

VIEWPOINTS

Guest Commentary:

Preparing for winter

By Rep. Kristi Noem

As South Dakotans, we know all too well just how cold it can get here in the Great Plains during the winter months. Before the first major snowfall of the year, it's important to take the time to make sure our families, homes and vehicles are prepared for the winter season.

Organizations like the American Red Cross and the National Weather Service encourage South Dakotans to have winter weather supply kits in vehicles, as well as the home. This kit should include water, non-perishable food, a shovel, battery-powered radio, a flashlight, warm clothing and blankets, medication and emergency contact information, among other items. The South Dakota Office of Emergency Management has published a 2012 Winter Weather Preparedness Guide. To read it, visit www.oem.sd.gov.

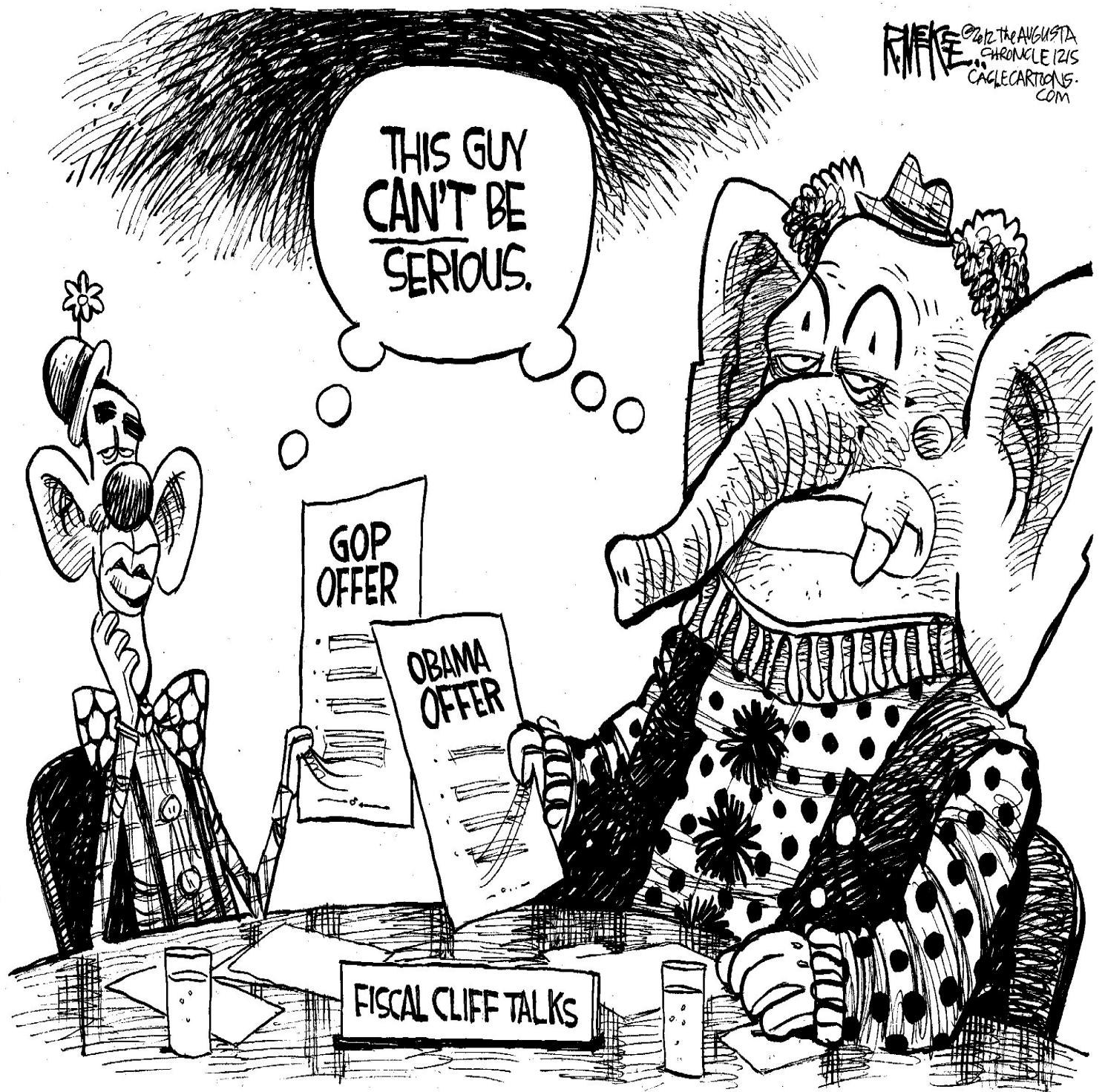
Our family has a NOAA Weather Radio, which alerts us of any potential weather threats. The weather radio warns of approaching strong winds, severe wind chills and blizzards. I would encourage people to take action to ensure they're aware of potential weather threats, whether through the use of a radio like the one our family uses or through other means.

