

1/4/13

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CELEBRATION DAY

*My, my, my, I'm so happy, I'm gonna join the band,
We are gonna dance and sing in celebration, We are in the promised land.
- Robert Plant*

Hey, Watchdogs. It's time to engage in an official celebration for our newly minted conservative majority Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

You are cordially invited to the swearing-in ceremony for the board:

Tuesday, January 8
8:00AM
County Government Center 7th Floor

This is the time for Watchdogs to get together collectively to celebrate with our 5 commissioners as they take the oath of office and continue move Anoka County government forward, building on the momentum of the past two years, seeking to erase the waste and abuse of the past 30 years.

The ceremony will officially mark the passing of the torch to a new generation of leaders in the county.

It's a workday, but hope you can make it.

Celebration day!

I AM A ROCK, I AM AN ISLAND

*I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.
I am a rock,
I am an island.
-Simon and Garfunkel*

Reverting to some "old business" on the Watchdog agenda, we're going to revisit a lame [hit piece](#) Star Tribune pretend journalist Paul Levy penned last week. We couldn't get to it as doing so would have violated this publication's policy of reserving the last column of the year for the "story of the year" feature.

This policy also allows Harold Hamilton and Watchdog staff to slip out of the country for a little R&R at an undisclosed Caribbean location, where we don sweet Hawaiian shirts, smoke cigars, drink rum, burn money, and laugh at buffoons like Roger Johnson.

Just kidding. We don't burn money.

We already have people who burn our money for us. They're called politicians.

But, indeed we party like rock stars and make fun of Roger Johnson. Lots of fun.

In any case, back to the story at hand.

The story blared the headline that our fair county was about to become an "island unto itself." Wow. Sensational.

So what kind of governmental action would prompt such a headline?

All because Anoka County has decided to leave the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).

These groups are lobbyists. They lobby the state and federal governments.

In short, they take taxpayer money from counties and use it to pay lobbyists to get more taxpayer money from Washington and Saint Paul.

So just because our excellent leaders have decided to leave these groups, howls of protest arise from the political class.

Where to start on this one.

First, let's begin with the subplot that the MICA lobby group has recently hired Steve Novak, the former lobbyist for Anoka County who, ahem, is no longer with Anoka County.

Some people are floating the rumor that Anoka County is pulling out of MICA because Novak now works there.

If true, good.

There's a reason Novak no longer works for Anoka County.

Second, as even the article makes clear, Anoka County isn't the first county to leave MICA. Ramsey and Hennepin have also left. These three counties must have at least 1/3rd of the state's population. Some "island."

Third, for all those worried that Anoka County isn't spending enough tax money to be "connected" through the lobbying organizations, don't worry. They still belong to others.

According to the State Auditor, Anoka County still belongs to the North Metro Mayors' Association and the North Metro Crossing Coalition.

Fourth, the county is still represented at both the state and federal level by contract lobbyists.

Fifth, in addition to contract lobbyists, the county still retains county employee lobbyist Kathy Tingelstad at a salary of nearly \$100,000 annually. (What do we get for that?). Very few counties have both contract lobbyists AND in-house lobbyists.

Finally, what about commissioners and staff themselves? Is there really a need for lobbyists at all, at least at the state level? Some counties only lobby with commissioners and existing staff.

The bottom line is that this is just another Paul Levy hit piece. With Dan Erhart and Steve Novak gone, hopefully Levy won't be far behind. He's one of the most biased journalists the Watchdog has ever seen.

This county board is doing exactly what the taxpayers elected them to do. Prioritize limited dollars and reduce or eliminate expenditures that don't meet stringent criteria.

Every taxpayers should be melting down the county phone lines thanking Sivarajah and company for their great work and, frankly, courage in leaving these two organizations.

For those like Carol LeDoux who think we just can't live without the \$100,000 plus it costs to belong to these organizations, tell what's so critical about membership.

We'll give you space right here in this publication to tell about all the great things they did with our money.

Good for the Anoka county board! we don't need to stinking AMC or MICA.

NOT HER

Ten [candidates](#) have filed applications to be appointed to the Anoka-Hennepin School Board to fill the vacancy created when board member John Hoffman was elected to the legislature.

We can't we know much about the ten except Grace Baltich of Champlin. She is a partisan DFL and government labor union hack who most certainly doesn't belong on our local school board.

Baltich has been rejected by the voters a couple of times when she ran for the legislature.

