

# VIEWPOINTS

## An idea to kick around

“A camel is a horse designed by a committee.”

So says the proverb that is critical of group decision-making. This saying emphasizes the ineffectiveness of incorporating too many conflicting opinions into a single project.

When you stop and think about it, however, Vermillion has been pretty fortunate when it has turned to committees to address some of its pressing concerns. Constructing a new city hall in the community at times seemed to be just a dream years ago; the hard work of a committee made up of dedicated community members helped that dream become a reality.

Dedicated committee members address a wide variety of issues on a regular basis in Vermillion, including city and county zoning matters, the operation of our local hospital, the expansion of our municipal library, and the best way to deal with an aging swimming pool.

We don't exactly know what to call this – an issue, a problem, a matter that needs attention – perhaps this could be defined as all of those things.

It's something that has reached the “murmur level” in conversations over morning coffee klatches throughout town, or in friendly conversations among neighbors. It's usually talked about in hushed tones. It's not something people are eager to just utter out loud.

We believe it's time to get a public dialogue going, however. It's time to have a thorough, open and hopefully positive, results-oriented discussion about the Vermillion High School football program.

This has been a particularly rough year for Tanager football. The team hasn't scored a point in its last three games. Along with being shutout, our players have been trounced on the field. They've lost to Canton 37-0. Tea rolled over us 45-0. We were no match for Harrisburg last week. They crushed us, 50-0.

It wasn't always that way. The Tanager football program enjoyed perfect seasons in 1995 and 1999. In recent years, our high school football team has managed to make it as far as the first round of regional playoff action – in fact, that happened just last season. But that's about the best we've been able to accomplish, for years now.

There is truth in the adage, “Winning isn't everything.” We believe the values that are intrinsic in the extra-curricular activities offered by our school district go beyond the performance on the field or the

on the court or on the stage. They are something bigger than a win-loss record, the applause from the audience, or a trophy in a display case.

These activities offer opportunities for students to learn the values of teamwork, individual and group

### BETWEEN THE LINES



DAVID LIAS  
david.lias@plaintalk.net

responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, diversity, and a sense of culture and community.

Extracurricular activities provide a channel for reinforcing the lessons learned in the classroom, offering students the opportunity to apply academic

skills in a real-world context, and are thus considered part of a well-rounded education.

There is no doubt the community grasps the importance of these types of activities in our school system.

We believe a cause for concern – something that needs to be explored – is the growing extra-curricular participation gap that seems apparent in our school district.

We know our school enrollment figures have been dwindling a bit, while numbers in surrounding districts like Harrisburg and Tea are exploding.

We'd like to know if smaller enrollment is leading to less participation in extra-curricular activities, particularly the Vermillion football program. We'd like to know if other issues are at play here. Discouraged student athletes? Discouraged parents?

All we know is that football is just one of many ways for the community and the school district to engage with a number of students in our high school. It is a way for all us, who pay our taxes to fund all local education programs, to help increase students' chances of success in the classroom. We should be interested in trying to offer the best programs possible for our students, and we can't help but wonder if some changes are needed.

We're worried about that student engagement. Can it continue with a program that seems to be offering such a heavy dose of negative experiences this year? Is there any way we can help make Tanager football a better experience for our future high school athletes?

We encourage the Vermillion School Board to begin a dialogue with the community by considering the formation of a citizens' committee to explore these issues.

### THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Argus Leader of Sioux Falls.  
Sept. 29, 2012

#### State needs to lead in octane charges

There's something amiss with the way fuel mislabeling is being prosecuted in South Dakota.

To the Beadle County state's attorney's credit, he has charged six service stations in his county with selling mislabeled fuel, the first charges tied to a statewide investigation into lower-quality gasoline being sold under bogus octane stickers. The county's attorney, Michael Moore, filed charges against five Corner Pantry locations in Huron and the 281 Travel Center in Wolsey, which sell gas distributed by M.G. Oil in Rapid City. At issue is that the stations sold 85-octane gasoline under an 87-octane label, without telling consumers it was a lower octane than marked on the pumps.

Harms Oil in Brookings hasn't been charged criminally but has been named in a class-action lawsuit.

