

Greetings from Pierre:

Medicare, prenatal care topics of debate

By Ray Ring
District 17

Soon after Gov. Dugaard took office, he appointed a Task Force on Infant Mortality.

This diverse group, including several medical experts, issued its final report in December 2011. It reported that South Dakota county data showed a strong correlation between the percent of mothers receiving early prenatal care and the infant mortality rate.

In the final report's words, "Early and regular prenatal care has a strong association with infant survival."

In other words, early prenatal care saves babies' lives. The Task Force's first recommendation is to "improve access to early, comprehensive prenatal care."

These findings and the recommendation are relevant to the Legislature's deliberations. House Bill 1214 would provide prenatal care to undocumented immigrant mothers in South Dakota. Their babies will be U.S. citizens when they are born.

This proposal was the subject of intense debate on the House floor last week. Even though I think it is a profoundly pro-life bill that any pro-life person would readily and emphatically support, several people who usually vote pro-life spoke against it on the floor and voted against it.

It seems that for some people economic issues pre-empt the right to life. The bill prevailed, 39-28, and now goes to the Senate.

SB 140, "to expand Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women," would

raise the maximum income a pregnant woman could receive and still receive health insurance. It has been tabled in the Senate, which means its fate is in doubt. Similar bills in past years have died in committee.

This week the House and Senate Health and Human Services Committees held a joint hearing to receive testimony on expanding Medicaid. As I reported in an earlier column, South Dakota has the opportunity to expand Medicaid to include many more low-income adults at minimal cost to the state.

Tim Tracy, CEO of Sanford Vermillion came from Vermillion to testify for the expansion, as did Denny Davis, a retiree from rural Vermillion. I was pleased to have both men represent the district in this important matter.

As we approach the end of the session (two weeks left), the Joint Appropriations Committee will be making decisions on dividing up the state's very limited resources. They have spent long hours hearing requests from state government agencies as well as representatives of local governments and other interested groups. I don't envy their difficult task.

Sen. Tom Jones from District 17 has done yeoman duty on this committee and I know he is representing us well.

Please don't forget the cracker barrel this Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m. in the Vermillion City Hall. I still need to hear your views on the many important issues still to come before the House.

Contact me at Rep.Ring@state.sd.us or (605) 675-9379 (my cell).

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Kindergarten Round-Up for Vermillion Public Schools

What: Kindergarten Round-Up
Who: Any child who will have their 5th birthday on or before September 1st, 2013 and their parents
When: Monday, March 18th
Tuesday, March 19th
Wednesday, March 20th
Where: Austin Elementary School, 300 High Street

Parents, if your child is going to be 5 on or before September 1st, 2013, please call Kazy at 677-7010 to register for a round-up session. Parents will have a question and answer time with school personnel while the incoming students will be screened. Please plan to spend the morning or afternoon with us.

PLEASE BRING A CERTIFIED COPY OF YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE TO ROUND-UP. IF YOUR CHILD WAS BORN IN SOUTH DAKOTA, YOU MAY PURCHASE A CERTIFIED COPY FROM THE CLAY COUNTY COURT HOUSE FOR \$15.00. HOSPITAL CERTIFICATES OF BIRTH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. IF YOUR CHILD'S IMMUNIZATION RECORDS INCLUDE THE KINDERGARTEN SHOTS, PLEASE BRING THE COMPLETED IMMUNIZATION RECORD TO THE ROUND-UP.

Please visit our website at www.vermillion@k12.sd.us for additional information, look under "Kindergarten Screening Scheduled".

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