

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

Motorcycle Helmets And Wise Choices

Did Nebraska lawmakers do the right thing Monday by derailing an attempt to ax the state's motorcycle helmet law?

Or does South Dakota do the right thing by having only a partial helmet law on the books, thus permitting adult motorcycle operators to choose whether to wear the gear or not?

These are the kinds of questions that constantly swirl around the issue of motorcycle helmet laws. They bring to the table issues of safety versus personal liberty and government protection versus government overreach.

It has stirred up again lately with Nebraska's LB 31, which would repeal the state's mandatory helmet law that went on the books in 1989. The bill failed to advance in Lincoln Monday, as the 24-18 vote in favor of the repeal fell short of the 33 votes needed to end debate on the matter. Thus, the filibuster tied to the legislation remains, and the measure will likely die right there for this session.

Many motorcycle enthusiasts and advocacy groups have been working for decades to repeal the law, saying it infringes on their freedom to ride without a helmet if they so choose. Nebraska is currently one of 19 states in the country that requires all motorcycle riders to wear helmets. Bordering states South Dakota, Colorado, Kansas and Wyoming have only partial helmet laws on their books, usually meaning the riders below a certain age are required to wear the protective gear. Iowa has no law governing the matter.

Some lawmakers also dragged South Dakota into Nebraska's debate by noting that the roadways of Nebraska are the most direct route to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, but many bikers avoid the state due to its helmet law — thus depriving the state of summer-time revenue. (Frankly, making this a money issue simply seems awkward because it seems to set forth unfortunate priorities.)

Opponents of the repeal come back to the one argument that seemingly trumps all others: Helmets save lives. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, riders wearing a helmet have a 29 percent better chance of surviving a crash than do bikers without helmets.

With LB 31's apparent failure, riders in the Yankton area are still presented with two different philosophical views on the matter on either side of the border.

Motorcycles are, by their very nature, vehicles that are prone to danger, no matter how experienced an operator is. The bikes are really much more at the mercy of other drivers than are four-wheel vehicles. The lighting that theoretically makes the cycles more visible to other motorists can be deceptive to motorists who are not paying close attention. Granted, a helmet may not make a lot of difference in some collisions, but then again, it may serve as the difference between gashed head gear and a traumatic, life-changing brain injury.

With the latter comes a lot of costs. According to the *Omaha World Herald*, it's estimated that a debilitating head injury can end up with a cost of \$4.4 million across a lifetime. Most of that won't be paid by the victim but rather by the taxpayers. It is another form of damage, you might say, that's shared by everyone.

Since this area has two different sets of rules in regards to the matter, we can only offer this advice: Even in places where a helmet is not required, the smart and safe thing to do is to protect yourself by wearing a helmet. It's a tool that could help you avoid a lifetime of pain. It's the sensible thing to do for yourself, your loved ones and your friends.

Freedom is always a great thing, but you can also be free to choose the wisest course. And whether it's the law or not, wearing a helmet is the smartest choice of all.

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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 25, the 84th day of 2015. There are 281 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 25, 1965, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led 25,000 people to the Alabama state capitol in Montgomery after a five-day march from Selma to protest the denial of voting rights to blacks. Later that day, civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo, a white Detroit homemaker, was shot and killed by Ku Klux Klansmen as she drove a black volunteer to the airport.

On this date: In 1306, Robert the Bruce was crowned King of Scots.

In 1634, English colonists sent by Lord Baltimore arrived in present-day Maryland.

In 1776, Gen. George Washington, commander of the Continental Army, was awarded the first Congressional Gold Medal by the Continental Congress.

In 1865, during the Civil War, Confederate forces attacked Fort Sledman in Virginia but were forced to withdraw because of counterattacking Union troops.

In 1911, 146 people, mostly young female immigrants, were killed when fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. in New York.

In 1915, the U.S. Navy lost its first commissioned submarine as the USS F-4 sank off Hawaii, claiming the lives of all 21 crew members.

In 1924, the Second Hellenic Republic was proclaimed in Greece.

In 1947, a coal mine explosion in Centralia, Illinois, claimed 111 lives.

In 1954, RCA announced it had begun producing color television sets at its plant in Bloomington, Indiana.

