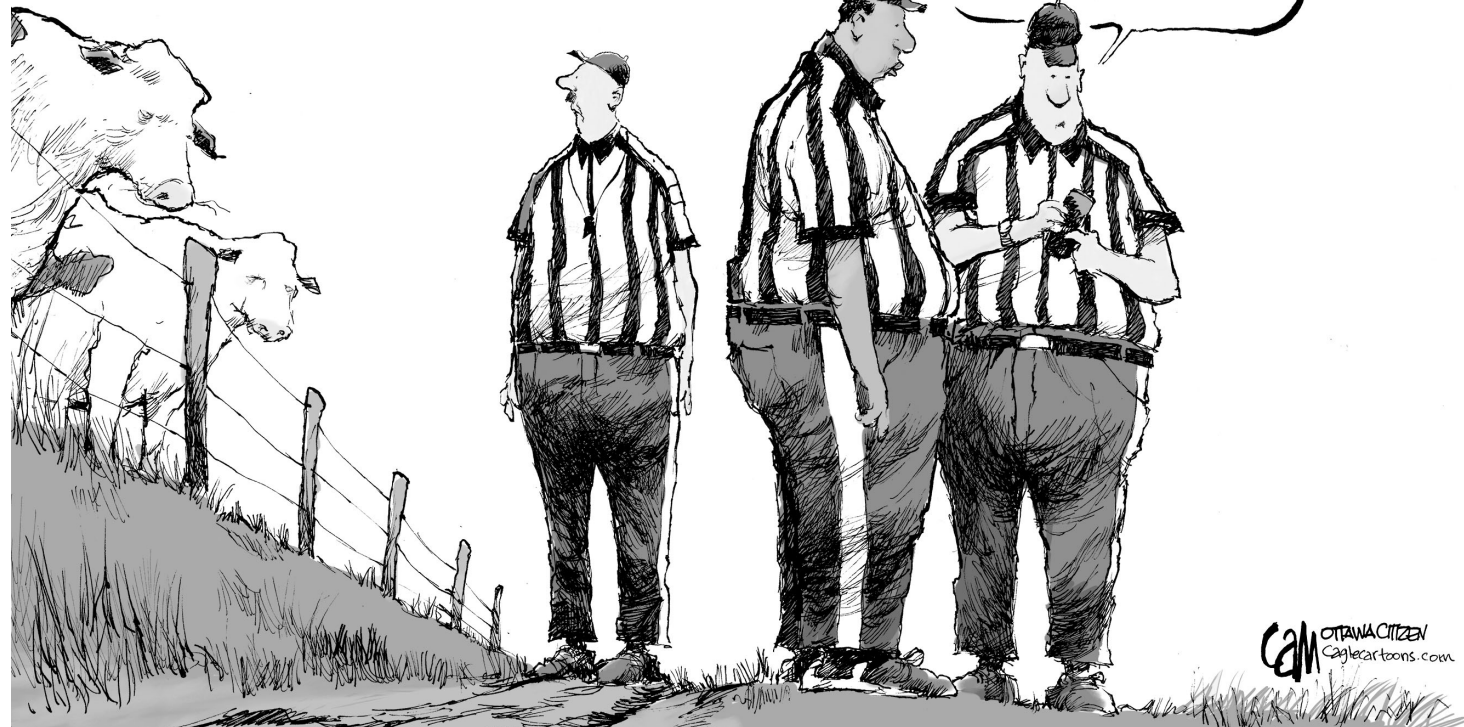
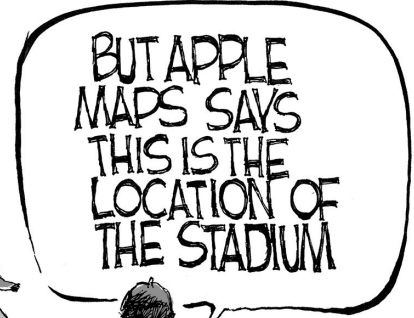


VIEWPOINTS

NFL REPLACEMENT REFS... PROBLEM SOLVED.



CAM OTAWA/CITIZEN
Cartoonists.com

SOUTH DAKOTA EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press
Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, Sept. 19, 2012
Attention needed for farm bill

The lack of a new farm bill is complicated when it shouldn't be and a reminder that members of Congress often forget for whom they work.

It's easy to shake our heads in disgust and say, "Just pass a farm bill." The one authored in 2008 expires Sept. 30.

Can it be that difficult for Republicans and Democrats to come up with a solution that makes sense for farmers, our food supply and the economy, especially in a state such as South Dakota, where agriculture is a huge part of our income and spending? Is it possible our representatives in Washington, D.C., could have worked harder along the way so that the bill wouldn't be allowed to expire when they go home Friday?

