

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

A Welcome Idea For Congress

OMAHA WORLD-HERALD (March 20): Chuck Hagel, a Republican, did it. So did Ben Nelson, a Democrat. As did Democrats Bob Kerrey and Jim Exon.

During their service in the U.S. Senate, those Nebraska lawmakers often gave their party chieftains the same message: Don't count on me to always vote the party line. Issues are too complicated for that. I'm voting my own mind.

In the U.S. House, Rep. Brad Ashford has begun his congressional career on the same path. The 2nd District's new congressman took an independent stance in the first weeks of the new Congress by voting with the Republican majority to pass six of seven bills opposed by most of Ashford's fellow House Democrats.

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Ashford's office says his is one of the most independent records in the House so far — voting with the Democrats 73 percent of the time (when the party-line average is 93 percent) — and that 30 of his 39 bills include Republican co-sponsors.

He has been criticized by some Democrats for some of his votes, particularly in support of the Keystone XL pipeline. And, as the *World-Herald's* Joseph Morton reports, he's catching partisan heat for not being as aggressive as many other congressmen in trying to raise campaign cash.

His approach shouldn't come as a surprise, though. Ashford was known for his independent-mindedness during his years in the Nebraska Legislature. At times he's been a registered Republican or independent. He has long been outspoken in his support for the Legislature's nonpartisan culture and the way it promotes practical policy-making.

Our dysfunctional Congress would benefit greatly by having fewer partisan stalwarts and a greater number of energetic independent thinkers.

Such lawmakers prod their respective parties to stop and look beyond simple talking points. These independent thinkers encourage their colleagues to pull back from extreme positions and work toward practical consensus-building.

They also remind the Republican and Democratic establishments that if a party intends to be a competitive national party, it needs to provide room for moderates. What's the fastest-growing political affiliation in Nebraska? Independents, who now account for 20 percent of registered voters statewide, with Republicans at 48 percent and Democrats at 31 percent.

Our nation is well served when members of Congress, Republican or Democrat, search for common ground and common-sense solutions rather than promoting the idea that politics should be a zero-sum, win-at-all-costs game.

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 Monday, March 30, the 89th day of 2015. There are 276 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On March 30, 1945, during World War II, the Soviet Union invaded Austria with the goal of taking Vienna, which it accomplished two weeks later.

On this date: In 1135, the Jewish philosopher Maimonides was born in Cordoba in present-day Spain.

In 1822, Florida became a United States territory.

In 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward reached agreement with Russia to purchase the territory of Alaska for \$72 million.

In 1870, the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited denying citizens the right to vote and hold office on the basis of race, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish. Texas was readmitted to the Union.

In 1909, the Queensboro Bridge, linking the New York City boroughs of Manhattan and Queens, opened.

In 1923, the Cunard liner RMS *Laconia* became the first passenger ship to circle the globe as it arrived in New York.

In 1975, "On the Waterfront" won the Academy Award for best picture of 1954, while its star, Marlon Brando won best actor; in what was regarded as an upset, Grace Kelly won best actress for "The Country Girl," beating out Judy Garland for "A Star Is Born."

In 1959, a narrowly divided U.S. Supreme Court, in *Bartkus v. Illinois*, ruled that a conviction in state court following an acquittal in federal court for the same crime did not constitute double jeopardy.

In 1964, John Glenn withdrew from the Ohio race for the U.S. Senate because of injuries suffered in a fall. The original version of the TV game show "Jeopardy!" hosted by Art Fleming, premiered on NBC.

In 1975, as the Vietnam War neared its end, Communist forces occupied the city of Da Nang. James Ruppert, 41, killed 11 members of his family at his mother's home in Hamilton, Ohio, on Easter Sunday.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously wounded outside a Washington D.C. hotel by assailant John W. Hinckley Jr.

In 2002, Britain's Queen Mother Elizabeth died at Royal Lodge, Windsor, outside London; she was 101 years old.

Ten years ago: Under heavy protection, U.S. first lady Laura Bush visited the capital of Afghanistan, where she talked with Afghan women freed from Taliban

repression and urged greater rights. The Supreme Court ruled that federal law allowed people 40 and over to file age bias claims over salary and hiring even if employers never intended any harm. Fred Korematsu, who'd challenged the World War II internment policy that sent Japanese-Americans to detention camps, died in Larkspur, California, at age 86.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama signed a single measure sealing his health care overhaul and making the government the primary lender to students by cutting banks out of the process. The world's largest atom smasher, the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, threw together minuscule particles racing at unheard-of speeds in conditions simulating those just after the Big Bang.

Math teacher Jaime Escalante, who inspired the movie "Stand and Deliver," died in Roseville, California, at age 79. Morris Jeppson, a weapons test officer aboard the Enola Gay who helped arm the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima, died in a Las Vegas hospital at age 87.

