

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Ethanol Questions And Answers

RAPID CITY JOURNAL (Nov. 20): The Renewable Fuels Standard was created by Congress in 2005 and required oil companies to add ethanol to gasoline. Beginning with a 4 billion gallon requirement in 2006, the following year President George W. Bush called for increasing the amount of renewable and alternative fuels produced by 2017 to be 35 billion gallons.

We joined South Dakota elected officials in embracing adding ethanol to fuel, first from corn and from other biofuel sources, including waste from timber operations in the Black Hills National Forest and elsewhere.

Back then, the overriding concern was the use of a domestically-produced fuel additive instead of importing more oil, including from the volatile Middle East. The RFS also provided the state's producers with another market for their corn crop.

The vast expansion into ethanol as fuel has had unforeseen consequences, including higher corn prices (\$1.95 a bushel in 2005 to \$7.13 a bushel in March 2013) that has led to an increase in prices at the grocery store and feed prices for livestock producers; encouraging farmers to plow land set aside for conservation for the more lucrative corn market, leading to fewer pheasants and other birds and animals; and an increase in environmental damage caused by using more fertilizer, as detailed in a series of Associated Press stories carried by the *Rapid City Journal* and other newspapers.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced recently a reduction in the Renewable Fuel Standard from 16.55 million gallons to 15.21 million gallons this year.

Sens. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., and John Thune, R-S.D., blasted the EPA's decision. "I'm very disappointed in the EPA's announcement today proposing to lower the RFS targets below current levels," Johnson said. "The ethanol industry has a \$3.8 billion economic impact in South Dakota. This proposal will negatively affect farmers, ethanol producers and communities throughout the state."

With a record amount of domestic oil production and more fuel-efficient vehicles on the highways, the need for ethanol is less than it has been.

Despite the problems detailed by the AP series on ethanol, we still support the Renewable Fuel Standard and research into biofuels.

We have questioned whether enough corn could be grown or diverted to ethanol to meet the 2007 RFS of 35 million gallons of renewable fuels by 2017. It now appears that there is only half as much demand for renewable fuel additives as will be required by 2017.

What happened with the push for more cellulosic ethanol produced from grasses and wood chips, including forest byproducts produced in the Black Hills? With all the questions being raised about corn-based ethanol, now would be a good time to push for other ethanol sources.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks 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 to views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Nov. 25, the 329th day of 2013. There are 36 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Nov. 25, 1963, the body of President John F. Kennedy was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery; his widow, first lady Jacqueline Kennedy, lit an "eternal flame" at the gravesite.

On this date: In 1783, the British evacuated New York, their last military position in the United States during the Revolutionary War.

In 1908, the first issue of The Christian Science Monitor was published.

In 1940, the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker made his debut in the animated short "Knock Knock."

In 1952, the play "The Mousetrap," a murder mystery by Agatha Christie, first opened in London's West End; it is the longest continuously running show in history.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower suffered a slight stroke.

In 1973, Greek President George Papadopoulos was ousted in a bloodless military coup.

In 1980, Sugar Ray Leonard regained the World Boxing Council welterweight championship when Roberto Duran abruptly quit in the eighth round at the Louisiana Superdome.

In 1986, the Iran-Contra affair erupted as President Ronald Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese revealed that profits from secret arms sales to Iran had been diverted to Nicaraguan rebels.

In 1999, five-year-old Elian Gonzalez was rescued by a pair of sport fishermen off the coast of Florida, setting off an international custody battle.

In 2001, as the war in Afghanistan entered its eighth week, CIA officer Johnny "Mike" Spann was killed during a prison uprising in Mazar-e-Sharif, becoming America's first combat casualty of the conflict.

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security and appointed Tom Ridge to be its head.

Ten years ago: The Senate gave final congressional approval to historic Medicare legislation combining a new prescription drug benefit with measures to control costs before the baby boom generation reaches retirement age. Yemen arrested Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdal, a top al-Qaida member suspected of masterminding the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole and

the 2002 bombing of a French oil tanker off Yemen's coast. (Al-Ahdal was later sentenced to three years for the French tanker attack, but was not charged in the Cole case.)

Five years ago: President-elect Barack Obama said economic recovery efforts would trump deficit concerns after he took office in January; at the same time, Obama pledged a "page-by-page, line-by-line" budget review to root out unneeded spending. Former NFL quarterback Michael Vick pleaded guilty to a Virginia dogfighting charge, receiving a three-year suspended sentence.

One year ago: Rioters stormed a Muslim Brotherhood headquarters building in northern Egypt on the third day of street battles following a power grab by President Mohammed Morsi. YouTube announced that "Gangnam Style," by South Korean rapper PSY, had become the site's most viewed video of all time, with more than 805 million viewings.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Noel Neill is 93. Playwright Murray Schisgal is 87. Actress Kathryn Crosby is 80. Actor Matt Clark is 77. Actor Christopher Riordan is 76. Singer Percy Sledge is 73. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs is 73. Author, actor and economist Ben Stein is 69. Singer Bob Lind is 69. Actor John Larroquette is 66. Actor Tracey Walter is 66. Movie director Jonathan Kaplan is 66. Author Charlene Harris is 62. Retired MLB All-Star Bucky Dent is 62. Dance judge Bruno Tonioli (TV: "Dancing with the Stars") is 58. Singer Amy Grant is 53. Former NFL quarterback Bernie Kosar is 50. Rock musician Eric Grossman (K's Choice) is 49. Rock singer Mark Lanegan is 49. Rock singer-musician Tim Armstrong is 48. Actor Steve Harris is 48. Actor Billy Burke is 47. Singer Stacy Lattisaw is 47. Rock musician Rodney Sheppard (Sugar Ray) is 47. Rapper-producer Erick Sermon is 45. Actress Jill Hennessy is 44. Actress Christina Applegate is 42. Actor Eddie Steeples is 40. NFL quarterback Donovan McNabb is 37. Actor Joel Kinnaman is 34. Actress Valerie Azlynn (TV: "Sullivan & Son") is 33. Former first daughter Barbara Bush is 32. Former first daughter Jenna Bush Hager is 32. Actress Katie Cassidy is 27. Contemporary Christian singer Jamie Grace is 22.