Here's what she says about herself (social worker):

Advocating for working families as a labor leader
President, AFSCME Local 2685
Vice-President, AFSCME Council 65

Here's who endorses her legislative campaigns:

Senate District 36 DFL
womenwinning
AFSCME Councils 5 & 65
Conservation Minnesota
National Association of Social Workers
Clean Water Action
Education Minnesota
Friends of DFL Women
49rs Int'l Union of Operating Engineers
IBEW
Minnesota AFL-CIO
Minnesota Nurses Association
Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Coun
North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters
OutFront Minnesota
Project 515
SEIU MN State Council
Team MAPE

We don't need a hyper-partisan hack on our school board.

[Contact](#) the school board and let them know you expect someone less partisan.

School board shouldn't be either a fallback for a two time loser or a stepping stone to the next campaign.

1/11/13

In This Issue:

- 1. So it Begins.**
- 2. Bills of the Week.**
- 3. Lessons Not Learned.**

SO IT BEGINS

Howdy, Watchdogs. We're coming to you live from the satellite headquarters deep within the bowels of Cass Gilbert's masterpiece. That's the Capitol for all Saint Francis readers.

Not much action here this week, other than new Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk taking a very partisan and a very sharp machete to the paychecks of GOP Senate staffers, cutting some pay by 40%.

None of these staffers make a whole lot of money to help out Republican Senators, so that makes them workin' folk. And trust us, they work hard and pour their heart and soul into helping the Cause.

But it looks like the Party of Working Folk only meant to help DFL Working Folk.

At least the new GOP Senators are learning a lesson about life in Saint Paul. The height of bi-partisanship is day one of the session.

There's a reason they're called Democrats and you're called a Republican.

Different world views. Fundamentally different world views.

And the struggle to implement one version over another ain't no tickle fight.

That doesn't mean there won't be opportunities to work together.

It means that the Capitol is where the great fights of the day to allocate scarce resources, define rights and obligations, and order our society happen.

Fundamentally, Democrats have one view of the world and Republicans have another. And you don't get to implement your view when you're stuck in the minority.

Freshman Republicans are about to find out that being in the majority means everything.

It's also a great opportunity to reflect on the conduct of the 2010 campaign, learn from past mistakes, and prepare for not only the 2014 election cycle, but to prepare for the special elections that will happen next month in House districts 19A and 14A.

Republicans need to use the next two years to implement a strategy for electoral success, act as the loyal and principled opposition, and circle the wagons, and learning that you may not exactly like or think exactly like the Republican next to you, but he's a whole lot better than the Democrat across the aisle.

In 2014, all GOP guns must be turned outward and not inward. We will all hang together or we will surely hang separately.

BILLS OF THE WEEK

Given the new majorities in the legislature, there was and will not be any shortage of bona fide candidates for the bad bill of the week.

This week's winner was a clear cut winner, even though a raft of tax increases and big spending increases were proposed by the majority party this week.

The paternity of this week's adventure in ignoble legislating belongs to Rep. [Joe Mullery](#), an entrenched Minneapolis legislator who gets as far to the left as he can, hoping to stave off the intra-party challenges he faces as his increasingly diverse districts looks for representation that more closely resembles the changing demographics of the district.

Among his prolific authorship this week, Mullery introduced [House File 27](#), a bill dealing with residential real estate foreclosure.

As an initial matter of disclosure, we declare that this bill is a real bill and has not been altered to make it look ridiculous and inane.

As proof, we have printed the bill for your perusal right here:

1.8 Section 1. [582.33] FORECLOSED REAL PROPERTY; DONATION TO CITY

1.9REQUIRED.

1.10At the conclusion of a foreclosure of a mortgage on residential property located in a

1.11city in this state, the lender shall have four months within which to sell the property in

1.12abona fide sale to a person or entity that is unrelated to the lender. If the lender fails to

1.13complete such a sale within that time period, the lender shall deed the property to the city

1.14in which the property is located. The city must accept the deed and may charge the lender

1.15for costs of any demolition and repairs reasonably necessary to prepare the property for

1.16sale. The city may retain any net proceeds from the sale for general city purposes.

1.17**EFFECTIVE DATE.**This section is effective for foreclosures concluded on or

1.18after August 1, 2013.

Whoa. Read that one again.

The lender is the owner of the property. This bill says that property owner must hand over the deed to the city, no matter what, no exceptions.

