

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION

Teacher-Pay Idea Offers Some Hope

A proposal by three South Dakota education groups that would raise revenue in order to give teacher pay a desperately needed boost shows a good deal of promise, and should be given serious consideration by lawmakers this winter.

The idea presented Monday to the Legislative Planning Committee would increase the state sales tax by a penny during the months of June, July and August, when South Dakota's tourism season is in high gear. It's estimated that this seasonal hike would generate at least \$40 million annually, or about \$4,000 per teacher in the state.

The idea was presented to lawmakers by representatives from the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, the School Administrators of South Dakota and the South Dakota United School Association. At the very least, it shows some refreshing outside-the-box thinking on the part of these organizations.

It also offers a partial fix for one of this state's most glaring and embarrassing issues.

You know the problem, by chapter and verse: South Dakota is rated dead last in the nation in terms of teacher pay. That also means we trail every state that borders us — states that compete for many of the same educators our schools are hoping to hire. According to TeacherPortal.com, South Dakota's average teacher salary of \$39,850 significantly lags behind Wyoming (\$56,100), Minnesota (\$53,680), Iowa (\$49,844), Nebraska (\$47,368) and North Dakota (\$44,807). Since teachers can be lured across the border in any direction for better pay — even after allowing for state income tax assessments in those other states — South Dakota faces an increasingly crippling recruitment problem. This is creating teacher shortages across the state, with many school districts getting very few applicants for positions — or, worse, some school districts unable to fill slots at all.

And yet, when this issue is discussed in Pierre each winter, the embarrassment becomes a frustrating circus. We annually seem unable to address the matter or, sometimes, even acknowledge its pressing existence.

This proposal calls for generating new revenue and putting it in a Teacher Salary Enhancement Fund. Because there are more people here spending money in the summer, the plan spreads out the burden — and that burden is only seasonal. Also, there would be criteria for school districts to meet to be eligible to tap into this fund, including reserve and base salary levels.

Of course, this does represent a tax increase — albeit for just three months — and that will no doubt cause some people to balk at the concept.

But if there are better or more practical ideas, they either have n't been forthcoming or have been regularly shot down.

Unless we as a state are genuinely content to pride ourselves on offering our kids a cut-rate education system that can't (or won't) afford to pay top educators, we need to look to something like this inventive proposal to bolster our schools and to invest in our future.

This is not a cure-all by any means, but it does at this point appear promising. And it seems to go three or four steps in the right direction down a very long road that this state must eventually travel, or else be left at the wayside.

kmlh

ELECTION LETTERS

■ With the election season here, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** has decided that all political letters received as of Sept. 9 will only run for a fee. All letters will be referred to the advertising department, and author will be given the option of paying to have the letter printed in its entirety elsewhere in the newspaper. Send your letters or questions to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, September 10, the 253rd day of 2014. There are 112 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On September 10, 1939, Canada declared war on Germany.

On this date: In 1608, John Smith was elected president of the Jamestown colony council in Virginia.

In 1813, an American naval force commanded by Oliver H. Perry defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. (Afterward, Perry sent out the message, "We have met the enemy and they are ours.")

In 1914, movie director Robert Wise ("West Side Story"; "The Sound of Music") was born in Winchester, Indiana.

In 1919, New York City welcomed home Gen. John J. Pershing and 25,000 soldiers who'd served in the U.S. First Division during World War I.

In 1935, Sen. Huey P. Long died in Baton Rouge two days after being shot in the Louisiana state Capitol, allegedly by Dr. Carl Weiss.

In 1945, Vidkun Quisling was sentenced to death in Norway for collaborating with the Nazis (he was executed by firing squad in October 1945).

In 1955, the long-running TV Western series "Gunsmoke," starring James Arness as Marshal Matt Dillon, premiered on CBS television.

In 1963, 20 black students entered Alabama public schools following a standoff between federal authorities and Gov. George C. Wallace.

In 1974, the West African country of Guinea-Bissau became fully independent of Portugal.

