

VIEWPOINTS

The need for a bit less ammo

I miss the good ol' days ... those days of bomb shelters, civil defense warnings on television, elementary school showings of a movie telling us, as children, to duck and cover under our desks should the Soviet Union drop an atomic bomb on us.

Nothing seemed to unite us more than having an enemy we all could agree on. During those "good" times in the 1950s and 1960s, we had our sights set on those cold, bloodthirsty, godless Commies that were hell-bent on destroying our country. Or landing on the moon. Or both.

It inspired us to do what now seems nearly unthinkable – to, for example, start a manned space program in the late '50s that would land men on the moon in the late '60s. It is a fascinating achievement fueled, in part, by our need at the time to beat the Soviets in the space race.

At the same time, other cultural and societal advances were taking place. The country began to slowly realize that yes, integration would not tear our country apart, and that every American, despite their gender, color, or creed, is endowed with basic civil rights.

Today, with the Soviet Union just a memory, and Russia being so friendly to us that it provides the only way for American astronauts to get into space, it appears that many in the United States are losing that progressive focus.

So some of us have been on the hunt for a new "enemy" – some entity on which we can focus with such zeal that all of the other problems facing us seem minor.

This year, it appears we've found that new target. Many (not

BETWEEN THE LINES



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become the new Public Enemy Number One.

You'd think South Dakotans would feel safe from this "threat." Back in 2006, a majority of our fine state's voters approved South Dakota Amendment C, which states, "Only marriage between a man and a woman shall be valid or recognized in South Dakota. The uniting of two or more persons in a civil union, domestic partnership, or other quasi-marital relationship shall not be valid or recognized in South Dakota."

Evidently, that was not enough to calm our fears. It's taken eight years, but the hysteria in our fine state has evidently grown to the point that some citizens, and some of our citizen lawmakers, believe that further legislative action is needed to deal with this so-call non-hetero menace that, wow, like just overnight appears to be plaguing us all.

Thankfully, there are currently enough legislators with enough common sense in Pierre right now to recognize that no such menace exists.

all, thankfully) South Dakotans have painted a big bulls eye on the backs of our fellow women and men with a sexual orientation other than hetero.

They have suddenly become the new Public Enemy Number One.

After some proponent testimony in committee earlier this week that bordered on being loony at times, lawmakers effectively killed SB128.

This bill, introduced by Sen. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, would have barred lawsuits against people for "expressing their religious beliefs on the subject of sexual orientation," as long as they did not incite violence, and ordered the attorney general to defend anyone sued for that reason. It also would have given businesses the right to refuse service on the basis of sexual orientation.

According to one of the proponents, Mark Chase, a pastor and president of the South Dakota Family Policy Council, "In our country, we should not have to fear that we'll have retribution because we've expressed that something is wrong according to my religious faith."

Chase and Jensen were evidently inspired to introduce this bill because they claim there are cases in Colorado and Oregon where individuals were sued for refusing to provide wedding cakes, flowers or other services for same-sex weddings.

Why these two men think there's a threat of such a same-sex wedding fiasco happening in a South Dakota bakery or florist shop when there's no possibility of a same-sex wedding happening in our state is a bit of a mystery.

Tom Barnett, executive director of the South Dakota State Bar, helped to set the record straight as he testified against the bill during its Feb. 18 committee meeting.

He noted that the Oregon and Colorado cases involved laws in those states that make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal. South Dakota has no such law.

"This legislation ... does nothing," Barnett said, describing how it simply is not needed to quell a "menace" that doesn't exist (that's my description, by the way).

"I am really appalled that we are considering something like this," said Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton.

Sen. Mark Kirkeby, R-Rapid City, could find nothing good to say about the legislation, describing it as "a mean, nasty, hateful, vindictive bill."

South Dakota is not alone in trying to paint LGBT citizens as the new enemy. There's been legislation introduced this year in Michigan, Kansas, and Idaho that is just as appalling.

There is hope, however, that crazy state laws like this may someday no longer be proposed. The source of this positive anticipation comes bubbling up from – of all places – Congress.

The Senate voted last November to approve the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, landmark civil rights legislation that would make it illegal to discriminate against LGBT individuals in the workplace.

ENDA would outlaw workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. It is already illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, nationality, religion, age or disability. Twenty-nine states currently have no laws

protecting LGBT individuals in the workplace.

It's the first time in history that the Senate has passed ENDA. The House passed a version of ENDA in 2007, but it did not include protections for transgender individuals.

We realize ENDA doesn't address the issues that SB128 was intended to solve, but remember, SB128 was a piece of trash to begin with that never should have been introduced.

According to GLAAD, a LGBT media advocacy organization, ENDA will now go to the House of Representatives. Speaker of the House John Boehner has stated his opposition to the bill, but there is significant pressure to bring the bill to a vote on the House floor.

