

Mission accomplished ... indeed

If I throw out the term "trickle-down economics" you likely will immediately think of President Ronald Reagan.

"Trickle down" became a popular bit of political rhetoric during the Reagan years, used by many to describe Reagan's propensity to support tax breaks to big business and the wealthy with the belief that such benefits would eventually be felt by nearly everyone as businesses, with a boost in capital, would supposedly create more jobs and eventually more wealth.

The "trickle down" terminology has been around a lot longer than that, actually. It has been attributed to humorist Will Rogers, who said during the Great Depression that "money was all appropriated for the top in hopes that it would trickle down to the needy."

It would be interesting to hear the comments Rogers would make if he was living in South Dakota today, and had been immersed in the recent goings-on with the state Legislature in Pierre.

State lawmakers have succeeded in turning the "trickle down" theory completely inside out and then actually make it become reality. "Trickle down," in South Dakota, has nothing to do with investment. Or reinvestment, for that matter.

It has to do with deinvestment, which is a word that probably won't be found in my dictionary. Let's just call this new term one more part of the mission accomplished by Gov. Dennis Daugaard and the overwhelmingly partisan, Republican majorities in both houses of the state Legislature.

I'm not about to diminish the challenge that lawmakers face. I'm not even going to bring up the fact that Daugaard never said a peep about pending severe state budget cuts during his gubernatorial campaign last year.

We balanced the state budget. I suppose I should be sitting here at my keyboard, shouting "Yippee" (thankfully, the door to my office is closed and no one would wonder what the hell is going on in here if I did that).

There's a problem, though. The Legislature really didn't "balance" anything. They simply decided that the state should continue, at an even greater pace, to step back financially from many of things the state Constitution says we are obligated to do.

Like provide a free public education to potentially every child in the state.

The state has decided to do

that by deinvesting in education. In other words, they've shifted, once again, more and more of the burden to funding public education to, well, us.

You and me. Taxpayers who, year after year, pony up to provide basic services to our nation,

state and local community. Including a quality education. We've even chosen to opt out of the property tax freeze in our district - twice - to support education.

So, when you hear the term "mission accomplished" used to describe the job the Legislature did earlier this year balancing the state budget, take a minute to look at the numbers. There are a lot of them in the school board story you'll find on the front page of today's Plain Talk.

The state did find \$12.2 million in one-time money (Yippee! Again.) so that school districts wouldn't experience a 10 percent cut in funding for 2011-12. But in the process, they managed to soak the Vermillion School District for about \$462,000.

It will mean reductions in services. It will mean cutting staff. Some faculty who, just perhaps (I certainly don't wish to speak for them) were hoping to maybe work just a bit longer before retiring have decided it's time to step away from careers they love.

Teachers, of course, aren't the highest paid people in town to begin with. So communities like Vermillion can count on them to be careful with their money, to not squander it. When they do need to spend, it likely happens in the shops and grocery stores and gas stations and restaurants of the community that supports them.

The deinvestment made by lawmakers in Pierre and signed into law by the governor is the opposite of a stimulus. If you think the economy of Vermillion is suddenly going to be awash in milk and honey because our state budget was balanced by not investing in education, think again.

Mission accomplished ... indeed.



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Earplugs, pillows and being outed

"How did we stay so long together? You and me Baby, we're stuck like glue..." Lyrics by Sugarland

Some of you are not going to like what I have to say next. For those who are die-hard traditionalists, you may want to turn the page now.

If your curiosity has been stoked, fair warning ... this is a long story of trial and error, to which I hope you will read with an understanding heart.

Here goes ... my husband and I sleep in separate bedrooms. Now, before you snap to judgment, let me explain.

It's not that we haven't tried and tried again to sleep peacefully in a queen-size bed. Believe me; we've journeyed through many episodic ventures of restless tossing and turning.

For a while, I wore earplugs, but they kept popping out. And besides, even when those darn things did stay put, I could still hear the "freight train" roaring on the other side of the bed. He tried nasal strips, but quite frankly, I can't remember why he quit using them.

For a time, I slept on my side with a heavy feather pillow covering my head. This technique did a fair job of blocking noise until I turned onto my back. He tried losing weight, which is known to reduce snoring. It did bring down the volume a bit.

We even went so far as to consider constructing a double king-size bed. That's when you place two king-size beds together and practically have to call your partner on a cell phone to have a conversation because of the distance between you. Unfortunately, we just don't have a bedroom big enough.

Needless to say, after years of my wrangling over his snoring, he just couldn't take any more of my elbowing him to stop. One night, sometime after

midnight, he shot out of bed, grabbed his pillow and stormed off, exclaiming his signature, "That's it!"

When Brian says "That's it," there's a massive door in the inner regions of his head and heart that closes hard and fast. "That's it" means we are through with something, and there is a certain ending bearing down.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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Something's over and it is over for good.

In that moment, feelings of sadness and relief comingle like a beam of sunlight forcing its way through a dark cumulus-filled sky. Part of me mourned my husband leaving our bedroom that night; another part of me rejoiced over the instant quietness his absence created.

Since then, I've worked hard to hide the fact that we sleep in separate bedrooms. It's a family secret that only our kids are supposed to know.

However, every once in a while, when Brian breaks the code of silence by saying, "In my bedroom..." I begin to twitch with anxiety that he has "outed" us. I turn three shades of red and just want to crawl into a hole, never to be seen or heard from again.

The taboo of couples sleeping apart is hard to overcome. But, I know we are not alone.

