

# The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION | OTHER VIEWS

## Nebraska Avoids Warning Sign

**OMAHA WORLD-HERALD (May 17):** When Nebraska legislators gathered in Lincoln in January, they faced one big job that had to be finished: Writing the state budget.

The Legislature last week completed that work, sending Gov. Pete Ricketts a plan that balances spending with revenues. Lawmakers have even gone a step further, building up a healthy savings account. Thanks to responsible budgeting over the past several years, the state should have a cash reserve of about \$718 million on June 30, 2016. That "rainy day" fund will provide an important cushion when the economy eventually turns from boom to bust.

Still, not everyone will be satisfied when lawmakers adjourn. Each legislative session, requests for more spending include everything from school aid to prisons to social services. Good, often emotional arguments are offered for the additional dollars being sought. Making the difficult decisions on which programs get more and which don't is an area where the 49 state senators — and particularly those on the budget-writing Appropriations Committee — earn their pay.

But the importance of balancing needs and wants with available revenue can't be overstated. That is reflected in a new report that finds nearly half the 50 states struggling to get the job done.

Even with the U.S. economy at its healthiest since the Great Recession, an Associated Press analysis of statehouse finances nationwide finds at least 22 states dealing with projected budget shortfalls. The number of states facing budget gaps prompted Standard & Poor's Ratings Service to call the trend a sort of "early warning."

"After all, if a state is grappling with a budget deficit now, with the economic expansion approaching its sixth anniversary, what will be its condition when the next slowdown strikes?" credit analyst Gabriel Petek wrote.

The causes for these budget gaps are many. In some states, revenue growth has been stagnant, making it difficult to keep up with growing populations and higher costs for health care and education. Other states have been hurt by a steep decline in oil prices, or they saw efforts to promote growth with tax cuts fail to work as anticipated.

Alabama faces a \$290 million shortfall. Some projected cuts would create a \$27 million hole in the state's court system, forcing more than 600 layoffs and leaving courts without staff to send jury notices, monitor juvenile delinquents, process protection orders and collect and distribute child support payments.

While the Census Bureau recently reported that total state government tax collections in fiscal year 2014 rose 2.2 percent, a fourth straight year of increases, 17 states saw declines in their tax revenues. Alaska had the biggest drop, \$1.7 billion. The state, which leans heavily on oil revenue, projected a \$3.2 billion budget shortfall.

In Illinois, lawmakers are trying to figure out how to close a \$6 billion shortfall, largest in the nation, while also struggling to remedy \$105 billion — with a "b" — in public pension debt.

In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback and lawmakers faced deficits after aggressive tax cutting. That led them to reduce school funding this spring, the AP reports.

In Nebraska, meanwhile, the Legislature gave final approval to an \$8.7 billion, two-year state budget designed to fund essential needs and provide additional money for the state's Property Tax Credit Fund, education and corrections.

The budget kept the state's overall spending increase to the 3.1 percent mark laid down by Gov. Ricketts.

This combination of diligent work and prudence is testament to the state's longstanding pay-as-you-go philosophy.

Not all Nebraskans will be satisfied with every decision state senators have made. But looking at the 22 states struggling to climb out of budget holes, Nebraskans can take satisfaction that the state lives within its means.

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 Tuesday, May 26, the 146th day of 2015. There are 219 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On May 26, 1940, Operation Dynamo, the evacuation of some 338,000 Allied troops from Dunkirk, France, began during World War II.

**On this date:** In 1521, Martin Luther was banned by the Edict of Worms because of his religious beliefs and writings. In 1865, Confederate forces west of the Mississippi surrendered in New Orleans.

In 1868, the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson ended with his acquittal on the remaining charges.

In 1913, Actors' Equity Association was organized by a group of actors at the Pabst Grand Circle Hotel in New York.

In 1938, the House Un-American Activities Committee was established by Congress.

In 1942, the U.S. War Department formally established the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS). The Tule Lake Segregation Center for Japanese-American wartime internees opened in northern California.

In 1954, explosions rocked the aircraft carrier USS Bennington off Rhode Island, killing 103 sailors. (The initial blast was blamed on leaking catapult fluid ignited by the flames of a jet.)

