

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

Budget Issues: A Matter Of Time?

One of the genuinely frustrating rituals of the South Dakota legislative session is something that can read often like a bad novel.

It reads like this: Lawmakers gather in Pierre and work for nearly two months on a flurry of legislation, a lot of which has some kind of spending. The spending is generally based on estimates made on revenue heading into the session, not to mention the budget address that the governor delivers in early December, roughly a month or more before the legislative session even starts. But then comes March and the final week of the session — and the update report on revenue can throw practically two months of work into a messy loop of uncertainty. And we are sometimes presented the image of lawmakers scrambling in the final hours to make a budget deal work.

That may well be the case this year. With just one week to go in the main run of the session, lawmakers on Monday were given an updated report on state revenues that showed that income is below projections, which in turn may cause a lot re-thinking on the budget, which includes \$1.44 billion in general revenue spending. Now, the lawmakers have until the end of the week to cope with that while dealing with the many other pieces of legislation still alive and kicking in one form or another in the capitol.

This has always been irritating to some of us who are on the outside watching lawmakers conduct business each year in this same manner.

Changing this would be a good idea. There needs to be a way to either get that budget report in the hands of lawmakers a little sooner — even one week earlier would help — or to have the lawmakers working in Pierre a little longer so they have more time to consider any curveballs that come with the updated revenue report.

Such changes are not so easy to do.

For instance, the revenue report probably can't be rushed, not should it: The report must be as thorough as possible and not filled with conjecture. So, releasing it earlier probably isn't possible.

Changing the legislative calendar wouldn't be very easy, either. According to the state constitution, the Legislature convenes on the second Tuesday of each January and conducts a 40-day session in the odd-numbered years and a 35-day session in the even-numbered years. Also, the final day of the session is held (if necessary) a couple of weeks after the main run in order for lawmakers to consider any gubernatorial vetoes.

So is it possible extend the main run by an extra few days by pinching off some days in January and February? According to the Legislator Reference Book available on the state's legislative website, there does not appear to be any limitation on that issue.

Some might argue that such an extension is not needed, but difficult and frustrating to watch lawmakers deal with a new fact of fiscal life that lands at the capitol on the final week of the session, changing the parameters of the game, so to speak. From our outside perspective, there needs to be a more practical approach for absorbing the new information, then discerning how best to take the new numbers.

knh

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the Press & Dakotan's Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Should high school transgender athletes be allowed to choose which sports they wish to participate in?

No, they should be limited to the gender on their birth certificate.....63%

Yes, they should be allowed to make that choice27%

Not sure.....10%

TOTAL VOTES CAST334

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you support the proposed nuclear deal with Iran?

To cast your vote in the PRESS & DAKOTAN'S Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, March 10, the 69th day of 2015. There are 296 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On March 10, 1885, Konstantin U. Chernenko, who was the Soviet Union's leader for 13 months, died at age 73; he was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev.

On this date: In 1785, Thomas Jefferson was appointed America's minister to France, succeeding Benjamin Franklin.

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln assigned Ulysses S. Grant, who had just received his commission as lieutenant-general, to the command of the Armies of the United States. The song "Beautiful Dreamer" by the late Stephen Foster was copyrighted by Wm. A. Pond & Co. of New York.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell's assistant, Thomas Watson, heard Bell say over his experimental telephone: "Mr. Watson — come here — I want to see you."

In 1880, the Salvation Army arrived in the United States from England.

In 1914, the Rokeby Venus, a 17th century painting by Diego Velazquez on display at the National Gallery in London, was slashed multiple times by Mary Richardson, who was protesting the arrest of fellow suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst. (The painting was repaired.)

In 1933, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake centered off Long Beach, California, resulted in 120 deaths.

In 1949, Nazi wartime broadcaster Mildred E. Gillars, also known as "Axis Sally," was convicted in Washington D.C., of treason. (She served 12 years in prison.)

In 1959, the Tennessee Williams play "Sweet Bird of Youth," starring Paul Newman and Geraldine Page, opened at Broadway's Martin Beck Theatre.

In 1965, Neil Simon's play "The Odd Couple," starring Walter Matthau and Art Carney, opened on Broadway.

In 1969, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty in Memphis, Tennessee, to assassinating civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (Ray later repudiated that plea, maintaining his innocence until his death.)

In 1973, the Pink Floyd album "The Dark Side of the Moon" was first released in the U.S. by Capitol Records (the British release came nearly two weeks later).

In 1980, "Scarsdale Diet" author Dr. Herman Tarnower was shot to death at his home in Purchase, New York. (Tarnower's former lover, Jean Harris, was convicted of his murder; she served nearly 12 years in prison before being released in Jan. 1993.)

Ten years ago: Lebanon's president reappointed staunchly pro-Syrian politician Omar Karami as prime minister. A suicide bomber blew himself up at a funeral in Mosul, Iraq, killing at least 47 people. Former President Bill Clinton underwent surgery in New York to remove scar tissue and fluid from his chest. Michael Jackson, clad in pajamas and walking gingerly, arrived one

hour late to his child molestation trial after the judge threatened to have him arrested him for tardiness; a back injury was blamed. (Jackson was acquitted.)

