

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

A Football Player Makes A Choice

One has to wonder how many people will remember Chris Borland. He's the linebacker for the San Francisco 49ers who did something rather profound last Friday: At age 24 and after one year in the NFL, he retired, you could say, due to injury. He didn't sustain an injury; rather, he retired to prevent one.

Borland, a University of Wisconsin product and former Big 10 Defensive Player of the Year who was coming off a big rookie year for the 49ers, decided to leave pro football out of concerns about brain injuries, which have become a very serious and frightening issue in the realm of the sport. It's especially a concern in the high-impact NFL, where large, swift humans violently crash into one another all the time.

"I just honestly want to do what's best for my health," he told ESPN's "Outside the Lines." "From what I've researched and what I've experienced, I don't think it's worth the risk."

The dangers of brain injury brought on by football (as well as other sports; see boxing as a disturbing example) have taken on a greater clarity in recent years. Studies have shown the devastating effects that the sport can have on some athletes. One such study, conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs' brain repository last year, reported that 76 of 79 former players tested were found to have evidence of degenerative brain disease.

But it's the faces and names that are part of such studies that haunt us all. These are athletes like legendary San Diego Chargers linebacker Junior Seau, who committed suicide, and it was later revealed he suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a brain disorder that leads to dementia and a general, hopeless loss of who you are. Other former players like Dave Duerson and Ray Easterling, also with CTE, also killed themselves. (Duerson shot himself in the chest, reportedly so that his brain could be preserved for study of CTE.) And there are many players — some big names, some you never knew — who gradually faded away in a haze of dementia and oblivion.

The NFL has wrestled with this issue, having reached a \$765 million settlement involving lawsuits with more than 4,500 players who sued on the ground that they were misled about the dangers of brain injuries related to concussions. The league has instituted certain protective rules for players suspected of having concussions. It still faces legal actions, not to mention growing public pressure, on the matter.

But for many players, the damage is already done. As *New York Daily News* columnist Mike Lupica pointed out, there is no reversal from this damage, no Tommy John surgery that can repair the devastation.

Thus, Borland decided to walk away. He took his career — and his life — into his own hands. While he has had two diagnosed concussions in his life (only one of them football related), Borland said his actions are intended to be proactive, not a response or a consequence to the injuries that can come with professional sports.

"I'm concerned that if you wait till you have symptoms, it's too late," he said. "There are a lot of unknowns. I can't claim that X will happen. I just want to live a long, healthy life, and I don't want to have any neurological diseases or die younger than I would otherwise."

But as he exits the gridiron, there are no shortage of hungry players who, knowing the risks anyway, are going to want his job ...

Will anyone remember Borland and this decision? We really don't know. But for Borland, it's far better to be healthy and forgotten by the rabid NFL fan base than to be remembered like Seau, Duerson, Easterling and too many others.

kmh

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 Wednesday, March 18, the 77th day of 2015. There are 288 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On March 18, 1965, the first spacewalk took place as Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov went outside his Voskhod 2 capsule, secured by a tether. Farouk I, the former king of Egypt, died in exile in Rome.

On this date: In 1766, Britain repealed the Stamp Act of 1765.

In 1837, the 22nd and 24th president of the United States, Grover Cleveland, was born in Caldwell, New Jersey.

In 1913, King George I of Greece was assassinated in Thessaloniki.

In 1925, the Tri-State Tornado struck southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and southwestern Indiana, resulting in some 700 deaths.

In 1937, some 300 people, mostly children, were killed in a gas explosion at a school in New London, Texas.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass, where the Italian dictator agreed to join Germany's war against France and Britain.

In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Hawaii statehood bill. (Hawaii became a state on Aug. 21, 1959.)

In 1962, France and Algerian rebels signed the Evian Accords, a cease-fire agreement which took effect the next day, ending the Algerian War.

