

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

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1-month . . . \$12.09
3 months . . . \$36.27
6 months . . . \$72.53
1-year . . . \$133.09

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1 month . . . \$14.51
3 months . . . \$43.53
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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Combine Dakotas For Prep Football

THE DAILY REPUBLIC, Mitchell (Nov. 12): It's true that South Dakota high school football isn't healthy. Yes, we have seven divisions for 141 teams. That's far too many divisions.

Yes, there are too many blowouts during the regular season. And yes, great enrollment discrepancies are only getting greater, meaning an easy solution isn't likely to surface anytime soon.

So here is the easiest fix: Combine South Dakota and North Dakota into a single football "state," with teams eventually playing for a single Dakotas title.

We realize this won't happen, but bear with us anyway. South Dakota has 141 teams and North Dakota has 91. That's 232 between the two states, but it's still far fewer than Minnesota's 386 teams.

How many champions will Minnesota crown later this month? Seven — same as South Dakota. North Dakota will crown four.

Mileage shouldn't be a concern with this idea, since it's closer for Sioux Falls schools to drive to Fargo than to Rapid City.

In our plan, schools would play mostly according to geography during the regular season, with six games against teams from the same state and then another two or three against out-of-state teams. The first round of the playoffs could be based on geography and then later rounds would be seeded.

Still worried about mileage? Tell that to Harding County, which this year traveled to Hayti (about 400 miles and seven hours) for a playoff game just one week after traveling to Burke (365 miles). Other teams made big trips this year, too, including: Wall (264 miles to Avon); New Underwood (300 miles to Howard); Hill City (325 miles to Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan); De Smet (364 miles to Hill City); Rapid City St. Thomas More (300 miles to Parkston); Redfield (289 miles to St. Thomas More); Custer (325 miles to Parkston); Aberdeen Roncalli (230 miles to Canton); Belle Fourche (410 miles to Dell Rapids); West Central (385 miles to Hot Springs); Sioux Falls O'Gorman (350 miles to Rapid City Central); Rapid City Stevens (350 miles to Sioux Falls Lincoln).

Meanwhile, Minnesota's north-south geographic size isn't much different than the Dakotas', yet that state seems to have figured out trouble with excessive mileage by playing at neutral sites.

The same could be done in the Dakotas. By our calculations, each of the top two divisions could have 16 teams, generally classing Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Bismarck, Fargo and Grand Forks programs into the upper class and the current South Dakota Class 1AAA teams with North Dakota's Jamestown, Dickinson, Williston, Devil's Lake, Mandan and so on.

Without great changes, South Dakota's football problem will never go away. South Dakotans are still migrating from rural areas to the edges of the state, and until more schools consolidate, enrollment discrepancies will continue to widen.

We believe a seventh class was justified, since Sioux Falls and Rapid City schools will continue to outpace enrollments at Mitchell and Huron and other central South Dakota schools. It's likely the same is happening in North Dakota.

But that seventh class is only a Band-Aid, and big changes are needed before football truly becomes exciting and fair again in South Dakota.

Combining our state playoffs with North Dakota is radical, but radical changes eventually must happen.

In the end, maybe the most radical of ideas may make the most sense.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Nov. 18, the 322nd day of 2013. There are 43 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Nov. 18, 1928, Walt Disney's first sound-synchronized animated cartoon, "Steamboat Willie" starring Mickey Mouse, premiered in New York.

On this date: In 1883, the United States and Canada adopted a system of Standard Time zones.

In 1886, the 21st president of the United States, Chester A. Arthur, died in New York.

In 1910, British suffragists clashed with police outside Parliament on what became known as "Black Friday."

In 1936, Germany and Italy recognized the Spanish government of Francisco Franco.

In 1942, "The Skin of Our Teeth," Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize-winning allegory about the history of humankind, opened on Broadway.

In 1958, the cargo freighter *SS Carl D. Bradley* sank during a storm in Lake Michigan, claiming the lives of 33 of the 35 on board.

In 1959, "Ben-Hur," MGM's Biblical-era spectacle starring Charlton Heston and directed by William Wyler, had its world premiere at Loew's State Theatre in New York.

In 1962, Nobel Prize-winning physicist Niels Bohr died in his native Denmark at age 77.

In 1966, U.S. Roman Catholic bishops did away with the rule against eating meat on Fridays outside of Lent.

