



**David Lias**  
*Between The Lines*

## Keep Haiti adoption in its proper context

We applaud recent statements made by members of South Dakota's Congressional delegation, specifically Republican Sen. John Thune and Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson, regarding adoption of Haitian orphans.

Both men are careful to put the need for adopting youngsters left in need following the devastating earthquake in that country in its proper context.

"The immediate needs for food, water, health care, and shelter must be our first priority in our efforts in Haiti," said Thune. "As we look down the road to future needs and plan for the sustained recovery efforts in this region it is important that we consider the needs of orphan children. Many efforts are already underway in addressing this concern, but I believe in the coming weeks we will have an opportunity to do more for these young people and I am committed to working with my colleagues to do all we can to unite orphan children with loving families in the U.S."

Johnson (D-SD), who contacted the State Department last week to urge fast action to help save these children from the aftermath of the earthquake, congratulated Bruce and Jill Lear of Watertown as they welcomed their children to the United States. Johnson pledged to continue to work with federal agencies to help unite other adoptive families with their children in Haiti as soon as possible.

It's natural, especially for parents with a strong urge to adopt a child, to want to do something immediately to help a homeless youngster from Haiti.

Notice that neither Johnson nor Thune are advocating a mad rush to adopt Haitian children. That's sound advice that every South Dakotan who has that desire should heed.

The Joint Council on Internal Children's Services, an advocacy organization for children, gives the issue some context:

"Ideas for airlifting children into the U.S. and placing them in foster homes continue to surface. In some instances, rumors and speculation have taken on a life of their own. Additionally, many U.S. families are seeking to initiate adoptions of newly orphaned Haitian children. While both airlifts and new adoptions are based on valid concerns and come from an obviously loving heart, neither option is considered viable by any credible child welfare organization. Bringing children into the U.S. either by airlift or new adoption during a time of national emergency can open the door for fraud, abuse and trafficking. Every effort must be made in a timely fashion to locate living parents and extended family members. Many children, who might appear to be orphaned, may in fact be only temporarily separated from their family. Our efforts must be to provide the families and children of Haiti with shelter, nutrition, water and safety. Once the situation in Haiti stabilizes and timely reunification has taken place, adoption may be an option for the children who remain outside of permanent parental care."

The Council said last Friday it had received encouraging news about adoptions that had made their way through the Haitian legal system:

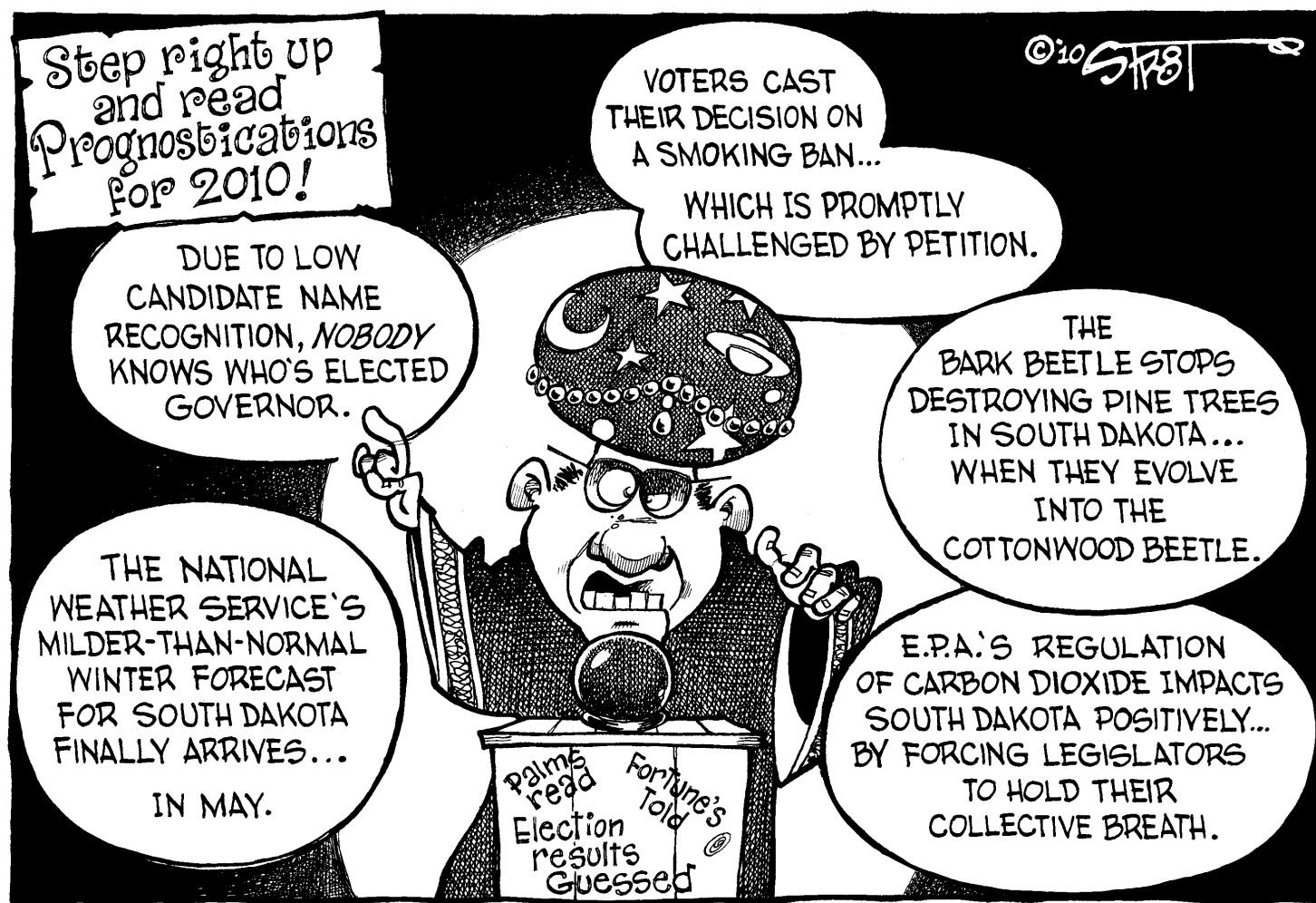
"Joint Council has confirmed that a handful of Haitian children, whose adoptions were finalized by the Haitian courts and whose adoptive parents were in Port au Prince at the time of the earthquake, have received their visa to enter the U.S. Joint Council shares in the joy and relief felt by these families and children. While the issuance of visas in these specific cases is very welcomed news, it should not encourage adoptive parents to travel to Haiti in an attempt to secure a visa for the child they are adopting. Such individual efforts may in fact be counterproductive and dangerous."

Johnson, who knows from experience the joy that families experience through adoption, also places the current situation in proper light.

"As a grandfather of two adopted children, I understand the miracle of adoption and am so happy that these children are safe in their new country waiting to be united with loving families," said Johnson, a founding member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption. "As the people of Haiti struggle to recover from the devastating earthquake, the orphans are among the most vulnerable survivors. If it is possible to clear these children for adoption with reasonable speed while protecting the integrity of families still in Haiti, there are loving families here in the U.S. waiting with welcome arms. I understand the paperwork and security dilemmas these orphanages are facing at this time, but I will continue to work with the appropriate federal agencies to help cut through red tape and keep this process moving forward."

Since the earthquake, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, in coordination with the State Department, announced a humanitarian parole policy to allow orphans from Haiti to enter the United States to ensure they receive the care they need. The policy will be applied on a case-by-case basis to those children who have been legally confirmed as orphans eligible for inter-country adoption by the Haitian government and are being adopted by U.S. Citizens or have been matched to prospective parents in the U.S.

That, we believe, is a wise policy to follow in light of the chaos that still exists in Haiti.



## Throughout history, it seems, blizzards pose problems

These past two weeks with all the bad weather I decided it was time to get out my old Reverse Time Machine to see how my friend Oog would have handled snow removal during his time. The Christmas storms left us with huge drifts, blocking our roads and made auto travel difficult.

WAL: The snowfall was so massive that we were caught unaware of the eventual problems facing us. What did you do when a blizzard happened to you?

Oog: What's a blizzard? Is it something like a buzzard? We have lots of them here.

WAL: A blizzard is a swirling snowstorm and we weren't ready for it. What did you do to prevent traffic from



**Bob Karolevitz**  
*Writer At Large*

piling up?

Oog: Well, you know, we don't have mechanical gear like you have so we just hitched up a Brontosaurus to a log and used "him" to clear a trail.

WAL: What about drive-ways?

Oog: Well, we just closed them up.

