

1/6/12

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PERFECT

Congratulations to Congressman John Kline, who was only one of 12 members of the U.S. House of Representatives to never miss a vote in 2011.

Although it's a sad commentary on the state of our democracy that we need to cheer a politician who simply does what he is paid to do, we nonetheless congratulate Kline on this apparently difficult achievement.

With 435 members in the U.S. House, a meager 2.75% of its members had a perfect voting record in 2011.

Is it too much to ask that our REPRESENTATIVES show up to actually represent us?

After all, they all seem eager to collect 100% of their paycheck.

Perhaps it's time to dock pay from these jokers for their absences. Only voted 75% of the time? Then you only get 75% of your salary.

How very sad.

BROOKLYN PARK - JOBS MACHINE

Brooklyn Park Mayor Jeff Lunde informs the Watchdog that the city led all metro suburbs in job creation last year. The city increased private sector jobs by 9.2%, leading second place finisher Maple Grove, which grew jobs 4.8%, by a large margin.

Lunde notes that the numbers do not include transfers coming to the Target campus in Brooklyn Park from downtown Minneapolis.

Mayor Lunde has done a great job focusing city hall on the task of creating a city that is hospitable to job creators.

Congratulations to Mayor Lunde, the city council and staff.

STILL FECKLESS AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Former God Ol' Boy Godfather Dan Erhart is an anachronism. A dinosaur. A fossil. A tribute to yesteryear. A Model T. Betamax. Atari. Bi-plane.

He just can't let go and realize that his time has passed. He doesn't realize that the old way of taxing and spending and "helping" his buddies has thankfully been rejected by a new breed of reformers who understand that government has to be more accountable, leaner, and more transparent.

Back in September, the Watchdog reported the historic news that Anoka County, under the leadership of Rhonda Sivarajah, had actually cut the budget levy and the amount of money county government spends.

As expected, Dan Erhart voted against the proposed budget, being that smaller government and lower taxes are anathema to big government poobah like himself.

Check out this video that demonstrates Erhart's haughty, contemptuous attitude towards the new board majority and the taxpayers those folks truly represent.

Also check out Commissioner Matt Look's excellent rebuttal of Erhart's tomfoolery. You're a feckless one, Dan Erhart.

Video is [here](#).

THE COUP THAT FAILED

What were we saying about the Feckless One, Dan Erhart? This past Tuesday, Anoka County held its annual organizational meeting, where the board chairman is elected, committee appointments are set and other rules of board operations are set for the year.

The Feckless One began the meeting by immediately making a motion to depose Rhonda Sivarajah as board chair.

The Feckless One put into nomination the name of Commissioner Kordiak for board chair, correctly noting that had he put his own name in, the Feckless One would have earned one vote, that being his own.

The effort to take out Sivarajah failed, with Erhart, Kordiak, and Carol LeDoux voting for Kordiak.

Sivarajah, West, Look, and Westerberg all voted against the motion.

It was then Sivarajah's turn to be nominated. She was re-elected board chair 5-2, with Carol LeDoux switching to the winning team in a cynical, fruitless gesture to no doubt curry favor with the winning side.

The whole affair produced big winners and big losers and will no doubt set the tone for the rest of year in Anoka County government.

Rhonda Sivarajah won big. She consolidated her leadership position in the county and reaffirmed the county's commitment to a policy direction that will focus on efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Andy Westerberg was another big winner. The Good Ol' Boys made an effort to flip him and turn him into a traitor against those who were his biggest supporters in his election - the fiscal conservatives who populate his district.

Westerberg deserves credit for remembering his constituents and continuing to side with the reformers.

We sincerely hope Andy Westerberg will continue to govern in 2012 as he did in 2011, when he supported Sivarajah and the big policy initiatives adopted by the county such as the historic budget levy.

Matt Look and Robyn West were winners as well. West has been a rock, steady and sure throughout her career. Look has become the voice of conservatism on the board, unafraid to put Erhart in his place while vigorously defending new policies.

While the Feckless One was undoubtedly a big loser, readers shouldn't underestimate the damage Carol LeDoux did to herself over this whole affair.

She threw her fate to the losing team, siding with Dan Erhart. LeDoux apparently didn't get the memo that Erhart is no longer in charge - or even relevant.

LeDoux has no shortage of challengers lining up in her district. Voting against Rhonda Sivarajah was about the dumbest thing she could have done. The move only poured gasoline on a growing fire.

LeDoux is in serious danger of once again becoming "Scott's Wife," little more than a malleable waif in a pantsuit.

And no, voting for Rhonda after voting against Rhonda won't atone for the cardinal sin.

You're on thin political ice, Ms. LeDoux.

Yes, the Feckless One was a big loser this week. His failed attempt to pull a palace coup proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that he has faded to irrelevance.

If we're lucky, Erhart will run for re-election this fall and embarrass himself off the stage.

Retiring gracefully is too much to expect from this guy.

1/13/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Pandering of the Worst Kind.**
- 2. Dayton's "Jobs" Plan.**
- 3. It's the Stadium Deadline!**
- 4. A Poll We Can Love.**

Editor's Note: Quote of the Week.

"The whole reason we're doing this is so the team can make money."
- Ted Mondale, Governor Dayton's point man on the stadium

And that is precisely why the government has no business in this affair. It's up to the Vikings and their shareholders to make money, not the state government.

PANDERING OF THE WORST KIND

The Watchdog joins the chorus of freedom loving conservatives who condemn Newt Gingrich and Rick Perry for their unfounded and facile criticism of Mitt Romney and his work for Bain Capital.

Perry and Gingrich, the [Beavis and Butthead](#) of GOP politics, thought it good politics to criticize Romney for work turning around failing companies by pandering to the crowd that sees capitalism, free markets, and profits as something evil.

Thankfully, this cynical political ploy has backfired, leaving two dead campaigns, well, deader.

And that's a good thing. In fact, it's a critical thing.

Those who call themselves Republicans have a fundamental belief in the correctness of capitalism, which is the worst economic system ever devised, except for all the others, or so the famous quote goes.

Our guess is that Gingrich knows the virtue of capitalism but says these spurious things anyway to pander to South Carolina voters. Our further guess is that Perry failed economics 101 or took basket weaving in its place. Harold Hamilton has already rushed

a copy of Henry Hazlitt's classic "Economics in One Lesson" overnight FedEx to Rick Perry. No word on whether Rick Perry can actually read, however.

It is vitally important to understand WHY conservatives so strongly believe in the fundamental virtue of capitalism, which can be understood by examining Romney's work as a turnaround specialist.

Begin with the First Principle of economics: All resources are limited. All of them. Copper, jet engines, flat screen televisions, auto repair, and yes, even medical care is limited (which is why government-run universal health care schemes ultimately involve harsh governmental rationing).

Therefore, in an industry, when resources are being utilized by failing and underperforming market participants, it is critical that those resources be directed away from inefficient participants and towards efficient participants.

This is the "invisible hand" Adam Smith wrote of in his opus work "*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*."

In a capitalist economy, there is a ceaseless and constant dynamic at play that directs limited resources away from inefficient uses and towards productive uses.

This is precisely what Romney did in his work at Bain Capital. He and his firm identified inefficient market participants and helped them become efficient by shedding and eliminating inefficient aspects of their business models.

And yes, this process often results in the regrettable dislocation of people who suffer layoffs.

But it is important to remember that this process of "[creative destruction](#)" provides an extremely beneficial and productive result. With resources constantly directed to efficient players, wealth is created (not transferred!), jobs are created, and our collective prosperity grows.

While it is painful to the person who suffers dislocation from the reallocation of resources, we should never doubt the overall beneficial impact, as that dislocated worker frequently finds new work and that more jobs are created in other market sectors that create more wealth and prosperity.

Think about. Years ago, no one was working at Microsoft. No one was working at Google. No one was building computers, cell phones, MRI machines, or highly efficient jumbo jets.

Instead, we were building Studebakers, telegraphs, Atari, and Betamax.

No person can seriously argue that we aren't living better as a society than we were 50 years ago.

And no person and can argue that we aren't living better than 95% of the rest of the world.

All of this is possible because of free market capitalism. Yes, the system isn't perfect and there are fair criticisms to be made.

But on the whole, we are a free and prosperous people because of free markets. Free markets mean free people.

And while the economic blessings of capitalism are many, there is a more important issue at play.

It is impossible for individual liberty to exist in the absence of capitalism.

In world history, there has never been a society that simultaneously offered individual freedom while practicing communism and other forms of central economic planning.

Put another way, capitalism is a death knell for totalitarian government and is thus never tolerated by tyrants and kings.

Free markets and free people are concepts that are fundamentally inseparable, intertwined, and mutually supportive.

Think of a society where individuals are free to enter into contracts, employ their labor as they see fit, and consume and produce goods and services as they see fit.

There is no doubt that that society also respects free speech, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of religion and other hallmarks of a society where the rule of law prevails and individual liberty is respected and cherished.

Think about the opposite. A society under which the economy is driven by central planning is bound to place individual rights subordinate to governmental power.

Thus, when capitalism is under attack, individual liberty is under attack.

When Obama and company undermine capitalism, they undermine your liberty and your individual rights.

Take Obamacare for example. Government-run healthcare means an "individual mandate" that forces, through governmental coercion, each citizen to participate in the health insurance marketplace.

Again, when free markets are attacked, an attack on individual liberty isn't far behind.

This is why conservatives have reacted so forcefully against Gingrich and Perry. Their attacks on capitalism are attacks on the bedrock of America - the right of each and every one of us to be free and determine our fate free from governmental coercion and harassment.

While there are most assuredly aspects of Romney's candidacy that are open to criticism, his past participation in a capitalist economy is not one of them.

DAYTON'S "JOBS" PLAN

Oops. It looks like Governor Dayton has stepped back into the time machine and emerged, once again, in the 1970s.

His "jobs" plan is little more than warmed over tried and failed government-centric proposals that have been around for decades.

Take the job hiring credit. Dayton proposes to offer a tax credit to firms that hire people. This scheme has been tried in the past and has failed miserably.

Research shows that firms who take advantage of the credit would have hired in the absence of the credit anyway. Put another way, the credit has zero marginal value.

It simply doesn't make economic sense for any company to hire an unneeded employee simply to take advantage of a tax credit that is heavily outweighed by the costs of training and paying that employee.

Moreover, past programs have been riddled with fraud, resulting in phantom employees, double counted jobs, and employees hired and fired before the firm encounters any real overhead costs.

But it does make for great politics. Dayton will no doubt count every tax credit as a job created on his watch. Moreover, he will claim that "but for" the credit, the job would have not been created.

The other wretched aspect of the "jobs" plan is a fat \$775 million "stimulus" proposal in the form of yet another bonding bill.

Bonding bills simply put state expenses on the credit card and add to the fastest growing aspect of the state budget - debt repayment.

Haven't we had enough of government debt and claims that government can spend us into prosperity?

The state has spent billions on bonding in recent years, including last summer. Where are the jobs?

The Watchdog has one simple question for Governor Dayton: how many jobs have been created from state bonding in the last 5 years? How many?

The answer is that he doesn't know.

What we at the Watchdog know is that we're fed up with government debt and "stimulus" bills. Fed way, way up.

IT'S THE STADIUM DEADLINE!

Big deal. So Ramsey County submitted a plan that ups the subsidy for Zygmunt and crew while Minneapolis does the same. And now Shakopee thinks it's a player.

The Vikings still have no stadium site, no financing plan, and no local champion.

What the media isn't reporting is that multiple Capitol sources tell the Watchdog that a stadium bill is increasingly unlikely to pass this session.

Stadium fatigue has set in at the Capitol, along with the realization that this is an election year and rarely do big issues get resolved in an election year, especially one where all 201 legislative seats are up for grabs.

Legislators are getting fed up with the continuing circus that is the stadium debate. Many Republicans want to move on to substantive issues that will define the 2012 election.

Zygi's football palace ain't one of them.

Today was just one more false deadline that further exposes the lie the team is going to move if they don't extort a stadium from us all.

A POLL WE CAN LOVE

A Gallup poll says self-described conservatives make up the largest segment of American voters.

40% consider themselves conservative while 35% call themselves moderate. Only 21% call themselves liberal.

This is the third year in a row that conservatives have constituted the biggest segment.

The trend started in 2008, the same year Barack Obama started dismantling the country.

1/20/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: With the 2012 Minnesota legislature kicking off next Tuesday, the Anoka County Watchdog will move the publication of the email update to late afternoon each Friday to better capture the week's events at the Capitol.

- 1. North Star Commuter Rail - a Legacy of Failure.**
- 2. The Session Begins.**

NORTH STAR COMMUTER RAIL - A LEGACY OF FAILURE

It is really amazing to consider that the bad news concerning Northstar commuter rail continues rain down on Anoka County taxpayers year after year.

The issue that launched the Anoka County Watchdog back in 2005 continues to haunt taxpayer wallets to this day - and will continue to haunt us, our children, and probably our grandchildren.

The train is nothing short of a horrifying melding of white elephant and legacy project, Erhart's Folly as it were.

As reported by our friends over the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota were the first to highlight the latest, and fundamental, failure of Northstar rail - low ridership numbers.

Readers will recall that in 2010, the first full year of operation, Northstar officials predicted ridership of nearly 900,000. The actual number was 715,000, a shortfall of over 20%!

The excuse at that time was that the line was new and ridership would increase as commuters realized the value - the genius! - of commuter rail.

The lie has been put to that alibi as the 2011 ridership numbers have come in for analysis.

In 2011, ridership was a paltry 697,000, 18,000 below the first year numbers! Yes, Northstar became LESS popular as commuters became more familiar with it.

This despite the fact that Northstar officials lowered the bar in 2011 by offering ridership projection numbers that were lower than 2010 projections.

For 2011, ridership was projected to be 750,000, nearly 150,000 riders below the 2010 projection of 897,000.

Northstar bureaucrats lowered ridership projections by roughly 16% and the train still couldn't clear the bar.

And let's not forget that tens of thousands of riders on Northstar aren't rush hour commuters who are freeing up highway lane space by taking the train. No, they're Twins fans taking a heavily subsidized train ride down to Target Field to watch the Twinkies put in another inept performance despite the fact that the Pohlads told the legislature a sweet new taxpayer-subsidized stadium would mean a competitive team on the field.

On top of all that, Northstar ridership is down at a time when bus usage is UP.

So much for the argument that Northstar is a commuter travel option that will open lane space and mean a better commute.

In the car versus train battle, cars are winning big time. The expansion of Highway 10 between Egret and Hanson did more for commuters in the area than Northstar ever will, and at a fraction of the cost.

So what about economic development? The other canard regarding Northstar was that it would bring billions in economic development.

That, of course, hasn't happened either. Drive to any Northstar station and look around. The development, such as it is, was already there when the station was built.

Predictably, the bureaucrats sucking up a government paycheck, are right there to tout all the development POTENTIAL.

Yep, the economic development is just around the corner. Much in the same way a televangelist tells his chowder head viewers that salvation is right around the corner, just as long as the checks keep coming in.

Take Big Lake, a tiny hamlet of 10,000 that serves as the northern terminus of Erhart's Folly (10,000 people? And we wonder why the train is failing).

Despite being a town of 10,000, Big Lake employs both a "senior city planner" and an "economic development specialist."

According to these bureaucrats with the important sounding titles, Northstar will bring retail sales (coffee shops, newsstands) economic benefit to Big Lake in 2022. Yes, we said 2022.

Northstar rail has proven to be the boondoggle Harold Hamilton predicted it would be a decade ago.

Was Harold the Nostradamus of the county? Nope. He merely asked to see the empirical data that would show Northstar to be a good public investment. When the data didn't appear, Hamilton called his shot and predicted that decades of choo choo boondoggery lay ahead.

Face facts, readers. Northstar rail is a failure and always will be. It was ill conceived from the start and this destined for failure. A group of legacy-seeking Good Ol' Boys pimped other elected officials and opinion makers into backing the project, much like the snake oil salesmen of years past.

The people who perpetrated this economic calamity on Anoka County need to be held to account.

The Anoka County Watchdog is happy to offer rebuttal space in next week's issue to Commissioner Dan Erhart and Anoka County lobbyist Kathy Tingelstad, the former state legislator who was run out of office after cheerleading for Northstar down in Saint Paul.

You can thank these two for their "leadership" on the issue right here:

Dan Erhart: Dan.Erhart@co.anoka.mn.us

Kathy Tingelstad: kathy.tingelstad@co.anoka.mn.us

THE SESSION BEGINS

This is the last edition of the Email Update before the 2012 legislative session kicks off next Tuesday.

Here are the Watchdogs predictions for the 2012 session.

Vikings Stadium. The legislature will not pass a Vikings stadium bill in the 2012 session.

Stadium politics are always difficult and GOP leaders realize they are asking their troops to walk the plank if they take a stadium vote in an election year, especially one that promises to be so volatile and contentious as this year. Whether the red or green button is pushed, it's a losing proposition for Senjem and Zellers to bring up a vote this year.

And there's also that no so small matter of the team's utter incompetence, a true saving grace for those of us who believe the government has no business subsidizing a professional sports franchise.

Lester Bagley and company still have no settled stadium site, financing plan, or local champion, which means they still have no bill for legislators to consider.

Moreover, the team's ham-handed strategy of creating a false sense of urgency back in the fall has utterly backfired. With the session days away, legislators and the public are beset with a sense of stadium fatigue and the feeling that the wind has gone out of the purple longboat's sails.

After the session ends, Bagley and crew will announce that they agreed to wait until 2013. They will sign a lease extension at the Metrodome.

Looking deeper into the crystal ball, a stadium bill will pass at some point in the future, but only after the team is sold to a group with a local ownership angle and a more competent lobbying team is brought in to restore gravitas to the team's efforts at the Capitol.

Bonding Bill. Yes, Watchdogs, a bonding bill will pass. Republicans will moderate Governor Dayton's massive, bloated bill and pass a more affordable bill focused on priorities besides dolphin exhibits and sculpture gardens.

GOP leadership will recall the whipping Republicans took at the polls in 2004 after they failed to pass a bonding bill and they were successfully tagged with a "do nothing" label that cost majority Republicans 13 seats in the Minnesota House, leaving them with a slim 68-66 majority that certainly was no majority on a large number of issues.

Reform 2.0. With today's press conference, the GOP finally got back on message, focusing on the issues that got them elected in the first place. Perhaps were now done with the senseless focus, near obsession, on football stadiums and slot machines.

The Watchdog predicts the GOP will find some common ground with the governor on these issues and a small element of Reform 2.0 will pass.

Constitutional Amendments. GOP leadership will come to realize that constitutional ballot initiatives are the equivalent of running a state-wide campaign and there simply aren't enough resources to fund multiple ballot issues (including the ultra-prices gay marriage issue), fund a presidential effort against Obama, fund a redistricting legal effort, fund the daycare provider union challenge, repay the state GOP debt, fund a senate race, fund 8 congressional races, and fund the election and re-election efforts of 201 legislative Republicans who aim to keep the majority in both houses.

Photo ID may make it to the ballot if Governor Dayton is unwilling to sign a compromise bill.

Other than that, there won't be enough GOP support for either an amendment to require a super-majority to raise taxes or a "right to work" amendment.

This is especially true with the latter amendment. Unless the GOP has a spare \$10-12 million laying around to match the all-out union blitz that would make Ohio look like a tickle fight, it is best to let sleeping dogs lie and not provoke the sleeping giant.

Many GOP candidates have yet to seriously engage fundraising for 2012. They're about to find out that there isn't a lot of spare change to go around in the GOP donor universe. Opening more political battle fronts risks a scenario where none are adequately funded.

Gambling. This is another issue that induced no small amount of fatigue as an inordinate amount of time has been dedicated to an issue the average voter doesn't care about.

No gambling will pass, with the possible exception of electronic pull tabs. The DFL and Governor Dayton won't abandon the tribes, who have been a steady ally over the years. The only question is whether or not the GOP will pass a bill and incur that wrath of the tribes. If so, we hope the racino folks have a few hundred thousand in the bank for the GOP.

Adjournment. This is the year the legislature actually adjourns early, just before Easter. The GOP anxious to hold its majority, rushes to get its troops back home to begin campaigning and meeting new constituents because of redistricting.

Moreover, there is very little common ground with Governor Dayton, especially in an election year.

With a projected budget surplus, there is no budget repair bill to be done.

The cherry on top is the bragging rights of having done the people's work early and heading home.

The GOP will do a bonding bill, pass reform items, do property tax reform, perhaps add a photo ID ballot issue, and go home.

That's a good thing. Every day spent in Saint Paul is a day off the campaign trail.

With a low unemployment rate and a budget surplus, the GOP has the makings of a solid re-election narrative.

We'll revisit our predictions after session ends to see just how prescient we were.

1/27/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Greetings, from Saint Paul, Watchdogs! The 2012 legislative session kicked off this week and the Watchdog has set up shop under the dome to report the latest happenings from the Capitol. Of course, we will keep an eye on events outside the Capitol, but the main threat to your liberty is centered squarely on Saint Paul. The principles of war dictate that resources are concentrated at the center of attack, so here we are and here we will be until the gavel falls on adjournment, [sine die](#).

- 1. Anoka County Does it Again.**
- 2. Amendment Mania.**

ANOKA COUNTY DOES IT AGAIN

We have to start this week's issue with more big news out of the Anoka County Board. At a time when our federal and state governments have grown into out-of-control Leviathans that Republicans struggle to contain, Anoka County has turned into a national model for thoughtful, forward-looking policies that restrain government and grow private sector prosperity.

Moreover, it's nothing short of amazing to consider that just a couple of years ago, the Anoka County Board, under previous "leadership," was the poster child for sclerotic, stale government dominated by cronyism and rhetorical platitudes centered on claims of fiscal responsibility while taxes and spending went through the roof.

Readers are well aware of the historic budget passed by the board this year that saw the county tax levy reduced for the first time in recent history.

The county board has supported this commitment to limited government by passing compensation plans that restrain employee salaries by holding pay flat.

The pay freeze, of course, is another milestone in county government history because of the aforementioned problem with previous boards operating the county like a banana republic.

The freeze is a hard freeze, meaning that salary schedules will stay as they are, with no hidden increases.

Compare this result, for example, to school districts. School districts continue to shell out pay and benefit increases despite the very difficult economy, which Obama can't seem to solve.

According to the Minnesota School Board Association, the statewide salary average for teacher contract settlements for the 2009-2011 contract period is 3.77% higher than the 2007-2009 period.

Just as aside, let's review the statewide average salary contract increases for teachers over the recent past:

2007-2009: 6.63%

2005-2007: 8.52%

2003-2005: 7.82 %

Of course, increases for benefits like insurance and retirement are not included.

This pay freeze also applies to the county board, which is no surprise. One of the first principles adopted by the new board was that they would lead by example and share the sacrifices asked of county employees.

No more news stories of county commissioners voting themselves a pay increase, accompanied by whining about how hard they work and the burden of being a commissioner.

On a side note, this would be an appropriate time to walk down memory lane to recall one of the Watchdog's Hall of Fame quotes, this one from former commissioner Margaret Langfeld back in 2005, the Watchdog's inaugural year.

Readers will recall that the county board decided to take a junket to Hawaii on the taxpayer dime to attend a conference for some group called NACo, the National Association of Counties.

When Watchdog CEO Harold Hamilton wrote a letter to Langfeld to shame her for the junket, Langfeld replied that, "The long plane ride to Hawaii is not pleasant!"

That quote still hangs on the wall of Watchdog headquarters and is emblematic of the Good Ol' Boys' elitist attitude and their inflated sense of entitlement and self-importance.

As mentioned above, it is important to keep in mind that the board, under the leadership of Rhonda Sivarajah, has reduced the footprint of county government in a thoughtful and purposeful manner.

Employees have been included in the process, with their ideas for delivering better services at a lower cost incorporated into new policies.

This isn't a situation, contrary to what Dan Erhart claims, where the board has simply taken a meat cleaver to the budget.

The goal isn't merely to hack on government. The goal is to create a county government that meets the needs of citizens while recognizing that the status-quo-plus-5% won't work anymore.

Readers shouldn't underestimate how much hard work is required to make this happen. Anyone can grow government and put it on auto-pilot. And it doesn't take a whole of effort to merely cut (yes, we admit we like cutting). It does, however, require a great deal of dedication and work to build a leaner organization that gets better results.

Commissioners Sivarajah, Look, West, and Westerberg deserve more than our thanks. They are creating a model for the rest of the state to follow, right here in Anoka County.

AMENDMENT MANIA

The Anoka County Watchdog urges Republican friends in the legislature to exercise caution regarding the avalanche of constitutional amendments under consideration for the ballot this fall.

In determining to put a question on the ballot, a number of factors should be carefully considered.

Literally [dozens](#) of constitutional amendments are under consideration, many of them dealing with public policy issues the Watchdog fully supports, such limiting tax increases, showing a photo ID to vote, and term limits for those who believe legislative service is a career choice, not an opportunity to serve.

But as worthy as the issue may be, there many factors to consider before throwing an issue on the ballot and possibly enshrining that issue in our founding document.

First, there has to be a solid campaign plan in place. Passing a constitutional ballot question requires a sophisticated political, media, and financial plan that must be flawlessly executed. The constitution requires a majority of affirmative votes to pass an amendment. That means that someone who doesn't vote on the issue is counted as a "nay" vote.

And it takes a boatload of money. The most recent successful amendment, to raise the sales tax for water, wetlands, bike trails, and puppet shows, saw the proponents spend over \$5 million.

Depending upon the intensity of the issue, it could be far more.

The "marriage amendment" that will be on the ballot this fall will undoubtedly attract far more attention and resources. Over ten million will likely be spent trying convince voters one way or the other, while trying to grab their attention in a presidential election year with a crowded ballot.

Just how many campaigns can be properly waged this year?

Second, many good conservatives are troubled by the prospect of legislating through the constitution.

Conservatives agree that the constitution is a founding document that should be changed rarely and only to address the most fundamental issues of a well ordered society.

Of course, there is a great deal of subjectivity involved in this analysis.

The recent amendment to put arts and outdoors funding in the constitution is a prime example of the abuse of the constitutional amendment process.

Now, this funding is protected by the constitution and is beyond the reach of the legislature.

Thus, Minnesota citizens were treated to the bizarre spectacle this past legislative session of millions being cut from public safety and our courts while millions upon millions were lavished upon puppet shows, bike trails, and beaches.

In a very real sense, constitutional amendments short circuit the democratic process by cutting out the governor in the near term (no gubernatorial action is needed to pass

legislation on to the ballot) and cuts out the legislature, and by extension the people of Minnesota, in the long run because that issue is now in the constitution and can only be repealed or amended by another amendment.

Again, in some cases that's good public policy because some issues are so imperative that they simply must be put beyond the reach of the temporary passions of the people and the sometimes arbitrary decisions of the judiciary.

But these instances should be rare.

Moreover, care must be taken not to have these amendments perceived, fairly or not, as a tool of convenience to get around a gubernatorial veto.

While the Watchdog is just as disappointed as anyone that Mark Dayton was elected governor, the fact is that he was duly elected and he should not be bypassed merely because he disagrees with many Republican issues. To do so is to violate a sacred obligation to uphold the constitution.

If the motive is based on purely on public policy, that's fine. If the motive is more nefarious, than legislators should pay heed to the better angles of their nature. And if that doesn't work, take a look at recent Minnesota political history.

The most important consideration of this whole is the realization that what is good for the goose can be good for the gander.

A DFL majority could have certainly gone around Governor Pawlenty on a number of occasions. What would conservatives have said about that?

A DFL majority sometime in the future (hopefully a far, far away future) could put on ballot issues to bypass a GOP governor.

What would conservatives say about a ballot amendment to guarantee universal health care?

How about one to guarantee early childhood learning?

Maybe one to enshrine the Doe vs. Gomez court decision that found a right to a government-funded abortion?

And while we are still flush with the heady exultation of electoral glory last fall, those feelings must be tempered by the hard reality of political history.

Since party designation was reintroduced in legislative races in 1974, the DFL has controlled both houses of the legislature during the following biennia:

1974-1976;
1976-1978;
1980-1982;
1982-1984;
1986 - 1988;
1990-1992;
1994 - 1996;
1996 - 1998;
2006 - 2008;
2008 - 2010.

There is one constitutional amendment the Watchdog can support. The amendment proposed amendment to require a 2/3rds vote of each house of the legislature to put a proposed amendment on the ballot. The current simple majority is too low a threshold and allows unworthy measures to make the ballot.

If the 2/3rds requirement had been in place, the so-called Legacy Amendment would have never made the ballot and the sales tax increase it brought wouldn't be the reality we face today.

2/3/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Greetings from the Watchdog War Room deep under the Capitol Dome in Saint Paul. Here's your weekly update, including a bad week for the DFL, rumors, the bills of the week, and other items of note from the week that was.

1. Capitol Update.

CAPITOL UPDATE

The headline from Saint Paul this week has to focus on the stumbles of the DFL, starting with their fearless (unless it's a low level, undefined threat of terrorism) leader, the Trust Fund Governor.

Governor Dayton displayed a decided lack of leadership and poise this week when he melted down and threw a tantrum that would have made any self-respecting toddler blush in admiration.

The cause? The rejection of Public Utilities Commission member and former DFL state Senator Ellen Anderson by the state Senate.

Apparently, Dayton was either unaware that the Senate had such powers or he and Anderson are the only two people in Minnesota who consider her views on energy to be within the mainstream, even in this left-leaning state.

Moreover, it's not like Dayton had no warning. If he had been a Watchdog subscriber, the governor would have read weeks ago that Anderson was heading to rejection, which may have prevented his fit.

Dayton's [press release](#) was decidedly unbecoming the chief executive of this great state:

"A very good person, a very dedicated public servant, and an excellent Chair of the Public Utilities Commission was wrongly maligned and cruelly rejected today by Republican Senators, who showed once again that they are **unfit to govern this state.**"

"You would think after their leadership scandals, which caused them to replace all of their leaders last month, they would behave themselves for at least a little while. However, they seem **incapable of doing so.**"

"Republican Senators tried to demean Ellen Anderson today; instead they demeaned themselves. Once again, they showed Minnesotans who they really are. **They are too extreme to lead.**"

If Governor Dayton is going to lose his composure and allow his emotions to dictate his actions in a circumstance like this, how is he going to react in a far worse crisis situation?

God forbid, but what if a serious natural disaster strikes? What if a situation arises at a nuclear plant? What if a mass casualty scenario becomes a nightmarish reality?

As both the chief executive of the state and the commander-in-chief of the state militia, Dayton would be called upon to exercise decisive leadership, making decisions that could literally mean the difference between life and death.

If he reacts like this over a rejected appointment, the Watchdog shudders to think what might happen if the crap really hits the fan.

Compare Dayton's hysterics and drama to Governor Pawlenty's measured, rational response to the rejection of Cheri Yecke as his Education Commissioner, who was one of two appointments rejected by the DFL-led Senate.

Said Pawlenty:

"In the dark of night, the Democrats in the Minnesota Senate have done a great disservice to our state. By rejecting Commissioner Yecke on a party-line vote, they have rejected innovation and accountability for our education system. My disappointment in their action and the loss to our state is deep and profound."

The voice of grace under pressure. The voice of reason and statesmanship.

By the way, Pawlenty really meant the dark of night. The DFL took up Yecke's confirmation at 3:40 AM, with no notice.

The GOP gave all parties involved the courtesy of both notice and a floor vote during regular business hours, when the public and the media had an opportunity to witness the proceedings.

The Yecke rejection also offers readers an opportunity to once again swim in the liberal hypocrisy that seems to infect nearly all their words and actions.

DFL Senators decried Anderson's rejection as one based on subjective factors surrounding style and not based on actions.

First, let's take a step back and consult the record regarding the reasons the DFL gave for rejecting Yecke.

One special interest group accused her of being "polarizing." Former DFL state Senator Steve Kelly, a leader on education issues for the DFL, called her an "active divider."

Whatever that mumbo jumbo means.

Second, Anderson had a demonstrated record over 18 years in the legislature of pursuing a radical environmental agenda that was far outside the mainstream.

So, Governor, spare us the drama regarding Ellen Anderson. The Senate properly exercised its oversight role in rejecting Anderson, the only rejection of your administration.

You, on the other hand, engaged in some serious emotional extremism that once again calls into question your fitness to serve as chief executive and commander-in-chief.

And don't worry about Ellen Anderson. She avoided the fate of being forced to rely on the private sector for a pay check by accepting a job in the governor's office as some type of "advisor."

How many times can people like Larry Pogemiller, Ellen Anderson, and Linda Berglin recycle through the public sector while avoiding the reality of a real job? It's almost mind-numbing.

DISMISSED!

The DFL ended up with more egg on their collective faces this week as a complaint they filed against Senator [Dave Thompson](#) (R - Lakeville) was dismissed.

The DFL thought they had uncovered some kind of smoking gun when it was revealed that Thompson had been hired to provide work for the party.

DFL Party Chair Ken Martin quickly ran to the nearest microphone to initiate the witch hunt, announcing that something "fishy" was going on and clearly insinuating that Thompson was being paid to run.

Martin now holds the dubious distinction of what has to be the quickest dismissal of a campaign complaint in Minnesota history.

Three days after the complaint, the Campaign Finance Board dismissed the complaint, noting that the complaint "does not provide a sufficient basis for the commencement of a Board Investigation."

Those words were a very polite and diplomatic way of telling the DFL complaint was worth bullspit.

What a joke.

Thompson is a successful attorney and radio personality with a great deal of media experience.

It shouldn't have been a surprise that Thompson was hired for a short term to provide communications consulting advice during the historic 2010 campaign.

Of course, there was no evidence whatsoever that Thompson was a sham hire or didn't provide value.

Moreover, this contract between Thompson and the GOP wasn't the public's business anyway.

Like the DFL, the GOP is a private organization funded with private money.

A contract between a private citizen and a private company is no one's business. Just because Thompson happened to be a candidate for the legislature doesn't change the analysis.

Nice try, DFL.

BILL OF THE WEEK

The week's recipients of the Bill of the Week award both hail from Anoka County, the home of the Watchdog.

The Dog is proud this week to shine a spotlight and doff its cap to state Representative Branden Petersen (R - Coon Rapids) and Senator Pam Wolf (R - Spring Lake Park) for their authorship of HF [1870](#) and its companion SF 1690.

This legislation allows school district to base discharge decisions on the basis of something besides seniority.

In other words, the bill would free up school districts to base layoffs decisions on something other than a "LIFO" (last in, first out) system.

So, for example, a school district could lay off a senior teacher who gets poor results while retaining a newer teacher who is educating children well and providing a good value to the taxpayer.

What a novel concept!

Make no mistake, Watchdogs. Petersen and Wolf deserve credit for their Profile in Political Courage.

Education Minnesota and the Teacher Industrial Complex hate the idea of teacher accountability and have made these two legislators public enemies number 1.

These two freshmen legislators, who represent swing districts, have staked out an admirable position, taking a big risk to truly reform education and stand tall in the face Minnesota's biggest special interest.

Oh, by the way, Senator Wolf is herself a teacher and just may know a thing or two about how schools work (or don't work).

It's kind of ironic that the teacher union always speaks to the need of the public to view teachers as professionals yet complains when teachers are treated that way.

After all, no engineering or accounting firm uses a LIFO system to address layoffs.

This old, Soviet-style pay grid for teachers is coming to an end.

Minnesota is only one of 11 states that makes seniority a deciding factor when making layoffs.

Let's make it 10.

Make sure you thank Rep. Petersen and Sen. Wolf for their hard and often thankless work to reform our public schools.

We're they would appreciate hearing from the many Watchdogs who are behind them 100%.

Contact Rep. Petersen [here](#).

Contact Sen. Wolf [here](#).

NEWS AND NOTES

Rep. Mark Murdock (R - Ottertail) has announced he will not seek re-election after two terms. Good luck to Rep. Murdock, who realizes the legislature isn't a career choice.

Former Senate staffer Michael Brodkorb has hired a team to represent him after he was fired very shortly after the Amy Koch scandal erupted. Legal experts observe that Brodkorb has a difficult task to prove a wrongful discharge. This one could bleed out for awhile, sadly.

Sources tell the Watchdog that a strong sense of "stadium fatigue" has settled over the Capitol, especially among Republicans. Many observers feel that the odds of taxpayer-financed stadium are growing quite dim. Good. This was a bad idea from the start.

Finally, don't think that Dayton's tantrum and the collective DFL whining and complaining over Ellen Anderson's nixing won't be addressed by the GOP in ways subtle and not so subtle.

2/10/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Caucus Night.**
- 2. Giving Credit Where Due.**
- 3. Yes, It's a Tax Increase.**
- 4. A House Divided.**

CAUCUS NIGHT

Precinct caucus night this past Tuesday changed the landscape of the GOP nomination race, with Minnesota leading the way.

Rick Santorum was propelled back into the primary "anti-Romney" role Tuesday night after seeing his campaign flagging beyond the glow of an Iowa upset. (Perhaps there should be a yellow jersey for the current "anti-Romney" favorite, just like the lead cyclist for the Tour de France gets to wear.)

In Minnesota, Santorum was the clear favorite of GOP caucus attendees.

The big story, however, may have been just how poorly Romney fared in Minnesota, placing a distant third.

Romney was clearly the front-runner coming in to Minnesota (and he still is) and he had the backing of many establishment politicians, including former governor Tim Pawlenty.

Obviously, the Republican base isn't convinced right now that Romney is the guy.

The real question is whether or not Santorum can cement his position as the real holder of the yellow "anti-Romney" jersey.

Thus far, the base has embraced and then rejected more of these candidates than Kim Kardashian has had lovers.

Michele Bachmann was the first, although her time as front-runner was shorter than the aforementioned Kardashian marriage to Kris Humphries.

Rick Perry was hot until it was discovered that he wasn't smarter than a 5th grader. Or a first grader, for that matter.

Herman Cain was the guy until it was revealed he had zipper issues.

Newt Gingrich filled the role until voters were reminded of just what a disaster he really is, what with all the marriages, affairs, and ethics issues as Speaker of the House.

As the newly anointed alternative to Mitt, Santorum will undergo a fresh round of scrutiny to determine if he is sufficiently pure, which may be a difficult task for any former member of the U.S. House and Senate, where many hundreds of potentially "bad" votes can take place.

Santorum served in both the U.S. House and Senate.

One example is earmarking. Santorum happily engaged in the practice while a senator/representative and has subsequently defended HIS use of earmarks by proclaiming that all his earmarks were of the "good" variety while others did the "bad" earmarking.

Right. Just like the difference between good and bad smallpox.

In fact, Santorum has doubled down on his earmarking by arguing that earmarking is a critical check on the executive branch.

Yes, all those ear marks for mule tannery museums, cow flatulence studies and bridges to nowhere by members of Congress weren't shameless and expensive examples of fiscal pandering and vote buying. They were really part of a brilliant political stratagem to check an overzealous chief executive, just like the Framers intended. Um, which Federalist paper speaks to this issue? We can't seem to find it.

Other votes include his decision in 1993 to be one of 17 House Republicans to vote for legislation that would prohibit employers from permanently replacing striking workers. How will that vote square with Republicans who favor issues like right to work legislation?

Moreover, Santorum will have to answer the "Big E" question at some point - meaning "electability."

In 2006, Santorum was absolutely crushed in his bid for a third term in the U.S. Senate. He lost by 18 points, the most lopsided loss for a sitting U.S. senator in 26 years.

To be sure, Santorum holds some very conservative viewpoints, especially on social issues.

Certainly, Santorum will need to explain how he can beat Barack Obama when his last campaign went down in flames and how he will win over voters who don't share his world view on issues like intelligent design.

This isn't to say that Mitt Romney is the better candidate or that Rick Santorum is unfit to be the GOP nominee.

Santorum may very well be the man to run against Obama.

And Romney has questions of his own to answer. It's clear that he hasn't convinced many conservatives that he's to be trusted with their vote (ahem, Romney Care).

What is being said here is that Santorum is the latest contestant in the Republican speed dating game and we've been here before.

There is an upset victory or sweet debate performance followed by an emotion-filled infatuation with the candidate-du-jour until serious scrutiny reveals Prince Charming to be a toad.

Are all these candidate really that flawed or do GOP voters have commitment issues?

Is this due diligence or a case of being just plain too picky?

The reality is that we're down to three dance partners (sorry, libertarians. The Watchdog loves many of Ron Paul's issues but he isn't going to make the final cut).

Will GOP voters walk down the aisle with Mitt, Newt, or Rick? Will Newt ask for an open nomination? Sorry, we couldn't resist a little fun at Newt's expense.

Stay tuned and keep your eyes on the prize Watchdogs. November is our chance!

GIVING CREDIT WHERE DUE

Okay, Watchdogs. Sit down and put your coffee cup in a safe place. We're about to praise and congratulate Governor Dayton.

Yes, sir. Dayton this week secured a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education program.

Readers will recall that NCLB was yet another George Bush foray into the world of ever expanding federal governmental power and influence.

Bush's collaboration with Ted Kennedy on NCLB marked perhaps a high water mark for Bush's brand of Big Government "Conservatism" ("compassionate," correct?) that did further damage to the Framers' idea of federalism and a restrained federal government, especially in this issue area. What article of the U.S. Constitution gives the Congress power over K-12 education? Yeah, we can't find it either.

Education is a state issue, period. Washington will never do a good job educating kids. Look at what they did to Washington, DC public schools.

Education isn't a federal issue and the federal Department of Education should be [abolished](#).

This is one case where we can agree with Dayton.

Now it's up to Republicans in the legislature to continue to push Dayton on education reform.

And that's how it ought to be. The proper forum for deciding education issues should be Saint Paul and not Washington.

YES, IT'S A TAX INCREASE

The Taxpayer's League of Minnesota (TLM) raised some eyebrows this week by pointing out the obvious. Namely, that these so-called "racino" bills to expand gambling in Minnesota are tax increases.

The Watchdog has on occasion expressed its position on gambling, which is that we're not opposed, so long as the expansion is truly free market and the revenues are 100% neutral, meaning that gambling income is offset dollar for dollar with tax cuts in other areas, like the statewide business property tax.

In this case, we part company with many of our fellow conservatives who oppose gambling on moral grounds. We respect their viewpoint but simply don't share it.

Phil Krinkie of the League was correct to point out the inherent flaws of the current bills and the simple fact that these bills are designed to get more money into government coffers, despite pledges of holding the line of government spending or, God forbid, an actual cut in state spending.

The authors of these bills are excellent legislators who, on the whole, deserve our thanks and support.

But that doesn't change the fact that these bills are not consistent with what the GOP legislature promised those of us who worked so hard to elect them.

We're simply not interested in growing government, subsidizing horse racing, funding a Vikings stadium, or giving an oligopoly to two horse tracks.

It would benefit readers to read again (or for the first time) what Krinkie said.

Editor's Note: Harold Hamilton is involved with the Taxpayer's League of Minnesota.

Wrote Krinkie:

The reason we believe the authors of HF2068, HF1779 and SF1683 are violating their tax pledge is because the legislation would legalize an activity currently not permitted by state law and create a new tax on that activity. The tax revenue from this new activity would be deposited into the state general fund and result in more government spending.

Currently slot machines are illegal in Minnesota. If they are legalized and taxed this would be a new tax.

The Taxpayers League takes no position on the expansion of gambling. Our mission is to fight for limited government, lower taxation and promote free enterprise as set out in the Constitution.

Our opposition to the current Racino legislation is the fact that it creates a new tax, prevents free enterprise and grows government.

1) The legislation enacts a NEW TAX.

Some legislators are trying to evade this reality by calling it a 'fee', but Minnesota State Statute 645.44 subd.19 defines "tax" as "any fee, charge, exaction, or assessment imposed by a governmental entity on an individual, person, entity, transaction, good,

service, or other thing. It excludes a price that an individual or entity chooses voluntarily to pay in return for receipt of goods or services provided by the governmental entity." The state imposing a charge on any new gaming operations is a tax. In the case of Racino; the proposed new tax is up to forty percent on gross receipts. This means the state government could receive up to forty percent of every dollar put into a slot machine at Canterbury Park in Shakopee and Running Aces in Columbus.

2) The legislation creates a monopoly and prevents free enterprise.

If you read the legislation you will see that it would grant a gambling monopoly to only two businesses. Providing only two businesses with the opportunity to profit from an activity while keeping it illegal for every other Minnesota business to enter that market prevents free enterprise.