According to the article titled "Is the Romance Gone? Couples Increasingly Sleeping in Separate Beds," the National Sleep Foundation reports that "nearly one in four American couples sleep in separate bedrooms or beds, a number that has doubled in recent decades." The National Association of Home Builders

predicts that "by 2015, 60 percent of custom homes will have dual master bedrooms." The article states that people don't talk openly about sleeping in separate beds "because there's a stigma that there must be something dysfunctional in the relationship ... But for those people who put a tremendous value on getting a good night's sleep, which I think most of us do but are afraid to say, it can be an incredibly creative solution that is really effective for the relationship."

Even Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes sleep in separate bedrooms. So, you see, Brian and I are part of a growing trend of couples who just can't sleep together for physical, not emotional reasons.

When all is said and done, after nearly 39 years of marriage, Brian and I are BFF (best friends forever). We're still in love, continue to slow dance in the living room and even have date night, once in a while. We both agree that the best part of our day is returning home after work and just being together.

I guess you could say we are stuck like glue, in spite of the fact that we sleep in separate bedrooms.

Source: "Is the Romance Gone? Couples Increasingly Sleeping in Separate Beds," Amber Greviskes, July 26, 2010, AOL Health.

A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her writing has won first-place in competitions of the National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women. In the 2009 and 2010 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contest, Paula's columns took five first-place awards. To contact Paula, email pauladamon@iw.net, follow her blog at <http://my-story-your-story.blogspot.com/> and find her on Facebook.

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S.D. EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

Aberdeen American News: March 17 State owes bonus pay to certified teachers

In the mad rush to slash the state budget, South Dakota has done wrong by its employees.

At issue is money owed to South Dakota teachers who successfully completed a national certification process. The state told the teachers they would each receive a \$10,000 bonus, divvied out over five years. The local school district and the state Department of Education would each contribute \$1,000 per year per teacher.

But South Dakota officials are not keeping their word to those teachers.

Because of the state budget crunch, \$76,000 owed by the state to teachers who have completed the certification will not be paid out. Unfortunately, there is not enough money in the education department's budget.

Teachers who completed the certification process in 2009 and earlier have not been paid the money they were promised. And they won't see it in the future, either.

"Conditions change, and budgets change," Sen. Al Novstrup, R-Aberdeen, said recently. "Deals are not permanent. They're one year at a time."

That may be true. But usually a contract is canceled before services have been rendered. You can't just say, "Whoops! I'm broke!" and expect to get

something for free. In the real world, you'd have to borrow money to pay back what you owe, or file bankruptcy.

In this case, the state feels it can get away with it, under the guise of "balancing the budget."

These teachers did what they were challenged to do, and they did so in good faith. The state obviously thought this certification process was important to these teachers being successful at their jobs, and would make the quality of state education better. Otherwise, why would they offer a \$10,000 incentive for those who went through the process?

What's really frustrating is that the bonus pay for certification has been a state law since 2000. Yes, a law. You'd think that would be binding, but we guess not.

One of the reasons South Dakota got into its fiscal mess in the first place was because we spent more than we had - not much, but enough. And we agree that spending should be cut. It's fine and good if the state wants to look at getting rid of incentive programs for employees in the future to better manage our books.

But this just doesn't seem right. South Dakota is getting all of the benefit it wanted - well-trained teachers - without paying for it. That's a dirty shame.

Figure out a way to get these people paid what they are owed.

Guest Commentary:

Economic development in small towns

By Gov. Dennis Daugaard



DAUGAARD

Last week, I attended the Eureka Community Development Company's 25th Anniversary. I applaud them for a quarter century of proactive development. The celebration also provided an opportunity to redouble my focus on creating jobs and economic development in our small towns. We are set to engage these goals by improving our MicroLOAN program, adding flexibility to our Community Development Block Grants, and developing a 'small town specialist' program within the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Each of these initiatives will give small towns more tools to attract, expand and keep businesses.

The MicroLOAN program provides loans for small businesses for project costs like equipment and real estate, and also for working capital, inventories and

supplies. The program joins with a community bank in providing loans. While it is a great program, I believe we can make it better. We intend to

streamline the approval process. We trust the community banks to know their customers and make good decisions. We don't need to add another layer of bureaucracy to confirm what a community bank has already decided. We will also look to preserve the active businesses in towns by emphasizing loans to aid the sale of small businesses. Our loans for working capital allow small town grocery and hardware stores to move to new owners who might otherwise find the inventories to be overly burdensome on

the front end. The MicroLOAN program is a great one for small-town South Dakota, and we will make it even more effective.

As we work with local community leaders to identify projects that will attract new businesses and residents to their communities, the state must ensure that it has the flexibility to meet the needs of each community. The Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) was created to allow the state to make targeted investments in improving our communities. In recent years, these grants have been used for very limited purposes. Those projects are important, but we must ensure that CDBG is flexible so that it can help our communities develop infrastructure, improve quality of life, and meet their development goals.

Finally, we will work with local and regional economic development organizations and business leaders to create

a small-town specialist program. This program will assist local community leaders by providing them with the tools and resources to create plans and goals, retain and expand current businesses, and promote themselves to potential businesses. In a world where communication and transportation become easier and more affordable every day, more people can make choices to live and work in small towns. We need to make sure businesses as well as community members are aware of the opportunities small-town South Dakota has to offer. Our small-town specialist program will send that message loud and clear.

South Dakota's small towns are a crucial part of our state's economy. They provide a wonderful quality of life and have much to offer businesses and residents. I am committed to providing small towns with the tools they need to succeed.

Vermillion

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