

# VIEWPOINTS

## Should I Stay Or Should I Go

BY PAULA DAMON

Something wasn't right. Hail and tree branches pelting the roof abruptly woke me at 3 a.m. Rising to look out the window, I saw everything blowing sideways. Trees, bushes, wind chimes, garden flags, lawn furniture.

It was one of those weather events when you half-expected to see pigs fly. I felt like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. Not a good sign.

Strangely, the evening weather forecast didn't mention any inclement weather. This one must have slipped under the radar. Or was it that new meteorologist right out of college?

As the roaring intensified, so did my anxiety over what looked and sounded like straight line winds or worse a tornado.

Quickly gathering our three Dachshunds, I carried them to safety in the basement, where we huddled listening to the storm grow louder and louder.

Then, I remembered. My husband, Brian, was still upstairs fast asleep, snoring away.

What was I to do? Should I stay in the basement or risk going back upstairs to convince him to take cover? Or just let him sleep through it?

When the kids were little, they always heeded my warnings. But not my husband. Nope, he's a whole other story.

Sympathizing with his school teachers, who probably sent home notes to his mother "Does not follow instructions," I began contemplating what qualities make a good husband.

A good husband listens carefully to his wife, is responsive to her instructions and does what she says.

Now, Brian has many of these qualities, except for the last three.

Needless to say, I was conflicted. What kind of wife would leave her hubby in the lurch?

Then I remembered how grumpy he gets when I wake him before daylight. I decided maybe it was best not to rouse him – at least until the roof blows off. That's when I'd probably holler, "Get down here right now!"

Hopefully, he'd hear me. As the minutes ticked by, guilt set in big time. I felt like a heel, not protecting my second half the way I was guarding my three helpless little doggies.

Reminded me of the old lady I once visited in the hospital, who confessed she grieved more over the loss of her loyal shiatsu, "Snickers," than she did when her husband passed.

"It wasn't about love," she clarified, "it was just that my husband hardly ever listened to me and Snickers hung on every word I said."

Sadly, I sort of could relate. If something happened to Brian, how would I explain it?

What would I tell the kids? That I suffered a momentary lapse in judgement? That I didn't have the energy? That the dogs needed me more?

Oh, it was no use. I was trying to dig out of a hole, which only made things worse.

In a quandary, I couldn't stop thinking about that husband of mine, now going on 43 years. He is such a handful when he's wide awake, let alone when he's half-asleep.

At that hour of the morning, I just didn't have it in me to spar over storm safety.

Suppose that would hold up in a court of law? Probably not.

Can I be honest with you? He's not really hard of hearing but more like hard of listening.

When the gas gauge is on empty, I say sometimes "empty" really means "empty," but he says it means we can go another 20 miles.

When we're lost while traveling, I tell him it's okay to ask for directions, but he acts like he didn't hear me.

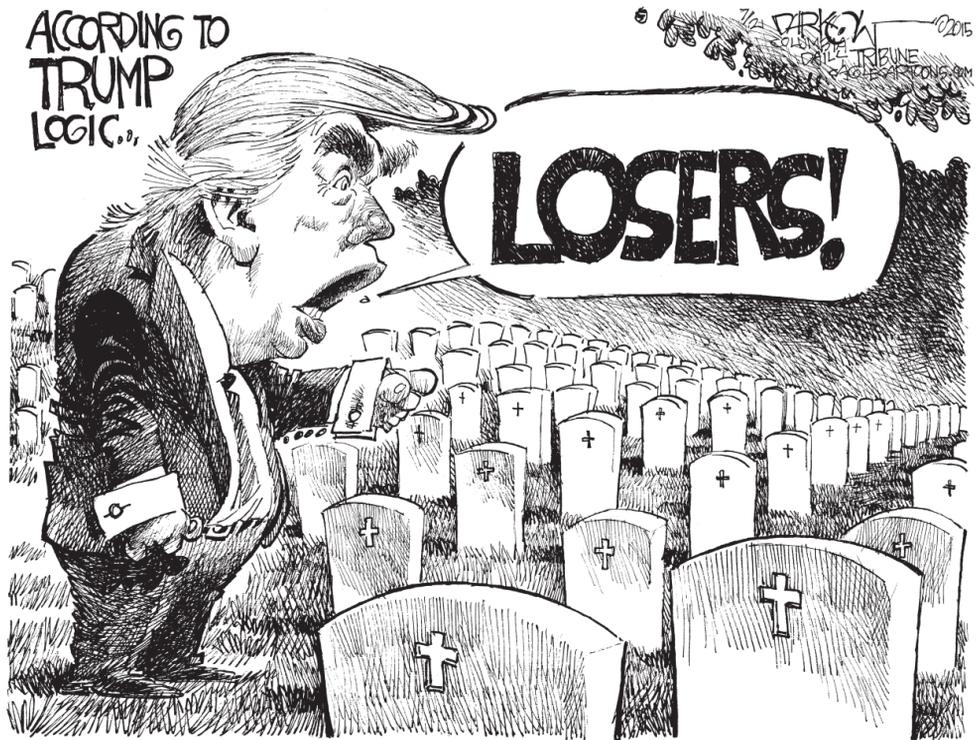
I've told him that listening is not just for the seventh inning stretch or half-time, it's for all the time, but that doesn't seem to faze him.

