

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

Speed, Danger On SD Interstates

The transportation bill currently slogging through the South Dakota Legislature has taken a lot of dings, and it has picked up some interesting baggage. One new addition particularly catches our attention. It's a tack-on that would increase the speed limit on interstate highways across the state from 75 miles per hour (mph) to 80 miles per hour, joining Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and Texas in embracing these greater speeds.

What precisely this has to do with funding road and bridge repairs isn't clear, but such leaps of imagination have never stopped the legislative process before.

Frankly, we're not in love with this idea. Creating a higher speed limit on interstates would only magnify the dangers on those roads. (It's also less energy efficient, since vehicles tend to burn up more fuel the further over 60 mph they travel. But we doubt there is any kind of consideration in regards to this matter.)

The need (or at least the desire) for speed has increased since the National Maximum Speed Limit (NMSL) was repealed in 1995, a move that allowed states to set their own speed limits on particular roads. In South Dakota, highways were posted at either 65 mph or 55 mph, but interstates are posted at 75 mph. (Also, a few four-lane expressways, like Highway 50 from Yankton to Interstate 29, are now posted at 70 mph.)

Which brings us to the current legislation, which really doesn't seem to be needed. If you have ever driven on a South Dakota interstate highway going precisely 75 miles per hour — and believe it or not, some of us actually do — you know that you are routinely passed by other vehicles who stretch their speeds up to 80 miles per hour or more. Putting the speed limit at 80 mph means there will be more vehicles pushing toward 90 mph as they zip across all or part of the state.

Higher speeds mean greater danger. A 2009 study by the American Journal for Public Health found a 3.2 percent increase in all road fatalities during the first 10 years after the NMSL repeal, with the greatest increase (9.1 percent) seen on rural interstates. Indeed, a number of studies singled out rural interstates as the places where the greatest road havoc tends to take place.

Also, one observation we found in an article from Slate stands out: Higher speeds may not result in more crashes, but the crashes that do happen will be more severe and, as a consequence, potentially produce more fatalities. This is a matter of simple physics as applied to moving objects. In these instances, speed is definitely not pretty. And, with the increase of distracted driving on our roadways, increased speed only further pumps up the danger.

The transportation package with the 80 mph proposal was approved by the House Tuesday in Pierre (which, ironically, is one of the few state capitals in the country not connected to the interstate). Our guess would be that it will ultimately become law. That would be unfortunate, but perhaps unavoidable. Such is the speed of change, as reckless as it may be.

kmh

OUR 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/.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, March 11, the 70th day of 2015. There are 295 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On March 11, 1865, during the Civil War, Union forces under General William T. Sherman occupied Fayetteville, North Carolina.

On this date: In 1861, the Constitution of the Confederate States of America was adopted by the Confederate Congress in Montgomery, Alabama.

In 1888, the Blizzard of '88, also known as the "Great White Hurricane," began inundating the northeastern United States, resulting in some 400 deaths.

In 1915, during World War I, Britain enacted a sweeping, long-distance blockade aimed at disrupting trade to and from Germany.

In 1935, the Bank of Canada began operations, issuing its first series of bank notes.

In 1942, as Japanese forces continued to advance in the Pacific during World War II, Gen. Douglas MacArthur left the Philippines for Australia. (MacArthur, who subsequently vowed, "I shall return," kept that promise more than 2 1/2 years later.)

In 1955, Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, died in London at age 73.

In 1965, "I Lost It at the Movies," a collection of film criticism by Pauline Kael, was first published by Little, Brown and Co.

In 1977, more than 130 hostages held in Washington D.C. by Hanafi Muslims were freed after ambassadors from three Islamic nations joined the negotiations.

In 1993, Janet Reno was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to be attorney general.

In 2004, ten bombs exploded in quick succession across the commuter rail network in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people in an attack linked to al-Qaida-inspired militants.

In 2011, a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast, killing nearly 20,000 people and severely damaging the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station.

In 2012, sixteen Afghan villagers — mostly women and children — were shot dead as they slept by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, who later pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Ten years ago: A judge, court reporter and sheriff's deputy were shot to death at an Atlanta courthouse; Brian Nichols, who killed them as well as a federal agent, surrendered a day later at the apartment of Ashley Smith, a woman he'd taken hostage. (Nichols was later convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.)

Five years ago: A federal appeals court in San Francisco upheld the use of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency. In an address at Tel Aviv University, Vice President Joe Biden said "good faith negotiations" could recognize Israel's security needs and the Palestinian goal for a viable state. Sebastian Pinera was sworn in as Chile's new president on a day when the country was peppered with a dozen significant aftershocks from a February earthquake. Pro Football Hall of Famer and former television actor Merlin Olsen died in suburban Los Angeles at age 69.