In 1978, U.S. Rep. Leo J. Ryan, D-Calif., and four others were killed in Jonestown, Guyana, by members of the Peoples Temple; the killings were followed by a night of mass murder and suicide by more than 900 cult members.

In 1987, the congressional Iran-Contra committees issued their final report, saying President Ronald Reagan bore "ultimate responsibility" for wrongdoing by his aides. A fire at London King's Cross railway station claimed 31 lives.

In 1991, Shiite Muslim kidnappers in Lebanon freed Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite and Thomas Sutherland, the American dean of agriculture at the American University of Beirut.

In 1999, 12 people were killed when a bonfire under construction at Texas A-and-M University collapsed.

In 2000, actors Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones were married in an extravagant wedding at The Plaza hotel in New York City.

Ten years ago: The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled, 4-3, that the state constitution

guaranteed gay couples the right to marry. President Bush and his wife, Laura, arrived in Britain for a state visit. The U.N. refugee agency began pulling foreign staff out of Afghanistan after the killing of French worker. A judge in Modesto, Calif., ordered Scott Peterson to stand trial for the killing of his wife, Laci, and their unborn son. (Peterson was later convicted and sentenced to death.) Barry Bonds won his record sixth National League MVP award.

Five years ago: Detroit's Big Three automakers pleaded with Congress for a \$25 billion lifeline, warning of a national economic catastrophe should they collapse. Belgium-based InBev SA formed the world's largest brewer with its 41 billion-euro (\$52 billion) takeover of U.S.-based Anheuser-Busch Cos. Inc. Boston's Dustin Pedroia won the American League MVP award, becoming the first second baseman to earn the honor in nearly a half-century.

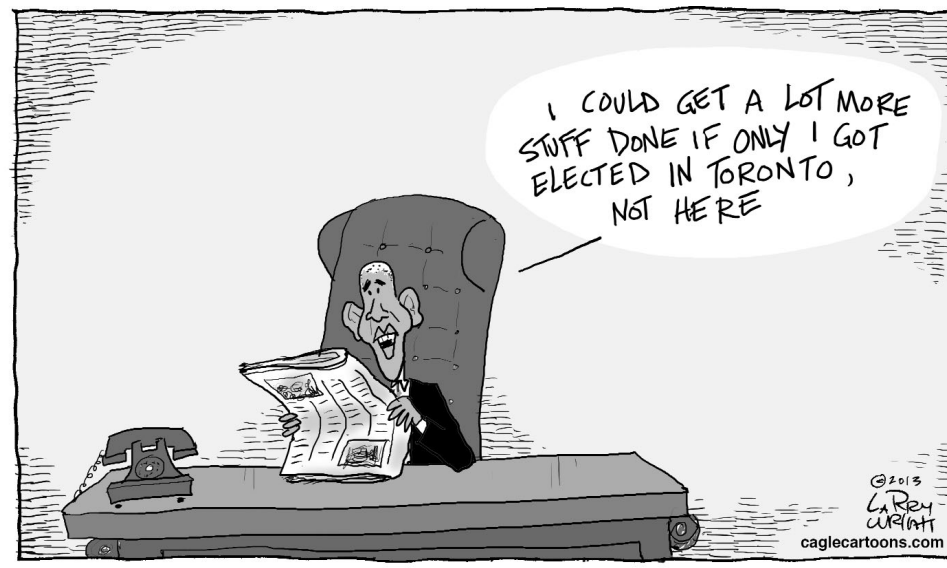
One year ago: In the deadliest single attack in Israel's offensive against Islamic militants, at least 11 civilians were killed when an Israeli missile ripped through a two-story home in a residential area of Gaza City. Palestinian militants continued to barrage Israel with rockets, firing more than 100.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Brenda Vaccaro is 74. Author-poet Margaret Atwood is 74. Actress Linda Evans is 71. Actress Susan Sullivan is 71. Country singer Jacky Ward is 67. Actor Jameson Parker is 66. Actress-singer Andrea Marcovicci is 65. Rock musician Herman Rarebell is 64. Singer Graham Parker is 63. Actor Delroy Lindo is 61. Comedian Kevin Epps is 60. Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon is 57. Actor Oscar Nunez is 55. Actress Elizabeth Perkins is 53. Singer Kim Wilde is 53. Rock musician Kirk Hammett (Metallica) is 51. Rock singer Tim DeLaughter is 48. Actor Romany Malco is 45. Actor Owen Wilson is 45. Singer Duncan Sheik is 44. Actor Mike Epps is 43. Actress Peta Wilson is 43. Actress Chloe Sevigny is 39. Country singer Jessi Alexander is 37. Actor Steven Pasquale is 37. Rapper Fabolous is 36. Actor Nate Parker is 34. Rapper Mike Jones is 33. Actress/comedian Nasim Pedrad is 32. Actor Damon Wayans Jr. is 31. Actor Nathan Kress is 21.