3) The legislation grows government.

The estimate is that if permitted to add slot machines; these two facilities would generate over \$100 million a year in new tax revenue for state government. The revenue generated from the new tax is deposited in the general fund and would grow government spending by hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Taxpayers League has a mission to hold legislators accountable. Just a few months ago most of these same legislators took the stance that "government must live within its means." Why do they now want to increase state revenue when the state has a projected surplus of almost a billion dollars?

A HOUSE DIVIDED

The Dog couldn't help but chuckle a bit when we read this week that one of the key members of the Ramsey County fight against a Vikings stadium is none other than Julie Novak, erstwhile spouse of Anoka County lobbyist Steve Novak.

Readers will recall that Steve Novak was the county's point man on the ill-fated attempt to move the Vikings out to Blaine by slapping a big sales tax increase on businesses in the county.

Overall, the stadium drive was a failure for the Good Ol' Boys but the journey was fun as nearly \$1 million in taxpayer funds was wasted on junkets, lobbyists and fancy dinner meals that the current board would have never supported.

Said Julie Novak of her stadium opposition, "I think we need to be an example to our children, and not pay for things that are not necessities."

Yes, a man's wife is indeed the better half, even if that wife is an ex-wife!

2/17/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Event of the Week.**
- 2. Irresponsible in Washington.**
- 3. State of Confusion.**
- 4. Non-News From the Vikings.**

EVENT OF THE WEEK

Greetings, Watchdogs! Welcome to another week of journalistic excellence coming to you from the Capitol in Saint Paul.

The event of the week coming up, however, will take place just a few miles away from the Capital City.

On behalf of the Taxpayer's League of Minnesota, the Watchdog invites you to the bucolic hamlet of Vadnais Heights for lunch and an address from one of the nation's foremost conservative thinkers and change agents in Washington, DC.

That conservative thinker is none other than [Grover Norquist](#), the founder of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), a conservative think tank and action group founded by Norquist in 1985 at the behest of President Ronald Reagan.

Norquist will be speaking next Tuesday, February 21st at 11:30 AM at [Jimmy's Conference Center](#) in Vadnais Heights.

Click here to [RSVP](#).

It is well worth your time to come out and listen to one of the country's finest political minds give his take on the state of American conservatism and our politics in general.

The Dog also needs to give a plug to the [White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce](#) for co-sponsoring the event.

We also acknowledge the good work of Chamber executive director and resident liberal [Tom Snell](#) in putting aside his statist, Keynesian tendencies to recognize the value of bringing Norquist to town. Good work, Tom!

Norquist is one of many influential celebrities Snell has brought to the Twin Cities over the years. Again, congratulations to Snell.

(Editor's Note: Harold Hamilton has known Tom Snell for many years, detesting his wishy-washy politics while valuing his friendship and admiring his tenacity.)

IRRESPONSIBLE IN WASHINGTON

Do we speak of one Barack H. Obama? Nope. It looks like our newly minted Republican majority in the U.S. House has already "gone native," allowing Washington, DC to change them instead of the other way around.

The simple fact is that Republicans in Washington have allowed the federal debt and budget deficits to continue to spiral out of control, doing little to confront the tough choices necessary to deliver on the promises that got them elected in the first place.

One prime example is the extension of the payroll tax cut.

This "temporary" tax cut is well on its way to becoming a permanent fixture in the federal budget, thanks in large part to Republicans who have fumbled the messaging on this issue and allowed, once again, politics to trump principle, which has happened time and again with Republican majorities.

First, a payroll tax cut is underpinned by a dubious public policy goal. The goal ostensibly is to put more money in the pockets of consumers who will presumably go out and spend the money and, you guessed it, "stimulate" the economy.

Most of the money, however, is used by households to pay off debt or is saved.

Instead, this cut is merely an election year pandering to voters, who Congress hopes will be fooled into taking a short-term benefit at the expense of long-term fiscal ruin.

The real sin here is that Republicans have dropped their demand that the tax cut be paid for.

This is the heart of the issue. Tax cuts that are not paired with spending cuts ADD TO THE DEFICIT.

Wasn't a reduction in deficit spending and the staggering federal debt central to the Republican election narrative in 2010?

The payroll tax helps fund Social Security, a massive entitlement already on a pathway to bankruptcy.

So here we go again. Republican incumbents will join with Democrat incumbents on the campaign trail this fall to engage in a heapin' helpin' of hypocrisy and duplicity.

We will hear them rail against Big Government and deficit spending. We will be regaled with solemn pledges to shore up Social Security and get our "fiscal house in order."

The sad fact is that all these incumbents, with the rare exception of some true conservatives, have done what Washington always does.

They take the easy way out by upping spending through immoral borrowing while deferring meaningful spending cuts and budget reduction measures by pushing the cuts to future years, relying on unrealistic economic growth projections, and telling us all that hard decisions can't be made right now because of the fragile state of the economic recovery.

No wonder Congress has such crappy approval numbers. Add us to the list of folks thoroughly unimpressed with this bunch, including the House GOP majority.

We won't be fooled into clapping our flippers and barking approval for Washington Republicans merely because they pass some tax cut that adds to our collective Chinese-financed indentured servitude.

We expect Republicans to fix the problem by cutting government, getting entitlements under control, and cutting red tape.

Republicans in Washington are in for a very rude awakening this fall if they think conservatives are going to turn out and vote for them merely because they point to Obama and proclaim themselves less of a political evil.

Let's be blunt: Republican bums can be tossed out just as easily as the Democrat variety.

Having an "R" behind your name doesn't earn automatic support from the Watchdog or our readers.

We're smarter than that and we're watching. We demand and expect real change. Rhetoric and issue distractions won't fool us.

The massive increase in the federal deficit and national debt isn't on the incompetent man in the White House alone.

The House and Senate need to increase the debt ceiling and pass all those smelly budgets before he can sign them into law.

Republicans in Washington would do well to read those cross tabs in the polling data. We classical liberals in the Friedman and Locke tradition aren't happy either.

We expect Democrats to act like teenagers with a bottle of whiskey and keys to the car. We don't expect Republicans to ride shotgun.

STATE OF CONFUSION

So Governor Dayton offered his State of the State Address this week.

It was filled with the typical things one would expect from him regarding public policy. Lots of government-centric solutions, lots of "stimulus" and lots of borrowing and other ideas that drain the treasury of money but don't offer corresponding spending cuts (sound like Washington? Sound like the 1970s? How ironic that Governor Wendy Anderson was there.).

The Watchdog has appropriately critiqued these warmed-over ideas and properly dismissed them as political theater.

What we can't figure out is what Mark Dayton will show up to any particular meeting, press conference, or event.

The State of the State was filled with all sorts of conciliatory outreach to the GOP:

"So, I say to legislators, let's take your best ideas and my best ideas and turn them into jobs! And let's do it now."

"I look forward to continuing our bi-partisan collaboration in streamline permitting processes even further, reducing the costs of public services, and making them more cost-effective."

"I stand ready to work with legislators on both sides of the aisle to enact laws that will better Minnesota."

"If we cooperate, if we share our best ideas, if we exchange our rigid ideologies for our shared ideals, we will revitalize our state. "

"Only by working together can we achieve a lasting legacy, in which we - and they - can take pride."

Whoa. Those honey-like, milky words are quite a contrast to Dayton's recent press release blasting Republicans, calling them "unfit to govern" and highlighting issues like the Amy Koch sex scandal.

What gives?

A change of heart? A confused man who is controlled by his emotions instead of logic and reason? A cynical ploy to portray himself as a statesman while preparing to engage in hyper-partisan warfare in an election year that will see all 201 legislative seats in play?

We go with the last thought. In his address, Dayton also noted that he will not support bills that aren't bi-partisan, giving DFLers the green light to act as obstructionists to the majority agenda while giving the governor cover to veto those bills by portraying Republicans as the partisan actors.

The governor decries legislative actions that are designed for elections instead of governing.

Veto actions work the same way, governor. How bi-partisan and cooperative will you be?

You have a great opportunity to make good on your pledge by signing the teacher layoff bill that allows school districts to consider factors other than seniority when making layoff decisions.

That bill passed the House this week on a bi-partisan basis, with one lone, courageous DFLer voting for the bill.

State Representative [Kate Knuth](#) (DFL - New Brighton), voted with Republicans to pass the bill.

While we have been critical of Rep. Knuth on a number of issues, including her belief in global warming, we applaud her vote and her courage to follow conviction.

You will be getting a bi-partisan bill, governor. Surely your pledge will impel you to sign it.

NON-NEWS FROM THE VIKINGS

Here's the biggest reportable piece of non-news in Minnesota this week: The Vikings aren't moving.

Not to Los Angeles or any other location you can dream up.

NFL bylaws require a franchise to notify the League in writing by mid-February of any intention to re-locate that calendar year.

We knew all along the threat to move was empty.

There is nowhere for the team to go, including Los Angeles, where a stadium is not a done deal and where the commissioner noted it was likely that LA would get an expansion franchise if they got one at all.

To be successful, any stadium drive is premised on the threat to re-locate. Thus, the Vikings have to level the threat, as implausible as it may be.

Of course, the Vikings had to spin their utter lack of any choice on the issue as a situation where they decided to hold off on moving because of the "progress" made on the issue.

Progress? Where's the bill? Where's the stadium location? What's the financing mechanism? Where's the special session to be called in November of 2011? How about the special session before the end of 2011? The special session before the start of regular session? The passage of a bill early in the 2012 session?

The Watchdog isn't convinced the state could give the Vikings a stadium without them goofing it up.

2/24/12

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- 1. Letter of the Week.**
- 2. Big Map Attack.**
- 3. Bill of the Week.**
- 4. The Dependency Class.**
- 5. Eagles Win!**

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Is it really so surprising that "a very good person, a very dedicated public servant" was "wrongly maligned and cruelly rejected" by state senators (in Gov. Mark Dayton's words)? Oh, how quickly we forget when the shoe is on the other foot.

Permit a bit of self-indulgent irony, please: My confirmation rejection as public service and commerce commissioner 12 years ago was led in part by then-Sen. Anderson, who disliked my push (mandated by Gov. Jesse Ventura) for energy regulation reform. She voted twice to reject my confirmation, including a excoriating rebuke of my probusiness work plan. That was a DFL-dominated Senate, rejecting a nominee solely on policy and politics.

Fast-forward to 2012, and Anderson's rejection at least was followed by the offer of a comfy, \$88,000 consolation job in the governor's office. I happily turned down a similar offer from Ventura, opting to stay sanely in the private sector.

Suck it up, Ellen. As the song goes: "What goes around comes around."

STEVEN MINN, MINNEAPOLIS
Star Tribune 2-1-12

BIG MAP ATTACK

Unless you were living under a rock or were incarcerated at Guantanamo Bay, we all know that a special panel of judges this week released maps that drew new congressional and legislative district boundaries.

Overall, Republicans were pleased with the maps and believe it provides favorable political battle terrain over which they can fight to retain majorities in both houses.

Senate GOP sources tell the Watchdog the new maps are "plus 2," meaning they think that maps can, if all goes well, add two senate seats to their 37-30 majority in the upper chamber.

House Republicans are similarly pleased and are prepared to wage a 67-seat campaign that will see the GOP contest every seat in the Minnesota House.

Regarding the congressional maps, there were no major changes to the current districts, which should make conservatives happy as the court respected Supreme Court guidelines that call for courts to exercise restraint in drawing boundaries and merely "square them up" in terms of population, contiguity, etc.

The biggest news was the Michele Bachmann was drawn out of the Sixth District and paired with incumbent DFLer Betty McCollum in a newly configured Fourth District.

Bachmann has announced she will move into the new Sixth, which is a dream GOP district that wraps around the suburban and exurban Twin Cities. Heck, Bachmann may not be conservative enough for this district!

The Eighth District will remain essentially the same, meaning Chip Cravaack will be running for re-election in a district that has been DFL for years but trending away from that history.

Cravaack can be a true change agent up North in 2012. If re-elected, he may be the guy who led a political realignment in Minnesota's Arrowhead.

In the legislature, the Watchdog will be watching some interesting GOP situations.

The most interesting perhaps, comes in Senate District 31 in Anoka County.

Incumbent senators Michelle Benson and Mike Jungbauer have been paired and both have announced they will run for the seat and seek the GOP endorsement.

But here's where things get curious.

Jungbauer initially stated he would run in a primary but then backed off his comments, noting he would abide by a ["normal, fair"](#) endorsement.

Is that some slippery language to provide cover to run in a primary?

He should clarify his comments and define "normal" and "fair." This publication would happy to print his comments.

Perhaps he is concerned comments [like these from 2004](#) may become an endorsement issue:

Sen. Mike Jungbauer, who represents most of Elk River, said its time to look at commuter rail as regional projects and working together to take them on one region at a time.

"(Commuter rail) is the single-most cost-effective transportation piece we can put out there."

Is that so?

Another key race is the House seat in Ramsey/Washington County that has pitted Majority Leader Matt Dean against Rep. Carol McFarlane.

Both are well-respected veteran legislators.

While no firm decisions have been made, both legislators have supporters who are firmly behind them.

Dean's supporters tell the Watchdog that he has stronger conservative credentials and has demonstrated his leadership skills by rising to the number 2 post in the House.

McFarlane's supporters note that the new district is mostly her old district and that she is a better fit for the district and the candidate who provides the best chance to win.

Both legislators are excellent, and we hope things work out for both of them.

A third key race is in Washington County, where a newly redrawn senate seat has not only paired two incumbent GOP senators, it has also included a GOP senate candidate who narrowly lost a tough district in 2010.

Senators Ray Vandever and Ted Lillie are paired up here, along with Karin Housley, spouse of NHL great Phil Housley.

As of this writing, no decisions have been announced, although there is a possibility that Lillie could move a little ways over to Woodbury, where there is an open senate seat.

Many folks have also touted Lillie as a contender to run against Betty McCollum for Congress.

Lillie will be a formidable candidate, whatever he decides to do. Regardless of the race, conservatives will be getting a true champion in Ted Lillie.

You can get the scoop on other developments [here](#).

Watchdog publisher Harold Hamilton announces, per his standing policy, that candidates may submit statements of candidacy for publication here, the most respected conservative blog in Minnesota.

BILL OF THE WEEK

Speaking of rising freshman stars, Ted Lillie isn't the only one to soak up some well deserved love this week.

Another Ted, as in [Ted Daley](#) (R - Eagan) showed his rising star status by passing a bill that would require teachers to demonstrate a proficiency in basic skills like math before they can teach our children.

Now the bill at first glance may seem like a no brainer, but it has been long opposed by the Education Industrial Complex (EIC), that powerful web of education special interests that puts kids second.

Daley not only got his bill up over the EIC, he also got Governor Dayton to make the bill law.

The Watchdog congratulates Daley for getting this bill passed AND signed into law.

Daley is another one of the those freshman GOP stars who forms the foundation for a lasting center-right coalition here in Minnesota.

And as much as it pains us, we are forced to praise Governor Dayton two weeks in a row.

While he is wrong on so many issues, Dayton has demonstrated a willingness to buck the EIC and sign legislation that puts students first.

Let's hope that willingness on the governor's part extends to other important education legislation.

THE DEPENDENCY CLASS

Well, the praise for Dayton didn't last long.

This week, the Dayton administration announced a new public service campaign designed to get more people to sign up for food stamps.

Apparently, only 65% of people who could be dependent on government are so, and that pains liberals, who of course thrive on building a large and permanent dependency class.

Don't forget that the dependency class has two wings, those who are dependent and those who make a living overseeing the dependent (i.e. government employees).

Both tend to empower Democrats at the polls.

This public relations ploy is funded in part with \$200,000 of your federal tax dollars.

Here's a novel idea: how about an ad campaign touting the job openings that are out there so the maximum number of people can experience the dignity and self-sufficiency of employment?

Here's another one: how about a campaign to make the unemployed aware of the job training opportunities that are out there, many of them funded by government?

The whole situation was made worse when the Lt. Governor demonstrated a total ignorance of basic economics by [claiming](#) that food stamp dependency HELPS the economy.

"Every dollar of use of the SNAP program, there's \$1.73 that's generated for our economy, which helps our grocery stores," she opined.

Oh, boy. Memo to Dayton administration: government money is nothing more than wealth diverted from the private economy and laundered through the public economy, always in a more inefficient manner.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, is "generated." It's a sleight of hand where a dollar is taken out of one pocket and slipped into another.

Yes, there may be public policy reasons for doing so, but there is no economic benefit.

This is another classic example of Democrats trying to claim that welfare spending somehow lifts the economy. Yet another "stimulus" crock.

Wealth creation, not spending, boosts the economy and creates prosperity.

Putting people on food stamps, welfare, and long-term unemployment doesn't create wealth or boost the economy.

All it does is rob people of dignity, create a permanent underclass, and empower the liberals who benefit from such an arrangement.

Maybe if the Obama and Dayton administrations had a more capitalist-oriented economic policy, we wouldn't need to so many welfare programs.

EAGLES WIN!

No, not the Philadelphia Eagles or even the Eden Prairie Eagles.

It's the real thing that won this week.

In a previous issue, the Watchdog wrote of a wind farm project in Goodhue County that sought a waiver from prosecution for the killing of bald eagles that would have been killed by wind mills generating heavily subsidized, sporadic, unreliable power.

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) ruled this week that the project needed to produce better projections regarding bird and bat traffic around the proposed site.

The victory is an important one, albeit a temporary one.

As the Watchdog wrote last week, this is a prime example of environmental extremism, where the cult of environmentalism is so radical that it calls for the killing of endangered species in the name of "green" energy.

Killing bald eagles so T. Boone Pickens (the project's lead investor) can make another million through a taxpayer-subsidized scheme is a dumb idea and we're glad government regulators have agreed.

Let us close the week by basking in the glory of America's majestic national symbol scoring a big victory.

3/2/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Budget Politics.**
- 2. Bills of the Week.**

BUDGET POLITICS

The biggest news from the Capitol this week was the release of the latest budget forecast from the state's Management and Budget bureau predicting that the state would add another \$323 million in projected surplus.

This amount is in addition to the projected \$876 million surplus in the previous forecast from November, making for a projected \$1.2 billion surplus for the current budget cycle.

Even better was the news that over 2/3rds of the surplus was due to reduced government spending, not increased tax revenue.

For all the news that government will have more money in the coffers, you would have thought the DFL would be in a more celebratory mood. You would have thought there would have been some smiling faces over on the left side of aisle.

But it was not to be. After the news of a projected surplus was released, the DFL was quick to proclaim the glass was half full, proclaiming that there was still a projected deficit projected for the budget cycle years out and that the surplus was only possible because the state had "borrowed from The Children," referring to delayed school aid payments.

The reason is that Democrats are clearly playing politics with the budget.

Governor Dayton and Democrats spent a significant amount of political capital attempting to convince the public that the state's budget and the state itself would fall into apocalypse if taxes weren't raised to pump more money into government.

Republicans stood on principle, stood their ground, and went through a government shutdown to demonstrate that job-killing tax increases wouldn't help the economy and that the state budget would be just fine without tax increases.

Well, lo and behold, just months after Republicans said fiscal restraint was the best path to fiscal recovery, they were proven correct.

Just months after Democrats brayed on and on that Republicans were prescribing a path to fiscal ruin, just the opposite happened.

In short, the fiscal reality doesn't fit the DFL campaign narrative so they must invent a budgetary bogeyman or two in a sad attempt to appeal to voters' fears and not their hopes this coming November.

Oh, no! There's a projected deficit years down the road! Oh, no, we "borrowed" from the children! When will they be repaid?!?!?!?!?

What a bunch of bunk.

Regarding projected deficits, the DFL would do well to recognize the oak tree lodged in its own eye before pointing out the splinter in the GOP's eye.

Perhaps the deficit angst should be directed towards Washington, DC and President Obama's trillion dollar federal deficits and multi-trillion dollar national debt before getting worried about some projected budget deficit years down the road here in Minnesota.

Worried about debt and deficits? Start with your own White House, guys.

Moreover, let's get away from all the bunk about "borrowing" from our schools and - gasp! - The Children.

The state didn't borrow anything from the schools. The state merely extended the aid payment period, which will all be repaid in full. In fact, over \$300 million will be repaid in a matter of weeks.

Think about this way. Say you have a lovable, irresponsible, unaccountable, spendthrift uncle. Let's call him Charlie.

To keep Charlie out of trouble, you offer to give him \$500 a month to help out with his bills.

Then you yourself run into a financial rough patch.

As a result, you tell uncle Charlie that he will only be getting \$400 per month but you will make up the \$100 per month reduction, in full, once you get back on your feet.

Uncle Charlie protests that you're "borrowing" from him and that he will have to in turn borrow money to keep up his lifestyle.

Really? It's the same thing with the schools.

Nothing is being "borrowed" and there is certainly nothing to prevent school boards from reducing their own budgets to prevent any bridge borrowing.

On top of all that, the DFL and their co-conspirators in the media conveniently forget that the GOP also increased the per-pupil aid formula by \$50 per student, actually increasing the amount spent on public education during the budget crisis by many millions.

So not only did Uncle Charlie continue to get \$400 per month with a promise to have the rest paid back later, he also got to raid the refrigerator at the same time.

Our only gripe with the GOP is that they have to get more aggressive in countering this DFL malarkey.

The state budget is doing just fine.

The GOP plan to attack the deficit worked - without succumbing to the DFL call for tax increases.

No, we didn't borrow from The Children. In fact, we gave The Children more money.

Republicans should start asking why the DFL is rooting against the economy.

Talk about playing politics and election year ploys!

BILLS OF THE WEEK

Hey, it's that time of the week once again when we highlight star players at the Capitol and the good work they're doing on behalf of taxpayers.

Rep. Pat Garofalo (R - Farmington), HF 2433

This bill would dedicate 40% of the funding in the "arts" silo from the Legacy Amendment sales tax increase to school art education.

Rep. Garofalo is merely looking out for the artistic interests of The Children and this bill should be a no-brainer.

In reality, Garofalo uncorked a gem of bill that forces the DFL to choose between two favored constituencies, namely The Children and the arts/croissant crowd.

You see, the arts booty currently supports sock puppet and minstrel programming that the arts/croissant crowd uses to impress friends and polo partners in their local community, where the idle rich sit on the library or theatre board and speak of the more refined things in life while you're out working your a\$\$ off to pay the taxes that funds this stuff.

This crowd most certainly will not share the loot voluntarily, even with The Children. They say let The Children eat cake, as long as its gluten and sugar free and the eggs used for baking are from free range chickens, of course.

**Rep. Branden Petersen (R - Andover) and Sen. Pam Wolf (R - Spring Lake Park)
HF 1870 and SF 1690 Teacher Layoffs**

The Watchdog has highlighted this bill in the past but wanted to put the spotlight on it once again because it has passed the House and Senate and sits on the governor's desk awaiting action, which will likely be a veto.

This bill would allow districts to consider factors other than seniority in laying off teachers, factors like quality and results. You know, just like the private sector.

The governor has already claimed the bill is an "election year ploy."

Since the only folks opposed to this bill are the fat cats over at the teacher's union, we can't help but wonder who is engaging in a political ploy.

3/9/12

In This Issue:

1. Anoka-Hennepin School District = Disaster.

ANOKA-HENNEPIN SCHOOL DISTRICT = DISASTER

Things have reached a point where the Watchdog has to ask, just what in the hell is wrong with the Anoka-Hennepin School Board?

The district has spun out of control on a variety of fronts and the school board must be held accountable.

Let's take a closer look at the large number of issues the board has fumbled recently:

Bullying Lawsuit.

It was announced this week that the school board voted to accept a settlement regarding a lawsuit filed by six students over allegations the district didn't do enough to prevent alleged bullying they experienced at school.

The Watchdog will not comment on the alleged facts surrounding the lawsuit or the merits of the case itself.

Having said that, we are going to weigh in the settlement, which is nothing short of a total victory for the radical gay rights lobby.

First, the settlement gives the six plaintiffs in the case a booty of \$270,000 in cold, hard taxpayer case to divide up among themselves (do the lawyers get a cut?). That's a cool \$45,000 per plaintiff.

The district could easily hire six classroom teachers for that amount, by the way.

These lawsuits are "never about the money" yet money always seems to be involved.

The school district will also spend \$500,000 hiring a bunch of employees and/or consultants to enforce the terms of the rollover, er, settlement.

These folks include an "equity consultant," a "mental health" consultant, and a "Title IX" coordinator to review policies and prevent "bullying," however that term is defined.

Moreover, the school board ceded its oversight role in this regard to the Obama Justice Department.

Instead of fighting to keep school governance in the hands of local control, the federal government has been given an oversight role regarding this issue until 2017.

Apart from money and the ceding of governance issues to outside, unaccountable organizations, the biggest threat engendered in the settlement is extreme risk of a harsh "speech code" being implemented in the district that will chill the free exchange of ideas regarding sexual orientation issues by exposing anyone, be it student or staff, to discipline as any dissent from a pro-homosexual agenda may be seen as "bullying" or a violation of district rules, which will be placed in a permanent file and tracked in a database kept by the district.

There is an unfortunate history of just this type of problem that plagued our colleges and universities in the 1990s.

Campus speech codes that punished students and staff for offenses like "lookism" ("discriminating" against a person based on their appearance) that chilled debate and created an oppressive atmosphere where arbitrary rules regarding ill-defined offenses made for kangaroo disciplinary hearings that made a mockery of the First Amendment and time-honored concepts of justice like due process and equal protection.

In short, the rule of law was replaced by an ideological tyranny of radical interest groups like feminists, GLBT interests, and ethno-centrists.

The same threat has now been introduced into the Anoka-Hennepin school district.

This is because the lawsuit settlement will empower interest groups who have an ideological axe to grind to implement policies based on inherently vague terms and require inquiry into the mental intent of children.

How do we define "bullying?" What does it mean when an adolescent announces he's "gay?" After all, we're talking about young children and children who are learning what it means to be an adult.

These issues will now be defined and resolved by a team of consultants who have every incentive to be as invaluable and involved as they can be in these issues.

Moreover, they often have their own ideological views on these issues which they surreptitiously attempt to imbed in the district's collective life.

For example, if one child punches another child in the nose on the playground, what will happen if the victim announces he's gay?

The likely outcome is the involvement of the consultants described above and other employees whose job is to determine if Johnny's punch to Billy's nose was nothing more than two kids in a tussle or whether Johnny is a kid who harbors an anti-gay animus and acted on it.

What about a situation where one third grader calls another one a "fag?"

Now we really get into a sticky wicket. Does the student who used the word know what it means? Did he intend to "bully?" Did the student who was the recipient of the invective feel "bullied?"

With the help of copious amounts of "training" (i.e. indoctrination), students and staff will learn to err on the side of a large amount of caution regarding their words and deeds.

The inevitable result will be a chilling effect on discourse and the free exchange of ideas - all in favor of the gay rights lobby.

Look, the Watchdog doesn't take positions on social issues. But we do take a position that this settlement draws resources away from student learning, greatly reduces the local control inherent in school board governance, and will likely result in a significant chilling of the First Amendment rights of staff and students to express their views - which is a primary function of education.

The Todd Protivinski Issue.

The school board still has not responded to our September commentary on this disturbing issue.

Here's what we wrote:

A teenage prostitute. A suspended principal. A school district-reimbursed cell phone downloading pornography. We demand some answers.

This past week, Fox 9 reporter Tom Lyden [blew the lid](#) off a quiet scandal in the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

This past January, Lincoln Elementary School principal Todd Protivinski was suspended without explanation. Parents weren't told why the principal was out.

Now we know.

According to Fox 9, Protivinski was suspended because he was under investigation for having sex with a 17 year-old prostitute.

The bizarre case began when the alleged prostitute attended her brother's parent-teacher conference at Lincoln Elementary, where the family met Protivinski.

The mother noticed the tension and the principal's nervous behavior.

The teen later told her mother that Protivinski was one of her Johns and that he paid her for sex just two weeks prior, according to the news account.

The Anoka County Sheriff's Department and the District conducted investigations.

Protivinski refused to cooperate with the investigation.

Ultimately, the Anoka County Attorney determined that "probable cause" existed to charge Protivinski but it would have been too difficult to prove criminal guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt."

Beyond the prostitution issue, the Sheriff's Department determined that Protivinski's district-reimbursed cell phone contained "evidence of pornography being received on a regular basis."

In August, [the school board](#) met to consider a motion to fire Protivinski.

On a 4-2 vote, the motion to fire him failed.

Those voting to fire:
Mike Sullivan

Scott Wenzel

Those voting to keep Protivinski on the payroll:

Tom Heidemann

Kathy Tingelstad

Marci Anderson

John Hoffman

Watch the school board meeting [here](#). This is agenda item 7, under "general counsel" for the August 22, 2011 meeting.

The Watchdog will not act as a finder of fact or an arbiter of criminal guilt, so we can't say for certain what transpired beyond what has been reported and what the investigation report states.

Having said that, this situation is extremely disturbing.

Those school board members who voted to keep Protivinski on the payroll owe the taxpayers an explanation regarding their decision.

We're still waiting.

Instructional Coaching.

The Watchdog learned this week from sources within the district that there is a plan to hire a so-called "instructional coach" for every school within the district.

We don't know exactly what an "instructional coach" does, but we are told they basically walk around the school all day telling the other teachers, who actually have kids to teach, how to teach.

These "coaches" are all licensed teachers who are qualified to be in the classroom.

With all the education and training teachers go through, one would think they already know how to teach. And if they don't, how about getting rid of them and hiring ones who can get results?

There are about 23 schools in the district. That's 23 qualified teachers who could be in the classroom teaching kids.

Anyone who is concerned about class sizes in the district ought to be contacting the school board and asking why 23 qualified teachers aren't in the classroom teaching kids.

The Watchdog has been told of some elementary classrooms with nearly 40 kids to a room.

Yet we have dozens of teachers who will apparently do nothing all day except walk around telling others who to do their job.

Wonderful.

Student Learning.

While the school board has been focused on issues of bullying, sexual orientation, and principals accused of engaging in prostitution, the Watchdog has yet to see a clear district plan to enhance student learning and student achievement.

According to the latest standardized test score results, 21% percent of district students don't read at appropriate grade level while a whopping 41% aren't proficient in mathematics.

The test scores are even more dismal for minority students.

Where are the consultants and coordinators to increase math scores? Where is the intervention team to get rid bad teachers and promote the good ones who get results?

What will be done to close the achievement gap for minority students?

Why is it that employers have job openings but can't hire because students are graduating from high school without the basic skills needed for the manufacturing floor in our high-tech economy?

What a disaster.

It's time for some new leadership and new ideas for the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

Contact the school board [here](#).

3/16/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Adios!**
- 2. Sounds Weak to Us.**
- 3. Progress at Last.**
- 4. Senate Districts 31 and 35.**

ADIOS!

-
The taxpayers are about to achieve a major victory and another step towards freedom. Long-time bureaucrat and Dan Erhart acolyte Steve Novak will be leaving the county this fall.

While we could engage in an extended retrospect regarding Novak's ignoble tenure with the county, including his quarterbacking of the failed (thankfully) Vikings-to-Blaine folly, we won't.

We will simply bask in collective relief of realizing that we won't be paying Novak's considerable salary and benefits package anymore come October.

We won't congratulate Novak on his retirement - we'll congratulate the citizens of Anoka County.

One way or the other, Dan Erhart himself won't be far behind.

Slowly but surely, the team of Sivarajah, Look, West, and Westerberg are cleansing county government of the Good Ol' Boy culture that tainted it for so many, many, years.

SOUNDS WEAK TO US

We admit we're a bit confused. This week, the Star Tribune ran an article with the screaming headline "Veterans Manager Tears into Anoka County Board."

An employee who runs the Veterans Services office has apparently resigned her position while publically blaming the county board for a lack of leadership and a lack of communication.

That sounds like pretty serious stuff. The Watchdog is fully supportive of veterans and supports quality, accountable governmental services to those who have honorably served our country.

Yet the article cites nothing with respect to veterans complaining about poor support services from the county. Nothing. Nada. Zip. Zilch. Zero.

What the article, does say, is that the employee in question is peeved because she learned that she is paid less money than her counterparts in other Metro counties.

Hey, genius, that's on you and you alone. When you were offered the job, you were no doubt made aware of the salary and benefit package.

In Minnesota, the salary of every government employee is public information. A 15 minute Google search would have given you the information that apparently was so surprising later on.

Moreover, Anoka County often pays less than other Metro counties. The county doesn't have the wealth of counties like Dakota and Hennepin. We can't afford it.

There's also something unseemly about a veterans' service officer complaining about the money. That kind of work simply isn't a place to get rich. To go public about your perceived lack of pay equity looks callous and shallow.

The second complaint centers on a "lack of communication" apparently caused by a lack of visits from some county commissioners.

Hey, it may or may not be true that some commissioners didn't walk down to say "hi."

The article also says nothing about the employee at issue making an effort to visit commissioners if it was so important.

It's too bad "journalist" Paul Levy didn't ask the question. Did the employee ask for commissioner visits? Did the employee ask for meetings which were denied?

And then the politics show up.

Commissioner Jim Kordiak and toady Steve Novak show up in the article to take a shot at board leadership, meaning chairwoman Rhonda Sivarajah.

"Building a relationship with staff is not something this board chooses to do," said Kordiak.

That's interesting. The Watchdog has multiple sources within the county and they tell us that the climate and morale within the county is higher under Sivarajah than it ever was under Dan Erhart.

Funny, wasn't Kordiak one who voted against making Sivarajah chairwoman? Sounds like some very sour grapes.

Novak then chimed in to claim that there was frustration over the time it took to handle "personnel issues."

What the Star Tribune article from Levy fails to note is that just three weeks ago, the county board unanimously approved a request from this aggrieved employee to hire an additional employee to help run the operation and better serve veterans.

Reported in the [Anoka County Union](#), the board unanimously approved this additional hire even though it wasn't in the county budget.

The Watchdog is more than willing to give any party to this issue an opportunity to clarify, revise, and extend their remarks in this publication.

As far as we can tell, this one looks like an employee who resigned because she wasn't making enough money and wasn't getting enough attention.

Sivarajah's political rivals then used the opportunity to bash the board's leadership.

Election season has already begun for the Anoka County Board.

With redistricting, it looks like all 7 board seats will be on the ballot.

The Good Ol' Boys will be looking every opportunity to undermine and then defeat the reformers at the polls in November.

Watchdogs need to be on the lookout.

PROGRESS AT LAST

For years, the Watchdog has called out liberal writers of letters to the editor who concealed their leanings and their titles, lending the false impression that they were average citizens who were outraged by the decisions of Republican office holders.

Our public shaming of these folks is forcing change.

This week, an [LTE](#) showed up in the Anoka County Union from Mel Aanerud, resident apologist for failed DFL policies.

While the LTE was filled with the DFL bromides typical of Aanerud's rants, it was atypical in that he finally acknowledged in the signature line his leadership role in the local DFL, an organization that hasn't has much success in convincing folks up here that the DFL is looking out for their values.

And we just can't help setting the record straight in just three places in Mel's propaganda piece.

First, the DFL isn't building and rebuilding American infrastructure. The failed \$787 billion "stimulus" only spent \$27.5 billion on highways and bridges while \$122 billion was spent on boosting government healthcare spending and extending unemployment benefits.

Second, he claims that Democrats want everyone to have a job. Then why does President Obama continue to kill the Keystone pipeline project, which would create thousands of jobs and is supported strongly by labor unions?

Third, a claim that the auto bailout is "nearly all paid back?" Really?

The Treasury Department estimates that the taxpayers will lose [\\$23 BILLION](#) on the bailout.

And that doesn't even include the bond holders who were screwed over by Obama in the whole deal.

Only in the DFL world is \$23.77 billion be counted as "almost."

Hey, Mel. Is the \$1 trillion deficit Obama has run up considered an "almost" balanced budget?

SENATE DISTRICTS 31 AND 35

Many Watchdogs have contacted this publication looking for information on the GOP endorsement battles in both these districts.

In Senate district 31, covering the central and northeastern parts of the county, incumbent GOP senators Michelle Benson (current district 49) and Mike Jungbauer (current district 48) are facing off.

In Senate district 35, covering the northwest corner of the county, current state Rep. Branden Peterson (House district 49B) is facing Martha Weaver.

As a non-partisan publication, the Anoka County Watchdog does not endorse candidates for office.

Having said that, we actively engage in voter education and will reserve space in upcoming editions of the Watchdog for candidate statements not to exceed 500 words.

Send to harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

3/23/12

In This Issue:

1. Capitol Update.

CAPITOL UPDATE

Greetings from the remote Watchdog headquarters located deep in the basement of the historic Capitol in Saint Paul. Committees are in the process of finishing their work and sending bills to the House and Senate floors for action. Here's what's happening right now at the legislature.

EXIT STRATEGY

Per the state constitution, the legislature need not adjourn until mid-May. The Watchdog has spoken to multiple sources close to GOP leadership in both houses about the growing consensus to adjourn long before that deadline, perhaps as early as April 6th.

April 6th is the date most mentioned because it is the start of a previously scheduled week-long break to observe the Easter/Passover season. This is a traditional break observed every year and would serve as a natural break point for a formal adjournment until next year.

According to sources, a strategy is being considered that would pass the constitutional photo ID amendment (already passed the House and will be considered on the Senate floor today) and pass a modest bonding bill and then adjourn.

Of course, there may be some other bills that are passed regarding government reform that will likely get vetoed or other inconsequential legislation that makes it into law.

In conversations with rank and file Republican legislators, many have said that photo ID and a bonding bill were the only bills that needed to get done and then the GOP could adjourn more than a month early, saving the taxpayers money, demonstrating the ability to manage effectively, and allowing legislators to get home to new districts to begin what promises to be a hard-fought campaign to keep legislative majorities in the midst of what is sure to be a bruising race for the White House.

The theory is that Republicans have accomplishments upon which they can run and it is unlikely they will get anything else accomplished because Governor Dayton is sure to veto other substantive bills for political reasons.

First and foremost, Republicans can boast that they won the state government shutdown last year.

Republicans argued that the economy and the state budget would both heal without resorting to job-killing tax increases. In fact, resorting to the tax increases advocated by Governor Dayton and the DFL would have only exacerbated those problems.

The GOP was proven correct. The state now enjoys a budget surplus and has recently passed a bill to re-calibrate the state school aid payment schedule that was lengthened as part of the budget solution.

The DFL has been reduced to complaining that future budgets might contain deficits, a proposition that is far more difficult to explain to voters than this simple truth: Republicans fought tax increases and now we have a budget surplus, a healing economy, and an unemployment rate way below the national average.

Republicans were handed the majority in both houses primarily to govern the state in a fiscally responsible fashion. They delivered.

The rest is gravy.

LEFT AT THE STATION

Some of the other high profile bills will very likely not make it out.

The Vikings' bid for a fat taxpayer subsidy is on life support and flat lining, which is a good thing. Mayor Rybak in Minneapolis is showing how weak he really is by failing to rally his own city council behind the stadium scheme.

Besides the other problems plaguing the bill, it is a simple truth that a majority of Republican legislators aren't interested in handing a mega-subsidy to a private business.

The Watchdog would be surprised if this bill sees the light of day this legislative session.

Similarly, the so-called racino bill to install thousands of slot machines at two racetracks appears to have lost all momentum and is very unlikely to pass.

Republican legislators who oppose the bill tell the Watchdog that they oppose it primarily for three reasons.

First, expanded gaming comes with large, proven, undisputed social costs. They believe government shouldn't aid and abet behavior that will further weaken the family and increase government safety net utilization.

In the view of legislators who hold this belief, they would go the other way and do what they could to roll back gambling in Minnesota.

A second school of thought isn't interested in growing government. Racino advocates have touted their projection that racino will give state government \$120 million or so extra to spend every year.

These legislators say they came to Saint Paul to cut government, not find ways to grow it. They argue that it looks silly for Republicans to push for legislation that would grow government when they took the state through the longest shutdown in its history in large part because of opposition to growing government.

Third, many Republicans are sensitive to the fact that "racino" gambling will harm charitable gambling.

It is estimated that racino would cause as much as a 25% reduction in the revenues of charitable gambling sites located near the sites of the proposed racinos in Shakopee and Forest Lake (Columbus).

These legislators aren't troubled by gambling but they don't want to see two privately owned for-profit [corporations](#) use government to get an oligopoly on slot machines that will increase share value while youth hockey and VFWs take a hit and bring in less money for their causes.

In this same vein, many legislators also take issue with racino proceeds being used to prop up the horse racing industry. It's tough to convince some Republican legislators that a bailout for any industry is a proper function of government and beneficial to the economy in the long run.

The right to work constitutional amendment is the last major legislation that is likely to be unresolved when the legislature adjourns.

See last week's [Watchdog](#) for that analysis.

SENATOR MICHEL ETHICS HEARING

As we go to press, the Senate Ethics Committee is about to hold a hearing regarding a [complaint](#) by Senator Sandy Pappas (DFL - Saint Paul) against Senator Geoff Michel (R-Edina) regarding the Michael Brodkorb-Amy Koch sex scandal.

We will watch the hearing with interest but can't help but suspect this is all about politics.

It looks to us as if the DFL found out that the legislature is about to adjourn and decided now is the time to drop the complaint and get some press before the legislature goes home.

THE ECONOMICS OF CORPORATE TAXES

The House this past week passed a tax bill that would slash corporate taxes and pay for those cuts in part by reducing other aids and credits.

Predictably, the DFL had a conniption fit and decried tax breaks for "wealthy corporations."

One hallmark of DFL thought is a fundamental lack of understanding with respect to free market economics.

Here's one lesson for our DFL friends: corporations don't pay taxes.

Their customers pay those taxes in the form of higher prices.

Their employees pay those taxes in the form of lower wages and benefits.

Their shareholders, including institutional investors who represent retirement accounts, pay those taxes in the form of lower dividends and share value.

If the DFL is truly committed to a prosperous middle class, they would support a reduction in the corporate tax burden to allow for higher middle class wages, higher middle class benefits, lower product and service costs, and a better return on retirement investments, especially since that same DFL is accelerating the insolvency of Social Security through a meaningless payroll tax cut.

This must be the same line of intellectually bankrupt DFL thought that on one hand proclaims protection of the "little fella, not the Rockafella" while supporting highly regressive taxes (e.g. sales taxes for Target Field, sales taxes for the "Legacy Amendment", and higher tobacco and alcohol taxes).

POLLING MANIA

The Watchdog has to caution our friends about the Argument by Poll. The Argument by Poll goes something like this: "Issue X should be passed because 72% of Minnesotans support it."

Sorry, but the polling data doesn't have a damn thing to do with legislation.

Take photo ID for example. The Watchdog on a daily basis reads of fellow conservatives extolling the virtue of photo ID, in part, because it polls well.

We extol the virtue of photo ID for one reason: it's good public policy and the right thing to do.

In other words, the validity of legislation doesn't turn on how many ill-informed yahoos out there think it a good idea.

"Free" health care polls well. It doesn't make it a good idea.

Moreover, the Watchdog finds this use of polling data to be in conflict with traditional, conservative notions of government.

Many conservatives support a representative form of government where we elect folks of high character and judgment to make informed decisions on our behalf. It is consistent with governance via the rule of law and intertwined with the notion that the rights of individuals must be protected.

Polling data is akin to direct democracy and mob rule, where the temporary passions of the majority rule the day.

If polling data is so persuasive, we ought to simply put legislation up on the Internet and let everyone vote on it.

That's a bit extreme, but it does prove a point.

Conservatives don't need polling data to support our positions. Our positions are correct on the merits and that is far more powerful than some group of folks who happened to answer the phone and take a survey regarding issues they or may not know anything about.

3/30/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Senate District 31 Candidate Statement.**
- 2. Anoka-Hennepin Response Letter.**

SENATE DISTRICT 31 CANDIDATE STATEMENT

This Saturday, Republican delegates in the newly configured [Senate District 31](#) will meet to endorse one of two incumbent Republican senators, Michelle Benson or Mike Jungbauer.

This race has been one of the most closely watched endorsement races in the state.