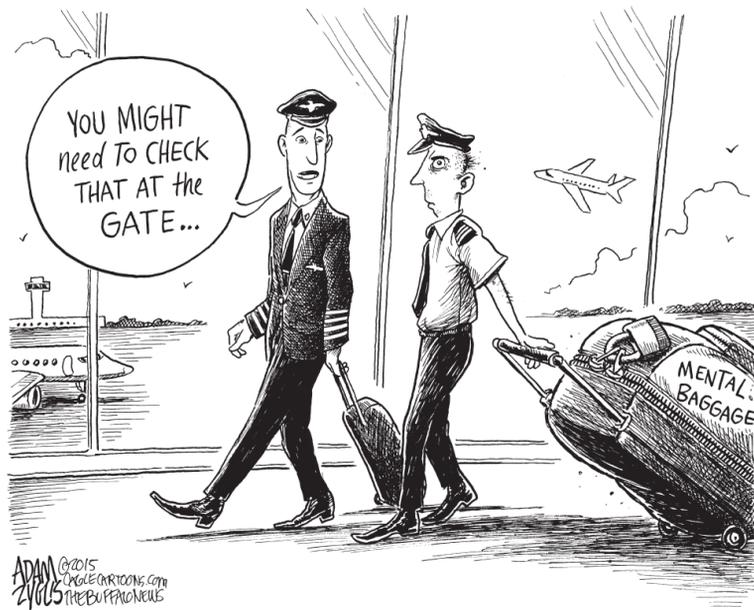
One year ago: Four hours of talks in Paris between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov failed to break a tense East-West deadlock over the crisis in Ukraine. Actress Kate O'Mara, 74, best known for her role in the 1980s soap opera "Dynasty," died in southern England. Harry Richard Black, 92, an artist who created the "Mr. Clean" advertising icon, died in Kettering, Ohio.

Today's Birthdays: Game show host Peter Marshall is 89. Actor Richard Dysart is 86. Actor John Astin is 85. Actor-director Warren Beatty is 78. Rock musician Graeme Edge (The Moody Blues) is 74. Rock musician Eric Clapton is 70. Actor Justin Deas is 67. Actor Robbie Coltrane is 65. Actor Paul Reiser is 58. Rap artist MC Hammer is 52. Singer Tracy Chapman is 51. Actor Ian Ziering is 51. TV personality Piers Morgan is 50. Actress Donna D'Errico (TV: "Baywatch") is 47. Singer Celine Dion is 47. Actor Mark Consuelos is 44. Actress Bahar Soomekh is 40. Actress Jessica Cauffiel is 39. Singer Norah Jones is 36. Actress Fiona Gubelmann is 35. Actress Katy Nixon is 34. Actor Jason Doherty is 33. Country singer Justin Moore is 31. Actress Tessa Ferrer is 29. Country singer Thomas Rhett is 25.

Thought for Today: "We do not talk — we bludgeon one another with facts and theories gleaned from cursory readings of newspapers, magazines and digests." — Henry Miller, American author (1891-1980).

FROM THE BIBLE

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 2 Corinthians 4:7. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



Capitol Notebook

Now 160 Years Later, Harney Is Under Fire

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — South Dakotans will be asked in the coming weeks to look at their past and participate in a political decision unlike any of recent times.

The state Board of Geographic Names wants to change the name of Harney Peak. At 7,242 feet, the mountaintop is the highest point in South Dakota and in the Black Hills.

The peak's namesake is General William S. Harney.

Harney led U.S. military forces in decades of campaigns against native American Indian peoples in parts of the Midwest and parts of the West.

In 1855, at Ash Hollow in what is now Nebraska, he met with Little Thunder, a leader of a Brule band that was attacking wagon trains on the Overland Trail.

While they talked, Harney's soldiers are said to have surrounded the band and then attacked. The deaths totaled 136 Brules and 13 U.S. soldiers.

During the same period, Harney's forces reportedly were the first U.S. military to enter what is now South Dakota.

They originally quartered at Fort Pierre and established Fort Randall.

The Custer expedition and discovery of gold in the Black Hills came 20 years later, not far from what is Harney Peak.

That the highest point would be named for the first general seems too clear for coincidence. The proposed replacement name for Harney Peak is Black Elk Peak.

Black Elk was a medicine man on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation who told his story in 1931 to writer John Neihardt, through a Lakota interpreter who was Black Elk's son Ben.



Bob MERCER

Black Elk said he was at the Battle of the Little Big Horn / Greasy Grass on June 25, 1876. A large confederation of tribal warriors wiped out Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and his Seventh Cavalry troops.

Black Elk further said he was at Wounded Knee on Dec. 29, 1890. Seventh Cavalry troops killed more than 200 men, women and children from various tribes, and 25 U.S. soldiers died.

