

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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**OPINION | OUR VIEW**

## Two Gauges Of Our Political Climate?

A couple of political notes have flown across the radar this week that together might serve as a comment on these contentious times.

An Associated Press story in Tuesday's *Press & Dakotan* noted that former South Dakota Sen. Larry Pressler is mulling over the idea of running for his old seat that he lost to Tim Johnson in 1996. But this time, the Republican lawmaker said he'd consider making the run as an independent.

At this point, we need to hit the pause button to note that the odds of Pressler actually stepping back into the political boxing ring at age 71 are probably small. Pressler himself put it at less than 50-50. But what makes even the consideration of the move notable is his evident unhappiness with the current state of perpetual political gridlock on Capitol Hill.

"I think I could help break the deadlock between Republicans and Democrats," he said, adding that, as an independent, he would not be beholden to any party lines or alignments.

Pressler is a politician from a different age. While he did move to the Senate from the House in a huge Republican wave in 1978 that foreshadowed the Ronald Reagan landslide of 1980, he was a lawmaker who came from a generation that realized that compromise and horse-trading were possible and, often, essential in order for government to run effectively. He was a lot like other lawmakers from both parties back in those days: While they were adamant in their views, they also knew how to occasionally cut deals at the end of the day and make the system work for everyone.

The other political tidbit was a report on the New Republic website Monday that Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a freshman Democrat, might consider running for president in 2016 — especially if fellow Democrat Hillary Clinton enters the race as currently presumed. It's reported that Warren has no illusions about actually winning the Democratic nomination, but she wants to instead battle for the party's soul when it comes to dealing with big banks and big business.

Again, the odds of this happening appear unlikely. But the report has apparently raised some anxieties in corporate circles, where Warren's fiery, bank-busting rhetoric is not warmly welcomed. One financial analyst called the prospect of a Warren candidacy "a nightmare scenario," noting the prospect of Warren and possible GOP presidential hopeful Sen. Rand Paul (Ky.) on either end of the political spectrum hammering vociferously at the same populist issue.

Warren's apparent aim is to shake up the cozy relationships between mainstream Democrats and big business. And by 2016, such anti-corporate populism, which has been building steadily since the start of the Great Recession, might be a truly muscular force in the political realm and could change a lot of things.

Our guess is that the speculated bids by either Pressler or Warren will not come to pass. But both scenarios, coming from two very different kinds of politicians who are concerned about the status quo they see in Washington, may be seen as a symptom — with the unbending gridlock and the corporate political domination in D.C. cast as cancers. And in these scenarios, the voters are intended to be the collective cure.

Perhaps that's the most important message to carry forward to 2014, 2016 and beyond.

kmh

**ON THIS DATE**

**By The Associated Press**

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 13, the 317th day of 2013. There are 48 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Nov. 13, 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed by Maya Lin, was dedicated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

**On this date:** In 1312, England's King Edward III was born at Windsor Castle.

In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote in a letter to a friend, Jean-Baptiste Leroy: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

In 1849, voters in California ratified the state's original constitution.

In 1909, 259 men and boys were killed when fire erupted inside a coal mine in Cherry, Ill.

In 1927, the Holland Tunnel opened to the public, providing access between lower Manhattan and New Jersey beneath the Hudson River.

In 1937, the NBC Symphony Orchestra, formed exclusively for radio broadcasting, made its debut.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure lowering the minimum draft age from 21 to 18.

In 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down laws calling for racial segregation on public city and state buses.

In 1969, speaking in Des Moines, Iowa, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew accused network television news departments of bias and distortion, and urged viewers to lodge complaints.

In 1971, the U.S. space probe Mariner 9 went into orbit around Mars.

In 1974, Karen Silkwood, a technician and union activist at the Kerr-McGee Cesium plant near Crescent, Okla., died in a car crash while on her way to meet a reporter.

In 1985, some 23,000 residents of Armero, Colombia, died when a volcanic mudslide buried the city.

**Ten years ago:** Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who had refused to remove his granite Ten Commandments monument from the state courthouse, was thrown off the bench by a judicial ethics panel for having "placed himself above the law." Eric Gagne of the Los Angeles Dodgers won the National League Cy Young Award.