Senator Benson has submitted a candidate statement which is published, unedited, below:

It wasn't that long ago I was an activist in Anoka County and decided to temporarily leave the private sector as a CPA to run for the State Senate in 2010. I ran with a specific purpose and was sworn in with that same sense of purpose. I am seeking the SD 31 Republican endorsement this Saturday so I can continue my work on these issues and serve as a voice for my constituents during a challenging time. Since my election I've worked with my caucus to get hearings and move my bills forward by advocating for my conservative, common sense approach in setting a direction for our State. Leaders don't wait for a title, they step into the gap, rally supporters, and move forward.

This week, the Supreme Court is hearing arguments about the Constitutionality of ObamaCare. Also this week, Governor Dayton declared he would use executive authority to implement the ObamaCare exchange in Minnesota. We need conservative legislators who will act with urgency and a sense of purpose.

At the Capitol, my committee choices and legislation reflect priorities carried forward in my tenure in the Senate.

The **Health and Human Services Committee** manages the fastest growing, largest part of our state budget and is where the battle over Obamacare is

being fought. This is where all welfare and health care decisions are vetted. It is also where federal mandates have the most impact. I want to be at the table when it is time to make tough decisions for our state and citizens.

Action:

Chief authored legislation for technology to detect and deter welfare fraud (passed).

Chief authored several EBT reform bills to reduce abuse in our welfare system (passed).

Co-chair of EBT Reform group.

I am the conservative voice on the *Minnesota Health Care Reform Task Force*.

In my first month as a senator, I was invited by the Chair of Health and Human Services to meet with Governor Dayton to request vouchers for our welfare programs. This month, Representative Paul Ryan proposed the same solution on the Federal side. Conservative leaders are pointing the way out of spending problems. We reject the status quo.

Energy Committee sets policy for this critical input to our economy. Minnesota needs reliable, reasonably priced energy. For too long, environmental policy has dictated energy policy, driving up costs for businesses and family budgets.

Action:

Chief author of key provisions to reform environmental programs and **reduce the cost of producing electricity**

Chief author of nation-leading legislation to **streamline utility reporting** requirements

Chief authored legislation that would allow all types of hydroelectricity to be counted as renewable (Our environmental policy is driving up energy costs and we must take every opportunity to stand up for a commonsense energy policy)

Co-author to **repeal of the coal moratorium**. Currently, no more coal fired power plants can be built in Minnesota. We can't even buy new coal power from North Dakota. I am proud to fight for this commonsense legislation.

Our current energy policies are a drag on manufacturing and high-tech industries. From modifications to our Conservation Improvement Program to documenting the cost of the Renewable Energy Standards, my actions support lower cost electricity for all Minnesota businesses and families.

Agriculture Committee serves our farm and food economies. Burdensome regulations and taxes punish farmers just as they do every business in the state. Agriculture is a foundational part of Minnesota's economy and must be respected as the business it is.

Action:

Chief author of \$5 million estate tax exemption for small businesses and family farms.

I helped bring the **Government Reform and Redesign Committee into being**. It is the first committee of its kind in the country. With economic challenges, retiring baby boomers, and failing legacy technologies, we can no longer wait to transform our government. It is time to focus limited resources on smaller, citizen centric government, ready for the next 20 years.

Where I stand on other major issues:

I am in the fight against the federal takeover of **health care**. Minnesota citizens have the right to decide their health care without interference from Washington

I am opposed to governments **playing economic favorites**; instead of a Vikings stadium, we should focus on a better business climate for all businesses

I **oppose expanding gambling** because the promised revenues are a band-aid and we have a spending problem, not a revenue problem

The Met Council is not accountable to the citizens or the legislature and must be put in check

Light rail projects and passenger rail are not a solution to real transportation problems. Our limited tax dollars should be focused on moving goods and people, not social engineering

I proudly signed on **as co-author on Employee Freedom legislation** (Right to Work)

Voter ID is a key to election integrity. I am proud to have voted to put this provision in statute and now to put it on the ballot

The citizens of Minnesota need senators and representatives who will fight for conservative values at every opportunity. I did not wait to lead. In my short tenure in the senate I have been a trusted leader on key issues of our day. I look forward to continuing this leadership in my next term as senator with the endorsement of SD 31 Republicans this Saturday.

Editor's Note: Senator Jungbauer did not submit a statement to the Anoka County Watchdog.

Other sources of candidate information:

Taxpayer's League of Minnesota legislative [scorecards](#).

Legislative Evaluation Assembly legislative [scorecards](#).

ANOKA-HENNEPIN RESPONSE LETTER

In a recent edition of the Watchdog, the Anoka-Hennepin School District was taken to task for a number of leadership lapses, including the response to the recent "bullying" lawsuit settlement.

The Watchdog offered to publish a response from the school board.

Chairman Tom Heidemann has taken advantage of that offer and his response to our column is published below:

Dear Mr. Hamilton,

You have recently published an article in your newsletter questioning the action of the school board. I would like to take this opportunity to provide information relative to the settlement and information relative to the legal action against Anoka-Hennepin by the Department of Justice, the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and two local law firms of Faegre, Baker Daniels LLP and Culberth & Lienemann LLP. It was a very difficult decision to agree to the settlement but it was the best we could do given the circumstances the school board was faced with. In my opinion we preserved several core principles:

The Board maintained the intent of the sexual orientation curriculum policy while making it defensible in future legal challenges.

The Board did not make any changes to curriculum and did not allow the federal government authority over classroom curriculum.

The Board maintained local governance rights in the agreement.

It took us eight months to mediate because we could not give on those core principals.

This was a complex litigation with two key parts, the Department of Justice/Education and student plaintiffs.

For the Department of Justice/Education portion we would have **lost** in court and the core principals would not be maintained and all actions would be managed and directed by the federal government rather than the compromise partnership language we worked to get in the negotiated settlement. It should be noted that the consent decree actions are built on programs already in place at Anoka-Hennepin.

For the lawsuit with plaintiff students our legal counsel believed we would have **won** after spending about \$2 to \$3 Million of tax payer money. We would have won the right to proclaim that our teachers and staff did take appropriate action. Coming from the business world it is hard to dollarize and set a value on the ability to make that statement. We can make it anyway even in a settlement.

There was a risk that if we had lost just one case or a portion of a case we would have been responsible for plaintiff attorney fees as well which could have been another \$3 Million of taxpayer money. Our insurance company made a business decision and negotiated a monetary settlement of \$270,000 to move on. That left us in a tough position since taxpayers would

have to fund the additional costs and accept the cost risk of a loss in order to continue the legal defense.

To this point the insurance company has paid the entire district's legal costs including paying the \$270,000 settlement they negotiated. In our public statement we made it clear that we believe staff took appropriate action (See attached public statement).

In the end, the Board fought hard to negotiate a minimal interference in local control by the federal government. The negotiation process was long, labor intensive by staff/board and very contentious taking over eight months to complete. One of the cornerstone goals was to maintain our local governance rights, which we did. The DOJ role, in approval, is to determine only if our policies are in compliance with Title IV and Title IX. In addition, we have methods for measuring the effectiveness of the consent decree action allowing the ability to course correct should they not meet the intended purpose of reducing Harassment and Bullying in the schools. It is my expectation that we will pursue federal grant moneys to offset the added \$500,000 of new actions required by the consent decree.

If you are interested, I would be willing to sit down and provided more detailed information relative to this tough fight that resulted in the legal settlement we have today.

Tom Heidemann

Board Chairman

4/6/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The legislature concluded work at approximately 4:30 yesterday afternoon and has adjourned until 12 noon on April 16th.

This break is an opportunity for Watchdogs to weigh in with legislators by not only contacting them but participating in the many town hall meetings legislators will hold in their districts over the break. Look for meetings in your area by checking local media and [House](#) and [Senate](#) web sites. Those who participate carry the day!

- 1. Michelle Benson in 5.**
- 2. Novak Make-Work Job Eliminated.**
- 3. Northstar - The Gift That Keeps on Taking.**
- 4. Candidate Statement.**
- 5. Iron Lady Event.**

MICHELLE BENSON IN 5

In one of the most closely watched legislative races of the young 2012 election cycle, the eyes of Minnesota politics were on Senate District 31 last Saturday as two incumbent GOP senators faced off for endorsement.

Senator Michelle Benson squared off against her colleague Mike Jungbauer.

With both candidates boasting of conservative credentials, the endorsement promised to be a closely-fought affair.

The predictions rang true as the contest was close throughout the balloting with the prospect of a deadlocked convention and a primary fight for both.

On the crucial fourth ballot, Benson moved ballots enough to surpass a threshold to move to a 5th ballot.

Benson carried the day on the 5th ballot.

The Watchdog congratulates Senator Benson and wishes her easier endorsements contests in the future. In 2010, Benson defeated incumbent Senator Debbie Johnson for the GOP nod and now has defeated another incumbent GOP senator.

The Watchdog also thanks Senator Jungbauer for his service to the state. He was wrong on issues like Northstar rail but was a leader on other issues like debunking the myth of global warming.

We're sure the base in Senate District 31 will close ranks and rally around Senator Benson, a staunch conservative who has already established herself as a talented, thoughtful legislator.

NOVAK MAKE-WORK JOB ELIMINATED

This story is no surprise at all for a number of reasons.

It was [reported](#) this week that Anoka County has decided to eliminate the high-paying position held by bureaucrat par excellence Steve Novak.

Paid more than the governor of Minnesota, Novak held the substantive title of "Division Manager for Governmental Services" for the county.

This position oversaw functions for which Novak had no real expertise to speak of such as veterans services and elections.

With Dan Erhart regulated to back bench status, Novak no longer had any bobo jobs to pull on Erhart's behalf, such as serving as "stadium point man" on the fool's errand to land the Vikings.

With Novak announcing his retirement effective September 1, the ever-gracious yet fiscally conservative Rhonda Sivarajah decided it was finally time to eliminate this ultra-expensive make-work job and save the taxpayers some duckets while assigning oversight of the various functions Novak used to have to people who are real, true to life experts on the subject matter.

The Watchdog is more than pleased to see yet another vestige of the Good Ol' Boy era of taxpayer abuse come to an end.

"Division Manager for Governmental Services." Give us a friggin' break. Oh, yeah. Rhonda just did.

NORTHSTAR - THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON TAKING

The United States Army articulates 9 "[principles of war](#)" in Field Manual 3 "Military Operations."

A reading of those principles tells combat commanders to reinforce success and not waste resources on secondary or losing efforts.

Someone forgot to tell government, which continues to reinforce failure, especially with our transportation system.

The latest reinforcement of failure, which isn't all that new, is a Northstar commuter rail stop in Ramsey.

This station is a double reinforcement, as the station is billed as helpful to not only failed Northstar rail but also to the failed Ramsey Town Center project, which has been recast as the Center of Ramsey "COR" project. We suggest the city cut the crap and call it by its appropriate name: Potemkin Village West.

And like any good propaganda narrative, there needs to be a healthy dose of inspirational, emotion-evoking media to make the public feel good about their "investment" in government.

The Watchdog has no faith whatsoever that a Northstar stop in Ramsey will save either the train or the COR.

Both are government mega-projects that share a common philosophy of far-reaching social engineering that seeks to force citizens in Northwest Anoka County to live a certain lifestyle based on high-density housing, mass transit, and a collectivist mentality towards everyday life.

These projects will fail because that type of lifestyle is alien to the citizens of Anoka County, who value open space, privacy, and the individual freedom afforded through large yards, big trucks, and being disconnected from the mass transit systems that so readily connect exurbs to the urban core, the very place most exurbanites fled in the first place.

It's unfortunate that the Watchdog must part company with Commissioner Matt Look on this issue.

He is a true conservative thinker and already a leader on the county board.

We remain big fans of Commissioner Look's leadership and public service, but we just can't overlook this impending boondoggle.

It's more of the same misallocated government spending that led to these problems in the first place.

[Video 1.](#)

[Video 2.](#)

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

The following statement has been submitted by Mandy Benz, candidate for Minnesota House:

"As a wife and a mother, I am truly concerned for families and the future of our children and what the role of government holds for my son's future." said Benz. "I believe this concern with my leadership abilities in grassroots politics, studies and thorough understanding of legislation from working at the Capitol prepares me for the fight ahead to solve concerns we have today."

Benz, a Legislative Assistant at the Minnesota Capitol, studied Office Management Legal Criminal Justice/Government at Rasmussen College. Benz' extensive volunteer work for her Senate District over the last several years combined with consistent fiscally and socially traditional family values make her a strong candidate for November.

Mandy, her husband Gary and son Brandon live in Coon Rapids where she currently serves on the Coon Rapids Safety Commission. The Benz family enjoys hunting, fishing and the outdoors. They also attend church at Horizons Community Church. Benz has also received an endorsement from Brad Brandon, President of the Minnesota Faith and Freedom Coalition.

"I would like to take this opportunity to eagerly endorse Mandy Benz for House of Representatives," said Representative Kathy Lohmer (R-Lake Elmo). "I have known Mandy for several years now. She is a great conservative and a very hard working and supportive assistant to Senator Ted Lillie. Mandy has a love for our country and state, a passion for our Constitution and a very firm allegiance to our founding principles of limited government and fiscal and personal responsibility. I would be happy to serve with Mandy in the House and know she would bring her passion and hard work to our caucus and would be an asset to our Conservative agenda going forward. She has shown her willingness to work hard and do whatever she can to help support, not only Ted, but myself as well. I have appreciated getting to know Mandy and would welcome the opportunity to work together with her in the Minnesota House of Representatives."

Assistant Majority Leader Senator Lillie was in attendance at the event to campaign for Benz and give an endorsement speech. Benz has also received endorsement letters from several current Minnesota legislators, including State Senator Gretchen Hoffman (R-Vergas), State Senator Al DeKruif (R-Madison Lake) and Assistant Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd).

To learn more about Mandy Benz and to follow her campaign, you can visit her website at www.mandybenz.com.

4/13/12

In This Issue:

- 1. A Lost Governorship.**
- 2. This is the Agenda?**
- 3. Get With the Program.**

A LOST GOVERNORSHIP

A recent national news item listed the 10 most popular governors in the country, as determined by aggregating approval ratings from reputable polling firms.

Governor Dayton didn't make the cut.

Is it any wonder? This is starting to go beyond his unwise pursuit and loyal fidelity to the intellectually bankrupt policies of both the 1970s (tax the rich!) and today ("stimulus" spending).

It's starting to look as if this governor simply isn't up to the job of chief executive.

Take recent events. A district court [threw out](#) Dayton's executive order seeking a union representation vote for day care providers.

Any first year law student could have seen that he had no authority to order the election.

Either the governor and his staff have little understanding of the chief executive's power under the Minnesota Constitution or they don't care. Either way, the issue is an embarrassment for the state and the office of the governor.

Next, while most citizens aren't aware of the state hospital in Saint Peter, it provides one of the most critical public safety functions in the state. The hospital houses the state's most dangerous and mentally ill patients. Like Silence of the Lambs type psychos.

Thus, one would think that the state would exercise particular due diligence in selecting the person in charge of the place.

Nope.

It was revealed that the state hired and then fired the first guy they hired to run the place after it was revealed that he had all sorts of [red flags](#) in his background, including past employment problems and a doctored resume, according to media reports.

What a spectacular failure of leadership.

Today, [news reports](#) state that the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) believes Dayton's Commissioner of Human Services broke the law by not cooperating with the Office regarding an investigation into the department's handling of Medicaid monies.

The OLA is a non-partisan, highly respected oversight office that investigates and audits state programs to ensure compliance and transparency. These are truly the good government folks.

When the OLA says you broke the law, you've got a problem.

Perhaps it's time for Governor Dayton to stop focusing on running the governor's office as the 2012 DFL campaign headquarters and start operating the office as the center of the executive branch of state government.

Moreover, the GOP can feel free to start pointing out these failures of leadership at any time. Enough press conferences on the status of bonding, the stadium, "racino," and other issues that do little to advance the cause of freedom.

If the GOP can't effectively communicate the failures of this governor, we've got problems in November.

THIS IS THE AGENDA?

So Governor Dayton sent a letter this week to legislative leadership outlining his agenda for the remainder of the 2012 legislative session.

To say we're unimpressed is an understatement.

The governor stated that a bonding bill, a Capitol fix-up bill, and a Vikings stadium were his priorities.

Couldn't aim any higher, governor? The bar has been set so low, Mini-me could leap it in a single bound.

The Dog doesn't even need to point out the policy flaws inherent in such an agenda. We have explained them many times.

The real problem here is that we have a governor who has yet to master the art of governing. We have a governor who still seems uncomfortable in the role of chief executive. It's like watching a hockey player shoot with a teammate's stick or watching the pitcher hit.

Governor, you have to be a leader.

You alone are responsible for that whole vision thing. You need to tell the state where you see Minnesota a year from now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now.

Then you need to find a way to get people there, whether they voted for you or not, whether they sent you a cooperative legislature or not.

An agenda of tax increases, debt-financed borrowing, and the status quo plus inflation is a non-starter. It's a political agenda ill-suited to governing and is one rejected by the voters.

You need to stop acting like a legislative minority leader. That juvenile "[jobs clock](#)" on your web site is unbecoming the chief executive of our great state. So are those 3-page hyper-partisan diatribes masked as veto messages. Every bill reaching your desk isn't an election-year "ploy" by the GOP. That "symbolic" veto of the photo ID amendment was also a pure waste of political capital. It probably felt good to you and your partisans, but nothing productive came of it.

It's not yet time to be the partisan-in-chief. You will have all summer to do fundraisers and parades with your DFL peeps.

You're stuck in a trap of the path of least resistance. It's easy to engage in partisanship and hard, very hard, to govern effectively.

But it's on you. Yes, the legislature has responsibility as well but you alone are governor and you alone bear primary responsibility for making things work.

It's time to move beyond pandering to your base. You can start by signing the teacher tenure reform bill (LIFO) when it reaches your desk. The current status quo is supported

only by the teachers' union and universally recognized by Minnesotans as antithetical to a quality education.

There have been glimmers of hope. Your support of streamlined environmental regulations was appreciated. We need more of that.

No one buys your principle that bills that lack bi-partisan support are worthy of a veto. You're doing nothing more than ceding your veto power to the DFL minority, which has no interest in allowing the GOP majority to attain legislative victories, lest those results muck up the political narrative of a "do nothing" legislature.

You need to rise above such petty political concerns. Governing is your job. Acting the Loyal Opposition is the job of others, particularly Rep. Thissen and Sen. Bakk.

There is obviously a choice here, governor. You can choose to adopt the role of statesman and chief executive, which means working with the Republican majority to pass bills that likely don't exactly comport with your world view.

Or you can adopt the role of Obstructor-in-Chief, joining with the DFL minority to grind the Capitol to a halt in the hopes that the public will look beyond the failures of a failed president and punish the GOP for an alleged failure to achieve results at the polls in November.

Perhaps that's what you want. A DFL majority in the legislature would surely allow for you to implement your true principles and values regarding "fair" taxation of the successful, an expansion of Big Government to cure what ails society, and the easy path of governing according to a formula of maintaining the status quo while feeding it generously with ever more private sector wealth.

It's a big gamble. Minnesotans have demonstrated a penchant for divided government. It's unlikely a majority of voters will be comfortable handing over the trifecta of House, Senate, and Governor's office to a DFL majority that has shown a resolute fondness for the 1970s and a shocking ignorance of the economic realities of today.

At some point, every governor realizes that his legacy is at stake. History shows an amnesia regarding legislators and longer memory for governors. Governors get a big portrait to remind Capitol visitors of the rule they once enjoyed.

A push to create a "do nothing" legislature can quickly turn into a verdict against a "do nothing" governor.

Minnesota isn't interested in what you're against, governor. They want to see what you are for and they will judge you accordingly.

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

The Watchdog has had enough. We've simply had enough of certain conservative "activists" who don't get it.

You know who you are. You're the cheapskate who doesn't give a nickel to GOP candidates or any conservative cause. You even take a "pass" when the hat is passed at the BPOU meeting for a collection to buy a couple more lawn signs or get the BPOU web site up and running.

You don't get out to support any campaign or candidate. When it's time to march in the parades, drop the lit on a cold October morning, or pound the lawn signs, your butt is nowhere to be found. Yes, that Star Trek convention is far more important, Comic Book Guy.

In fact, your activism is limited to showing up at the monthly BPOU meeting to air your grievances about how your local GOP legislator is a RINO (regardless of the voting record) and then segue into a frothing monologue regarding Obama's birth certificate, 9/11, and Area 51 when everyone else is ready to discuss the plan of action to take the fight to the liberals.

If you spent half as much time working to win elections as you do sitting on Facebook in bitch sessions with the other malcontents, we could really get something done.

Just because you showed up to vote in 2010 after staying home to hand Obama victory in 2008, you think the GOP legislature owes you and should prostrate themselves at your feet, passing every agenda item you want.

Get over it. Senjem and Zellers are focused on a sustainable, long-term governing majority, which, yes, includes reaching out to the same independents who were critical to electing the GOP majority. Yes, their thoughts matter. Get out your calculator and see that appealing to 25% of the electorate doesn't get us to the majority, the one and only place where we can get things done like photo ID, LIFO, and a more responsible state budget.

Moreover, it's time to get behind and support GOP legislators, not kick the crap out of them for not passing your purity test. Just because they're not with you on one issue, it's not a license to brand them RINOs or claim that you're going to back some loony tune third party guy who couldn't get 10% of the voter in your district.

It's a laugh to see wanna be's challenge or threaten to challenge incumbent legislators who have lifetime Taxpayer League scores in the 90s.

You can stop with the all the attacks and "outings" on your lame blogs and Twitter accounts with 10 followers.

We have people who do that. They're called Democrats, backed by their well-funded PACs, which are in turn funded by trust fund millionaires who are the real Big Money in this state.

You've never won an election, you've never raised a penny for the cause, and you only show up to dominate BPOU meetings by complaining. Win an election? You can't win a date.

It's high time to get with the program and start helping the cause.

Or stay home. We don't need you that much. Some folks are more trouble than their value to the organization.

4/20/12

In This Issue:

- 1. County Board Elections.**
- 2. Speaking of the County Board...**
- 3. Candidates Welcome.**

COUNTY BOARD ELECTIONS

In the near future, the Anoka County board of commissioners will redraw the seven district boundaries for each seat on the county board, as required pursuant to the results of the most recent census.

After decades of calcified, arrogant, intellectually bankrupt "leadership" from the Good Ol' Boys, the board underwent radical change in 2010, ushering in a new board that actually reflected the desires of the county electorate.

This election year may very well see a continued trend towards electing county commissioners who are conservative and committed to smaller, more accountable, more transparent government.

After all, Dan Erhart and Jim Kordiak are still on the board and just as nostalgic for the old days as ever.

The new district boundaries will inform the decisions of some candidates who are taking a "wait and see" approach while every incumbent will see changes that may make re-election more difficult.

Having said that, some candidates aren't waiting.

State Senator Mike Jungbauer of East Bethel has announced his candidacy for the county board, the announcement coming on the heels of a close loss to fellow senator Michelle Benson for endorsement after the two were drawn into the same legislative district.

Sources tell the Watchdog that Jungbauer will be running regardless of the what happens with redistricting.

The current district would pit Jungbauer against Andy Westerberg, meaning a match-up that would likely hinge on the ability of each to prove their conservative bona fides, especially if the GOP again endorses in this race.

And that's not all. The Watchdog can report that another formidable candidate is strongly considering a run for county commissioner if that person remains in the same district as Westerberg after redistricting.

Boasting noteworthy conservative credentials, this potential candidate has expressed a frustration that Westerberg hasn't been as conservative as he could have been on the board.

If all three do end up running against one another, it will make for an interesting race.

All three candidates can make the case that they are electable conservative in the race.

It would certainly be a race worth watching and potentially one of the best county board races in many years.

Another race Watchdogs must watch is [Scott Schulte](#) against Dan Erhart.

There is a possibility that these two could end up in different districts, but both are Coon Rapids citizens and likely to be drawn in together.

Schulte is well-known in Coon Rapids, knows how to campaign, and is far, far more interested in smaller government and respectful governance that Erhart ever will be.

Of course, Erhart may just decide to drop out, as this would be the first serious challenge Erhart has faced in many years.

For his part, Schulte is looking forward to taking on Erhart and eager to talk about where these two part ways in terms of the way they would govern the county.

Strap on the helmet, Danno. Could be a rough election.

The Watchdog is also hearing of excellent candidates lining up against Carol LeDoux, who had an opportunity to join the conservative block on the county board but has frequently lined up with Dan Erhart, which could be her undoing.

In a rapidly growing district that could put her in a very conservative area like Andover, LeDoux may find all that footsy with Erhart to be her undoing.

Conservatives in the area have been closely watching her work on the board and they aren't very impressed.

Watch this race as well.

Count on the Watchdog to continue to bring you all the latest news with respect to these elections.

SPEAKING OF THE COUNTY BOARD...

This county board has an opportunity right now to prove its conservative credentials by stopping another harebrained Obama administration scheme.

The [Anoka County Union](#) reports that the county is applying for a grant to install electric vehicle car charging stations at the Coon Rapids Dam.

The money for the stations would come from a federal grant from our dead-broke federal government that would allow all the tree hugging Earth Firsters to cruise on down to the Dam and get a taxpayer-subsidized charge up while enjoying a view of the great Mother River.

Among a host of problems inherent in this whole scheme is that the private sector has already moved to meet the need here in Anoka County.

Two private business operations offer charging stalls so far.

In short, if this application is successful, Anoka County would be getting into the electric car charging business and competing against private-sector taxpaying businesses.

Why? When the private sector can meet a market need, government can get the heck out of the way.

Moreover, the government will build their stations with money they don't have, subsidize the operation with money they don't have, all without regard to marketplace signals regarding demand. Stations will simply be built with no regard to marketplace demand,

consumer desires, or demographic analysis. Money will simply be tossed about while politicians have another photo op down at the dam.

Rest assured, private sector charging stations will be built only when the market place demands them, operate at maximum efficiency, and charge a rate that the demand for the service will bear.

Best of all, taxpayers won't be on the hook for any problems with the private sector stations.

Rest assured, government will do none of this.

Of course, these charging stations are part and parcel of the failed Obama energy strategy that has included heavily subsidizing the Chevy Volt (no word on whether the government charging stations will come equipped with an adjoining fire station should any Volt suddenly explode) and offering companies like Solyndra all sorts of government money.

This whole charging station fiasco is emblematic of Big Government and why taxpayers are sick and tired of the status quo.

The Watchdog demands to know what the county board is going to do about this boondoggle.

It's high time the board instruct the parks and recreation department to withdraw the application.

We don't want Chinese-financed grants from Washington, we don't need another state-run enterprise, and we sure as heck don't need to go along with the Obama energy policy, such as it were.

Watchdogs, [contact the Board](#) and let them know you oppose this dumb idea!

If any of these folks want to impress us as conservative candidates, we'll be watching how they walk the walk, not talk the talk.

CANDIDATES WELCOME

With election season upon us, it's time for local candidates to become better known to Watchdogs.

As candidates announce their intention to throw their hats in the ring, Harold Hamilton invites them to submit a statement of candidacy (500 word limit) to our readership.

Send submissions to harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

4/27/12

In This Issue:

1. Rally Time!
2. Power Charging Stations Lose Power.
3. Spoiled Brats - and that's the Parents.

RALLY TIME!

Hey, Watchdogs! We look forward to seeing all of you at the Capitol tomorrow morning for annual Tax Cut rally. Come and enjoy the fellowship of like-minded lovers of liberty and limited government and be sure to visit Harold Hamilton at the Watchdog tent, where we will have tons of Watchdog swag to commemorate your visit.

The legislature will also be in session tomorrow, perhaps voting on taxpayer subsidies for a professional football franchise. You will have the opportunity to have your voice heard in a very personal and direct way regarding this and other issues that remain outstanding.

Government belongs to those who show up. The liberals and their special interests have been showing up all session looking for a spiff or two financed with your hard-earned money. Tomorrow is your turn. Make something of it and let legislators know that the same people who swept them into office in 2010 are counting on the legislature to one very simple yet powerful thing - make good on a campaign promise to make government smaller, more efficient, and accountable to the citizens of the state.

POWER CHARGING STATIONS LOSE POWER

Last week, the Watchdog exposed a county scheme to apply for federal grants to install electric vehicle charging stations at the Coon Rapids dam, thereby competing with the private sector, spending money Washington doesn't have and lending credence to the failed Obama energy policy.

Watchdogs responded by contacting county commissioners to demand a stop to this foolishness.

Commissioners Sivarajah and Westerberg contacted the Watchdog to explain their position and report to this publication that the grant application has been stopped and will not be coming back.

Here's what Sivarajah wrote:

This came to the board as an information item that the parks committee excluding Andy Westerberg was exploring. This was not voted on by the board and I and others told the parks director we did not support it. The Parks director will be bringing it to the parks committee to withdraw the application. The withdrawal will come as an informational item to the board. The bottom line is a clear message was sent that the county board was not supportive so there will not be an application submitted.

Commissioner Westerberg wrote:

Hello. I just wanted you to know that I have had two opportunities to vote on this proposal and each time I have voted against it. The first occurred at the TAB programing and full committee meetings. The second (3rd) time was at the park board meeting where it passed on a 2-1 vote.

The Watchdog thanks both Sivarajah and Westerberg for their sane thinking and commitment to opposing this type of tomfoolery, which often passes below the radar in county government. This is further confirmation that elections matter.

Under the Good Ol' Boys, not only would the charging stations have been built, a light rail line would have been extended to them to provide another transportation option for Anoka County commuters.

Westerberg notes that he was the only vote opposing this fantasy scheme in committee. According to the county web site, Westerberg serves on the Parks committee with fellow commissioners Kordiak and LeDoux.

Shame on those two for voting for this fiasco, although it's hardly a surprise. Kordiak has always voted like an inveterate Big Government Good Ol' Boy while LeDoux has failed miserably in her quest to be a political chameleon, being all things to all people, especially in her GOP-leaning district.

LeDoux will be running for re-election this fall and she will have a great deal of explaining to do in her district, especially if a credible conservative challenger emerges.

Anyone out there interested in a part-time job at \$63,000 annually, with great benefits and an awesome retirement package?

Sivarajah and company could use some help in moving the county in a positive direction.

The great results Watchdogs got here show what can happen when good people are put in charge.

Good job, Watchdogs!

SPOILED BRATS - AND THAT'S THE PARENTS

Did you know that it looks unlikely that the state will designate an official "state mammal" this legislative session?

Yeah. Neither did we. Somehow, designating a state mammal didn't make the legislative agenda of the House, the Senate, or the Governor.

Yet that didn't stop some soccer mommy in Andover from writing a petulant, snotty Op Ed to the Star Tribune on the issue, which demonstrates how the Star Tribune continues to lose any semblance of journalistic quality (sorry, we won't link to that publication).

Yes, it seems that poor Vicki Froslee has been left dejected and cynical regarding the legislative process. This because state Rep. Peggy Scott and Sen. Michelle Benson failed to pass into law, or even get a hearing, for a bill her kid and fellow classmates dreamed up to designate the Black Bear as the state mammal.

Apparently, Ms. Froslee missed 5th grade civics but did not miss the opportunity to act as one more selfish citizen who boasts of an entitlement mentality.

First, most bills don't get legislative hearings and precious few become law. This session, the legislature has introduced nearly 3,000 items of legislation. Thankfully, there aren't the resources available to hear all these bills, much less get them to the governor.

Get over it, Vicki. You're not alone in wanting committee hearings or the governor's signature on a bill.

Second, let the Watchdog be honest and politically incorrect: this was a stupid bill and shouldn't have been introduced in the first place.

There is utterly no need to further clutter the statute books with crap like this. It's bad enough that we have a state muffin, state portrait, state apple, state sport (hockey) and official state soil.

It's all just pandering to voters who think it's neat that little Johnny or Susie got a bill passed.

There are other opportunities to get kids involved in civics, including Youth in Government programs and the like, which the Dog fully supports.

We don't need to waste legislative resources pandering to bratty parents who want to treat the legislative process like a pony ride - another amusement vehicle for their kids.

Third, Rep. Scott and Sen. Benson are serious legislators who have had their hands full fighting the good fight on real issues on behalf of their constituents and all of Minnesota.

Scott is a key figure on the bonding committee and a champion of legal reform on the Civil Law committee. Benson, although a freshman, is a key player on health and human services issues, which comprises tens of billions in government spending.

It's no surprise they didn't have the time to cater to the demands of school parents who are either completely ignorant of the political crisis facing our country or who believe that this issue is more important. Either way, penning a whiny, petulant Op Ed betrays the mentality of the author with respect to civic engagement and collective public policy priorities.

If they're willing to take it, the kids and parents learned a valuable lesson here. Government doesn't give you everything you demand, contrary to what the liberals say. Moreover, learning to take "no" for an answer is an important part of growing up.

Let's see if it's the kids or the parents who learn this lesson quickest.

5/4/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Rally for the Hardcore.**
- 2. New Districts for Anoka County.**
- 3. Candidate Statements.**

RALLY FOR THE HARDCORE

Last Saturday's Tax Cut Rally was for the hardcore, so says Mother Nature. Watchdogs defied a cold, driving rain to have their collective voice heard regarding limited government and individual liberty.

A number of passionate and inspiring speakers, including former Minnesota resident Herman Cain, fired up the crowd and emphasized the importance of being active and engaged in the upcoming election.

Harold Hamilton hosted visitors in the Watchdog tent, where visitors picked up some great swag, enjoyed conservative fellowship and marveled at the iconic, massive inflatable [Watchdog](#), which has become an ubiquitous symbol of taxpayer rights across Minnesota.

The Watchdog staff and Harold Hamilton thank all who stopped by to offer their thanks and praise for the Watchdog's work to promote transparency and accountability across all levels of government.

We also thank all the new readers who signed up to receive our weekly Email Update, Friday commentary, and daily Morning Blotter.

Welcome to the brotherhood of the Dog!

NEW DISTRICTS FOR ANOKA COUNTY

The big news in the county this week is the new county commissioner [district boundary](#) changes that cause six of the seven commissioners to seek re-election this fall in what promises to be an interesting and exciting election, especially for local races.

Here's a breakdown of the races and boundary changes:

District 1: The incumbent here is [Matt Look](#), who succeeded Good Ol' Boy Dennis Berg after his retirement. Look beat down long-time Good Ol' Girl Natalie Steffen, as the Boys made every effort to keep the district in their gnarled, greedy hands.

The big changes here involved the district losing Andover and picking up all of Oak Grove.

Overall, the district will remain conservative and seek a county commissioner who govern in a manner consistent with that conservatism.

On the whole, Look has constructed a conservative record on the board thus far and has earned special kudos for his willingness to take on Dan Erhart whenever Earhart loses his sense of place and time and thinks that his opinion still matters, causing him to spout off as he did when he ran the place.

Look will be fending off a challenge from the right in the form of Oak Grove city councilman [Dan Denno](#).

Denno makes no secret of his conservative world view and Tea Party affiliation.

Sources tell the Watchdog that Denno formed his campaign prior to redistricting but intends to move forward against Look.

If true, it will be an interesting to see how the candidates will compare and contrast their records, style, and agenda for the county board.

District 2: Incumbent Andy Westerberg saw little change in this district, other than losing the city of Oak Grove to District 1.

With East Bethel and Ham Lake still a part of District 2, there promises to be another battle in this district among three candidates who will all vie for the mantle of "fiscal conservative."

As the Watchdog reported last week, state Senator Mike Jungbauer (retiring) has announced his candidacy against Westerberg.

As we also reported, another candidate is waiting in the wings in that area and has, in fact, announced her candidacy. See our exclusive candidate announcement below.

District 3: This district changed primarily by encompassing more of the city of Blaine. Incumbent Robyn West has been an ally of the conservative block on the county board.

Unlike districts 1 and 2, West does not have a challenger from the right, although Blaine has a strong Good Ol' Boy presence and always put up an opponent to West.

District 4: Taking in the southern tip of the county, this piece of real estate has been wholly owned and operated by the Kordiak machine, Albert and son, Jim.

This is the only district not on the ballot this year.

This district is usually a lost cause and much like Cold War doctrine, must be contained and isolated. It's much harder for Kordiak to do damage to the taxpayer when he's in the minority.

A toady for Dan Erhart, Kordiak will be rendered combat ineffective if Erhart leaves the board this year - voluntarily or involuntarily.

District 5: This district, which comprises the east half of Coon Rapids and southern Andover, changed very little in the redistricting.

Incumbent Carol LeDoux has been a thorough disappointment to all who thought she might have an interest in working with the reformers to change the way the county does business.

LeDoux is vulnerable to a quality challenger but one has yet to emerge in a district that for some reason has always had difficulty attracting good candidates.

District 6: Home to the Iron Lady of county government, District 6 changed little, taking in some of Blaine and retaining the eastern portions of the county.

Rhonda Sivarajah is nothing short of a heroine to every Watchdog in the county and will surely earn nothing but continued respect and support from conservatives in her district.

Of course, the Good Ol' Boys will find at least one shucker and jiver to run against her. They will try to find two so they can force her into a primary race.

No matter, she will mop the floor with these mopes and continue her noble quest to fundamentally change the culture of county government.

District 7: This is the big race, kids. Good Ol' Boy Godfather Dan Erhart is in the most competitive race of his long, entrenched career against Coon Rapids businessman and councilman Scott Schulte.

Fortunately, this district did change rather significantly.

The district added a large chunk of geography, adding the western half of Andover, running all the way to the border with Oak Grove.

These Andover districts are among the most conservative in the county, frequently giving GOP candidates 70% of the vote.

If Schulte works these precincts hard and properly demonstrates his fiscal bona fides, he should be able establish a base for victory over Erhart.

Moreover, Schulte is well known and respected in Coon Rapids, where his family name is well known and he has won office as a city councilman.

Erhart's only real advantage is in Anoka, a sclerotic, aging suburb where Good Ol' Boys are known and for some reason appreciated.

The formula for Schulte is simple. Pound him in Andover, edge him in Coon Rapids, and keep it close in Anoka.

And that the end of Dan Erhart.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Candidate Statement - by Julie Braastad

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I am pleased to announce that after much consideration, I have decided to run for the Anoka County Commissioner position representing District 2. You may recognize my name because I am currently serving my second term on the Ham Lake City Council. Ham Lake has been the leader in Anoka County in maintaining low taxes and setting precedence for limited government. It has been important to me to maintain Ham Lake's low tax levels while still providing residents with the necessary essential services. This has come about through good planning and thinking outside of the box. I want to bring my tax reducing ideas and innovative thinking to the county level. In today's

economy, we cannot operate government as usual. Over the past year, I believe that the county board has been moving in the right direction but there is still much more work to be done. I believe that Anoka County needs to have a fiscally responsible budget. This can be achieved by prioritizing spending and without raising taxes. It is all about taking an honest look at the county's needs versus its wants. It is possible to cut spending without cutting services. I believe in and have a passion for limited government. Bigger government is not better government. It is imperative that every program and every department within the county be operated in the most efficient manner possible. The county can focus on economic development by easing the tax burdens on businesses. Businesses need the freedom to be able to operate without being overly taxed. When this happens they will be able to expand and will also create new ventures thereby creating new and higher paying jobs. I really wish it would not have been the position of the current board to sink more money into the Northstar Commuter Rail. It doesn't make sense to me to continue to invest in a losing situation.

I currently serve as the Ham Lake Fire Department liaison, am on the Executive Board of the North Metro Telecommunications Commission and am the Sr. Vice President of the Don Hansen VFW - Ladies Auxiliary. I have been an active member of the Ham Lake Area Chamber of Commerce for the last 15 years and am one of the organizers of the Toys for Troops drive.

You'll find I'm an excellent listener, a hard worker and a proven conservative leader. I hope I will earn your vote for county commissioner. Follow my campaign at www.juliebraastad.com and on Julie Braastad for Anoka County Commissioner.

Candidate Statement - by Andrew Reinhardt

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I'm Andrew Reinhardt, Republican-Endorsed Candidate for House District 36B, which covers the northern half of Brooklyn Park and a portion of Coon Rapids. I'm a proud conservative who believes in freedom, liberty, and suburban values. In other words, getting government off of people's backs, and out of the way of blocking prosperity! I'm the son of a tire factory mechanic, and the first in my family to graduate from college. I'm a Gulf War Veteran with the rare distinction of earning Good Conduct Awards from both the Navy and Army. And after years of dedicated community service, I was honored to receive a Mayor's Good Citizenship Award and Key to the City of Brooklyn Park. Standing up for what's right hasn't been easy. Frequently I've

been the only "no" vote on City Commissions and a regional transportation Board fighting FOR the free market, and AGAINST wasteful spending and oppressive government overreach.

I'm excited to offer voters a clear choice for freedom, prosperity, and getting Minnesota to work. For years this area had been dominated by one Party, and not coincidentally they were years of significant decline. In 2010, Brooklyn Park & Coon Rapids finally elected a Republican State Senator in Senate District 47, and voters flipped the Anoka County Board to a conservative majority, and we are already seeing significant results. This November, we can join thriving nearby suburbs who have full GOP House and Senate Representation. That's the main safeguard to protect suburbs from continually being abused as an ATM to fund inner-city projects and expensive toys like light rail lines and stadiums. I will work to protect the homes, values, and wallets, of my constituents, not sell them out to the Minneapolis and St. Paul establishment.

DFL Rep. Melissa Hortman has made her own case for being fired more than any other Legislator in St Paul, hands down. She was elected with the slogan "it's time to get the job done," constantly claims to be bi-partisan, but she's been part of two state government shutdowns in eight years, after zero in 148 years before her arrival. As Minority Whip, her *job* is to push her colleagues to the far-left DFL platform. She's supported a sales tax increase, a gas tax increase, income tax increases, two stadiums (and counting) and even authored a bill to start taxing clothing. Even what she claims to be her major accomplishments are seriously flawed, as Northstar Rail has turned out to be a colossal failure, and Highway 610 was only extended due to federal Obama debt money, not out of responsible priority spending. While our families and communities are suffering, Rep. Hortman has been preoccupied with a steady string of trendy liberal global warming and recycling measures, like trying to outlaw throwing away a beverage container. These are serious times, and it's time for responsible and accountable leadership focused on real priorities like jobs, the economy, and our neighborhoods.

5/11/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Be sure to read our analysis of the Vikings stadium and see how it requires a photo ID! The bill should have warned the DFL, "Photo ID Inside!"

- 1. The End? No, the Beginning.**
- 2. A Purple Primer.**

THE END? NO, THE BEGINNING.

The legislature went home yesterday afternoon, not to return until January of 2013. The end of every legislative session marks a new beginning of freedom for Minnesota taxpayers.

The Watchdog will have a complete analysis and retrospective on the entire biennium next week.

For now, let us collectively rejoice in the adjournment and turn our attention towards the 2012 campaign cycle, which begins today and demands your attention and best efforts.

A PURPLE PRIMER

Hands down, the biggest issues of this session was the Vikings stadium, which is unfortunate since there were so many other thousands of issues more important than a public subsidy for a private enterprise.

We've broken down the biggest takeaways from this bad stadium deal, which violates the fundamental principle that government has no business subsidizing private enterprise.

The Financing.

The state will finance the taxpayer share with appropriation bonds, which are debt instruments to be repaid over time with interest.

Appropriation bonds are paid with an annual appropriation from the state's general fund. Yes, the state's general fund is at risk with appropriation bonds, unlike revenue bonds.

Revenue bonds are bonds that are repaid with revenue from the particular capital project that is built with the bonds. For example, a community center can be built with revenue bonds and then be repaid with revenues from the enterprise.

Appropriation bonds indeed put the state's general fund at risk yet do not pledge the full faith and credit of the state to repay the bonds. General obligation bonds do that.

Thus, some folks will argue that appropriation bonds are less risky for taxpayers precisely because they do not pledge the full faith and credit of the state.

This is really a distinction without a difference. If the financing mechanism for the stadium deal, electronic gambling, fails to produce revenues sufficient to repay the bonds, it is highly unlikely the state would allow the bonds to go into default, even though there would be no legal argument to prevent such an outcome.

More likely, the state would simply rob other programs or raise taxes to fund the gap. So yes, the taxpayers are at big risk regarding these bonds.

Which leads us to the next financing issue: gambling revenue.

The deal finances the bonds by allowing the state's charities to implement two new kinds of gambling, electronic pull tabs and electronic bingo that links players in one location to players in other locations.

This gambling would be taxed with the revenues going into the general fund and then laundered back out to repay the bonds.

