

Guest Commentary:

Giving thanks

By Rep. Kristi Noem

The final months of every year are full of annual traditions that bring family and friends together. These events serve as a good reminder to pause and be thankful for one another, our friends, family and country.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to see my children grow. When I look at Cassidy, Kennedy and Booker, I am continually amazed by the strong young individuals they are turning out to be. It's been different around the Noem house with Cassidy away at college, which makes me appreciate the time we have together as a family even more.

Here in South Dakota, we have so much to be thankful for. In the face of a severe drought, our state's economy has managed to stay strong. Due to the perseverance and determination of South Dakota families and small businesses, our state continues to lead the way towards long-lasting economic stability.

We should also give thanks

for our great country. All too often, people across the world are persecuted for their political beliefs or the religion they adhere to. It's hard to believe that the freedoms we enjoy in the United States that are so fundamental to our way of life are unthinkable elsewhere in the world. I am thankful for the men and women who have fearlessly fought to defend these freedoms and for those that will continue to answer the call to defend our nation into the future.

While many of us may celebrate in warm homes this holiday season, I encourage South Dakotans to also give back to those who are less fortunate. Many communities across the state have volunteer opportunities for individuals and families to lend a helping hand to those in need in the upcoming weeks.

So, whatever the family tradition is this Thanksgiving, I hope South Dakotans will take the time to reflect on all there is to be thankful for.

Guest Commentary:

Thankful for farmers, ranchers on Thanksgiving

By Sen. Tim Johnson

On Thursday, families across the country will gather around the table to celebrate Thanksgiving. I have much to be thankful for this year, including a loving wife, children and grandchildren. I am also continually thankful to be able to serve South Dakotans in the U.S. Senate. Like every year, though, I am also incredibly thankful for South Dakota farmers and ranchers.

Folks across the country might not thank them on Thursday, but those of us who live in South Dakota know that without our ag producers, wonderful Thanksgiving feasts would not be possible. Even during terrible droughts like this past year, South Dakota farmers and ranchers worked hard to make sure we have an adequate food supply. We owe it to our producers to provide them support.

Unfortunately, the House has failed to pass a farm bill and there are serious consequences. Producers lack certainty and we are close to reverting back to the agriculture policies of the 1940s. This is bad for everyone in our country, but especially our farmers and ranchers. A number of important programs have already expired, and the House has only a few short weeks left to act before more programs expire.

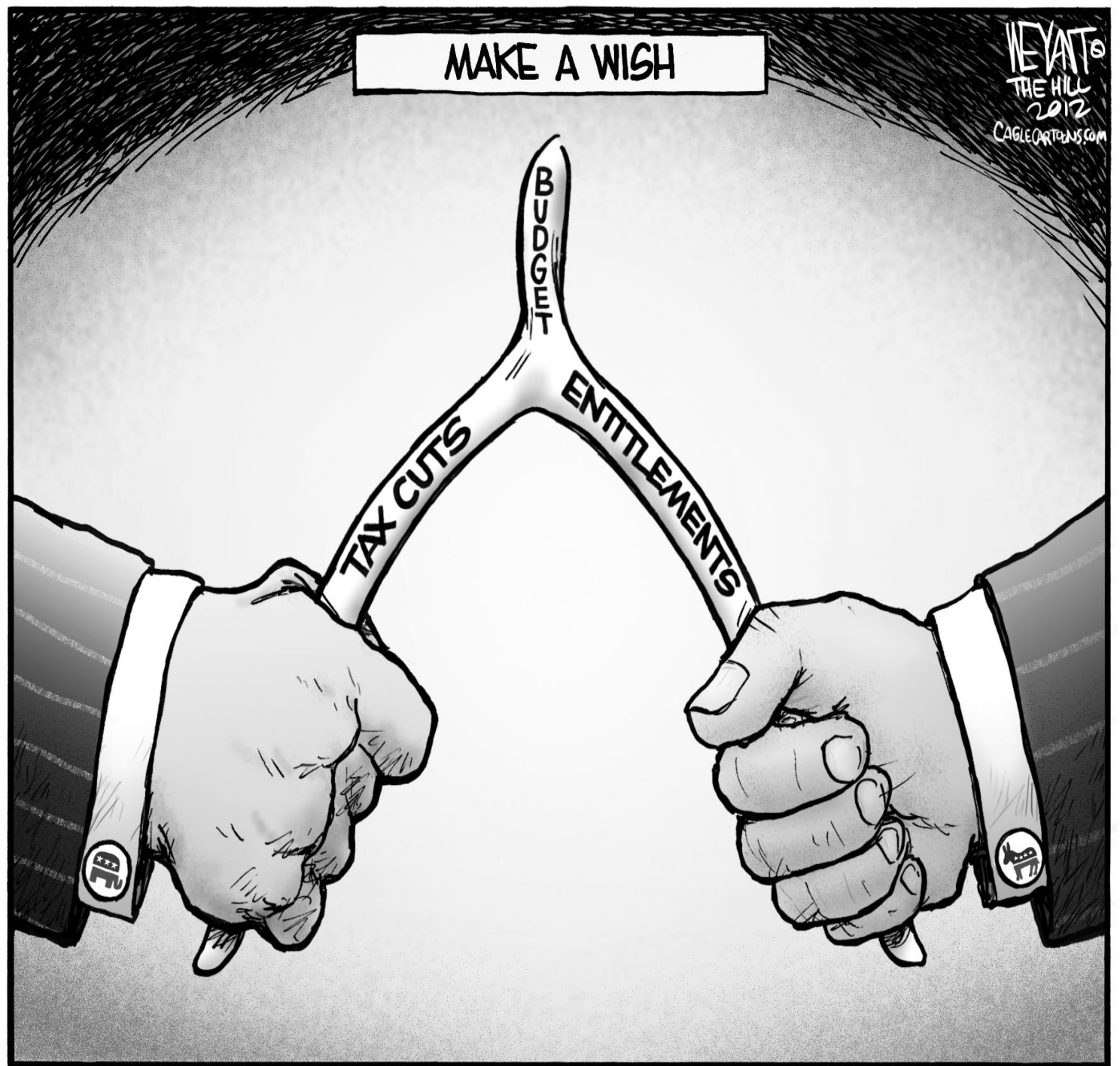
Back in June, Republican and Democratic Senators worked together to pass a farm bill that cuts the deficit, supports millions of jobs, and makes important reforms to our farm programs. After considering over 70 amendments, we passed a bill that includes livestock disaster assistance that would apply to losses experienced during this year's drought. Our

