

VIEWPOINTS

Thune should look forward

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, a Republican, announced earlier this week that he has approved the new route through Nebraska for the Keystone XL pipeline. The pipeline will also run through western South Dakota.

Heineman's decision more or less clears the way for the U.S. State Department and President Obama to approve the presidential permit required for the project.

In this time of new beginnings – the start of a new year, the inauguration of our president, the opening of a new session of Congress – one can hope that things may change for the better.

It's already starting to feel like we may be in for a re-run of the last two years, however.

Sen. John Thune (R-SD) issued a press release quickly after the news broke that Heineman had approved the pipeline route. He clearly placed the blame for the Keystone XL delay on President Obama.

"The ball is now squarely in the president's court," said Thune. "Now that TransCanada has worked with the state of Nebraska to reroute the pipeline around the Nebraska Sandhills, the president is running out of excuses for delaying this job-creating, domestic energy-producing project. It is time for the president to decide between job creation and energy production or political expediency. I call on the president to immediately lend his support to this bipartisan project so that we can begin investing in America's energy future."

Sen. Thune, a Republican, has opposed President Obama, a Democrat, on, well, just about everything for the last four years, and we South Dakotans, to a point, see nothing wrong with that. It's part of what politics is all about.

We are still holding on to the hope that there will be less rhetoric and more action as Congress and the president settle down and get to work after this week's festivities in Washington, DC. We must admit, however, that Sen. Thune has dampened our enthusiasm just a bit. It's not so much what he said in his press release. It's what he didn't say.

He didn't talk at all about the recent history of the Keystone pipeline, and how it became so controversial in the first place.

As proposed, the pipeline would provide added capacity for the transport of oil from the oil sands of Alberta, Canada, to refineries in the United States, including Texas. Because the pipeline crosses an international border, its construction requires the approval of the State Department.

Environmentalists and most Democrats oppose the pipeline in large part because they oppose the development of the oil sands, which is a particularly pollution- and energy-intensive way to produce oil. Industry, unions and most Republicans, on the other hand, support the pipeline for economic and energy security reasons.

On its face, the decision whether to approve the pipeline looks like so many other partisan political conflicts, pitting pro-development Republicans against pro-environment Democrats.

If we simply take our senator's word for it, one may presume that President Obama was simply being a stubborn obstructionist in 2011 when he postponed a decision on Keystone until after the 2012 presidential election. The president, however, had many

good reasons to delay action on the pipeline.

What Sen. Thune seems to forget is the president did not initiate the resistance to the pipeline. It started in Nebraska. Residents of that state, including its Republican governor, wanted to make sure that the environmentally-delicate Sandhills area wasn't run over roughshod by the project. Of particular concern was the potential threat the pipeline might have posed, in its original route, to the aquifer in that region.

These certainly weren't insurmountable issues. In fact, the president was so confident that the problem would be resolved that he threw full support behind the construction of the southern half of the pipeline while Nebraskans and TransCanada worked on finding a better route for the northern portion.

However, Republicans in Congress saw the postponement of the decision as a political opportunity. In December 2011, they inserted a provision requiring the president to make a decision about the pipeline within 60 days into an unrelated piece of legislation.

This provision received full-throated support from Sen. Thune.

"In delaying the Keystone XL pipeline decision until after the election, President Obama chose his own job over hundreds of jobs that could be created in South Dakota," said Thune in a press release issued on Nov. 30, 2011. "With 14 million Americans currently unemployed and a struggling economy, the Obama Administration owes the country an answer on whether it will approve this job-creating project now, not after the next election."

Facing this deadline, President Obama rejected the pipeline, arguing that the deadline did not give the administration sufficient time to conduct the necessary environmental, safety and other reviews. Given recent high-profile pipeline leaks in the news, his argument resonated with most voters.

By attempting to fast-track the approval process, Sen. Thune and other Republicans may have scored a few political points, but they also handed a victory to the project's opponents, whose environmental case against the pipeline (as distinguished from oil sands production) was always a fairly weak one.

Sen. Thune should just be honest with us. He and other members of the GOP supported a provision that was so unreasonable – make a decision in 60 days, Mr. President, or else! – it had the potential to kill the pipeline project.

Thune should admit that he wasn't actually trying to stop the project. To the contrary, back in 2011, Sen. Thune and other members of the GOP preferred that a Republican president, namely Mitt Romney, would approve it in 2013.

Mr. Romney made enough blunders on his own to lose the 2012 presidential election. Friends like Sen. Thune weren't much help. Their mishandling of the Keystone pipeline issue wound up being more of a hindrance than a help to Romney's efforts.

So, it's not surprising to hear the senator this week once again try to convey the idea that the delay in pipeline construction in Nebraska is all the fault of the president.