In 1960, U.N. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge accused the Soviets of hiding a microphone inside a wood carving of the Great Seal of the United States that had been presented to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

In 1969, the Apollo 10 astronauts returned to Earth after a successful eight-day dress rehearsal for the first manned moon landing.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in Moscow. (The U.S. withdrew from the treaty in 2002.)

In 1981, 14 people were killed when a Marine jet crashed onto the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz off Florida.

In 1994, Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley were married in the Dominican Republic. (The marriage, however, ended in 1996.)

**Ten years ago:** President George W. Bush received Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas at the White House; Bush called Abbas a courageous democratic reformer and bolstered his standing at home with \$50 million in assistance. Investigators confirmed five cases in which military personnel mishandled the Qurans of Muslim prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, but said they had found no "credible evidence" that a holy book was flushed in a toilet. Actor Eddie Albert died in Los Angeles at age 99. Internationally acclaimed concert pianist Ruth Laredo, 67, died in New York.

**Five years ago:** BP launched its latest bid to plug the gushing well in the Gulf of Mexico by force-feeding it heavy drilling mud, a maneuver known as a "top kill" which proved unsuccessful. TV personality Art Linkletter died in Los Angeles at age 97. Lee DeWyze was crowned the winner of "American Idol" over Crystal Bowersox.

**One year ago:** Pope Francis honored Jews killed in the Holocaust and in terrorist attacks during a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem as he wrapped up his Mideast pilgrimage. Egypt began holding a three-day presidential election (former military chief Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi emerged the landslide winner).

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Alec McCowen is 90. Sportscaster Brent Musberger is 76. Rock musician Garry Peterson (Guess Who) is 70. Singer Stevie Nicks is 67. Actress Pam Grier is 66. Actor Philip Michael Thomas is 66. Country singer Hank Williams Jr. is 66. Actress Margaret Colin is 58. Country singer-songwriter Dave Robbins is 56. Actor Doug Hutchison is 55. Actress Genie Francis is 53. Comedian Bobcat Goldthwait is 53. Singer-actor Lenny Kravitz is 51. Actress Helena Bonham Carter is 49. Distance runner Zola Budd is 49. Rock musician Phillip Rhodes is 47. Actor Joseph Fiennes is 45. Singer Joey Kibble (Take 6) is 44. Actor-producer-writer Matt Stone is 44. Contemporary Christian musician Nathan Cochran is 37. Actress Elisabeth Harnois is 36. Actor Hrach Tizian is 36.

**Thought for Today:** "Courage is being scared to death — and saddling up anyway." — John Wayne, American actor (born this date in 1907, died 1979).

FROM THE BIBLE

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. Romans 10:10. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



Capitol Notebook

## What Is Language Of Human Peace?

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — I get confused when I hear some people say in South Dakota, "We were here first."

I certainly don't dispute that native people lived throughout this region before European explorers arrived.

I don't know anyone who disputes that. So what is the point of the "We were here first" comment?

Is it to dismiss me because my personal heritage isn't what our society now categorizes as American Indian?

Is it a way to tell me that I'm second-class?

I don't need to be told that. I already know it. I can't vote in a tribal government election. I can't receive the additional benefits available from the federal government for lands taken.

I do understand the desire of people to speak their native language and dialects. That is how people's brains are wired.

We want to speak our language. We want to talk about our history.

We want to say who we are, in our way. Declaring "We were here first" can be a way of saying, "Recognize our language. Recognize our history."

Throughout the first century of territorial settlement and statehood, many people in South Dakota spoke their native languages and dialects within their homes and communities.

The challenge, even still today, comes when speakers of different languages come together.

I don't know enough German or Lakota or Spanish or French to flunk a test. I know only American English.

I confess: When a speaker at a meeting



Bob MERCER

chooses to make comments in something other than American English, I'm lost.

Solutions might be trusting translators or personally learning the languages and dialects in which those comments are made.

We do have many people in South Dakota who speak more than one language. I admire them for that ability.

I just don't think, at age 56, I will get there. Too often words I know escape me already.

The closest I came to living with a second language ended when I was a boy and the Catholic Church stopped celebrating Mass in Latin.

So what do we do with these things such as language that would divide us as citizens?

Should our public schools teach Lakota/Dakota as a second language, as we increasingly offer courses in English as a second language?

Our state's native people are hardly alone. This has been a struggle in Ireland too. I'm just as lost with anything spoken or written in Gaelic.

