

VIEWPOINTS

Is it a good day or a bad day?

Some big decisions were made Wednesday in the halls of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Whether it was a good day or a bad day depends a whole lot on your worldview, I guess. And ultimately, whether you truly believe Wednesday's decisions will somehow positively or negatively affect your life.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down the Defense of Marriage Act and declined to reinstate California's Proposition 8. As a result, gay marriage will be legal in America's most populous state, and gay couples legally married in their states will enjoy federal benefits such as joint tax filing and inheritance rights.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley issued a press release soon after the ruling to assure fellow South Dakotans that we really shouldn't notice much of a change here in the Rushmore State.

"After today's U.S. Supreme Court decisions, South Dakota constitution and legislative enactments defining marriage to be between a man and a woman remain in effect as a matter of law," said Jackley.

In the release, he notes that we South Dakotans set that definition ourselves back in 2006. You could have knocked me over with a feather with that news. I had completely forgotten that we voters approved a constitutional amendment, with 172,242 voting for and 160,173 voting against, that makes marriage valid only between a man and a woman.

Why, exactly, did we do that? I can't remember why the issue was even brought to a vote. Can you?

It's sort of a head scratcher today, isn't it? Especially in 2013, which has been an epic year of progress for gay-marriage advocates. Same-sex marriage is now legal in 13 states, more than double the number from just a year ago.

Thirty percent of Americans now live in a state where gay couples can legally marry, and nearly half live in a state that recognizes gay relationships in some form, be it marriage or civil union. Two of those 13 states are our neighbors, Iowa and Minnesota.

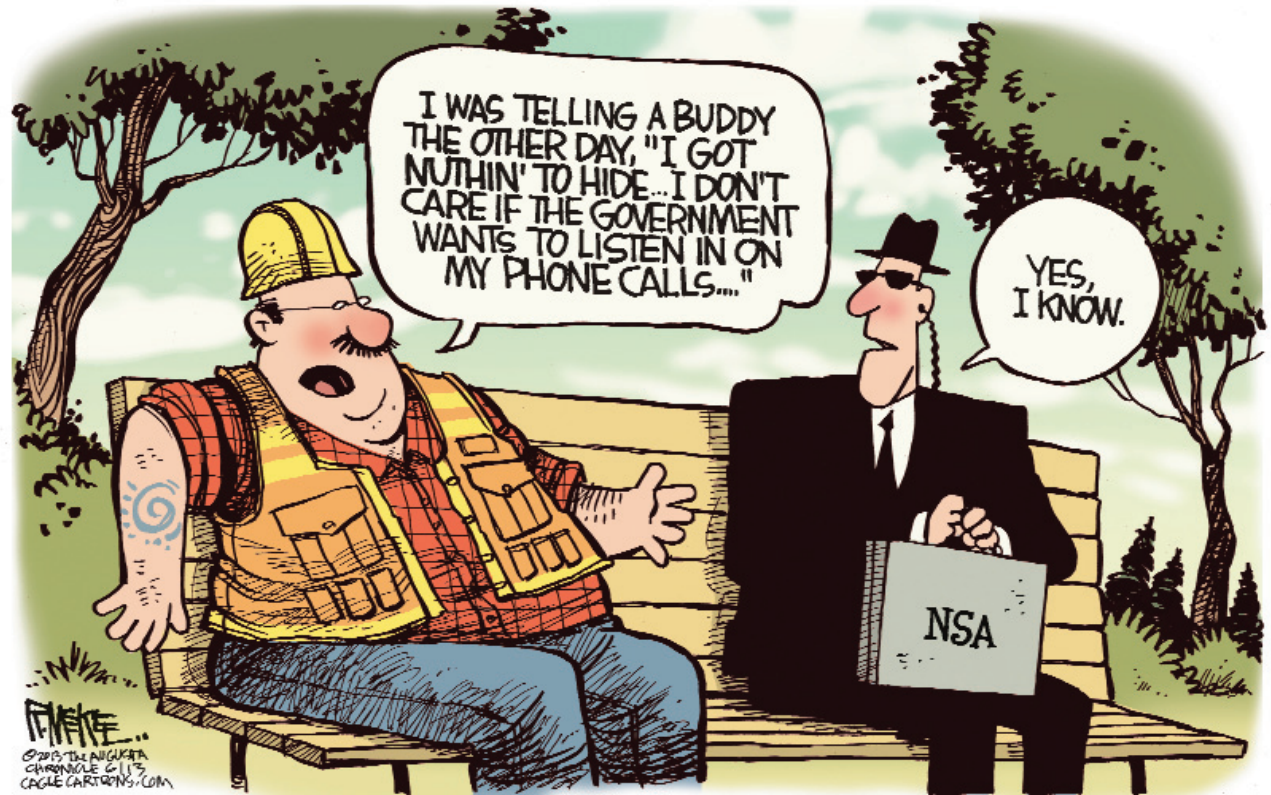
Who knows? Maybe someday we'll be asked to vote on whether to repeal that 2006 Constitutional amendment. Putting this issue on a ballot again and allowing South Dakota voters to reflect on what marriage means to them would be a fine exercise.