In 1974, most of the Arab oil-producing nations ended their 5-month-old embargo against the United States that had been sparked by American support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

In 1980, Frank Gotti, the 12-year-old youngest son of mobster John Gotti, was struck and killed by a car driven by John Favara, a neighbor in Queens, New York. (The following July, Favara vanished, the apparent victim of a gang hit.)

In 1990, thieves made off with 13 works of art from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (the crime remains unsolved).

In 1995, Spain's Princess Elena married a banker, Jaime de Marichalar y Saenz de Tejada, in Seville; it was Spain's first royal wedding in 89 years. (The couple separated in 2007 and later divorced.)

Ten years ago: Doctors in Florida, acting on orders of a state judge, removed Terri Schiavo's feeding tube. (Despite the efforts of congressional Republicans to intervene and repeated court appeals by Schiavo's parents, the brain-damaged woman died on March 31, 2005, at age 41.) Former Connecticut Governor John G. Rowland was sentenced to a year in prison and four months under house arrest for selling his office in a corruption

scandal (he served 10 months behind bars).

Five years ago: President Barack Obama signed into law a \$38 billion jobs bill containing a modest mix of tax breaks and spending designed to encourage the private sector to start hiring again. Actor Fess Parker, 85, died in Santa Ynez, California. Jerome York, an Apple, Inc. board member and a financial wizard credited with turning around Chrysler and IBM, died in Pontiac, Michigan, at age 71.

One year ago: With a sweep of his pen, President Vladimir Putin added Crimea to the map of Russia, provoking denunciations from the Western leaders who called Putin a threat to the world. Venture capitalist Bruce Rauner won the GOP primary in his bid for Illinois governor (he went on to defeat the Democratic incumbent, Pat Quinn). A KOMO-TV news helicopter crashed and burst into flames near Seattle's Space Needle, killing both people on board.

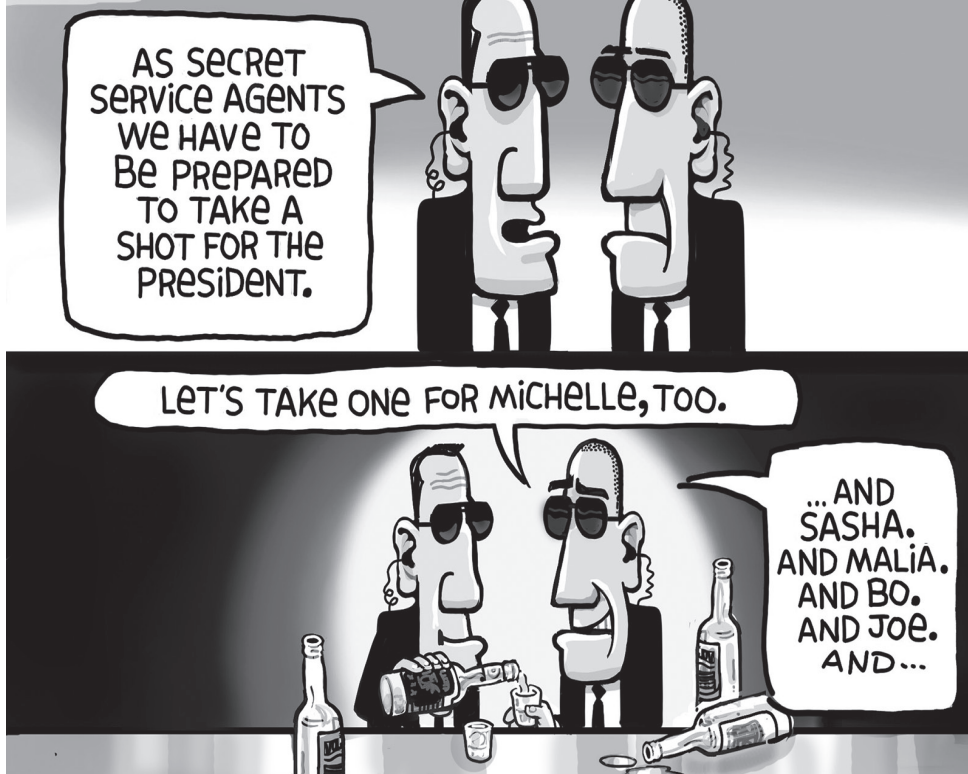
Today's Birthdays: Composer John Kander is 88. Country singer Charley Pride is 81. Nobel peace laureate and former South African president F.W. de Klerk is 79. Country singer Margie Bowes is 74. Actor Kevin Dobson is 72. Actor Brad Dourif is 65. Jazz musician Bill Frisell is 64. Singer Irene Cara is 56. Movie writer-director Luc Besson is 56. Actor Geoffrey Owens is 54. Actor Thomas Ian Griffith is 53. Singer-songwriter James McMurtry is 53. Singer-actress Vanessa L. Williams is 52. Olympic gold medal speedskater Bonnie Blair is 51. Country musician Scott Saunders (Sons of the Desert) is 51. Actor David Cubitt is 50. Rock musician Jerry Cantrell (Alice in Chains) is 49. Rock singer-musician Miki Berenyi is 48. Actor Michael Bergin is 46. Rapper-actress-talk show host Queen Latifah is 45. Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus is 43. Actor-comedian Dane Cook is 43. Country singer Philip Sweet (Little Big Town) is 41. Rock musician Stuart Zender is 41. Singers Jaron and Evan Lowenstein are 41. Actress-singer-dancer Sutton Foster is 40. Singer Devin Lima (LFO) is 38. Rock singer Adam Levine (Maroon 5) is 36. Rock musician Daren Taylor (Airborne Toxic Event) is 35. Olympic gold medal figure skater Alexei Yagudin is 35. Actor Adam Pally is 33. Actress-dancer Julia Goldani Telles is 20. Actress Ciara Bravo is 18. Actor Blake Garrett Rosenthal is 11.