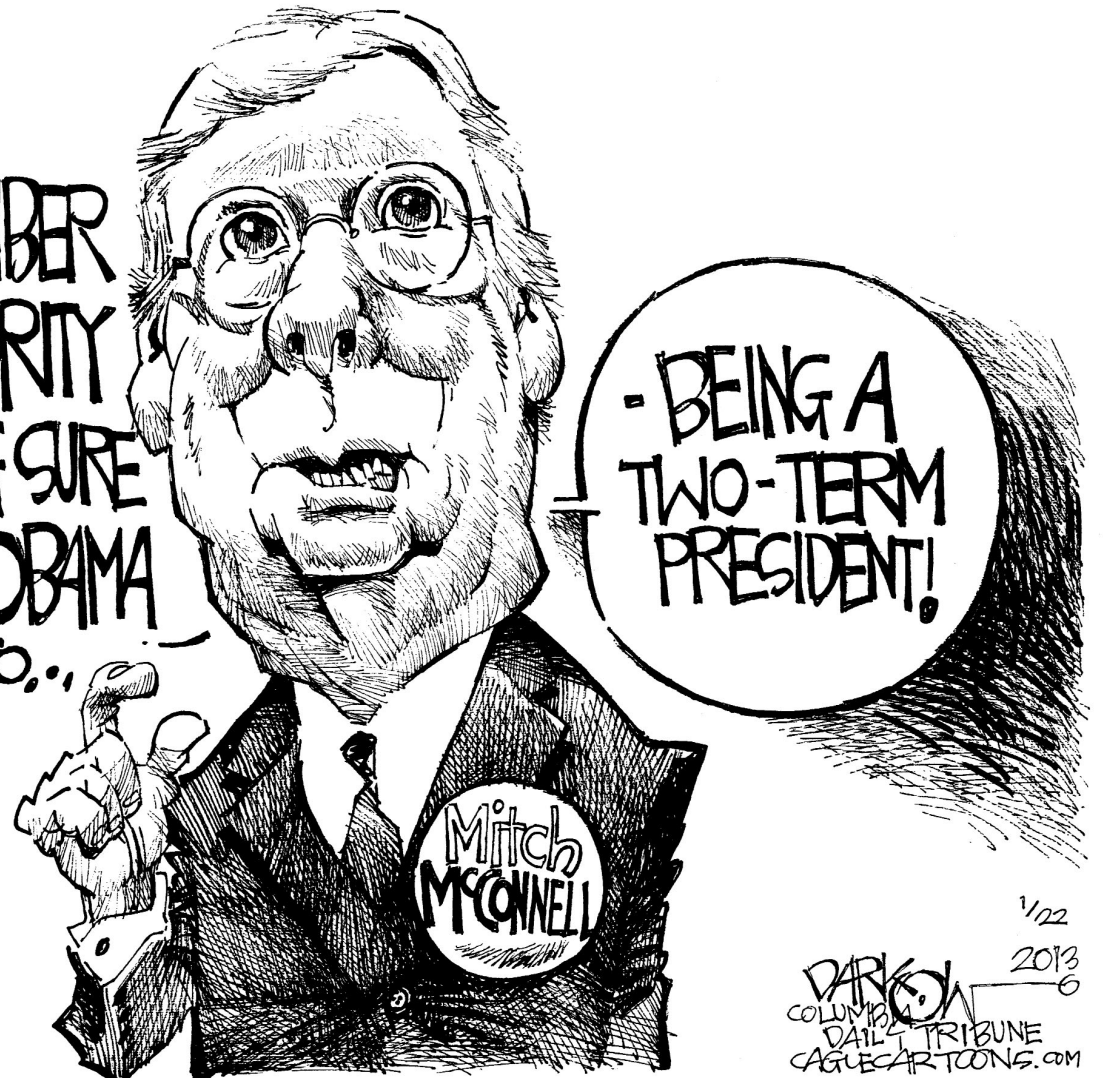
Midwesterners know better than that. We urge the senator to forget about the past – we all make mistakes – and look ahead to ways he can work with our president to accomplish positive things for our state and nation.

BETWEEN THE LINES



DAVID LIAS
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MY NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IS MAKING SURE PRESIDENT OBAMA IS LIMITED TO...



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Sentenced to life without parole

"The reader's ear must adjust down from loud life to the subtle... sounds of the written word. [For] an ordinary reader... it will take half an hour to pick up the writing's modulations, its ups and downs and louds and softs." – Annie Dillard, "The Writing Life"

You would think that seasoned writers would have it made, especially when deadlines loom and the pressure is on. Although, rarely is that ever the case.

The anatomy of writing requires a rare depth of thought and sensitivity – an exploration of rhythm, cadence and energy of what breathes and does not breathe, what is animate and inanimate, what is tangible and intangible.

Many of us consider our work as a birthing of sorts. Others say drafting stories compares to sculpting or puzzle making. There is no single metaphor for writers and their work but an endless storehouse of comparisons.

Writers are both parade marshals and drummers. We are ring leaders and the high-wire act. Our rambling words sometimes meander and then finally convene in stories about everything and nothing: Mother's mink collar, Dad's sailor hat, the playground teeter-totter, a tin spice can, a clothesline flapping and flailing in the wind, black licorice, the back porch steps, on and on it goes.