Enter the ugliness of politics. The full senate passed a farm bill in June, followed by the House Agriculture Committee action a month later. But that's where the bill stopped, hung up in the full House, with neither side cooperating and both sides blaming the other.

For farmers in South Dakota and other states, a long-term delay in a farm bill will mean uncertainty for those who grow crops and livestock for a living, and it could lead to increased consumer prices. In a year when crops are thwarted by drought and the economy's gears remain stuck in recovery mode, it seems short-sighted to resort to politics instead of a solution.

In the "real world" outside of Washington, people are expected to do their jobs even if the task is difficult. Workers are paid to solve problems, come up with solutions and meet deadlines. It would be nice to think that our representatives in Congress remember how to do that, too.

In this case it's time they get to work on the public's business instead jockeying for position in the November election.

Voting is an important civic duty of every citizen. We are confident that most military personnel take their right to vote seriously. Being deployed overseas, however, makes participating in the democratic process more difficult. The absentee voting procedure is designed to make it easier for military and overseas voters to return their ballots in time to have their votes count.

Family members at home can do their part by reminding their loved ones to remember to vote. With 46 days remaining until election day, there will be plenty of time for deployed military personnel and overseas voters to return their absentee ballot by Nov. 6. But make sure that you do return your absentee ballot in time, because every vote counts.

Watertown Public Opinion, Sept. 20, 2012
Local voters decide local issues

Every so often a story comes out of Pierre where one state agency or another thinks it has a pretty good idea that everybody should follow. When it comes to education, sometimes, those ideas make sense; sometimes they don't. There should be state standards when it comes to teacher training and certification. There also should be statewide standards about the type of education a public school is expected to provide. And there should be standards about requirements a student needs to meet in order to graduate.

After that, however, things get a little iffy. We have been strong supporters for local control of schools whenever possible. For example, funding. Yes, there must be rules concerning how much money is available to pay for public education and who provides it. And every so often a funding proposal surfaces that demands more money for every district in the state whether they need it or not.

We have two words in response to those proposals: Castlewood, Hoven. Both districts recently voted on local measures to opt out of the state-mandated property tax freeze. Hoven voters said "yes," agreeing to replace an expiring seven-year opt-out with a new seven-year opt-out. Castlewood said "no," deciding to let an opt out passed in 2009 expire rather than approve a new one.

We're not going to comment on the finances of either district or what they should or should not do. But we do like the fact voters in both communities decided for themselves what was best for their communities. After all they live there. They know what the problems are and they're the ones who will live with the decisions they make.

That's the way it should be and why we support local control of local issues whenever possible. One-size fits all solutions coming out of one bureaucracy or another aren't always the answer. How can someone living in Pierre or Sioux Falls or someplace else know what is best in Castlewood or Hoven when it comes to funding and maintaining their schools?

Those are decisions that need to be made at the local level and recent votes prove that. Hoven voters said "yes we need more money now" and Castlewood voters said "no we don't." Those are their schools. Those are their communities and those were their choices. That's the way it should be.

That's going to cost how much?

If you thought you've heard it all, two words: Lenore Skenazy.

"Who in the world is Lenore Skenazy?" Well, she's a parent who charges other parents \$350 for eight one-hour-and-forty-five minute sessions to not watch their children.

"Huh?" Parents drop their kids off at a playground in Central Park in New York City, where non-babysitter, Lenore, is waiting. She says, hi, leaves the park, travels blocks away to a coffee shop, while those little rascals are left at the park for their parents to find and pick up later.

"Say what?" OK, I know this idea is a hard to swallow, but parents are actually paying this woman to not watch their kids. To give you a better idea of how serious Skenazy is about unsupervised play, here's an excerpt from her website, aptly titled www.iwon'tsuperviseyourkids.com: "Our first session is Weds., Sept 12. Ages 8-18 welcome. We'll meet at the entrance to the "Ancient Playground" in Central Park, at 85th St. and Fifth Ave., at 3:45 p.m. I'll be there to say hi — then I'm off to sip my latte. Kids can be picked up at 5:15, or they can head home on their own — it's up to you. If your child owns a watch, have him/her wear it. Otherwise, the kids can ask folks what time it is. While many people think that children being someplace with 'strangers all around' is dangerous, actually it means there are people all around who can help if anything goes wrong..."

"Tell me this isn't so!" I had the same reaction. I know what you're thinking — the world has gone mad and Skenazy is leading the charge. It has. She is.

"Just the idea makes me

hyperventilate." I hear you, but take a closer look.

"Why?" Because there's a method to this madness, which Skenazy calls free-range parenting.

"Is this an antidote to helicopter parents?" You could say that. Today's anxiety-prone, overly protective parents imagine, plan and solve just about everything for their kids, meddling in their business, including play.