Today's ruling points out that each state is responsible for defining and regulating marriage. Do South Dakotans still feel the same about marriage as they did in 2006? It would be interesting to find out someday.

BETWEEN THE LINES



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Black Hills Overlook straddles views

Only an hour or two before dusk, I am standing at the vortex of these canyons. Stretching beyond – carpets emerald seamlessly roll over dozens of grassy knolls scattered about.

A sharp cool wind cuts across my cheeks, reminding me of its invisible might while sturdy Ponderosa pines defiantly sway in contrastingly slow stillness.

What do I want so badly that I am here on this narrow rocky ledge on the Black Hills Lookout in the Nebraska National Forest?

A favored spot, pointing north, the lookout straddles views to the east and west. Leading me here, a narrow well-trodden stony path, lightly tromped on for a half-century or more by hundreds, maybe thousands, of seeking souls, like me, who dared to venture down that frequently blown out gravelly lane behind me, the one splitting tree groves and pastures, girded with ghosts of the past.

My feet are positioned only inches from sharp drop-offs where entanglements of bramble, brush and branches wait.

Squinting at dulling sunlight, I strain to see beyond the vanishing point.

Forming a visor over my eyes with my cupped palms, I behold clouds touching down far in the distance where massively high – big, big sky reverences earth and genuflecting before open fields, which nod in kind and carry on

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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unbridled beauty – wild flowers dancing before my tired bones, rocky mounds stoic and strong about my limp arms, a nagging cold front nipping at my neck.

I reach out as to a tablemate, yearning for nature's company, whose promise will leave me full to overflowing.

Even while sun lowers her booming rays into unblemished darkness, I stay, courageously facing what's to come.

Kneeling at the altar of these canyons, my fingertips numbing yet fluent in such grace this place pours on me, in me and through me, I feel a band of triumphant marching.

My head is airy, my soul purified, my mind cleared. An understudy of the power, precision and polarity of nature,

their way to nightfall.

I wonder to myself with chilly May air tapping methodically on my chest and forearms and thighs – am I longing for with earnest that which I cannot see, yet telegraphs to my heart what tomorrow may hold?

Such dancing before my tired bones, rocky mounds stoic and strong about my limp arms, a nagging cold front nipping at my neck.

I reach out as to a tablemate, yearning for nature's company, whose promise will leave me full to overflowing.

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I take note, watching and listening, learning to be still and know.

Bowed, I respond believably to such lessons taught here on this ledge, in this forest, high above burgeoning spring pastures frozen by distance.

Girded in trust, even though I am miles from such security concrete streets and sidewalks lend, I am home in this favored spot, pointing north, straddling views east and west.

My feet are positioned only inches from sharp drop-offs where entanglements of bramble, brush and branches wait.

What do I crave so greatly, causing me to stand on this narrow rocky ledge at the Black Hills Lookout in the Nebraska National Forest?

Leading to it? A rutted stony path, lightly tromped on for a half-century or more by hundreds, maybe thousands, of seeking souls, who dared to venture down the frequently blown out gravelly lane – the one splitting tree groves and pastures, girded with ghosts of the past.

What is it that I desire that the joyous screaming inside me cries out to stay?

What is it that causes me to groan with tired happiness for adoption into this forever place only changed by nature's will and necessity, not by human greed and strife?

More, ever after.

Small biz drives rural economy

By Elsie M. Meeks

In rural America, the local community drives the rural economy. Money spent and invested locally rolls through a community and generates even more economic benefits.

That's why rural small businesses are critical to strong rural communities. And it's why USDA joined with the Small Business Administration to recognize and honor America's small businesses, during National Small Business Week last week.

President Barack Obama marked the beginning of Small Business Week by issuing a Presidential Proclamation for the 50th year running.

At USDA, we have the expertise and financing to help small businesses to thrive. Our assistance has a significant impact on rural communities. In 2012, we helped 50 South Dakota businesses through our business programs,

impacting 1,873 local jobs.

