

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

The Farm Bill And Corporate Agriculture

KANSAS CITY STAR (Nov. 18): Suppose you step outside one morning to enjoy the crisp autumnal air. You stand on your porch, take a deep breath ... and gag at the stench. Maybe it's coming from the stream that flows nearby. The water didn't used to have that sheen. Maybe it's riding on the northerly breeze. The wind doesn't usually blow from that direction.

So you start asking around and wind up checking with the Environmental Protection Agency. The folks there tell you that a nearby corporate farm has a history of violations. When you ask who owns it and where it is, the EPA is mute. Congress won't let it say. Follow your nose.

That nightmare scenario could occur too often if the federal Farm Bill, now in congressional conference committee, retains provisions in the House version that would slap an unneeded, overly broad muzzle on the EPA.

The professed motivation makes sense. Small, family farmers have reported incidents of environmentalists targeting them for harassment and vandalism. The government does not need to help by turning over farmers' addresses and names under the Freedom of Information Act.

That is why FOIA already protects that kind of personal information.

Certainly, sometimes mistakes happen. The EPA this year improperly released records about 80,000 livestock operations to environmental groups. When it figured out its error, the agency asked for the records back, and the groups complied. No harm done. The Farm Bill's secrecy provision would have changed nothing.

What it would do is extend secrecy to corporations. It would protect records about owners, operators and employees of agricultural operations. That includes corporations that own or operate industrial farms and concentrated animal feeding operations (think lots and lots of pigs and everything that comes out of them). Current protections apply to people, and while in the realm of campaign finance corporations are people, the Supreme Court ruled in 2011 that the "person" in "personal privacy" still matters for purposes of public records.

Large corporate agricultural operations can cause serious environmental, health and quality of life harm in communities. Allowing them to hide behind a congressionally provided mask would erect significant barriers to accountability and monitoring.

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback wants his state's agricultural industry and other heavy consumers of water to get serious about a long-term management strategy. Across the border in Missouri, the Clean Water Commission recently revised water-quality rules to set stricter limits on pollutants.

If federal records related to some of the biggest users are off limits, states will have a devil of a time with enforcement and verification of who is doing what to the waterways.

Yet Kansas and Missouri have only one representative on the congressional negotiating committee, Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts. Meanwhile, states like Minnesota and Michigan land three seats each, and Texas gets four of the 41 total. We urge Roberts to stand firm for the rights of his constituents to find out what is going on in agricultural areas.

Congress can redundantly reinforce existing privacy protections for farmers and their families and still balance public interest in disclosure. That will happen only if senators and representatives care about transparency and accountability.

Unfortunately, too many currently seem more interested in the headline-grabbing Farm Bill disputes than the public's right to know.

THE VIEWS PAGE

■ The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views 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 to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Nov. 21, the 325th day of 2013. There are 40 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Nov. 21, 1973, President Richard Nixon's attorney, J. Fred Buzhardt, revealed the existence of an 18-1/2-minute gap in one of the White House tape recordings related to Watergate.

On this date: In 1789, North Carolina became the 12th state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1861, Judah Benjamin, who had been acting Confederate Secretary of War, was formally named to the post.

In 1920, the Irish Republican Army killed 12 British intelligence officers and two auxiliary policemen in the Dublin area; British forces responded by raiding a soccer match, killing 14 civilians.

In 1922, Rebecca L. Felton of Georgia was sworn in as the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate.

In 1931, the Universal horror film "Frankenstein," starring Boris Karloff as the monster and Colin Clive as his creator, was first released.

In 1934, the Cole Porter musical "Anything Goes," starring Ethel Merman as Reno Sweeney, opened on Broadway.

In 1942, the Alaska Highway was formally opened.

In 1969, the Senate voted down the Supreme Court nomination of Clement F. Haynsworth, 55-45, the first such rejection since 1930.

In 1974, bombs exploded at a pair of pubs in Birmingham, England, killing 21 people. (Six suspects were convicted of the attack, but the convictions of the so-called "Birmingham Six" were overturned in 1991.)

In 1980, 87 people died in a fire at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nev.

In 1991, the U.N. Security Council chose Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt to be Secretary-General.

In 1995, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above the 5,000 mark for the first time, rising 40.46 points to end the day at 5,023.55.

