

The Press & Dakotan

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Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

- CONTACT US**
PHONE: (605) 665-7811 (800) 743-2968
NEWS FAX: (605) 665-1721
ADVERTISING FAX: (605) 665-0288
WEBSITE: www.yankton.net
- SUBSCRIPTIONS/ CIRCULATION**
Extension 104
jim.gevens@yankton.net
CLASSIFIED ADS
Extension 116
tera.schmidt@yankton.net
NEWS DEPT.
Extension 114
news@yankton.net
SPORTS DEPT.
Extension 106
sports@yankton.net
ADVERTISING DEPT.
Extension 122
sales@yankton.net
BUSINESS OFFICE
Extension 119
ar@yankton.net
NEW MEDIA:
Extension 136
beth.rye@yankton.net
COMPOSING DEPT.
Extension 129
kathy.larson@yankton.net

MANAGERS

Gary L. Wood
Publisher

Michele Schievelbein
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Jim Gevens
Circulation Director

Tonya Schild
Business Manager

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Classified Manager

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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

Stem Title Flood With Higher Price

THE LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (Sept. 9): A Massachusetts car dealer is swamping the Lancaster County Department of Motor Vehicles with so much work it's taking a substantial toll on the DMV.

Say what? The dealer — LaBelle Chevrolet of Bridgewater, Mass. — has requested and received nearly 3,000 car titles from the Lancaster County DMV since February, taking advantage of Nebraska's vehicle titling laws that allow out-of-state companies to get newly purchased vehicles inspected outside Nebraska and send those inspection documents here for titling. Why? In Massachusetts, it costs \$75 to title a vehicle. In Nebraska, the charge is \$10, one of the lowest in the nation.

For LaBelle, the Journal Star's Kevin Abourezk has calculated, the savings in titling costs has been \$1,800 a day — more than enough money to prompt the company to establish a subsidiary with a Lincoln office to provide the local presence required by state law to request and receive titling.

For the Lancaster County DMV, LaBelle's mass titling now makes up about 7 percent of the titles it processes — about 30 a day out of 400 to 500 titles. That means extra work for the person who spends about four hours a day processing the titles with little compensatory income for the county to show for it.

Nor does Lancaster County get any sales tax revenue from the sales of the cars being titled here but sold in Massachusetts, Don Arp, the motor vehicle manager for the Lancaster County Treasurer's Office, points out. "The vehicles actually never come here, but they're titled here," Arp said. "It's legal. He's just using what's available to him."

So, how, short of repealing the titling law altogether, can a damper be put on LaBelle's and, almost certainly, other companies' abuse of the lenient Nebraska statute and its low fee?

Lancaster County Treasurer Andy Stebbing has proposed raising the state's titling fee to \$25, an amount that might be enough to discourage those practices — and if it isn't, would provide income to cover the increased costs of providing the service, which could result in the hiring of additional employees.

Stebbing's proposal is right and reasonable — a \$25 titling fee on a vehicle valued in the thousands or tens of thousands is far from exorbitant. The Legislature should take up the issue in January, by which time LaBelle will probably have titled thousands more Massachusetts cars in Nebraska.

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 kelly.hertz@yankton.net.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, September 21, the 264th day of 2015. There are 101 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On September 21, 1897, the New York Sun ran its famous editorial, written anonymously by Francis P. Church, which declared, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus."

On this date: In 1792, the French National Convention voted to abolish the monarchy.

In 1893, one of America's first horseless carriages was taken for a short test drive in Springfield, Massachusetts, by Frank Duryea, who had designed the vehicle with his brother, Charles.

In 1912, magician Harry Houdini first publicly performed his "Water Torture Cell" trick at the Circus Busch in Berlin.

In 1925, the Rudolf Friml operetta "The Vagabond King" opened on Broadway.

In 1938, a hurricane struck parts of New York and New England, causing widespread damage and claiming some 700 lives.

In 1948, Milton Berle made his debut as permanent host of "The Texaco Star Theater" on NBC-TV.

In 1957, Norway's King Haakon VII died in Oslo at age 85. The legal mystery-drama "Perry Mason," starring Raymond Burr, premiered on CBS-TV.