"What's so wrong about that?"

Well, it's causing children to be less independent and deprived of unsupervised play, counterproductive to their formation into healthy responsible adults. Are you following me?

"Sort of." Pondering the whole idea sent me back to my own free-range childhood days, when the school bell couldn't ring soon enough, releasing me to the great outdoors. I'd romp around on foot, traveling blocks from the security of my own neighborhood.

"Really?" Yup, sometimes venturing miles on bike, skirting unknown places, discovering new grounds for play, splashing in creek beds, couching under railroad trusses, navigating busy highways. I daringly pushed the limits of liberty by shoving back my otherwise mundane regimented existence.

"Didn't your parents worry?" Not really.

"And at home?" I had plenty of unsupervised play there, too. Draping blankets over dining room chairs and lining pillows on the floor, I built houses, forts and kingdoms.

"I just don't think kids these days would buy that, not with video games, iPads and newfangled electronics they play with their thumbs."

You're not alone. Most kids spend at least half their waking hours on digital media with a significantly decreasing percentage actually playing outside. Good luck trying to find an unsupervised kid riding a non-motorized scooter, balancing on roller skates or playing hop-scotch.

"Come to think of it, I rarely see kids playing outdoors."

My point exactly. Children are missing out. Non-electronic play gives children control, allows them to make decisions and determine risks, all formative physically, emotionally and socially. After all, in the animal kingdom, play is practice for life and essential to survival.

"So you think video games are bad." All I'm saying is that today's risk-averse, overbearing parents are depriving kids from learning essentials they can't get from video games like Team Umizoomi, MonkeyQuest or Super Mario 3-D Land.

"Would you turn kids loose in Central Park?"

No, I'm not suggesting letting kids or grand kids go unsupervised in Central Park. All I'm saying is to give them some free reign in the neighborhood. Just saying.

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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Governor's House Program expands partnerships with private industry

As part of a new partnership between private industry and the Governor's House Program, changes approved by the South Dakota Housing Development Authority now allow qualified families to buy their "governor's house" through private builders.

Other important changes to the program from this partnership include:

- Annual income limits have been set at \$42,280 for households of one or two people and \$48,320 for households of three or more, in recognition of the ongoing gap in affordable housing.

- School districts in rural communities may now purchase "governor's houses" as a tool to recruit and retain quality teachers.

- Developers will be allowed to purchase "governor's houses" for rental purposes when financed under programs that require long-term affordable rent limits targeting low-income families.

Under the new rules, approved builders can purchase a "governor's house," develop the lot and foundation, place the home and offer it for sale to qualified buyers.

This private industry partnership can make the process of buying a "governor's house" simpler for buyers. Before the rule change, the buyer had to contract separately for the land, foundation, sidewalks and other site work. Now they can purchase a home directly from a builder that is ready to move into, if they prefer, which can greatly reduce not only challenges but also costs to the qualified buyer.

"The benefit of working with a local builder is that they can help with the lot preparation, foundation, building permits, and the numerous other aspects that go into building a home, which can be overwhelming to many new homeowners" said Paul Kostboth, SDHDA's single family development director. "Also, the project stays local, which is important for many communities."

The houses will continue to be constructed by medium-security inmates at the Mike Dufree State Prison in Springfield, and then moved to home sites across South Dakota. Since it began in 1996, the program has made home ownership a reality for 1,985 South Dakota families. It has also taught a useful trade to thousands of prisoners as they prepare to reenter society.

"Governor's houses" are moderately priced at \$35,500 for a two-bedroom, one bath, 1,008-square-foot home, which includes delivery to the customer's site. The houses are well-built, low-maintenance, energy-efficient alternatives for South Dakotans with limited means. No tax dollars are spent to build, sell or deliver the "governor's houses."

For more information about the program, visit www.sdhda.org.

St. James Marketplace Annual Heritage Fest to be Sept. 30

St. James Marketplace Heritage Fest will again be held Sept. 30 at St. James, NE.

Festivities will begin at 11 a.m. with an opening ceremony. Displays and activities like the corn-grader, standing engines, hand-cranking ice cream and butter, John Deere

tractor display, Wild Bill the Blacksmith, musician Paul Seibert, spinning and weaving, accordion-playing and two-man sawing contest and skillet-throwing contest will follow. Following lunch there will be book-signings of "Legends and Lore of the Outlaw

Trail" by Marita Placek and Return to "The Hills of Mars" by Dick Haskin. The festivities will go on throughout the whole day. At 4 p.m. Paul Seibert will have a tribute to John Denver. Check out the activities at www.stjamesmarketplace.com

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO DAVID.LIAS@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.

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