First, gambling revenues are incredibly volatile. To base 30 year bonds on a volatile revenue stream is risky, even reckless.

Second, this kind of gambling is new and unproven, adding to the risk. There is really no track record of this kind of gambling to offer and kind of reliable projections upon which to base revenues.

And no, the answer to this problem wasn't more gambling in the form of the so-called "racino," as some Republicans proposed.

The state is going to come to regret turning to gambling to finance programs.

Gambling is a regressive tax visited upon those who can least afford it. Normally, our libertarian tendencies wouldn't care, but the fact is that these addicts blow their small earnings on gambling and then turn to the welfare system to pick up the pieces.

The state has no business preying on dopes who don't know any better because the taxpayers end up footing a bigger bill in the long run.

It's the coward's way out. If Republicans want more government and more government spending, they ought to be big enough and honest to support honest tax increases to pay for it.

Really, it's been appalling to watch Republicans bray on and on about more gambling while attempting to claim the mantle of conservatism.

There's nothing conservative about advocating for more governmental revenue to support more governmental programs, especially when those programs have nothing to do with core functions of government (like building a stadium or bailing out the horse racing industry).

With the session over, maybe Republican leaders like RNC Committeewoman Pat Anderson can back to her job of rebuilding a broken, bankrupt state party instead of hanging out at the Capitol as a paid lobbyist for the gambling industry.

The Referendum.

As expected, Minneapolis residents will get jobbed out of their right, pursuant to the city charter, to vote on the expenditure of city funds to build sports facilities that require more than \$10 million city funds.

The sophistry here is that the \$150 million local share isn't really Minneapolis money since it's financed with a local tax that is state imposed.

If that's true, is it really a local share? Shouldn't that \$150 million count towards the state share?

The 1%.

Despite being the legislative minority, Democrats in both the House and Senate provided the majority of votes for the stadium.

Yes, the DFL was responsible for a \$350 million public subsidy for a Delaware based private corporation owned by a billionaire New Jersey real estate mogul.

Let the DFL never, ever be heard to complain of corporate greed, corporate welfare, or any BS about paying one's "fair share."

Every DFLer who voted for this bill put the lie to the "party of the workin' man" narrative.

You offered up a subsidy to a member of the 1%, financed by gambling, which preys heavily on the bottom 1%.

And that includes a DFL governor who did little this session but advocate for this stadium, his clear number one priority.

The DFL wanted a stadium this session. Will they campaign on it? Don't hold your breath.

How cynical and how very crass.

Photo I.D. Required!

Did you know the Vikings bill requires the presentation of a photo identification. It's true! Check out [HF 2958](#), the stadium bill. Article 4, section 52, subdivision 9(d) states: Before participating in the play of a linked bingo game, a player must present and register a valid picture identification card that includes the player's address and date of birth.

It's right there on page 71, lines 13-15.

So Democrats are opposed to a photo ID to vote but support photo ID to play bingo? How cynical and how very crass.

The Process.

- Putting aside the merits of the stadium issue, every citizen should be appalled by the lack of transparency and secrecy surrounding the conference committee that assembled the stadium bill behind closed doors.

Joint Rule 2.06 mandates: All Conference Committees shall be open to the public. As much as practical, meetings of Conference Committees shall be announced as far in advance as possible, with the intent to provide a 24-hour notice, and actions taken shall be agreed upon in an open meeting.

This didn't happen. Instead, the conference report was crafted behind closed doors, out of sight from the taxpaying public.

The conference committee played games by having different parties in separate rooms to avoid triggering a quorum of the conference committee which would then trigger an open meeting.

Citizens were treated to the spectacle of the conference committee posting their bill before the committee even officially met. Just how in the he\$\$ does a conference committee assemble and agree upon a conference report before they have even met?

They hid behind closed doors and cut a deal with the Vikings in a smoke-filled back room.

What disservice to the people of this great state.

Another stadium?

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The Vikings bill didn't just build a new home for the Vikings. It also will likely build one for the Saint Paul Saints.

Sources tell the Watchdog that the Saint Paul legislative delegation was persuaded to support the Vikings stadium with a wink and a nod that the Saints would get a stadium as well.

How?

Well, just take a look at the [bonding bill](#) that passed just days before the stadium bill.

Contained within is a provision that appropriates \$47.5 million for capital project grants. Our sources say that a chunk of this money is set aside for a Saints stadium.

Anyone else out there who wants a stadium? Anyone the state has missed? How about that lingerie women's football team?

The fallout.

- Many conservatives are rightly ticked off about this bill and have expressed interest in stripping GOP legislators who supported the bill of endorsement.

The Watchdog encourages folks to take a different, more positive course of action.

Namely, go out and work to support legislators who had the courage to oppose the bill in the face of angry, hostile, venomous, mouth-breathing supporters who harassed legislators with profanity and threats throughout.

No matter where you live, there is a GOP legislator nearby who stood on principle. Even if it isn't your legislator, support that person with your time, money, and talents.

Be positive. Be proactive.

Spending time hammering at a fellow Republican is counterproductive and only cheers the DFL.

Work FOR something, not against.

5/18/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Blaine City Council Suppresses First Amendment.**
- 2. Session Wrap Up: Issue #1.**

BLAINE CITY COUNCIL SUPPRESSES FIRST AMENDMENT

Greetings, Watchdogs. We begin with this item from the May 3rd Blaine City Council meeting, copied verbatim from the minutes:

City Manager Arneson stated the *Star Tribune* will continue to distribute free newspapers in purple bags to non-subscribers. He stated currently they are distributing in the 55443 zip code and will deliver this weekend in the 55449 zip code. He stated if residents want the *Star Tribune* to stop delivery they should call 612-673-7305. He stated the *Star Tribune* is able to distribute the newspaper under the freedom of press. He asked the Council if the City should pursue a way to stop the distribution.

Councilmember Clark stated he would like the City to pursue a way to stop the distribution.

City Manager Arneson stated there are three ways to pursue the complaint by a claim on littering on private property, claim on littering on public right of way or a civil complaint.

Councilmember Bourke asked about the government trying to suppress the press. City Attorney Sweeny replied the issue with littering is not a violation of State law. He stated the First Amendment prohibits laws bridging the freedom of speech and press. He stated there have been court cases relating to the distribution of this material in the U.S. and it is an appropriate exercise of speech and freedom of press. He stated the City can monitor the distribution this weekend and make conclusions. He suggests not taking on the newspaper relative to this distribution without more facts.

City Manager Arneson stated the staff will monitor the distribution this weekend and report back to the Council.

Councilmember Swanson asked about private roads and if a townhome association could call the *Tribune* to stop delivery for the development. City Attorney Sweeney replied the association could call.

It looks like the city council missed that constitutional law class. Even worse, it looks like the city attorney did as well.

Now, let's admit a couple of things.

The Star Tribune is indeed a nasty, mediocre, liberal rag. If any publication deserves persecution, it's these guys.

Moreover, it's true that the First Amendment is not limitless. For example, you don't have a right to go around littering and claim protection pursuant to the First Amendment.

That much is true.

However, treading upon the freedom of the press to disseminate their publications is sticky business, especially when the suppressor is government.

It seems a bit hypocritical that politicians are the ones complaining about the Star Tribune distributing their literature, unsolicited, to homes in Blaine.

Isn't that exactly what they all do when running for re-election? Aren't they the ones who stuff our newspaper boxes, door jambs and windshields with their propaganda, whether we want it or not? Isn't it their campaign literature blowing all over the neighborhood every October?

If the city council is going to remind citizens that they can call the newspaper to stop free delivery, perhaps the council can remind citizens that they can call the candidates this fall and ask not to have campaign literature delivered to homes.

The same holds true for litter violations. Will these city council members hold themselves to the same standard and ask staff to look for candidate litter violations this fall?

It's just plain hypocritical to complain about the Star Tribune when candidates themselves are the biggest offenders when it comes to unsolicited publications and litter.

Moreover, just why is this city council business? Is the city so prosperous and so well run that the council can indulge in discussion of the delivery of newspapers?

This is a private transaction between and private business and private citizens.

If the citizen doesn't wish to receive a complimentary copy of the Star Tribune (and we can see why), they can simply call the paper and request to be taken off the delivery schedule.

This is emblematic of the state of our politics and our government these days.

Every citizen feels entitled to a life free of risk, trouble, and even inconvenience.

And whenever Joe Public experiences one of those circumstances, his first reaction is to run to government to complain and demand that government fix the issue.

And just as unfortunate is the willingness of so many politicians to indulge this garbage by first telling the citizens they have a legitimate gripe (they don't) and that government will take action to alleviate the inconvenience (it shouldn't).

Too many garbage trucks on your street? Complain to government. Too many free newspapers? Complain to government. Too fat to fit in an airplane seat? Complain to government. Bought a house you couldn't afford? Complain to government. Don't have a billion dollar football palace? Complain to government.

And the rest of us pay for it all.

SESSION WRAP UP: ISSUE #1

As promised, and as is our practice, we will take space in this publication over the next couple of weeks to dissect and examine the past legislative biennium (2011 and 2012).

The biggest issues from the past biennium goes back to 2011 - the budget deficit.

Governor Dayton and the GOP legislative majority engaged in a showdown of epic proportions, with the governor proclaiming that tax increases must happen while the GOP just as passionately claimed that tax increases must not be a part of the solution.

The state went to a historic shutdown.

The GOP won. Not only were there no tax increases, the state budget has forecasted increased surplus amounts, putting the lie to Dayton's claim that the GOP solution wouldn't produce a solution but would only lead to more fiscal trouble.

Wrong. Tax increases? We don't need no stinkin' tax increases.

Here's what the Watchdog wrote in the immediate aftermath of the budget solution:

Well, it's all over but the shouting, which will continue until November 2012.

The state shutdown ended this week with a whimper as all went according to plan, with Republicans demonstrating that they both manage state government and do so guided by their collective principles and values.

The easy way out would have been a "compromise" with Governor Dayton sometime prior to June 30th.

It would have been a "compromise" based upon how much higher taxes would have risen in Minnesota and it would have been a compromise that would have required the GOP to abandon the core of its covenant with Minnesota voters.

Republicans promised that they would go to Saint Paul and get government spending under control. That promise required both the rejection of tax increases and a meaningful reduction in spending.

And that promise also required one more thing - the reform and redesign of a system of government that was geared towards a 1970s economy and was based upon the liberal values of the 1970s, namely a belief that government was the primary driver of prosperity and society's foremost problem solver.

Instead, this GOP majority held fast to their collective values and withstood the attraction of political expediency, the condescending scolding of the editorial boards, and the relentless pressure of special interest groups who, frankly, got their undies all wound up because someone finally had the courage to tell these spoiled brats that the party was over.

Conservatives across Minnesota should rejoice that this legislature crafted a balanced budget based on a foundation of three core values: the rejection of tax increases; the crafting of a budget that puts Minnesota government on a path to fiscal sustainability; and a budget that embraces public policies that reward work, family, and free markets.

While the war over the size and scope of the state budget took center stage, the showdown between Governor Dayton and legislative Republicans over tax increases was the main battle front.

The centerpiece of the Dayton campaign was a promise to raise taxes, especially on our most successful job creators.

Republicans not only forced Dayton to scale back his income tax proposal, they got him to drop it completely. Not only that, they also forced him to drop tax increases altogether. No sales tax increase, no cigarette tax increase, no alcohol tax increase, no tax increase of any type in any amount. Zip. Zilch. Nada. Nothin'.

The sitting governor of Minnesota was forced to abandon the central premise of his campaign and was no doubt a core value of his.

Republicans were also successful in putting some serious brakes on spending while putting the state on a path to sustainable and reasonable growth.

Yes, we agree with those Watchdogs who wanted to spend less. It would have been nice to have ended up a \$32 billion general fund.

But that just wasn't going to happen. Not with a DFL governor sitting across the negotiating table.

The dream of what could have been with a GOP governor shouldn't cloud the reality of what the GOP accomplished against a DFL governor. (Note to GOP: endorse a better candidate next time around.)

The state budget forecast predicted general fund expenditures in the upcoming budget cycle of \$39 billion. Remember \$39 billion. There is no doubt that Governor Dayton and DFL legislature would have found a way to slake the \$39 billion thirst of the Leviathan that is state government.

Dayton backed his plan down to \$37 billion, \$3 billion above forecast revenues and \$5 billion above current general fund expenditures.

A budget compromise just above \$35 billion represents a \$4 billion reduction in forecast expenditures and is a major achievement Republicans should trumpet to taxpayers.

Let's also take a moment to address all this "kicking the can down the road" business.

Of course, this phrase is designed to label the GOP as fiscally irresponsible and too feckless to confront difficult budgetary choices. Nonsense.

Far from irresponsible and bad, the use of one-time monies like the school shift is beneficial in many respects.

First, the fact that one time monies were used does not "kick the can down the road." Instead, it takes government off auto-pilot and will force the legislature and the governor to openly debate and consider future "revenue enhancements," should they be needed.

Revenue increases like taxes, gambling expansion, and other schemes were all permanent revenue streams that would have fattened government coffers forever into the future, masking the need for reform and redesign.

The fact that these revenues won't be built into future forecasts may indeed mean future deficits.

But future deficits, if they occur, will not likely be caused by inadequate revenue. Instead, they will likely be caused by irresponsible spending - just like this budget.

Future projected deficits are called "structural imbalances." Big spending weenies like Arne Carlson and John Gunyou get all bent out of shape over them.

Watchdogs shouldn't. Structural imbalances can be made structural through spending cuts as well as tax increases.

It is much easier to right size government from a deficit posture as opposed to a surplus posture.

And this is why DFLers and RINOs get worried about one-time money. As long as the books are balanced, it's all good, even if the books show massive spending increases.

We're willing to have that debate again in 2013.

The odds of future deficits are greatly reduced, however, by GOP budget victories that reform and redesign state government.

Not only do these victories represent public policy triumphs that reward work, family, and free markets, they will help drive down future expenditures because fewer

governmental services will be required, much to the chagrin of the Social Services Industrial Complex.

Putting aside the merits of the stadium issue, every citizen should be appalled.

5/25/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Dan, Dan the Big Government Man.**
- 2. Big Bucks in Andover.**
- 3. Andy Westerberg Statement.**

DAN, DAN THE BIG GOVERNMENT MAN

Honestly, the Watchdog is going to miss Dan Erhart after he loses in November.

Indeed, it's a rare thing to see a backwoods, backslappin', corpulent, arrogant, haughty, contemptuous good ol' boy in Minnesota politics.

It has been appalling yet strangely alluring to watch a local elected official show consistent and regular contempt for fiscal restraint, civility in general, and the very taxpayers he has long taken a paycheck to represent.

The latest example concerns the issue of government owned and operated electric vehicle charging stations, an issue the Watchdog [exposed](#) weeks ago.

Under this scheme, the federal government is offering grants for local units of government to install and operate electric vehicle charging stations.

This, even though the federal government has no money to offer (it's broke), the plan is part of any number of dubious and failed Obama programs (global warming, electric car subsidies, "stimulus"), and the dispositive fact that the private sector already offers this service (by definition proving that it is more efficient than this proposal).

Thankfully, common sense prevailed and the application for the grant was scrapped.

Which didn't sit well with Erhart, who lost an opportunity to: a) spend some else's money; b) grow government; c) have his photo taken at government expense in an election year; d) wine and dine with lobbyists; and e) bloviate and pontificate about "leading" in this area, which in Erhart's world usually means having our county government do something that no other county would be stupid enough to do.

Being the savvy politico that he is, Erhart would not be denied his opportunity to bloviate and pontificate.

The decision to scrap the application was made by a committee and presented on May 8 to the full board only as an informational item.

Of course, such a description would never prevent the formerly relevant commissioner from popping off.

According to a published news [report](#), Erhart poo poohed the decision to refrain from grabbing some Obama Cash because the county missed an opportunity to... here it comes!!!!, show some LEADERSHIP in promoting alternative fuels while giving the county a profit center.

Danno even did some homework, calculating the profit margin for government.

According to Erhart's cipherin', the county would charge \$1 for a vehicle charge up while it would only cost the government 48 cents to provide that charge up.

So Erhart is okay with a 100%-plus mark up on the services Anoka County provides?

This begs a question.

Are there other county-provided services that gouge the taxpayers to provide a 100% profit?

Are the fees charged only enough to cover the cost of the service provided or is county government making money off us?

And that's a window into the mind of a Big Government career politician.

If you're Scott Schulte, where do you even begin in deciding how to expose Erhart's record?

Is it all the junkets?

The property tax increases?

The Northstar Fail Rail?

The dinners on the government credit card?

One thing we know is the overall theme: Career politician. Out of touch. Time for new leadership. Time for true leadership.

BIG BUCKS IN ANDOVER

According to state law, Minnesota cities and counties must annually publish the salaries of the three most highly compensated employees.

The public policy behind the law is greater transparency, better informing citizens regarding government spending.

An observant Watchdog informed us this week that the city of Andover published its 2012 salary notice as a pdf file titled "MN state law 156."

Such a headline isn't at all helpful since very few taxpayers know what "MN state law 156" means.

In the interest of being helpful, the Watchdog wants to help the city publish these salaries:

City Administrator: \$124,813.32

Director of Public Works and Engineering: \$113,960.14

Fire Chief: \$104,871.82

Not a bad gig if you can land it.

ANDY WESTERBERG STATEMENT

County commissioner Andy Westerberg offers this statement of candidacy:

It has been a tremendous honor to serve as an Anoka County Commissioner since

I was elected in 2010. It is my intention to ask the voters of DISTRICT 2 to continue to allow me to serve them.

During my first two years in office, I can say with confidence that I have achieved what I set out to do. Prudently reducing the size of government while ensuring that we provide necessary and vital services in a cost effective and professional manner.

I am happy to report success.

Over the last two years we (Anoka County Board) have reduced spending in Anoka County government, enabling us to pass along a 7.43% reduction to you the taxpayer.

This is easily the largest tax reduction by the Anoka County Board in as long as anyone can remember. Some say it goes back more than 30 years.

We accomplished this by seeking operating efficiency, eliminating unnecessary activities, and changing the way Anoka County does business. Here are some examples of how we achieved these results:

1. We implemented a voluntary early retirement program which allowed us to eliminate some positions.
2. We restructured other positions to increase efficiency while maintaining services critical to our citizens.
3. We reduced the number of employees authorized to carry credit cards, and modified purchasing policies to place more restrictions on when and where we can "pick up the tab for lunch".
4. We are now making better use of technology, as evidenced by our new Document Imaging System. This system reduces paper and facilitates Internet Based Transactions.
5. We got innovative in road construction and became the first county in

Minnesota to use the DESIGN-BUILD concept to rebuild County Road 14(Main St). We expect to complete what would have been a 4-5 year project in about 18 months. Our goal is to have that road open in August 2012.

6. We also cut the Regional Rail Authority budget by 65% putting more emphasis on roads and bridges.

During my second term in office, I will continue our work to change the way Anoka County does business. My personal goals will include:

1. A reduction in general fund expenditures each year for the next 4 years. I would like to see this accomplished through continued cost savings efforts based on improving efficiency, consolidations, eliminations, and the smart use of technology.

2. Taking a lead role in discontinuing Anoka County's participation in the Northern Lights Express rail program. Focusing our investments on roads, bridges, and flexible transit methods like buses to reduce congestion on Hwy 65.

3. Continue to direct efforts to reduce Meth and Heroin use in the county in order to promote public health and safety.

4. I will continue to promote the assets of our county which proclaim this is a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

It has been an honor to serve. We are making a difference. I humbly ask for your continued support to move forward together.

Andy Westerberg - Anoka County Commissioner District 2
763-323-5757

6/1/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Government Workers Prosper, Private Workers Suffer.**
- 2. Scott Walker is the Beacon.**
- 3. Education Minnesota Remains a Front Group.**

GOVERNMENT WORKERS PROSPER, PRIVATE WORKERS SUFFER

How ironic it is that on the very day that the nation receives yet more disappointing news regarding unemployment numbers that we also receive news that Minnesota government workers are getting a pay raise.

It was announced late last night that negotiators for two government unions and the state had reached agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement that would provide, among other things, a pay raise.

This morning, it was announced that only 69,000 jobs were added to the economy last month, the worst monthly number in a year. The unemployment rate jumped to 8.2%? Remember when the "stimulus" was going to keep unemployment below 8%? It hasn't been below that yet in the Obama administration.

Moreover, Obama's European style economic policies have discouraged many millions more from actively seeking employment. Because the unemployment numbers only count those actively seeking employment, the 8.2% number is understated because it doesn't count the millions who want a job but have given up hope and aren't even looking.

Yes, a permanent underclass of chronically unemployed people is a feature of European style economics and one that President Obama supports, unlike every other American president, including Clinton, Carter, and Johnson.

Isn't ironic that President Obama pursues the economic policies of European Social Democrats at the very time in history in which these policies are proving to be abject failures that do nothing but visit misery, learned helplessness, and social unrest on citizens? Obama wants to be Greece and Spain at the very time these countries are becoming convulsed, teetering on the brink of mass civil unrest.

The dichotomy between government workers who continue to thrive financially while their private sector counter-parts experience hardship exposes the fatal conceit of both President Obama and Governor Dayton.

The fatal conceit is that neither understands the difference between jobs and wealth-creating jobs.

To their way of thinking, anyone on a payroll means "jobs" which can only boost the economy, or "stimulate" it.

Not true.

Because government cannot create wealth, government jobs can't create wealth and thus do nothing to boost the economy and put the country on a path to prosperity.

Yes, many government jobs have value in other ways. For example, it's a good thing that prison guards keep bad people locked up.

But prison guards, like all other government jobs, don't manufacture commodities of value, or mine things of value, or grow things of value.

Government only uses money extracted from the private economy to pay government workers, meaning that there has been no net gain, only a recirculation of existing wealth via money payments.

This is best seen in an extreme example, which surprisingly Obama hasn't yet tried.

Government could hire a million unemployed people and pay them to dig holes. Government could then hire a million people to come in behind them and fill the holes.

Better yet, the diggers could be given spoons instead of shovels to really give them some hours of work.

Would any reasonable person conclude that anything of value had been created? Has the labor of these folks enhanced our collective wealth and prosperity?

In fact, government could pay one group of people to go around smashing windows and pay another group to fix them. Think of the jobs and stimulus to the window industry!

In fact, isn't this concept under another name called "cash for clunkers?" Government pays citizens to destroy productive assets and provide an incentive to replace those productive assets.

Thus, government programs to create "jobs" is really just a distraction. Every citizen should be focused on wealth-creating jobs and wealth-creating policies.

But perhaps there is another more nefarious motive at work here.

Perhaps Dayton and Obama understand the policy implications but ignore them in the name of politics.

After all, creating jobs their way means that government gets control over the private economy in a way that would never happen in a market-driven scenario.

Moreover, these policies favor government workers and the unions who represent them.

And those unions, in turn, put their clout behind these politicians to elect them and keep them in office.

Don't forget that one of the unions that just got a pay raise is AFSCME, one of the first unions to get behind Mark Dayton.

Now in office, Dayton is responsible for bargaining against these unions.

So who is Dayton representing in these negotiations? Is he representing the taxpayers, who want value and accountability? Or is he repping the unions, who want as much pay as possible for as little work as possible?

This is precisely why government workers should be forbidden from unionizing. The unions work hard to elect the very people who oversee their pay and work conditions.

From the highest levels of the federal and state government right down to our school boards, elected officials are charged to bargain against the very people who endorsed and elected them, creating a clear conflict of interest that all too often leaves taxpayers unrepresented and thus ripe for a fleecing.

But citizens do have a way to fight back, at least with respect to the current contract.

These labor contracts, if approved first by the unions, must be approved by the legislature.

Because the legislature isn't in session, these contracts will be up for interim approval by a little-known legislative committee called the [Subcommittee on Employee Relations](#) (SER).

The SER is controlled by Republicans, who can reject this contract.

[Contact the SER](#) members and tell them now is not the time for pay raises for bureaucrats.

We have strong conservatives on this panel who have the principles to reject bad contracts:

Sen. Mike Parry
Sen. Michelle Benson
Sen. Ted Daley
Rep. Steve Drazkowski
Rep. Keith Downey
Rep. Mike Benson

SCOTT WALKER IS THE BEACON

So, how good are we feeling about Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and the recall election next week?

Walker is up in the polls while the Democrats and their union masters are already forming a circular firing squad of blame.

Don't feel bad, Democrats. It isn't so much your incompetence and infighting.

The real reason Scott Walker will win is because his policies are correct and because Walker has demonstrated the courage to actually implement them.

No Watchdog should underestimate the massive, national implications of Walker's impending victory.

Often times, there are elections that presage and portend larger future elections.

For example, the election of Chris Christie and Scott Brown in 2009 foretold of larger GOP victories nationwide in 2010.

In the same way, a Walker win will presage GOP victories this November.

Moreover, Walker's policies will be adopted with enthusiasm in states across the country in 2013. Republicans will see that taking on the government employee unions, especially the teacher unions, is a fight that they can win and one that puts them on the correct side of history.

In short, Walker's victory next Tuesday is nothing short of historic.

EDUCATION MINNESOTA REMAINS A FRONT GROUP

Education Minnesota, the big teachers' union, has released a list of legislative endorsements.

The union bristles whenever people point out that the union is really just a front for the DFL.

In fact, the [press release](#) tells us of the union's bi-partisan political friendships: "We're excited about this first group of endorsed candidates, which includes both old friends and new voices," said Education Minnesota President Tom Doohar. "We're confident we can work with this bipartisan group to build the best system of public education in the nation."

So how bi-partisan are these folks?

Out of 85 legislative endorsements, two, TWO, are Republican.

That's 83 DFLers and 2 Republicans.

That's not bi-partisan. That's tokenism.

6/8/12

In This Issue:

1. County Commissioner Races Set.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER RACES SET

Watchdogs, it's going to be an interested roller coaster ride for county commissioner races this fall.

Post-census redistricting caused a shifting of district line that put six of seven county board seats up for grabs.

Hence, the entire board is up for grabs, including the entire conservative bloc.

Commissioner Jim Kordiak is the only county board member who isn't up for re-election.

With Kordiak sure to be back in January, the Good Ol' Boy turn-back-the-clock old school faction is already one seat ahead for 2013.

Two of the races have more than two candidates and will see an August primary election to winnow the field to two.

Let's get down to business.

DISTRICT 1

Matt Look (incumbent)

Dan Denno

Tom Gamec

Allison Lister

DISTRICT 2

Andy Westerberg (incumbent)

Mike Jungbauer

Julie Brastad

Debbie Johnson

DISTRICT 3

Robyn West (incumbent)

Dan Sanders

DISTRICT 5

Carol LeDoux (incumbent)

Scott Bromley

DISTRICT 6

Rhonda Sivarajah (incumbent)

Kevin Ryan

DISTRICT 7

Scott Schulte

Dan Erhart (incumbent)

In a break from past practice, the Watchdog is going to step away from candidate statements and instead institute a candidate survey.

With so many candidates and so much at stake, it's vital that our readers know who these candidates are and where they stand on key principles.

1. Candidate Name:

2. Candidate Web Site:

3. Explain your private sector business experience and how that experience informed your understanding of the importance of free markets.

4. If you have previous political experience, name 5 successful initiatives you championed to limit government and promote freedom.

5. Are you seeking or have you ever been or are you endorsed by the government union known as AFSCME?

6. If you are challenging an incumbent, you obviously think the incumbent should be fired. Why? What will you do differently? (The Watchdog will reserve the privilege of incumbents to rebut criticism).

7. Are you accepting campaign contributions from people or organizations who currently have contracts with the county?

8. Will you vote to hold the county property tax levy flat or reduce it in the next term if you are elected?

9. Does Barack Obama deserve to be re-elected?

10. Name 5 things you will accomplish for the taxpayer if you are elected.

Send submissions to the Watchdog at harold@anokacountywatchdog.com by June 22. Survey will be published by district throughout the summer.

The Watchdog also plans to host candidate forums in select districts this summer and fall as well.

Elections are always important but this is truly the most important county commissioner election in a generation, which isn't hyperbole or hype.

Years of toil and hard work resulted in a conservative majority taking control in 2010.

The sea change on the board represented true "hope and change" that reversed decades of taxpayers abuse and county government arrogance.

Watchdogs are strongly committed to preserving the new culture of accountability and transparency.

The Watchdog is committed to giving our readers the information they need to make an informed choice not only at the polls but right now, so they can commit their time and talents to candidates who will govern as champions of limited government.

6/15/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Erhart's Folly Continues to Falter**
- 2. Business Should Stay out of (Conservative) Politics**
- 3. The Vikes - Get to Know Em'!**

ERHART'S FOLLY CONTINUES TO FALTER

"Northstar: It just makes sense!" "It's equivalent to a 1 and ½ lanes of traffic on Highway 10." "It will bring jobs and economic development to Anoka County." "If we don't waste this money, someone else will." "We need something cool and rad up here on this end of town." "Northstar will put Anoka County on the map."

These just a sampling of the completely bunk statements we heard during the collective mania that gripped Anoka County when Dan Erhart and company sold their snake oil to a gullible public that wanted to believe that somehow a commuter train would do all those neat things for taxpayers.

None of it turned out to be true. Well, at least there is a cornel of truth regarding the last claim. Northstar has certainly put Anoka County on the map - as a laughingstock for engaging in the folly of commuter rail.

Erhart's Folly is once again in the news. And once again, the news isn't good, which is par for the course for Northstar. It's about time the media start attaching adjectives to Northstar such as "troubled" and "beleaguered."

The latest for this troubled (so how that works?) rail scam is the continued failure to meet ridership projections.

Since the first choo choo ran down those tracks off Highway 10, the expected riders have failed to show up.

The excuses were legion. "Gas prices are low." "The economy is bad." "The economy is good." "People don't know about commuter rail." "The line needs to go to Saint Cloud."

They could have made t-shirts.

And let's put aside a growing myth and one that is propagated by lazy media types. There is a growing urban legend that the line was cut from Rice (not Saint Cloud) down to Big Lake because there wasn't enough money or because conservative politicians sabotaged the project.

The line was cut simply because it didn't meet the federal government's own weak cost-benefit metrics.

Surprisingly, running commuter rail to a small regional center and then up to a cow hamlet in Jim Oberstar's district lead to a low cost-benefit analysis. Who would have thought?

Yes, Northstar couldn't hurdle the midget's bar and satisfy a government that builds bridges to nowhere that this was a really sweet project if it ran to Rice, population 1,460. Did we mention Rice is in the 8th Congressional District?

The latest trick to "stimulate" Northstar ridership is a fare cut. Never mind that every ride on the line is already subsidized to the hilt.

News reports indicate that the Metropolitan Council will soon consider fare cuts to coax riders to get on Erhart's Folly.

Hell, the riders are already so heavily subsidized, why not go full Monty and just make it all free?

That way we can be honest in admitting that Northstar is a failure and that offering free rides is really what the utopians want in mass transit anyway.

Want proof? The proof is that they never cared about the outrageous cost to build and operate the line and the fact that increasing the massive subsidy is just fine by them.

And if free rides are offered, maybe we can stop throwing money down the rat hole to bail out this white elephant.

We can stop doing things like throwing millions into a station stop in Ramsey, which won't do squat to build riders, even though the government stopped running a popular and inexpensive bus service from the city with the intent to force people on to the train.

With stations in Elk River and Anoka, there was no need to build yet another station in between the two.

Unless, of course, one considers the other reason (real?) for constructing a stop in Ramsey. The other reason is to bail out another government mega-project failure, the Town Center project.

So here we have the spectacle of a boondoggle rail station built in hopes of bailing out a boondoggle commuter rail line and a boondoggle planned downtown concept.

Northstar is officially a joke and so is Dan Erhart.

Okay, so the county board is crowing about saving \$50 grand by withdrawing from the NLX project.

Yes, the Watchdog agrees that rail has yet to prove itself and that roads and bridges are a priority.

But we think some doth celebrate too much when there is a ticker tape parade to celebrate a cancelled membership for a rail line that is years from anything.

Again, the NLX pull out is okay by us, but what about Northstar?

We saved a few thousand on NLX.

What about the millions being spent on a Ramsey station?

What about the millions being collected by the county's sales tax increase for transportation?

What about the "wheelage tax" still being collected?

The fact is that the county is still taxing and spending millions on a utopian vision for a mass transit "build out" across the Metro.

If the board is going to get all big balls about transit and crow about things like NLX, then why not get serious and make some meaningful changes, like eliminate the wheelage tax and eliminate the sales tax increase for transit?

It will be interesting over the course of the summer and fall to see where the county commissioner candidates are on these issues.

Poker is the name of the game here. If you raise an NLX membership, you may just get raised a wheelage tax or even a sales tax.

When you get pushed "all in", do you muck your cards or call the "all in" bet?

BUSINESS SHOULD STAY OUT OF (CONSERVATIVE) POLITICS

So General Mills announced this week that it taking a stand in opposition to the marriage amendment on the ballot this fall.

The GLBT crowd went nuts and talked about how great and courageous that stand is and how we should all send a word of thanks to Betty Crocker, especially since she looks pretty uptight and not really the type to be down with the homosexual lifestyle.

As readers well know, the Watchdog doesn't take positions on social issues.

But we will take a position on hypocrisy.

We well remember when this same crowd had a fit when Target Corporation donated money to Minnesota Forward, a pac that supported the GOP candidate for governor.

When Target did it, it was decried as an improper foray into politics by a large, iconic Minnesota business entity.

There were calls for boycotts, sit ins, and all manner of protestation against Target's sin against the body politic.

But when General Mills does it, it's way, way cool.

So the issue isn't really corporate involvement in politics. It's really about getting involved in politics in a way that pleases the hard left.

Which is nothing new. When Republicans like Bob Packwood had problems keeping their hands to themselves, the liberals, especially the feminists were there to call for Bob's head.

And when Bill Clinton ruined that blue dress? Nary a word from the left. Then, it was a private matter for Bill and Hillary.

Never mind that Slick William told a lie and that he frequently dropped his pantaloons in the Oval Office, a sacred room that belongs to US, not HIM.

As long as Minnesota corporations allow themselves to be bullied and co-opted by the left, they will continue to be abused.

Memo to Honeywell: Obama visiting won't stop him. Then again, maybe Honeywell is in line for a stimulus grant for green energy or something.

THE VIKES - GET TO KNOW EM'

With a news taxpayer-financed Vikings stadium just around the corner, we thought it appropriate to borrow a marketing phrase from the equally inept Twins and encourage taxpayers to get to know the boyz in purple.

Jerome Felton (FB)

-
Felton, a 5th round of Detroit in 2008, was arrested at an Eden Prairie McDonald's drive through and has been charged with DWI and a DWI test refusal.

Caleb King (RB)

-
King displays all the aggression and propensity for violence crazed football fans expect.

King was arrested in late April for assault after he beat the living daylights out of a man at a birthday party (shall we say birthday "bash?") in uptown Oak Grove, Minnesota.

The victim suffered a skull fracture, facial fractures and cuts that required more than 50 stitches to close. Oh yeah, the guy may also have permanent brain damage.

The trigger? The guy apparently told King he looks like Eddie Murphy.

The real crime is that King does actually resemble Murphy and plays football about as well, as evidenced by his time on the practice squad.

Dwight Smith (FS)

-

Smith was arrested in 2006 for having sex in a public stairwell in Block E. Smith thought that when Mayor Rybak called for activity on Block E, he was talking about something entirely different than economic activity.

Koren Robinson (WR)

-
The speedy Robinson showed just how fast he can be when he rang up six counts of DWI and fleeing the police when he went all Dukes of Hazard up Highway 169 during training camp in 2006.

Robinson hit triple digits when his BMW hit 100 mph while fleeing the cops through Saint Peter.

Robinson hit double digits when he blew .11 into the breathalyzer.

The Love Boat Crew

-
And not Captain Stuebing's Love Boat. Gopher and Isaac weren't on this cruise. Back in 2005, a number of Vikings brought a group of prostitutes up to Minneapolis for a cruise around Lake Minnetonka and a little debauchery.

Fred Smoot, Daunte Culpepper, Bryant McKinnie and many others showed themselves to be exactly the kind of role models and good citizens we demand when we talk of saving the Vikings.

Randy Moss (WR)

-
Hey, who wouldn't want a foul-mouthed, pot smoking, fan abusing, above-the-law clown out there playing when he wants to play?

Moss was another classic Viking who made sure a portion of his income taxes supported the criminal justice system used to restrain his arrogant, boorish behavior.

With the Vikings in Minnesota for another 30 years, we can all look forward to more of this corporate citizenship.

The Vikings - Get to Know Em!

6/22/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Worst Statistic of Them All.**
- 2. Jim Oberstar - Frog Lover.**
- 3. Golden Valley Smacks Light Rail.**
- 4. Correction.**

WORST STATISTIC OF THEM ALL

Our failed president faces a raft of damning economic policy indictments this fall. The national debt is up by trillions, millions of jobs are gone and stimulus hasn't brought them back. Promised unemployment rates below 8% have never materialized. The long-term unemployed are beginning to resemble a European-style permanent underclass, dependent upon government and trapped by the learned helplessness of Welfare State social policies, all accelerated under Obama.

But perhaps the most damning statistic regarding Obama's failed policies is the stunning drop in the net worth of American families.

The Federal Reserve estimates that since the recession started, the net worth of American households (assets minus debt) fell a whopping 40%, wiping out two decades of wealth creation and putting families back to where they were in 1992.

In short, a generation of wealth was vaporized in three short years.

To be fair, it isn't just about Barack Obama and his vapid, intellectually bankrupt policies.

There were lots of greedy folks who stoked the housing bubble with predatory lending practices, selling dumb people bad loans.

And there were plenty of greedy homeowners who bought houses they couldn't afford and knew it, walking away when things went south.

There were plenty of greedy Americans who accumulated massive debt in the shameless pursuit of consumption, owning cabins, boats, SUVs, and pools financed with easy credit and not a care to saving for a rainy day.

That's all true.

But Obama hasn't made anything better. Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac still kick out loans to unqualified people who have no business owning a home. Obama continues to worship at the altar of the home ownership myth.

The federal government, which already carried obscene levels of debt, now carries trillions more, most of which was used to finance pet programs under the guise of economic recovery. No, spending more money to hire teachers and fire fighters doesn't create the wealth needed to lift us out of the recession.

The value of the dollar has been destroyed and money is printed as if Parker Brothers ran the mint and not serious, responsible adults.

In short, the Obama recovery template has been to finance the printing of money through loans from foreign creditors and then spend the booty on favored constituencies.

The next act in the play is then to blame the unsurprising results on George Bush, Europe, Wall Street, the Octomom, you name it. Just label it under "headwinds."

There isn't a policy Obama has pursued that will help private sector job creators create those jobs and in turn create wealth.

So long as capital is on strike and true job creators face the uncertainty of a feckless and arbitrary federal government, there will be no true recovery.

The federal government just needs to get the hell out of the way.

And that just isn't in this president's DNA.

If Obama is not defeated in November, we will continue to get the government we deserve.

JIM OBERSTAR - FROG LOVER

It's so obvious that Jim Oberstar was long overdue to get the boot from Congress, as he continues to embarrass himself at a remarkable pace.

The latest fart in church for our bike riding, erstwhile plunderer of the Treasury is his grinning, breathless acceptance of the French National Order of Merit.

Yay.

Oberstar has an apparent long-running crush on our lazy, soap-averse, surrender loving cousins across the pond.

An article on the award tells us that Oberstar led the fight against renaming French fries "freedom fries" during that whole brouhaha over war fighting policy.

Opposing the idea because it was dumb is fine. Opposing it because you think the French are cool is another thing.

The press release regarding the award states that the French wanted to recognize Oberstar's "distinguished" career.

Yep, Oberstar ran up the debt, favored bikes over cars, and acted like an arrogant jerk towards the people he was supposed to represent.

No wonder the French love him. He must be to France what David Hasselhoff is to Germany.

Finally, we are told that the Congress is down to one French speaking member.

Can you guess who it is? No, it's not Nancy Pelosi.

None other than Sen. John Kerry, another arrogant, aloof jerk.

You just can't make this stuff up.

Au-revoir, connard!

GOLDEN VALLEY SMACKS LIGHT RAIL

Kudos to Golden Valley! The city council voted to reject routing the proposed Bottineau light rail through the city.

The vote is rather historic, given that most local units of government just roll over and act like sheeple instead of leaders whenever railmania strikes.

Now, the reasons for the rejection weren't made clear, other than concerns that the line would encroach on open space in the city.

It doesn't matter. It appears that citizens are finally waking up to the reality of rail, especially the Southwest Corridor, another white elephant on par with Central Corridor.

If you want rail instead of cars, Jim Oberstar probably has a bike seat or two for your transportation pleasure over there in Europe. The they're going, no one will be able to afford a car anyway.

They've run out of other people's money.

And the same can be said for the always-troubled Northstar commuter rail line.

This week's bad news regarding the line featured a story about two brave entrepreneurs who are trying to make a coffee shop work near the Anoka station.

Apparently, the commuters aren't flocking to the shop to grab a cup of joe or a doughnut for some reason.

And here we were told Northstar would brings jobs and economic development to the area.

Once again, even the mainstream media puts the lie to the whopper that rail spurs development.

Heck, rail can't even sell coffee on a cold Minnesota morning.

If the folks at the Anoka station aren't buying coffee, maybe rail riders from the Ramsey or Coon Rapids stations could walk over and try a cup. After all the three stations are a short walk from one another.

CORRECTION

Last week's edition wrongly placed Rice, MN in the Eighth Congressional District. Indeed, the hamlet is in the Sixth District.

6/29/12

In This Issue:

1. Mothball.

2. Candidate Statements.

MOTHBALL

As the Watchdog reported recently, the Met Council has voted to cut fares for the failed (no longer "troubled") Northstar commuter rail line.

A meager fare cut won't save Northstar. It was doomed from the start because commuter rail is not only a failure, it's a mega failure when you plunk it down in a sparsely populated area like Big Lake, Minnesota.

Saving a buck won't encourage people to abandon their cars for the train anymore than building more stations will save the failed train.

For some time, even conservative elected officials have resisted mothballing Northstar, instead adopting the it's-already-here-we-have-to-make-it-work line of reasoning.

Given the stillbirth of Erhart's folly, it's time for serious policymakers to consider shelving Northstar as a means of saving money.

Consider that Northstar requires an annual operating subsidy in the neighborhood of \$14 million. News reports indicate that Minnesota would be required to repay the federal government approximately \$150 million to ice the train.

If that \$14 million were devoted to repayment, we would be square with Washington in just over a decade.

Consider next that these multi-million dollar operating subsidies will stretch as far as the eye can see, decade after decade.

Again, let's not pretend Northstar will ever be free of massive operating subsidies.

It appears that the prudent course of action would be to cut the losses and move on.

There isn't a taxpaying business around that would continue to lose its shorts on a product or service line year after year and justify the continued loss by noting how expensive the one-time shut down charge would be.

It's time to acknowledge the failure and stop throwing money down this rat hole.

It's time for Watchdogs to start asking candidates what they propose to do about Northstar.

"It's here and we have to suck it up" is not a preferred answer.

Moreover, it's high time to start holding people accountable for this disaster - this white elephant.

Where is the media? Where is the camera in Dan Erhart's face asking why he pushed this bunk?

How about former state Representative Kathy Tingelstad? She sat there at the Capitol with a microphone jammed in her yap espousing the propaganda that led to this situation.

It's amazing that no one responsible for this mess is asked the hard questions.

And then there are those guilty of aiding and abetting the rip off, starting with former Governor Pawlenty, who got religion on the train in the same way he got religion on global warming and the Twins stadium that was needed to "field a competitive team." (currently last place).

That list also includes current GOP office holders, who caught Northstar fever.

Mothball it. It just makes sense, to borrow a phrase.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Here are the candidate statements submitted by candidates from District 1, which will have an August 14th primary, just six weeks away.

Candidates Matt Look and Dan Denno submitted statements. Tom Gamec and Allison Lister failed to submit statements.