One year ago: In an extraordinary public accusation, the head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., declared the CIA had interfered with and then tried to intimidate a congressional investigation into the agency's possible use of torture in terror probes during the Bush administration. Swedish Radio reporter Nils Horner was shot dead in Kabul, Afghanistan, in an attack claimed by a Taliban splinter group. Dallas Seavey ran a blistering pace and took the lead just hours before the finish to win the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

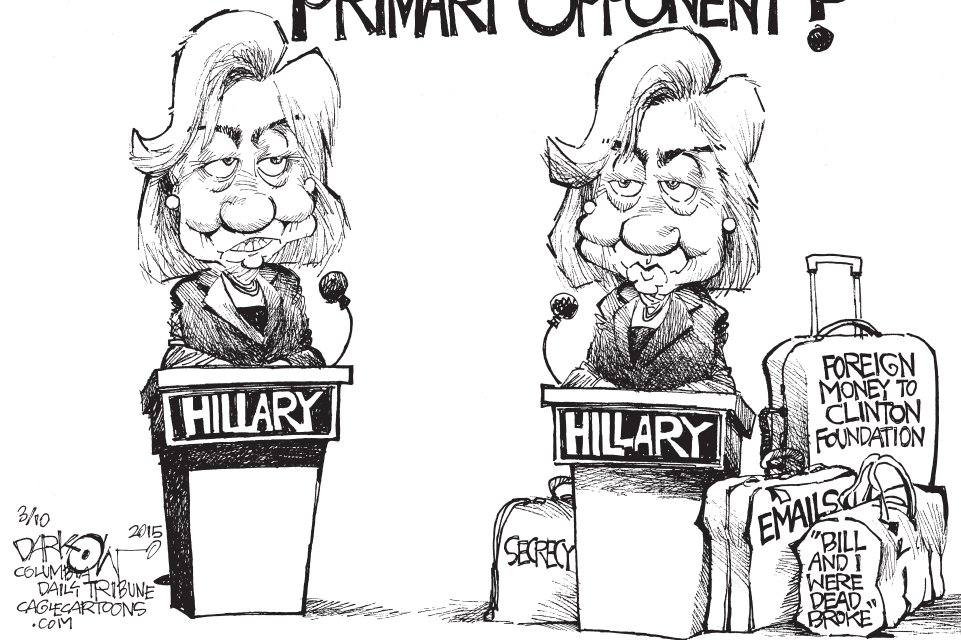
Today's Birthdays: Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is 84. ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson is 81. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia is 79. Musician Flaco Jimenez is 76. Actress Tricia O'Neil is 70. Actor Mark Metcalf is 69. Rock singer-musician Mark Stein (Vanilla Fudge) is 68. Singer Bobby McFerrin is 65. Movie director Jerry Zucker is 65. Actress Susan Richardson is 63. Recording executive Jimmy Iovine is 62. Singer Nina Hagen is 60. Country singer Jimmy Fortune (The Statler Brothers) is 60. Singer Cheryl Lynn is 58. Actor Elias Koteas is 54. Actor-director Peter Berg is 53. Actor Jeffrey Nordling is 53. Actress Alex Kingston is 52. Country musician David Talbot is 52. Actor Wallace Langham is 50. Former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., is 50. Actor John Barrowman is 48. Singer Lisa Loeb is 47. Neo-soul musician Al Gamble (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 46. Singer Pete Dinklage is 46. Actor Terrence Howard is 46. Rock musician Rami Jaffe is 46. Actor Johnny Knoxville is 44. Rock singer-musicians Benji and Joel Madden (Good Charlotte; The Madden Brothers) are 36. Actor David Anders is 34. Singer LeToya is 34. Actress Thora Birch is 33. TV personality Melissa Rycroft is 32. Actor Rob Brown is 31. Actor Anton Yelchin is 26.

Thought for Today: "Perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life." — Kate Chopin, American writer (1851-1904).

FROM THE BIBLE

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Luke 12:37. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

WHO SAYS HILARY WON'T HAVE A PRIMARY OPPONENT?



The Conundrum Of Corporation And Nation

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Content Agency

The U.S. economy is picking up steam, but most Americans aren't feeling it. By contrast, most European economies are still in bad shape, but most Europeans are doing relatively well.

What's behind this? Two big facts.

First, American corporations exert far more political influence in the United States than their European counterparts exert in their own countries.

In fact, most Americans have no influence at all. That's the conclusion of professors Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, who analyzed 1,799 policy issues and found that "the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy."

Instead, American lawmakers respond to the demands of wealthy individuals (typically corporate executives and Wall Street moguls) and of big corporations — those with the most lobbying prowess and the deepest pockets to bankroll campaigns.