Ten years ago: More than a dozen rockets fired from donkey carts slammed into Iraq's Oil Ministry and two downtown Baghdad hotels used by foreign journalists and civilian defense contractors. Health officials said a deadly outbreak of hepatitis A at a Chi-Chi's Mexican restaurant in suburban Pittsburgh was probably caused by green onions from Mexico.

Five years ago: Wall Street staged a comeback, with the major indexes jumping more than 5 percent and the Dow Jones industrials surging nearly 500 points. Somali pirates released a hijacked Greek-owned tanker, *MV Genius*, with all 19 crew members safe and the oil cargo intact after payment of a ransom. (The ship had been seized almost two months earlier.) Madonna and Guy Ritchie were granted a preliminary decree of divorce by a London court.

One year ago: Two weeks after he was re-elected to a ninth full term in Congress, Democratic Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. quietly resigned, in a letter in which he acknowledged an ongoing federal investigation. (Jackson would eventually be sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for illegally spending campaign money.) Israel and the Hamas militant group in Gaza agreed to a cease-fire to end eight days of the fiercest fighting in nearly four years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Joseph Campanella is 86. Country singer Jean Shepard is 80. Actor Laurence Luckinbill is 79. Actress Marlo Thomas is 76. Actor Rick Lenz is 74. Singer Dr. John is 73. Actress Juliet Mills is 72. Basketball Hall of Famer Earl Monroe is 69. Comedian-director Harold Ramis is 69. Television producer Marcy Carsey is 69. Actress Goldie Hawn is 68. Movie director Andrew Davis is 67. Rock musician Lonnie Jordan is 65. Singer Livingston Taylor is 63. Actress-singer Lorna Luft is 61. Actress Cherry Jones is 57. Rock musician Brian Ritchie (The Violent Femmes) is 53. Gospel singer Steven Curtis Chapman is 51. Actress Nicolette Sheridan is 50. Singer-actress Bjork (byork) is 48. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Troy Aikman is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chauncey Hymnibal (BLACKstreet) is 45. Rock musician Alex James (Blur) is 45. MLB All-Star player Ken Griffey Jr. is 44. TV personality Rib Hillis is 43. Rapper Pretty Lou (Lost Boyz) is 42. Football player-turned-talk show host Michael Strahan is 42. Country singer Kelsi Osborn (SheDAISY) is 39. Singer-actress Lindsey Haun is 29. Actress Jena Malone is 29. Pop singer Carly Rae Jepsen is 28. Actor-singer Sam Palladio (TV: "Nashville") is 26.

Thought for Today: "Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment." — Robert Benchley, American humorist (born 1889, died this date in 1945).

FROM THE BIBLE

He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. Mark 4:27. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Kindle's Korner

How Does YSD Handle Inclement Weather?

DR. WAYNE KINDLE

Yankton School District Superintendent

Most of us are not looking forward to the cold snowy weather and treacherous roads, but winter weather is upon us. We will all endure the next season, as we say goodbye to a spectacular Fall. With that being said, I am going to provide you with some information related to Inclement Weather and closing school.

I will be working very closely with the local radio stations, The National Weather Service, and KELO Weather to determine any forecasted weather, which could prohibit us from beginning a school day or releasing early.

I will also be communicating with Tony Anderson. One of Tony's responsibilities for the YSD is to supervise our busses and routes. He has many years of experience dealing with inclement weather and bus routes.

In addition to all of aforementioned contacts, I will be in communication with other area schools about their road conditions, and weather.

We can't avoid driving in some winter conditions, but driving with caution, allowing additional time for travel, and listening to media outlets will enable us all to get our students to school during the winter months. However, there will be times when school is cancelled or we release early during the day.

Below are some things that I will consider prior to making a decision about school cancellation or an early release:

- Is there a blizzard warning that could endanger getting the students to or from school anytime during the day?
- Is the city calling for "no travel"?
- Can our busses navigate safely on the 11 regular bus routes and three Special Education bus routes that pick up our students?
- Can our students, parents, and staff travel safely in town while getting to and from school?
- Be patient and gather as much information from people who are in a position to know.
- Don't wait too long and put students/staff/drivers in harm's way.

I will always consider overall safety of students, parents, and staff as a final deciding factor. I also realize that "safety" can and will be defined differently by people. Criticism for causing us to go more days in May or June is easier to justify than criticism for trying to have school when the conditions are too tough.