bill will also better enable USDA to help food banks feed the hungry through some important changes to our feeding programs. The House, on the other hand, has not produced anything.

No doubt politics have been involved with the farm bill. There are many in Congress who do not believe we should provide our food producers with a safety net. The House leadership chose not to consider a farm bill before the elections. These political games hurt our producers. The elections are over. It is time for the House of Representatives to do what is right and pass a farm bill.

As I traveled South Dakota last month, I heard repeatedly from ag producers who were disappointed that the House left them behind. Our producers also reiterated the importance of passing a long-term farm bill that maintains a strong crop insurance program and offers disaster assistance to livestock producers. This year's drought has placed considerable strain on folks throughout the state, particularly on our ranchers, who have no permanent safety net. That's why we included several disaster assistance programs in our bill to help them get through difficult years like this one. Unfortunately, House inaction has left our ranchers in a tough spot.

It is my hope that this Thanksgiving folks across the country, including lawmakers, think about how their food got to the table. The food got there because of the hard work of our farmers and ranchers. It is time for the House of Representatives to stand with our producers so they can continue to feed our nation. It is time for the House of Representatives to get serious and pass a farm bill.



The polarities of being a gopher

Little did I know on the day I married my husband I would enter into a gopher lifestyle.

Being a gopher is somewhat similar to a perpetual honey-do list. Don't get me wrong, it's not a bad thing, but once you get started, it's hard to break away from this ever-demanding role.

Now, 40 years, three months, six days and two hours after I said, I do, I've graduated with an advanced degree in gophering, magna cum laude.

Most of the time, it's not a big deal, but when Brian has a fix-it project, I somehow find myself back in Gopherville. When he built a carport onto the garage, guess who's running back and forth for this, that and whatever?

Totally unorganized, Brian would just as soon throw his tools on the ground, rather than slip them into the handiest of weekend warrior accessories – a tool belt.

This means I spend a lot of time chasing things down: hammer and nails, screw driver, crowbar, pry bar, chalk line and measuring tape, drill and drill bits. You name it, I know how to gopher it.

One thing about gophering, you hurry up and wait a lot. And for systematic thinkers, like me, this allows plenty of time for noticing things that could make gophers relatively obsolete. Such as the convenient recessed round holder on top of the ladder; now that's a perfectly good place for loose nuts and bolts.

And those slots on the ladder thingy for the paint can – you know the shelf that flips down when a stepladder is erect. Whatever it's called, it has really nifty holes for hand tools.

When passing time waiting and then waiting some more, I decided to slip his "old faithful" hammer, handed down from his father, into one of those slots. In another, I placed his trusty heavy-duty orange and black-handled screwdriver – the kind with multiple bits and shafts.

And in the last, the crowbar, of course.

Pleased with myself, I remarked, "How cool is that?" projecting loudly enough so maybe, just maybe he'd notice. "Hey," I said, "they put these nifty little holes up here for tools and stuff."