Matt Look for Anoka County Commissioner District 1

Matt Look (incumbent)

1. Candidate Name: Commissioner Matt Look

2. Candidate Web Site: www.mattlook2012.com

3. Explain your private sector business experience and how that experience informed your understanding of the importance of free markets. I am a small business owner of Look Signs Inc. in Ramsey. Owning my own business for 15 years and working in corporate America for 10 years helped to define a "needs vs. wants" paradigm that allows me to scrutinize requests for spending, then prioritizing importance and urgency at the government level. I now understand the difference between signing the front of the check vs. signing the back which reminds me to be thoughtful of the burdens we place on businesses. Less government regulation allows businesses to prosper and flourish, reinvest in their company, create jobs, and employ laborers within our communities. This leads to business success, employment, and community stability.

4. If you have previous political experience, name 5 successful initiatives you championed to limit government and promote freedom. As a Ramsey City Council Member I was a champion of cutting wasteful spending and outsourcing duties through contractors as opposed to permanent staff. Ramsey was 1 of 2 cities in MN to lower taxes, the only city to eliminate wetland buffering ordinance (land grab), and the only city to eliminate rental licensing (violation of 4th amendment with mandatory inspection). I voted to deny requests to subsidize private water fountains and other pork city projects. I also denied eminent domain proceedings that took from one to give to another for purposes of development. As Anoka County Commissioner for District 1, I advocated to lower taxes for the first time in 40 years, cut the levy by \$8 million (1 of 2 counties in the state to cut taxes), cut the Regional Rail budget by 65%, cut the HRA budget by 18%, successfully implemented a paperless agenda process saving thousands, and successfully implemented early retirement saving \$1.5 million annually. By cutting unnecessary capital improvement projects, we will have a "bond-free" year for the first time ever in the history of Anoka County. Two years ago, I ran in opposition to the NLX (Northern Lights Express), otherwise known as the "Casino Train". On June 12, the County Board voted to discontinue our involvement in this project saving the taxpayers \$1 billion in capital cost (to build) and over \$35-45 million annually to operate.

5. Are you seeking or have you ever been or are you endorsed by the government union known as AFSCME? I am not seeking, nor have ever been endorsed by AFSCME.

6. If you are challenging an incumbent, you obviously think the incumbent should be fired. Why? What will you do differently? (The Watchdog will reserve the privilege of incumbents to rebut criticism).

7. Are you accepting campaign contributions from people or organizations who currently have contracts with the county? I will not accept contributions from anyone in a contract with Anoka County, nor from employees of Anoka County.

8. Will you vote to hold the county property tax levy flat or reduce it in the next term if you are elected? We are on track to lower the levy rate for a second time, something that has never happened in the history of Anoka County, while we maintain core services at the same levels. As the Finance Committee Chair, it has been my goal to plan for necessary expenditures and drastically cut "wish-lists" contributing to increased debt service, and increased taxes.

9. Does Barack Obama deserve to be re-elected? No.

10. Name 5 things you will accomplish for the taxpayer if you are elected. (1) Continue to "right-size" Government; (2) Continue to cut wasteful spending; (3) Fully implement a cash in lieu of bonding financial plan that will define future expenses, both in infrastructure and information technology. We need to prepare for those expenses years in advance instead of taking on debt every time we are "surprised" with an expense; (4) Continue to move away from the perception of an "ivory-tower" form of communication with cities, to a respectful, genuine concern for challenges that our cities face. After all, we serve the same constituents; and (5) Offer a second early retirement option with the goal of saving the County \$3 million annually.

Dan Denno for Anoka County Commissioner District 1

1) Candidate Name: Dan Denno

2) Candidate Web Site: www.dandenno.com

3) Private Sector Business Experience -I have a lifetime of extensive and varied experience as an employee for both large and small corporations and as an employer. I have had the opportunity to sign both sides of the check. This invaluable experience

has taught me how rewarding hard work is. The best welfare program is a good job. I have been self-employed in the real estate industry and have owned a fast food restaurant. In the fast food industry the free market system allows consumers to receive the most value for their money due to fierce competition between franchises. We had to provide great products and services for our customers while being sensitive to costs and managing operational expenditures. I have been employed in the construction industry as a project manager in commercial electrical construction. As a project manager I have to identify the customer's needs and coordinate the bidding process. In construction the bidding process is the way most jobs are obtained. The company with the most efficient, hardest working employees will win the bid due to their ability to offer the most competitive price. The free market system again offers the customer the chance to receive the most value for their money. We can see that this is becoming more prevalent in government as well, creating an incentive in governments to be efficient and accountable. Governments with lower taxes and higher efficiencies are attracting more of the businesses to them while bloated and inefficient governments are left to languish in their mediocrity.

4) Political initiatives while on the City Council of Oak Grove

a) Worked with the Sheriff to find ways to reduce the contract costs to the city. We eventually reduced our contract cost from \$ 650,000 to \$495,000.

b) Put forth an initiative for the relaxing of restrictions in our parking ordinance as a reduction in government control.

c) After winning the 2010 election, but before taking office, I had the opportunity to work on the budget with the council. City staff was looking at a budget that would increase the levy in 2011. After going through the budget line by line and item by item, I was able to show where there were enough areas that could be reduced that allowed for a 10% reduction in the budget and a 0% levy increase for 2011.

d) Initiated a letter stating that the City Council of Oak Grove considered the mandatory seat belt law to be a complete overstep of the constitution by the state and federal government.

e) With the help of the city employees and the city council, we changed the vacation schedule of the city employees to be more in line with the private sector, both in amount of days received and in the schedule by which days are earned.

5) I am not endorsed now nor will I seek endorsement from AFSCME.

6) I have closely watched Matt Look's efforts at the county over the past year and a half. When he was elected to the Board there were many of us that anticipated an approach more conservative from him than what we are seeing. I understand his commitment to the City of Ramsey, but as a Commissioner representing the entire county, he shouldn't be making decisions that go against common sense and forsake other parts of the county. We also feel that his commitment to reducing the size of county government is lacking. It is necessary to commit 100% towards this in order to obtain a substantial decrease in taxes at the county level for both residential and business properties.

7) Not at this time that I know of.

8) I will definitely find ways to reduce the levy. There must be a constitutional basis for what we spend money on in all branches of government. The cities have their prescribed duties to their citizens and so do the counties. It is time we conform our spending to these prescriptions and not to the whims of whoever is in office.

9) Does Barack Obama deserve to be re-elected? Absolutely not.

10) 5 things I will accomplish for the taxpayer!

a) Reduction or elimination of the Commissioners credit cards and home office allowances.

b) A visible and vocal push back on the control exerted by the Met Council and their continuous growth in size, expenditures and expansion of control into all areas. This would include the Hwy 35 corridor, where the Met Council has talked of putting in a pay lane.

c) A reduction in the tax levy for commercial properties as well as residential properties. Although the county lowered taxes on the residential properties this year, the commercial properties that I researched had a property increase.

d) A further reduction in government employees through attrition rather than through an early retirement plan that costs the county money. I would put a freeze on hiring so that when a person retired in a position it could either be eliminated or filled by a current employee whose position was going to be eliminated.

e) A complete line by line review of the budget. With my experience in accounting I can do an in-depth review of the balance sheet and expense sheets and look for ways to cut costs. We need to make the finances understandable and straight forward.

Donations to my campaign may be made online at my website, www.dandenno.com.

7/13/12

In This Issue:

1. **District 2 Statements.**
2. **Commissioner Matt Look Rebuttal.**

Editor's Note: This week, the Watchdog turns the virtual pages of our fine publication over to candidates for Anoka County commissioner. Districts 1 and 2 will both have a primary election August 14th, just a little over a month away.

DISTRICT 2 STATEMENTS

Editor's Note: candidates Mike Jungbauer and Debbie Johnson failed to submit candidate statements.

Andy Westerberg (incumbent)

1. NAME - ANDY WESTERBERG - County Commissioner District 2

2. Web - www.andywesterberg4cc.com

3. I have been self-employed for over 30 years with a workforce as high as five total team members. Currently, I only employ two others. I know how it feels to "let someone go" and wonder how they will make their next house payment and feed their family.

Government can mess up a business in a hurry with taxes that are too high for them to survive and red-tape that is simply too cumbersome to endure.

4. As a state legislator: Reformed the marriage penalty tax to reduce taxes on families. Part of the Omnibus Tax Bill that provided "Jesse Checks". The REAL CREDIT goes to the Republicans that held out for the REFUNDS! Authored legislation that allows school districts to communicate information about the students that transfer into a new district. Authored legislation to reduce EQUITY STRIPPING that was modeled in other states. Fought against mandates because common sense not government should be in control.

As a county commissioner: I lead the way to pull out of the NLX train to the casino. Cut spending over \$8 million from the budget to lead to our first tax levy cut in over 30 years. Cut the Anoka Regional Rail Authority budget by 65%. Reduced the number of credit card carrying members at the county and

eliminated some operations that were duplicated.

5. No not seeking and No I have never sought AFSCME endorsement.

6. I am challenging the incumbent (MYSELF) because I am THRILLED with the job we have done and I look forward to doing more.

7. Yes, hopefully they know I STRONGLY SUPPORT a FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE AGENDA.

8. I definitely will work to reduce our tax levy when re-elected.

9.No WAY! NO HOW.

10. I will WORK to reduce spending.

I will WORK to reduce taxes.

I will WORK to reduce the size of government.

I will WORK to reduce regulation and red-tape for businesses.

I will WORK to promote our COUNTY as a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Julie Braastad

1. Candidate Name: Julie Braastad

2. Candidate Web Site: www.JulieBraastad.com

3. Explain your private sector business experience and how that experience informed your understanding of the importance of free markets.

I am extremely well rounded in the private sector business arena. I worked in the banking industry for many years. During that time I was responsible for budgets, analyzing financial statements, staff management and customer service. After banking I went back to school and received my paralegal certification in 1993. I have worked in many areas of law including Civil Litigation, Contract Law, Real Estate and Bankruptcy Law, Estate Planning and Family Law. I went on to manage multiple small businesses for many years. Currently, as well as working as an independent paralegal, I am assisting my husband in the operations of his electrical contracting business. From my experience I know firsthand how important it is to allow businesses to be driven by supply and demand and not be restrained by government interference, regulation or subsidy.

4. If you have previous political experience, name 5 successful initiatives you championed to limit government and promote freedom.

I was instrumental in bringing the saying of The Pledge of Allegiance to all of our meetings. Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to me is an action that symbolizes one's loyalty to the United States of America and the feeling that as an American, one is proud to be a part of this blessed country. It is a great way to start each of our meetings.

I stopped Met Council's efforts to bring city sewer and water to the City of Ham Lake by eliminating any reference to city sewer and water in the Comprehensive Plan for 2030. The overwhelming majority of residents are very satisfied with their private wells and septic systems and did not want to see an unelected group of people come in and have control over various aspects of their city.

Through efficient and effective government Ham Lake has been the leader among cities in Anoka County for the lowest taxes while still providing the essential services to the taxpayers. Every year I go through each line item in our budget and strategize on how we can do things better.

I have kept my campaign promise to help maintain Ham Lake's rural character by maintaining our large lot sizes. This allows families the freedom to enjoy convenient country living at its best. I believe this is one of the key reasons Ham Lake has had the highest median home value in Anoka County. Families are able to raise animals, have hobby farms and enjoy the wildlife their spacious lots encourage.

In our current tough economic times, we have had to re-evaluate rules and regulations that were causing hardships on already struggling businesses. We opted to allow businesses more flexibility which in turn has made their lives easier. I believe less government intervention and regulation will enable businesses to be more productive and therefore more prosperous. This will enable them to expand their business and hire more employees. It isn't government that needs to be creating jobs but instead leaving that up to businesses.

5. Are you seeking or have you ever been or are you endorsed by the government union known as AFSCME?

No I am not seeking their endorsement nor have I ever been endorsed by them.

6. If you are challenging an incumbent, you obviously think the incumbent should be fired. Why? What will you do differently? (The Watchdog will reserve the privilege of incumbents to rebut criticism).

It is one thing to say that you are fiscally conservative but to me, actions speak louder than words. I feel very strongly that investing additional money into the Northstar Commuter Rail for the Ramsey station was very irresponsible. With the Elk River and the Anoka stations so close and the actual ridership being way below the estimated and the subsidy of each rider being so high, there was nothing fiscally responsible about that decision. The additional 13+ million that was spent on the Northstar would have been better spent on repairing roads and adding lanes where traffic congestion is high.

With the salary that the commissioners are paid I feel that they should dedicate the majority of their time to the position. In 2012 Commissioner Westerberg decreased the number of committees he was on because it created conflict with the running of his business. I am willing to dedicate as much time as necessary to the commissioner position. I will make it my priority and not something I have to fit in. I also feel that the commissioners should take a more active role in lobbying for the county. As of today we have two fulltime lobbyists on the Anoka County payroll.

Another concern I have is that Commissioner Westerberg was considering nominating Kordiak over Sivarajah for the chair position of the county board. I am thankful that he did not but there is nothing about this that makes sense to me and that he was even considering it is very worrisome.

I got into the political arena after being involved in my community for years. For the other candidates, it is the opposite; you only see them around the community during campaign time. My service on the Ham Lake City Council has given me the experience I need to get to the county level. We have set the precedence for limited government among the other cities and this is something I now want to do at the county level!

7. Are you accepting campaign contributions from people or organizations who currently have contracts with the county?

I have not accepted contributions from people or organizations that currently have contracts with the county.

8. Will you vote to hold the county property tax levy flat or reduce it in the next term if you are elected?

Although the current board reduced the current county property tax levy I believe that there is still substantial work to be done. Decades of over spending and living beyond its means are not corrected in one year. During my service on the Ham Lake City Council it has been my practice to take each department's budget and go line by line through it, looking for more effective and efficient ways to operate. We continue to come up with cost savings measures every year.

9. Does Barack Obama deserve to be re-elected? Absolutely not.

10. Name 5 things you will accomplish for the taxpayer if you are elected.

Stop wasting resources on losing efforts

Reduce the county debt

Improve communications between the board and county employees

Find more effective and efficient ways to provide essential services

Find additional ways that the different government entities can collaborate more often to share services, equipment and even employees.

COMMISSIONER MATT LOOK REBUTTAL

Editor's Note: The Watchdog noted that it would reserve the right of incumbent's to rebut challenger criticism. Commissioner Look has chosen to rebut the criticism of challenger Dan Denno, which was published two weeks ago.

Charge: I have closely watched Matt Look's efforts at the county over the past year and a half.

Response: Mr. Denno has been closely watching and planning a campaign against a different Commissioner. He learned just a few weeks ago that his city of residence, Oak Grove, was redistricted to District 1. Since he "already planned to run" he is now running against me, a fellow conservative. Many are asking: is it really ideological differences, or is it just a new job? We must be careful and thoughtful. Not too long ago, Tom Emmer lost the Governor's race because of Horner. Mark Dayton won. We lost in a big way. The current County Board has no seats to spare. With 6 of the 7 Board seats up for reelection, "It would just take one seat," said Dan Erhart. Can you imagine

District 1 represented by former Ramsey Mayor and multi-million dollar spender/taxer Tom Gamec? Can you imagine the conservatives on the Board back in the minority after only 2 years and a good Ol'boy back as the Chair? This election is not just a whim, job, or item on a bucket list. We must work together to keep this seat or we all lose.

Charge: When he was elected to the Board there were many of us that anticipated an approach more conservative from him than what we are seeing.

Response: I will do my best to answer this very generalized statement. Boards are not a 1 vote show. You may have the best idea in the world but you need 3 others to support it. I can guarantee you everything we do at the County is carefully weighed and vetted. Here are the facts: when I was a Ramsey City Councilmember, we were 1 of 2 cities to cut taxes in the entire state. Now, as a County Commissioner, we are 1 of 2 counties to cut taxes in the entire state. This was not by coincidence. It was by design. This is the work of a conservative. Any attempt to minimize what we have accomplished in the last 18 months is misleading at best. An interesting and related point is that after a conversation I had with Oak Grove's Mayor (about how we cut taxes in Ramsey) Oak Grove implemented my suggestions. These recommendations made up a significant portion of their acclaimed 18% reduction in their budget. Also noteworthy is that Oak Grove (where Mr. Denno is on City Council) kept their levy (the calculation for the amount of taxes you pay) flat. If your property value went down and the levy remained flat, you had a tax increase by percentage. In addition to cutting the budget at the County, we also cut our levy by 7.4%. That's fiscally conservative....and a tax reduction!

Charge: I understand his commitment to the City of Ramsey, but as a Commissioner representing the entire county, he shouldn't be making decisions that go against common sense and forsake other parts of the county.

Response: This accusation is absolutely absurd. This year we spent \$70 million on infrastructure (roads and bridges) across the entire County. To name a few projects: County Roads 5 and 22 (Nowthen/Oak Grove) have been upgraded; and funding is now secure for a redesign at 9 and Bridge St. (St Francis). We invested \$3.5 million dollars in a broadband fiber backbone, something that is connecting every city. We have invested in our forensics lab . . . a countywide benefit. The County invested substantial dollars into the Cedar Creek Conservation Area located in Oak Grove and by percentage, we have spent more money on non-road related projects in Oak Grove than anywhere else in the County. The entire County and District have been and will continue to be well represented by me.

Charge: We also feel that his commitment to reducing the size of county government is lacking. It is necessary to commit 100% towards this in order to obtain a substantial decrease in taxes at the county level for both residential and business properties.

Response: Decreasing taxes for the first time in 40 years is pretty substantial. Within 18 months in office I promoted and implemented a paperless process (saving thousands) and a successful voluntary separation (early retirement, saving millions). We will not slash our workforce or overthrow our processes with a guillotine style approach similar to a bull in a china store. This is not because of a lack of commitment but because we are thoughtful, careful, and respectful as oppose to reckless. We also put an indefinite hold on all Capitol Improvement Projects (CIPs) that were approved just prior to our taking office, saving millions. Additionally, as Finance Committee Chair, I insisted CIP requests were redefined from "wants" to "needs" only, saving significantly more money.

As a result, we will not bond this year (historically, previous boards bonded twice a year, resulting in tens of millions in debt). All these reductions lead to our County's credit rating being raised from "Good" to "Strong" far exceeding the Federal Government's. I have only been in office 18 months but got things done for Anoka County efficiently, quickly, and respectfully because I have built relationships and connections in the County and at the Capitol for almost 15 years, I have close to a decade of Government experience, and fiscally sound management and leadership skills.

I respectfully disagree with Mr. Denno.

7/20/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Erhart Goon Squad Attack.**
- 2. Patrick J. Walker Statement.**

ERHART GOON SQUAD ATTACK

In his desperation to be re-elected, Commissioner Dan Erhart has ruthlessly deployed his goon squad of [winged monkeys](#) to attack and harass the Scott Schulte campaign at every turn.

Erhart most recently cried, "Fly my pretties, fly!" while deploying his monkeys to simultaneously erect his campaign lawn signs while complaining that Schulte was installing his in illegal areas.

And while simians are smart, they aren't that smart.

But like any baboon or chimp, they are adept at throwing poop around.

For example, the Erhart lawn sign put on in the right of way at the corner of HWY 242 and Coon Creek Blvd. is now gone. Nice try, Dan.

Of course, actions like those haven't prevented attacks on the Schulte campaign, including a letter to the editor in the [ECM newspaper June 22](#) feigning citizen outrage that Scott Schulte was thumbing his nose at the duly passed laws of the United States of America.

The June 22 letters contained a missive from Gloria Lawrence, who sniffed that she and her husband took umbrage at Schulte's installation of a lawn sign prior to June 29, a clear violation of the almighty Coon Rapids Code.

Lawrence buttressed her credibility with a claim that her old man has been putting up lawn signs for 30 years.

"Councilman, can the rest of the candidates running for office also put their signs up, or does this individual have special privileges?" Lawrence complained.

Another sock puppet named Jennifer Koch also faked some outrage, exclaiming, "I was taught, from early on, that rules/laws are to be followed. Could it be that Scott Schulte, a Coon Rapids City Council member, is unaware of Minnesota campaign statutes? If elected county commissioner, would he educate himself of Anoka County Statutes?.... and most important.... would he follow them? Just wondering!"

Oops. That's wrong. There was nothing illegal about the Schulte lawn sign. The city was wrong and has since retracted the erroneous memo.

Winged monkeys can fly, they can bite, they can write nasty letters, but they can't read statutes.

And to top it off, the Watchdog doffs our cap to one Brad Johnson, who exposed this whole lawn sign smear campaign against Schulte with an outstanding letter to the editor in the same ABC newspaper, which has always had a problem with partisan letter writers posing as regular citizens.

Kudos, Brad!!!

Here's that letter:

Nasty and mean. That's what I thought after reading letters to the editor in the June 22 Anoka County Union.

Coon Rapids Council member Scott Schulte dared to run against Commissioner Dan Erhart, who has occupied a seat on the Anoka County Board for 30 years.

Then, two letters to the editor falsely accused Mr. Schulte of being a campaign sign law breaker. But Mr. Schulte broke no laws. Four days earlier, a June 18 StarTribune article made clear that Mr. Schulte had the legal right of way.

Erhart's brand of "old-boy" politics, using surrogates and innuendo to trump up unfounded negativity about opponents, is well known.

In my opinion, Mrs. Gloria Lawrence's letter titled "Ordinance violations" was simply false and a nasty campaign tactic.

Wrongly bashing Mr. Schulte, she wrote, "My husband, Ron, has been putting up political signs in the Anoka County area for well over 30 years."

Readers should know how very close the Lawrences are to Erhart. Mrs. Lawrence failed to tell you that her husband, Ron Lawrence, is well known for being Dan Erhart's longtime campaign sign "guy."

Erhart's campaign finance disclosures from his last election in 2008 reveal that he paid \$1,327.95 to "Ron Lawrence - Mileage for campaign signs."

Moreover, Ron Lawrence is listed as the treasurer for the Letter Carriers Union PAC, and he is equally well known for delivering big union checks to Erhart's chosen candidates.

In just the past two years Erhart's Volunteer Committee or the Letter Carriers PAC opened their war chests to their candidates including, among others, Tony Palumbo, Natalie Steffen and Carol LeDoux.

This year, however, Scott Schulte in District 7 and Scott Bromley in District 5 offer a positive departure from the negative politics of the past, which need to be retired.

Their districts cover Coon Rapids, eastern Anoka, western and southern Andover and the northern tip of Fridley.

If you share my higher expectations for tomorrow's Anoka County commissioners in these areas, reach out to them and insist on a better future for our county.

It's time for a change - new leadership and fresh ideas in Districts 7 and 5.

Brad Johnson
Coon Rapids

Man, someone's campaign just reeks of the stench of desperation. Is that a bead of sweat dripping down your cheek, Mr. Erhart?

PATRICK J. WALKER STATEMENT

My name is Pat Walker and I am running for Anoka City Council.

The reason I am running is that I see a disturbing disconnect between the City of Anoka and the economic condition of the country. Since 2007 hardly a day has gone by that the President could not be seen on TV saying that this is the worst economy since the Great Depression. While the value of your home has contracted by almost half, the City of Anoka Property Tax Levy has seen almost no reduction at all. The current council has had several opportunities to do this and instead of listening to their conscience or even the people they are sworn to serve, they listen to the Financial Consultant, salesmen who did not take an oath to the taxpayer.

Tax Increment Districts are Tax Increases and Anoka has eight Tax Increment Districts currently. They capture money from the City's General Fund. They capture School District money and they capture Anoka County's money. Anoka is capturing and committing this money in twenty five or thirty year blocks of time. We are spending well into future revenue. This money is diverted into a separate fund, one which doesn't contribute to basic government services, and the City of Anoka has several new funds. Always looking to start a new Enterprise or to raise fees or capture new revenue intended for Tax Relief. There appears to be no stopping the train. The more they talk about how conservative they are, the more I want to gag.

I would fight to see Anoka stop putting in fountains where ten parking spots used to be. How does that fit within the "Wants and Needs" mentality we keep hearing about? I would fight to see the Tax Increment Districts retired in a timely fashion. It's fair, once the bills are paid. This is not an Enterprise. I would fight to see the Slabtown area get real curbs instead of the existing dirt ones and storm water collection that actually collects it. I would fight to see a solution to the Dunham Oaks ingress and egress problem. These are basic functions of local government but the current council is too busy building an empire.

While the employees that maintain the actual infrastructure go shorthanded, Anoka has a Human Resources Director, a luxury item at best. The City Manager should do this job.

While every household is getting back to basics and many are just trying to keep their home or buy health insurance. The City of Anoka is spending fast and restricting any future council's ability to respond as compassionately as possible, to the needs of its citizens. You deserve better. Pat Walker for Anoka City Council.

7/27/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Erhart Goon Squad Strikes Out.**
- 2. Dan the Ultra-Hip and With-It Facebook Man.**
- 3. Schulte Candidate Statement.**

ERHART GOON SQUAD STRIKES OUT

Erhart's winged monkeys have had a tough month. They've been working hard to intimidate and harass Scott Schulte, but things just haven't worked out.

The latest episode concerns an election law violation filed by Erhart's campaign chair against Schulte under MN Statutes §211B.13, which states:

Bribery, advancing money, and treating prohibited.

A person who willfully, directly or indirectly, advances, pays, gives, promises, or lends any money, food, liquor, clothing, entertainment, or other thing of monetary value, or who offers, promises, or endeavors to obtain any money, position, appointment, employment, or other valuable consideration, to or for a person, in order to induce a voter to refrain from voting, or to vote in a particular way, at an election, is guilty of a felony. This section does not prevent a candidate from stating publicly preference for or support of another candidate to be voted for at the same primary or election. Refreshments of food or nonalcoholic beverages having a value up to \$5 consumed on the premises at a private gathering or public meeting are not prohibited under this section.

In short, this is serious stuff.

The complaint was filed with an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) in the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH).

The result?

The complaint was dismissed out of hand.

The ALJ wrote: "After reviewing the Complaint and attached exhibits, the undersigned Administrative Law Judge has determined that the complaint does not set forth a *prima facie* violation of §211B.13." DISMISSED.

That's lawyer-speak for "your complaint has absolutely no merit." "It sucks."

Editor's Note: The Watchdog is working to obtain the submitted exhibits and other documentation. We felt it was important to publish soonest news that Team Erhart's goon tactics have failed yet again.

Another epic fail for a desperate candidate clinging to power long after his time has passed.

DAN THE ULTRA-HIP AND WITH-IT FACEBOOK MAN

Forget what you know about Commissioner Dan Erhart. He's not the paunchy, stodgy, you-kids-get-off-my-lawn-or-I'll-call-the-cops curmudgeon he looks to be in every photo, video, and public appearance he's ever made.

Nope, Erhart is really a super cool dude who is at home listening to some "beast" tunes on his Ipod while downing an energy drink and busting a sweet 720 tailwhip on his Haro.

At least that's the image handlers are attempting to portray in his very own Facebook page (search "Dan Erhart").

Uh, right. It just doesn't quite work.

Obviously, the handlers haven't told him that multiple photos wearing the same black [Sansabelt](#) pants pulled up to just under the nipples is decidedly unhip. Tony Hawk would have purchased the olive ones, Dan.

Or how about the photo with Dan and a union leader at the DFL picnic? Oops. That can't go over too well with all those new GOP-leaning voters in Andover.

Well, for a guy with union endorsements, the photo makes sense.

Or how about the post touting his "leadership" on the failed Northstar commuter rail.

One post brags, "Dan Erhart is proud to have been chair of the Northstar Corridor Development Authority when they led the effort to launch Minnesota's first commuter line, which is operated by Metro Transit."

In one sense we feel sorry for candidate Erhart. Only 12 souls are brave enough to admit that they "like" the page (must be at least 12 Erharts in the Anoka phone book).

Please head on over to Dan's page and post something. You could express your feelings on a variety of topics like:

Northstar rail

The multiple junkets to places like Hawaii

His lone vote against the tax levy that lowered property taxes

The many, many dinners on the county credit card

The dismissed campaign complaint against Scott Schulte

Where one can obtain a Schulte lawn sign

Dan needs friends, people!

SCHULTE CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Erhart opponent Scott Schulte has submitted a candidate statement. Dan Erhart failed to do so.

1. Candidate Name:

Scott Schulte

2. Candidate Web Site:

www.schulteforcountyboard.com

3. Explain your private sector business experience and how that experience informed your understanding of the importance of free markets.

I have been working at our family run service station in Coon Rapids since the age of 12, where my father instilled in me a strong respect for hard work, honesty, and integrity. I worked continuously throughout high school and technical college and continued on until 1998 when I purchased the business from my father. He had owned and operated it since its inception in 1958. I still work in the shop everyday and oversee EVERY aspect of the business, from advertising, payroll, employee education and

budgeting. Owning a small, independent "Main Street" business is where I learned the true value of free enterprise and, unfortunately, the negative effects of government over-regulation and intrusion. If elected, I promise to run the county like I run my business - efficient, accountable, and customer-focused.

4. If you have previous political experience, name 5 successful initiatives you championed to limit government and promote freedom.

I have served 3 consecutive terms as the Coon Rapids Councilman at Large, representing up to 63,000 people over the last 12 years. Below is a sampling of some accomplishments.

1. Reduced City staff from 245 in 1999 to the current 226.
2. Reduced future pension & insurance liabilities for retiring city employees, by eliminating this benefit with all new hires. The savings over the next decade will be substantial.
3. Served on the MN/DOT Design Build Council to promote more efficient project delivery of government projects by allowing the private sector to engineer, design and build public projects as they go to bring the project forward in a more timely and efficient manner. The Main St. or County Road 14 project is the pilot project for this program. It was originally scheduled to take 6 more years to complete on a Design/Bid/Build basis but the committee approved the Design/Build process and the project will have taken 18 months to complete by the time it opens in August of this year. This is the first of many Design/Build projects at the County level to be approved in the state.
4. Authorized and supported the Coon Rapids City staff to implement "lean practices" (Kaizen), including working toward an electronic paperless system. Kaizen is process of creating efficiencies within a current system by eliminating redundancies and humanizing the work environment and encouraging workers to experiment with their work in an effort to eliminate wasted effort.
5. Removed "Nucleus Clinic" out from under the city's budget and control. The Nucleus Clinic is a sexual health "free clinic" in Coon Rapids that was funded through Community Development Block Grants. Over time it was staffed and funded out of the cities budget. This clinic is better suited to the "non-profit" sector and is now funded through user fees and private donations. This has saved the taxpayer in Coon Rapids many thousands of dollars.

5. Are you seeking or have you ever been or does the government union known as AFSCME endorse you?

NO

6. If you are challenging an incumbent, you obviously think the incumbent should be fired. Why? What will you do differently?

The incumbent has been in this seat for 30 years and chairman for 18 of those. He has failed to reduce the scope and reach of our county government. He has authorized budget after budget that continues the overreach and was the lone vote against reducing the latest budget and levy. He has focused on trains, stadiums and expanding social programs at the expense of true infrastructure.

When elected I will focus on the true charge of the county board. Maintaining infrastructure, providing necessary services for constituents, paying close attention to the needs of the municipalities within my district and continuing the current chairwomen's lean initiatives.

I have worked with some members of the current County Board with great success in the recent years. Cooperation to achieve good projects and great results for Anoka County residents has been the result. However working with the Commissioner from District #7, Dan Erhart, has proven to be very challenging. His lack of willingness to collaborate and cooperate on even the most basic projects has jeopardized their successes.

The time is NOW for new ideas and the spirit of cooperation. District #7 and Anoka County have changed. You deserve a commissioner that is willing to look forward with enthusiasm and optimism, not backward with disdain.

7. Are you accepting campaign contributions from people or organizations that currently have contracts with the county?

No

8. Will you vote to hold the county property tax levy flat or reduce it in the next term if you are elected?

Yes, barring any unforeseen catastrophe beyond human control.

9. Does Barack Obama deserve to be re-elected?

No, his record is clear.

10. Name 5 things you will accomplish for the taxpayer if you are elected.

1. Bring a common man's point of view to the board in district #7.
2. Bring a business perspective to the boards budget process.
3. Remain completely accessible and transparent to the taxpayer.

4. Support reforms put in place by the majority of the current board that have saved taxpayers countless dollars and enhanced the delivery of services. Government must continue to find ways to do more with less.
5. Taxes should be spent primarily on infrastructure and public safety. We should focus on our local roads and bridges. Providing safe roads is one of the most important roles the County level of government should play.
6. Having served many years on the Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council I can attest to the great tax savings brought about by this joint venture of all law enforcement agencies in Anoka County. From shared costs at the gun range to shared radio systems and data systems, the economies of scale are tremendous. We must continue to push initiatives similar to this if we intend to improve delivery of services and hold down expenditures and taxes.
7. Parks and trails are a part of the infrastructure and fabric of our county. Continued funding and maintenance is a priority, however, implementing the use of volunteer groups like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4H and other groups can help to keep down some of the expenses related to this important budget item.

8/3/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Winged Monkeys Fail Law School - Again.**
- 2. Anoka-Hennepin still Lacking.**

WINGED MONKEYS FAIL LAW SCHOOL - AGAIN

We've always maintained that winged monkeys can't be lawyers - it's contrary to nature.

That Law of Nature was demonstrated again last week when an administrative law judge (ALJ) ruled in favor of Scott Schulte after Dan Erhart's winged simians filed a complaint against Schulte alleging - get this - bribery!

The Watchdog wrote of the dismissal last week and promised to provide details this week.

And unlike government, we deliver on our promises.

And would you believe this whole episode is based on water bottles? Yes, water bottles. Here's what happened:

The Schulte campaign smartly handed out water bottles with the campaign's logo at the Andover Fun Fest parade on July 14th, a particularly hot, steamy Saturday.

Recalling numerous episodes of "Perry Mason" and "The People's Court," the Erhart goon squad believed they found incontrovertible, indisputable, dispositive, prima facie evidence of a nefarious Schulte plot to compromise the electoral integrity of the good people of Andover.

The goon squad's Exhibit A also alleged that Schulte's Facebook page announced the campaign's intention to hand out the offending water bottles.

Oh, my. Did anyone call the Justice Department?

After collecting the evidence, via photographs and screen grabs of Schulte's Facebook page, the winged monkeys proceeded to craft their complaint and snap the trap shut on the unsuspecting Schulte.

In fact, the complaint stated that Schulte had violated the anti-bribery statute of Minnesota campaign law. You know, the law that prevents dirty campaigns from doing things like offering cold, hard cash in exchange for votes.

The rather preposterous claim was that Schulte was BRIBING voters by giving them water bottles at the parade.

One requirement of lawyering is literacy. You have to be able to read.

If the goon squad would have read the law, it's fairly easy to see that bribery requires an *inducement*, meaning that the thing of value offered must be conditioned upon a promise to do something in return.

That's also common sense, something that appears to be in short supply in the Erhart campaign. It's not bribery if you don't demand anything in return. It's called a gift.

Moreover, the law and a number of easy-to-research campaign finance law decisions exempt items of nominal value.

The law, in clear black print, sets the nominal value at anything under \$5. That's why things like candy and campaign stickers are handed out by candidates at parades.

It was even alleged by the goons in their complaint that they estimated the value of a water bottle at \$1, 1/5th the value of the threshold to violate the law.

No wonder the complaint was dismissed out of hand.

If you're going to accuse someone of bribery, you would think that at least some minimal amount of thought and care would go into the allegation.

But then again, look at who we're talking about here.

You need to take a minute to read the judge's dismissal:

On July 19, 2012, Gail Fitzgerald filed a Campaign Complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings alleging that Scott Schulte violated Minn. Stat. 211B.13 (bribery/treating).

The Chief Administrative Law Judge assigned this matter to the undersigned Administrative Law Judge on July 19, 2012. A copy of the Complaint was sent by U.S. mail to the Respondent on July 20, 2012.

After reviewing the Complaint and attached exhibits, the undersigned Administrative Law Judge has determined that the Complaint does not set forth a prima facie violation of Minn. Stat. 211B.13. This determination is described in more detail in the attached Memorandum.

Based upon the Complaint and the supporting filings and for reasons set out in the attached Memorandum,

IT IS ORDERED:

That the Complaint filed by Gail Fitzgerald is DISMISSED.

Dated: July 23, 2012

Barbara L. Neilson
Administrative Law Judge

Notice

Under Minn. Stat. 211B.36, subd. 5, this Order is the final decision in this matter and a party aggrieved by this decision may seek judicial review as provided in Minn. Stat. 14.63 to 14.69.

Memorandum

The Respondent, Scott Schulte, is a candidate for the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, District 7. The Complaint alleges that on July 14, 2012, Mr. Schulte and/or members of his campaign passed out free bottles of water at the Andover Fun Fest Parade. Each bottle of water had a label affixed to it with a picture of Mr. Schulte and the words: "Vote for Scott Schulte for Anoka County Commissioner." The Complaint alleges the bottles of water were handed out during the parade while Mr. Schulte was "shaking hands with the crowd and otherwise promoting his candidacy for Anoka County Commissioner." The Complainant estimates that each bottle of water had a retail value of approximately \$1.00. The Complaint notes that on July 11, 2012, Mr. Schulte posted on his Facebook page that he was intending to hand out bottled water at the Andover parade.

The Complainant failed to identify the specific provision of the Fair Campaign Practices Act that she believes was violated by this alleged conduct, but it is assumed she is claiming that Mr. Schulte violated Minn. Stat. 211B.13.

Minnesota Statutes 211B.13 provides as follows:

A person who willfully, directly or indirectly, advances, pays, gives, promises, or lends any money, good, liquor, clothing, entertainment, or other thing of monetary value, or who offers, promises, or endeavors to obtain any money, position, appointment, employment, or other valuable consideration, to or for a person, in order to induce a voter to refrain from voting, or to vote in a particular way, at an election, is guilty of a felony. This section does not prevent a candidate from stating publicly preference for or support of another candidate to be voted for at the same primary or election. Refreshments of food or nonalcoholic beverages having a value up to \$5 consumed on the premises at a private gathering or public meeting are not prohibited under this section.

Minnesota Statutes 211B. 13 is an anti-bribery statute. It prohibits giving something of a monetary value in order to induce a voter to vote in a particular way at an election. The issue presented in this case is whether giving free bottles of water to persons attending a parade amounts to a violation of this statute.

An assessment of the monetary worth of an item should be made from the perspective of a voter receiving the item, not the person offering it. Whether the distribution of the items to voters is a violation of this section is a question of fact. In prior decisions, Administrative Law Judges have held that tossing penny candy at parade, giving notebooks imprinted with the candidate's name and office, and distributing bottles of water at a county fair with "Republican Party" labels did not violate Minn. Stat. 211B.13, but that a candidate's provision of chicken dinners to residents at a senior housing complex after a candidates' forum did violate Minn. Stat. 211B. 13.

The Administrative Law Judge concludes that, like *Campbell v. Grant County Republican Party of Minnesota*, the provision of bottled water in this case does not constitute "a thing of monetary value" or "other valuable consideration" within the meaning of the statute. The Complainant estimates

that each bottle of water has a retail value of approximately \$1.00. The Complainant thereby admits that each bottle was worth less than \$5, which is the amount the Legislature established for determining whether a refreshment is a thing of monetary value.

In addition, Ms. Fitzgerald has failed to allege sufficient facts to support her claim that Mr. Schulte provided the bottles of water to induce a voter to refrain from voting or vote in a particular way at an election so as to fall within the prohibition of Minnesota Statutes 211B. 13. It appears that Ms. Fitzgerald merely argues that any donation of food or beverage from someone who is also a candidate for public office violates the statute. However, this argument overstates the nature of the prohibition in section 211B.13. If the Legislature had intended to prohibit all donations from candidates for public office, it would have stated this intent directly. Instead, section 211B.13 draws the prohibition more narrowly, banning only those gifts that are rendered with the purpose of inducing voters to either refrain from voting, or to vote in a particular way.

While the Complainant asserts that the labels on the water bottles promoted Mr. Schulte's election, there is no allegation that any condition was attached to the offer of a bottle of water that anyone was "paid" to vote for Mr. Schulte, or that anyone was otherwise "induced" to vote in a particular way in the Anoka County Commissioner election. To the contrary, it appears that the bottles of water were simply handed out during a parade and spectators were free to accept or reject them, without any condition. As was noted in the Campbell v. Grant County Republican Party decision, the value of the water accepted by any person was too nominal to create any obligation on the part of the recipient to vote in any particular manner and there is no allegation or evidence showing that any water was accepted under those terms. The "inducement" prohibited by Section 211B.13 requires something more than what was alleged to have occurred during the Andover Fun Fest Parade. In this respect, this case is distinguishable from other cases alleging a violation of Section 211B.13 where the connections between the provision of food items and the candidates' electioneering efforts were clear.

In this case, the value of the bottled water is too nominal to create an inducement or obligation non the part of the recipient to vote for Mr. Schulte and Complainant has put forward no evidence that the bottles of water were accepted under those terms. Because the Complainant has failed to allege a

prima facie violation of Minnesota Statutes 211B.13, the Complaint is dismissed.

ANOKA-HENNEPIN STILL LACKING

The latest comprehensive test scores are in at the Anoka-Hennepin School District, and you can bet that students are still lacking in overall proficiency in reading and math.

Students in grades 3-8 were tested in reading and math this spring.

In Anoka-Hennepin, only 63.6% of students are proficient, leaving nearly 37% lacking basic proficiency.

The statewide average for our vaunted public schools stands at 62.1 percent.

Congratulations, school board. You've led the district to a 1.5% lead over the average.

Another discouraging statistic is that math scores are not rising, but are instead bumping along a mediocre trend.

For example, the district math proficiency average in 2008 was 64.9%. In 2011, it was 59.3%. This year, 63.6%.

Where's the progress we were promised when the board was promoting the last property tax levy?

Is this what the board means when we "maintain the excellence?"

65% is a "D" in our grade book.

Reading is somewhat better, with 79.4% reading at a proficient level, compared to a statewide average of 76%. Still, 2 out of 10 students can't read too good, as [Derek Zoolander](#) would say.

School Board member John Hoffman is seeking to oust state Senate Ben Kruse. It will be interesting to see how Hoffman defends these scores that happened on his watch.

Is this the kind of "progress" he'll bring to the Capitol?

Let us guess, he's endorsed by the teachers' union, that bastion of reform and student-centered learning.

8/10/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Greetings, Watchdogs! We're coming to you this week from deep inside Watchdog election headquarters at an undisclosed, secure facility somewhere in Anoka County.

Next Tuesday is primary election day. There are a number of important races on the ballot. Make sure you get to the polls and exercise your sacred right to vote. The world belongs to those who show up. Next Tuesday, show up.

Find out where to vote right [here](#).

See you at the polls!

1. Campaign Finance Reports Revealed.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS REVEALED

This week, county commissioner candidates filed their campaign finance reports. The Watchdog is right here to break it down and tell you, the loyal reader, what's important regarding these documents.

This week, we examine the two races with a primary as well as the titanic tilt in District 7, where Scott Schulte is mounting a serious challenge to career politician Dan Erhart.

To start, we're going to look not at any candidate report, but at a political action committee (PAC) established to influence the composition of the county board come January.

This PAC, ironically named "[Citizens for Responsible Government](#)," has filed two campaign finance reports with the county.

There is no doubt that this PAC is a Good Ol' Boys entity, established by Good Ol' Boys, financed by Good Ol' Boys, for the purpose of turning back the clock by electing and re-installing to power the very same Good Ol' boys network who used to run this county.

The PAC is primarily funded by attorney Bill Erhart (does the last name ring a bell?), Natalie Haas Steffen (who lost to Matt Look in 2010), and Al Sannerud (Good Ol' Boy emeritus).

Having said that, not all contributions are required to be itemized, so it is impossible to discern every person who has contributed.

The report notes that the PAC has been established to support the election of Dan Sanders (running against Robyn West), Alison Lister (running against Matt Look), Tom Gamec (also running against Matt Look) as well as the election of four people to the Ramsey city council (which would make for a majority of the council).

With the Good Ol' Boys gunning directly for West and Look, it must make for some tense county board meetings with Dan Erhart.

The silver lining to that cloud is that those who thought they could work with Dan Erhart and appease him are finding out otherwise.

The majority of the expenses have come in the form of lawn signs for the supported candidates.

The primary advantage of a PAC is that it can receive massive donations, unlike a direct donation to a candidate, which is capped at \$300 per person.

For example, Bill Erhart contributed thousands to the PAC, while he is limited to a \$300 direct contribution to the same candidates supported by the PAC.

Thus, an entity like this can provide an enormous advantage to some candidates and greatly tilt the electoral playing field.

There is an interesting take on this whole situation over at a new blog called [Reflections in Ramsey](#) (Editor's Note: This blog is not affiliated with the Anoka County Watchdog or the Minnesota Watchdog).