In 1964, Malta gained independence from Britain.

In 1970, "NFL Monday Night Football" made its debut on ABC-TV as the Cleveland Browns defeated the visiting New York Jets, 31-21.

In 1975, the Warner Bros. motion picture "Dog Day Afternoon," starring Al Pacino, opened in New York.

In 1989, Hurricane Hugo crashed into Charleston, South Carolina (the storm was blamed for 56 deaths in the Caribbean and 29 in the United States). Twenty-one students in Alton, Texas, died when their school bus, hit by a soft-drink delivery truck, careened into a water-filled pit.

In 1996, John F. Kennedy Jr. married Carolyn Bessette in a secret ceremony on Cumberland Island, Georgia.

Ten years ago: Hurricane Rita swirled toward the Gulf Coast as a Category 5, 165-mph monster as more than 1.3 million people in Texas and Louisiana were evacuated. A JetBlue Airbus circled Southern California for hours, crippled by a faulty landing gear, while the passengers were able to watch the drama unfold on live television; the plane landed safely at Los Angeles International Airport.

Japan's Parliament re-elected Junichiro Koizumi prime minister. Former National Organization for Women president Molly Yard died in Pittsburgh at age 93.

Five years ago: The mayor and ex-city manager of the Los Angeles suburb

of Bell were among eight current and former city officials arrested in a corruption scandal that authorities said cost the blue-collar city more than \$5.5 million in excessive salaries and illegal personal loans. Two men filed a lawsuit accusing Atlanta megachurch pastor Bishop Eddie Long of coercing them into sexual relationships when they were teenage members of his congregation. (Long, who denied the allegations, later reached out-of-court settlements with them and two other men.)

One year ago: Thousands of demonstrators filled the streets of Manhattan and cities around the world to urge policy makers to take action on climate change. A SpaceX cargo ship rocketed toward the International Space Station, carrying the first 3-D printer for astronauts in orbit. NASA's Mavens spacecraft arrived at Mars after a 442 million-mile journey that began nearly a year earlier. Pope Francis briefly visited Albania, where he called for Muslims and all religious leaders to condemn Islamic extremists who "pervert" religion to justify violence. Ending months of vote-related tension, Afghanistan's election commission named Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai the country's new president.

Today's Birthdays: Poet-songwriter Leonard Cohen is 81. Author-comedian Fannie Flagg is 74. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer is 72. Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear is 71. Musician Don Felder is 68. Author Stephen King is 68. Basketball Hall of Famer Artis Gilmore is 66. Actor-comedian Bill Murray is 65. Hall of Fame jockey Eddie Delahoussaye is 64. Rock musician Philthy Animal is 61. Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is 58. Movie producer-writer Ethan Coen is 58. Actor-comedian Dave Coulier is 56. Actor David James Elliott is 55. Actress Serena Scott-Thomas is 54. Actress Nancy Travis is 54. Actor Rob Morrow is 53. Retired MLB All-Star Cecil Fielder is 52. Actress Cheryl Hines is 50. Country singer Faith Hill is 48. Rock musician Tyler Stewart (Barenaked Ladies) is 48. Country singer Ronna Reeves is 47. Access-talk show host Ricki Lake is 47. Rapper Dave (De La Soul) is 47. Actor Rob Benedict is 45. Actor James Lesure is 44. Actor Alfonso Ribeiro is 44. Actor Luke Wilson is 44. Actor Paulo Costanzo is 37. Actor Bradford Anderson is 36. Actress Autumn Reeser is 35. TV personality Nicole Richie is 34. Actress Maggie Grace is 32. Actor Joseph Mazzello is 32. Actress Ahna O'Reilly is 31. Rapper Wale is 31. Actors Nikolas and Lorenzo Brino are 17.

Thought for Today: "The only true measure of success is the ratio between what we might have done and what we might have been on the one hand, and the thing we have made and the things we have made of ourselves on the other."
— H.G. Wells, English author (born this date in 1866, died 1946.)