**Five years ago:** A wind-driven fire erupted in Southern California; the blaze destroyed more than 200 homes in Santa Barbara and neighboring Montecito. Investors did an abrupt

turnaround on Wall Street, muscling the Dow Jones industrial average up more than 550 points after three straight days of selling. Colombian rocker Juanes won five awards, including record of the year and album of the year, at the Latin Grammys in Houston. Cleveland's Cliff Lee won the American League Cy Young Award.

**One year ago:** The Pentagon said it was looking into more than 20,000 pages of documents and emails between Marine Gen. John Allen and Florida socialite Jill Kelley. (Kelly had reportedly received threatening emails from Paula Broadwell, the biographer who had an affair with Gen. David Petraeus.) A week after winning a ninth full term in Congress, Jesse Jackson Jr. left the Mayo Clinic, where he had been treated for bipolar disorder. The Chicago-area Democrat had rarely appeared in public since taking medical leave in June. Davey Johnson of the Washington Nationals and Bob Melvin of the Oakland Athletics were named managers of the year by the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actress Madeleine Sherwood is 91. Journalist-author Peter Arnett is 79. Producer-director Garry Marshall is 79. Actor Jimmy Hawkins is 72. Country singer-songwriter Ray Wylie Hubbard is 67. Actor Joe Mantegna is 66. Actress Sheila Frazier is 65. Actress Frances Conroy is 60. Musician Andrew Ranken (The Pogues) is 60. Actress Tracy Scoggins is 60. Actor Chris Noth is 59. Actress-comedian Whoopi Goldberg is 58. Actor Rex Linn is 57. Actress Caroline Goodall is 54. Actor Neil Flynn is 53. Former NFL quarterback Vinny Testaverde is 50. Rock musician Walter Kibby (Fishbone) is 49. Comedian Jimmy Kimmel is 46. Actor Steve Zahn is 46. Actor Gerard Butler is 44. Writer-activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali is 44. Actor Jordan Bridges is 40. Actress Aisha Hinds is 38. Rock musician Nikolai Fraiture is 35. NBA player Metta World Peace (formerly Ron Artest) is 34. Actress Monique Coleman is 33.

**Thought for Today:** "As you live, believe in life. Always human beings will live and profess to greater, broader and fuller life. The only possible death is to lose belief in this truth simply because the great end comes slowly, because time is long." — W.E.B. — Bois, American author and reformer (1868-1963)

**FROM THE BIBLE**

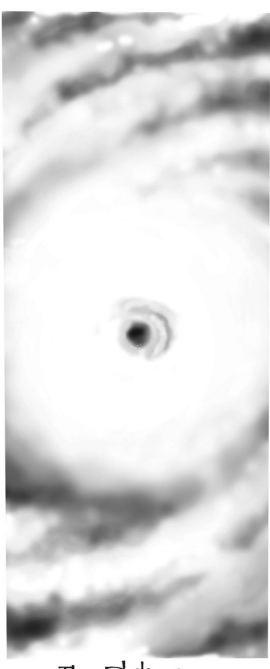
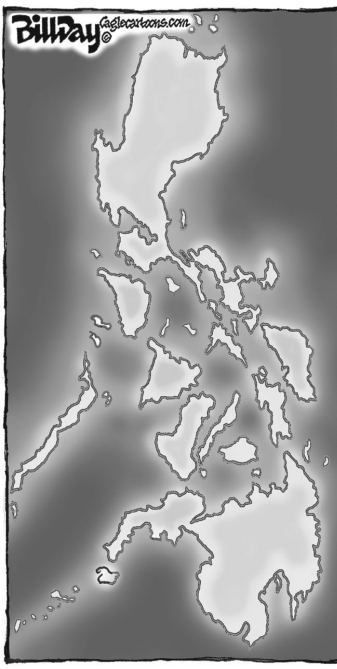
*I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me.*  
John 10:14. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