ENDA is supported by a vast majority of Americans. More than 70 percent of Americans support federal workplace protections for LGBT people, according to GLAAD. Additionally, a majority of Americans in every state in the country support employment protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

We hope Speaker Boehner will recognize this legislation has merit, and should be allowed to come up for a vote in the U.S. House.

We also hope it will be approved by our representatives in Congress. ENDA won't change the attitudes of those in South Dakota who perceive LGBT people as some sort of enemy. It may, however, give them just a bit less ammunition to use the next time they take aim at their targets.

Words to cultivate closeness

Underneath the thin veneer of our frenzied lives exists a craving for more time with the most important people to us. And no matter how hard you try, fulfillment of this deep-seated longing seems unattainable.

Day in and day out, you relentlessly chase after uncomplicated measures of quality time and have come to believe it's virtually impossible without spending lots of money.

I beg to differ. Establishing or reestablishing togetherness does not have to be as elusive as you might think.

So before you run out and attempt to buy togetherness or give up all together, consider these ways of building closeness...

1. Have some cuddle time – Snuggle each day.
2. Create atmosphere – Turn off TVs, computers and cell phones and turn on your favorite relaxing music.
3. Play – Untether yourself from the daily grind by playing tag, hide-and-seek, board games or your favorite sport.
4. Spend one-on-one time – Take one hour every week doing a favorite activity with each member of your clan or with the whole gang together.
5. Short outings – Plan mini-journeys for a change of scenery: drive to a nearby town, visit a park or go to the library.
6. Count your blessings – It never hurts to share with others the things make you truly grateful.
7. Celebrate half-birthdays – Why not do something special mid-year? Wouldn't two birthdays be better than one?
8. Share highs and lows – Daily sharing draws you closer, deepens your feelings of connectedness and gives you perspective.
9. Invent together – Cook dinner, repair broken items around the house or work on making something you need, instead of buying it.
10. Explore together – Create a list of places you've never been and start checking them off.
11. Invest in others – As a family or group of friends, do something to help others, such as sprucing up a yard, park, place of worship, garden or simply by housecleaning for an elderly neighbor.
12. Be pedestrians – Consider walking together, instead of driving to your destination. Walking is good exercise, offers quality time and will make you feel better.
13. Share a sundae – Two spoons, please.
14. Break bread together – Establish at least one day each week to share a meal around the table – no texting allowed.
15. Create spiritual moments – Acknowledging a higher power can be draw you closer.
16. Remember, pray together – Establishing prayer time can reduce emotional distress, making you feel more hopeful and connected.
17. Stay together – Don't give up so easily when times get tough. Instead, practice believing you can get through this. Reach out for help and, remember, the grass is not greener on the other side of the fence. That's just a figment of your imagination.
18. Offer undivided attention – When you cease multitasking and focus totally on what others are saying or doing, we show respect, interest and caring.
19. Be encouraging – Positive reinforcement can get people out of a rut and help them cope with all kinds of challenges.
20. Practice these nine important words to cultivate closeness –

I love you.

You are beautiful.

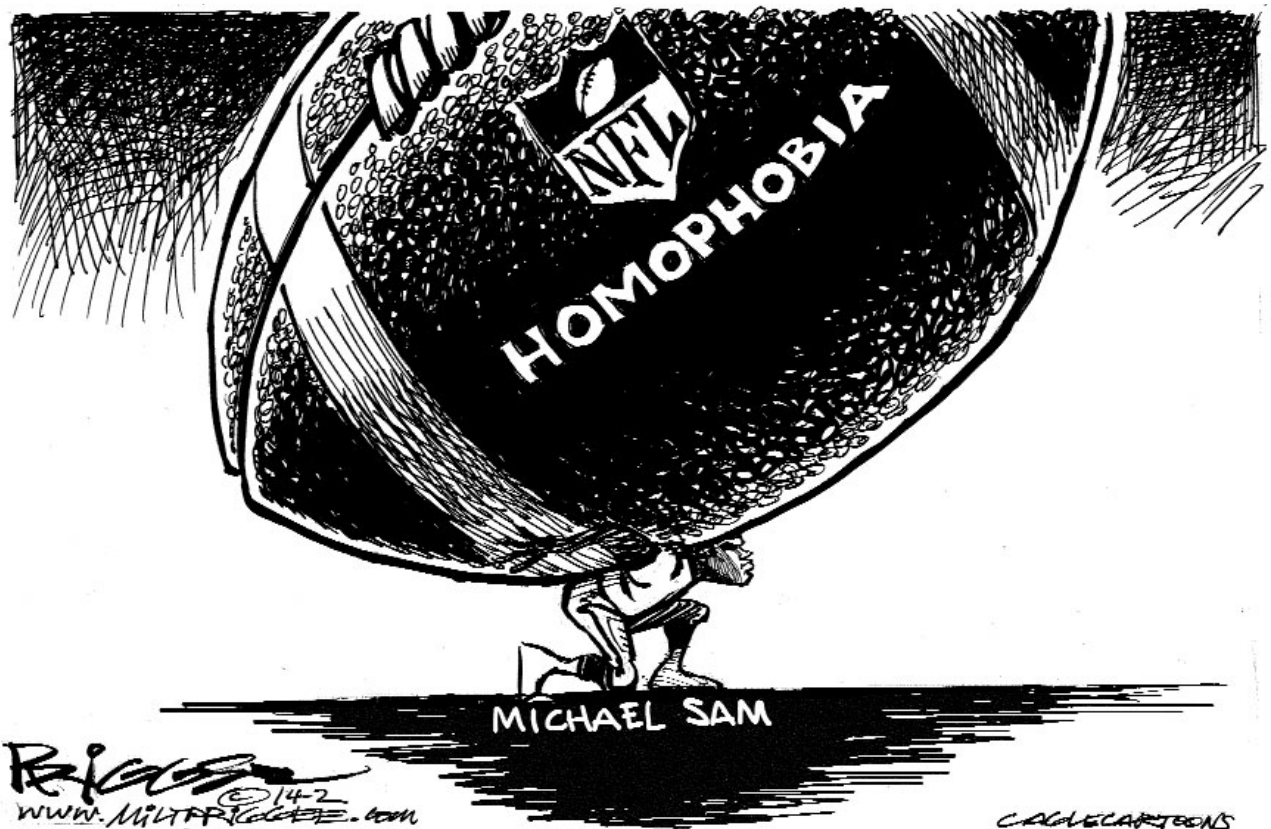
Please forgive me.