In 1975, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was shot to death by a nephew with a history of mental illness. (The nephew was beheaded in June 1975.)

In 1985, "Amadeus" won eight Academy Awards, including best picture, best director for Milos Forman and best actor for F. Murray Abraham.

In 1990, 87 people, most of them Honduran and Dominican immigrants, were killed when fire raced through an illegal social club in New York City.

Ten years ago: Losing still more legal appeals, Terri Schiavo's father, Bob Schindler, said his severely brain-damaged daughter was "down to her last hours" as she entered her second week without the feeding tube that had sustained her life for 15 years. An ailing, silent Pope John

Paul II appeared to the faithful via video for Good Friday services at the Vatican.

Five years ago: Osama bin Laden threatened in a new message to kill any Americans al-Qaida captured if the U.S. executed Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the self-professed mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, or other al-Qaida suspects. Defense Secretary Robert Gates approved new rules easing enforcement of the "don't ask, don't tell" ban on gays serving openly in the military. Daisuke Takahashi gave Japan its first men's title at the World Figure Skating Championships in Turin, Italy.

One year ago: Following a two-day security summit in The Netherlands, President Barack Obama declared that the gathering had taken "concrete steps" to prevent nuclear material falling into the hands of terrorists even though Russia and China failed to sign an agreement to beef up inspections.

Today's Birthdays: Movie reviewer Gene Shalit is 89. Former astronaut James Lovell is 87. Feminist activist and author Gloria Steinem is 81. Singer Anita Bryant is 75. Singer Aretha Franklin is 73. Actor Paul Michael Glaser is 72. Singer Elton John is 68. Actress Bonnie Bedelia is 67. Actress-comedian Mary Gross is 62. Actor James McDaniel is 57. Former Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., is 57. Movie producer Amy Pascal is 57. Rock musician Steve Norman (Spandau Ballet) is 55. Actress Brenda Strong is 55. Actor Fred Goss is 54. Actor-writer-director John Stockwell is 54. Actress Marcia Cross is 53. Author Kate DiCamillo is 51. Actress Lisa Gay Hamilton is 51. Actress Sarah Jessica Parker is 50. Former MLB All-Star pitcher Tom Glavine is 49. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Debi Thomas, M.D., is 48. Actor Laz Alonso (TV: "The Mysteries of Laura") is 44. Singer Melanie Blatt (All Saints) is 40. Actor Domenick Lombardozzi is 39. Actor Lee Pace is 36. Actor Sean Faris is 33. Auto racer Danica Patrick is 33. Actress-singer Katharine McPhee is 31. Singer Jason Castro ("American Idol") is 28. Rapper Big Sean is 27. Rap DJ/producer Ryan Lewis is 27. Actor Matthew Beard (Film: "The Imitation Game") is 26. Actress-singer Aly (AKA Alyson) Michalka is 26. Actor Kiowa Gordon is 25. Actress Seychelle Gabriel is 24.

Thought for Today: "Scratch a pessimist, and you find often a defender of privilege." — Lord Beveridge, British economist (1879-1963).

FROM THE BIBLE

And they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. 1 Kings 3:28. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



School Daze

Reich: Why College Isn't (And Shouldn't Have To Be) For Everyone

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

I know a high school senior who's so worried about whether she'll be accepted at the college of her choice she can't sleep.

The parent of another senior tells me his son stands at the mailbox for an hour every day waiting for a hoped-for acceptance letter to arrive.

Parents are also uptight. I've heard of some who have stopped socializing with other parents of children competing for admission to the same university.

Competition for places at top-brand colleges is absurdly intense. With inequality at record levels and almost all the economic gains going to the top, there's more pressure than ever to get the golden ring.

A degree from a prestigious university can open doors to elite business schools and law schools — and to jobs paying hundreds of thousands, if not millions, a year.

So parents who can afford it are paying grotesque sums to give their kids an edge.

They "enhance" their kids' resumes with such things as bassoon lessons, trips to preserve the wildlife in Botswana and internships at *The Atlantic*. They hire test preparation coaches. They arrange for consultants to help their children write compelling essays on college applications.

They make generous contributions to the elite colleges they once attended, to which their kids are applying — colleges that give extra points to "legacies" and even more to those from wealthy families that donate tons of money.