As we cobble our accounts, we tiptoe with exuberant trepidation down long winding corridors of our subject matter. Examining that which is meaningful, fearful or trivial in life, we never are quite sure where we'll end up.

Every last glance and grimace matters.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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We sip or sometimes guzzle the atmosphere, texture and the cadence of people, places and things.

We are capable of drawing fire in the quietude of noisy waiting. In the silent restlessness of our charge, we resurrect once lived moments of finding and nearly losing, living and almost dying, making and narrowly missing, running and barely crawling.

As purveyors of the language, we are accused of being clairvoyant – hearing and seeing what others do not. With libertarian note taking and shared password, we grant full access to all, withholding nothing.

We are both defendants and witnesses cavalierly preparing our testimonies for trial. There's no escaping it. Pleading guilty of all chargers, we are sentenced to a writer's life without parole.

Those of us who write for a living can be compared to miners angling with axes of hope and picks of resolve, excavating without end, uncovering some answers and even more questions. Sifting through the rubble of our work, we search endlessly for tiny nuggets that could become stories.

Writers are as ministers, sanctioned to arrange words as a holy grail, offering absolution. We are posterity librarians, indexing joys, cataloging hurts, checking out passages and archiving milestones.

In our contemplative construction of words, we are eternally in pursuit, chasing

down and trying to capture reality. Whether in dusty attics or moth-eaten memories, we often find ourselves authenticating the distance from the fertile foreground of youth to the vanishing point.

Some have compared writers to healers, practicing medicine without a license, administering remedies as cures for their readers and, yes, for themselves.

No matter the metaphor, we are commissioned without remorse to embrace the impenetrable sensuality of life itself: the ebb and flow of the hellish and the heavenly, the stink of chaos, with all of its nasty aftermath and maybe even the sweet fragrance of what's to come.

Although, occasionally, we must journey through stories with borrowed bravery, as our streets are not paved with gold but sometimes are rocky with steep terrains and deep crevices.

Even so, you will not hear a writer say, "Don't go there." We do not wince while greeting the deep, wide unknown. Instead, we give it voice, all the while whispering, "Come, see."

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A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her writing has won first-place in competitions of the National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women. In the 2009, 2010 and 2011 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contests, her columns have earned eight first-place awards. To contact Paula, email boscodamon.paula@gmail.com, follow her blog at my-story-your-story.blogspot.com and find her on Facebook.

Guest Commentary:

Bill bolsters ability to cover HS sports

By David Bordewyk

South Dakota Newspaper Association

High school football games under Friday night lights and basketball gyms jam-packed with fans are as much a part of South Dakota as coffee-shop talk about the weather and crops. High school sports and other interscholastic activities such as drama and music events fuel intense civic pride in our communities and schools.

The feats and accomplishments of students on the field of competition or the performance stage are celebrated by an entire community of family, friends and school fans.

The hometown newspaper is there as well, chronicling the games and school activities. Covering local school sports and school activities such as plays and concerts are a big part of what goes into the local newspaper. The community expects it and a good newspaper meets that expectation.

Technology today has allowed newspapers to expand

the tools they use to cover high school sports and events.

Newspapers are going beyond the traditional stories and photos printed in the paper to innovations such as broadcasting football or basketball games over the internet and updating readers through social media tools. Readers have come to expect that type of expanded coverage and newspapers of all sizes in South Dakota are delivering on those expectations.

All good, right? Yes, except that some schools are now putting restrictions and limitations on how the local news media can cover their school sporting events and activities.

In Pierre, an exclusive contract between the school and a local radio station prohibits a competing local radio station or the local newspaper from broadcasting Pierre school athletic events. However, the restrictions don't apply to any out-of-town news media outlets.

In Sioux Falls, the public

school district sought to specifically prohibit the local newspaper from broadcasting high school football and basketball games on the internet.

Elsewhere, newspaper photographers are being unreasonably restricted on how they can cover high school competitions. Reporters are limited on how they can use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to report live from a high school game.

Schools offer a variety of reasons for these restrictions. Mostly, it boils down to money. Schools looking to make additional revenue from the performances of students on the field by placing restrictions on how the local news media may cover these events.

Incredible as it may sound, there is a real trend toward more monetization of high school sports.

That is why we are working for passage of a bill in this legislative session that would prohibit schools from unreasonably restricting the

ability of local news media to do their job. Senate Bill 119 would not prohibit schools from generating revenue through certain contracts with media, so long as those contracts do not restrict other media from being able to do their job.

SB119 is not about creating any special or new privilege for news media in South Dakota. It only tries to ensure the news media in South Dakota can do what they have always done when it comes to reporting about high school sports and activities.

Fans and supporters of high school sports and activities expect the local news media to be there, creating a chronology and scrapbook of memories and achievements through their stories, photos and other media.

Urge your legislators to support Senate Bill 119. Let's make sure the hometown news media can continue to do their job and live up to the expectations of their readers and viewers. Nothing more, nothing less.

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