

Thune's fence is a bad idea

Earlier this week, Sen. John Thune expressed disappointment after the Senate rejected an amendment that he hoped would be added to the immigration reform bill that is currently being considered in that chamber of Congress.

Rejection of Thune's amendment is a good thing. It's just, pure and simple, a bad idea.

Thune's measure calls for the construction of a fence of somewhat mammoth proportions to evidently try to keep people from illegally entering the United States from Mexico.

Thune's press release describes it as "reinforced, double-layer fencing." The senator's amendment calls for construction of approximately 350 miles of this fencing, which was required by the immigration bill passed in 1996, as a trigger prior to Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status being granted, with the remaining 350 miles being required before RPIs could apply for green cards.

An immigration reform bill introduced by eight senators last April would grant RPI status to law-abiding non-citizens who have lived in the U.S. since December 31, 2011.

In exchange for registering and paying a \$500 fee, they could work for any employer and travel outside of the country. Registered provisional immigrant status would last six years and could be renewed. After 10 years, non-citizens could adjust their status to "lawful permanent resident."

In other words, the April legislation provides a pathway to citizenship to people who are living in the United States illegally. Opponents of the proposal have said that the estimated 11 million non-citizens living in the U.S. illegally should be required to return to their home countries.

I think it's safe to assume, through his actions, that Thune is an opponent to the reform legislation.

Here's what gives validity to that assumption:

The need for the fence is questionable. Thune states in his press release "the Senate missed this important opportunity to communicate to the American people that we are serious about securing our border and enforcing the laws that we pass." He adds "less than 40 miles of the 700 miles of reinforced, double-layer fencing required by the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 have been constructed to date." What he doesn't mention is things have changed a great deal since 1996. The line between Mexico and the U.S. is now more secure than it's been in decades.

In 2007, more than 850,000 people were caught trying to illegally cross the nearly 2,000-mile-long southern border from Mexico that year, and the number of Mexican immigrants living in the country illegally was at a 40-year peak, according to the Pew Hispanic Center. In 2012 nearly 357,000 people were apprehended trying to sneak in from Mexico. Why fewer than in 2007? Because not as many people are attempting the crossing. Last year Pew reported that for the first time in 40 years, about the same number of Mexican migrants (legal and illegal) returned

BETWEEN THE LINES



DAVID LIAS
david.lias@plaintalk.net

home as arrived, bringing net migration to zero.

Let's say Sen. Thune's idea somehow magically works, and it stops all illegal immigrants from coming in. What are we going to do with the ones already here? It's not like they disappear as soon as they step over the border: they work, they send their children to school, they have some kind of permanent address, they use health care. That means that it is possible to find them and force them to file for citizenship, pay taxes and fines, etc. — in short, all the things that regular citizens do. Registered Provisional Immigrant status is a step in that direction. Thune wants at least half of the fence constructed before RPI status is triggered. It's a condition that offers no solution to the illegal immigration problem existing inside U.S. borders.

Amnesty for the 11 million undocumented workers living in the U.S. is good for the economy. Using economic projections from the Congressional Budget Office, Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, director of the North American Integration and Development Center at the University of California at Los Angeles, calculates that a comprehensive immigration plan this year that includes a way for undocumented workers to gain legal status would increase tax revenue by \$4.5 billion or more over three years, and increase gross domestic product by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years.

"Unfortunately, each time Congress has tried to fix our immigration system, promises to secure our border are never upheld," said Thune in his press release. The senator is stretching things a bit.

President Barack Obama has poured money and resources into border security. In his first term, he spent \$73 billion on immigration enforcement. That's more than the budgets of all other federal law enforcement agencies—the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Secret Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Marshals Service—combined, according to the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan research group. (Bush spent \$37.4 billion on immigration enforcement in his first term and \$60 billion in his second.)

If my math is correct, a 700 mile fence with a \$7 billion price tag costs \$10 million per mile. Currently, the Lewis & Clark Water System, which has been a dream for planners in our neck of the woods for decades, is only partially complete. It is unable to move forward because of a lagging commitment on the federal level. The estimated cost for completing the water project construction is roughly \$202 million. Or, about 20 miles of fence.

Where would you rather see the money spent?

To reiterate: Rejection of Thune's amendment is a good thing. It's just, pure and simple, a bad idea.



She didn't mull over what was

On a recent trip to the Nebraska National Forest, in the northwest part of the state, I saw first-hand the devastation of the West Ash Fire, which late last summer destroyed more than 58,000 acres of the forest.

In doing so, the fire affected 80 percent of Chadron State Park. Ten miles south of the City of Chadron, NE, on Highway 385, the 1,000-acre park, Nebraska's oldest, has been my family's summer vacation spot for the last 24 years.

After reading news reports of the fire, I tried to imagine what it was like to helplessly stand by and watch such destruction as it was happening. What follows are my reflections of what I saw as I hiked the high plains, hills and dales of the park.

Brandishing, fire cleansed as she dogged ahead, clearing brush and bramble in her way.

Wiped out all of the messes Mother Nature had carelessly left behind. A trail of debris, tired branches, wind-peeled bark, scraggy moss, fire swept it all out of here.

Now, there's very little to show for the heartache and joy of growing and maintaining this place, as fire, the grand housekeeper, scoured these forest floors. Only black skeletons of trees and rocks remain.