Five years ago: President Barack Obama denounced waste, inefficiency and downright fraud in the government's health care system as he sought to rally public support for his revamped overhaul plan during a rally in suburban St. Louis. About 200 women who'd flown airplanes during World War II as Women Airforce Service Pilots were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. Actor Corey Haim died in Burbank, California, at age 38.

One year ago: The Senate unanimously approved a bill making big changes in the military justice system to deal with sexual assault, including scrapping the nearly century-old practice of using a "good soldier defense" to raise doubts that a crime had been committed. (The House has yet to act on the measure.) Joe McGuinness, 71, the adventurous and news-making writer and reporter, died in Worcester, Massachusetts.

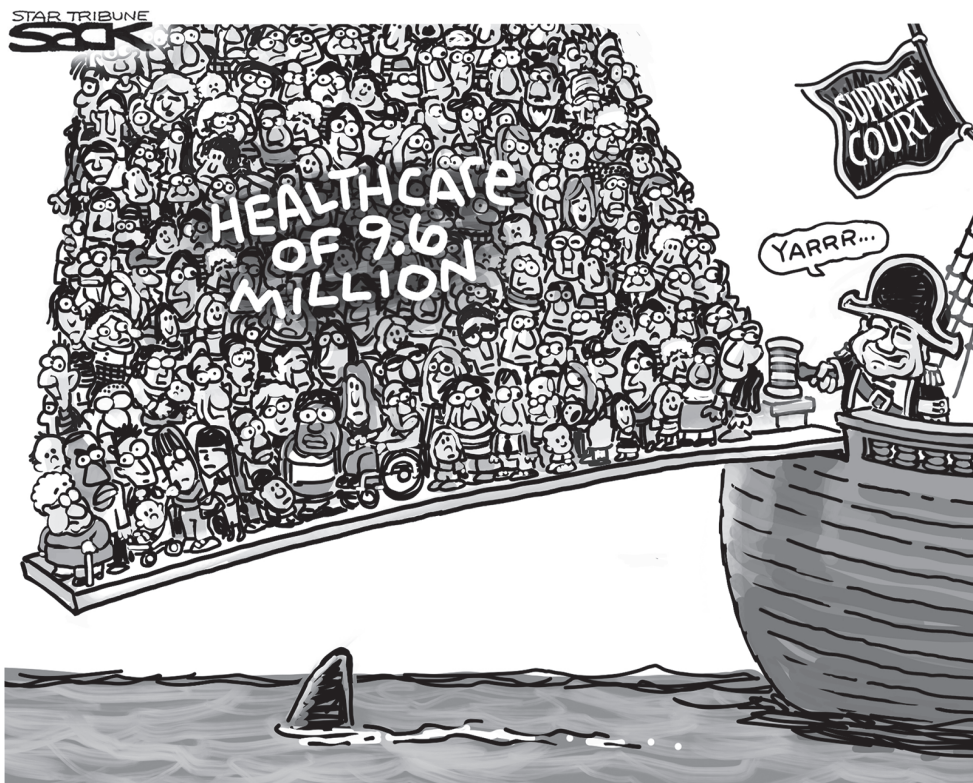
Today's Birthdays: Talk show host Ralph Emery is 82. Bluegrass/country singer-musician Norman Blake is 77. Actor Chuck Norris is 75. Playwright David Rabie is 75. Singer Dean Torrence (Jan and Dean) is 75. Actress Katharine Houghton is 73. Actor Richard Gant is 71. Rock musician Tom Scholz (Boston) is 68. Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell is 68. TV personality/businesswoman Barbara Corcoran (TV: "Shark Tank") is 66. Actress Aloma Wright is 65. Blues musician Ronnie Earl (Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters) is 62. Producer-director-writer Paul Haggis is 62. Alt-country/rock musician Gary Louris is 60. Actress Shannon Tweed is 58. Pop/jazz singer Jeanie Bryson is 57. Actress Sharon Stone is 57. Rock musician Gail Greenwood is 55. Magician Lance Burton is 55. Movie producer Scott Gardenhour is 54. Actress Jasmine Guy is 53. Rock musician Jeff Ament (Pearl Jam) is 52. Music producer Rick Rubin is 52. Britain's Prince Edward is 51. Rock singer Eddie Brickell is 49. Actor Stephen Mailer is 49. Actor Philip Anthony-Rodriguez is 47. Actress Paget Brewster is 46. Actor Jon Hamm is 44. Country singer Daryle Singletary is 44. Rapper-producer Timbaland is 43. Actor Cristian de la Fuente is 41. Rock musician Jerry Horton (Papa Roach) is 40. Actor Jeff Branson is 38. Singer Robin Thicke is 38. Actress Bree Turner is 38. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shannon Miller is 38. Contemporary Christian singer Michael Barnes (Red) is 36. Actor Edi Gathegi is 36. Rock musician Matt Asti (MGMT) is 35. Country singer Carrie Underwood is 32. Actress Olivia Wilde is 31. Rhythm-and-blues singer Emeli Sande is 28. Country singer Rachel Reinert is 26. Actress Emily Osment is 23.

