

Lance S. Russell

South Dakota House of Representatives - District 30

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October 29, 2012

Dear SD Legislative colleagues and potential 2013-2014 colleagues:

Since prevailing to one of the two Dist. 30 House seats in the primary election in June 2012, and having no opponents in the upcoming general election in November, I have been spending a considerable amount of time completing many work assignments and preparing for my service in the 2013 Legislature. I know many of you, however, are very busy campaigning for election, which is just a week away. Please understand that I do not write this letter in any way to somehow revel over my re-election status, but rather, to encourage you in your election endeavors and, should you prevail, to immediately begin considering the possibility of reforms and a revised approach to the organization of our House of Representatives.

As many of you may be aware, as a second-term House member I was "uninvited" from the Republican Party caucus last year after it was determined that I was not sufficiently attending our Party's daily closed caucus meetings. The then majority leader, after being notified one day by text that Representative Nelson and I would be late for a caucus meeting, announced that we were no longer welcome and, if the other members of the caucus did not like it, they were free to leave at that time. As a result, I did not attend another caucus this past Legislative Session. It should be noted that, historically, there have been other Republican Party House members who have not regularly attended caucus meetings and they have not faced any similar banishment as a result of their absences from caucus; for example, Dave Munson, former Republican House member & Mayor of Sioux Falls.

I also understand that folks who previously have held leadership positions have, over the past several weeks, been making telephone calls to members of the past Republican caucus surveying if I should be allowed to attend Republican caucuses this coming year. To my surprise as well as to other legislator's surprise, some of these calls are actually being made by current legislators who are seeking re-election to the House, and whom have general election competition.

Needless to say, this type of bold and presumptuous pre-election activity is unsettling. These folks are taking it upon themselves to presume to set an agenda which would no doubt seek to continue the previous leadership's divisive exclusion of elected members of the Legislature - *from the big tent Republican Party*. Not only are calls being made to survey potential exclusion or inclusion of Legislators to certain meetings, but regular communications and notices are not being sent to certain Legislators as well - I have been completely excluded from receiving any e-mails sent among Republican members, including the one that apparently announced the date of caucus elections for the 2013-14 sessions.

Looking at the forthcoming prospect of 2013-2014, please understand that it had been my desire and hope that the passage of time would put these matters to rest. Having been forced to relay this information to you and in outlining the recent occurrences herein, however, it is clear we are in a time of exclusion regarding how the state's House of Representatives may continue to operate. In light of what I have outlined for you here, please consider for a moment how easily you could be similarly excluded now or in the future.

As a result, in order to make sure fairness, thoughtfulness and our Founder's intent is placed at the forefront of any legislative agenda, I would like you to consider the following potential reforms to the future functioning of the body:

- **No stifling of debate.** During the time I have been a member of the House, the speaker calls on only designated members as identified by leadership to speak on the floor on either the budget bill or other so-denoted "key" bills and, as such, other members are as a matter of

course precluded from speaking to or on such bills. The budget bill is the most important piece of legislation you must make an informed decision on, and I believe this tradition of "silence" amongst the majority of other elected legislators on the Floor must change.

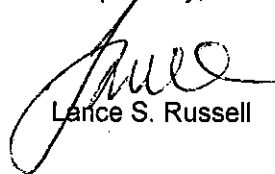
- **Secret and organized pre-committee meetings on bills without the benefit of testimony should not occur.** These organized pre-committee meetings held by majority party members of certain committees to determine which members will vote for and/or against bills without first hearing proponent or opponent committee testimony on the bill absolutely undermines the basic principles of the legislative process.
- **Organized marginalization of members with whom we may at times disagree on policy is not beneficial to our constituents, but rather, is simply unacceptably immature and childish.** For example, reference to "He or she who shall not be named" in organized meetings marginalizes certain members of the body. This organized behavior should not be tolerated in meetings of the People's House.

Please note that the foregoing is merely a short list of some important reforms you may want to review and consider prior to the organization of the next Legislative Session. I am sure you may very well have other structural reforms to add to this list – I hope you feel you can openly engage in this discussion and provide your input. The goal is to make the Legislature an institution that functions in a manner which our Founders would be proud and which should always reflect the values of the people of South Dakota.

I realize members who have engaged in these "organizational activities" as outlined will likely be highly critical of this letter; however, I believe that ultimately as equally elected members of our Legislative body, each of us has an obligation to strengthen this institution, including eliminating behavior wrongfully designed to concentrate power and diminish the thoughtful and honest exchange of ideas.

Thank you in advance for your careful and thoughtful consideration of this information. Best wishes to you and your families in your upcoming election. Please do not hesitate to contact me any time if you have any questions, concerns or ideas.

Respectfully,



Lance S. Russell