Fire quieted the sky, too, leaving smoldering stillness in her wake.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



PAULA DAMON
paula.damon@iw.net

destruction business with imperious nobility, handed down from long stuffy lineage, as she strutted about with an air of ought-ness.

Incredulously gaining ground, she muscled madly through narrow ravines, boring wide open once lush caverns where Ponderosa pines and poplars towered proudly.

Fire — a currency that exchanged suppleness for grime.

Traipsing over ancient hills, parading like a grand marshal, on sod tables, she clamored for more.

Hungry, ever pressing forward, leaning on wind to carry her forth, she slumbered not. Racing to the finish, she was a murderous

Like a scorned lover, fire took it all with her. First clutching, and then strangling, as she disingenuously hissed over lush prairie grasses, snuffed out yucca, wasted hiding places and hollows, undressed forest walls, exposed deciduous canopies, creating a barren wasteland.

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

Madly crackling and whirling unsympathetically, fire went about her

pistol turning woodlands gritty. As a strong front arrowed her sideways, fire powerfully hurled her deadly aim, levying soot against succulence.

Her subtle wail encircled entanglements of creeping vines and molting cocoons. Her terrible beauty first strolled along deceptively, and then stamped out intentionally.

Staring hard ahead, not glancing back, she let loose her sizzling hot fury. While birthing little chargers, she created a dark veil — an unholy shroud for us mourners to gawk through afterward in disbelief.

Fire split quiet pastoral beauty in two, sprayed flames with her angry tongue, ever on the lookout to devour more.

She didn't mull over what was, nor boast about what will be, but rather rushed to annihilate what is, fueled by her sadistic, unquenchable thirst.

Fire emptied her war chest, devouring our legendary playground in large nourishing gulps. Swallowing whole our fancifully pine perfumed retreat, rendering it disappeared.

Old wilderness is no more. Fire took it tree after tree. Only charred tracks remain as footprints where she shimmied skyward and snaked across meadows, spraying her dastardly venom, engulfing gulches, laying bare buttes, backbones and brooks.

Fire churned, ever in a hurry to stomp on our old salvation route, now a graveyard.

Fire took care of it.

A welcome change is coming your way

By Gary Wood
Publisher

The Webster definition of the word "change" is "to undergo transformation, transition, or substitution". But it seems for too many people the word change is a four-letter word. (It looks like six letters to me, but who's counting?)

Change has become a constant part of life and business nowadays. We see changes in how our government operates (that's another story for another day) and change in how business operates and the effect it has on us. As we have seen over the years, many of the businesses that are not willing

to undergo change, transition or even a complete transformation are those that find themselves becoming obsolete or not being able to compete in today's marketplace.

As you will see this coming Friday, June 28, we are once again seeing a change in how we present the printed version of the Plain Talk newspaper to our readers and advertisers alike. While the length of our printed page will remain the same the width will change as it becomes a bit narrower. The reason for this change is to provide both our readers and advertisers with a newspaper that is much more appealing to the eye. With a change in production

capabilities, we now have the potential to have full color on every page and, as you will see in the June 28 newspaper we have color everywhere. In fact, please look at it closely as there will be full-color on every page. Your Plain Talk will be presented to you with the same great coverage of local news and sports from this great community and the surrounding area that we are so privileged to serve.

Please look at the news and sports content (the best local stories you'll find of Vermillion and the surrounding communities we serve), the full-color photos, the full-color ads and all that

is now possible. I think you'll find this to be a very welcome change to the Plain Talk, your newspaper, and help to enrich your experience with us. We hope you enjoy the change as much as we've enjoyed creating the opportunity to better serve you — our readers and advertisers. As we continue to embrace change in our business, we hope you'll embrace it with us.

I would like to personally thank each one of you for reading and welcome your comments, in this ongoing and ever changing experiment we call the newspaper business.

LETTER TO THE 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 david.lias@plaintalk.net.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

Do you believe the Patriot Act of 2001, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush to combat terrorism, should be suspended or repealed?

It should be repealed 22
It should be kept 16
It should be suspended temporarily 9

Total Votes 47

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.

Vermillion

Since 1884 • Official County, City and School District Newspaper

201 W. Cherry, Vermillion, SD 57069 • Publication No. USPS 657-720

Publisher: Gary Wood • Editor: David Lias



Published weekly by YANKTON MEDIA, Inc. • Periodicals postage paid at Vermillion, SD 57069. Subscription rates for the Plain Talk by mail are \$27.56 a year in the city of Vermillion. Subscriptions in Clay, Turner, Union and Yankton counties are \$41.34 per year. Elsewhere in South Dakota, subscriptions are \$44.52, and out-of-state subscriptions are \$42. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Plain Talk, 201 West Cherry Street, Vermillion, SD 57069.

Vermillion Plain Talk Staff
News Staff: Travis Gulbrandson. **Advertising Director:** Michele Schievelbein. **Advertising Sales Rep:** Carol Hohenhaner. **Classified Sales:** Brett Beyeler. **Composing Staff:** Kathy Larson, Rob Buckingham, Mathew Wienbar & Sally Whiting. **Reception Office Manager:** Sarah Hough. **Distribution & Circulation Manager:** David Jeffcoat.