SOURCE: "Lists to Live By – For Everything that Matters Most – The Third Collection," compiled by Alice Gray, Steve Stephens and John Van Diest.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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Capitol Notebook:

2 legislators to follow on video lottery

By Bob Mercer

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – Will this be the legislative session when the backers of video lottery overcome the opponents of expanded gambling?

The South Dakota Lottery Commission and the hundreds of business involved in video lottery hope so.

A better bottom line for video lottery means three things.

The state treasury and the businesses will split more money. The players will lose more money.

Every dollar lost in the privately owned machines is split 50-50 with state government.

The 2014 legislative session lands in an election year. Gov. Dennis Daugaard is up for a second four-year term and all 105 legislative seats are up for their usual two-year terms.

There isn't any question after the past three years that the Daugaard administration wants more money from video lottery.

That can best be seen from the appointments the governor made to the commission, the hiring of a new assistant director for the lottery's central office and the regular visits that state Revenue Secretary Andy Gerlach makes to the commission meetings.

The Senate Commerce Committee voted 5-2 Thursday to endorse legislation from Sen. Dan Lederman, R-Dakota Dunes. It would increase to 15 the maximum number of video lottery

machines in an establishment.

The limit since video lottery began in the late 1980s has been 10. Lederman's bill would require that any machine above 10 had to use new software technology.

The committee last year voted 7-0 against a similar bill from Lederman seeking 14 machines. That might have been a result of other political circumstances.

The Senate had been friendly to the idea two years ago. Senators in 2012 approved a 14-machine bill from Sen. Bob Gray, R-Pierre, on a 24-6 vote. Then Gray's bill died in the House State Affairs Committee, where it was set aside 7-4.

The lottery administration is struggling – and has been for many years – with the workhorse technology of the VLC 8700 terminals that players clearly favor. The 8700s run and run, no matter that they have been declared officially obsolete.

The commission and the administration want to get more new machines with new technology into the bars and convenience stores and mini-casinos that dot South Dakota.

But as long as the 8700s keep working, the 10-machine limit constrains the modernization push.

The second piece moving to a vote in the House in the next few days would allow the Lottery Commission to increase the \$2 bet limit to as much as \$5.

The commission also would be allowed to set rules for free play,

similar to Deadwood casinos and tribal casinos. It also would remove the \$1,000 maximum award.

In this instance, the commission is trying to make video lottery more competitive with other gambling locations in South Dakota and neighboring states. Rep. Dick Werner, R-Huron, is prime sponsor of the bet-limit bill, HB 1246.

Werner previously served on the Lottery Commission. He was part of its new wave of members who wanted more aggressive approaches to making more money for state government from the lottery's array of products.

The House Commerce Committee endorsed Werner's bill 9-4 Wednesday.

Last year the Legislature gave authority for penny machines.

The Senate agreed with the South Dakota Lottery's proposal 30-5. But it wasn't the easiest sell in the House, where representatives approved it 39-28. They needed 36.

If the Werner bet-limit bill makes it through the House in the next few days, its lead sponsor in the Senate next will be Lederman.

And if the Lederman machine-numbers bill makes it through the Senate in the next few days, the lead sponsor in the House next will be Werner.

Dick Werner and Dan Lederman will be the legislators to watch on this issue this session.

Vermillion



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