In 1979, four Puerto Rican nationalists imprisoned for a 1954 attack on the U.S. House of Representatives and a 1950 attempt on the life of President Harry S. Truman were freed from prison after being granted clemency by President Jimmy Carter.

In 1984, a revival of the TV game show "Jeopardy!" hosted by Alex Trebek premiered in syndication.

In 1994, the prison drama "The Shawshank Redemption," starring Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Ten years ago: CBS News vigorously defended its report about President George W. Bush's Air National Guard service, with anchor Dan Rather saying broadcast memos questioned by forensic experts came from "what we consider to be solid sources." Former transportation secretary Brock Adams died in Stevensville, Maryland, at age 77.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama said he accepted Republican Rep. Joe Wilson's apology for

shouting "You lie!" during the president's health-care speech to Congress. A frail Sen. Robert Byrd addressed the Senate for the first time in months to pay tribute to the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, his one-time rival and longtime dear friend. The activist group ACORN fired two employees of its Baltimore office after they were seen in hidden-camera video giving tax advice to a pair of conservative activists, James O'Keefe and Hannah Giles, who were posing as a pimp and a prostitute.

One year ago: President Barack Obama, in a nationally broadcast address, said diplomacy held "the potential to remove the threat of chemical weapons" in Syria without the use of force, but declared the U.S. military would be "ready to respond" against President Bashar Assad if other measures failed. An Indian court convicted four men in the fatal gang rape of a young woman on a moving New Delhi bus. (The four were later sentenced to death.) Thomas Bach was elected president of the International Olympic Committee, succeeding Jacques Rogge.

Today's Birthdays: World Golf Hall of Famer Arnold Palmer is 85. Actor Philip Baker Hall is 83. Actor Greg Mullavey is 81. Country singer Tommy Overstreet is 77. Jazz vibraphonist Roy Ayers is 74. Singer Danny Hutton (Three Dog Night) is 72. Singer Jose Feliciano is 69. Actor Tom Ligon is 69. Actress Judy Geeson is 66. Former Canadian first lady Margaret Trudeau is 66. Political commentator Bill O'Reilly is 65. Rock musician Joe Perry (Aerosmith) is 64. Actress Amy Irving is 61. Country singer Rosie Flores is 58. Actress Kate Burton is 57. Movie director Chris Columbus is 56. Actor Colin Firth is 54. Rock singer-musician David Lowery (Cracker) is 54. Actor Sean O'Bryan is 51. Actor Raymond Cruz is 50. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Randy Johnson is 51. Rock musician Robin Goodridge (Bush) is 49. Rock musician Stevie D. (Buckcherry) is 48. Rock singer-musician Miles Zuniga (Fastball) is 48. Actress Nina Repeta is 47. Rapper Big Daddy Kane is 46. Movie director Guy Ritchie is 46. Contemporary Christian singer Sara Groves is 42. Actor Ryan Phillippe is 40. Actor Kyle Bornheimer is 39. Rock musician Mike Way (My Chemical Romance) is 34. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Timothy Goebel is 34. Rock musician Matthew Followill (Kings of Leon) is 30. Singer Ashley Monroe (Pistol Annies) is 28. Singer Sanjaya Malakar ("American Idol") is 25. Actor Chandler Massie is 24. Actress Hannah Hodson is 23.

Thought for Today: "There are years that ask questions and years that answer." — Zora Neale Hurston, American author (1891-1960).

FROM THE BIBLE

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. Song of Solomon 6:3. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Rice Abuse Video Tells Us Nothing Really New

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

Apologies for the blunt language, but can we please cut the crap?

Meaning: can we stop pretending we know something now that we didn't before about what Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice did to his then-fiancee in the elevator of that Atlantic City casino? Can we stop pretending new information has come to light?

Granted, the surveillance video released Monday by TMZ is graphic and disturbing: Rice is seen slapping Janay Palmer, who rushes at him, whereupon he uncorks a left that hits her like a hammer. She bangs her head on a railing and crumples, senseless, to the floor. But we already knew this had happened. We knew it from the initial video, released shortly after the February 15 incident, which shows Rice dragging Palmer out of the elevator like a sack of flour, like a piece of lumber, like me-Tarzan-you-Jane.

