

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

About Those Barbarians At The College Gates ...

CAPITAL JOURNAL, Pierre (Oct. 15): It causes South Dakota universities no concern whatsoever that some undergraduate students want to enter the university at ages older than the usual 18 to 22.

So why is it causing such head-scratching that some home-schooled students are seeking admission to undergraduate programs at ages younger than the usual 18 to 22?

The Board of Regents is right that it needs a policy to confront this national phenomenon and clarify what South Dakota institutions expect from home-schooled students. We're told that could happen as early as the April 2014 meeting.

That's good timing, because a policy could then be in place by the time the fall 2014 term begins.

Our opinion? There are brilliant students, ordinary students and doubtless some poor students among home-schoolers. What they all have going for them is the flexibility to proceed at their own pace. For that reason alone, many will complete school earlier than public school peers.

But they won't all meet South Dakota's requirements of requirements of four years of English, three years of advanced mathematics, three years of laboratory science, three years of social studies and one year of fine arts for admission to a bachelor's degree program. (Neither would Mozart or Thomas Edison, who are among the many home-schooled figures in history, and probably, for that matter, neither would MIT scientist Erik Demaine, sort of a poster child for the modern home-schooling movement; he entered a Canadian university at age 12, finished his bachelor's degree at age 14 and earned his Ph.D. at age 20.)

So what do we do with these students? State universities could do what they have apparently done in several instances already and deny these younger-than-usual home-schooled students admission if they have not completed the requirements. The problem with that is that we could be sending Erik Demaine over to earn his degree across the border in Minnesota or Nebraska.

Another possibility, perhaps wiser, would be to simply accept some baseline ACT scores in different subject areas as the standard of admission for those who have not met all the usual requirements. That's one reason we have standardized ACT exams, is it not? Grading can vary widely from school to school, so those who have technically met requirements for admission to a bachelor's degree program and perhaps even earned good grades in those subjects are not necessarily equipped to do well in a university. At the very least, it's good that the Board of Regents is looking at the issue. The barbarians at the gate are our children. We need not be afraid to let them into our universities.

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.
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■ 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.

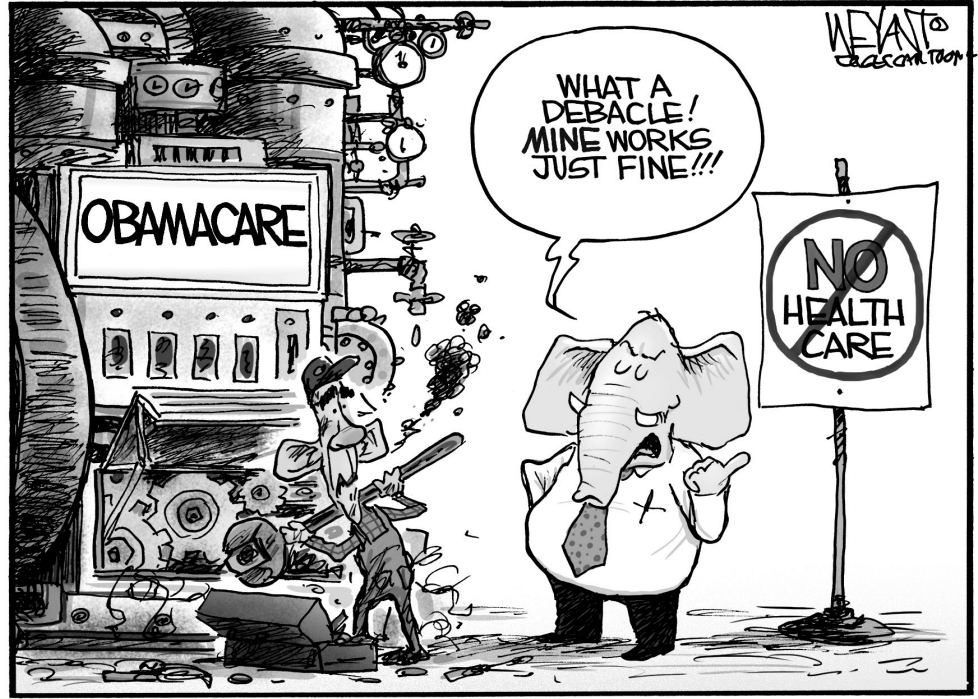
ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Oct. 28, the 301st day of 2013. There are 64 days left in the year.
Today's Highlight in History: On Oct. 28, 1886, the Statue of Liberty, a gift from the people of France, was dedicated in New York Harbor by President Grover Cleveland.
On this date: In 1636, the General Court of Massachusetts passed a legislative act establishing Harvard College.
In 1776, the Battle of White Plains was fought during the Revolutionary War, resulting in a limited British victory.
In 1858, Rowland Hussey Macy opened his first New York store at Sixth Avenue and 14th Street in Manhattan.
In 1919, Congress enacted the Volstead Act, which provided for enforcement of Prohibition, over President Woodrow Wilson's veto.
In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt rededicated the Statue of Liberty on its 50th anniversary.
In 1940, Italy invaded Greece during World War II.
In 1958, the Roman Catholic patriarch of Venice, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, was elected pope; he took the name John XXIII.
In 1962, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev informed the United States that he had ordered the dismantling of missile bases in Cuba.
In 1980, President Jimmy Carter and Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan faced off in a nationally broadcast, 90-minute debate in Cleveland.
In 1991, what became known as "The Perfect Storm" began forming hundreds of miles east of Nova Scotia; lost at sea during the storm were the six crew members of the Andrea Gail, a sword-fishing boat from Gloucester, Mass.
In 2001, the families of people killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attack gathered in New York for a memorial service filled with prayer and song.
In 2002, American diplomat Lawrence Foley was assassinated in front of his house in Amman, Jordan, in the first such attack on a U.S. diplomat in decades.
Ten years ago: Firefighters beat back flames on Los Angeles' doorstep, saving hundreds of homes in the city's San Fernando Valley from California's deadliest wildfires in more than a decade. The Senate confirmed Utah Governor Mike Leavitt as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. A Soyuz space capsule carrying an American, a Russian and a Spaniard from the International Space