Prosecutors in Brookings and elsewhere have not filed criminal

charges in the investigation, even though stations in those areas also were found to have sold the lower-octane gas after a state investigation. Attorney General Marty Jackley has said he isn't involved in prosecuting in the case but has had discussions with prosecutors, private lawyers representing fuel marketers and the Department of Public Safety about a possible statewide settlement in the mislabeling cases.

The investigation into mislabeled gasoline began last spring when state inspectors audited 189 stations in the state on a tip that 85-octane gasoline was being sold outside of a traditional market in the Black Hills. They reported finding the mislabeled gas in 14 cities.

We don't know exactly what detailed information was turned over to the county prosecutors and certainly don't expect that they would drop everything to consider charges in this case.

But cases should not be handled differently in different counties. To avoid that, the attorney general could take a broader leadership role in the



## Dag-nab-it, what's the world coming to?

Stop and think. When was the last time you heard someone say, Jiminy Crickets? Probably never for most. How about my stars, land sakes or dag-nab-it? Same story.

The list just goes on: holy cow, groovy, nifty, fudge, dingbat, wiggled out, loony bin, crackpot, spruced up, gussied up, do-hickey, mull over, floozy and doozy.

And we can't forget such phrases as the emperor has no clothes, they drank the Kool-Aid, he was three sheets to the wind and she has toys in the attic.

The divide between the language of my generation and today's vernacular leaves a lot to be desired. I can't overhear my granddaughter chattering away with her friends, because she's texting.

Even if I could see what she's saying, I'd probably have a hard time deciphering acronyms, like LOL, BRB, GF, NOUB and PAW. Since I don't use these myself, I'm not quite sure, but I think LOL mean lots of laughs or lots of love, BRB is be right back, GF stands for girlfriend or good friend, NOUB is none of our business and PAW might be parents are watching.

The differences between today's youth and the rest of us have been widely reported. Guess that's because we who deliver the news have enough institutional memory to point out the sharp contrasts.

A popular delineation of increasingly wide generational divides is the “Mindset List,” compiled and released each year around the time 18-year-olds leave home

for college.

Among my favorites of the 75 ways the college graduation Class of 2016 worldview differs are...

This latest crop of whippersnappers has always lived in cyberspace and is addicted to new 3G, 4G electronics that are on the market every six months or so. They haven't a clue what certain Bible phrases mean, nor the stories behind them, like forbidden fruit, the writing on the wall, good Samaritan, turn the other cheek, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, ask and you shall receive and the Promised Land.

With luggage on wheels, this generation can't imagine carrying a suitcase. Since all they know are MP3s and iPods, they don't listen to music on a car radio and really have no use for any kind of radio at all. Remember when transistor radios with long extended antennae hit the market?

Consider the icons on iPads and iPhones – a floppy disc for save, an image of an ancient telephone receiver to make a call and a snail mail envelope for email.

Strangely paradoxical, don't you agree? Their parents, and maybe even their

grandparents, have never owned a set of hard-bound encyclopedias.

Rolling their eyes, this generation impatiently reminds their elders that CDs and DVDs are not tapes, records or albums. Before purchasing a textbook, they don't think twice about doing a Google search to rent the book or buy it as an e-book.

It's hard to imagine that the college graduating Class of 2016 grew up without Romper Room and don't have the foggiest notion what it is.

Ask anyone born since 1997, they'll say with complete conviction that history has always had a channel and they almost always watch television programs everywhere but on a TV.

Expanding on the “Mindset List,” I've noticed a dark twist to the language of today's pop culture. A good performance or something grand is described as sick. Impressive, beautiful, maybe even gorgeous is considered a killer. A perfect example was when my 20-something neighbor first stepped through the gate to our picketed yard, she exclaimed, “Wow, you have a killer flower garden!”

If it were not for her oohs and aahs, I would have thought my garden was overgrown and weedy.

While you mull this over, I wish a killer of a week, one that is filled with many sick moments. LOL. BRB.

### MY STORY YOUR STORY



PAULA DAMON  
paula.damon@tw.net

Consider the icons on iPads and iPhones – a floppy disc for save, an image of an ancient telephone receiver to make a call and a snail mail envelope for email.