There is no mechanism cited in the bill for just compensation. Although the process of turning the deed over to the city may involve compensation, that's not necessarily the case. Think we might have a constitutional issue here? We thought government couldn't seize private property without just compensation.

Moreover, who says that city will do a better job than the private market in reselling the property? At a minimum, most cities would have to incur big costs in creating a bureaucracy to repair, maintain, inventory, track, and sell the properties.

Even more importantly, what if a city doesn't want to get into the real estate business?

There are cities out there with only a few hundred residents and a small cadre of staff. They have neither the resources or the expertise to handle this issue. This is really a massive unfunded mandate on cities.

Remember all the talk on the campaign trail from the DFL about helping out the cities, which were mistreated by Republicans?

And, by the way, when the city accepts the deed, they accept the liability that comes with it. Another headache for cities.

Republicans ought to demand a vote on this bill just to see where everyone is on this issue.

Yikes.

Now for the good bill of the week.

And lo and behold, our bill of the week is really a group of bills authored by BOTH Democrats and Republicans.

This cluster of bills centers on the idea that a super-majority would be needed to pass a constitutional amendment to the ballot.

Give the DFL and GOP authors credit on this issue.

Our constitution is our founding document and should be difficult to amend. A simple majority of the legislature isn't enough of a check and balance on this important matter.

Requiring a 2/3rds or 3/5ths majority would stop junk like the "Legacy" amendment from reaching the ballot.

Passing this bill would be a good deal for the GOP. It would do the conservative thing by making it harder to monkey with our founding document.

And the historical fact, as pointed out in this publication many months ago, is that the DFL has spent more time in the majority than the GOP in the Minnesota legislature.

A bill like this would most likely act as a bulwark against bad DFL amendments more than anything else.

But you have to give some props to the DFL. They introduced many of these bills. This restraint wasn't on display so much from 2010 - 2012.

LESSONS NOT LEARNED

So it appears that some GOP delegates didn't learn the hard lesson of 2010. Or 2012.

In 2010, Tom Emmer proved to be an unelectable candidate in a year in which we could have had a GOP trifecta. How nice would it be to have a Republican governor right about now?

So in 2012, the delegates went ahead and endorsed Kurt Bills, who challenged Emmer for the right to wear the "Worst GOP Candidate Post-WW II" sash.

Bills got crushed by Amy Klobuchar as the GOP faithful watched the race get called within 5 seconds of the polls closing as the GOP suffered another embarrassing defeat.

And in the bantam weight division, the faithful were treated to the spectacle of a 22 hour endorsement fight down in the First Congressional District, where Allen Quist late won the right to face Tim Walz.

Some honor. Walz went on to mop the floor with Quist.

Here we go again.

As this issue goes to press, we have learned that the GOP delegates, all 35 of them, have endorsed Allen Quist yet again. This time to run in a special election for the Minnesota House in district 19A.

Really? Collective amnesia? Quist just lost in a big way two months ago.

In fact, he lost to Walz by 26 points in this House district in that race. 26 POINTS!!!

Quist will not win this race.

In fact, Quist hasn't won an election since MTV played real music videos and Whitesnake was selling out arenas.

It's not as if there's going to be some dynamic that offers a 27 point reversal from two months ago.

Yes, we've already heard the Quist apologists apply some twisted logic to convince themselves that things are different because 60 days have passed.

Yes, we've heard about how the pasting from Walz was actually pretty good because Quist got his butt kicked just slightly less harder than what Walz did to his opponent in 2008.

The best "rationale" is that this is a special election and the turn out will be really small.

Great. This is our strategy? To field candidates who have a fighting chance to win only when the field is so small that a hard core base can win it for the candidate?

So we're admitting that this candidate has narrow appeal and will do well only in a special election?

And what if Quist did win? He still has to come back and face a bigger electorate in 2014.

Ridiculous.

Huh. Maybe, just maybe, it's a better idea to field a candidate who can appeal to a broad swath of the electorate.

Sources tell the Watchdog that Jim Gorgart, a veterans service officer in Le Sueur County, will run in a January 29th primary against Quist.

The GOP should be so lucky.

Since when should we allow the 35 delegates who selected Quist choose for the entire GOP base in the district?

35 people. Heck, they could have all been Quist's relatives and Euchre buddies from Rotary.

