholic Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli was elected pope on his 63rd birthday; he took the name Pius XII. The Massachusetts legislature voted to ratify the Bill of Rights, 147 years after the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution had gone into effect. (Georgia and Connecticut soon followed.)

In 1940, the cartoon character Elmer Fudd made his debut in the Warner Bros. animated short "Elmer's Candid Camera," in which the title character finds himself pitted against a rascally rabbit that was a precursor to Bugs Bunny.

In 1955, nine months before Rosa Parks' famous act of defiance, Claudette Colvin, a black high school student in Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a white passenger.

In 1962, Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points for the Philadelphia Warriors in a game against the New York Knicks, an NBA record that still stands. (Philadelphia won, 169-147.)

In 1972, the United States launched the Pioneer 10 space probe, which flew past Jupiter in late 1973, sending back images and scientific data.

In 1985, the government approved a screening test for AIDS that detected

antibodies to the virus, allowing possibly contaminated blood to be excluded from the blood supply.

In 1990, more than 6,000 drivers went on strike against Greyhound Lines Inc. (The company, later declaring an impasse in negotiations, fired the strikers.)

**Ten years ago:** The number of U.S. military deaths in Iraq reached 1,500. The woman who'd accused NBA star Kobe Bryant of rape settled her lawsuit against him, ending the case.

**Five years ago:** Authorities in San Diego County found the body of 17-year-old Chelsea King, who'd been missing since Feb. 25, 2010. (John Albert Gardner III later pleaded guilty to raping and murdering King and another victim, 14-year-old Amber Dubois; he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

**One year ago:** The historical drama "12 Years a Slave" won best picture at the 86th annual Academy Awards; one of its stars, Lupita Nyong'o, won best supporting actress. Matthew McConaughey was named best actor for "Dallas Buyers Club" while Cate Blanchett was honored as best actress for "Blue Jasmine"; Alfonso Cuaron received best director for "Gravity"; **Today's Birthdays:** Actor John Cullum is 85, Author Tom Wolfe is 85. Former Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev is 84. Actress Barbara Luna is 76. Author John Irving is 73. Actress Cassie Yates is 64. Actress Laraine Newman is 63. Former Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., is 62. Former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar is 60. Singer Jay Osmond is 60. Pop musician John Cowsill (The Cowsills) is 59. Tennis player Kevin Curren is 57. Country singer Larry Stewart (Restless Heart) is 56. Rock singer Jon Bon Jovi is 53. Blues singer-musician Alvin Youngblood Hart is 52. Actor Daniel Craig is 47. Actor Richard Ruccolo is 43. Rock musician Casey (Jim-mie's Chicken Shack) is 39. Rock singer Chris Martin (Coldplay) is 38. Actress Heather McComb is 38. Actress Bryce Dallas Howard is 34. NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is 33. Actor Robert Iler is 30. Actress Nathalie Emmanuel (TV: "Game of Thrones") is 26.

**Thought for Today:** "Nothing ever really sets human nature free, but self-control." — Phyllis Bottomo, English writer (1884-1963).

FROM THE BIBLE

*For apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? Ecclesiastes 2:25. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Handling The Money

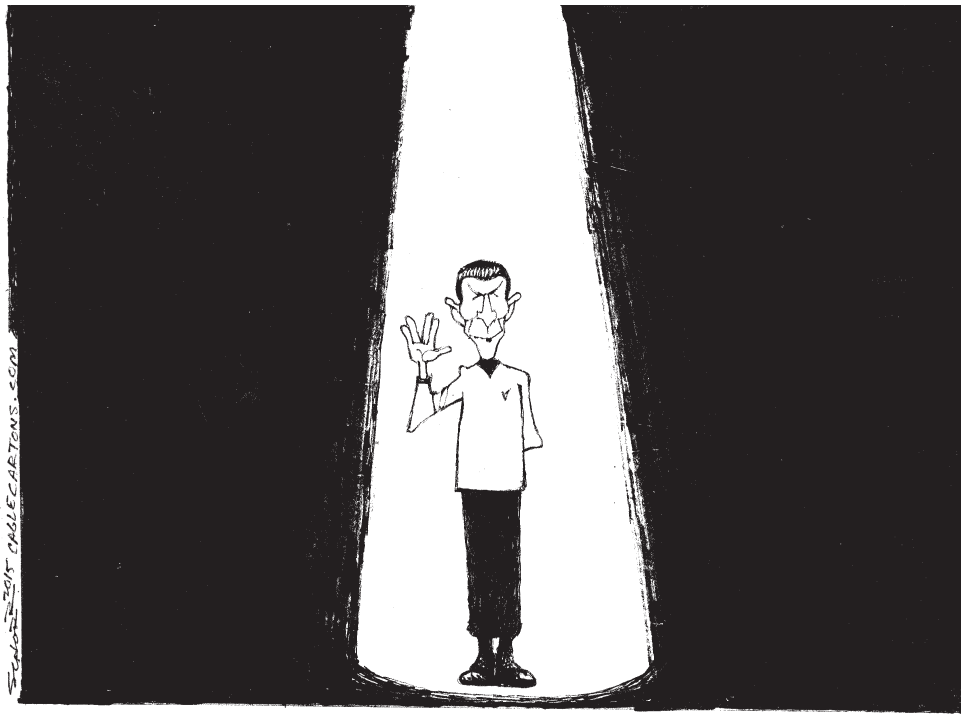
**Lyle Malone, Yankton**  
Gov. Dennis Daugaard has started a panel to examine education problems. It should take them a few minutes to see state aid to schools is inadequate. I support some form of new taxes to solve this problem, but I will not vote for it if the funds will be controlled by the state of South Dakota. We have every reason not to trust the state to deliver any new monies to education in South Dakota.