In addition to compiling a

winter weather supply kit, South Dakotans should ensure that all vehicles are winterized and that the gas tank is full to prevent the fuel line from freezing. The Red Cross also encourages homeowners to maintain heating equipment on an annual basis. So before Santa makes his way down the chimney, make sure to have the fireplace and furnace cleaned and inspected by a professional.

Many communities across South Dakota are sponsoring coat drives, where individuals can donate old or extra winter coats for those who are in need. For example, Kidz-n-Coats is a program that donates winter coats to children in the Sioux Falls area. I encourage South Dakotans across the state to reach out to area organizations to see what opportunities are available in each community.

Although some may grumble about snow or the falling temperatures, there are also many who enjoy snow — like my son, Booker. Not only will we make sure we have our snow shovels ready, the Noem household will also be pulling snow sleds out of storage. The winter months provide unique opportunities for families to spend time together building snowmen or ice-skating, but we shouldn't forget that cold temperatures and icy conditions should be taken seriously.



Guest Commentary:

Request for additional Missouri River releases threatens S.D. interests

By Sen. John Thune

It has been a hot, dry year in South Dakota. The drought-stricken landscape and the loss of crops, hay, and pastures have made this a challenging year for farmers, ranchers, and communities across South Dakota. Even certain areas of the state that experienced excess rainfall in 2011 suffered from lower than normal rainfall this year.

The drought-induced low water levels of the Missouri River mean that less water is available to be released from the Missouri River, which eventually flows into the Mississippi River in St. Louis. The trickle-down effect of diminished water flows has caused economic losses for businesses along the Mississippi due to reduced barge traffic.

I understand and appreciate the economic challenges faced by the businesses along the Mississippi River; however, some lawmakers and groups have recently issued requests for the president to make an emergency declaration that would allow the Corps to deviate from the Missouri River Master Manual.

The Corps' Master Control Manual governs the Corps' management of the Missouri River and doesn't take into consideration the impacts of barge traffic on the Mississippi River. If the president complies with this unprecedented request, precious water would be released from the Missouri River reservoirs to aid navigation on the Mississippi River. Under existing law, such actions are not permitted by the president or the Corps of Engineers.

Even more troubling is the real concern about how the release of water from the Missouri River would impact communities in our region that are dependent on this critical water source. Due to harsh drought conditions experienced along the Missouri River, a declaration from the president would have a significant negative impact on the people and businesses that depend on Missouri River water.

According to the Corps of Engineers, the water levels on the Missouri are already 20 percent below the normal levels due to this year's drought. The release of additional water from Missouri River reservoirs would only exacerbate the drought-related conditions experienced by the communities, tribes, and industries that rely on water from the Missouri River.

That's why I have spearheaded an effort joined by members of the South Dakota, North Dakota, Kansas and Montana delegations to urge the president, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Corps of Engineers to deny any requests for water releases. Denying the requests for an emergency declaration will prevent both short and long-term consequences such actions would have on Missouri River states.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate to ensure the president, FEMA, and the Corps balance their efforts to address this situation on the Mississippi River while ensuring they understand the negative impact such efforts could have on Missouri River communities.

The perfect storm — reflections on a social injustice

"With ignorance comes fear — from fear comes bigotry. Education is the key to acceptance." — Kathleen Patel, author of *"The Bullying Epidemic"*

I have a thing or two to say. Bullying takes many forms beyond the playground and exposes the darker side of the human experience.

While bullying today has the attention of the media, governors, teachers, parents and school administrators, we would be remiss to not reflect on the bigger picture.

In fact, we are a nation with a record of bullying, including launching personal attacks on politicians who have fallen from grace, lodging political barrages against civil rights movements or carrying out unjust assaults against minorities, such as our long history of discrimination against Native Americans and African Americans.

Don't forget how we incarcerated Asian Americans after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor during World War II.

Like war, there is nothing good about bullying. It's always oppressive, scars its victims and degrades the bullies themselves.

Let's face it; at one time or another, just about everyone has been bullied or has been a bully. We were targets on playgrounds, in classrooms, on school buses because of how we looked, talked, walked, and dressed, for not following the crowd or simply for being different.

As a risk-averse, chubby, second-generation Italian kid, living in a skinny, risk-taking, white Anglo Saxon neighborhood, I was an easy target.

Even so, I am mystified by all the clamor today. Should we cast blame on the media?

