

# One in a *Ver*Million

## Meet Ray Ring

By David Lias  
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Ray Ring of Vermillion has spent a lifetime dealing with economic and legislative issues, both on the national and state level.

The retired University of South Dakota economics professor worked for the Illinois Bureau of the Budget and the U.S. Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation before coming to USD in 1978.

He has done consulting and research for South Dakota's Legislative Research Council, Governor's Commission on Tax Fairness and Governmental Cost Effectiveness, Governor's Advisory Commission on Taxation and several private sector organizations.

So, naturally, one would assume that his transition from private citizen to District 17 Representative in the South Dakota Legislature would be an easy one.

Ray would tell you that such an assumption would be wrong.

"A couple people have asked me, 'Is being in the Legislature what you expected?'" said the freshman Democratic lawmaker, who was elected

by District 17 voters in last November's election. "My answer is, 'it's all I expected and more,' because it's very intense, time consuming, both during the legislative session and the committee meetings, and following those, there are usually lots of things that we have to go to in the evenings."

Ray received his B.S. from St. Benedict's College in 1967, his M.A. in 1973 and Ph.D. in 1980, both from the University of Kansas. During his years in the academic world, his major interests included economics of state and local governments and ethical and philosophical aspects of economics. His several refereed publications in national journals include three in the National Tax Journal.

He served as director of the University Honors Program from 1999 to 2001, and continues to be involved in undergraduate research. He and his wife have four children

"It's been a real eye-opener," he said of his experience in the S.D. House this legislative session. "I already had some experience, having presented revenue estimates and that sort of thing to the Legislature, so it wasn't probably as much of a surprise to me as it



was to some people.

"One person described my experience as sort of now peeking behind the curtain to see what the wizard is doing back there," Ray said, "because I've seen it from the outside. Now I'm seeing it from the inside."

One thing in particular that Ray has had no problem realizing is the rewarding aspects that accompany his new, challenging job.

"It's a real honor to sit there (in the House chamber). I push the buttons, I get to make the votes, I even now have even spoken on the floor once," he said, "and it's been an amazing experience."

"The only disadvantage is that boring drive between here and Pierre," Ray said, laughing.

He noted that no lawmaker can simply arrive in Pierre and hope that

every issue that he or she favors receives support.

"You clearly can't just go in and take over and say, 'these are my issues.' My major issues – school funding and Medicaid – haven't really been approached, yet," Ray said, "but some other important things have come up and I'm glad I was able to have some input."

"I guess I expected some level of frustration, and that expectation has been satisfied, too," he said, again with a laugh, "although not as frustrating as I thought it would be. I think partly that is because there really seems to be an attitude of cooperation and collaboration – certainly more than what I had been seeing from the outside for several years, and that's been very gratifying."

## Health fair gets to the 'heart of the matter'

By Travis Gulbrandson  
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The Sanford Vermillion Community Health & Wellness Fair held on the USD campus last weekend really allowed visitors to get to "the heart of the matter."

The main display in the annual event, now in its seventh year, was a giant inflatable walk-in human heart, which sat on the floor in the main hall of the Lee Medical Building, where the fair took place.

"(The display) explains where the blood goes through once it comes to your heart, what the deoxygenated blood goes through and how it comes back out," said Paul Davis of the mobile heart screening unit from Sanford Hospital. "If you can listen, it has a sound effect (of a heart) pumping. That's what gets the kids."

Adults were drawn to the exhibit, as well, said Davis, who also was on-hand to coordinate heart screenings for all age groups.

"It's was kind of cool," he said. "When we first start rolling it out, everybody is like, 'What is this big thing laying on the ground?' Then it blew up, and you can hear, 'Ooh, ahh.'"

"There are a lot of

people with questions on it, a lot of people going through it," he said. "Then they go back and get their friends and bring them back here."

Along with the heart screenings, area residents had the opportunity to get a number of other tests, such as blood pressure, blood sugar and lipid panel.

According to Mary Merrigan, marketing director at Sanford Vermillion, approximately 200 visitors came to view the 30 different vendors and information booths and take some of the 15 possible screenings.

Louis Papka, physician assistant, associate professor and academic coordinator of USD's PA program, oversaw a session that checked cardiometabolic risk factors, measuring visitors' waist circumference, weight, height, body mass index and blood pressure.

"Even if they're healthy, we would like them to go away with a better understanding of what their risk factors are later in life, as well as now, for the development of heart disease and diabetes," Papka said. "So we do discuss with

them proper nutrition.

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