Thought for Today: "If an historian were to relate truthfully all the crimes, weaknesses and disorders of mankind, his readers would take his work for satire rather than for history." — Pierre Bayle, French philosopher and critic (born this date in 1647, died 1706).

FROM THE BIBLE

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. Job 15:5. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Capitol Notebook

One More Horse Race?

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — I received a telephone message, and then an e-mail, the other day from a self-described "voice from the past" inviting me to coffee.

They were from Larry Pressler. He was asking if I was available late Monday afternoon for a cup of coffee. I instantly reached a conclusion.

He was attempting another run for public office.

Later in the afternoon, I read another reporter's account of the conversation that reporter had earlier in the day with the former U.S. senator.

Sure enough, now 71 years old and out of office since his 1996 defeat, Larry Pressler was looking for the voters' love just one more time.

Unfortunately, I couldn't meet him on Monday afternoon. That wild and crazy bunch known as the Legislature's Executive Board has a two-day meeting Monday and Tuesday.

After the way that Legislative Research Council director Jim Fry was shown the door back on Sept. 25, who knows which person might next be investigated or fired or hired?

And for those of you now thinking: "Hmm, how about Pressler for LRC director?" — well, just don't go there. He never served in the Legislature.

But Larry Pressler did serve in Vietnam. And he served four years in the old East River seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1975 through 1978.

And he seems to have influenced the thinking of then-U.S. Sen. Jim Abourezk, a Democrat who decided he didn't want to seek re-election in 1978 as Pressler, a Republican, ramped up to run for the seat held by Abourezk.

None has served in Congress.

Pressler is pondering an independent candidacy instead. He knows the tremendous growth in voter registration has been among independents since 2002.

To borrow a slogan from the '70s: Larry Pressler — now more than ever?

Strange things sometimes happen.

Point Of View

The Reality Of Obamacare

BY MICHAEL P. FEIMER

We will be living with the Obamacare fiasco for years; hopefully the private insurance industry will be able to develop a competing product with the federal program. We are just beginning to witness the devastating consequences of Obamacare: As of this writing, more than 5 million individuals have had their policies terminated because of the unnecessary, all-inclusive requirements of Obamacare.

Many of these people were offered a new policy — but, with a 40 to 120 percent rate increase along with mandatory coverages that some cannot even use such as young males having to pay for maternity benefit coverage. Most of the replacement policies increase the risk to the individual by increasing their out of pocket maximum from \$1,500 to \$7,000.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Next year at this time (2014) according to Obama's own administration, "69 percent of all employee sponsored group plans will be canceled" (this prediction was made in 2010) and that means tens of thousand will be facing policy termination. They knew this over three years ago.

When a free market works, individuals and businesses customize health plans to fit their needs. One of those needs is affordability! With new Obamacare requirements many of those affordable Group Plans are non-compliant and the insurance company is required by law to terminate these small business plans.

The unintended consequences of the Affordable Care Act are far-reaching and we are seeing individuals lose their doctors, health care policies and medical facilities. This disruption in coverage will get personal. There are few things more devastating than receiving a diagnosis of stage 3 or 4 cancer. However, the current medical advances and the ability to seek treatment wherever that treatment is located provides the needed support to deal with and beat the odds. We are now seeing people losing their coverage, losing their providers and facing the disruption of the medical and emotional momentum necessary to fight their battle. Who is going to step up and help those that were promised uninterrupted coverage through the implementation of Obamacare?

That means that no matter how we reform health care, we will keep this promise to the American people: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period. If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period. No one will take it away, no matter what." — President Obama, speech to the American Medical Association, June 15, 2009, during the debate over health insurance reform.

This promise was given before the ACA was passed by the Democratic controlled House, Senate and signed by President Obama and without one Republican vote. The real issue here is the following promise that was made after ACA was passed into law.

