

We're for less damage, grief

There's good news and bad news.

First, the good news. South Dakota appears to be the closest it has ever been toward enacting a statewide ban on texting while driving.

The South Dakota Senate approved a texting while driving ban Tuesday. Meaning our state is oh-so-close to showing that, just like 39 other states, the District of Columbia and Guam, we here on the plains have enough common sense and interest in public safety to pass such a ban.

And now, the bad news. The Argus Leader reports Wednesday that the legislation now heads to the state House, where it's expected to face a tough fight. Two previous bans on texting while driving were defeated in that chamber in 2011 and last year.

We see a disappointing pattern here. Similar legislation also failed in the SD House in 2010. Its main sponsor was then-District 17 Rep. Eldon Nygaard of Vermillion. The ban, if adopted, would forbid "text-based communication" on wireless devices while operating a motor vehicle, with exceptions for hands-free or voice-activated texts and text messages sent while parked.

"Texting and driving is dangerous, it's deadly and it deserves to be illegal," said Sen. Mike Vehle, R-Mitchell, in Wednesday's Argus Leader.

It also would override local bans passed by several South Dakota cities, including Sioux Falls. Vehle said that would bring consistency to the law.

Critics ignore the fact that texting and driving – according to multiple reputable studies – is six times more dangerous than driving while intoxicated. A quarter of all collisions last year could be attributed to the distracted driving practices of texting or talking on a cell phone.

Distracted driving in general accounts for about 80 percent of accidents. In 2011, more than 6,000 people died and more than a half-million others were injured in crashes related to driver inattention.

The following statistics come from a study conducted by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI):

- Of all cell phone related tasks – including talking, dialing, or reaching for the phone – texting while driving is the most dangerous.

- Teen drivers are four times more likely than adults to get into car crashes or near crash events directly related to talking on a cell phone or texting.

- A car driver dialing a cell phone is 2.8 times more likely to get into a crash than a non-distracted driver.

- A driver reaching for a cell phone or any other electronic device is 1.4 times more likely to experience a car crash.

- A car driver talking on their phone is 1.3 times more likely to get into an accident.

- A truck driver texting while driving is 23.2 times more likely to get into an accident than a trucker paying full attention to the road.

- A truck driver dialing a cell phone is 5.9 times more likely to crash.

- A trucker reaching for a phone or other device is 6.7 times more likely to experience a truck accident.

BETWEEN THE LINES



DAVID LIAS
david.lias@plaintalk.net

For every 6 seconds of drive time, a driver sending or receiving a text message spends 4.6 of those seconds with their eyes off the road. This makes texting the most distracting of all cell phone related tasks.

Approximately a year ago, I wrote a column very similar to this one, urging state lawmakers to someday approve a ban on texting while driving.

At a cracker barrel legislative meeting held in Vermillion in February, 2012, retired Circuit Judge Art Rusch of Vermillion pointed out that the reason many legislators cite for not supporting a ban – difficulty of enforcement – is an incredibly weak excuse.

"I've been involved in law enforcement for approximately 40 years, and I've never heard the argument made that because something may be tough to enforce, it shouldn't be made into a law," he said. "If that's going to be a criteria, then why don't they get rid of the laws that forbid murder, because that's too expensive and difficult to enforce? That argument is just ludicrous."

Rusch applauded Sen. Eldon Nygaard and Rep. Tom Jones back in 2012 for supporting the ban on texting. "... clearly all of the research shows that it lead to lots of damage and grief."

This year, Jones is a member of the state Senate. Our district's House members are Nancy Rasmussen and Ray Ring. We urge you to contact them, and other House members you may know, and ask them to support the texting ban.

Like Judge Rusch, we're for less damage and grief. We hope the state Legislature is, too.

Legislative notes:

Transportation bills being evaluated

By Rep. Nancy Rasmussen
District 17

This week in Pierre the House Transportation Committee will be listening to testimony and evaluating four Senate Bills addressing student driving.