How did we think she got that way? Did we imagine she was overcome by his cologne?

For criminy sake, he said it himself: He slugged her. And the Ravens knew this when they did their Tammy Wynette imitation, singing choruses of "Stand by Your Man." NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell knew it when he "punished" Rice by suspending him for just two games. Ravens fans knew it when they gave the cowardly woman-hitter a standing ovation as he trotted out for a preseason game.

So as the NFL responds to the new video by suspending Rice indefinitely and his team shreds his contract, it is galling to hear Ravens Coach John Harbaugh claiming the clip "changed things." And it is the height of backside-covering bovine excreta for an NFL flack to tweet that the increased penalty was a result of "new video evidence."

There is no new evidence — just a video that makes visceral what some of us were content to pretend we didn't know.

Yet even now, some folks don't get it. "I think the message is, take the stairs," said Brian Kilmeade of Fox "News." Meantime, Dr. Ben Carson warned against "demonizing this

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guy." Yeah. Because Rice's feelings are what matter here.

Full disclosure: I am the child of an abusive father. I've written previously in this space and in my book, "Becoming Dad," of how my old man used to get tanked up, then come home whaling on Mom and us kids. Twice, he held us all at gunpoint. So, unlike Brian Kilmeade, I tend not to see the lighter side of domestic violence. Indeed, I tend to be rather humorless about it.

Nor am I impressed that Palmer went ahead and married Rice and has condemned his increased punishment. I don't know this woman, but I do know abused women and I know their judgment is often suspect. Sometimes they blame themselves. Sometimes they are too forgiving. Sometimes they convince themselves they can change a bad man. Sometimes they think hitting is normal. Sometimes they think hitting is love.

According to the National Domestic Abuse Hotline, one in three women has been raped, struck or stalked by an intimate partner. More than 75 percent of women who are victims of intimate partner violence were victimized previously by the same person. Yet *Psychology Today* has reported that up to a third of women who are in abusive relationships never leave them.

So this is not just about Palmer, but about all our mothers, sisters, daughters, lovers and friends and the violence against them that is still too common and too commonly ignored.

The NFL essentially ignored what happened to Palmer. She did, too. But the camera didn't and as a result Ray Rice finally gets what he should have gotten seven months ago. Shame on him. But shame, also, on the NFL and the society it reflects, that justice took this long and had to go to this length.

That video did not tell us something we didn't know. It just forced us to face what we already did.

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

Loving The Children

Peter Rossiter, Yankton

In Sally Welter's Sept. 2 letter to the editor, she writes approvingly of a "news item" in which the governor of Iowa personally deports 124 teenagers who landed in Iowa with no papers. The story is false. Gov. Branstad's office denies the story. Politifact.com rates the story "Pants on Fire."

It is surprising that Sally Welter would believe a story from a chain email. Mrs. Welter is a prominent member of Yankton's Roman Catholic community, which makes her letter even more surprising.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has repeatedly described the plight of unaccompanied children crossing the border as a humanitarian emergency. The sanctity of the family and the need to protect the vulnerable is an integral element of Catholic approach to service and pastoral care in the United States.

Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso put it this way in a July 2014 column: "A willingness to give of ourselves for the sake of the most vulnerable is the measure by which we will be measured according to the one who said, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'" (Matt. 25:35) Jesus also told us: 'Whoever receives a child such as this in

ABOUT THIS PAGE

■ The View 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 on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

my name receives me.' (Matt. 18:5) Jesus surely loves the little children. We are called to do the same."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops calls on us to join the Justice for Immigrants Campaign and become a part of a network of Catholic institutions, individuals and other persons of good faith in support of a broad legalization program and comprehensive immigration reform.

The bishops call on us to voice our opposition to our local representative and senators to legislative proposals that would roll back humane protections for these children and to a reduction in funding for the care of unaccompanied children.

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