Lastly, I accept the fact that our school district patrons will not all agree upon a decision made regarding Inclement Weather, so I will do my best and move forward with a decision. I want to thank you in advance for your support and understanding while making this type of decision.

Here is the order of notification regarding cancellation of school:

1. Notify YSD Administrators/Food Service/Transportation
2. Post on YSD Website/Facebook/"Connect 5" Communication System
3. Post on KELO TV close-line.
4. Call WNAX Radio
5. Call KYNT Radio
6. Call KVHT Radio

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

Effective with the 2014-15 school year, South Dakota public school districts, including the Yankton School District will be required to have teacher effectiveness systems in place. The South Dakota Commission on Teaching and Learning (CTL) has developed a Teacher Effectiveness Model.

Under the Teacher Effectiveness Model, teachers will receive both a professional practice rating and a student growth rating. The two separate ratings are combined using a summative rating matrix. This tool provides the opportunity for evaluators to exercise professional judgment prior to classifying teacher performance into one of three categories (Below Expectations, Meets Expectations, Exceeds Expectations).

The recommended method does not rely on a uniform formula to calculate effectiveness ratings. Instead, the method prioritizes professional practices relative to the South Dakota Framework for Teaching (Charlotte Danielson model), while also incorporating

evaluations of student growth as one significant factor.

The Teacher Effectiveness Model of evaluation is available for all South Dakota school districts to use. However, at its Oct. 1 meeting, the South Dakota Board of Education passed rules that would allow districts to use their own system for evaluating teachers, as long as the system aligns with the South Dakota standards for teaching (South Dakota Framework for Teaching), is research based, and includes a valid measure of student growth. Districts that are interested in taking advantage of this flexibility would need to apply to the Department of Education.



Wayne
KINDLE
YSD Superintendent

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The professional practice rating is based on the state's professional teaching standards known as the South Dakota Framework for Teaching. Evaluations are supported by evidence gathered through formal observation and by other evidence demonstrating performance relative to the teaching standards. The teaching standards include 22 components grouped into four domains:

- 1) Planning and Preparation
- 2) Classroom Environment
- 3) Instruction
- 4) Professional Responsibilities

STUDENT GROWTH

Quantitative measures of student growth are the other significant factor in determining and differentiating teacher effectiveness. Data from state standardized tests must be one of the quantitative measures used to evaluate the performance of teachers who provide instruction in state-tested grades and subjects.

Given that the state assessment is administered to limited grade levels and subject areas, it is important to note that the model system includes a common process for evaluating student growth for the broad range of teachers. Evaluators and teachers collaborate in a goal-setting process and the establishment of Student Learning Objectives, or SLOs, which serve as the foundation for evaluating a teacher's impact on student growth. These SLOs reflect a rigorous, yet realistic expectation of student growth that can be achieved during a given instructional period.

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

The Teacher Effectiveness Model includes the following observation schedule to support the professional practice piece of evaluation:

- Probationary teachers (teachers in years one through three of continuous employment)
 - Two formal observations of professional practice per year
 - Four informal observations per year; one prior to the first formal observation, then the remainder delivered throughout the year
- Non-probationary teachers (teachers in their fourth contract and beyond)
 - One formal observation of professional practice per year
 - Four informal observations per year

Training to support professional practice evaluations will be delivered through Teachscape Focus, a comprehensive web-based training program aligned to the South Dakota Framework for Teaching. Teachscape Focus provides in-depth training for both teachers and evaluators. Additional support for professional practice evaluations is provided through Teachscape Reflect, a web-based evaluation management system. Teachscape Reflect functions as a workflow management system, houses essential supporting documents, allows evidence to be stored online and supports the calculation of the overall professional practices rating. The state is providing these tools to all public school districts.

I took specific information regarding the Teacher Effectiveness Model from the South Dakota Department of Education Website. As you can see this is a lot of information and a significant change, as to how we evaluate our teachers. It is important to note the Yankton School District currently has an effective teacher evaluation system in place. However, we will adhere to the requirements of the South Dakota Department of Education.

Henry Ford stated, "Coming together is a beginning. Staying together is a process. Working together is a success."

WRITE US

■ Make your feelings known! Write to the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** on a topic of the day, in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to (605) 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.