Senate Bills 105, 106, 107 and 216 are the result of a task force created to examine teen driving statistical date, driver education options, barriers to teen driving safety, and review current laws affecting teen drivers, and national best practices to improve safety of teen drivers.

I will summarize the bills contents, but I invite you to read these bills in full. They can be found on the Legislative Research Council's Web site.

SB 105 would lengthen an instruction permit from 180 days to 365 days.

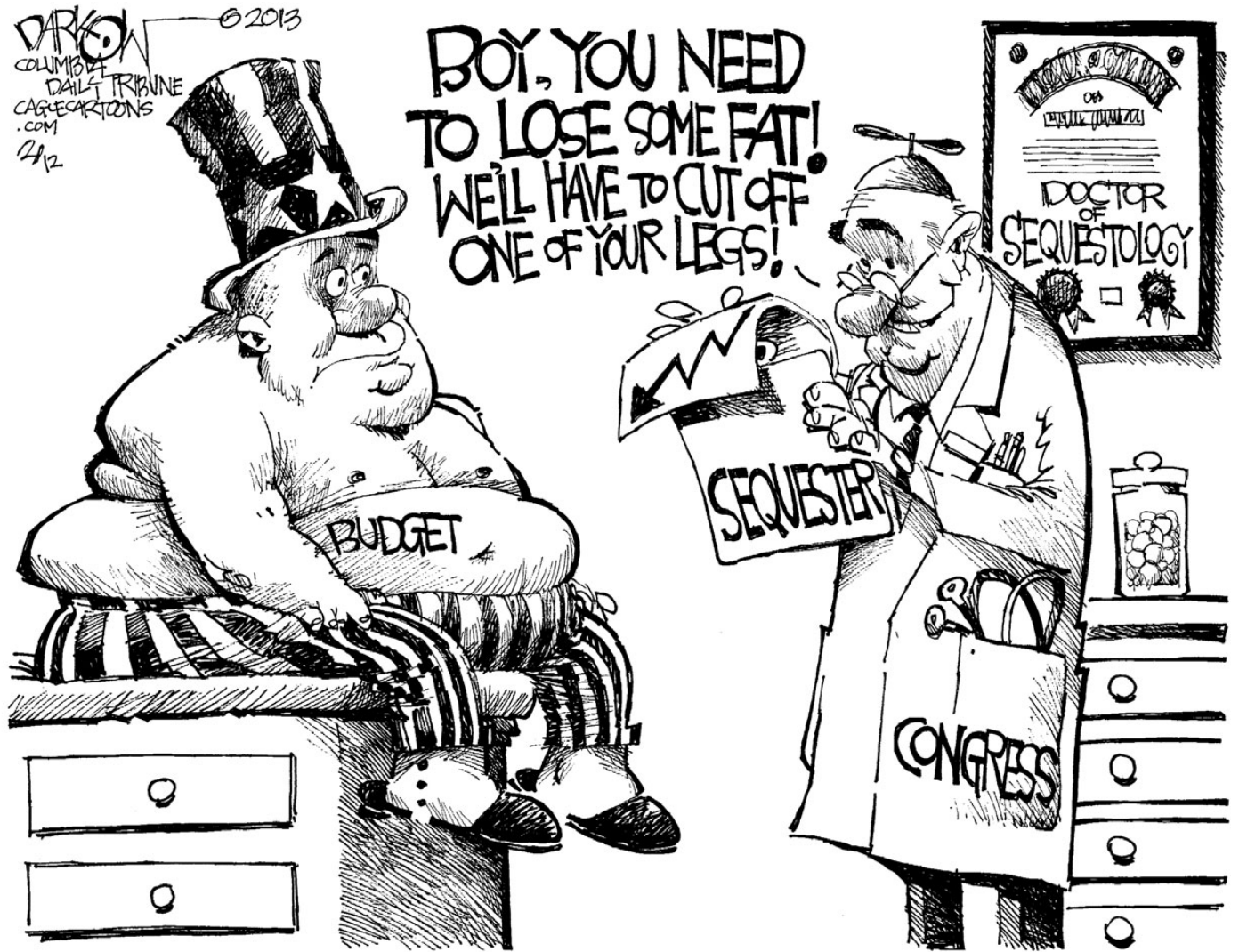
SB 106 would prohibit minors from using wireless communication devices while driving during the instructional and restricted permit periods.