The subsequent book published in 1932 by Neihardt was "Black Elk Speaks." Among the stories told were Black Elk's visions while atop Harney Peak.

And now, more than 80 years later, we face questions.

Do we want to remove Harney's name? Do we want the peak to carry Black Elk's name?

Or do we want another name altogether?

The state board's five members meet Tuesday afternoon in Pierre. The board plans to take written comments through May 1 and to have field hearings to receive public comments.

Those meetings will be at Martin on April 28; Custer on April 29; Rapid City on April 29; Flandreau on May 5; and Pierre on May 6.

The Legislature began the process of removing offensive names in 2001 and formally created the board in 2009. All of those changes involved squaw and negro.

It seems likely the Legislature will want to say something about Harney Peak. Its 2015 regular session ends on Monday, March 30.

As for Gov. Dennis Daugaard's position? "The governor knows the board will carefully consider all of the public input and he trusts them to make a good decision," spokeswoman Kelsey Pritchard said.

Racism And A Cup Of Coffee

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Content Agency

Am I the only person in America not making fun of Howard Schultz?

The Starbucks CEO bought himself a ton of ridicule recently when he attempted to jumpstart a national dialogue on race by having baristas write the words "Race Together" on customers' cups of Cinnamon Dolce Light Frappuccino Grande or Caffe Misto Venti with extra coconut.

On Twitter, the campaign was dubbed "patronizing," "absurd" and "a load of crap." On "The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore," Rosie Perez said, "I don't want to be forced to have a conversation. Especially early in the f--- morning." Some folks questioned the wisdom of calling for racial dialogue when your executive team has all the rich cultural diversity of a GOP convention in Idaho.

Starbucks says there will eventually be more to the campaign, but what we've seen so far has been epically bad — naive at best, dumber than a sack of coffee beans at worst. Give it this much credit, though: It came out of an earnest conviction that the future health of our country requires us to solve race. In other words, Starbucks had good intentions.

You may say that's not much. You may note that good intentions are the macadam on the road to hell.

Me, I think we dismiss good intentions at our own peril.

Besides, Schultz's biggest mistake was not in having baristas write a trite slogan, but in his failure to realize that much of the country is simply not equipped for the conversation he is inviting them to have. Last week, even as "Race Together" was being lampooned, I spent 41 minutes I'll never get back on the phone with a white, Jewish reader who had insisted she wanted to have the "conversation on race." I have often said this country needs. It was not a productive encounter.

She starts on a spiel about blacks and drugs. I point out that only about 15 percent of drug use in this country is by blacks and that the vast majority of dealers are white. There is a silence. She says this is something she had not known.



Leonard PITTS

We move on to the fact that Jews were foot soldiers and financiers of the Civil Rights Movement, so she is offended that black people never attend Holocaust remembrance services. She has no statistics to prove this, but insists her observation is valid based on her lived experience. I point out that her lived experience is in Tucson, which has a black population of maybe 17.

And so it goes.

What it illustrated for me, and not for the first time, is that often, when people think they're talking about race, they really aren't. They are talking instead about the myths, resentments, projections and suppositions by which they justify half-baked notions about who those "other" people are.

You can't wholly blame them. Who can speak sensibly on a subject he doesn't understand? And we've been foiled in our quest to understand by an institutional conspiracy of ignorance. Race is the rawest wound of the American psyche, but somehow, you can graduate high school without knowing who Emmett Till was or that Martin Luther King ever said any words other than "I have a dream." Race has done more than arguably any other social force to shape this country, yet somehow news media do not cover it, unless forced to do so by crisis or controversy.

So here is what I've come to realize: Before we can have a fruitful "conversation on race," we need to first have education on race. We will not be a well nation or a whole one until we cease to fear and begin to understand this force that has made us who and what we are.

And how dare we reject from that cause any good person who earnestly seeks the same end, even if his solution is as dumb as a slogan on a coffee cup? Yes, I recognize the limitations of good intentions. But they sure beat the heck out of the other kind.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for *The Miami Herald*, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pricing Concerns

Angela Wiebelhaus, Yankton
As a customer of NorthWestern Energy, I am concerned about the individual rate increase that is planned to go into effect on July 1, 2015.

The increase to the typical residential customer using an average of 750 kilo watt hour of power each month will be \$16.76 per month, or about 56 cents a day. The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission will determine the amount of this rate increase.

According to the information in the customer

notice "Electric Rate Increase" that I received with my monthly billing statement, a customer has a right to join with 24 other customers to file a written objection to a rate increase and hold a public hearing to determine if the rate increase should be allowed.

May we join together in several petitions to reduce the amount of this increase to a more acceptable level?

According to my customer notice, it says a copy of the filing will be available at each of their office locations, where you can request a copy to look at in person.