The minute-by-minute news cycle and citizen's journalists have the capacity to record the most

egregious acts of bullying as they are happening. Add the super highway of social media, which serves as an instant handheld freeway, hurling pervasive and punishing attacks anywhere, anytime, by anyone. As one teacher put it, our kids can't escape bullying; it follows them home and never leaves.

Depending on which report you read, the frequency is varied and alarming, including as few as one in six children and as many as nine out of 10 children are bullied each year.

According to 2009 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, 42.9 percent of sixth graders were bullied during the 2007 school year.

A report by www.DoSomething.org states that 56 percent of students have experienced some sort of bullying at school. Between fourth and eighth grade, 90 percent of students are victims of bullying. The most common reasons for being bullied are a student's appearance or body size.

A victim of bullying is twice as likely to take his or her own life compared to someone who is not a victim. One out of 10 students drop-out of school because they are bullied.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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Researchers say they believe that bullying should not be treated as part of growing up with the attitude of kids will be kids. Some 57 percent of students who experience harassment in school don't report the incident.

On the other hand, schools with easily understood rules of conduct, smaller class sizes and fair discipline practices tend to have less violence compared to those without these.

It doesn't matter which statistic is the most accurate, all paint a troubling picture.

With every new story on this subject, I shake my head and wonder what's happening or what's not happening to make our kids think it is OK to harass their peers.

From all of the bullying today, one would conclude that the valued lesson of the Golden Rule — "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" — and "play nice" are no longer relevant.

What's our society coming to?

I'm not sure what the answer is, but I do believe that children don't learn tolerance, kindness and the value of diversity on their own. It takes an entire village and such lessons begin at home.

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A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula 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, 2010 and 2011 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contests, her columns have earned eight first-place awards. To contact Paula, email boscodamon.paula@gmail.com, follow her blog at my-story-your-story.blogspot.com and find her on Facebook.

SOUTH DAKOTA EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal: Nov. 28, 2012
Preserving Lakota language important

Bryan Brewer knows that he faces a challenge when he is sworn in next month as president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Brewer, who is retired after 30 years as an educator, told the annual Lakota Language Summit held at Rapid City that preserving the language and passing it on to future generations can be a turning point for the Sioux tribes.

"It affects our culture, it affects our children. A lot of them don't know who they are or where they came from," Brewer said. "Through our language and our culture, they're going to know where they came from, and hopefully, that will help. Somehow, it will be intertwined."

Brewer told the group that he intended to lead a Lakota Language Revitalization Initiative when he becomes tribal president that will focus on creating Lakota language immersion schools and identifying fluent Lakota

speakers.

A year ago, the Lakota language was declared to be in a state of emergency by state and national groups trying to save Native American languages and an action plan was suggested to the Oglala tribe. Brewer said the OST tribal council ignored the action plan and did nothing.

"We're going step it up and take it before our council and find the funding for it," Brewer said.

According to the nonprofit Lakota Language Consortium, the average age of a Lakota speaker is about 65 years old, and only about 14 percent of residents of the various Sioux reservations can speak their Native language. Without a Lakota language program in Oglala Sioux and other tribal schools, the language could become extinct someday.

That's not too far of an exaggeration. Of the estimated 500 Native American tribes that existed in North America when Christopher Columbus landed in the New World, fewer than 50 Native languages have more than 1,000 speakers today.

We applaud Brewer's commitment to create a Lakota language program in OST schools. Preserving the Sioux culture includes preserving the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota languages.

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls: Nov. 26, 2012
Wind energy credit vital for South Dakota

South Dakota has at least one constant: wind.

It can pack a punch no matter the season with a drying spring wind that allows farmers to head to the fields, a summer blast of hot air that does little to cool us, fall winds that strip a tree naked in a day and howling winds of winter that ignite a blizzard or just make our homes feel more drafty.

Those breezes blow enough for our state to rank fifth in the nation in potential for wind energy development.

But a tax credit that is crucial to the wind energy industry expires at the end of the year with nothing yet to replace it. That leaves an uncertainty in the industry — an unknown that slows any wind development. This year, zero

megawatts of new wind power have gone online in the state.

The tax credit waits for a lame-duck Congress to make it a priority and fund the Production Tax Credit. South Dakota's congressional delegation approves extending the tax credit but has work to do and faces budget challenges when it comes to any subsidy.

It's a pricey expense at an estimated \$5 billion for one year, but it also generates private investments that far exceed that amount.

It's time for all three of our lawmakers — Sen. Tim Johnson, Sen. John Thune and Rep. Kristi Noem — to work together to help get approval for the tax credit and put aside potential political differences to help an industry that has growth potential in a state where the wind rarely stops blowing. Jobs depend on it, and it's the right thing to do.

We can't change the wind, but we can change the direction of wind development by extending the tax credit, at least temporarily, to help the industry continue to develop this renewable energy source.

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