Thought for Today: "To the living we owe respect, but to the dead we owe only the truth." — Voltaire, French writer and philosopher (1694-1778).

FROM THE BIBLE

Do not be anxious about your life. Luke 12:22. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

STAR TRIBUNE
S&K



The Rez Of The Story

Myths About SNAP

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives), William J. Brennan, Jr., who lived between 1906 and 1997, was an American jurist who served on the U.S. Supreme Court and who was known for being a leader of the court's liberal wing. He once wrote: "Congress acknowledged that society's accumulated myths and fears about disability and disease [and poverty] are as handicapping as are the physical limitations that flow from actual impairment."

The National Consumers League (NCL), posted the following on its website in June 2013 and is more than a little enlightening, in my estimation: "The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is a federal aid program administered by the USDA that is widely misunderstood, with countless myths mischaracterizing the program. We will separate fact from fiction.

"SNAP provides low-income individuals, senior citizens and the disabled with financial assistance to purchase food. Due to its nature, SNAP acts not only to reduce hunger and improve nutrition, but also to alleviate poverty across the United States. In 2012, SNAP provided nearly \$81 billion in food assistance to 46.7 million Americans.

"Over the past month, Congress has been working to re-authorize the farm bill, which funds and sets the country's food and agricultural policy every five years. Both the Senate and House had planned to make significant cuts to SNAP, which accounts for approximately 76 percent of the farm bill's budget. The Senate proposed and passed a bill, which would make cuts of \$4.1 billion in SNAP funding over the next 10 years, meaning an estimated 500,000 families will lose \$90 per month in benefits. The House failed to pass a bill that would make even more aggressive cuts, reducing SNAP funding by \$20 billion over the next 10 years, cuts that would impact almost 2 million people. But that is not the only debate surrounding the farm bill. Despite serving nearly one in seven Americans, SNAP is widely misunderstood with countless myths mischaracterizing the program."

One of these myths characterizes SNAP recipients as "welfare queens." "According to



Vince
TWO EAGLES

research by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, four out of five SNAP beneficiaries are either working — many of which are military — or individuals who cannot be expected to work, such as children, the elderly or the disabled."

Another myth about SNAP recipients is that SNAP is widespread with "fraud and abuse":

"Since the introduction of the Electric Benefit Transfer card (EBT), which is essentially a debit card to purchase food, fraud within the program has reached unprecedented lows. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), 'trafficking,' which involves selling SNAP benefits for cash, has gone from 3.8 cents per dollar to one cent per dollar over the last 20 years. Furthermore, SNAP funding goes towards the beneficiaries. Only 8 percent is spent on administration costs, such as salaries, training and nutrition education."

Still another myth making the rounds out there is that SNAP is an "economic drain." In reality, "SNAP helps to drive the local economy." According to USDA, every dollar spent on SNAP spurs \$1.79 in economic activity. Instead of stunting the U.S. economy, SNAP helps keep up demand for farm products and food, thereby boosting growth and jobs.

Another popular myth surrounding SNAP says that "SNAP recipients use federal money to enjoy lavish restaurant meals of caviar and champagne. SNAP funding is primarily used to buy food — ranging from produce to pre-packaged items — at authorized retail stores. A handful of states operate a SNAP Restaurant Meal Program, which allows the elderly, homeless, and disabled to purchase ready-to-eat food at restaurants. And yes, SNAP benefits also allow mothers to buy baby formula, but SNAP does not cover other household items — such as soaps, paper products, pet foods, alcohol or cigarettes."

You get the picture. I know Native people have been on the receiving end of many myths not excluding the above. My point is that we need (yes, *need*) to look out for one another. Remember, we are all in this together.

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All The Wage

Darla Kotbra, Mitchell

An open letter to my teenage daughters (and all teenagers in South Dakota);

In November, the voters of South Dakota approved an initiative that would increase minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour. Now we have elected officials, some from our own district, who want to take that minimum wage away from workers under age 18. What this means is that a 17-year-old can be working at a cash register, stocking shelves, lifeguarding, washing dishes, directly next to an 18-year-old, sharing the exact same responsibility, the same job description, and that 17-year-old would be paid a dollar an hour less.

The proposed change to the law (SB 177) states "No employer may take any action to displace an employee, including a partial displacement through a reduction in hours, wages, or employment benefits, in order to hire an employee at the wage authorized in this Act." I wonder who will regulate that and how it can be proven. How many 18-year-olds will see a reduction in hours because their co-workers who are a few months younger can be paid less? And what recourse will they have?

Some will argue that you are limited in what you can do and when you can work. Employers have been dealing with those issues and minimum wage for years. It's just an excuse to avoid paying you the new minimum wage.

There are so many lessons to be learned about politics. There are so many unwritten rules. Pay attention in government class. Watch the news. Read the paper. Get informed.

P&D LETTER POLICY

The PRESS & DAKOTAN invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask 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 us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.