"And if you like your insurance plan, you will keep it. No one will be able to take that away from you. It hasn't happened yet. It won't happen in the future." — Obama, remarks in Portland, Ore., April

1, 2010, after the bill was signed into law.

One would be hard pressed to site an example of how President Obama could do more to harm his credibility and the public's faith in the federal government than misleading them about their own health insurance.

The complete debacle of the Obamacare website is no surprise to those of us that know and work in the health care industry. Kathleen Sebelius (Secretary of Health and Human Services) took on an impossible job lacking the skill sets necessary to even understand the scope or magnitude of this massive undertaking. After 3 1/2 years and over half a billion dollars invested in putting up the Obamacare webpage, it does not work.

Putting things into perspective:

- From March 21, 2010, to Oct. 1, 2013, is 3 years, 6 months, 10 days.
- From Dec. 7, 1941, to May 8, 1945, is 3 years, 5 months, 1 day.

What this means is that from the time we were attacked at Pearl Harbor to the day Germany surrendered, is not enough time for this federal government to build a working webpage. As a concerted effort we mobilization of millions, building tens of thousands of tanks, planes, jeeps, subs, cruisers, destroyers, torpedoes, millions upon millions of guns, bombs, ammo, etc. We also turned the tide in North Africa, Invading Italy, D-Day, Battle of the Bulge, Race to Berlin — all while we were also fighting the Japanese in the Pacific!

And they can't build a webpage in 3 1/2 years? We were able to accomplish the above because we knew what we were doing with a clear mission and everyone believed in that mission, it was the right thing to do.

If the true intent was to cover the 30 million uninsured, it could be accomplished in a very simple way of utilizing existing process and coverages:

1. Expand Medicare and Medicaid to include the uninsured depending on their financial position, and keeping control at the state level.
2. Assess those of us on individual and group plans to support the subsidies needed for those individuals, and implement supplemental policies to fill in any gaps in the Federal programs.

There — that took two sentences, not a 961-page bill with more than 10,535 pages of regulation.

So as thousands of employees lose their 40-hour work week, lose their health coverage and get forced into policies that won't have the flexibility necessary for quality health care — you now know with two sentences that we could have fixed the uninsured issue.

Some good news: There are businesses that have taken steps to include all the rules and regulation that Obamacare mandates. For those lucky employees, they should thank their employer — he is looking out for you!

Mike Feimer is a 1971 graduate of Yankton High School and holds an AA, BS and Masters Degree from the University of South Dakota. He has more than 28 years experience in the health insurance industry along with 14 years working in an actuarial department researching, developing and implementing insurance products.

YOUR LETTERS

A Spirit Of Giving

Randy Gleich, Yankton
How many can say "I've volunteered" or "I gave"?

Look at the recent events in the Philippines. The season of giving has no boundaries. It does not discriminate. It is good for a person's character. It is part of enjoying community. Look no farther than South Dakota, hosting 10 of the lowest per capita income counties in the U.S.

Larry Pressler lasted 18 years as a U.S. senator from South Dakota. He lost, barely, in 1996 to a Democratic congressman named Tim Johnson.

The get-out-the-vote techniques mastered by Democratic congressman Sen. Tom Daschle in 1986 to unseat Republican U.S. Sen. Jim Abdnor were employed on Johnson's behalf 10 years later. Johnson won 166,533 to 157,954.

Johnson is now wrapping up his third term as a senator. He won't seek re-election in 2014. And Pressler is interested in trying to get back into that seat.

Pressler tried to re-start his political career in 2002. He ran for the open seat for the House that was being vacated by Republican John Thune to challenge Johnson.

Stephanie Hersheth — she wasn't yet Hersheth Sandlin — won the Democratic nomination for the U.S. House with 58 percent of the vote. Placing second in the four-candidate Democratic primary was Rick Weiland with 32 percent.

Now Weiland is the only Democrat announced for the Senate in 2014.

Then-Gov. Bill Janklow won the Republican nomination for House with just about 55 percent. In second place in the five-candidate primary was Pressler with 27 percent.

The Republican primary for Senate in 2014 has four candidates campaigning: former Gov. Mike Rounds, state Sen. Larry Rhoden, state Rep. Stace Nelson and newcomer Annette Bosworth.

None has served in Congress.

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