The second fact is that most big American corporations have no particular allegiance to America. They don't want Americans to have better wages. Their only allegiance and responsibility is to their shareholders — which often requires lower wages to fuel larger profits and higher share prices.

When General Motors went public again in 2010, it boasted of making 43 percent of its cars in place where labor is less than \$15 an hour, while in North America it could now pay "lower-tiered" wages and benefits for new employees.

American corporations shift their profits around the world wherever they pay the lowest taxes. Some are even morphing into foreign corporations.

As an Apple executive told *The New York Times*, "We don't have an obligation to solve America's problems."

I'm not blaming American corporations. They're in business to make profits and maximize their share prices, not to serve America. But because of these two basic facts — their dominance in American politics, and their interest in share prices instead of the well-being of Americans — it's folly to count on them to create good American jobs, improve American competitiveness or represent the interests of the United States in global commerce.

By contrast, big corporations headquartered in other rich nations are more responsible for the well-being of the people who live in those nations.

That's because labor unions there are typically stronger than they are here — and are able to exert pressure both at the company level and nationally.

Volkswagen's labor unions, for example, have a voice in governing the company, as they do in other big German corporations. Not long ago, VW even welcomed the UAW to its auto plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. (Tennessee's own politicians nixed it.)

Governments in other rich nations often

devise laws through tripartite bargains involving big corporations and organized labor. This process further binds corporations to their nations.

Meanwhile, American corporations distribute a smaller share of their earnings to their workers than do European or Canadian corporations.

And top U.S. corporate executives make far more money than their counterparts in other wealthy countries.

The typical American worker puts in more hours than Canadians and Europeans, and gets little or no paid vacation or paid family leave. In Europe, the norm is five weeks paid vacation per year and more than three months paid family leave.

And because of the overwhelming clout of American firms on U.S. politics, Americans don't get nearly as good a deal from their governments as do Canadians and Europeans.

Governments there impose higher taxes on the wealthy and redistribute more of it to middle- and lower-income households. Most of their citizens receive essentially free health care and more generous unemployment benefits than do Americans.

So it shouldn't be surprising that even though U.S. economy is doing better, most Americans are not.

The U.S. middle class is no longer the world's richest. After considering taxes and transfer payments, middle-class incomes in Canada and much of Western Europe are higher than in U.S. The poor in Western Europe earn more than do poor Americans.

Finally, when at global negotiating tables — such as the secretive process devising the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal — American corporations don't represent the interests of Americans. They represent the interests of their executives and shareholders, who are not only wealthier than most Americans but also reside all over the world. Which is why the pending TPP protects the intellectual property of American corporations — but not American workers' health, safety or wages, and not the environment.

The Obama administration is casting the TPP as way to contain Chinese influence in the Pacific region. The agents of America's interests in the area are assumed to be American corporations. But that assumption is incorrect. American corporations aren't set up to represent America's interests in the Pacific region or anywhere else.

What's the answer to this basic conundrum? Either we lessen the dominance of big American corporations over American politics, or we increase their allegiance and responsibility to America.

It has to be one or the other. Americans can't thrive within a political system run largely by big American corporations — organized to boost their share prices but not boost America.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on iTunes, DVD and On Demand.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Poison Prevention

Traci Eilers, Yankton

Do you know what to do if you suspect someone has consumed excess medication or household chemicals — in other words: poison? Poisonings affect many Americans of all ages, from young children to elderly adults. More than 2 million cases of human exposures to poison are reported in the U.S. each year and 94 percent of all incidents occur in the home. Eight-one percent of these human exposures were unintentional, and 51 percent of calls to poison centers involve children ages 5 and younger.

This year, Poison Prevention Week takes place on March 16-22. Student pharmacists at South Dakota State University will be working to raise awareness about the importance of poison prevention throughout the local community.

Start with these helpful links: keep

chemicals and household cleaners in locked cabinets or out of reach of children, avoid leaving medications on open counters, avoid keeping toxic chemicals near food cabinets, and keep all household cleaners in the original containers. Most people are not aware that child-resistant caps are not child proof. Therefore, please keep medications out of reach of children regardless of the type of cap on the bottle. For more helpful tips, visit the Poison Center website at www.aapcc.org/prevention/nppw for tips on how to prevent poisonings in the home.

Keep the Poison Control hotline phone number (1-800-222-1222) posted in an easy to see location. The hotline is a free resource, completely confidential and available 24/7 to use. The Poison Control hotline will answer questions about human exposures, animal exposures, plant poisonings, and many other topics. You never know when this information could save someone's life!

EMPOWERMENT: "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." — Thomas Jefferson

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