USDA Rural Development invests in many sectors of the South Dakota economy. Helping to grow businesses that support local and regional foods, investing in the bio-based economy and assisting intermediary organizations relend to small rural businesses are just a few ways this is being accomplished in South Dakota.

USDA Rural Development has programs to help keep business operating costs low through programs, such as the Rural Energy for America Program and the Value-Added Producer Grant Program. For example, the Lower Brule Farm Corporation was awarded a VAPG to help fund the cost of becoming Safe Quality Food Certified, hire a Quality Assurance



Meeks

Manager, purchase supplies, and develop marketing and sales strategies.

In fiscal year 2012, a total of 16 South Dakota businesses received REAP grants for installing renewable or energy efficient systems or conducting feasibility studies to do so, saving on operating costs while contributing to cutting carbon emissions.

Last week, Secretary Vilsack announced 54 new awards under our Rural Business Enterprise Grant program to help rural small businesses in 21 states expand and grow. These grants will be used for feasibility studies, improved web marketing, tourism outreach and new facilities. They're just one more step that USDA is taking to give rural businesses tools to grow and create jobs.

Finally, through our revolving loan programs, USDA Rural Development is helping intermediary organizations that we lend to meet the challenge of

assisting small businesses in the communities they serve. In 2012, \$1,003,000 was provided to three intermediaries to assist rural South Dakota businesses and helping to create and retain jobs.

At USDA, supporting the local small businesses that will build new opportunity across America's small towns and rural communities is a priority.

Elsie M. Meeks is the State Director for the USDA Rural Development in South Dakota. She has more than 25 years of experience in economic development in Indian Country and at local, state and national levels. USDA Rural Development's mission is "To increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all Americans." There are eight office locations throughout the state of South Dakota. Visit our Web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov/sd.

Guest commentary:

SD agriculture – a call to action

By Gov. Dennis Daugaard

When my grandfather, Martin Daugaard, and several of his siblings immigrated to the United States from Denmark in the early 1900s, they came to South Dakota to capitalize on the opportunities available to them in agriculture.

More than a century later, technological advancements, science-based production techniques and a commitment to innovation have resulted in even greater opportunities for economic development in this growing industry.

That's why I'm excited to host the 2013 Governor's Ag Development Summit on Wednesday, June 26, at the Ramkota in Pierre. The purpose of the summit is to bring together a variety of perspectives to examine ways we can strengthen and improve the agriculture industry. There is still time to register, and I invite anyone with an interest in enhancing our state's No. 1 industry to contact the South Dakota Department of Agriculture at (605) 773-5436 to save a space.

This year's theme – "A Call to Action" – reminds me of the life-changing decision my grandfather made a century ago to leave his home country and seek a new life in the United States. Rather than remain in Denmark, he took a risk and acted to seek a better future.

Our agriculture industry faces the same choice: do we stand by and continue to do what we've been doing, or do we push forward with initiative and a determination to succeed?

This year's Ag Development Summit will build upon the key leader round table events of past years and provide a forum to discuss the ways in which the agriculture industry can continue to thrive. Our state has all the necessary components to build this important economic sector for the next generation; we need only to take advantage of them.

Like my grandfather, a host of our state's farmers, ranchers and agribusiness people have answered the call to action. The 2013 Governor's Ag Development Summit can help us build upon our past successes and find new opportunities for the future. I hope to see you there!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Support appreciated

To the editor:

June 30, 2013, will be the 20th anniversary of the ribbon cutting for the Sanford Vermillion Medical Center. The medical center now includes a new hospital, medical clinic, care center, and congregate care center.

Prior to the construction of this new facility, there was debate in the community as to whether this facility

should be constructed and as to whether the community should assist in the funding of the project.

In a 1991 referendum, the voters approved funding that went on to provide a portion of the funds for the cost of the new medical center. This referendum not only gave the hospital facility the financial resources to go forward, but it was also a vote by the community that said yes, we need a new health care

facility and we're willing to help pay for it.

When the decision to build the new health care facility was made, it was John Paulson, Larry Veitz, and Kathy Manning, R.N., along with the input of numerous community members, whose leadership directed the creation and development of the facility.

The Vermillion community members should take a moment to pat themselves on the back

for making the decision to support the health care facility. Whenever an individual receives care in this facility, you have played a role in making that possible. You have not only helped to make the past 20 years possible. You have also made sure that this facility will be available for future generations to come.

Thank you,
William Dendiger, M.D.
Vermillion