**YOUR LETTERS**

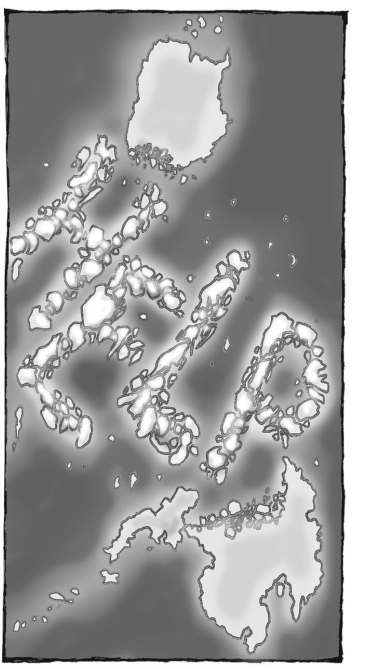
**Good Job!**

**Jean Knodel, Yankton**  
Many thanks to the City Public Works Department for their handling of our trash con-

tainers. With the windy days we have had of late, we were pleased to find them with lids laying down in the driveway.  
GOOD JOB!



The Philippines



## Pragmatism And Ideology

BY ROBERT B. REICH  
Tribune Content Agency

The *Washington Post* called Chris Christie's huge gubernatorial victory a "clear signal in favor of pragmatic, as opposed to ideological, governance." But the mainstream media used a different adjective to describe Bill de Blasio, Election Day's other landslide victor. The *New York Times*, for example, wrote of "the rise of the left-leaning Mr. de Blasio."

Again and again, Christie is being described as the pragmatist; De Blasio, as the lefty. But in light of America's surging inequality, the labels should be reversed.



Robert REICH

The real pragmatist is De Blasio, who proposes to raise taxes on the wealthy in order to fund preschool and after-school programs for the children of the poor and hard-pressed middle class.

The cost of child care is taking a huge bite out of the paychecks of many working parents, some of whom have been forced to leave their kids alone at home or rely on overburdened neighbors and relatives. A small surcharge on the incomes of the super-rich to pay for well-supervised child care is a practical and long-overdue response.

The real ideologue is Christie, who vetoed an increase in the minimum wage in New Jersey. The current minimum of \$7.25 is far lower than it was three decades ago in terms of purchasing power, and the typical minimum-wage worker is no longer a teenager but a major breadwinner for his or her family.

The so-called "pragmatic" Christie also frowns on gay marriage and abortion rights, which puts him in the company of many tea partiers. But because Christie himself isn't a tea partier, and had the temerity to be seen in the friendly company of President Obama in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy's devastation, he appears pragmatic in comparison to them.

The civil war that's engulfed the Republican Party — pitting the tea party against the establishment GOP — is a headache for Republicans focused on the 2016 presidential contest. For that establishment, the size of Christie's win is a huge relief.

The Democratic Party, by contrast, has been the very model of civility. Establishment De-

ocrats have dominated ever since Bill Clinton "triangulated" and moved the Party rightward.

Meanwhile, progressive Democrats and organized labor — those who the late Paul Wellstone described as the "Democratic wing of the Democratic Party" — have been remarkably tractable. Although they forced Obama to pull the nomination of Larry Summers, they've been all but ignored on the big stuff having to do with widening inequality.

When progressives wanted Wall Street banks to reduce the mortgages of underwater homeowners as a condition for getting bailed out, the White House and most congressional Democrats turned a deaf ear.

Progressives also got nowhere trying to end the Bush tax cuts (even if that meant going over the "fiscal cliff"); seeking a "public option" for health insurance, an Employee Free

Choice Act that would make it easier to form unions, and a resurrected Glass-Steagall Act as part of financial regulation; and objecting to the President's proposed "chain-weighted CPI" for Social Security and cuts in Medicare.

Yet progressives in the Democratic Party took their lumps without declaring civil war.

If the president and congressional Democrats had done more to reverse the scourge of widening inequality, de Blasio would seem more mainstream, and his proposal to raise taxes on the rich to finance better schools would be understood as another practical response to the overriding challenge of our time.

Had the tea party not declared war on the establishment GOP, Christie would be seen as a right-winger, and his opposition to raising the minimum wage as well as to abortion and gay marriage would be understood as ideological.