SB 107 would limit the number of passengers allowed in a motor vehicle.

SB 216 would establish a state-wide driver education program.

The task force is recommending these changes be adapted into state statute. The safety of our children and our neighbors is at the core of this legislation.

If you have questions or comments on these or other bills, please e-mail me at Rep.Rasmussen.state.sd.us.



Pink power and what makes us tick

"Your premium brand had better be delivering something special, or it's not going to get the business." Warren Buffet, businessman, investor, philanthropist

For at least a year, I had been whining about the small dull green tubs with loose lids we die-hard recyclers were forced to use. I even put a call into the hauling company, suggesting they change over to the bigger receptacles, like nearby towns had done.

Awkward and cumbersome, those bins weren't big enough for my weekly load of papers, wrappers, cans, labels and plastics. They weren't popular at all in my area. Our household was one of few using them, and I'm sure their homeliness seriously affected curb appeal.

As our garbage collectors quickly found out, color and size really do matter in this space. Now, a majority of homes throughout town are sporting those tall hot pink recycle cans.

After our garbage hauling company started supplying customers with tall, slick hot pink recycling containers with easy flip-top lids and sturdy handles to push and pull, their recycling business grew by at least 60 percent.

I, too, was a fast adopter of the new pink cans, universally known and recognized in the U.S. for breast cancer awareness. As soon as they started popping up in my neighborhood, I called to request one.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



PAULA DAMON
paula.damon@iw.net

stimulation.

With the many tactics retailers use to influence consumer response, color is one of the most influential methods. And, pink casts a powerful spell, especially over women.

Over the years, we women have progressed in sharing household duties with men. Yet, we still command most of the housework, including what we throw away, what we keep and what we recycle. This could explain the popularity of recycling in the pink.

There are other examples like this. Consider how far we've come from metal milk boxes where glass or plastic milk jugs were delivered every morning by the milkman on our front or back stoops pre-1970 or so.

Color does affect what we do. For years, experts have suggested that we cover our walls with pastels to encourage moods of peacefulness and harmony.

Marketing experts say color evokes emotions and changes how we behave. We are excited by red and calmed by blue. Science confirms that color satisfies our needs for

A far cry from today's adorable pint-sized milk bottles splashed with pizzazz and strategically placed next to soda pop in convenience stores.

What's in the bottle hasn't changed much, save maybe more Vitamin D. Today's milk bottles are come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some are styled to-go with grip grooves.

Others are stackable, fitting more squarely in the fridge and still others are artfully designed with color and style.

While I am not a milk drinker, lactose intolerant, I'm intrigued by how milk has stepped up its game and is now sharing space quite competitively in dairy cases at the grocer's and on convenience store shelves side-by-side with soda pops and specialty coffees.

My all-time favorite product makeover is what Tide has done to laundry soap with the Tide Pod, introduced on the market in the last year or so. Tide Pods are a detergent, stain fighter and brightener all in one cute little pinwheel pellet.

I admit I haven't tried them, yet. Even though consumer ratings are somewhat poor with complaints the pods don't completely dissolve in the wash, I like their colorful orange, blue and white stripes, cookie jar Tide Pod dispenser and no clean up or guessing, like liquid and powder laundry detergents.

I may try them. Someday. Maybe. If they come in pink.