We've never met Goltart but he certainly can't be any less appealing than Quist.

We always knew the GOP was going to have it out sooner or later over these unelectable candidates.

If this is the place to begin, so be it.

If the GOP is realize the goal of becoming a sustainable governing coalition, the march has to start now and it has to include candidates and leaders who can articulate a vision that resonates with the public, not just 35 delegates on a cold January night or the low percentage who will turn out for a special election.

We mean EVERYBODY. You know, like Ronald Reagan did it.

Let the primary parade begin. Can't wait.

1/18/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Sales Tax Trouble.**
- 2. The Backslide.**
- 3. The Great Gun Schism.**

SALES TAX TROUBLE

Greetings, loyal readers. Lots of news flowing from the Capitol in Saint Paul and news right here in Anoka County. Let's get down to business.

This week's bad bill is really a series of bills finding different ways to accomplish one really bad idea. That bad idea is to tax clothing. Yes, tax our underwear, tax our socks, tax our coats and caps.

The bills take various forms, but are designed to do one thing: make you pay tribute to the sovereign whenever you hit the local Kohl's or Old Navy to buy junior a new pair of Buster Browns.

Did you expect anything different from this crowd, which now has the keys to both the government liquor cabinet and the government car. Bad, bad combination.

While we know our readers are opposed to tax increases, it's important to understand why extending the sales tax to clothing is such a bad idea.

First, it's a regressive tax, which hits low income people the hardest. Once again, we see the party of the Workin' Man sticking it to the Workin' Man.

Rich or poor, we all wear underwear, with the exception of those who prefer to go commando. The rich man wears his grungies just like the poor man. The difference is that a nice pair of cotton briefs takes a bigger bite out of the poor guy's wallet. Thus, far the bills don't tax only the silk boxers preferred by the yacht basin crowd.

To get around this political problem, the Democrats will have to resort to complex tax schemes and other sophistry.

Some Democrats are talking about taxing clothing transactions over \$200, although it's not clear if this is any one item over \$200 or an aggregate purchase of over \$200.

Of course, some bills contain the always popular "tax credit" for poor folk. As if our tax code isn't complex and chaotic enough. Under this proposal, we would add yet more pages to the tax code and more lines to the tax return. Yet one more goodie to determine if you get on your tax return.

Now back to this \$200 scheme. You can see the problems with this already. If it's an aggregate tax, then multiple trips to the store would be in order.

How about any one item? Seriously, you could start to see the left and right shoe sold separately. The hood sold separately from the jacket. The liner sold separate from the shell.

And let's not pretend \$200 clothing items are all luxury. Any real man will tell you that a decent cold weather waterfowl jacket can easily cost more than \$200. They're necessary for late season waterfowl and they last for years, provided you don't get fat.

Again, wasn't it all about punishing the rich guys?

Next, a sales tax on clothing would obliterate one of the very few, perhaps the only, tax advantages Minnesota provides.

Retailers from giants like Cabela's and anchor tenants at the Mall of America down to main street clothing stores in border towns attract millions of international and out of state visitors who buy clothes, food and lodging, providing a massive boost to the state's economy.

Of course, the Dems never seem to learn the lessons inherent in punishing the rich. Like any other consumer, they just buy less of whatever is taxed.

Suppose the clothing tax only applies clothing items in excess of \$500 or even \$1,000. The folks who make those items aren't rich. The folks who sell them aren't rich. The folks who drive the truck to deliver the goods to retail aren't rich. The folks who alter and tailor the items aren't rich.

Yet they are the ones to pay the price when clothing sales plunge because of unfavorable tax treatment.

Years ago, some Eastern seaboard states thought it a good idea to impose a high tax rate on yacht sales. The rich bought fewer yachts, which hurt those who sold the yachts. Then the mechanics who fix yachts were hurt. And then the folks who fuel and maintain the yachts. Then the folks who serve food and drinks to boaters on the Inland Waterways of the East Coast.

Get ready for the clothing tax, readers. Just another bad idea brought to you by your DFL majority.

THE BACKSLIDE

We hate to say we told you so, but we told you so. The yellowing of the GOP belly continues.

In breaking news, House GOP budget honcho Paul Ryan is now openly discussing the idea of backing away from the debt ceiling fight.

After getting whipped like wayward dogs in the fiscal cliff fight, we were all promised that the GOP would show up for the debt ceiling fight.

Uh huh.