Deeply concentrating over exacting 93.5-inch-long by 48-inch-wide plywood roof sheeting, he didn't even look up. Those tools stayed in place for a little while – that was until he needed to move the ladder and tossed them on the ground, where they

waited for me to gopher again. Being a gopher is a thankless job. And, yes, it can be extremely boring. Whether I'm holding, pushing, steadying or bracing, I must admit, my attention tends to wander.

Like all those pine needles on the garage roof that should be swept off before they settle in the gutter. And the gutters themselves all caked with decayed leaves and sediment – shouldn't we clean those out, too?

What about that rotting sideboard under the overhang? Let's slap some paint on that or should we replace it. We should rake all those leaves, burn the wood pile over there, store the lawn chairs, clean the air conditioner unit and on and on.

And while the "shoulds" are lyrics to my thought process, they send Brian reeling – all because he's what's called a linear thinker.

Linear thinking is a slow, methodical process of thought that progresses step-by-step, where a response to a single step must be completed before even thinking

about the next.

The way I look at it – anyone in a relationship with a linear thinker probably has done his or her share of gophering for this and that and whatever.

When gophering for a linear thinker, plan on many trips back and forth, back and forth, and back and forth to the tool bench, garage, shed, house and hardware store.

Like most wives, I tried curing my husband by recommending that he make a mental list of what he needed for a project and then gather everything at once. It would save a ton of time and the project would get done much sooner.

All you women have probably already guessed, my efforts haven't worked one iota and here's why. For linear thinkers, like Brian, gophering one thing at a time is a way of life. It's how things get done.

Conversely, systematic thinkers like me see things holistically, clearly seeing the big-picture, considering all the steps from A to Z.

We take the long view. We look at how parts operate, not individually, but as a whole. This tends to overwhelm linear thinkers. Trust me on that.

That's why when a linear thinker and a systematic thinker stay together for any length of time, such as 40 years of marriage – that, my friends, is called love.

2012 © Copyright Paula Damon.

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.

SOUTH DAKOTA EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls: Nov. 13, 2012
Include voter reform in new education reform bill

Before South Dakota makes another ill-fated run at reforming our schools, let's answer one key question: What are we trying to fix?

Voters overwhelmingly rejected Referred Law 16, but the measure was framed before the election as a showdown between Gov. Dennis Daugaard and teachers. The law would have implemented merit pay and teacher evaluations based in part on their students' test scores. It also would have added \$15 million to teachers' salaries.

Voters — the same people who

often gripe that teachers are the lowest paid in the nation — also rejected Initiated Measure 15, which would have added a penny to the state sales tax to generate revenue for schools and Medicaid.

With lots of entry points on each bill, it is difficult to know why voters rejected them. We don't think lawmakers and the governor should misread what their intentions were with those votes, either. Instead, they should seek to get citizens — all of us — involved in what education reform should accomplish.

That's why we hope the state asks people to contribute their ideas before moving forward with new legislation. Everyone has skin in the education game — students, parents, grandparents, neighbors or taxpayers.

We all understand the value of a well-educated society.

If the problem we hope to solve is better student performance, as Daugaard has suggested, then we need to know what we're shooting for and how to support teachers in doing a better job. If the issue is paying teachers what they deserve, then we need to spend some money, and that money has to come from somewhere.

As we examine the question of what it is we're trying to fix, the administration must include all stakeholders at the table: teachers, superintendents, business leaders, academics, lawmakers and ordinary citizens.

Before we introduce more bills that will only draw the ire of teachers and superintendents, let's work

together to identify what we're trying to do and then develop an appropriate strategy.

Governor, it's your move.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell: Nov. 15, 2012

Secession will not move the country forward

It is utterly amazing to us that people across the United States are screaming for their respective state to secede from the union following President Barack Obama's victory in the recent election.

We are surprised that people are so passionately against the president — and so much that they would put their name on a petition to actually dissolve the

government in the same style that sparked the American Civil War. First of all, such an act borders on treason. Second, it's just poor sportsmanship in the wake of the country's decision to put Obama back in office for another four years.

We endorsed Mitt Romney for president. That doesn't mean we have some deep hatred for President Obama, but that we simply disagree with some of his practices, political beliefs and policies. No big deal.

Yet we now watch in wonder as people flood the Internet with hateful and hurtful spite in the wake of Obama's win.

And now we hear about petitions designed to encourage

states to secede from the union.

The South Dakota petition has been signed by more than 5,000, although we hear that most of those disgruntled people aren't even from South Dakota.

South Dakota is a red state, and one that overwhelmingly backed Romney for president.

But our candidate lost, fair and square. The majority of Americans wanted Obama for president.

The contest begins anew in about three years, and maybe next time, Republicans will emerge victorious.

In the meantime, these outlandish calls for secession only create a bigger divide that does nothing to help move the country forward.

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

PT PLAIN TALK

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. Composing Staff: Kathy Larson & Jamie Seives. Reception Office Manager: Susan Forma. Distribution & Circulation Manager: David Jeffcoat.