Let's take a look at the candidate money race.

DISTRICT 7 (ERHART VS. SCHULTE)

Ah, to be the Good Ol' Boy Godfather. Despite being deposed by Sivarajah and company, Erhart is nonetheless still adept at raising money from people who benefit from contracts with the county either directly or indirectly.

For example, Erhart took a donation from Trudy Richter, a registered [lobbyist](#). Richter lobbies, among others, for the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board. Anoka County is a member of this organization.

Mary Richardson also contributed to Erhart.

Richardson and Richter are partners in a consulting firm of the [same name](#).

Now, check out the clients this firm serves or has served:

Anoka County
Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Anoka County Regional Rail Authority
City of Ramsey
Northstar Corridor Development Authority
Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board
Counties Transit Improvement Board

All these entities are either Anoka County entities or county Anoka County as a member.

Erhart also has taken money from labor unions.

He lists among his contributors the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United Transportation Union.

Erhart's expenditures also contain some interesting tidbits.

The campaign lists expenses with the Erhart law firm, led by the same Erhart who is running the PAC profiled above.

The Erhart campaign also made a contribution to Carol LeDoux's campaign. Unfortunately, LeDoux has proven herself to be aligned with Dan Erhart all too often.

As for Scott [Schulte](#), he reported a starting balance of \$4,815, and the receipt of \$5784 as well as a personal loan to the campaign of \$7,000, giving Schulte total receipts of \$17,599 so far this year.

After roughly \$12,000 in expenses, Schulte had just over \$5,500 cash on hand.

In short, Schulte has a demonstrated ability to raise the funds necessary to beat Dan Erhart.

DISTRICT 1 (Look, Denno, Lister, Gamec)

Incumbent [Matt Look](#) reported \$2,720 in revenues with \$1,237 cash on hand after expenses.

[Alison Lister](#), a beneficiary of the Good Ol' Boys PAC, reported raising a paltry \$725 during the reporting period, making no expenditures.

[Dan Denno](#) reported raising \$5,554, almost exclusively from personal loans to the campaign. He also reported Over \$1,500 worth of in-kind contributions.

After expenses, Denno has only \$181 cash on hand.

The fourth candidate, Tom Gamec, has yet to file a finance report. The Watchdog can only find a statement of economic interest on file with the county elections office.

DISTRICT 2 (Westerberg, Braastad, Jungbauer, Johnson)

The Watchdog can't find a pre-primary report for Westerberg, so we'll have to look at his "initial" 2012 [report](#), that covers the start of the year through late May.

He raised \$3,187 and spent about 1/3rd that amount.

The next best fundraising total in this race belongs to Ham Lake city council member Julie [Braastad](#), who reported raising just over \$1,500 and having just over \$500 cash on hand.

State Senator [Mike Jungbauer](#) fared less well. He reported raising less than \$250 for the period, leaving a paltry \$375 cash on hand, inclusive of previously raised monies.

Another member of the state Senate club, former Senator [Debbie Johnson](#), reported raising no money during the reporting period.

Ouch.

So what does it all mean?

First, no candidate raised more money than the Good Ol' Boy PAC save for Dan Denno. It shows that the influence of this PAC needs to be neutralized in order to level the playing field.

Second, the Watchdog predicts Look versus Denno in District 1 and Westerberg vs. Braastad in District 2.

8/17/12

In This Issue:

- 1. The Post-Primary Landscape.**
- 2. The Revolving Door.**

THE POST-PRIMARY LANDSCAPE

Primary Day on Tuesday defined the political landscape leading to November 6th and brought its fair share of spills, thrills, and chills, even if many voters expressed apathy by producing the second lowest primary turn out in modern Minnesota history.

Here in Anoka County, many races were brought into sharp focus as voters will now have two choices for a particular race. In many of those races, the choices provide a stark contrast and a true choice regarding the future direction of the cities and the county aspirants hope to represent.

ANOKA COUNTY DISTRICT 1

Incumbent Matt Look breezed through the primary and will face Allison Lister in November.

Voters in this district will have a clear, bright-line choice between a conservative reformer in Look and a newcomer, Lister, who represents the latest mutation of the Good Ol' Boy culture.

Matt Look has proven his conservative bona fides over his first term on the county board, supporting Rhonda Sivarajah on key votes, voting to reduce the property tax levy, and driving important fiscal reforms, like reducing county borrowing and paying for more capital projects with cash.

Watchdogs should also take note of Look's role on the board as the check and balance against the jackbag antics of Dan Erhart.

During board meetings, Look is the one who frequently counters Erhart and puts him in his place whenever the backbencher gets mouthy and belligerent, which is often.

In short, Look is a reliable conservative vote on the board and is part of the narrow 4-3 conservative majority against the Good Ol' Boys Erhart, Kordiak, and LeDoux (Carol,

that is, although you wouldn't know it from the campaign signs. The Empty Size 2 Suit, she is.).

And then there is [Allison Lister](#), Look's opponent. She represents the new generation of turn-back-the-clock candidates who seek to overturn the gains conservatives have won over the past few election cycles here in the county.

How do we know? Frankly, the Good Ol' Boy crew has been pretty up front about it.

Lister is noted on the Good Ol' Boy PAC (Citizens for Responsible Government) as a [beneficiary](#) of their special interest largess.

(Check out this [Facebook Page](#) for more information on the Good Ol' Boy PAC.)

Moreover, her web site lists retired Good Ol' Boy emeritus Dennis Berg as a supporter. Apparently, Berg thinks enough of Lister to crawl out from under his retirement rock to offer his endorsement, which is meaningless because no one remembers Dennis Berg or cares about his political musings. Only in the mind of Good Ol' Boys do they believe people remember them and their careers in local government. Dennis Berg endorsed her??? Wow!!! We better march to the polls and elect Allison!!! With Berg's endorsement, she ought to run for president!!! Not.

And in typical Good Ol' Boy fashion, Lister's web site says nothing, not a word, about her policy agenda, should she be elected to the board.

Where is she on the property tax levy? The Northstar extension to Saint Cloud? The NLX tourist train? How about lobbying expenses and no bid contracts? What about junkets and the county credit card?

Not a word. How cowardly.

Frankly, the Watchdog is sick and tired of candidates who refuse to tell their voters where they stand on key issues. Asinine platitudes about "listening to people" and "finding common ground" are often little more than political cover for not taking a stand and being accountable as a candidate.

Remember that Lister declined to answer the Watchdog candidate questionnaire while Look submitted not one but two communications in this regard.

Either Lister knows where she is on these issues and is hiding the ball or she truly doesn't know.

If it's the former, she has integrity issues that argue against her election. If it's the latter, she doesn't have a basic grasp of county-level issues and is thus unqualified to serve.

If you live in District 1, you have a crystal clear choice in November.

ANOKA COUNTY DISTRICT 2

The outcome here is in many respects quite the opposite of what transpired over in District 1. Here, both candidates who survived the primary can lay claim to conservative credentials, which is a great thing for Watchdogs in this district.

Incumbent [Andy Westerberg](#) has proven his commitment to reforming county government through his votes to reduce the property tax levy, support Sivarajah for chair (twice) and do the small things like lead the charge against the stupid idea to install electric vehicle charging stations at county parks.

The other winner, Ham Lake Council Member [Julie Braastad](#), is also conservative and has an established, impressive voting record on the city council. She would undoubtedly be a part of the reformer bloc if elected.

Watchdogs will have to decide for themselves which candidate will earn their support in November. We at the Watchdog are comfortable that either candidate will serve taxpayers well. The difference will likely come down to small distinctions regarding style or nuances with respect to particular issues.

We encourage District 2 voters to contact these candidates and ask them directly where they stand on issues important to you and how they would govern if elected to the board.

The two most conservative candidates won. The one who flirted with the Erhart camp didn't make the cut and that's a good thing.

COON RAPIDS AT-LARGE SEAT

This seat is being vacated by Scott Schulte, who is doing a great job nudging Dan Erhart into retirement, thereby liberating Anoka County from his abusive oppression.

Here, the primary outcome will give Coon Rapids voters a very clear distinction between candidates.

Former police chief [Steve Wells](#) brings both knowledge of government and a healthy respect for the private economy to the job.

Wells believes that "you built that," and would certainly be mindful of government's impact on jobs if elected.

Moreover, it's hard to overlook Wells' long commitment to the city he seeks to represent. Wells served the city for over 30 years as a police officer and was also deeply involved in civic organizations like youth hockey and the local schools.

The other candidate in the race is [Roger Johnson](#), a man the Watchdog has tracked for so many years that we can't help but like the guy just a little bit even though he's a die-hard liberal who believes in the power of Big Government.

Roger is a life-long liberal and a hard-core member of the DFL. There is no doubt whatsoever that Roger views life through the prism of progressive, liberal ideals.

If it's a solution that involves government, Johnson will likely embrace it.

In addition to the liberal world view, Roger has an ego almost as big as [his hair](#).

Check out these modest comments on his web site:

"Roger says, 'I'm highly educated, but still underutilized.'"

"Roger has the *gravitas* to be the person whose vote belongs to all of us citizens, and not just to the ones with the loudest voices."

"So there you have Roger Johnson in a nutshell: He is a man of COURAGE and WISDOM, is a DELIBERATIVE LEADER, has INTELLECT, can EXPLAIN COMPLEX ISSUES, has JUDGMENT, WARMTH, EMPATHY, lots of EXPERIENCE, GRAVITAS, and above all, he's a man of PRINCIPLES and INTEGRITY."

Run for Coon Rapids Council? With character traits like that, Roger should run for North Korean Dictator. "Supreme, Infallible Leader" should be this guy's title.

Perhaps the insufferable bragging and boasting is the reason why Johnson has yet to win an election.

If Coon Rapids elects Roger Johnson, you folks are getting exactly the government you deserve.

The Watchdog knows there other conservative candidates out there running for office.

But it's up to you to get the word out. If you have a candidate statement, we will certainly consider publication. But you need to send it.

harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

THE REVOLVING DOOR

So we all cheered and threw a ticker tape parade when it was announced that Steve Novak would be leaving Anoka County and getting off our payroll.

We all thought we would be washing our hands of a guy who didn't ever come close to justifying his six-figure salary.

What we didn't know is that we taxpayers weren't really getting rid of him.

Sources tell the Watchdog that Novak has been hired to join the staff of the Minnesota Inter-County [Association](#) (MICA).

MICA is nothing more than a group of counties that dump taxpayer money into in the organization in order to lobby state government to spend other taxpayer money.

For example, the group opposes levy limits and property tax freezes.

Great.

And guess what? Anoka County is a member of MICA. So our tax dollars will continue to pay for Novak.

Why Anoka County is in this organization is a good question.

It's a great question to ask Anoka County commissioner candidates as they seek your vote in November.

Why are my tax dollars supporting crap like MICA membership?

8/24/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Who is Allison Lister?**
- 2. That Biased Media.**
- 3. And Spring Lake Park Schools Are Worse.**

WHO IS ALLISON LISTER?

The Watchdog received a great deal of feedback regarding our analysis of the District 1 primary race that has been narrowed to incumbent Matt Look and Allison Lister.

Many readers concurred that Lister is a true "empty suit" candidate at this point, offering no real agenda other than some simple platitudes and vapid sound bites via her web site.

If elected along with Carol LeDoux this November, Anoka County would be the first in the nation to feature not one but two empty suits on the same county board, according to the Watchdog Analysis and Statistics Department.

Agenda? We don't need no stinking agenda!

Certainly, she has ducked every chance to address Watchdog readers and explain where she stands on key issues facing the county.

In short, she's a candidate with no agenda and no name recognition, having never run for office before (to the best of our knowledge) and not having any kind of public profile in the county besides some whining about the county board while she was a county employee.

So how did she take second place in a four-way primary?

The answer seems to lie in the one thing we do know about her. She's supported by the Good Ol' Boys and their special interest PAC, "Citizens for Responsible Government," otherwise known as the "We Ran This County and Want to Again" PAC.

Being supported by this PAC says much to voters about Lister and her real agenda. If you're in with this crowd, it speaks volumes about who you are and what you want to do to the taxpayers in this county.

To be fair, Lister lists a series of grievances against the county board as a justification for her campaign.

I discovered issues within our county government that need immediate attention. I know I can affect positive change as your commissioner. I discovered issues within that need immediate attention. I know I can affect positive change.

Okay. So what are these issues? Define them.

Initially I was also discouraged (now disgusted) by the political influence going on within our county board. There is a severe lack of candid communication which has created a distrust amongst board members and some employees.

Again, ill-defined, vague yet serious allegations. Define the issues. Offer examples. Prove it.

As Director of Anoka County Veteran Services, I experienced the lack of leadership and communication first hand.

Ugh. More shadow boxing. More witch-hunt style accusations.

This last accusation is curious to say the least. The Watchdog recalls that the current county board increased hiring in the Veterans' Service Office and expanded and remodeled the office to better respond to the needs of vets.

In fact, one Watchdog reminded us that she admitted at a League of Women's Voters forum that Matt Look and the rest of the current board have been "very good" to the office and to Anoka County veterans.

So what gives here?

Hurling vague accusations is classic Good Ol' Boy.

Why did Allison Lister resign from the county and turn around and run for office?

Are her campaign issues similar to her reasons for quitting the county?

What is her connection to the Erhart PAC?

Something smells real fishy in District 1.

On the other hand, we could just ignore her and re-elect Matt Look.

THAT BIASED MEDIA

So, so biased. We noticed a byline recently in the [Anoka County Union](#) that stated, "Test results are in and things are looking good for students in Anoka-Hennepin School District 11."

The article was all about how Anoka-Hennepin students fared well on recent standardized math and reading tests.

Oh, really?

Like the 58% of 11th grades who aren't proficient in math?

Or the 40% of 8th graders who aren't proficient in math?

Or the fact that 1 in 4 7th and 8th graders aren't proficient in reading?

Oh, it's compared to the equally crappy statewide average, we're told.

Wow! Throw a ticker tape parade. We're mediocre! We're mediocre!

Talk about taking pride in being the tallest midget in the room.

Things will be looking up when our school kids are competing with kids in other developed nations in math and science.

Being equal to the kids out in Yellow Medicine county or Cook County isn't a big deal.

We aren't competing with Warroad, Wadena or Worthington for economic prosperity and everyone in the Education-Industrial Complex knows it.

So let's stop with the cheerleading and acknowledge and address the shortcomings of our public school system. Namely, the lack of competition and a teacher union that promotes seniority-based benefits and not results-based benefits.

AND SPRING LAKE PARK SCHOOLS ARE WORSE

And the story gets worse over in the Spring Lake Park School District.

Just this week, the school board here approved a [new contract](#) for the superintendent, offering a 2.5% pay raise for each of three years, along with a phone allowance and car allowance.

The salary for running the district? \$183,422 for 2013, \$188,007 for 2014 and \$192,707 for 2015.

Those figures don't include the cost of fringe benefits like health insurance and retirement package.

The school board just couldn't brag enough about superintendent Jeff Ronneberg.

"Dr. Ronneberg is an excellent strategic planner who also possesses the leadership ability to coordinate and collaborate with district staff to align that short- and long-term planning with day to day learning for kids, and we're just very thankful to have him here."

Okay, so let's consult those MCA standardized math and reading [scores](#) to see where "Doctor" Ronneberg has led the district with his mad strategic skillz and sweet ability to align planning and learning.

40% of 5th grades ARE NOT proficient in math across the district.

45% of 6th graders ARE NOT proficient in math.

37% of 7th graders ARE NOT proficient in math.

47% of 8th graders ARE NOT proficient in math.

And the grand tamale: 64% of 11th graders ARE NOT proficient in math.

Good lord, what a dismal result.

We just don't even have the stomach to write up the test scores for reading, which were better but still offered proficiency rates in the 70s or low 80s.

So these results justify a pay raise that boosts the salary of the superintendent over \$190,000?

Just where exactly is the accountability here?

In our public schools, the salaries, benefits, and costs rise while results stay flat or decline.

Only 36% of 11th graders pass the math test and the school district super gets a three year deal with pay raises included.

What a tragic, tragic joke.

And what does the super have to say about the test scores? "We still have room for growth."

This clip sums up how we [feel](#). Delta House and Spring Lake Park Schools are one and the same.

8/31/12

In This Issue:

- 1. We Know We're Celebrating.**
- 2. The Whisper Campaign.**
- 3. The Latest Northstar Meme.**

WE KNOW WE'RE CELEBRATING

We came across this item on the Anoka County official calendar this week:

**MEMBERS OF THE ANOKA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY ATTEND A RETIREMENT CELEBRATION FOR STEVE NOVAK
THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 2012
9:30 - 11 A.M.
ROOM 710
GOVERNMENT CENTER
ANOKA, MN**

If the Watchdog would have received an invitation, we would have brought a cake, candles, and a one-way bus ticket to Gary.

Yes, commissioners "may" attend. You wouldn't want to show up and look too giddy about it.

Novak leaving Anoka County is a major bench mark in eliminating vestiges of the Good Ol' Boy network.

While the Watchdog will offer a hearty cheer on this occasion, it is tempered by the fact that Novak is merely moving to another job where Anoka County will foot the bill, at least in part.

As we noted in a recent update, Novak will lobby for an organization called the Metropolitan Inter-County Association (MICA).

MICA is a group of counties that lobbies the state. You know, that whole racket of one unit of government working to shake down another unit of government.

Anoka County pays dues to MICA, for reasons that are beyond us.

We're told in a [press release](#) that Novak will lobby transportation and bonding issues for MICA.

Great. Lobby for bonding (debt) and transportation (more rail).

We wish Novak all the success he enjoyed getting a taxpayer-financed Vikings stadium in Anoka County.

We're afraid to ask what we'll be shelling out for Novak's retirement benefits. Whatever it is, it's too much.

THE WHISPER CAMPAIGN

We know the Good Ol' Boys are willing to say anything and do anything to cling to power here in Anoka County. Witness the petty campaign complaints against Scott Schulte (He was giving out water bottles! The horror.).

The latest chapter in the win-at-all-costs campaign is a whisper campaign against Matt Look, Scott Schulte, and conservatives in general who are supporting these two as well as Robyn West and Rhonda Sivarajah.

The latest whisper in the campaign is that the conservatives are sexist. Those who are supporting Matt Look and Scott Bromley over Allison Lister and Carol LeDoux are doing so because they have a problem with women in elected positions.

Yeah, it's got nothing to do with the fact that both Lister and LeDoux have said and done nothing to demonstrate that they share our agenda for limited government and greater individual liberty.

But let's set the record straight. The Good Ol' Boys were only ever able to produce one, just one, female member of the club.

Margaret Langfeld was the token lady in the smoke-filled back room in Anoka County.

Watchdogs doubled up on the Good Ol' Boys on the commissioner count, claiming Robyn West and the Iron Lady herself as ours.

And we're not done there. In fact, Watchdogs can claim a large contingent of Anoka County area elected officials as our own:

State Senator Michelle Benson
State Senator Pam Wolf
State Rep. Peggy Scott
State Rep. Linda Runbeck
Donna Schmitt (Columbia Heights City Council)
Julie Brastad (Ham Lake City Council)
Sheri Bukkila (Andover City Council)

And we'll also add in Mandy Benz, who will be the newest female Republican office holder in Anoka County after November.

Moreover, the Watchdog has, on numerous occasions, celebrated the achievements of our female conservative champions.

The Good Ol' Boys represent a past era when tokenism was the order of the day. We Watchdogs represent an era of reform. And, yes, those reforms include recognizing women as political co-equals in fight for limited government.

They'll say anything and do anything.

And let's not forget the whisper campaigns against Scott Schulte and Matt Look.

Some of these rumors and innuendo are so vile and harmful that the Watchdog will not reprint them in this publication.

But go ahead and contact Schulte and Look. Ask them what the Good Ol' Boys are saying about them, their families and way they conduct their business affairs (when you don't create jobs, you have to find a way to poison those who do).

It's pure cowardice, these whisper campaigns. It's hard to fight back, to shadow box, against the whispers.

If the Good Ol' Boys had the guts to publish what they say, there would be an opportunity to rebut, to establish the truth.

The best remedy would be to simply sweep out the remaining strains of the Good Ol' Boys in November and be done with them once and for all.

THE LATEST NORTHSTAR MEME

Talk about say anything and do anything.

Northstar rail acolytes are desperately trying to portray the failed train as a victim of politics.

It wasn't bad public policy to stick a commuter train in Anoka and Sherburne counties.

Nope. It was politics. Primarily, it was the decision to cut the line's northern terminus from Rice back to Big Lake.

In a recent [article](#), Dinosaur Dan Erhart and even Governor Dayton have been repeating this meme.

"It should have gone all the way to St. Cloud, but it didn't because it was so political," the dinosaur tells us.

"It doesn't even go to St. Cloud, for crying out loud," he said. "I fault the previous (Pawlenty) administration for that," the governor who caused the longest state shutdown in history tells us.

That's just flat out wrong and Erhart knows it.

The FACT is that Northstar's 82 mile route to Rice (beyond Saint Cloud) couldn't meet the federal government's low cost-benefit standards.

In order to make the low bar, the route had to be cut back to Big Lake.

It wasn't politics. It was the cold, hard math of the government metrics that caused the cut.

Here's one sample right out of the mouth of Tim Yantos, the chief bureaucrat on the project:

Tim Yantos, Northstar project director, added, "Under the latest evaluation standard used by the FTA, the preliminary data suggests that the Northstar line can meet the FTA cost-effectiveness test with modifications. The Big Lake to Minneapolis portion of the route appears to meet the FTA requirements while extending the line to St. Cloud narrowly misses this standard."

-
It didn't meet the standard and that's that.

9/7/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Know Your Candidates - City Council.**
- 2. The Purple Taxpayer Plunder.**

KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES - CITY COUNCIL

What's happening, Watchdogs? We're post-Labor Day and on the downhill run to Election 2012, a pivotal election.

This one is for all our faithful readers in Andover. You've got a city council race and you need to know some things.

One of the peculiar things about city council races is that they allow candidates to run and possibly get elected without revealing who they really are what they really believe about important issues.

This is especially true if the candidate holds views that are out of the mainstream in their area.

With city council, you can just talk about improving the parks, putting in a stop sign at a particular intersection, or luring a really hip coffee shop for the new strip mall.

Watchdogs ought to know just a little bit more about Valerie Holthus, who is running for city council in this deep red Republican city.

First, Holthus is an officer for Anoka-Hennepin Education Minnesota (AHM), the local teachers' union.

According to AHM's [web site](#), Holthus is the group's Government Relations honcho, coordinating political activities and running the group's candidate endorsement process.

In other words, she works to elect Democrats and defeat Republicans, including legislators like Peggy Scott and Michelle Benson, two principled conservatives who are serving Andover well.

And let's not forget state Rep. Branden Petersen, who represents a small slice of Andover but is running to represent the city in the state Senate in the newly configured District 35.

But that's not all.

Holthus is also [endorsed](#) by [Women Winning](#), a radical feminist group that helps to elect women who favor abortion.

Moreover, according to the group's web site, [endorsement](#) must be proactively sought. In short, you have to ask them for it.

You might ask yourself why this group would bother with city council candidates. After all, city councils don't pass upon abortion or other life issues.

The obvious answer is that city councils often act as a political farm system, just like in baseball.

City council candidates cut their campaign teeth at the local level and gain valuable name recognition and experience for potential runs later on for the legislature or Congress, two bodies that most definitely consider abortion issues.

It's a sophisticated stealth operation that seeks to build a candidate's name recognition and political bona fides without revealing true principles and values before they can no longer be hidden in a partisan political race.

If Holthus isn't really interested in a future run for the legislature or otherwise, than why seek this group's endorsement?

Moreover, you can't find a single mention of either Holthus' pro-abortion stance or her work on behalf of the teachers' union on her campaign [web site](#).

Why is that? Well, let us just hazard a guess that the good people of Andover are strongly pro-life and would never elect Holthus if they knew of her pro-abortion stance.

What do Kathy Tingelstad, John Hartinger, Theresa Lynch, Chris DeLaForest, Peggy Scott, Branden Petersen, Debbie Johnson and Michelle Benson all have in common?

They have all represented Andover in the legislature of the past many years and all of them, every last one of them, had a strong pro-life voting record.

And we may just hazard one more guess that these same voters wouldn't be impressed with a teacher union political hack who works to elect toadies who will toe the union line on issues that might upset the cushy, teacher-centered status quo that the union despises.

Ultimately, you good Andover tax payers will cast your votes in the privacy of the polling booth.

But this is precisely why the Watchdog exists. We shine the light of truth on a murky political process.

You owe it to yourself to check out the other candidate in this race:

[Tony Howard](#)

It's your vote, Watchdogs.

COON RAPIDS

Chad Newman is running for city council in Coon Rapids. He sends the following candidate information, also found on his [web site](#):

Hi, my name is Chad Newman. We may not have met, but I'd like to be your City Councilman. First, let's get to know each other.

I was born in Miller, SD to Tim and Doris Newman. They were pastoring a small church and would go on to be ministers in International Falls, Marshall, and even Tallahassee, FL, during my youth.

From a young age, I learned the value of hard work and character. Instead of being handed an allowance, I worked for it, mowing at home and at church, cleaning up, and other chores.

My parents felt very strongly about honesty, respect, and listening to your elders. Like my Father, I spent a lot of time visiting nursing homes and listening to elders in our church. I learned that if something you did was wrong, you did the right thing even if it was the hard thing.

In high school, I worked to start a high school bible club. We received some friction from others, but fought past it to exercise our right to practice our

religion where others could practice theirs. Because of this, I will always fight for liberty and free speech, even if that speech is something I completely disagree with.

After high school, I began attending North Central University to be a minister. After a short while, I realized that many ministers struggle with running the financial side of the church, and changed my major to business. I graduated with a degree in Business Administration with a Concentration in Christian Leadership and Ethics.

It was in college that I met my wife, Krista. She is currently a practicing psychologist, and is writing a book in her spare time. She was one of my first experiences in overcoming tough obstacles, as she didn't have any plans to me Mrs. Chad Newman. It took me a few months of walking her to work in Downtown Minneapolis, in the winter, to even convince her to be my "girlfriend".

After graduating, I received a dose of the tough side of the American Dream. I went to work as a management trainee for Enterprise Rent a Car. For a young man who thought he should be CEO, it was a dose of reality to start out washing cars! However, this dose was what I needed, and I rapidly found myself progressing upward through the ranks of managers, most recently running the downtown market of Enterprise Rent a Car.

This experience at Enterprise Rent a Car taught me to always make decisions with as much information as possible. It taught me to forecast conservatively, and work aggressively. It taught me how to motivate those around me by working harder than them. It taught me that failure doesn't exist, but hard lessons do. It is these things that I want to bring to our City. It is these hard lessons and my experience that will help to make Coon Rapids a better place to live.

Join me today and cast your vote to make Coon Rapids YOUR city.

THE PURPLE TAXPAYER PLUNDER

Well, this is one way for government to stimulate the economic fortunes of the citizens. Well, at least one citizen. Well, maybe not a Minnesota citizen but at least a U.S. citizen.

Forbes magazine just released its [annual valuation](#) of NFL franchises, including Zygmunt Wilf and merry band of purple felons.

And wouldn't you know it? Zyg's Big Purple Asset is now worth a cool \$975 million.

The best part (for Zygi) is that the \$975 million figure represents a whopping 22% increase from the team's 2011 value.

(Just for historical reference, Zyg paid a mere \$600 million for the team way back in the Dark Ages of 2005).

The 22% jump in value represents the largest increase of any NFL team.

How did that happen? Perhaps the commitment of a taxpayer-financed stadium had something to do with it? You know it.

And what of other NFL franchises?

Chumps like the defending Super Bowl champs only saw a 13% increase.

And those cheese heads across the river? They may have Aaron Rodgers but they only saw a 7% increase in value.

And how about those division rivals in Detroit? The Lions suck on the field and they suck on the balance sheet. Only a measly 1% increase in value. 1%???? That's the kind of return on investment regular people get! You know, the kind of people who will fund the new stadium.

Invest in the stock market? Nope. Invest in precious metals? Nope. Hold up the taxpayers and demand their money? YOU BET.

9/14/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Here Comes the Debate!**
- 2. Did We Tell You About the County Board?**
- 3. Donna Schmitt Piece.**

HERE COMES THE DEBATE!

The candidates for Anoka County Commissioner will finally meet in the political octagon.

The Anoka/Blaine/Coon Rapids League of Women Voters has announced that they will hold a [candidate forum](#) on Tuesday, September 25th from 6:30 - 8:00 PM.

The location will be the 7th floor of the Anoka County Government Center, the county board room.

Hey, Watchdogs. You've got a patriotic duty to be there and support your conservative board members.

This is indeed an important election, and not just at the federal or state level.

We've worked hard, very hard, to install a conservative majority on this county board.

The Good Ol' Boys want their power back and they're doing everything they can to turn back the clock to the Good Ol' Days of the 1970s and 1980s, when taxes went up and up and so did their taxpayer-financed perks.

YOU need to be there to support those who support us.

Hey, it may be one of the last chances to see Dan Erhart in elected office.

DID WE TELL YOU ABOUT THE COUNTY BOARD?

Have we told you that elections matter? Have we mentioned that this county board, under new management, has effected a sea change in the culture, attitude, and philosophy of government down at the Anoka County Government Center?

Of course we have. But the evidence keeps piling up.

After making political history by actually cutting the property tax levy last year, with Dan Erhart casting the lone "no" vote, (view video [here](#)), the county made history again.

That history comes in the form of the county voting to cut the property tax levy for a second year in a row.

In 2011, the county cut the property tax for the first time in 40 years.

Now they've done it again.

Elections matter.

Oh, did we mention the board also voted to cut the property tax levy for the rail authority, the parasitic body responsible trains?

Yes, the levy there was cut 10%, thanks to Commissioner Matt Look.

The cut includes nixing \$100,000 in lobbying fees. Lobbying fees are zeroed out, even though the damage has been done after years of the public spigot thrown wide open for lobbyists to hawk Northstar rail.

This is very, very welcome news.

Rest assured, when Dan Erhart was board chair, property taxes went up and up and up like a rocket into orbit.

Make no mistake, county government is being brought under control thanks to Commissioners Look, Sivarajah, Westerberg, and West.

DONNA SCHMITT PIECE.

A couple of weeks ago, the Dog praised one of the county's rising conservative female stars, Donna Schmitt of the Columbia Heights City Council.

Well, wouldn't you know it, Donna has come through with another exhibit in her gallery of limited government.

Check out this piece she wrote regarding Minneapolis and a street car named Rybak.

When you think about it, Schmitt is walking the wall for our fiscal safety. In Columbia Heights, she acts as a bulwark against the liberal encroachments of Minnesota's most liberal city.

She protects the soft underbelly of the county while others like Jim Kordiak, well, don't.

She writes:

Ah, remember the days when you could jump on a streetcar and ride it to your destination? Probably not, since jumping on a moving streetcar only happens in movies; ask the operators in San Francisco. We haven't had a real streetcar in Minneapolis/St. Paul since [1954](#) and that is before many of us were born.

Minneapolis is doling out money again for another [study](#) to determine if we can get a streetcar in Minneapolis. This is the third time that I am aware of, that they passed out money, like candy, to run a survey in the [\\$1.2 million range](#). When the estimated cost for the streetcar line is running as high as \$67 million per mile when does the insanity stop?

[Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak](#) has insisted over and over that Minneapolis needs this and one of the suggested lines would run from Minneapolis, north on Central Ave into Columbia Heights. By adding Anoka County and Columbia Heights into the mix, Minneapolis has more sources for funding for the project when federal money runs out, which will happen before the project is even complete.

Columbia Heights has an added incentive not to work with Minneapolis on this project: Many citizens in the Heights are discussing a new library and there is discussion on the council to start saving money for this project. We could build six, really nice libraries for the cost of one mile of a streetcar!

It is time to tell Minneapolis, "No, we don't want your streetcars!" We can't afford to build them and we can't afford to maintain them. There will be three times to do this: Sept. 26, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall; Sept. 26, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the 5th Precinct Police Station, 3101 Nicollet Ave. S.; and Sept. 27, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Eastside Food Co-op, 2551 Central Ave. NE.

9/21/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Watchdogs, don't forget about the Anoka County Commissioner candidate forum coming up next week. Be there to support your conservative candidates for the county board. We've worked hard to get them there and they've worked hard to deliver. They've worked hard to change the Good Ol' Boy culture. They Good Ol' Boys realize this is the last chance to reclaim junketeering, taxpayer-abusing glory. In short, this could be the end of Dan Erhart's Reign of Taxpayer Terror. BE THERE.

Tuesday, September 25th

6:30 - 8:00 PM

Anoka County Government Center - 7th Floor

2100 3rd Ave. N.

Anoka, MN 55303

- 1. Back on the Watch List You Go!**
- 2. Scott, Scott, Scott.**

BACK ON THE WATCH LIST YOU GO!

Man, it's been awhile since we had to take the MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce to the woodshed.

Under new management, the Chamber has taken great strides to eliminate the vestiges of former Executive Director Tom Snell's kangaroo court style of management, which was a daily theater of the absurd.

But as the military saying goes, "one 'ah s**t!' wipes out a 100 'atta boys."

And the "ah s**t" to which we refer?

We refer to a decision of the MetroNorth's political action committee to endorse state Representative [Melissa Hortman](#) over her opponent, [Andrew Reinhardt](#) for state Representative in the Brooklyn Park area.

Frankly this is an endorsement that stinks to high heaven.

Sources in the Reinhardt campaign shared with the Watchdog the communication Reinhardt received from Dick Haluptzok, chairman of the MetroNorth PAC.

The letter states, in part:

Your answers to our questionnaire were certainly very thoughtful. We appreciate your knowledge of the area and our business issues, as well as your willingness to listen to our concerns. However, your position on key business issues did not withstand our decision making process for endorsements. We therefore felt that to endorse the opponent in your race was the best decision for our Leadership Fund.

There are only three plausible explanations for the endorsement:

1. Reinhardt is a demonstrably poor candidate with respect to a pro-business agenda and deserved to be denied the endorsement no matter the business voting record of his opponent;
2. Rep. Hortman has an unassailable pro-business voting record and deserves the endorsement no matter the pronouncements and promises of her opponent, who has no voting record because he has never held elective office.
3. Reinhardt is the victim, and Hortman the beneficiary, of nepotism. Let's take the first issue, Reinhardt's views on the business climate.

Here's what Reinhardt's web site home page says about his views on business:

I've been a consistent voice fighting *for* the free market, and *against* oppressive government overreach. Families must live within their means, government needs to as well.

That sounds pretty good to us.

And what of his position on key business issues as explained on the MetroNorth Chamber PAC questionnaire? The answers that Mr. Haluptzok felt "did not withstand our decision making process for endorsements." By the way, what kind of mumbo jumbo speak is that? What exactly does "not withstand" mean in this context? An attempt at convenient obfuscation, perhaps?

In any case, here what Reinhardt said of business issues on his questionnaire:

My campaign is about freedom, suburban values, and getting Minnesota to work again! I believe I can bring people together, and fight to grow jobs and the economy, protect taxpayers, and continue reforms making government more affordable, effective, and accountable. I've been a consistent voice fighting *for* the free market, and *against* oppressive government overreach. Families must live within their means, government needs to as well.

Overall I support a hold, or decrease in state spending. Every specific area should be looked at for efficiencies. In specific areas like transportation, I would support an increase in roads and bridges, and a decrease in spending on costly rail projects. Growing the economy is the best solution, and unfortunately Governor Dayton vetoed some solid legislation that would have helped veterans and small businesses.

Unlike many DFLers (including my opponent) who campaign on lowering property taxes while at the same time hiding their desire for raising the sales tax, gas tax, income tax, and other taxes, I want to lower the overall tax burden for businesses and individuals. I'll get more Minnesotans working again by creating a business climate which allows for the expansion of business & hiring of more employees. We must eliminate as much burdensome red tape as possible, lower taxes, and support private sector innovation to help businesses grow & create jobs in MN. The GOP Legislature turned a \$6.1 billion deficit to a \$1 billion surplus with the plan of not raising taxes, getting a grip on spending, & changing how government works. We also need a well-educated workforce grown here in MN.

The Watchdog doesn't see how a candidate could be any stronger in supporting the private sector and free-market solutions to the issues facing job creators.

Obviously, Reinhardt's answers didn't offend the PAC or any other reasonable person who can clearly see his devotion to a pro-business, pro-capitalist economy.

So how about theory number 2, that Rep. Hortman has a stellar pro-job creator voting record.

Having been in the legislature for many years, Hortman has a voting record. Let's consult it.

Minnesota Chamber of Commerce voting record:

2012: Hortman voted with the Chamber on 4 of 14 scored votes.

2011: Hortman voted with the Chamber on 2 of 13 scored votes.

2010: Hortman voted with the Chamber on 1 out of 7 scored votes.

2009: Hortman voted with the Chamber on 2 of 13 scored votes.

And what of the NFIB, the voice of small, independent business?

In the 2009-2010 legislative session, Hortman voted with small business on only 18% of scored votes. In other words, she voted with small business just once on 15 key votes.

Get the picture? Hortman has a decidedly anti-job creator voting record. She is no friend of job creators, especially main street folks.

That's clear to any reasonable reader.

So what about theory number 3, that Hortman benefitted from nepotism? Nepotism, boys and girls, is the pernicious practice of bestowing favors based upon a family relationship.

You see, Mr. Haluptzok, the chairman of the MetroNorth PAC, is also Rep. Hortman's uncle.

Did the family relationship have anything to do with the endorsement? We don't know. But we do know the decision wasn't, COULDN'T, have been made on the basis of either Reinhardt's statements or Hortman's voting record.

Let us just say the circumstantial evidence doesn't look good.

If Haluptzok wants to offer an explanation other than what we have explored here, he's free to do so. We'll be happy to publish it and let our readers decide.

Until that time, the Chamber is back on the Watchdog Watch List.

SCOTT, SCOTT, SCOTT

Have we told you about a tried and true Good Ol' Boy campaign tactic, juvenile and weak?

When lacking a quality candidate to put up against a conservative, try to fool the voters by putting up a candidate with a similar name to the incumbent.

This cycle, the Good Ol' Boy camp has put up some unknown against conservative rock star Peggy Scott. The opponent? Sam Scott. Mr. Scott has no legislative agenda to speak of and is virtually unknown in the district.

But that doesn't matter to the Boys. Try to fool the voters, muddy the waters, throw sand in the eyes.

It never works and certainly won't work here.

One has girl plumbing. The other has boy plumbing. One is a long-time resident of the area, having raised a family here. The other is just moved to Andover in 2007.

One has an established record of conservative voting while the other can only offer vague criticisms and shopworn promises to be fair and not so mean.

And one more. One will have the "R" behind the name while one will have the "DFL."

You're welcome, Sam. We've given you more exposure in one update than you've had in the last six months.

And one more piece of advice, greenhorn. It's illegal to put your lawn signs on government property. The idea is to put them in front of real homes populated by real people who cast real votes.

Get to work, son. The Watchdog hears you're 28 points down.

9/28/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: This week's issue is dedicated to the Winged Monkeys. You know who you are!

- 1. Advantage: Schulte.**
- 2. Re-arranging the Deck Chairs.**

ADVANTAGE: SCHULTE

This past Tuesday evening, the candidates in three county commissioner races convened on the 7th floor of the Anoka County Government Center to engage in the only general election debate of the year for these seats.

The room was packed and many more will watch on their local cable channel.

But if you weren't there, the Watchdog is here to recap the main event for you, Schulte vs. Erhart.

The other races were Matt Look against Allison Lister in District 1 (Matt Look schooled Lister, who looks like she still hasn't figured out why she's running) and in District 2, where Andy Westerberg and Julie Braastad wrestled to a draw.

The clear advantage in this debate went to Scott Schulte, who showed that while he has a wealth of experience in the private sector and a dash of government service, he is energetic, purposeful, and earnest.

Dan Erhart, on the other hand, looked wan, tired, and yesteryear. He looked every bit the part of the guy who has been making political buggy whips for the past 30 years and is now watching the automobile take over.

He nods politely and talks of past glories, but this new county board and their transparent way of doing business is clearly alien to him.

Efficiencies? Budget reductions? Levy reductions? Facebook? Huh?

Whatever happened to the status quo plus a property tax increase?

Yes, Dan voted for this year's levy reduction, the first time he's stood behind a tax cut in 30 years. He even went out and got a Facebook page.

It's a not-so-brilliant disguise. Kind of like a [Japanese exchange student](#) sitting at the American dinner table for the first time. Lots of polite smiling and nodding, very little comprehension.

He knows that this is what he has to do to keep his fingers grasping the waning remnants of political influence, the vestiges of what used to be. Yesteryear. Then. Before.

Scott Schulte made a convincing case that the guard has changed and the torch of leadership needs to pass in District 7 in order to keep pace with the innovations and ideas reshaping county politics.

Here's how it all went down, an inflection point in one of many critical elections at stake this November.

Schulte began by laying out a biographical case that lays the foundation for political leadership on the board.

A small business owner for many years, he knows what it means to make payroll and sign the front side of a paycheck. Create jobs? Schulte is on the front lines, seeing the direct effects of government regulation on jobs and wages.

It's a family owned auto shop started in 1958 and owned by a Schulte ever since. A mechanic by trade, Scott is under the hood with his employees, getting dirt under the fingernails. He's no sit-in-the-office kind of guy.

Currently serving on the Coon Rapids City Council, Schulte also understands government. He's no career politician, with a political resume far shorter than the entrepreneurial resume.

Dan Erhart tried hard to hide his entrenched career in politics. There was reference to long-ago private-sector experience with companies like Honeywell, probably working to develop a new generation of vacuum tubes or AM radios.

He didn't once refer to three decades on the government payroll, in office since Reagan's first term, back when Atari was cutting edge and cell phones were as big as a bread box.

There were a number of memorable exchanges where Schulte schooled Erhart and scored points with the judges on the way to a knockout victory.

GETTING ALONG

Questions were posed by the audience through written questions read aloud by a moderator.

One question dealt with getting along with colleagues, a clear weakness with Erhart, who considers himself a majority of one.

He made no attempt to cite any instances of cooperation or collegiality with other board members but instead spoke of his ability to influence and connect with other elected officials, touting himself as some sort of coordinator of goodwill between federal, state, and local officials.

"I'm up at 4:30 in the morning making phone calls and working with people," he bragged.

Schulte replied, "I'm up at 4:30 in the morning as well. Twelve years on city council and you've never called me once, Dan."

Boom.

INFLUENCE

And speaking of all those big wheel phone calls to the political centers of power, there was a quite peculiar complaint that sprang forth from the mouth of Mr. Erhart just moments after he was done patting himself on the back for being such a skilled power broker.

Erhart proceeded to complain about how ineffective Anoka County was in landing pork from the federal and state government.

The example Erhart used was a state transportation appropriation of about \$400 million. Out of that amount, Anoka County got only \$14 million.

So which is it, Dan? Are you the power broker you claim to be and thus deserve re-election?

Or has it been 30 years of futility?

After all, a big part of your re-election narrative is your contacts and your ability to deliver on 30 years worth of contacts and relationships.

It's interesting watch Erhart simultaneously brag about his influence and decry the lack of it.

RAIL

Dan Erhart continues to double down on rail, both Northstar rail and the proposed Northern Lights Express to Duluth.

Anoka County has already pulled out of NLX, citing high costs and the lack of support at the federal level for high speed rail.

As for Northstar, well, that's a boondoggle unfolding by the day (see item below).

Schulte, for his part, is less impressed with rail and more focused on roads and bridges.

Be that as it may, the question posed by the moderator was to quantify the jobs and economic development attributable to Northstar rail.

Schulte noted all the promises made regarding the jobs and economic development Northstar would bring.

He noted that he is still waiting.

Then, in a stunning display ofchutzpah, Erhart simply proclaimed that Northstar is commuter rail - it's for commuters.

Put another way, Northstar is only about commuters, not the other stuff.

Wow. Anyone who was paying attention back then will clearly recall the promises Erhart and other rail acolytes made regarding jobs and economic development.

Simply stunning.

We won't forget those promises, Commissioner Erhart. And we will hold you accountable for them.

VOTER ID

The question was in the nature of how county government will handle additional costs attendant to implementing photo ID if the constitutional amendment passes.