In an article published last night on the web site [Real Clear Politics](#), Ryan began laying the foundation for a GOP retreat on the debt ceiling fight:

Paul Ryan said here Thursday that House Republicans are considering a short-term debt limit extension to avoid default and improve the lower chamber's standing in other pressing fiscal negotiations with the Senate and the White House...

Many Republicans, feeling pressure from the financial markets, appear to be coming to terms with the perils attached to failing to extend the debt ceiling...

In a conversation with reporters, Ryan suggested that holding the debt limit captive now might stunt progress on getting the debt itself under control...

The Wisconsin congressman said Republicans must recognize the reality of having a divided government, and get the conversation moving with the upper chamber and the president...

In other words, the president has once again owned the House Republicans. One party refuses to tackle runaway spending, crushing debt, and nearly bankrupt entitlement programs. That party says raise the debt ceiling with absolutely no real reforms or spending cuts.

The other party has a strategy to pass legislation to raise the debt ceiling while implementing desperately needed spending reforms, inviting the other party to participate.

Yet the irrational and intransigent party wins. That party being the president.

Don't worry, there will be some type of booby prize thrown to the GOP that will be sold to us as something meaningful, as if we're a bunch of idiots.

Just like fiscal cliff fight, when \$41 of tax increases were exchanged for \$1 of cuts and nothing in the way of entitlement reform. We locked in lower tax rates! Yeah! We're f'ing

bankrupt and our Asian creditors own us! We borrow millions every day just to run government but we did nothing about it! Go team!

Rep. Ryan assures us that the GOP will show up to fight Obama on the sequester of \$1.2 trillion spending.

Forgive us if we're just a bit dubious on that front.

Those cuts include defense cuts, something many Republicans can't seem to support, even though the days of America acting as the world's policeman and the protector of long-reconstituted democracies is past.

This isn't 1947. We don't need to protect Japan and Germany from the Soviet Union. They can protect themselves, in concert with our military.

Maybe we're wrong. Maybe the GOP will man up on the debt ceiling and hold fast.

We seriously doubt it. This article is ominous and very much planned. It is the first step in conditioning conservatives to accept the retreat.

That retreat has nothing to do with the "consequences" of failing to raise the debt ceiling.

It has nothing to do with the sequester being more favorable terrain on which to fight the president.

It has everything to do with Republicans running scared of the president and their own constituents.

It's a failure of leadership and a failure of courage. It's cowardice.

Obama is in GOP heads. He's got them on the run. If this was a poker game, Obama would have Boehner on [full tilt](#).

The House GOP doesn't think it can beat the president and he knows it.

It's extremely disappointing that our leadership in Washington can't convince the American people that putting the nation on a path to fiscal responsibility is the correct and imperative course.

It's discouraging that Rep. Boehner and Sen. McConnell are having such a difficult time fighting a president who is wrong, incompetent, and on the wrong side of history and economics.

But maybe we're wrong. Maybe the House GOP retreat is producing some master plan to school Obama on the debt ceiling debate.

But you've lost the benefit of the doubt Mr. Boehner. And Mr. Klein. Prove us wrong.

We doubt you're willing to stand and be counted. Serious doubt.

THE GREAT GUN SCHISM

A party divided. A big issue. Infighting. Backbiting. Recrimination. The GOP? Nope. The Democrats.

The Obama gun control scheme has Democrats divided on a high profile, emotional issue.

On one side are the ultra libs who would shred and burn the Second Amendment if they could.

On the other side are Democrats, many from rural states or congressional districts, who are NRA endorsed and have a record of supporting the Second Amendment.

Think Sen. Max Baucus of Montana or Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia.

So where is the media? Anytime Republicans are split on a big issue, the media is right there to highlight the split while painting the conservative Republicans as ogres.

Why no articles on the schism, with not so subtle praise heaped on the liberals who hate guns?

Yes, we know the media has been exposed a thousand times over.

But we will be there 1,001 times to call them on it.

Where's the article, Star Tribune?

1/25/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Capitol Update.**
- 2. It's Worse Than We Thought.**

CAPITOL UPDATE

What's up, party people? The Watchdog has been busier than a one-legged man at a butt kicking contest trying to keep up with all the nefarious goings on down here in Saint Paul.

We knew the DFL would engage in massive overreach, but we didn't think they would go all out crazy in January. Maybe there's more to come, but we don't know how much is left in the "absolutely nuts" category of public policy.

