

1815 Miscellaneous

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Forces beyond local control

HEALTH

From Page 04

We're all familiar with humorous saying, and I'm paraphrasing here, "No person's life, liberty and property is safe as long as the legislature is in session."

The Vermillion School Board discovered at its Jan. 28 meeting that there could be a bit of truth to that axiom. And it's not really a laughing matter.

While discussing various bits of education-related legislation that's seeing action in Pierre during this legislative session, Superintendent Mark Froke brought up Senate Bill 15.

The bill, introduced at the request of the state Department of Education, is described, in its official title, as "An act to revise certain provisions regarding state aid to special education."

So far, so good. "This changes up the amount per thousand (valuation of real property) that can be taxed for special education. Currently, we have a minimum and a maximum, and the minimum is \$1.20 per thousand, and the maximum is \$1.40 per thousand," Froke told the school board. "The state is proposing moving that to \$1.33 minimum, and \$1.55 maximum."

"Just off the cuff, I thought, 'good, that will provide some additional support for special education.' We're always struggling with that," he said.

Business Manager Sheila Beermann ran the

numbers," so to speak, to see what kind of financial impact – hopefully a positive one – this legislation may have on our school district's special education programs.

Turns out it's not exactly a winning formula.

"When I did the worksheet for our special education, if the school would remain at \$1.40 (the current maximum) all it would do is reduce the dollars coming into the district," Beermann said. "We'd have to move our levy to \$1.53 (per thousand) in order to maintain the same income into the district, but it still would be shuffled from the state to the taxpayer – that extra 13 cents per thousand."

"So it does shift the burden," she said. "It also makes us increase our levy just to maintain our dollars."

"The governor is very interested in seeing this passed, and no one could figure out why," Froke told the school board.

Beermann's calculations show that if this bill is approved in its present form, and the Vermillion district makes no changes to the present levy – keeping it at \$1.40 – there will be a noticeable impact.

"We take a \$70,000 hit," Froke said, "and taking it to a \$1.53 per thousand – we break even. What's happening is the burden is being shifted from the state to the local taxpayer."

It's easy to vent, to have steam coming from your ears, when you get the card from the county each year that breaks down just how much property tax you pay. There is no doubt some people who conclude that local governing entities, such as our school board, need to work harder

at pinching pennies. It is, after all, "our" money.

School boards, from Vermillion to Lemmon and all points in-between in South Dakota, face huge challenges year after year when it comes to budgeting. At the last meeting of the Vermillion board, members dealt with the fact that they will soon have to approve the spending of a significant amount of capital outlay funds on needed maintenance/replacement of a portion of the high school's roof.

Board members and school administrators knew this day was coming, however. They planned ahead, and made sure the district's capital outlay fund was adequately stocked with revenue to meet such needs.

Senate Bill 15, however, is something that's as out of the school board's control as our district's student enrollment. The enrollment, by the way, is down from last year, meaning significantly less revenue will be available when it comes time to plan for next year's budget.

SB15 was introduced Jan. 9, and referred to the Senate Education Committee. On Jan. 24, it was bumped to the Senate Appropriations Committee. That committee is scheduled to take action on it today.

One can imagine that it may be approved by that committee and move on to the state Senate. It may be altered in some way during this process; perhaps some wording will be stricken or an amendment may be added.

exercise, smoking cessation – basically health promotion and prevention."

Near the heart display was a booth that taught visitors hands-only CPR using small mannequins.

"We are providing ... a DVD instructional with the hands-on mannequins," said Heidi Fodness, RN. "It shows you the rate at which you should be doing the chest compressions and how to identify that somebody needs CPR."

"It takes about 22 minutes, and then if there are questions, it may take about 30 to 45 minutes," she said.

Fodness said knowing CPR can be an important skill to have.

"I believe that with knowing CPR and other life-saving techniques, that the community will be much more aware, and they will feel more comfortable if they ever get into a life-saving situation," she said.

The wellness fair enabled visitors to take a more active role in community health through the Community Blood Bank, which was taking donations for Sanford Vermillion.

Executive Director Ken Versteeg said he hoped the blood drive would generate enough blood to get Sanford Vermillion through February.

"We go to a lot of health events around the 200-mile radius of Sioux Falls, and I would say this is our best health fair event for turnout," Versteeg said. "We collect the most donors at this event every single year. It's been very consistent for us."

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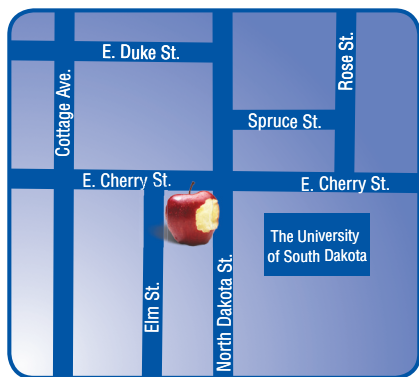
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