It was clear from the answers that Scott Schulte supports photo ID and that Dan Erhart does not.

What was breathtaking, however, was Erhart's claim that there has been no proven case of voter fraud in Minnesota.

Really?

How about that voter fraud conviction right here in [Anoka County](#)?

Either Mr. Erhart is horribly misinformed or he is interested in misinforming.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

This question really says it all.

Scott Schulte spoke of prioritizing government and focusing on finding efficiencies to do more with less.

He noted that since his time on the Coon Rapids City Council, the number of city employees has gone from 242 to 218.

However, city services are still delivered efficiently while the population has grown.

Erhart answered the question by talking about, you guessed it, rail.

Yep, a train to Duluth and expanding the failed Northstar commuter train is the priority for Erhart.

He talked of some weird strategy whereby these trains will cause development and then jobs and then prosperity for all.

How has that been working out so far for Northstar?

Advantage: Schulte.

RE-ARRANGING THE DECK CHAIRS

Our friends over the [Freedom Foundation of Minnesota](#) (FFM) continue to do great work on behalf of Minnesota taxpayers.

FFM has been a great tag-team partner in exposing the fraud that is Northstar commuter rail.

Many politicians here in Anoka County are running away from Northstar like it's the plague.

No wonder. It's a project that has already proven to be an utter failure and waste of taxpayer dollars.

County Commissioner Dan Erhart seems to be the only politician who is either brave enough or stupid enough to continue to claim paternity of this [ugly baby](#).

Northstar rail isn't really a train. It's more like an ocean liner. It's a fiscal Titanic, to be precise.

The latest chapter in re-arranging the deck chairs on the Northstar/Titanic is a fare cut, resulting in an even higher taxpayer subsidy.

Pop quiz: Has the fare cut resulted in higher ridership?

If you guessed "no," you would be winner.

Here's what FFM had to say about moving the deck chairs:

Metro Transit figures obtained by the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota (FFM) for the first month of the experimental fares indicate that monthly Northstar ridership plunged by more than eight percent , some 12,300 passengers. Northstar train ridership in August 2012 totaled 66,543 passengers compared to 78,898 passengers in August 2011. In both 2010 and 2011, ridership on the commuter line increased from month to month July to August. The August 2012 decline was registered across the board at all Northstar stations with the greatest falloff at the station at the end of the 40 mile line, Big Lake.

That's correct. Ridership went the other way.

Right now, taxpayers foot the bill for 80% of each Northstar ride.

Northstar rail has failed to deliver on every promise the politicians made when they foisted this \$317 million boondoggle on us.

10/5/12

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "The president doesn't pick winners and losers. He just picks the losers."

- Mitt Romney

1. Prosperity for Your Great-Great-Great Grandchildren.

2. We're Still So Very Curious.

3. Individual Liberty Supports Capitalism.

PROSPERITY FOR YOUR GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRANDCHILDREN

Funny, it's hard to find anyone running for re-election who continues to embrace Northstar commuter rail, the political equivalent of leprosy.

The only two Anoka County candidates willing to caress that crusty corpus are state Representative Melissa Hortman and Anoka County Commissioner Danny Erhart.

Having said that, these two have been churning and burning through excuses, looking for the just the right narrative to escape from uncomfortable campaign discussions regarding the failure of Northstar.

It seems the latest excuse is the one Hortman and Erhart are going to offer voters through the election.

Namely, that Northstar will deliver on promises of jobs and economic development decades from now.

Apparently, we're all supposed to just give this \$317 million public works project a free pass until sometime after 2050 and expect nothing until then.

What a bunch of bunk. This project made baseline projections regarding ridership, for example, from Day One. So far, the train has delivered on none of that.

When think about it, the message from Hortman and Erhart is that Northstar promises jobs and economic development - for some future generation.

What about today? We need jobs and economic development today, not generations from now.

This is so typical of the liberals. Taxes now, benefits later.

Just like ObamaCare. Just like rail. Just like poverty programs. Just like Target Field.

This is exactly the kind of backwards, ill conceived thinking that has put Anoka County behind other Metro counties for so many years.

Fortunately, Matt Look, Rhonda Sivarajah and other county commissioners represent a new era and a new way of looking at economic development.

They understand that attracting private sector jobs means many things other than a train to Big Lake that is really nothing more than a legacy project for one county commissioner.

Private sector job creators don't want a train. Trains don't improve the balance sheet, especially with the taxes that come with it.

They want low taxes and low regulation. They want government out of the way.

Scott Schulte gets that as well and would work well with this new leadership philosophy.

Here's one other thought. If Northstar is on track to deliver its promises, then why all the scrambling around to rescue it?

Why the new station in Ramsey? Why the fare cuts, which jack up the subsidy? Why not just stay the course?

This train is a white elephant, plain and simple.

Erhart and Hortman will simply run around making excuses to cover their political backsides until November 7th.

Watchdogs, make sure you ask every candidate who wants your vote where they stand on Northstar.

If they tell you anything other than that the train is a failure, tell them they won't get your vote.

There are already a number of candidates , including newcomers, who get it.

Those newcomers include, Nick Zerwas, Jim Newberger, David FitzSimmons, Andy Reinhardt, and Mandy Benz.

They understand transportation issues well and won't be intimidated by the rail crowd.

If elected, they will work on roads and bridges and transit options that make sense, like express bus ways.

They know the Northstar Emperor has no clothes and they aren't afraid to say so. Check them out!

WE'RE STILL SO VERY CURIOUS

A couple of weeks ago, the Watchdog reported the very curious endorsement of state Rep. Melissa Hortman by the MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce.

We wondered aloud how the Chamber could endorse such a proven anti-business legislator over her pro-business opponent.

We also informed our readers of the blood relationship between Hortman and chairman of the endorsement committee.

This week, the MetroNorth Chamber published the complete list of endorsed candidates, which has only made the Hortman endorsement all the stranger.

Overall, the endorsement list is commendable, with excellent pro-capitalist candidates endorsed.

In fact, the Watchdog is impressed with each and every legislative endorsement on the list - save one.

Moreover, there are a number of candidates for local office who were endorsed who will be strong pro-jobs politicians (more on that in a bit).

The endorsement committee even went out on a limb and endorsed candidates for the legislature who are big, big underdogs and probably won't win.

Endorsing Gina Bauman over barb Goodwin and Dale Helm over Connie Bernardy took some stones.

On the merits, Bauman and Helm are great candidates but are running in deep blue areas.

Certainly, Goodwin and Bernardy are proven socialists, but the odds favor their winning.

Good for the chamber for doing the right thing and acting on principle, not political expediency.

But it still begs the question regarding Hortman.

How in the world did they get it so right but blow the call on Hortman?

Did her opponent beat up the committee members back in grade school?

Goodness sakes.

Overall, the Chamber made great choices (note to Tom Snell over in White Bear Lake).

But again, why Hortman?

Regarding local endorsements, there is more of a mixed record.

In Coon Rapids, Steve Wells was endorsed for the at-large council seat over Roger Johnson.

THIS IS GOOD NEWS.

Pay attention, Coon Rapids. Steve Wells is the common sense candidate in this race. Check him out.

Roger Johnson is a owned by the public unions and is a Big Government liberal.

There is a stark choice in this race. As stark as it gets.

Again, check out Steve Wells.

Over in Blaine, the Chamber made all the wrong endorsement calls for city council.

Blaine is a mini Good Ol' Boys network.

We suggest you check out Jason Babler and Dave Morrell.

You can see the comprehensive endorsement list [here](#).

INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY SUPPORTS CAPITALISM

It's an unqualified truth that individual liberties and capitalism support each other and often exist in proportion, meaning that any society with abundant individual liberty often boasts of abundant free-market capitalism.

Of course, that also means that little individual liberty means little economic freedom.

That's why individual liberties are so important.

And among those individual liberties, the right to keep and bear arms is a bedrock liberty.

The National Rifle Association has just released its list of [endorsed](#) legislative candidates here in Minnesota.

Take a look. If a candidate is NRA endorsed, you can bet that they are also a champion of economic liberty.

Get informed and vote!

10/12/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note:

All we have to say about the vice presidential debate was written a long, long time ago: "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet."- Proverbs 29:9

Editor's Factoid:

Last year, Mitt Romney gave over \$4 million charity. Joe Biden gave \$5,540, just 1.5% of his income. Biden proves the axiom that liberals are quite generous - with someone else's money.

Quote of the Week:

"I've created about 250,000 direct and indirect jobs according to the state of Nevada's measurement. If the number is 250,000, that's exactly 250,000 more than this president, who I'll be damned if I want to have him lecture me about small business and jobs. I'm a job creator. Guys like me are job creators and we don't like having a bulls-eye painted on our back."

"The president is trying to put himself between me and my employees. By class warfare, by deprecating and calling a group that makes money 'billionaires and millionaires who don't pay their share.' I gave 120% of my salary and bonus away last year to charities, as I do most years. I can't stand the idea of being demagogued, that is put down by a president who has never created any jobs and who doesn't even understand how the economy works."

- Steve Wynn, Las Vegas-based job creator (gaming and resorts)

1. They're all Moderate in October.

2. The Latest Northstar Lie.

3. Blaine Buffonery Alert.

THEY'RE ALL MODERATE IN OCTOBER

That's what every DFLer outside of the urban core and the Iron Range is these days.

It's utterly amazing to hear them at the local candidate forum or the on the stump.

They all claim they're moderate and give just a small "kissin' your sister" smooch to the DFL agenda.

Photo ID? Well, they like photo ID, just not the one the Republicans like. What version do they like? The one that they'll research later on, once the election is over.

How about taxes? Do they support Governor Dayton's call for a job-killing tax on small business income via a fourth tier to the income tax system?

Well, they just can't say (won't say, rather). You know, we just can't take any options off the table, but we have to leave all the options open, they say.

How about the Marriage Amendment? Again, it's so gosh darn tough. They like traditional marriage and all, but there must be some way to weasel out of it all. Can we talk about something else?

And, of course, jobs. They're all about jobs and the economy but they don't have a single specific idea to create private-sector jobs, other than massive borrowing bills, more "stimulus."

Any thought to cutting taxes and regulations, the proven way to grow the private economy?

Uh, we need to research that. Have to have every option available. Did we mention we're moderate?

Take the recent debate in Senate District 49 (Edina/Bloomington) between Republican Keith Downey and Democrat Melissa Franzen.

Here's Downey's charge against Franzen:

"What I'm not hearing from my opponent, frankly, are concrete answers to whether or not she would support tax increases, the tax increases that Gov. [Mark] Dayton has proposed."

Franzen's response:

"We need to be open minded as to what solutions we need to deal with our budget and revenue issues. I think taxes should be only a last resort. Let's see what we're doing with our current taxes and current revenue coming in."

How utterly disingenuous and how very typical of a suburban DFLer.

Know this.

All of them who are elected will get to Saint Paul and will be anything but moderate.

They will vote for a host of tax increases, they will increase red tape regulations, they will be enemies of capitalism and wealth creation.

Know it.

If the DFL manages to wrest control of the House and Senate, they will team with Governor Dayton to create an agenda hostile and lethal to economic recovery.

This is a crew that honestly believes taxes don't impact jobs and wealth creation.

Many of this crew are outright hostile to capitalism and job creators.

The Watchdog has heard all the "moderate in October" promises, year after year.

They're all moderate in October.

And they're all hard core liberals in January.

Know it.

THE LATEST NORTHSTAR LIE

To be clear, Northstar commuter rail is a fraud upon the taxpayers. A \$317 million fraud. Like a rotten, rancid onion, layer after layer is peeled back to reveal even more rot and more outright falsehoods underneath.

The latest scam concerns the promises of jobs and economic development.

Throughout the Northstar debate, cheerleaders for the train claimed that it was indeed an economic development tool as much as a commuter travel option.

Frequent promises were made regarding the jobs and economic development that would follow the train.

So where are the jobs and economic development now?

How many jobs have come to Anoka County and the other counties along the line?

How much economic development can we attribute to Northstar rail?

Suddenly, the acolytes, led by Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart, have gotten a grand mal case of amnesia.

What promises?

Oh, we didn't mean COMMUTER rail. We were only referring to light rail.

You see, commuter rail is only for moving people (how's that working out?), not for economic development.

Check out Dan Erhart making this very claim during the last candidate debate right [here](#).

And there's more.

Commissioner Erhart now says that it's impossible to even measure the jobs created or the economic development caused by trains.

Witness this exchange between Harold Hamilton and Erhart on Erhart's [Facebook](#) page:

Hamilton: As predicted, you won't produce the numbers. How many jobs? How much economic development? As a taxpayers and citizen, I only ask for the numbers. Where are they?

Erhart: Harold, wouldn't it be interesting if we could pinpoint data the way you propose?

That's politician-speak for "we can't do that."

Read that again. ***The claim is that it's impossible to measure the promised economic benefits.***

Now, the Watchdog believes that's a bunch of bunk. The metrics to measure the benefit (or lack thereof) clearly exist.

The real scam here is that after years of pie-in-the-sky promises, and years of rational people debunking those promises, we now have reached a point where the advocates tell us that the promises were never made. And even if they were, we just can't possibly measure them, and thus be held accountable for the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars forked over by overburdened taxpayers.

Again, every conservative legislative candidate should feel a moral compulsion to oppose bunk like this.

Yes, we know the lobbyists, the special interests, and even the local chamber of commerce will tell you all the cool kids are doing rail.

But the record is clear. Minnesota now has a demonstrated record of rail.

And it's nothing short of abysmal.

Stand on the data. Don't fall for the pressure, the politics, or the rhetoric.

Just let the data drive the process.

The theme song for taxpayers is right [here](#).

BLAINE BUFFONERY ALERT

We've explained many times the Good Ol' Boy tactic of trying to confuse the voters with candidates who have the same or similar name to a good candidate in the area.

Not too long ago, we explained the state Rep. Peggy Scott was the good Scott while her opponent, Sam Scott, is the bad Scott in Andover.

There is a similar situation in Blaine.

There, some hunyuk named Dan Sanders is running against incumbent commissioner Robyn West.

And while West and Sanders aren't similar in name, the Good Ol' Boys are attempting to confuse and obfuscate the issue because the state Rep. in that area is none other than Tim Sanders, who is well respected for his awesomeness on behalf of the taxpayers.

Tim Sanders is the good guy.

Dan Sanders is the not-so-good guy.

Robyn West is the good lady.

Tim Sanders and Robyn West = awesomeness

Dan Sanders = Not legitimate.

Got it?

10/19/12

In This Issue:

- 1. The DFL's Augean Stables.**
- 2. A New Low.**
- 3. Letter of the Week.**

THE DFL'S AUGEAN STABLES

Ugh, it's that time of year. The time of year when the normal level of BS emanating from DFL quarters reaches extreme levels. Kind of like a 1,000 head of cattle drinking from a fountain of laxatives.

So leave it to the Watchdog to pull on the hip boots, grab a shovel, and attempt to dig us all out from under a mountain of BS.

It's especially galling to see the level of crap thrown at honorable and talented public servants like state Senator Benjamin Kruse, who has obviously been targeted by Alida Messenger's millions and the resulting screed disseminated by her winged monkeys.

And while we can't quite replicate Hercules' feat of clearing the Augean Stables, we can use the garden hose of truth to wash away some of the political feces thrown about by our bovine-like friends on the other side.

Let's take property taxes, an especially large and attractive cow pie DFLers love to hurl about this time of year.

At the start, let's be very, very clear. Property taxes (with a couple of minor exceptions) are LOCAL taxes. Local units of government control these taxes.

Since property taxes were invented, local elected officials have attempted to blame the state for these taxes, but it isn't true.

Take a look at Anoka County, where Board Chair Rhonda Sivarajah has led the board to cut county property taxes not once, but twice in the past two years. (Note to Dan Erhart: We know you voted against property tax cuts before you voted for them. You flip-flopped like a stranded walleye because Scott Schulte is on the verge of ending your 30 year Reign of Taxpayer Terror.)

The DFL meme this year is that Republicans raised property taxes on 95% of Minnesotans.

Not true.

Claim: 95 percent of homeowners saw a property tax increase in 2011.

Fact: According to the Minnesota Department of Revenue, approximately 32% of homeowners actually saw lower property taxes.

Multiple media outlets have examined this claim and found, by way of Revenue's statistics, that it simply doesn't add up. The defense offered by the Democrats shows either a fundamental misunderstanding or intentional deception regarding property taxes.

Tell the DFL this the next time they bombard you with these bogus claims. And then tell them to call the city council or county board to either thank them or give them heck as the case may be.

Again, property taxes are a local tax. Don't let the tax raisers off the hook with child-like claims that "the state made me do it!"

Another smelly turd taxpayers are finding in the mail box concerns utterly bunk claims the DFL is making that GOP legislators are harming Medicare.

The simple fact right out the gate is that state legislators can't do anything about Medicare. It's a federal program that is controlled by the federal government.

The DFL has managed to concoct a genetically-altered Super Turd that combines classic "Mediscare" tactics with a massive lie about candidates who have nothing to do with the program. In fact, some of the targets aren't even legislators! They are first-time candidates who have never cast a vote as a legislator.

Take the case of Ben Weiner, a rookie GOP candidate for the MN House.

They DFL launched a Super Turd into his district recently.

The ultra-liberal Minnesota Public Radio did a [fact check](#) on the dung and judged it to be outright FALSE.

Here's what they said, in part:

In fact, Wiener hasn't made any public statements about Medicare or federal entitlement programs in general. He says that's because "it's a federal entitlement program and not a state issue."

Aside from using tenuous evidence to support the specifics, **the DFL flier is fundamentally misleading.**

It implies that the state Legislature has control over how Medicare is administered, and Wiener would be involved in efforts to dismantle the program.

But any changes to Medicare must be made at the federal level. For instance, the Legislature couldn't make changes to Medicare Part D even if it wanted to.

The Verdict

The DFL bases its claims on the passage of two bills that have little to do with Medicare, or would require the approval of Congress for the state to act.

But even so, the ad implies that Wiener somehow has a plan to cut Medicare (he does not) and that the Minnesota Legislature has jurisdiction over the program in the first place (it does not).

This mailer jumbles so many misleading and incorrect claims **this PoliGraph test judges it false.**

Feeling desperate, are they?

A NEW LOW

What has gotten into some candidates in Anoka County this year?

The Watchdog has reported on the rash of lawn signs installed on public property, which is illegal and unethical. Moreover, public utilities have become so concerned that they have issued a warning to candidate's that many lawn signs have come close to puncturing underground utility lines, including gas pipelines.

Perhaps these candidates don't know that many utilities run via an easement down public rights of way, in order to minimize the impact on private property and offer ready access for maintenance and repair.

Or maybe they don't care.

The new low we're hearing about recently is the practice of campaigns putting up lawn signs on private property, WITHOUT the owner's permission.

The Watchdog has received multiple reports of people waking up to find political lawn signs installed in their yards. In fact, we heard one report of a guy waking up to find a large 4 foot by 8 foot sign installed in his yard.

These reports indicate that county commissioner candidates Dan Sanders and Carol LeDoux are the offenders.

But it could also be the Good Ol' Boy PAC at work as well.

You see, it can be hard to know because some candidates and campaigns are also putting up lawn signs and billboards that lack a disclaimer telling voters who prepared and paid for the sign or billboard.

This is also illegal and unethical.

The Minnesota Fair Campaign Practices Act declares:

A person who participates in the preparation or dissemination of campaign material other than as provided in section 211B.05, subdivision 1, that does not prominently include the name and address of the person or committee causing the material to be prepared or disseminated in a disclaimer substantially in the form provided in paragraph (b) or (c) is guilty of a misdemeanor.

In short, you have to tell voters you're responsible for the material, whoever you may be.

Moreover, putting up a lawn sign without permission is trespass, plain and simple.

It shows that the candidate has no respect for private property rights or respect for the very citizens they seek to represent.

A new low, indeed.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Former county attorney Bob Johnson comes out swinging against Carol LeDoux this week in a letter published in the Anoka County Union:

To the Editor:

When I was county attorney, the county board members and I felt terrible about Scott LeDoux's illness and tried to do what we could to ease his resignation. We also had a lot of sympathy for his wife, Carol. When she ran for his seat on the board, that sympathy lead to support from many of us and, I believe, from the people of Scott LeDoux's commissioner district. We were not surprised that such support lead to her election.

With the passage of time, we can now consider whether sympathy alone is a sufficient reason to elect a public official. Carol has done nothing to distinguish herself as a commissioner and seems to struggle with the responsibilities of the work. In contrast to the other commissioners, I do not believe she has brought any vision or real leadership to her district.

Having managed a budget in county government for 28 years, I know how important it is to have county commissioners who understand business

principles. I had hard decisions to make, having to balance perceived needs with available revenue. Commissioners who understand these issues and have a vision for the community can make fiscally responsible decisions and improve lives of people in the county. This experience leads me to support Scott Bromley.

Scott Bromley has the successful business experience and character to be an outstanding county commissioner. Scott Bromley has a real vision for economic development in his district and Anoka County.

He will not have to struggle, as Carol LeDoux has, to understand budgets and insist on performance. He will demand quality work at low cost as he has done in his businesses. When you measure his record against that of Ms. LeDoux, the choice to vote for Scott Bromley is easy.

Robert M.A. Johnson
Ramsey

10/26/12

In This Issue:

- 1. The State of the Races.**
- 2. Candidate Statement.**

THE STATE OF THE RACES

With less than two weeks until election day, the great question of the day centers not only on the presidential race, but every other race down ballot, including the legislature.

The Watchdog has spoken with scores of legislators, campaign staff, lobbyists, and other interested parties over the course of the past six months about the state of legislative races around Minnesota, begging the ultimate question: who controls the House and Senate come January?

Here are some of the themes that are emerging, leading to the conclusion...

A. This isn't a wave election. Unlike 2008 and 2010, there is unlikely to be a wave that favors either party. Instead, the races are shaping up to mirror the national picture, where Democrats and Republicans are coming home to support their folks across the ballot, leaving Independents to break as they will late in the race.

B. Many Seats Are Competitive. One of the great untold stories is that redistricting created a large number of competitive swing seats that can go either way depending upon which way the pendulum is swinging in a particular election.

Polling over the summer and fall has shown upwards of better than 20 races where the candidates are within a point or two of each other.

Usually, these races start to break one way or the other as we near election day. This hasn't yet happened, meaning there will likely be a nail-bitter in many seats, far more than needed to win control of the legislature, where the DFL needs 4 seats in the Senate and 6 in the House.

But it's also important to remember that the "wave" elections in 2008 and 2010 really only appeared to be waves because so many seats changed hands.

If you look at both the winning margin in many districts as well as the aggregate number of votes cast for DFL and GOP legislative candidates, you can see that there was really little difference between the parties.

In 2008, the DFL swept nearly every close race. In 2010, it was the same for the GOP.

When the deep blue seats in Minneapolis and Saint Paul and the Iron Range are excluded, the numbers show that most of Minnesota has become purple, supporting the proposition that we are a closely divided nation.

C. Why the DFL is Optimistic.

The DFLers we talk to are optimistic because, well because, they have the money. DFL Old Money interests have poured millions upon millions into the attack machinery of the Left to destroy, impugn, sully, and soil the records and the very character of legislative Republicans.

Like every election, Republicans, the alleged Party of the Wealthy, will be outspent by the DFL and allied special interest groups, like the public employee unions.

The DFL is also optimistic because it's a presidential election year and DFL turn-out is historically higher during a presidential election year.

Ugh. Big deal.

D. Why the GOP is Optimistic.

Both House and Senate GOP camps are optimistic that they will hold their majorities and here's why.

First, quality of candidates. The GOP has for two election cycles in a row managed to field high-quality candidates who have the star power and talent to overcome the torrent of negative ads coming their way.

In 2010, the public got to meet talented Republicans like Jeremy Miller, John Carlson, John Pederson, Ted Daley, Ted Lillie, Dan Fabian, Deb Kiel, Rich Murray, and King Banian, among others.

In 2012, the public has seen the considerable resumes and talents of candidates like Phil Hansen, Mike Dudley, Stacey Stout, Roz Peterson, Dale Lueck, Ben Wiener, and Travis Reimche.

These candidates give the GOP a qualitative edge that will matter in the end.

In fact, many GOP candidates are outperforming the GOP index in their districts by a huge margin.

The Watchdog won't divulge specific numbers in order to protect sources and candidates, but rest assured, our DFL sources are depressed that they haven't been able to gain traction against top GOP targets.

Okay, here's a hint. A state Rep. named "Rich M." from Albert Lea is up big in his race and will win.

And so will "Deb K." from the Red River Valley Up way, way big.

And so is "Jeremy M." from Winona, a state Senator he is.

And so much more.

The 2012 rookie class is also outstanding.

Here's a drill that explains our point. Take GOP candidate [Stacey Stout](#), running a district that leans DFL, 43A.

Look at her photo. Now look at her opponent, [Peter Fischer](#).

Who's the attractive candidate at this door? And yes, Stacy is bright, hard working, and articulate as well.

In fact, we can report that there are at least three races where the DFL appears to be asleep at the switch.

The district looks safe DFL, but polling shows the GOP candidate within close striking distance.

Plans are being drawn up to shoot a massive dose of assistance into these races in the next few days, pushing the GOP candidate over the top to steal an upset victory.

Stay tuned.

The GOP is also optimistic because of the enthusiasm gap evident in polling. The fact is that Republicans are motivated to vote this cycle, and the DFL not so much.

Yes, the presidential election will elevate DFL turnout, but not all districts are created equal.

The growing momentum for the Romney campaign may not mean a victory for Romney in Minnesota, but it may mean a few hundred extra votes for the GOP legislative candidate in a swing district.

This brings us to a third point, the Independents.

The GOP is very confident that Independents, who decide so many elections in Minnesota, will break once again in favor of Republicans, which took this group in 2010, unlike 2008.

Two factors are at work here. First, the DFL's narrative about the GOP government shutdown, school borrowing, and property taxes isn't resonating with voters.

Push polling aside, the message testing hasn't been going so well.

The budget is balanced, schools are teaching the children, and most home owners have seen property taxes go down (see Anoka County).

And no one gave a single rat crap about the shutdown. No one cared. No one. Not one soul.

Second, the presidential race is of course having an impact on legislative races. What happens at the top of the ticket will spill down ballot.

Polling shows Independents supporting Romney by double digits.

This is primarily because Obama has failed to deliver on his promises, most importantly the promise to change Washington and govern in a consensus environment.

Since the president can't run on his record, he has engaged in a slash and burn campaign in an effort to trash his opponent and make Romney unpalatable.

Juvenile antics like referring to "Romnesia" and calling Romney a "bullshitter" might make the DFL faithful feel good, but it does nothing but alienate Independents, who are turned off by partisan bickering and the rancor of gutter politics.

What Obama is doing in Minnesota is ginning up Democrats at the expense of Independents, which will haunt the DFL's efforts to gain a majority.

DFL candidates in Minneapolis might get 80% instead of 75%, but Independents will cast votes for the GOP in the suburbs and exurbs, where those votes are critical.

Finally, People vote, not dollars.

If money was sole determining factor in elections, the DFL would be way ahead year after year.

Money matters, but so many other factors come into play.

We give the edge to the GOP in this battle.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Dave Morrell is running for city council in Blaine. He submits the following for your consideration:

My name is Dave Morrell. My family and I have been Blaine residents since 2002 and Anoka County since 1993. In September, I celebrated 20 years of marriage with my wife Roxanne. We are raising three children ages 7, 12 and 14 who attend Spring Lake Park Public schools.

I'm challenging incumbent council member Mike Bourke for the Ward 2 seat on the Blaine City Council. This is the same Mike Bourke that challenged and lost to Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West in 2010.

Why am I running for City Council?

I'm a 20-year veteran of the private sector with experience in the areas of project management, functional management, business analytics and finance. I also understand residential real estate markets from my years as a real estate broker from 2001 to 2011. Presently, I work at Medtronic, in R&D, as a program analyst where I am responsible for managing schedule and budget for new medical device programs.

Blaine is facing its second consecutive year of budget deficits. These deficits have been in the range of 2-4% of the annual operating budget. Although the Council has so far voted to hold the tax levy constant, several members favor increasing the levy and therefore property taxes. The compromise in solving the budget deficits has been a policy of borrowing from budget reserves. In my view, this is a clear indication the Council is out of touch with the economy and with the difficult decisions families have been making for the past 5 years. I support cutting spending to solve these short term financial problems.

Long term, we have to break the dependency Blaine has on residential development to fund local government costs. This will require a focus on business development/redevelopment. By developing and implementing a real plan for business development, we will solve future budget problems. More importantly, we'll diversify the taxbase, encourage jobs growth and in the end bolster Blaine's economy for the future. By containing government, we may even be in a position to lower taxes!

However, none of this will happen without new leadership. The voters have to decide what kind of leadership they desire: a status quo Council relying on almost a century of collective elected experience or two newcomers who will provide fresh leadership by leveraging diverse private-sector experience, a fiduciary focus and vision for the future. Those two newcomers are Myself and Jason Babler who is running in Blaine's 1st Ward against Dick Swanson.

Unlike my opponent and his colleagues on the City Council, I am not hiding from what I believe in. Please visit my website www.DaveMorrell.com to

learn about my positions on the issues as well as my vision for the future of Blaine. I encourage you to watch the video cuts of my interview with North Metro TV. This was supposed to be a debate but Councilmember Bourke didn't show-up nor did he call to cancel. If you like what you see, please share my message with your network of friends, colleagues and most importantly 2nd Ward voters in Blaine.

11/2/12

In This Issue:

- 1. ELECTION SPECIAL!**
- 2. ERHART ON THE ETHICS HOT SEAT**

ELECTION SPECIAL!

Editor's Note: This is it, Watchdogs. The last edition before Election Day 2012. This is perhaps the most important election of the past 50 years. The nation is indeed standing at a crossroads. As some have said, we have already passed the fork in the road and are heading down the wrong path. This election is the last chance to jump over to the correct path or consign ourselves and our posterity to European-style economic misery.

As is our tradition, we will not engage in lengthy commentary this week. The time for talking is over. It's time to vote.

Below are resources to help you get to the polls next Tuesday and cast your vote.

The candidates noted below are known to the Watchdog as candidates who have stated through their votes, campaign literature, and other public pronouncements that they value individual liberty, smaller government, and free markets, just like you.

In the interest of space, we are leaving federal offices aside.

"With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

See you at the polls!

Where Do I Vote?

Check out the Secretary of State's [Pollfinder](#).

Voter Education Resources.

Taxpayer's League of Minnesota [scorecards](#).

Legislative Evaluation Assembly [scorecards](#).

NFIB 2011-2012 [scorecard](#).

Candidate Resources

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE

Lorie [Gildea](#).

Dan [Griffith](#).

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT ASSOCIATE JUSTICE (seat 1)
Barry [Anderson](#).

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT ASSOCIATE JUSTICE (seat 4)
David [Stras](#).
Tim [Tingelstad](#).

MINNESOTA STATE SENATE
Michelle [Benson](#) (District 31)
Branden [Petersen](#) (District 35)
Benjamin [Kruse](#) (District 36)
Pam [Wolf](#) (District 37)
Gina [Bauman](#) (District 41)

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Kurt [Daudt](#) (District 31A)
Tom Hackbarth (District 31B)
Peggy [Scott](#) (District 35B)
Andrew [Reinhardt](#) (District 36B)
Mandy [Benz](#) (District 37A)
TIM [Sanders](#) (District 37B)
Dale [Helm](#) (District 41A)
Laura [Palmer](#) (District 41B)
Tim [Utz](#) (District 41B)

ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Matt [Look](#) (District 1)
Andy [Westerberg](#) (District 2)
Julie [Braastad](#) (District 2)
Robyn [West](#) (District 3)
Rhonda [Sivarajah](#) (District 6)
Scott [Schulte](#) (District 7)

ANDOVER CITY COUNCIL
Tony [Howard](#)
Sheri [Bukkila](#)

BLAINE CITY COUNCIL
Dave [Morrell](#) (Ward 2)
Jason [Babler](#) (Ward 1)

COON RAPIDS CITY COUNCIL
Steve [Wells](#) (At large)
Chad [Newman](#) (Ward 1)
Ken [Boelter](#) (Ward 2)

FRIDLEY CITY COUNCIL
Rick Wolfe (At large)

HAM LAKE CITY COUNCIL
Tom Johnson
Gary Krikeide

ERHART ON THE ETHICS HOT SEAT

Jay Kolls over at KSTP reports that Commissioner Erhart has failed to disclose a key business relationship to the Anoka County board for some time. Erhart is part owner of a company called White River Partners. Erhart's business partner at White River Partners also happens to be a partner at a well known investment firm. Yes, Erhart has voted many times as a commissioner to give Anoka County work to this business. And yes, Erhart has never disclosed this business relationship.

Erhart defends himself by saying that he did not think it was a conflict of interest because his business, White River Partners, did not benefit. Apparently no comment about his business partner benefiting.

Read more [here](#).

11/9/12

In This Issue:

SPECIAL "VAC" EDITION (VICTORY in ANOKA COUNTY)

1. Victory!

VICTORY!

Editor's Note: This edition is focused strictly on the historic, rad, awesome victories on the Anoka County Board.

A detailed examination of the debacle that was the federal and legislative elections can be found on the pages of our sister publication, [the Minnesota Watchdog](#).

Watchdogs, a day of historic proportions was experienced Tuesday night as the nemesis of Anoka County taxpayers, Commissioner Dan Erhart, was defeated.

In the interest of full disclosure, Harold Hamilton readily and happily acknowledges his role in helping Erhart's transition to involuntary retirement. Said Hamilton, "It was pretty damn sweet!"

The day Watchdogs have been waiting for these last 7 and a half years was realized. Dan Erhart is done. Toast. Finished. Done. Over.

In a many respects, this is Anoka County's Berlin Wall moment. It's the moment when the old guard came crashing down in spectacular fashion, ushering in a completely new and more transparent way conducting county business.

While it took some time, the county board has completely transitioned to a taxpayer-centered model that will serve citizens well for at least the next two years.

There are now 5 bona fide, authentic conservatives on the county board, giving the good guys a 5-2 edge.

In many respects, this campaign was a major battle between the forces of Good and Evil for control of the county board.

With 6 of 7 seats up for grabs, both sides realized that this was the definitive battle for control of the county.

For the good guys, it was like the Battle of Midway.

For Erhart and company, it was more like Waterloo.

The good guys went 5 for 5, with one seat being a non-factor with two poor candidates who did very little to excite conservatives.

For the time being, the county board is in excellent hands and new day has dawned in Anoka County.

We won!

And did we mention Erhart is gone?

GOOD BYE!

DISTRICT 1

Conservative Matt Look prevailed in convincing fashion, despite being the target of a slimly negative campaign from the Erhart PAC, run by the Good Ol' Boys.

They threw everything they had at Look and he prevailed.

Congratulations to Commissioner Look. One of the good guys.

DISTRICT 2

This race featured two Republican candidates in Andy Westerberg and Julie Braastad.

And while both would have served the county well, it is undeniable that Braastad will be a more conservative voice on the board.

Most importantly, she will stand firm against the rail mania that gripped the county for too long.

Westerberg certainly helped create a conservative voting bloc, but his support of Northstar being extended to Saint Cloud was troubling to say the least.

Braastad will never support that.

Moreover, there were times when Westerberg leveraged his status as a swing vote, causing consternation for Sivarajah, West, and Look.

Braastad will be a rock solid vote in favor of the taxpayer. Count on it.

As for Westerberg, we sincerely thank him for his service. He supported some very good public policy, including reducing the property tax levy.

Andy did a very good job for the taxpayers.

But now it's time for Braastad to assume her place on the board.

We know she will do a great job.

DISTRICT 3

This is another district where the Good Ol' Boys slithered into the gutter to attack an honorable incumbent in Robyn West, a reliable ally for Chairwoman Sivarajah.

In classic Good Ol' Boy fashion, they ran a candidate with a name similar to a popular politician in a cynical attempt to confuse voters.

The ploy didn't work and West won by a substantial margin.

We congratulate West and admire her rock steady conservative hand on the wheel of county government.

Way to go, Robyn!

DISTRICT 4

Good Ol' Boy Jim Kordiak was the only commissioner not on the ballot. He has now been rendered irrelevant by Tuesday's results.

DISTRICT 5

Scott's wife won re-election, beating Scott Bromley rather easily in a race that did nothing to inspire Watchdogs.

Perhaps the most asinine moment of the campaign was Scott's Wife's endorsement of the stiff running against Erik Paulsen.

She endorsed the guy and he got smoked. Case closed.

The endorsement was likely some quid pro quo with the unions.

Like we said above, no big deal.

It's mind over matter. We don't mind this race because it doesn't matter.

DISTRICT 6

The Iron Lady was easily re-elected in a race that was never in doubt. Rhonda Sivarajah led wire to wire and finished strong.

She will very likely be board chair once again, and deservedly so.

DISTRICT 7

Did we mention that Dan Erhart lost?

Yes, but we have yet to congratulate Scott Schulte.

The race wasn't just about Erhart losing.

Scott Schulte will be an excellent commissioner. He is a small business owner with experience on the Coon Rapids city council.

Schulte will serve his district well by drawing on his considerable experience and talents.

Congratulations, Scott!

In local races, Coon Rapids taxpayers dodged a bullet when Roger Johnson lost his city council bid.

Johnson is now 0 for 95 in his quest to be elected and force others to listen to his endless blathering about the merits of liberal policy and the talents he boasts and like to boast about.

Hey, Roger. A bit of advice. It's time to leave the stage. The citizens have voted you off the political island. It's getting embarrassing. You're starting to look like Mike Starr.

We also congratulate Tony Howard and Sheri Bakkila in Andover, where taxpayers dodged their own bullet with Val Holthus, a hard core liberal in moderate clothing.

At the legislative level, many of our peeps like Peggy Scott, Michelle Benson, Tim Sanders, and newcomer Mark Uglem found success.

Unfortunately, some very talented public servants were not returned to the legislature.

We thank Pam Wolf and Benjamin Kruse for their selfless and inspirational leadership in the state Senate. The state is worse off without their service.

John Hoffman and Alice Johnson will no doubt prove themselves to be cookie-cutter tax and spenders who will do the bidding of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul and Iron Range DFL leadership.

A rubber stamp for Mark Dayton as well.

In any case, whoop it up Watchdogs. Dan Erhart and his reign of taxpayers abuse are finished.

11/16/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Ramsey Behind Enemy Lines.**
- 2. Ramsey Station Isn't a Surprise.**
- 3. New Leaders, and Local Ones at That!**
- 4. Clarification.**
- 5. Status Quo Ante.**

RAMSEY BEHIND ENEMY LINES

In the aftermath of an election that saw historic gains for Watchdogs at the local level across Anoka County, there were some setbacks.

The biggest setback undoubtedly took place in Ramsey, a city beset by political dysfunction, ethical issues, legal issues, and a modern day Potemkin Village known as Ramsey Town Center, AKA the Center of Ramsey. New name, same old problems.

By all appearances, the faction that took over the city council was well-organized and well-funded, in large part by the Good Ol' Boys PAC, which can now meet in a phone booth after the drubbing they took in other areas.

After the election, a number of folks on the losing side privately complained to the Watchdog that this publication didn't do enough to shine a light on Ramsey.

We beg to differ, but there are some lessons learned here.

Since its inception, the Anoka County Watchdog has always encouraged readers to be proactive.

The folks who complained never once sent the Watchdog documentation to support either their cause or their candidacy. It is the policy of this publication to publish statements of candidacy from any serious candidate, regardless of ideology.

The lesson is an ancient one: light a candle; don't curse the darkness.

Moreover, while the Watchdog is interested in publishing the information we receive from readers, we will not publish salacious, unsubstantiated rumors.

For example, we have anonymous emails claiming "councilmember XYZ is a child molester."

Folks, we need some supporting evidence. You don't need to be Woodward and Bernstein, but we will not move forward with unsupported claims, especially claims involving personal conduct.

Again, the Watchdog renews its long-standing offer to receive information you would like to see published.

RAMSEY STATION ISN'T A SURPRISE

Welcome to the party, all of you who are now concerned about the Ramsey stop for Northstar rail.

This week, the Star Tribune finally showed some life and ran an article highlighting what we already know: this station is the latest manifestation of rearranging the deck chairs on rail's version of the Titanic.

Overall, it's important to understand one key point. The Ramsey station isn't about commuter rail or building ridership. It's about bailing out the Town Center Project.

The station is a \$13 million shiny object designed to lure tenants to the Town Center. It's designed to bring in yet another apartment project, gas station, or White Castle.

From a rail perspective, it's a loser for a loser rail project.

Commuter rail is based on time and speed. A key policy rational underlying commuter rail is competition with the auto.

Commuter rail needs to offer a faster ride than a car.

Therefore, limiting the number of stops is critical, and a reason the feds wouldn't fund a station in Fridley.

Now we have not only a station in Fridley (just miles from downtown Minneapolis. Is it any wonder the Fridley station has the lowest ridership of all the stations?), we now have yet another station that is 4 miles from one station and 6 miles from another.

Northstar is a 41-mile rail line that is now weighed down with seven stations. That's a station roughly every six miles!

Moreover, the Watchdog would love to see the methodology underpinning the new ridership projections.

We're highly skeptical that these "new" riders will really be new.

It's likely many will simply be poached from either the Elk River or Anoka stations.

It's also likely many will be refugees from the highly popular Northstar commuter bus service that was discontinued in order to force riders who prefer transit on to the train, at a higher cost for everyone involved.

But again, just remember that this station isn't about rail.

NEW LEADERS, AND LOCAL ONES AT THAT!

While it's important to continue a rational, sober, self-examination of the causes that led to the GOP's drubbing at the polls, we must look forward and prepare for the future.

In many respects, the 2012 election is history and looking forward, not backward, is the important thing.

The Watchdog wants to congratulate two local products, state Rep. Kurt Daudt and state Senator Michelle Benson on their election to leadership positions within their respective caucuses.

Daudt will take the helm of the House GOP caucus as the minority leader while Benson will help Sen. David Hann lead the GOP in the Senate as an assistant minority leader.

These two will do a great job and we congratulate them!

Do Anoka County proud!

CLARIFICATION

In our post-election analysis, we noted that some GOP candidates didn't run very good campaigns.

Some readers have extrapolated the conclusion that we believe the GOP ran bad candidates.

That's simply not true.

The vast majority of GOP legislative candidates, win or lose, were great candidates who ran excellent campaigns.

In fact, 2010 and 2012 were two of the best cycles with respect to candidate quality.

Having said that, there were some candidates who didn't run good campaigns. They didn't engage in the critical, necessary basics needed to win, such as fundraising and door knocking.

While these candidates boasted great resumes, the work ethic just wasn't there.

Hey, these things happen every cycle. It's just a bit more galling when we lose winnable seats in large part because the basics necessary for victory just weren't there.

STATUS QUO ANTE

It's curious to see the president claiming a mandate to jack up taxes because he got re-elected.

The same holds true for Senate Democrats. "We won, so we get our way."

Really? So the same must be true for Speaker Boehner and the House Republicans, who maintained their majority.

After all the money, the ads, and the campaign, we are back at the start, with essentially the same government as before.

There is no mandate whatsoever for this president.

Republicans must hold firm and not cave!

The fiscal cliff, the debt ceiling, funding Obamacare. If the GOP caves, they will invite untold trouble.

Many Republicans stayed home this election, and many more will if they perceive there is no reason to back Republicans. "GOP lite" is not a recipe for success.

Moreover, half the country supports our ideas.

We're as divided as ever. There's absolutely no reason to cave at this point.

Yes, if reasonable deals can be reached that honor our values, that's fine.

Merely being obstructionist isn't a formula for success, either.

But if it's merely giving in to this president and Harry Reid, forget it.

11/23/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Hey, Watchdogs. Happy Thanksgiving! Yes, we're a day late, but that's the publication schedule. Harold Hamilton wishes you and yours the very best as we reflect upon the freedoms and blessings we enjoy. Charity begins at home and doesn't involve government. Please consider supporting the charity of your choice this holiday season. Goodness knows the government over the past four years has made us poorer and less prosperous.