Thought for Today: "Reject bakers without hating." -- Mary Baker Eddy, American religious leader and founder of The Christian Science Monitor (1821-1910).

FROM THE BIBLE

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. Matthew 10:29. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Capitol Notebook

Common Core Program Is Not An 'Obama Plot'

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — There's no good way to measure the true breadth and depth of the opposition to the Common Core standards that will be used in South Dakota's public schools to measure students' academic achievement.

But it was a strong sign when a busload of angry people from the Sioux Falls area showed up at the state Board of Education meeting in Pierre a few days ago. They demand South Dakota withdraw.

At its roots, the opposition movement is stirred to action by a common hatred for President Barack Obama. Common Core is seen as an evil perpetrated upon the nation by Obama's administration.

But Common Core's start came in 2007 through the National Governors Association. That was two years before Obama took office.

The governors wanted a common set of standards to measure their states relative to each other. Common Core was to be that. Each state's elected leaders could decide whether to use Common Core.

The desire for the uniform standards was in response to No Child Left Behind, the federal accountability program that measured student and school performance.

The 2001 legislation passed by Congress was signed into law by President George W. Bush on Jan. 8, 2002. That was six years before Obama.

National Governors Association staff oversaw the Common Core initiative. In South Dakota, the state Department of Education considered adoption for two years.

In December 2010, during then-Gov. Mike Rounds' last month in office, the state Board of Education adopted Common Core.

The Common Core math and language stan-

dards and the Common Core assessments are now the replacement South Dakota will use for the Dakota STEP assessment. The state Department of Education had developed and used Dakota STEP under NCLB.

The plan by the state board and the state department calls for schools across South Dakota to administer Common Core assessments to students this school year as a trial run.

South Dakota received a waiver from NCLB for the current school year from the U.S. Department of Education. The state department is preparing to seek a second waiver.

The state department's plans for meeting the federal government's requirements in the NCLB waiver involve using Common Core. But Common Core wasn't forced on South Dakota.

South Dakota could have stayed under NCLB and suffered federal interference and penalties. Approximately one-fourth of students weren't able to reach proficient or advanced levels on Dakota STEP.

The movement against Common Core in South Dakota is part of a national uprising. In the 2013 legislative session, the House of Representatives voted 36-32 to require the state Department of Education to receive the Legislature's approval before adopting any further Common Core standards.

The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Jim Bolin, R-Canton. He planned to run for the Republican nomination for the state office of lands commissioner in 2014, but he put that ambition on hold this fall so he could organize against Common Core.

Senators killed Bolin's bill, HB 1204. Don't be surprised, however, if busloads of Common Core opponents pack the 2014 session this winter demanding South Dakota withdraw.

Who Is The Real Thug?

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

With George Zimmerman out on bail last week after his latest run-in with police, it seems an opportune time to discuss the second killing of Trayvon Martin.

The first, of course, has been discussed ad infinitum since Zimmerman shot the unarmed 17-year-old to death last year. But then Trayvon was killed again. The conservative noise machine engaged in a ritual execution of his character and worth, setting out with breathtaking indifference to facts and callous disregard for simple decency to murder the memory of a dead child.

Geraldo Rivera blamed him for his own death because he wore a hooded sweatshirt — in the rain, yet. Glenn Beck's website suggested he might have been an arsonist, kidnapper or killer. Rush Limbaugh made jokes about "Trayvon Martin Luther King."

Some conservative readers even chastised me for referring to him as a "child" or a "boy" though at 17, he was legally both. Makes him seem too sympathetic, they said. One man assured me, absent any evidence or, apparently, any need of it, that contrary to reports, Trayvon was not walking to where he was staying that day but was in fact "casing" the neighborhood.

One woman forwarded a chain email depicting a tough-looking, light-skinned African-American man with tattoos on his face. It was headlined: "The Real Trayvon Martin," which it wasn't. It was actually a then-32-year-old rapper who calls himself The Game. But the message was clear: Trayvon was a scary black man who deserved what he got.

I sent that woman an image of Trayvon from the Zimmerman trial. It shows him lying open-eyed and dead on the grass. "This is the real Trayvon," I wrote.

It was a waste of time. "They're both pictures of Trayvon," she insisted. So deeply, bizarrely invested was she in the idea of Trayvon as thug that she could not distinguish between a fair-skinned man with tattoos, and a brown boy with no visible markings. Literally, they all look alike to her.

And once again, a conservative movement



Leonard PITTS

which argues with airy assurance that American racism died long ago, disproves its thesis with its actions.

Here, someone wants it pointed out that Trayvon Martin was not an angel. Well, he wasn't. He took pictures flipping the bird. He used marijuana. He was suspended from school at the time of his shooting. Obviously, he needed guidance. The same is true of many boys. Indeed, it is rumored that there are even white children who use marijuana.

But here's the thing: Why did some of us need Trayvon to be an angel in the first place? Why did they feel such a pressing urgency to magnify — and manufacture — his failings? Why was it so important to them to make him unworthy of sympathy?

It is a question that assumes new potency the more we see of George Zimmerman. On the day he shot Trayvon, this hero of the conservative noise machine, this righteous white Hispanic man who was, they say, just standing his ground, already had a record that included an accusation he attacked an undercover police officer. That same year — 2005 — a woman sought a restraining order against him, alleging domestic violence.

In September,