Finally, I convinced myself he's a grown man. God created Brian exactly like rest of us – with free will.

If he really wanted to seek safety, he would have done so by now – even though he was fast asleep.

Right? Yeah, right, when pigs fly.

PAULA DAMON



## Pick Your Adjective For The '16 Ballot – But Skip Past Normal

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – Direct democracy is budding again in South Dakota. Voters face three measures on the 2016 statewide ballot. But there could be 10 or more.

The decline of Democrats and dominance by Republicans in legislative elections are fueling some of this.

But four potential measures come straight from people who believe in marijuana.

One petition would legalize medical marijuana. Another would de-criminalize possession of one ounce or less of marijuana.

Two related petitions seek new prohibitions against tobacco and alcohol. Tobacco and alcohol would become illegal like marijuana is.

The circulators are asking voters for consistent treatment.

All four would seem to have a fair chance to make the ballot. It seems unlikely any has a fair chance of victory, based on past election results in South Dakota.

Then there is the fight between those who support "fair" lending and those who support "responsible" lending.

The two main committees in this fight use those two adjectives to distinguish their sides.

The "responsible" group wants to cap payday and title loans at an annual maximum of 36 percent interest and fees.

The "fair" group wants to continue without a limit because they deal with high-risk customers.

Together those two adjectives prompt a head-scratching question: What is fair or responsible about even 36 percent interest and fees?

Four measures deal with politics. Two laws passed by largely Republicans in the 2015 legislative session have already been referred to the 2016 ballot.

One would create a youth minimum wage of \$7.50 per hour for employees younger than age 18. The current minimum wage is \$8.50 per hour.

The other would make many changes to South Dakota's elections laws that would curtail some practices commonly used by Democrats and would make matters more difficult for other political parties.

The question on each is whether voters want the law to go into effect.

There are two constitutional amendments that people dissatisfied with some of the current legislative processes want to present to voters.

One would broaden the state constitution to allow any law to be referred to a statewide vote, and also would require two-thirds majorities in both chambers

of the Legislature to overturn an initiative or referendum.

The other would create in the constitution a special commission to draw the boundary lines for legislative districts, rather than the Legislature continuing to do it.

The commission would have three Republicans, three Democrats and three registered voters who aren't from either of those two political parties.

A third proposal for a constitutional amendment dealing with technical institutes already is set for the ballot. It isn't partisan at all.

The Legislature wants voters to clarify that members of state Board of Regents, who govern the state universities, aren't responsible for the tech schools.

The amendment might need some technical adjustment by the Legislature in the 2016 session. How that would occur isn't clear.

This list is what we know now. Other measures are still being conceived.

Meanwhile, with State Fair six weeks away, there aren't announced Democratic challengers to Republican incumbents John Thune for U.S. Senate and Kristi Noem for U.S. House.

Zany? Indeed.

## Prairie Doc On Call: DM And Indians

BY RICHARD P. HOLM MD

In 1735, John Wesley visited Savannah in the Province of Georgia in the American Colonies, and gave an account of the Native Americans as the perfect example of health. He described this as mostly due to their lean diet and their rigorous physical lifestyle. It is now nearing 300 years later and people of all races could learn from the habits of the early American Indians.