Legislative report:

Medicaid and its effects on South Dakotans

By Sen. Tom Jones
District 17

In my newsletter last week, I mentioned that I would like to visit the new health care package that is to be initiated, if our state of South Dakota so chooses.

In my opinion, this Medicaid expansion is good for South Dakota. Earlier this session I attended briefings on Medicaid expansion. Please remember that 69 percent of our current Medicaid recipients are children and 31 percent are adults.

The Affordable Care Act allows the states to expand coverage to those adults who qualify if they

are at 138 percent of the poverty level.

South Dakota will receive between \$200,000,000 and \$300,000,000 in federal assistance over the next 10 years in health care with a minimal contribution from our state. I think we would be foolish not to enroll in this program.

Action in the Senate Appropriations Committee and on the Senate floor is picking up.

This week we acted on SJR 2 which will require the electors at the next general election to decide if any new tax were to be imposed, it would require a 2/3 voters' approval.

I voted against this bill as it would not let the majority rule. A less than 2/3 vote will let the minority rule if it doesn't have 67 percent in favor of it. This passed 25-10, primarily down party lines.

We also passed SB 194 to extend the sunset date for schools to use capital outlay funds for various expenses other than buildings.

I reluctantly voted for the bill, which passed 29-6. Schools desperately need funds; therefore we passed this extension.

The bad part of passing this is that some day we will need capital outlay money for repairs on an old building or construction of a

new building and if we spend those funds for day-to-day operations, the fund will be reduced severely or even gone.

In Appropriations Committee we heard requests from the Department of Revenue, Public Utilities Commission, the Governor's Office, the Department of Tribal Relations, State Auditor, Treasurer, the Commissioner of Schools and Public Lands, and the Legislative Research Council. On Wednesday and Thursday, we had bill hearings involving money requests.

If you have comments or questions, e-mail me at sen.jones@state.sd.us.

Exemptions eroding South Dakota's broad tax base

By Gov. Dennis Daugaard

Many states tax the sales of goods. A few also tax services. South Dakota has a broad-based, four percent sales tax on nearly all goods and services.

Because past legislators and governors have maintained the broadness of the tax, it is a steady, reliable source of revenue, even in times of economic distress.

Broadening this tax base helped Gov. Janklow cut property taxes 30 percent. Taxing the sales of a broad array of goods and services also helps our state avoid an income tax.

However, an ever-present temptation exists to ask for exceptions. Interest groups come to Pierre each year to argue for a tax exemption on their particular

goods or services. They are supported by their lobbyists and members.

These exemptions do not have policy goals, other than relieving a particular group from paying sales tax. They are not designed to attract new economic activity or help create jobs. Some interest groups have better arguments than others, but one fact is always true: Each time an exemption is created, it benefits a narrow group at the expense of all other South Dakota taxpayers.

Even if some exemptions are small, the principle of a broad-based tax is violated.

Each time an exemption is carved out, there is less revenue for priorities like education, health care, or economic development. For each

exemption, we send a message to the next interest group that they also should try to avoid paying sales tax.

I vetoed legislation last year that would have exempted the sales tax on hay for livestock bedding. Several exemptions have been proposed this year, including certain coaching services, some rodeo admissions, and sales of used truck tires. Certainly these are very small exemptions, proposed by groups for whom I have empathy.

Still, I must oppose the erosion of our broad sales tax base through repeated, minor exemptions that ignore our overarching policy goals.

I truly believe that we should strive for more taxpayers, not

more taxes or higher rates. Spreading the burden among many makes each one's burden lighter. We should not continue to chip away at our steady, broad tax base. It's easy to agree with each group and make an exception "just this once." But we must be vigilant against it.

Voters, taxpayers and the public in general don't have an association, interest group, or lobbyists. As your governor, I believe it's my responsibility to speak for the people. It's my job to work on behalf of the unorganized many against the interests of the organized few. Let's keep our tax rates low by asking everyone to share in the responsibility to pay.

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Vermillion Plain Talk Staff
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