WAL: That's what we did.

We didn't learn much in the intervening centuries.

Oog: Of course hitching up a Brontosaurus is no easy chore. We should just teach our wives to do this. After all, all they have to do is keep the caves clean, cook our meals and sit or do nothing.

WAL: Thanks for the suggestion but I don't think Phyllis would go for it and besides I don't own a Brontosaurus!

Oog: Where did they put all the snow they hauled away?

WAL: They can take it back where it came from as far as I'm concerned!

But I was wondering if your children played in the snow or built snowmen like our kids do here?

Oog: No. Their fingers got too cold so they couldn't stay out too long. Besides our children don't play very much.

WAL: Well, so long for now, friend. Your suggestions weren't worth a hoot this time so I hope you will do better next time I have to use my Time Machine!

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## She wants a self-cleaning toilet and dust

I've been hearing a lot about Smart Houses lately and the older I get the more I want one of those.

A Smart House, if you haven't heard, is a digital version of your own home.

Smart Houses require a lot less work. They turn lights on and off. They regulate your thermostat. They open and close your fridge for you. They even start and stop your gas fireplace.

It sounds sci-fi, but this technology is available off the shelf — the only limitation is what's in your wallet. It's pricey stuff.

I could see retrofitting our 35-year-old home to do all these things and more.

My smart home would automatically water my plants, raise and lower my blinds and feed my three Dachshunds.

There is a courting of sorts that must occur between homeowners and their smart technology. You have to allow the smart home to get to know you well enough in order to predict your activities, sort of like dating.

### MyStory YourStory



**Paula Damon**  
*Columnist*

On the one hand, I can't imagine handing over the control of my home to a centralized, calculating, computing system with motion detectors and sensors everywhere. Would I really want to do that?

On the other hand, if I could remotely start cooking dinner at home before leaving the office, that might make it worth it.

The more I think about it, the more appealing a helpful, intelligent and friendly robotic home becomes. Brian would like it, too, since it would significantly reduce his "Honey, do" list.

While dreaming about all these bells and whistles, I came up with a wish list for my very own smart home...

I want to be able to tell my front door, "Open," and my garage door, "Close."

I'd like my washer to load my dryer, fold the clothes and put them away.

If only there were a Swiffer that could "swiff" on its own and vacuum to do the same. I want that, too.

What about a self-cleaning toilet, tub and shower? Wouldn't that be nice?

I could use windows that wash themselves (I really don't like washing windows) and a power washer to scrub my porch and siding on command. We bought a powerwasher two years ago and haven't used it on the siding yet.

How about a refrigerator with technology that tells the grocery store what I'm out of and the grocery store automatically delivers what I need to my door? That would be a good thing to have.

I want cobwebs and dust

### LETTERS

#### Avera program assists Haiti

**To the editor:**  
You can help! The Avera Haiti Project brings the current disaster so much closer to home and so much closer to our hearts.

We have learned in past disasters that the need comes in two waves. The first is the need for dollars to buy medical goods, bandages, antibiotics, medications and other emergency products. The second wave is the need for food, clothing, rebuilding and construction dollars. In past disasters, we have directed dollars through the Red Cross, Doctors without Borders and Catholic Charities. In this disaster, we also have a great partner in

Haitian Health Foundation.

We are in contact with each of these organizations and will direct dollars to the area where they will have the greatest impact. You can help! Your gift of \$25, \$50, \$100 or even \$250 will help the people in Port au Prince and the surrounding areas. Avera will match your gift dollar-for-dollar up to \$10,000.

Word today from the Haitian Health Foundation (HHF) confirms that even Jérémie (where many Avera colleagues have participated in working visits) though 100 miles from the epicenter, has sustained damage but no loss of staff and volunteers. They are still assessing the situation. The great suffering for the people there is not being able to find

out if family and friends in the hardest-hit areas are alive and well. There is no boat or road by which they can travel. In addition, vital supplies in Port au Prince waiting to be moved to Jérémie, cannot be transported at this time, nor does the HHF know if they are lost or damaged.

You can make your gift online by going to [www.Avera.org](http://www.Avera.org) and clicking on the Haiti Rescue icon. Select Haiti Rescue from the Program Area drop down box.

Please call the Avera Foundation at (605) 322.4750 with any questions.

Sincerely,  
**John T. Porter**  
President and CEO

**PLAIN TALK**

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