FROM THE BIBLE

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." Mark 10:27. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

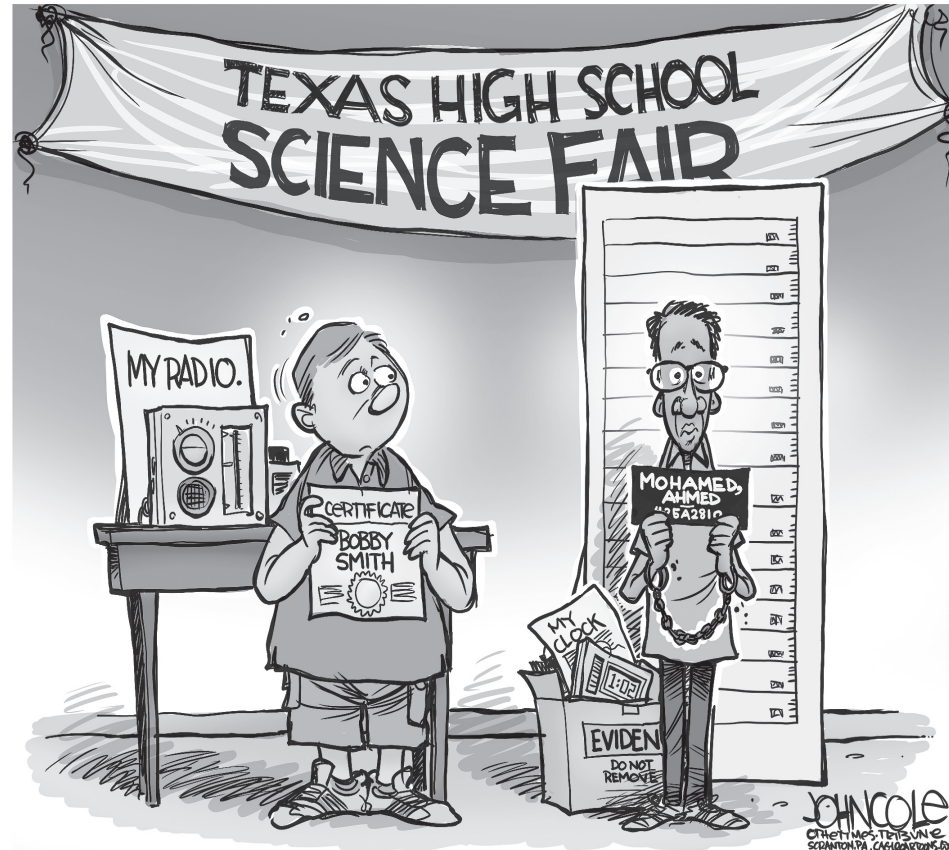
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More Flag Information

John Hollenbeck, Yankton Commander, Yankton American Legion Post #12

Recently I wrote a letter concerning the flying of the American Flag in and around our community (*Press & Dakotan*, Aug. 25). It concerned flag etiquette, specifically why, and the necessity of flying out National Flag at half-staff. It occurred to me that many people do not get or read a local newspaper, or listen to radio or TV news, and have no idea why some flags they see around town are flying at half-staff.

In an attempt to rectify this issue, I would propose the following solution. I receive notification from the governor's office when the state or federal government requests a status change in flying the U.S. Flag. Usually this notification comes days in advance of the actual event. I would be very glad to inform you (home owner or business) of these requests, by e-mail as I receive them. Just send your name and e-mail address to me at goofygraphics@midco.net and I will place your information in my "flag notification folder." Thank you.



Capitol Notebook

Who's For Real With A Petition?

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The public cost was unfortunate but necessary in dealing with Annette Bosworth for the frauds committed in gathering signatures for her U.S. Senate candidacy petition.

Same for Clayton Walker's frauds, when he put fictional signatures on his U.S. Senate candidacy petition. Now we have more allegations regarding petition fraud, for some of the initiatives and constitutional amendments proposed for the 2016 general-election ballot.

Other than a candidate or a ballot-measure sponsor, circulators in South Dakota don't need to register before carrying the petitions.