Station landed in Kazakhstan. The seven astronauts who died in the Columbia shuttle disaster were honored with the unveiling of their names carved into the national Space Mirror Memorial.
Five years ago: Former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick was sentenced to four months in jail for his part in a sex-and-text scandal. (Kilpatrick ended up serving 99 days.)
One year ago: Airlines canceled more than 7,000 flights in advance of Hurricane Sandy, transit systems in New York, Philadelphia and Washington were shut down, and forecasters warned the New York area could see an 11-foot wall of water. President Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney altered their campaign travel plans because of the approaching storm; Obama visited FEMA headquarters in Washington before returning to the White House to monitor Sandy's progress. The San Francisco Giants won their second World Series title in three years, beating the Detroit Tigers 4-3 in extra innings to complete a four-game sweep.
Today's Birthdays: Jazz singer Cleo Laine is 86. Actress Joan Plowright is 84. Musician-songwriter Charlie Daniels is 77. Actress Jane Alexander is 74. Singer Curtis Lee is 72. Actor Dennis Franz is 69. Pop singer Wayne Fontana is 68. Actress Telma Hopkins is 65. Olympic track and field gold medalist Bruce Jenner is 64. Actress Annie Potts is 61. Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates is 58. The former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is 57. Rock musician Stephen Morris (New Order) is 56. Country/gospel singer-musician Ron Hemby (The Buffalo Club) is 55. Rock singer-musician William Reid (The Jesus & Mary Chain) is 55. Actor Mark Derwin is 53. Actress Daphne Zuniga is 51. Actress Lauren Holly is 50. Talk show host-comedian-actress Sheryl Underwood is 50. Actress Jami Gertz is 48. Actor Chris Bauer is 47. Actor-comedian Andy Richter is 47. Actress Julia Roberts is 46. Country singer-musician Caitlin Cary is 45. Actor Jeremy Davies is 44. Singer Ben Harper is 44. Country singer Brad Paisley is 41. Actor Joaquin Phoenix is 39. Singer Justin Guarini ("American Idol") is 35. Pop singer Brett Denner is 34. Rock musician Dave Tiro (Plain White T's) is 34. Actress Troian Bellisario is 28. Singer/rapper Frank Ocean is 26. Actor Nolan Gould (TV: "Modern Family") is 15.
Thought for Today: "I prefer liberty with danger than peace with slavery." — Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Swiss-born French philosopher (1712-1778).

FROM THE BIBLE

He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called The Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. John 19:17. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Capitol Notebook

In Obamacare, We Can All Feel Like We're Lucky

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Here in South Dakota, state government is doing as little as possible to assist our citizens who are interested in registering for the new federal health-insurance coverage.

There's no hot link on the www.sd.gov main webpage. If you happen to guess right, you can find one on the main page for the Department of Social Services (www.dss.sd.gov).

Maybe I don't watch or listen to the right programs, but I haven't noticed a public service announcement either.

The federal link is www.healthcare.gov. The assistance and marketing roles have been spread out regional organizations which specialize in helping the poor.

That makes sense, in a way — but the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act aka Obamacare isn't aimed at the people with the least money.

It's intended to help working-age people who aren't covered by government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Everybody is supposed to have health insurance no later than March 31, 2014.

For many, buying the required coverage will mean running up credit-card balances, or no longer making hundreds of dollars in other purchases every month, or some combination.

The rates will be subsidized, based on a person's income, through federal tax credits.

But the prices still seem steep, especially if a person isn't paying \$200 or \$400 or \$600 or more already each month for health insurance.

Our state government's leaders don't want anything to do with Obamacare. They were among officials from some two dozen states that sued two years ago trying to stop it.

