

# The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

*Brought to you by the North Dakota Progressive Coalition – May 2006*

“War is a coward's escape from the problems of peace.”  
-- *William Sloane Coffin*

The Good: Our student-led rally in Bismarck on May 15 protested low wages, excessive tuition hikes, and high interest rates on student loans – all the symptoms of a lack of leadership in the Republican-controlled legislature. Thanks to everyone who wished us well and especially to the people who came!

The Ugly: Advertisements funded by out-of-state public relations firms flooded North Dakota airwaves this month and last to tell us that the estate tax should be repealed. The ads tried to trick people into thinking farmers pay the estate tax. Nearly all are exempt from the tax. The New York Times recently broke the story that 18 mega-wealthy families are financing the PR campaign and hiding their involvement behind front groups – a classic fight between greed and community.

The Bad: The Medicare sign-up deadline passed on May 15. Almost 30,000 North Dakota seniors have not signed up, meaning their premiums will go up at least 7% until the next sign-up period in November. Congressional Republicans will soon introduce a new bill allowing health insurance companies to pour lemon juice on your paper cuts – what else did you think “compassionate conservatism” meant?

The Good: Representative Earl Pomeroy is calling for a deadline extension and for the penalties to be waived. At least some government officials are treating us like adults. “Eat your vegetables or you’ll be grounded!” “Join Medicare Part D or we’ll increase your premiums!”

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The Ugly: Congress recently made the capitol gains tax cuts permanent. These tax cuts reduce the tax paid on income derived from stocks. The more stock you own, the more money you save. The average millionaire will save \$42,000 under these tax cuts. The average \$50,000-aire will save \$11. Isn't it odd the only people who benefit from tax cuts are the ones who can already afford taxes, health insurance, and college expenses? What kind of government is that? Oh yeah – the lousy, no good, irresponsible, very bad kind.

The Bad: According to the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, if the minimum wage rose as fast as college tuition did since the 1970s, the minimum wage would be \$22/hour. In 1978, the minimum wage was \$2.65/hour. It's gone up only \$2.50 since. Would you like fries with that?

The Good: Democracy – use it or lose it! Make sure you vote on June 13. School board, county commission, city council, and other seats are up for grabs!

The Good: Pop quiz – get your #2 pencils and sit up straight! Now spell “Congratulations!” Around the state this month, students graduated from all levels of school and are ready to move on to the next step in their lives. Good job!



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