When fraud occurs, trust turns to menace, threatening democracy and privacy.

What better way than some petition to anonymously steal a person's full name and address?

Requiring circulators to register at a county auditor's office or the secretary of state office before they start gathering signatures would be a safeguard.

The circulator could be asked for photo identification and proof of current residential address, and for the specific ballot measure or candidate, then sign a statement pledging to follow the petition laws.

In turn the circulator would receive official certification.

That way, a petition signer could ask to see the certification and identification of a circulator.

The downside is we might no longer get to see petition circulators dodge news reporters, as we have this summer.

State law already sets some requirements to be a circulator.

She or he must be "a resident of the State of South Dakota who is at least eighteen years of age who circulates nominating petitions

or other petitions for the purpose of placing candidates or issues on any election ballot."

But we're seeing there's no easy way to enforce that law.

Requiring the circulator to be certified beforehand would provide the public with a tool of self-defense.

The recent crimes committed by candidates Bosworth and Walker, and the ongoing controversies during this signature-gathering season for ballot measures, point to the need for steps to better preserve the integrity of our democratic system.

We're heading into an era of much more direct democracy, of lawmaking by ballot.

There is a need too for clarification on what public government bodies can do regarding candidates and ballot measures.

State law looks clear. Governments in South Dakota can't expend money to support candidates, or to petition for a ballot measure, or to take a position on a ballot measure.

The 1941 decision by the South Dakota Supreme Court in a Beadle County case set the standard. The Legislature passed the latest version of the ban in 2007.

But then-Attorney General Larry Long, in an October 2008 lawsuit brought by a citizen against the Brown County commission interpreted the ban to mean "extra" spending. The lawsuit was dropped after the November election, leaving the point unresolved.

An official opinion from Attorney General Marty Jackley in 2012 said the South Dakota Municipal League could spend money in an advocacy role, but another sentence implied the cities themselves couldn't.

It would seem any resolution considered by a government body at a public meeting must cost taxpayers something.

With 16 measures possibly on the 2016 ballot, some conflicting with each other, these aren't small matters.



Bob MERCER

We're Not A Brave Nation

BY LEONARD PITTS JR
Tribune Content Agency

He's wearing a NASA T-shirt. He is also wearing handcuffs.

Ahmed says police told him he was being charged with building a hoax bomb. James

McLellan, a spokesman for the Irving police, told local station WFAA, "We attempted to question the juvenile about what it was and he would simply only tell us that it was a clock."

That, of course, is because it was a clock.

Eventually, whoever has custody of the brain at the Irving PD must have recognized this for the Islamophobic idiocy it was. Ahmed was released. No charges will be filed.

Word of all this set Twitter ablaze. Ahmed has received supportive tweets from Arianna Huffington and Hillary Clinton. Mark Zuckerberg invited him to Facebook. President Obama invited him to the White House. And he's inspired a trending hashtag: (#hashtag)IStand-WithAhmed.

Which is good. But one hopes it will also inspire a little soul-searching for this country, which would be better.

Because once again, fear has made us our own worst enemy, has made us stupid. The fact that a bright kid — a kid with initiative, a kid who only wanted to make his teacher proud, a kid who, by all appearances, is precisely what we wish more kids would be — was hauled away in handcuffs for those very attributes ought to make us sober and reflective about the nation we have become in the years since Sept. 11.

One is reminded of the time President Bush strode out on an aircraft carrier beneath a celebratory banner proclaiming "Mission Accomplished." But given that the primary goal of terrorism is to make people afraid, maybe somebody should find that banner and ship it to al-Qaida.

Judging from what happened to Ahmed, they deserve it more than we ever did.



Leonard PITTS

Ahmed Mohamed, a 14-year-old ninth-grader from MacArthur High in Irving, Texas, had built the digital clock at home and was eager to show it to his engineering teacher, who liked it. When his English teacher saw it, however, she thought it looked like a bomb. Next thing he knew, the teenage tinkerer, who wants to be an engineer when he grows up, was under arrest.

There's a picture of him online that's heartbreaking: It shows a slight, brown-skinned boy in glasses, looking frightened and confused.