What has happened since has deeply affected not only the American Indian but also the white and multi-ethnic settlers of this country. As advancements in technology has taken away the need for hard daily work to survive, the American public has become lazy, letting the wheels and motors do the walking. Especially over the last 25

years, we have become a country of game-boy, couch-potato, TV watchers, who drive to school and work, always looking for an easier way.

At the same time diets have changed, with the availability of inexpensive oil, flour, syrup and cheese. This made fry-bread, pizza, donuts, cheesy potatoes, and sugary drinks the dietary staple, rather than the lean meat, fruits, vegetables, roots, fungi, and legumes, which were the traditional American Indian and Native Alaskan diet.

With all these too-easy and greasy-sugary ways, comes an epidemic of obesity, with two out of three Americans overweight, and half of these frankly obese. No surprise an epidemic of diabetes has followed. Right now 12 million Americans know they

have diabetes, and about five million more have it but don't know it. Paradoxically, obesity and type II Diabetes is about twice as bad in the American Indian population who, in the 1700s, were looked upon as the epitome of health.

So how can we change this trend in not only the American Indian population but in all the rest of those European, Middle Eastern, Asian, African, Mexican and South American immigrant populations that make up this admixture we call America?

It certainly will not come from developing and prescribing more medicine. One study from Bosnia-Herzegovina showed educating children and parents about diabetes made the biggest difference. This spreading of education must come not only from economists, politicians,

educators, and medical care providers, but especially from local community leaders and elders working together to bring on a leaner diet and more rigorous physical lifestyle.

We all could learn from the habits of the early American Indians.

To hear more from Dr. Holm, watch his TV show, *On Call with the Prairie Doc*, every Thursday at 7pm CT on South Dakota Public Broadcasting and his website, [www.PrairieDoc.org](http://www.PrairieDoc.org). *On Call with the Prairie Doc* is produced by the Healing Words Foundation in association with the South Dakota State University journalism department and airs Thursdays on South Dakota Public Broadcasting Television at 7 p.m. Central, 6 p.m. Mountain, and streams live at [www.PrairieDoc.org](http://www.PrairieDoc.org).

### LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

The *Plain Talk* encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the *Plain Talk* will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or

entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to [shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net](mailto:shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net).

## Being Good Stewards Of Taxpayer Dollars

BY GOV. DENNIS DAUGAARD

Throughout my time serving as governor, good stewardship of taxpayer dollars has been my goal. Two pieces of recent news can assure South Dakotans that state government is handling their money responsibly.

On June 30, we closed the fiscal year with a budget surplus. Our ongoing revenues came in higher than projected and our expenses came in lower than budgeted. Revenue growth for the completed 2015 fiscal year exceeded estimates adopted by the Legislature last March by \$10 million, or 0.71 percent; and state agencies demonstrated fiscal restraint, spending \$11.5 million less than appropriated, or 0.84 percent.

Each year when we make budget projections, we try to make estimates that

are as accurate as possible. There's no way to project the exact numbers, so it's better to err on the side of a surplus not a deficit. Through the Bureau of Finance and Management's diligence, we were pretty close this year. Our projections were 99 percent accurate.

The good news of the surplus follows on the heels of a recently released report from the Mercatus Center in which South Dakota was ranked third in the nation for fiscal condition. The study is based on the comprehensive annual financial reports from each state for fiscal year 2013. The study compares states by their abilities to pay short-term bills, meet long-term spending obligations and increase spending. The study also takes budget and trust fund solvency into account.

In the study, we ranked just behind Alaska and North Dakota – and that's

something to be proud of. While Alaska and North Dakota derive a large percentage of their revenues from oil severance taxes, we must rely on other revenues more closely tied to economic activity.

When I took office, balancing the budget was my number one priority. Now, for four years in a row, we have maintained structural balance in our budget and we've done so without using one-time revenues or rainy day funds.

In a time when many other states are adopting rosy projections and employing budget gimmicks to justify overspending, South Dakota is acting responsibly. We don't spend money we don't have, we keep our budget structurally balanced and we seize opportunities to spend in the short-term where it can lead to savings. These practices reflect the responsible values of South Dakota citizens.