This comes to mind during Memorial Day weekend. It is a national holiday marking the losses of so many soldiers and others in the Civil War.

The war was largely about the federal Fugitive Slave Act and people with black skin who had been mercilessly forced to work in the United States of America.

The war ended in 1865 with the Union winning. This was also the time that U.S. troops pushed west into the Plains and over three decades came bloodshed, forced treaties and reservations.

We have yet to make real peace in urban America or Indian country.

We are here now, each of us, still facing that challenge.

The Rez of the Story

## Season Of The Sundance

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives),

This time of year (the summer months) is when we Dakotah like to Pow-Wow (social dance) and some Dakotah people do their traditional "Sundance" also at this time of the year. Many things have been told about these cultural and spiritual events held literally around the globe these days. There are Pow-wows and Sundances held routinely throughout many European countries and therein lies the rub for many Indian people.

Let's talk about the Pow-wow first. Pow-wow is a universal term used by many Indian people throughout north America. Jack Utter, "American Indians Answers to Today's Questions" tells us that the word pow-wow is "...derived from the Algonquin-speaking Narragansett tribe of the Rhode Island region.

In its original usage, it meant a Native healer or priest. For example, in 1646, the Massachusetts Bay Colony defined "pawwows" as "witches or sorcerers that cure by the help of the devil" (Spicer 1969, p. 174). In 1674, another observer wrote,

"Their physicians are Powaws or Indian Priests (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). Early on, the meaning of pow wow was expanded by non-Indians to include ceremonies in which Indian healers or religious leaders participated. The word was later widely applied and accepted by Indians and non-Indians as a generic term to cover nearly all gatherings involving feasts, councils, or inter-tribal conferences. Today the term is still applied to healers and spiritual leaders, but that meaning is used by some of the eastern tribes. In Indian country, "pow wow" currently means a tribal or inter-tribal dance, fair, rodeo, celebration, or other gathering. These may vary in size from small social functions to the very large "Gathering of Nations" pow wow, which annually draws people to Albuquerque, New Mexico, from throughout the U.S. and Canada. In addition to their recreational value, pow wows are socially significant for individual participants and are important to Indian solidarity, spirituality, cultural identity, and exchange of social-political information."

As far as I know, pow wows are usually open



Vince TWO EAGLES

to the public. There will not only be many different styles and types of dances and dancers but it is not uncommon to see Indian Name-Giving, Wiping of the Tears, Honoring and other ceremonies. Additionally, it is quite common to see Giveaways (these are quite often "Memorial Ceremonies" remembering those have deceased).

The Sundance on the other hand is a bird of a different feather, so to speak. Many traditional Indian people who still practice the old religious ceremonies believe it is disrespectful to allow non-Indians to either participate or observe the Sundance. This is, of course, their right.

If, on the other hand, the dancers or the sponsor of the Sundance think it is alright to allow non-Indians to attend and/or participate then so be it. The bottom line is that you have to ask before attending or participating in this very sacred ceremony.

I know the allowing of non-Indians to attend a Sundance, let alone participate in one, is highly controversial in Indian country. Even among Indian people I have observed a tendency to generalize ritual. This means that there are those who say one way of conducting a Sundance is right while another way is wrong. It is next to impossible, in my estimation, to win such an argument especially when we know different Tiyo's payes (Indian families) have their own particular way of doing things.

I don't believe this necessarily represents disunity among Indian people but allows for diversity in thought and individuality in religious practice. I understand that Indian people have always respected each individual's right to develop and explore their own personal relationship with the Creator without interference from someone else. If this is true then to each his own — some like it hot some like it cold. There is very little room for criticism but plenty of room to support and keep alive our Indian ways; especially our ceremonial life.

Once again, for you non-Indians, don't be afraid to ask and you can't go wrong.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Supporting Food Drive

National Association of Letter Carriers Local, Yankton

On Saturday, May 9, postal customers from Yankton, Mission Hill, Utica and Gayville participated in the national Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive and donated 9,300 pounds of non-perishable food and other items to the local food pantry.

We would like to thank all of the people who donated and everyone who collected and sorted the nonperishable items. We want to thank Hy-Vee for the plastic bags with the food drive logo, the local media for printing and airing our public service announcement and the businesses, schools and churches that allowed us to put up the posters.

Thank you all for filling up the shelves at the local food pantry.