There was a time that gambling money seemed to disappear into the general fund. The

federal government gave S.D. \$26 million for education, and this was used by Gov. Rounds to balance his budget. Gov. Daugaard faced a deficit the next year due to the use of the \$26 million and felt forced to reduce aid by 10 percent. This made the education aid worse than before.

Perhaps we could designate an independent agency — or perhaps a bank — to make sure any new funds for education actually go to education.

South Dakota is guilty of abuse and neglect in dealing with teacher's pay and aid to our schoolchildren.



Capitol Notebook

## This Idea Might Be Too Good To Be Good

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Here are two numbers that stuck out from a state Senate debate last week.

Some 10,000 students now receive their K-12 education from private schools and home schools in South Dakota, according to Sen. Phyllis Heineman, R-Sioux Falls.

The choice to attend those schools saves \$45 million annually that would have been spent on state aid to public schools, she said.

What wasn't said is public schools aren't receiving \$45 million they otherwise would.

That's roughly \$4,500 per teacher, in the nation's lowest-paying state for teachers.

Our public school boards must hire and pay teachers whether there are 10 students or 30 students per classroom.

That is important. South Dakota's system of funding general K-12 education relies upon a per-student allocation.

The PSA is paid through a combination of state funding and local property taxes.

The governor and Legislature plan to increase the PSA to \$4,876.76 for next school year from the current \$4,781.14.

For every student who chooses a private school or home school, the local public school doesn't get the PSA.

Lose one student per grade and it's the financial equivalent of a public school losing a teacher — except a school still needs a teacher for each of those grades.

If the Legislature gave the PSA to a public school district for every student who resides within it, our public schools would be stronger financially and our teachers would be better paid.

But there isn't \$45 million of consistent ad-



Bob MERCER

ditional revenue waiting to be tapped. So the public schools must find other ways, also known as higher local taxes and deeper budget cuts, to make up for those 10,000 students and \$45 million.

Those numbers came out during Senate's consideration of Heineman's proposal to create a state government program that would financially help private schools and home schools.

Her plan would allow establishment of non-profit organizations to provide tuition assistance to students from lower-income households who wish to attend private schools, and to provide \$250 grants to classrooms at private schools and home schools.

To pay for those, her plan would detour up to \$4 million of taxes that currently go to state government's treasury from insurance companies.

The companies could put up to \$4 million total into non-profit organizations. The companies would receive a 90 percent credit on the taxes they owe state government.

The non-profit organizations would be subject to state audit. The amount of the program could grow by 25 percent annually if the requests for help reached 90 percent or more of the amount. The program would start in 2017.

The Senate approved the plan 23-12 and sent it to the House of Representatives for further consideration. SB 189's lead sponsor there is House Republican leader Brian Gosch of Rapid City.

The administration of Gov. Dennis Daugaard opposes the plan.

No legislator has been more sincere, or worked harder, to improve education than Phyllis Heineman in her 15 years at the Capitol.

But spending state funds to encourage students to leave the public system seems costly, on both sides of the equation.

Point Of View

## Approve HB 1153 To Bolster SD Open Meetings Laws

BY DAVID BORDEWYK  
South Dakota Newspaper Association

Honesty, decency and forthrightness are among the values that define South Dakotans. Another core value is a fundamental belief in the public's right to know about their government. South Dakotans believe the public's business should be conducted in public view.

That principle in government transparency is embedded in South Dakota's open meetings laws, which date back more than a half century and direct state and local government boards on how they should conduct business in public.

A principle guiding our open meetings laws is that when at least a quorum of members of a government board is discussing official business, the state open meetings laws should be followed. In other words, among other things, an agenda of the meeting should be provided in advance of the meeting and the public should have the opportunity to witness the meeting. That principle applies whether the government board is meeting in person or by teleconference or video-conference.

A bill being debated now in the South Dakota Legislature would extend that same concept of openness and transparency to government boards that may conduct business by email or other means of electronic communications.

Urge your state senator now to vote for House Bill 1153. Tell your senator in Pierre to support House Bill 1153 because it will strengthen our state's open meetings laws and bolster government transparency.

Simply put, House Bill 1153 says that if a quorum of a public board discusses official business via email or other means of electronic communications, then the open meetings laws should apply.

The idea for this bill originated with a task force on open government that was organized by Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Attorney General Marty Jackley in 2012. That task force of individuals representing government, law enforcement, business, judiciary and news media recommended eight legislative proposals

to improve the public's right to know.

The 2013 Legislature considered the same proposal found in this year's House Bill 1153. The 2013 legislation failed by one vote in the House. This past week, House Bill 1153 was approved in the House on a 47-22 vote.

Now it is up to the Senate. Approval of House Bill 1153 by the Senate would send it to the governor for his consideration.

Along the legislative path, opponents of House Bill 1153 have argued that this bill will expose all email of public officials to undue public scrutiny.

That's simply not true. House Bill 1153 makes it crystal clear the only email that may be public is if a quorum of a public board is discussing official business. Period.

The use of email to communicate has become commonplace in our personal lives and in the workplace.

The same is true in the day-to-day work of government. But public boards of elected officials must be careful about the use of email to communicate among one another. They must be prudent about ensuring their discussions by email or other electronic means do not extend to decision-making or policy-setting discussions without the public's knowledge or ability to participate.

That is why House Bill 1153 is so important. It creates guard rails for public boards when it comes to communicating official business by email or other electronic means. House Bill 1153 recognizes the changes in technologies and applies those changes to our state's open meetings laws.

And so whether it is by phone or in person or by email or other electronic means, tell your senator now to vote for House Bill 1153.

David Bordewyk is general manager of the South Dakota Newspaper Association.

SECURITY: "Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe." — Thomas Jefferson

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: It's Your Right To Know!