They generally lost, except states now can't be required to go along with federal Medicaid expansion. Whether to expand Medicaid here will be debated in the 2014 legislative session.

One statement might say it all for state government's hands-off role: "He believes PPACA is unconstitutional and should be repealed."

That is the summary of Gov. Dennis Daugaard's position. It's in the 2012 final report of a task force that studied whether South Dakota should operate the health insurance exchange that each state must have.

The governor ultimately decided to let the federal government run the exchange for South Dakota. At least 30 states chose that route.

President Obama's administration wasn't ready for the Oct. 1 start-up of registration. The www.healthcare.gov website didn't receive sufficient testing. New experts have been contracted to make repairs.

The registration deadline is five months away. The question now is whether state government should step up and do more to let people know.

Unfortunately, ignoring Obamacare doesn't make it go away. Shutting down the federal government for 16 days didn't make it go away. A federal lawsuit didn't make it go away.

There are so many pieces to the entire Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that we can't know how they'll work and whether there need to be fixes.

But I know this. There were times in my life when I had zero health-insurance coverage. I wasn't always lucky.

A few months ago I suffered a pulmonary embolism. I had insurance. I was lucky.

Now it's the federal law. So why not help everyone get registered?

In Praise Of Dull And Competent

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

Let us now praise competence. The praise is overdue. Competence is like the dull, but reliable husband a woman spurns for some sexy stranger with a flashy car. Then she finds out her new fellow has the manners of a pig, the depth of a wading pool and absolutely no interest in helping her study for her real estate license. Suddenly, dull and reliable don't seem nearly so bad.

We find ourselves learning that lesson on a national level for the second time in eight years.

The first was in 2005. We had been seduced by compassionate conservatism that shot from the hip and reacted from the gut. Then we discovered none of that could get water and food to a major American city in the wake of a devastating storm.

In 2008, we were smitten with hope and change, with urbane cool and thoughtful pragmatism. Now we learn none of that can build a website that works worth beans.

So yes, let us now praise competence. Some will call it unfair to compare the Bush administration's botched response to Hurricane Katrina with the Obama administration's botched rollout of health-care reform. They will note that as Team Bush dithered and "Heckuva Job, Brownie" tried to assemble the proper wardrobe for managing a crisis, Americans were dying. By contrast, for as much as people may have wailed, "Kill me now!" as it crashed, froze and mangled their information, Healthcare.gov didn't actually kill anyone.

But the observation misses the point. If these two debacles are unalike in impact, they are much alike in one critical regard: The people in charge saw this moment coming, had time to prepare and failed.

Consider: Katrina became a hurricane on Aug. 25 and entered the Gulf of Mexico the next day. It smacked the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29. Yet, even with that much lead time, it wasn't until Sept. 2 that the first convoy of supplies reached the stricken city of New Orleans.

Similarly, the Affordable Care Act was

signed into law in March 2010 with a provision allowing uninsured Americans to begin purchasing insurance online beginning now, October 2013. Yet, as this month draws to a close, would-be users of the website still find themselves stymied, frustrated and unable.

Now, as then, failure raises an obvious question: If the government was unable to handle a challenge it knew was coming and for which it had ample time to prepare, what faith can we have in its ability to handle the unexpected? Say, a terrorist attack? A chemical spill? A nuclear accident?

Let us now praise competence. While we're at it, let us demand an explanation for incompetence — and some accountability to go along with it.

It is unconscionable and unbelievable that the nation where Amazon.com was born, the nation that pioneered online retailing, cannot cobble together a website to sell health-care insurance. Though the public so far seems willing to cut the White House some slack — Gallup polling shows that, despite the website failure and years of sustained GOP attack, health-care reform is actually inching up in popularity — it would behoove Team Obama to fix this yesterday. As its lackadaisical response to Hurricane Katrina undermined the Bush administration's legacy, so might this debacle threaten President Obama's.

More important, it is not, well ... healthy when people must question their government's ability to perform basic functions. Like that wife who spurns her boring husband in the search for something sexy, maybe it's time we questioned the things that turn us on.

Hope and change are great, but passionate conservatism is all well and good. But you know what? There is also something to be said for just getting the job done.

Competence is the new sexy.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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YOUR LETTERS

Fire Prevention Week

Deputy Chief Larry Nickles
Yankton Fire Department
"Prevent Kitchen Fires" was the NFPA 2013 Fire Prevention Week Campaign. Yankton firefighters visited nearly 900 students and teachers at the schools or at the fire station for tours. The department hosted over 600 visitors at the Fire Station #2 open house last week.
The firefighters also started distributing the

2014 Fire Prevention calendar sponsored by 46 Yankton businesses that features daily fire prevention messages. We want to give a great big thank you to calendar sponsors, as well as the 36 Yankton business sponsors for the Guardian Fire Safety handbook that is distributed primarily to the Yankton third graders.

Also, a big thanks to the sponsors of our open house, including Cimpl Meats. Please take a second to thank these people for their part in helping us keep Yankton safe.