The biggest irony of the last three decades is that the football field of American politics has tilted to the right just as most Americans have been losing ground. The ideologues continue to move rightward. The true pragmatists are trying to level the playing field.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future." He blogs at [www.robertreich.org](http://www.robertreich.org).

## Obamacare's Gift To The GOP

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — In spite of everything — the GOP's internal scurrillages, the government shutdown, the party's transparent attempts to derail Obamacare — Republicans kept getting second chances.

The question is, can they handle prosperity? Do they even know what to do with it?

With the myriad problems besieging Obamacare, from the non-rollback to the minuscule number of enrollees in the health insurance exchanges, this is no time for gloating. Rather, it is time for Republicans to get very, very busy with their own ideas for across-the-board reforms.

The party of "no" must become the party of "we can, too!" This doesn't mean sacrificing core principles, though some could use a little shelf time. It does mean picking battles Republicans can win and avoiding skirmishes that further alienate centrists and minorities.

Forget building a larger tent, which increasingly looks like a pup for two white guys and a flashlight. Ditch the tent and build a coliseum. Install Doric columns, if you like, and grab an obelisk on your way to redemption. At no extra cost, here's an inscription for the keystone: *Waste not, want less.* Waste not this moment; want less than perfection and aim for the possible.

This was always House Speaker John Boehner's battle plan, but he finally conceded that leading his conference where it wanted to go was preferable to inciting a civil war. In a recent interview, Boehner told me he thinks at least some of the better-death-than-compromise caucus had come around to understanding that attaching Obamacare to the continuing resolution, resulting in the government shutdown, was the wrong tactic.

Even so, "at least some" may not be enough. And who knows what Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, has up his sleeve as new deadlines loom for budget and debt-ceiling negotiations early next year?

In the meantime, House and Senate Republicans have a small window, while Obamacare is hugging the shoals, to show why their ideas are best. Americans frustrated with Congress and disappointed by the president are primed for someone to pick up the bullhorn and say, "We hear you."

It's too bad "compassionate conservatism" has become tarnished because compassion is what is needed in today's GOP playbook: Compassion for the hungry whose food stamps House Republicans excised from the farm bill; compassion for 11 million immigrants who are

prisoners in illegal limbo; compassion for gays, lesbians and others seeking protection against workplace discrimination.

These are not such difficult choices in the scheme of things. How to guarantee that Iran can't weaponize its nuclear capability? That's tough. Not so tough: Helping the poor feed their families, finding a path for citizenship along with other immigration reforms, extending equal protections to individuals whose sexual orientation should not be a firing offense.

The Senate also has passed a comprehensive immigration bill with the help of 14 Republicans that contains a relatively strenuous path to citizenship that includes paying back taxes and fines, and getting in line behind others seeking citizenship. Hardly a giveaway. Even so, some Republicans aren't on board with the path to citizenship. Al-

though Boehner told me he hopes to get an immigration bill to the House floor next year, others say 2014's midterm elections make this unlikely.

Phooey. What's really not likely to happen is a Republican White House — ever — without Latino voters. There's only so much Republicans can accomplish when they control only half of one-third of government. Consider that the biggest states with the largest concentrations of Hispanics — Florida, California, Texas and New York — also convey 151 of the 270 electoral votes needed to be elected president.

Appealing to Latinos doesn't mean Republicans have to pander or bow to President Obama's wishes. It means doing the right thing. Even though a slim majority of Americans (53 percent) think most immigrants here illegally should be deported, according to a Reuters/Ipsos online survey last February, a more recent NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll found that 65 percent favor a path to citizenship if it requires essentially what the Senate bill proposes.

The draconian option of deportation would be an unlovely sight. Not only would families be torn asunder, but America's crops would wither on the vine, as they did in Alabama after that state's crackdown prompted a sudden, mass exodus. Yet again, unyielding principle prevailed over common sense and survival.

Time is of the essence if Republicans hope to refresh their image in the public square. Picking battles wisely, acting compassionately, creating rather than negating is the only way forward. Jar the hardwoods, campers, there's daylight in the swamp.

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