Thought for Today: "It's easy to be independent when you've got money. But to be independent when you haven't got a thing — that's the Lord's test." — Mahalia Jackson, American gospel singer (1911-1972).

FROM THE BIBLE

Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

STAR TRIBUNE (ajl) ©Cartoons.com



Pierre Report

Budget Adjusts To Changing Numbers

BY REP. JEAN HUNHOFF

R-District 18 (Yankton)

The House voted at 10:21 p.m. on March 13 on the General Appropriations Bill. Though not a unanimous vote, it was an overwhelming majority that finalized another balanced budget for the State of South Dakota.

During the past two weeks, the Joint Appropriations Committee listened to economic advisors, Bureau of Finance and Management and the Legislative Research Council on economic trends and forecasts for the next fiscal year. The consistent message was that the economy was softening and budgeting for the next fiscal year should reflect a conservative approach.

It was interesting when the Joint Appropriations subcommittee for Revenue Projections met that two different perspectives surfaced. We all heard the same forecast information yet it was interpreted differently in that a few saw a stronger economic year compared to this year. Also of interest was that the Legislative Research Council projections were higher than the Bureau of Finance. This was a first for me.

The day after, we concluded on splitting the difference between the two estimates. We heard of layoffs occurring in Sioux Falls and Minneapolis by major employers. We know that Agriculture is the No. 1 industry in South Dakota and it impacts the economic development in this state. Less equipment sales this past year and falling crop prices are contributing a slowing of the ag sector.

In the end, we were able to reinvest \$22.6 million for one-time expenses despite an \$8.3 million in reduced revenues. For FY 2016, revenue estimates reflect a growing economy across the state, but revenue estimates were reduced by \$10.4 million from the estimated offered by the governor in December.

Something that has not changed over the years is funding priorities: education, taking care of people and protecting the public. In total, those priorities represent 95 percent of the budget. The issues are how the dollars are allocated in those areas and what dollars can go to support economic development which provides the majority of our tax base in South Dakota.

Currently, the workforce shortage is contributing to a slowing in economic growth. The lack of prepared workers prevents small and large businesses from growing and meeting the market demand for goods and services. With the dollars that were available for education and economic development, priorities were given to those areas. We can only work with what we have and so available dollars were directed to a 2 percent increase in K-12 education, higher ed. and tech schools received additional dollars for programming and student aid increased in the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarships for freshman and sustaining need based and critical need scholarships.