- 1. Those Feckless Democrats.**
- 2. Twinkies Teach Economics.**
- 3. We Need to Stop Complaining.**

THOSE FECKLESS DEMOCRATS

Well, negotiations over the "fiscal cliff" haven't exactly proven to be an exercise in Profiles in Courage for the president and Senate Democrats, led by Harry Reid, who reminds the Watchdog staff of every kid who suffered wedgies and swirlies in grade school. The kind of kid who always mouthed off - when he was far enough away to make a successful escape or close enough to hide under the teacher's skirt.

In any case, it's hard to believe the Democrats could be so feckless and so reckless as to take entitlement programs off the table in negotiations.

Both Reid and Sen. Chuck Schumer have gotten in touch with the Socialist wing of the Democrat party to join Bernie Sanders of Vermont in announcing that they plan to do the irresponsible thing.

First, America is \$16 trillion in debt and nearly bankrupt because of entitlement spending, not because tax rates are too low.

There is no way that this country's fiscal mess can be solved (in an honest fashion) without implementing reforms with respect to every major entitlement program.

If the federal government imposed the highest income tax rate in world on our millionaires, it wouldn't come close to closing the deficit gap or making a meaningful reduction in the staggering national debt.

In short, any meaningful plan to put the country on a path to fiscal solvency includes real entitlement reform.

The Watchdog has every belief that Democrats won't agree to any real reforms and will instead go for the old bait and switch tactic, which means taking tax increases now while pushing entitlement reform off to some future date.

If Republicans agree to such a deal, the party will have lost all credibility with the public.

Second, Democrats have demagogued entitlement programs to the hilt, telling voters that they alone care about protecting, preserving, and expanding these programs.

Yet these programs are either bankrupt or on a path to bankruptcy.

They simply cannot be protected and available for future generations without reforms that limit eligibility and/or benefit sets. It's a fact.

Moreover, the fiscal cliff will produce tax increases and benefit cuts that will hit Democrat constituencies hard.

For example, an analysis by the Wall Street Journal shows that for a family of four making \$30,000 per year, they will see a \$1,400 tax increase because of the cliff.

Federal employees will also see layoffs and reductions.

For a party that claims to be for the workin' man and government employees, the stakes are high.

Republicans need to leverage Democrats on this issue and push them to accept a meaningful agreement.

It's an open question as to whether voters will see this fundamental truth through the smokescreen of rhetoric and obfuscation offered by Democrats and amplified by their co-conspirators in the Legacy Media.

The bottom line is that entitlement programs have to be on the table and the subject of negotiations.

If not, there is no use in sitting down to negotiate.

The Watchdog predicts that Washington, at least in the short run, will do what Washington always does and kick the can down the road.

The parties will agree to some type of deal that delays the implementation of the cliff for 6 months or a year.

Which will then push the House and a third of the Senate into an election-year mentality, meaning that nothing will be done until "after the elections."

We hate to sound cynical, but we've seen this movie before - on too many occasions.

So what's the solution? Pointing out problems isn't enough.

The public policy underpinning any deal will involve three critical aspects:

1. Grow the economy. We can shrink the deficit and debt by growing the economy. The first principle is to do no harm. But beyond that, government policies must encourage growth and not punish wealth creation or productivity.

This is why tax increases are so harmful. Capital gains taxes, death taxes, and income tax increases that hit pass through small businesses hamper wealth creation.

The federal government needs to stop with tax policies that hit productivity and investment.

Liberals need to remember that a healthy, vibrant private economy is what funds government.

2. Reform entitlements. The fact of the matter is that federal spending is out of control. Federal spending as a percentage of GDP has averaged 24% each fiscal year under Obama.

Historically, the post World War II era has seen the federal government spend anywhere from 16 to 20% of GDP.

Reforming entitlements and federal programs in general to put the federal government back on a trajectory to spend less than 20% of GDP on programs is a necessary and critical component.

3. Bring in more revenue. Yes, the Watchdog hates to say this and we don't support it, but this leg of stool is necessary to get any kind of deal. It's time to be honest about there being no willingness in Washington to go with cuts and reforms only. It just isn't going to happen.

Having said that, we're talking about more revenue but not tax increases. Both sides have been willing to talk about eliminating tax deductions and credits in order increase revenue.

The Watchdog agrees with the policy of eliminating many credits and deductions, which produce the harmful effect of distorting markets and really amount to nothing more than government picking winners and losers.

But the Watchdog would cut taxes in revenue neutral manner with the new revenue.

Since that is a pipe dream at this point, it is the least harmful way to give Democrats and even some Republicans what they want.

Still, we're skeptical that Democrats would even accept that kind of deal. In any case, it's time to get serious about governing. Kicking this fiscal time bomb down the road while we borrow trillions from the Chinese is eroding our sovereignty, eroding our collective morale, and eroding our preeminent position in the global economy.

Speaker Boehner should grasp the mantle of leadership and offer a deal within this strategic framework and put the ball squarely in Obama's court. Make him go up against his base and do the work of getting his camp in line.

For once, let's put the onus on the other side to say no. Let them be the unreasonable ones.

The situation is dire. It's time to get down to business on this deficit and the national debt.

TWINKIES TEACH ECONOMICS

There's been no shortage of hand wringing and near panic over the prospect of Hostess Brands liquidating in bankruptcy.

Besides a lesson for labor unions in the hard reality of economics, specifically a lesson on the profit motive and the need for labor deployment flexibility, there is a lesson to be learned here regarding the resiliency and dynamic aspects of capitalism, which will accrue to the collective economic benefit of society, despite claims of "vulture capitalism," and "Bain-style management" from unions who doth protest too much.

Presuming a liquidation occurs, here's what will happen.

The most critical factor here is that this is a liquidation of assets, and not a sale of an ongoing business concern.

This is a legal distinction, but an important one. In a liquidation, assets are purchased but none of the obligations or debts of the former owner transfer to the buyer.

This means that the market can carefully assess what Hostess is selling and buy the productive assets while shedding the unproductive assets.

For example, we know there is demand for Twinkies. Someone will buy the rights to manufacture and sell Twinkies brand snack cakes.

What that buyer will NOT acquire is a labor union with out of market wages and benefits combined with arcane and expensive work rules.

In short, the economy will see the productive assets re-deployed while the unproductive assets will go un-purchased, for either the short or long term.

This is a critical feature of a capitalist economy. All assets are limited. Therefore, it is critical that these assets be put to their highest and best use. It is key that assets efficiently deployed continue while inefficient assets go away or be turned into productive assets.

The factories and brands and employees that are efficient will be put back to work.

This is the way it has to be. If not, we would still employ the makers of the Beta Max, we would all still use Netscape, and we would cook with lard.

The creative destruction of capitalism allows for the dynamic redeployment of scarce assets to facilitate wealth creation and innovation, which makes us all better off.

And let's not fear for the Bakers union that killed Hostess.

The skilled bakers who comprise that union will find their way back into the labor force, either employed in a successor to Hostess (likely without this union, or perhaps any union).

It may be a hard lesson, but that union and the Teamsters had work rules and other terms and conditions of employment that were out of the market. The market wouldn't support their current wages and conditions of employment.

Again, resources are limited. You can't pay a forklift driver \$70 per hour with benefits and get away with it.

The alternative is communism. If you think that's a path to prosperity, ask people in North Korea what they're eating for dinner tonight.

WE NEED TO STOP COMPLAINING

Okay, folks. We need to stop complaining about what happened on November 6th.

Specifically, we're referring to the photo ID folks who are looking to place blame for the spectacular flame out that caused the amendment to go down.

The latest complaint centers on all the money photo ID opponents spent.

Excuse us, but were you surprised? You don't have to be Karl Rove to have anticipated that liberal special interests and labor unions were going to spend millions to defeat the amendment.

To complain about that fact is unproductive and weak.

We all knew big money would flow in against the amendment. To act surprised and outraged by this circumstance is weak.

That this certainty wasn't addressed or part of the campaign plan to pass the amendment speaks volumes about those who prosecuted it.

Patton was prepared to counter Rommel's tactics at El Guettar.

Bill Parcells found a way to defend the West Coast offense.

The modern NHL beat the neutral zone trap.

Anticipating your opponent's plan and devising a way to counter it is mandatory in politics.

The photo ID people didn't do it, even though they had the initiative in deciding when to launch this issue.

Look, we don't want to rag this issue, but it's getting old to read of the all the whining and complaining about the opposition regarding photo ID.

The opposition came at the issue in exactly the manner in which any person who follows politics could have predicted.

Admit defeat and move to a different line of work, folks.

The Watchdog will be joining other conservatives in adapting and tweaking our strategic plans to prosecute a better strategic plan for tomorrow, 2014, and beyond.

11/30/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Anoka County Bucks the Trend.**
- 2. Speaking of 2014...**
- 3. The Last Gasp?**
- 4. Do They Ever Go Away?**

ANOKA COUNTY BUCKS THE TREND

Greetings, Watchdogs. It's a great day to live in Anoka County. Many conservatives around the state are calling and emailing into Watchdog HQ and the spacious, well-appointed office of Watchdog CEO Harold Hamilton to ask us how we did it. And by "we," that's a collective "we."

How did we manage to make Anoka County more conservative on election night and buck the state-wide trend? How did we manage to make this county the envy of so many other jurisdictions, who must now contend with the specter of tax and spend liberalism?

The simple answer is that the formula for success isn't real complex but it's incredibly labor-intensive.

The ingredients for success aren't many, but are critical and again, require a lot of dedication and a lot of hard work on the part of many people.

First, you need accountability. The Anoka County Watchdog is about to enter its 8th year of informing the electorate about what's happening in Anoka County.

Our labor of love here at the Watchdog has included hundreds of email updates, thousands of Morning Blotter reports, and untold hours of research, writing and sleuthing.

We have let readers know which politicians have their interests at heart and which ones are really Big Government advocates who merely masquerade as conservatives. Sadly, there have been many in Anoka County throughout the years, some of them massive fraudsters who were finally exposed and sent on their way. And some have yet to be put out to pasture but soon will be.

Next, you need talented, intelligent, hard-working patriots who are willing to step up in the name of public service and do the hard work to get elected and turn conservative principles into public policy.

At the risk of missing names, folks like Rhonda Sivarajah, Julie Braastad, Robyn West, Matt Look, Scott Schulte, Michelle Benson, Peggy Scott, Branden Petersen, Tim Sanders, and numerous patriots at the city council level (Donna Schmitt, Gary Kirkeide, Tom Johnson, Sheri Bakkila, Tony Howard etc.) have led the county into a new era of low taxes, low regulation, and less government that will prove to be exceptionally attractive to job creators.

The Watchdog recently spoke with a local elected official from another Metro county who marveled at where Anoka County is headed. This person feared for his own county, noting that Anoka County was moving into position to wipe the mat with his county in an economic sense. It was obvious this elected official was filled with a sense of admiration for Anoka County and a strong fear for his own.

Finally, and most importantly, the Watchdogs and these candidates tapped into a strong vein of citizens who were not only fed up with the status quo, they were willing to do something about it. They were willing to invest their time and talents into getting involved and making a difference. They attended meetings, made phone calls, dropped literature, marched in parades, and made sure the word was spread.

Watchdogs now have to protect what has been gained. While the Good Ol' Boys are on the run, they are plotting a comeback, to be sure.

Don't forget that redistricting in Anoka County has put Scott Schulte up for re-election again in 2014. Schulte is a giant killer who will be known in Anoka County lore as the man who liberated us from Dan Erhart.

That means Schulte will have a target on his back. For that reason, we must have his back. Today is not too soon to ask Scott Schulte what you can do to make him successful both as a commissioner and as a candidate.

But there will be opportunities as well in 2014. Carol LeDoux and Jim Kordiak will also be up for re-election, offering Watchdogs the opportunity to replace both of them with commissioners who will join the majority in putting taxpayers first.

The hard work never ends, friends.

"You don't get something for nothing. You can't have your freedom for free. And you'll never get wise with the sleep still in your eyes, not matter what your dreams might be."
-Geddy Lee

SPEAKING OF 2014...

The Watchdog can report that plenty of behind-the-scenes jockeying is already taking place in Anoka County District 5, where Scott's Wife just won re-election over a flawed opponent.

Rumors continue to swirl that Scott's Wife will not seek re-election in 2014, causing some potential candidates to quietly begin to build campaigns.

But don't think being rid of Scott's Wife would be an automatic gain for the taxpayers. There are potential candidates who would not be a gain for the county board.

Among the rumored candidates, Andover Mayor Mike Gamache would fall under that banner. A DFLer who has been hiding under the blankie of non-partisan office, Gamache would not be a part of the conservative majority on the board.

For example, Gamache proudly brags of being the driving force behind Andover adopting "prevailing wage" ordinances that drive up the cost of city-funded projects and is a holy grail of sorts for Big Labor organizations like the AFL-CIO that have seen their influence in Anoka County on the wane with people like Dick Lang, Dan Erhart, and Dennis Berg no longer running the show.

No matter what the situation, expect this district to be a hotly contested race in 2014.

THE LAST GASP?

Hopefully, we've heard the last of Dan Erhart, with his swansong puff piece appearing in the Star Tribune this week, courtesy of staff "journalist" Paul Levy, a cheerleader for Erhart who dispensed with any appearance of objectivity long, long ago.

The piece was utterly devoid of any quotes or observations from Erhart's numerous critics. Of course, there were plenty of fawning quotes from the usual obsequious suspects, chief among them Steve Novak, who is doing what he can to spin history in favor of the Good Ol' Boys, seeing as he so faithfully served them for so many years.

You would think by reading the article that Dan Erhart was the George Washington of Anoka County.

Even worse, Levy gave these controversial and biased folks license to take shots at their critics without any of the aforementioned opportunities to respond.

For example, there was talk of Erhart's blatant lack of respect for a duly elected colleague, Matt Look. Look probably couldn't care less about what Erhart thinks, but maybe you could have given him the opportunity to respond, Mr. Levy?

And, of course, Erhart had to throw in the obligatory shot at folks like the Watchdog, putting out the same shop-worn bromide about us being "dishonest."

For years, the Watchdog has challenged Erhart and Novak to document our dishonesty. It never happened.

The best they could do was a media interview where Novak decried the "tone" of our reporting.

What a joke. Good riddance to both of you. We at the Watchdog have no regrets - none - about exposing these two.

And trust us, Dan, there was a lot of information we were given that we decided not to publish because we could not verify it. If even half of what went unpublished is true...

Let us hope that this unpleasantness is behind us.

But...

DO THEY EVER GO AWAY?

As we wrote the above item, the hotline starting ringing, with word that already Erhart's buddies are pushing him to be on the government payroll.

We heard from multiple sources that Erhart's name is being floated to help push the Northern Lights Express train down at the Capitol.

We also hear from sources that Steve Novak's name is also being pushed in various quarters, because he served as a DFL Senator back when polyester was considered fashion and words like "groovy" meant something.

Ugh.

12/7/12

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog pauses today to recall the service, courage and sacrifice of those stationed at Pearl Harbor on that Day of Infamy.

Editor's Note II: Last week, we named conservative heroes representing Anoka County and specifically noted that we risked missing names. We missed one. Rep. Tom Hackbarth has ably served the taxpayers of this county for many years. Tom will have his hands full this coming session, but the Anoka County delegation will benefit from his leadership.

- 1. Beware "Tax Reform."**
- 2. Quick Bits.**

BEWARE "TAX REFORM."

Ugh. It looks like one of the top agenda items for the newly-minted DFL Juggernaut will be what is labeled "tax reform."

At the outset, note that the rationale for examining and revamping the tax system is all about the government budget.

The talk is all centered on making the government budget more stable; it's all about making the government budget more predictable; and, of course, it's all about getting more money in the door to make government bigger.

It looks like the Juggernaut is intent on going in exactly the wrong direction on all three legs of the Minnesota tax stool (property taxes, income taxes, and sales taxes).

Let's start with the property tax. The Juggernaut has co-opted friendly and reassuring labels about "buying down" property taxes and making government "less reliant" on property taxes.

What this really means is that the state is looking for ways to ship more money down to local units of government to spend as they see fit. PERHAPS there will be some buy down of property taxes, but there may also be some spending increases (and perhaps big ones at that).

This is because the property tax is a LOCAL tax, levied by independently-elected politicians. In short, these folks decide how the money gets spent. There are a couple of state-imposed property taxes (commercial/industrial and recreational property), but the vast majority of property taxes are local in nature.

Money is filtered down to LUGs (local units of government) through a variety of means, but when it comes to property taxes, the primary means is local government aid (LGA) and other programs like the market value homestead credit (MVHC).

These programs are horrible public policy for a number of reasons.

First, they harm accountability by decoupling the taxing authority from the spending authority. The state taxes the money and then the LUG gets to spend it.

It is human nature to be less responsible with someone else's money than with your own.

Second, these programs lack meaningful transparency. All too often, local elected officials raise property taxes or undertake other unpopular measures and then turn around and blame the state for "cutting" aid programs.

Taxpayers have great difficulty in separating fact from fiction. Property taxes are difficult enough to understand without also getting a graduate degree in LGA MVHC, the Green Acres program, the "circuit breaker," and the myriad other programs that allow LUGs to spew acronyms and evade accountability through a decidedly opaque property tax system.

Third, these programs often don't do what they're supposed to do - reduce property taxes. Again, the decision lies in the hands of local officials. The state can try all sorts of means to control the aid (e.g. levy limits and restrictions on spending). But these measures are ineffective because local governments find loopholes and other ways to raise and spend money.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, LGA and other programs discourage needed reforms and innovations at the local level.

As we all know, organizations often delay or defer needed reforms until a financial crisis hits. The crisis forces the tough decisions.

Think of LGA as a form of welfare for cities.

It's money that is specifically designated to help cities that are deemed unable to help themselves.

Yet, unlike welfare for people, LGA comes with no real strings attached. There is no time limit, no requirement to cut spending or reform the local budget, and no requirement to do anything to reduce reliance on LGA.

In fact, much like the welfare programs of old, there is a perverse incentive, a moral hazard, to do nothing, as reforms jeopardize the amount of LGA coming in.

Cities that take LGA (and lots of it), for example own golf courses, swimming pools, community centers, and there is even a city that owns a green house as well as one that owns a movie theater (Netflix, anyone?).

Isn't that like someone on welfare owning a Porsche or having a membership at a country club?

Where is the similar outrage? Where are the restrictions and requirements?

The simple fact is that many legislators, DFL and GOP, are afraid of local elected officials and their lobbying arms that roam the Capitol.

In short, it's both a form of political self-preservation (I'm afraid mayor so and so will run against me!) and bringing home the bacon (I can't wait to show up for the ribbon cutting for the new drinking fountains at the municipal green house!).

Minnesota has 87 counties and 853 cities. There is really no logical basis for their boundaries, which were often formed many, many years ago in an era far different from what society looks like today.

State aid programs stifle needed reforms, mergers, and yes, dissolutions by staving off tough decisions driven by fiscal woes.

Yes, some LUGs take responsibility and have merged services with adjoining jurisdictions. And, yes, some have lowered property taxes. But this is the exception and not the rule.

If these aid programs had requirements similar to welfare for people, it would do more to drive innovation, reform, and efficiency at the local level.

Regardless, these programs should come with strings attached regarding time limits and budget reforms.

If the Juggernaut jacks up local aid programs, it's a moral imperative.

Now let's undertake an examination of sales tax "reform" proposals.

These reforms have centered on expanding the sales tax and, hopefully, reducing the rate. But rest assured, government will not see any reduction in revenues.

Last week, the Watchdog spilled some ink explaining how sales taxes are regressive and, therefore, contrary to the Juggernaut's stated intent to make taxes more PROgressive and rich soaking.

Think about what happens when the sales tax is expanded.

When a family goes to Wal Mart to buy underwear or a winter coat for the kids, government will get a cut.

When a new mom goes to buy diapers or baby formula, government will tax it.

Food could be taxed as well. A tax on milk and butter? Could be.

And don't forget that the sales tax would very likely be extended to business services.

A haircut for the kids. Taxed.

Need a lawyer because your spouse has abandoned you and a divorce has become necessary? Taxed.

Need to drop a new tranny in your Chevy? The mechanic will have to tax you for his services.

Sound fair? Sound like making the "rich pay their fair share?"

You tell us.

Oh, and don't forget that another aspect of tax reform is "closing loopholes" by taking away tax deductions.

The home mortgage interest deduction could be gone.

How about deductions for charitable contributions to your church or the local homeless shelter? That could be gone.

Even the deduction for helping defray the costs of donating an organ could be gone.

Finally, there is one other aspect of "sales tax reform" that could become law should the Juggernaut wish it to be so.

Sales taxes also apply when a business does business with another business.

For example, if lawyer services are taxed, whenever a business hires a law firm (oh, say to defend against a trumped up personal injury claim), the defending business would pay.

Or whenever a business receives services from an accountant (oh, say to navigate the all the complex and conflicting provisions of the state and federal tax code), that business would pay the sales tax for the service.

And guess who really pays for that? If you said that the cost gets passed on to the consumer, you would be correct.

Such is the magic of sales tax "reform."

The Watchdog will be watching with great interest to see how the DFL manages to construct a sales tax scheme that doesn't hammer the middle class in exactly the way we have described.

Finally, let's take a look at the income tax. To be honest, the income tax is the one tax that can truly be progressive.

Government just simply singles out successful people and smashes them with higher and higher taxes in the name of "fairness."

It can be done. If we all go over the fiscal cliff, it has been calculated that California will have a marginal income tax rate at the top bracket of over 50%, combined state and federal.

The first real question is just who we mean by "rich." Some DFL proposals of the recent past have defined "rich" at \$100,000 household income.

Hell, who are we trying to kid. These proposals always hammer at the upper middle class and the middle class. This is because, again, the real focus is the government budget, not the family budget.

There aren't enough rich people to cover all the money they want to take in.

More importantly, an increased level of income taxation needs to be evaluated in light of jobs - job creation, job re-location, and job retention.

Most small businesses file their taxes as individuals and not as corporations under the corporate tax rate.

Thus, higher individual rates apply to most businesses in Minnesota.

It beats the heck out of us how higher tax rates create jobs and wealth in the private sector.

It beats the heck out of us how higher tax rates make this state more competitive in the hunt to lure jobs to Minnesota.

And what about all this talk of fairness?

Since when is it fair and just to punish those who have risked much, forgone much, and sacrificed much in order to build a business and earn, EARN their success?

Since when did we elevate envy and greed to a value our government should pursue?

Prosperity, wealth, and opportunity are not enhanced by confiscating the wealth of those Americans who create it (far lower than 53%).

Instead, government should celebrate success, encourage others to emulate the successful, and set conditions that allow citizens the opportunity to achieve success.

This what you have to look forward to come January, brave readers.

QUICK BITS

So the electronic pull tabs aren't bringing in the expected revenues. The solution had better be that those who use the stadium pick up the difference. You people wanted a new stadium. Pay for it.

Striking workers (what's left of them) at American Crystal Sugar for a fourth time rejected a contract offer from management. The Watchdog goes out on a limb to predict this strike goes bust.

The Freedom Foundation of Minnesota reports 52 staff members and officers of Education Minnesota, the teachers' union, receive a salary in excess of \$100,000.

A task force appointed by Governor Dayton has recommended that predatory sex offenders be put in less restrictive environments and that the population be redistributed around the state.

On behalf of Anoka County, we say no thanks. Put them up at Gitmo or Gary, Indiana. Or at the Governor's Mansion.

The state is apparently facing a \$1.1 billion deficit in the upcoming budget cycle. Revenues are going up. As you might guess, spending is also projected to rise by a greater amount. In this case it's projected to rise at about 8.5%.

If we merely lived with the increased revenue, we would have no deficit.

We continue to be amazed by the legacy media's bias. What major new outlet reported that the projected deficit is the result of spending that will increase at a far greater rate than inflation and population growth?

How about limiting spending increases to inflation plus population growth or some other formula? The dirty secret is that most states do this. Check Iowa, for example.

12/14/12

In This Issue:

- 1. Roger Johnson is a Clown.**
- 2. Speaking of "Labor Endorsed."**
- 3. Elections Have Consequences.**

ROGER JOHNSON IS A CLOWN

[Roger Johnson](#) is a clown. He's silly. Funny. Funny like a clown. Funny like he makes us laugh. Funny like he's here to amuse us.

Roger has been around for years and years, showing up to events, pontificating, bragging, running off at the mouth, bloviating, and in general just boring the snot out of everyone within ear shot.

You see, Roger has been trying hard. Real hard. He wants to be with the Good Ol' Boys, even though the Good Ol' Boys are no more.

He's like the kid on the junior varsity trying hard to impress all upperclassmen on the varsity. Working to get recognition in hopes of getting a Good Ol' Boys letter jacket some day.

Usually, Roger works to impress the Good Ol' Boys by running for office. And running. And running. And losing. Roger has run for every office in Anoka County except dog catcher and railroad commissioner. And lost every time.

Most recently, "[labor endorsed](#)" Roger ran for city council in Coon Rapids and was promptly rejected like Denny Hecker applying for a credit card.

After being rejected for the umpteenth time by the voters, Roger is seeking attention and recognition by attempting to be the guy who takes on Harold Hamilton.

It seems every year there's some guy who steps forward and announces to the Force of Evil in Anoka County that he's going to take on Harold Hamilton. He's going to be the anti-watchdog.

And so it goes with Roger Johnson.

This past week, Roger published an inane, ill-informed, illogical, [screed](#) against Harold Hamilton in the Anoka County Union regarding Dan Erhart's defeat. Although Roger has no idea and is ignorant on the subject (has that ever stopped him from opening his mouth before?), he went on to claim that Harold Hamilton "bought" the county commissioner seat that Dan is about to vacate and Scott Schulte is about to assume.

Of course, the letter was also filled with the obligatory class warfare rhetoric regarding Hamilton's wealth (again, a subject about which Johnson knows nothing) and Hamilton's alleged lack of concern for the Great Unwashed Masses.

In short, it was the same tired old garbage from the pen of a man whose shtick is old and routine to all the rest of us in the county who have moved on from the Good Ol' Boys and are looking forward.

In fact, Watchdog staff had a lengthy discussion about whether to even bring up this subject, given that Dan Erhart is no longer news in this county and Roger Johnson never was.

That consideration was outweighed by the principle the Watchdog follows that we don't let the liberals get away with lies, smears, innuendo, and stereotypes.

We call them out the moment they say it. We don't let them get away with it.

Now, "labor endorsed" Roger Johnson is concerned, it seems, with big money in elections. Thus, we eagerly await his denunciation of the hundreds of millions of dollars his beloved unions spent getting Democrats elected this cycle. We eagerly await him decrying the millions one person, Alida Messinger, spent getting Democrats elected.

And what of Anoka County? What of "[Citizens for Responsible Government](#)," the PAC funded and operated by Dan Erhart's brother? Talk about money in politics!

What is really laughable here is that Harold Hamilton spent very little money on the Erhart-Schulte race.

While Hamilton isn't interested in revealing the exact amounts or methods, here is a comparison.

In this pre-general election report, Dan Erhart [reported](#) over \$27,000 in contributions, including contributions from lobbyists who do business with the county.

Harold Hamilton spent less than what Erhart took in during that one reporting period.

In fact, Hamilton spent thousands less than that figure of \$27,000.

You see, it wasn't money that defeated Dan Erhart. It was an idea. The idea that the county could do better. The idea that the time had come to stop wallowing the Good Ol' Boy politics of yesteryear and begin to look forward. It was the idea that the good people of Anoka, Andover, and Coon Rapids were ready to have a commissioner step up and join the new majority in reshaping the county to better compete in the new economy.

And as for Hamilton's wealth, this is just another example of the envy of the liberals.

Yes, Hamilton has been successful in life. And it was all earned. From a childhood of poverty in rural Nebraska, Hamilton served his country in the military and then moved on to become the first in his family to earn a college degree.

He then took the risks associated with business ownership and started Micro Control Company at his kitchen table.

The Watchdog would submit that Anoka County is far, far better off with Harold Hamilton counted among its citizens.

The county is far better off with the 170 high tech, high paying jobs Fridley-based Micro Control offers.

The county is far better off with Harold Hamilton's charitable works, which have enriched the lives of thousands of school children in the county, fed the hungry here in the county, and have offered a better quality of life through the enhancement of amenities like Springbrook Nature Center.

Here's an idea for your next letter, Roger.

Tell us about your service in the military.

Tell us all about how many jobs you've created for Anoka County taxpayers.

And do tell us of all the financial contributions you've made to local food shelves, schools, colleges, universities, and cultural organizations.

The good news here is that the Watchdog is done giving time and attention to both Roger Johnson and Dan Erhart, hopefully.

Erhart lost his re-election and he's not coming back.

Roger Johnson is merely attention seeking and it's not really worth the effort to spend any more time on a man who is laughed at in most circles.

Then again, when personal attacks are launched against Harold Hamilton, the Watchdog will be there to respond.

Silly. Like a clown.

SPEAKING OF "LABOR ENDORSED."

Elections have consequences. In a recent issue, the Watchdog examined the success conservatives had in changing the Anoka County board.

Here's what Big Labor (who spent some money on politics recently) had to say about Anoka County. This comes from the [Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation](#), which has meddled in Anoka County elections time and again:

The election's biggest setbacks came in Anoka County, where only one of the four candidates endorsed by the MRLF for Anoka County commissioner won election.

In 2013, the seven-member Anoka County Board will include only two members who are labor-endorsed.

Gone from the Board will be longtime commissioner and strong labor ally Dan Erhart. Erhart lost his re-election contest for the District 7 seat in Coon Rapids to challenger Scott Schulte by only 645 votes out of 21,969 votes cast.

Over the years, Erhart was a leader in the development of the Northstar Commuter Rail Line and a champion for prevailing wage. "He will be dearly missed," said Bill McCarthy, MRLF president.

In other Anoka County board races:

- * MRLF-endorsed incumbent Carol LeDoux won re-election with 57.53 percent of the vote for the District 5 seat representing Coon Rapids;

- * Alison Lister, endorsed by the MRLF, lost her challenge to incumbent Matt Look for the District 1 seat representing Ramsey;

- * Ironworkers Local 512 member Dan Sanders, who was endorsed by the MRLF, lost his challenge to incumbent Robyn West for the District 3 seat representing Blaine.

The MRLF made no endorsement in the race for District 2 Anoka County Board, in which incumbent Andy Westerberg was defeated by challenger Julie Braastad.

The MRLF also made no endorsement in the race for District 6 Anoka County Board, which saw incumbent Rhonda Sivarajah easily win re-election.

ELECTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Did we mention that elections have consequences? The Anoka County board recently voted to decrease the 2013 county property tax levy by over \$1 million. This is the second consecutive year that the county has reduced property taxes.

Would that have ever happened under the Good Ol' Boys? Nope. Because it never did. They were too busy with Northstar rail, a Vikings stadium, junkets to Hawaii, and contracts for political supporters.

Chairwoman Rhonda Sivarajah said, "It's our responsibility as leaders to not overburden our citizens just as they're starting to get back on their feet. We will move forward with the excellent and diverse array of service as we always have, while staying focused on our priorities of sound management, a diverse tax base, low debt burden, and healthy reserves."

Anoka County is becoming well positioned to experience a burst of job and wealth creation now that the board is controlled by people who understand that government doesn't create wealth and jobs. Government sets the conditions that allow job creators to do what they do.

May we never turn back the clock to those days.

Elections indeed have consequences.

12/21/12

In This Issue:

- 1. A Classy Farewell - Not.**
- 2. Standards? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Standards!**

A CLASSY FAREWELL - NOT

So Dan "Godfather" Erhart had his send off. He attended his last county board meeting, attended the "party" afterward, had his cake and coffee.

Of course, no send off could ever equal the party he and the Good Ol' Boys threw for themselves for decades. The junkets to Hawaii, DC, and all those football stadiums. The dinners at 5 star restaurants at taxpayer expense, the contracts awarded to campaign donors.

Now that the county has been liberated and Erhart has been sent out to pasture with the others, he sat down for obligatory [interview](#) with the local media to reflect on his many, many, many years in office.

You would think that it would be an opportunity, a golden opportunity, to just once act in magnanimous fashion. One last chance to show a little class as you exit the stage.

Nope. Too much to ask. Just not in his nature.

Speaking of his erstwhile colleagues on the board, he noted he is "so disappointed" in them and that they are "laughingstocks," all because they decided not to spend any more county money on a proposed rail line to Duluth.

Because Northstar worked out so well, Dan?

We think the "laughingstock" title is hanging around only one neck.

We would also note that the involuntary retirement ceremony was held for two men with one thing in common: they both campaigned for expanding rail in Anoka County.

And Dan wasn't done. He also castigated his former colleagues for a "lack of vision" and damaging the county's long-term future.

Yeah, programs like reducing county debt and keeping low taxes will really kill the county's future. What job creator would want to come to a county with low taxes and efficient yet limited government? The horror!

And, of course, there was the obligatory apology (in the classical definition) of Northstar rail.

We here at the Dog just might make Northstar excuse t-shirts.

It doesn't go to Saint Cloud.
The Twins are losing.
The economy sucks.
Gas is too cheap.
The tickets aren't subsidized enough.
You have to wait 50 years for the results.

Really, the Northstar defense goes on for some 9 paragraphs.

Well, that's okay. He's the only guy left in the county who will admit to supporting the train. And now he's gone from the stage.

What was most pathetic was the multitude of statements which invoke the aphorism "[the lady doth protest too much, methinks](#)."

Danny doth protest too much on so many subjects.

"I had no idea I would be here this long."
"I have never been in this with a personal agenda."
"Everything I have attempted to do has been for the good of Anoka County."
"I am very conservative in my personal life and with the county's dollars."
"I did not run a negative campaign."
"I have never run a negative campaign in 30 years."

This is all we can [say](#) about that BS.

STANDARDS? WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' STANDARDS!

Many Watchdogs have been wondering what is going on with Minnesota's proposed social studies standards.

Yes, they're long on criticizing our great nation and short on acknowledging that America has done more good than any other nation in world history.

Below we have reprinted portions of a National Review [article](#) on the subject, which does a great job explaining what's happening with this stuff.

Nine years ago a group of history professors from the University of Minnesota sent a letter to the state's education department. They complained that the history/social-studies standards for Minnesota presented American history too positively. The

historians wanted early American history described in terms of "conquest," "subjugation," "exploitation," "enslavement," and "genocidal impact." For these academics, the story of America primarily meant slavery for African Americans, genocide for American Indians, subjugation for women, xenophobia for immigrants, and exploitation for poor people.

It looks like the Minnesota academics have finally achieved their goal. This Thursday, December 20, the Minnesota Department of Education will hold a public hearing before approving new standards that emphasize, among other things, "institutional racism." For example History Standard 20 for the period 1870-1920 declares: "The student will understand that as the United States shifted from its agrarian roots into an industrial and global power, *the rise of big business, urbanization, and immigration led to institutionalized racism*, ethnic and class conflict, and new efforts at reform." [italics added]

Less biased standards might suggest that "the student will understand" that the growth of business enterprise, urbanization, and immigration led to greater prosperity for most Americans, including African Americans who moved to large northern cities and Ellis Island newcomers who chose to become Americans. Further, the period 1870 to 1920 witnessed tremendous technological development and inventions for which Americans are famous: including great advances in medicine; the promotion of public health (including a clean water supply and indoor plumbing), the sewing machine, typewriter, phonograph, and electric light bulb.

But, American [achievements are downplayed](#) while the overarching theme becomes "institutionalized racism." Of course, this logically means that the major "institutions" of American liberal democracy - the courts, Congress, the presidency, state and local governments, businesses, churches, civic organizations - and the entire democratic system and its civil society are racist and therefore, clearly, illegitimate.

The stated purpose of the Minnesota 2012 standards is "to identify the academic knowledge and skills that prepare students for post-secondary education, work and civic life in the twenty-first century. . . . Students need deep knowledge of this information in order to make sense of their world."

While the 2004 Standards specifically examined 9/11, the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and terrorism, the 2012 Standards, incredibly, include no references to 9/11, the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, the Iraq War, the war in Afghanistan, the Gulf War of 1991, or terrorism itself. Nor is there any hint of a global conflict with terrorists described either as President Bush's "War on Terror" or President Obama's "War against violent extremists." True, there are two tepid references to the "Arab Spring," but this is hardly adequate to provide the "deep knowledge" needed for students "to make sense of their world."

The 2004 Standards were a consensus document, greatly influenced by the American Federation of Teachers and the Albert Shanker Institute's Education for Democracy

Statement of 2002; they were praised by education liberals such as Diane Ravitch; and (unlike 2012) approved by the state legislature. The old Standards emphasized American citizenship and referred to the sacrifices that earlier generations of Americans had made "to win and keep liberty and justice." They included "patriotism" as a civic value.

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The new 2012 Standards speak in generic terms of "civic life in the twenty-first century." References to a specific American citizenship are rare. "Patriotism" is no longer included in the long list of "civic values." Loyola University, Baltimore Professor Diana Schaub [describes](#) this new tendency as "civics without a country."

The 2004 Standards examined the idea of "Western civilization" - the legacy of Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem, of which America is a part. In the new 2012 Standards, Western civilization like patriotism disappears as an explicit concept. In contrast to the old Standards, the new Standards examine the Cold War, primarily as a struggle between two great powers over economic systems, deemphasizing the moral conflict between political liberty and Communism.

You get the drift.

12/28/12

In This Issue:

1. The Top Story of 2012.

THE TOP STORY OF 2012

Happy New Year, Watchdogs! This is, of course, our last edition of 2012. It was year of stratospheric highs and Dead Sea level lows.

For Anoka County, the picture was the same. While we lost state Senator Pam Wolf and Ben Kruse, we also gained state Rep. Mark Uglem and also saw Branden Petersen move from the House to the Senate.

Unfortunately, Petersen's old House seat went DFL.

Also on the positive side was the re-election of our conservative legislative core in Peggy Scott, Michelle Benson, and Tom Hackbarth.

Watchdog friend Tim Sanders of Blaine was elected Minority Whip as well. And don't forget that Michelle Benson and Peggy Scott were also elected to caucus leadership.

On the local level, Coon Rapids taxpayers dodged a bullet when Roger Johnson was rejected for a city council seat.

But there was little debate at the Watchdog editorial meeting regarding the biggest Anoka County news story of 2012.

The defeat of Dan Erhart was not only the biggest story of 2012, it is the biggest Watchdog story since our inception in 2005.

Erhart's defeat signaled a true political realignment in the county, as demonstrated by the upcoming board composition that will operate 5-2 in favor of a pro-jobs, pro-growth agenda.

It's morning in Anoka County again.

Here's what the Watchdog said about Erhart's defeat in our first edition after the election:

November 9, 2012

In This Issue:

1. Victory!

VICTORY!

Editor's Note: This edition is focused strictly on the historic, rad, awesome victories on the Anoka County Board.

A detailed examination of the debacle that was the federal and legislative elections can be found on the pages of our sister publication, [the Minnesota Watchdog](#).

Watchdogs, a day of historic proportions was experienced Tuesday night as the nemesis of Anoka County taxpayers, Commissioner Dan Erhart, was defeated.

In the interest of full disclosure, Harold Hamilton readily and happily acknowledges his role in helping Erhart's transition to involuntary retirement. Said Hamilton, "It was pretty damn sweet!"

The day Watchdogs have been waiting for these last 7 and a half years was realized.

Dan Erhart is done. Toast. Finished. Done. Over.

This publication won't wish Erhart well or say nice things we really don't mean about his 30 year reign over county taxpayers.

He was a big government taxer and spender. He was a bully and a blow hard. He operated by intimidation and rumor mongering. The county is better off without his outmoded and unwelcome modus operandi. He wasn't a throwback to any previous era in Minnesota. It was a Good Ol' Boy model more suited to yesteryear Louisiana or Mississippi than Minnesota.

In a many respects, this is Anoka County's Berlin Wall moment. It's the moment when the old guard came crashing down in spectacular fashion, ushering in a completely new and more transparent way conducting county business.

While it took some time, the county board has completely transitioned to a taxpayer-centered model that will serve citizens well for at least the next two years.

There are now 5 bona fide, authentic conservatives on the county board, giving the good guys a 5-2 edge.

In many respects, this campaign was a major battle between the forces of Good and Evil for control of the county board.

With 6 of 7 seats up for grabs, both sides realized that this was the definitive battle for control of the county.

For the good guys, it was like the Battle of Midway.

For Erhart and company, it was more like Waterloo.

The good guys went 5 for 5, with one seat being a non-factor with two poor candidates who did very little to excite conservatives.

For the time being, the county board is in excellent hands and new day has dawned in Anoka County.

We won!

And did we mention Erhart is gone?

GOOD BYE!

DISTRICT 1

Conservative Matt Look prevailed in convincing fashion, despite being the target of a slimly negative campaign from the Erhart PAC, run by the Good Ol' Boys.

They threw everything they had at Look and he prevailed.

Congratulations to Commissioner Look. One of the good guys.

DISTRICT 2

This race featured two Republican candidates in Andy Westerberg and Julie Braastad.

And while both would have served the county well, it is undeniable that Braastad will be a more conservative voice on the board.

Most importantly, she will stand firm against the rail mania that gripped the county for too long.

Westerberg certainly helped create a conservative voting bloc, but his support of Northstar being extended to Saint Cloud was troubling to say the least.

Braastad will never support that.

Moreover, there were times when Westerberg leveraged his status as a swing vote, causing consternation for Sivarajah, West, and Look.

Braastad will be a rock solid vote in favor of the taxpayer. Count on it.

As for Westerberg, we sincerely thank him for his service. He supported some very good public policy, including reducing the property tax levy.

Andy did a very good job for the taxpayers.

But now it's time for Braastad to assume her place on the board.

We know she will do a great job.

DISTRICT 3

This is another district where the Good Ol' Boys slithered into the gutter to attack an honorable incumbent in Robyn West, a reliable ally for Chairwoman Sivarajah.

In classic Good Ol' Boy fashion, they ran a candidate with a name similar to a popular politician in a cynical attempt to confuse voters.

The ploy didn't work and West won by a substantial margin.

We congratulate West and admire her rock steady conservative hand on the wheel of county government.

Way to go, Robyn!

DISTRICT 4

Good Ol' Boy Jim Kordiak was the only commissioner not on the ballot. He has now been rendered irrelevant by Tuesday's results.

DISTRICT 5

Scott's wife won re-election, beating Scott Bromley rather easily in a race that did nothing to inspire Watchdogs.

Perhaps the most asinine moment of the campaign was Scott's Wife's endorsement of the stiff running against Erik Paulsen.

She endorsed the guy and he got smoked. Case closed.

The endorsement was likely some quid pro quo with the unions.

Like we said above, no big deal.

It's mind over matter. We don't mind this race because it doesn't matter.

DISTRICT 6

The Iron Lady was easily re-elected in a race that was never in doubt. Rhonda Sivarajah led wire to wire and finished strong.

She will very likely be board chair once again, and deservedly so.

DISTRICT 7

Did we mention that Dan Erhart lost?

Yes, but we have yet to congratulate Scott Schulte.

The race wasn't just about Erhart losing.

Scott Schulte will be an excellent commissioner. He is a small business owner with experience on the Coon Rapids city council.

Schulte will serve his district well by drawing on his considerable experience and talents.

Congratulations, Scott!

In local races, Coon Rapids taxpayers dodged a bullet when Roger Johnson lost his city council bid.

Johnson is now 0 for 95 in his quest to be elected and force others to listen to his endless blathering about the merits of liberal policy and the talents he boasts and like to boast about.

Hey, Roger. A bit of advice. It's time to leave the stage. The citizens have voted you off the political island. It's getting embarrassing. You're starting to look like Mike Starr.

We also congratulate Tony Howard and Sheri Bakkila in Andover, where taxpayers dodged their own bullet with Val Holthus, a hard core liberal in moderate clothing.

At the legislative level, many of our peeps like Peggy Scott, Michelle Benson, Tim Sanders, and newcomer Mark Uglem found success.

Unfortunately, some very talented public servants were not returned to the legislature.

We thank Pam Wolf and Benjamin Kruse for their selfless and inspirational leadership in the state Senate. The state is worse off without their service.

John Hoffman and Alice Johnson will no doubt prove themselves to be cookie-cutter tax and spenders who will do the bidding of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul and Iron Range DFL leadership.

A rubber stamp for Mark Dayton as well.

In any case, whoop it up Watchdogs. Dan Erhart and his reign of taxpayers abuse are finished.