Strangely paradoxical, don't you agree? Their parents, and maybe even their

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 'To What Avail'

To the editor:

I submitted this “Letter to the editor” about four years ago and it was published. I sincerely believe now is the time for it to be read again by all those that may be interested in the coming election:

### “To What Avail?”

In the apparent chaos in the thinking and actions of the

United States Congress and the top leadership of our republic during this period of our lives, my mind seems drawn to a passage I read decades ago in the novel, “Wanderer,” written by Sterling Hayden. Hayden, a Hollywood actor, was a man torn between the reality of earning a very comfortable living with his acting abilities and his desire to run away to sea

as master of his own sailing vessel. He had this to say about “Freedom Lost.”

“To what avail the plough or sale, or love, or life – if freedom fail.”

I personally believe in the United States, as we have known it, is coming to a crossroad very fast. Serious thought to that simple one line above should be considered by all of us as our

lawmakers and leaders, from those in the past to those in the present, try to lead us down the “government knows best for us” road. We don't need Washington to lead us down life's path.

Bill Willroth, Sr.  
Vermillion

## SOUTH DAKOTA EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

prosecution. It was a statewide investigation, after all, so why not handle follow-up steps on the same basis?

Given that this investigation involved gas distributed by two of the largest providers in South Dakota, state oversight would seem appropriate.

### RAPID CITY JOURNAL

Oct. 2, 2012

#### Apply cell phone ban to all

The South Dakota Legislature has twice defeated a ban on texting while driving, but a legislative committee may give the issue new life.

The Teen Driving Task Force is recommending a law to prohibit young drivers from using cell phones while driving. South Dakota currently is one of 11 states without a law banning texting while driving.

The panel is also recommending:

- That the time required to have an instruction permit to drive accompanied by an adult be extended to one year before teen drivers can get a restricted permit that allows them to drive alone.
- That statewide standards be

established for drivers' education course content, testing and certification of instructors.

- That a limit be set on the number of passengers who can ride in a car driven by a teen with a restricted permit.

Statistics show that changes in South Dakota teen driving laws are needed for public safety. According to a 2010 U.S. News & World Report study, South Dakota ranks last in safe teen driving. And the state Department of Health reports that motor vehicle accidents account for 70 percent of deaths among teens and younger children in South Dakota.

It is our hope that the legislative panel's recommendations will lead to changes in the state's driving laws that will make it safer for teen drivers.

We note that using a cell phone while driving is inherently dangerous, and not more dangerous for teen drivers. While we are encouraged that the legislative panel is recommending a ban on using a cell phone while driving for young drivers, the ban should be extended to drivers of

any age.

The recommendation is a good place to begin, but a ban on texting while driving should apply to everyone who uses South Dakota's roads and highways.

### WATERTOWN PUBLIC OPINION

Sept. 27, 2012

#### A boom now but later.

It looks like South Dakota won't become a booming oil producing state like our neighbor to the north. A study done by the governor's office says the oil boom that hit North Dakota thanks to the Bakken formation in the western part of that state apparently isn't in store for us.

The bulk of the Bakken formation lies in Montana, North Dakota and Saskatchewan although some say it stretches into Wyoming and South Dakota.

North Dakota has been enjoying an oil boom for the past few years thanks to that formation and last year it produced 152 million barrels. The boom has brought new people, new jobs, new money and new opportunity to the state and the revenue generated has provided a budget surplus for state

government.

South Dakota, however, won't be reaping similar benefits. Our state produces about 1.6 million barrels of oil a year and that figure is not expected to exceed 6.5 million barrels a decade from now. That's a bit of a mixed blessing.

South Dakotans can still make money off the North Dakota boom by providing housing and other services that are in short supply in the western oil fields. And although the profits won't reach the levels they have in North Dakota, there is still money to be made.

There are some things we won't mind missing out on like congestion on roads and highways, a housing crunch that's still a problem, an increasing demand for public programs and services and a rise in crime that parts of North Dakota are coping with thanks to the influx of large amounts of people and money. Some of that could spill across our border but not to the extent North Dakota is experiencing.

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. Composing Staff: Kathy Larson, Jamie Selves and Taryn Sonnenfeld. Reception Office Manager: Susan Forma. Distribution & Circulation Manager: David Jeffcoat.