For the remaining FY 15, one-time dollars were allocated to:

- emergency funding at \$6 million, which backfills the state's costs for emergency and disaster assistance in South Dakota,
- Direct Workforce Dollars at \$2.1 million to assist long-term care and community-based services in recruitment and retention of staff,
- Captive Property and Casualty Coverage for all state buildings at \$4 million,
- Captive Insurance for the Authorities at \$2 million;
- Sanford Underground Lab Ross Shaft

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Let Diplomacy Work'

Vanessa Carlson, Wakonda

As you may know, 47 Republican senators recently sent a warning letter to Iranian leaders threatening to blow up any diplomatic deal negotiated by President Obama.

This letter wasn't just bad politics — it was a dangerous attempt to undermine negotiations with Iran. The leader of the letter, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas), has explicitly stated that the goal of congressional action is to make talks with Iran fail.

This is disrespectful, dangerous and reckless. These Republicans should be held accountable. I hope no Democrat joins them in blowing up the president's diplomatic efforts and putting us on a path to war.

DISSIDENCE: "Acceptance by government of a dissident press is a measure of the maturity of a nation." — William O. Douglas

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



J. Hunhoff

upgrade for \$3.5 million,
• South Dakota Conserva-
tion for Wildlife Habitat at
\$500,000;

• Jobs for Americas Gradu-
ates at \$250,000;

• Tax Refunds for the El-
derly at \$450,000;

• Rural Health Recruitment
Assistance at \$380,000;

• Rural Health Facility Re-
cruitment Assistance at \$302,500;

• and Sioux River Flow Study at \$500,000.

For FY 16, education received a 2 percent in-
crease. The big discussion on funding revolved
around the inclusion of sparsity, assessments
and Information Technology (IT) usage in the
education formula. These expenses have been
considered outside the formula and appropriat-
ed annually on a one time basis. The 2 percent
increase included them in the formula, which
then is shared between the state and local ef-
fort. That was the debate as the local taxpayer
would be picking up a greater share of dollars
according to the Cutler/Gabriel split. The House
voted to take those dollars out of the formula
for sparsity and assessments. The bill went
over to the Senate and was amended back to
the original form of including in the formula. If
those three expenses were not in the formula,
there would be no funding in the budget for
sparsity, IT and assessments. The rationale for
moving them into the budget is that all schools
participate with IT and assessments, and all
along taxpayers having been paying for the
small school factor no matter what sizes their
school district. It was all rolled into the formula
and seemed appropriate to include these three
expenses into the formula.

Health care providers received tiered
increases with the greatest percentages over 2
percent going to long term care and communi-
ty-based services.

State employees received a 2 percent
increase.

Post-secondary Technical Institutes re-
ceived a 2 percent inflationary increase to their
ongoing budget per the funding formula.

There was funding for roads, two new judges
— one in Minnehaha County and another in
Pennington County — and some swaps of dol-
lars to support the law enforcement officers
training program which is running in the red.

The Juvenile Justice Act will support more
community-based services for our troubled
youth rather than residential/institutional
placement.

The budget adopted was ongoing budget of
\$1,429,990,456 in general funds, \$1,675,861,718
in federal funds and \$1,220,850,946 in other
funds for a total budget of \$4,326,703, 120 in
total funds. The totals exclude special and
continuous appropriations.

Was it the best it could be? That is in the
eyes of the beholder, which is the taxpayer.

There were no programmatic reductions,
there were sustaining efforts with inflationary
increases and there were one-time funding
projects to grow our economy.

The approved budget is never the end but
rather the beginning for growing South Dakota.
This summer, I will be working outside of ses-
sion as a member of the Joint Appropriations
Committee, Government Audit and Operations
Committee and Interim Rules Committee.

It is a privilege to work for the people of
District 18.