You might call this affirmative action for the rich.

The same intensifying competition is affecting mid-range colleges and universities that are doing everything they can to burnish their own brands — competing with other mid-range institutions to enlarge their applicant pools, attract good students and inch upward in the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings.

Every college president wants to increase the ratio of applications to admissions, thereby becoming more elite.

Excuse me, but this is nuts.

The biggest absurdity is that a four-year college degree has become the only gateway into the American middle class.

But not every young person is suited to four years of college. They may be bright and ambitious, but they won't get much out of it. They'd rather be doing something else, like making money or painting murals.

They feel compelled to go to college because they've been told over and over that a college degree is necessary. Yet if they start college and then drop out, they feel like total failures.

Even if they get the degree, they're stuck with a huge bill — and may be paying down their student debt for years.

And all too often the jobs they land after graduating don't pay enough to make the degree worthwhile.

Last year, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 46 percent of recent college graduates were in jobs that don't even require a college degree.

Point Of View

The Case For Crane

BY JIM MEANS

Yankton

After reading Kelly Hertz's column (*Press & Dakotan*, March 20) regarding the school district discussion for updating Crane Worth Field or moving to Williams Field, I question the premise that the practical answer is moving to Williams and the sentimental answer is Crane.

I contend that the district would like to consolidate facilities at the high school property and are in the process of convincing themselves and the public that a move is the practical solution.

Some points that I believe need to be considered in the process:

- Parking — Crane has had capacity crowds to numerous events over the years from big football games to high school graduations and although there is a limited adjacent parking lot, I contend that the average walk of the attendees to these events was no longer than it will be for the average walk from the high school parking lot to the Williams field.

- Stadium at Crane obviously needs updating but I contend that if half the funds would be spent on upgrading the current stadium than will need be spent at a new facility, we could have a better facility at Crane than the new.

- Scoreboards and lighting are currently in place at Crane and, of course, all equipment needs to be upgraded and maintained but that expense will be less than making the move to Williams. If there is a move to Williams, the equipment will need periodic upgrading there, as well.
- Crane has great natural wind breaks along

The biggest frauds are for-profit colleges that are raking in money even as their students drop out in droves, and whose diplomas are barely worth the inkjets they're printed on.

America clings to the conceit that four years of college are necessary for everyone, and looks down its nose at people who don't have college degrees.

This has to stop. Young people need an alternative. That alternative should be a world-class system of vocational-technical education.

A four-year college degree isn't necessary for many of tomorrow's good jobs. For example, the emerging economy will need platoons of technicians able to install, service and repair all the high-tech machinery filling up hospitals, offices and factories. And people who can upgrade the software embedded in almost every gadget you buy.

Today it's even hard to find a skilled plumber or electrician.

Yet the vocational and technical education now available to young Americans is typically underfunded and inadequate. And too often denigrated as being for "losers."

These programs should be creating winners.

Germany, whose median wage (after taxes and transfers) is higher than ours, gives many of its young people world-class technical skills that have made Germany a world leader in fields such as precision manufacturing.

A world-class technical education doesn't have to mean young people's fates are determined when they're 14.

Instead, rising high school seniors could be given the option of entering a program that extends a year or two beyond high school and ends with a diploma acknowledging their technical expertise.

Community colleges — the underappreciated crown jewels of America's feeble attempts at equal opportunity — could be developing these curricula. Businesses could be advising on the technical skills they'll need, and promising jobs to young people who complete their degrees with good grades.

Government could be investing enough money to make these programs thrive (and raising taxes on top incomes enough to temper the wild competition for admission to elite colleges that grease the way to those top incomes).

Instead, we continue to push most of our young people through a single funnel called a four-year college education — a funnel so narrow it's causing applicants and their parents excessive stress and worry about "getting in"; that's too often ill suited and unnecessary, and far too expensive; and that can cause college dropouts to feel like failures for the rest of their lives.

It's time to give up the idea that every young person has to go to college, and start offering high school seniors an alternative route into the middle class.

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 Netflix, iTunes and Amazon.

the north/west part of the field with large mature trees. The district has discussed planting wind breaks at Williams but the current football players will be grandparents and the artificial turf will be replaced at least twice before those to be planted wind breaks will be mature enough