In any case, space limitations provide for only a few nuggets of information, reserving space to analyze how Governor Dayton's tax scheme will hammer you, no matter who you are. So much for getting the rich to pay their "fair share."

Minnesota Pensions.

News reports this week indicate that Minnesota's public pensions continue to be significantly underfunded, by \$16.7 BILLION. That's about \$4 BILLION more than in 2010, when legislators "fixed " the glitch.

The simple fact is that Minnesota's public pension obligations are unaffordable and unsustainable.

They don't reflect reality and certainly don't reflect the retirement plans of the people who fund those pensions - taxpayers in the private sector.

True pension reform requires true courage. Thus, look for the can to get kicked down the road until a crisis erupts, just like in many California cities.

Government workers should have retirement programs that mirror those of folks who are subject to market forces. When government lives better than those who fund government, fiscal ruin can't be far behind.

Southwest LRT.

In this week's PT Barnum moment, hucksters for the Southwest light rail line trotted out a poll that purported to show overwhelming support for building another ultra-expensive and under-utilized rail line.

Geez, it wasn't all that long ago that all sorts of polls were trotted out in the north Metro showing everyone that Northstar commuter rail had all sorts of support.

The line got built and no one rides it, leaving Minnesota with a commuter rail line that has met none of its promised benefits of traffic relief, jobs, and economic development.

Really, it appears that the train does little more than provide one tax subsidy to the Twins and Vikings, shuttling fans to and from their taxpayer-subsidized stadiums.

Sure, it's easy to say yes to a hypothetical train that will get your neighbors off the road while not exploring how people feel about rail COMPARED to other transportation options, INCLUDING roads and bridges.

How telling that a whopping 66% in this poll said rail wasn't a convenient transit option for them. Yep. That includes people who live near rail. Unless there is a massive, European style system, it doesn't make much sense, especially when our population density is a fraction of Europe and Asia.

The Lucky Few.

"We do not believe that in this country freedom is reserved for the lucky or happiness for the few."

This quote comes from our feckless chief executive in his call to socialist action, er, second inaugural address.

Note that the "freedom" to which the president refers is ECONOMIC freedom.

Like the most diehard liberals, the president believes that success is not the product of hard work, sacrifice, and an application of one's God-given talents.

Instead, success is little more than luck, with lightning striking one guy as opposed to the ten standing next to him.

Achievements and financial success is nothing more than a divine distribution of lottery tickets or e-pull tabs, with a few winning tickets and the rest losers.

This bunk narrative is essential to the liberal philosophy because liberals need one thing to make their scheme work: some other guy's money - and lots of it.

And it's far easier to justify stealing another's wealth when there is a popular belief that the wealth wasn't earned. Instead of taking from a guy who earned it and giving it to a guy who didn't, liberals can justify confiscation by chalking it up to government sort of re-adjusting the lottery. Joe won the prize and Bill didn't. Oh well, government will

make it FAIR by taking half of the "winnings" and giving it to the poor unlucky guy who didn't get a winning ticket.

Most people in America feel a sense of disgust and revulsion over the prospect of government seizing what someone has fairly and justly earned.

It's so much easier to take when the goods at issue are perceived to be the result of dumb luck.

The only problem is that such a narrative is immoral, unjust, untrue, and plainly contrary to the very core of the American Dream, which posits that every man has a chance to EARN a decent living when he works hard and engages in the self-reliance and rugged individualism that makes America distinct from the rest of the world.

Other than that, the president is right on.

IT'S WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT

Ok, let's get on to this budget business. Much has been written on this important topic and there is much more to be said.

Conservatives expected a laugh of a budget. Instead, we got one to make everyone cry - in Minnesota. This is a budget only Wisconsin could love. Or Iowa. Or North Dakota. Or South Dakota.

It's worse than nearly everyone expected. A breathtaking money grab masquerading as tax reform. A shameless punch in the gut to job creators dressed up as a tax neutral "wash" for the average schmoe. Not so.

For this column, the Watchdog will explore the implications for Minnesota businesses. You know, the folks who create the jobs and create the wealth.

But before we start, we need to point out perhaps the biggest point of hypocrisy for governor.

Here's what candidate Dayton said of rival Tom Horner's plan to raise the cigarette tax:

"You raise the price of a pack of cigarettes \$1.50 as Mr. Horner proposed, that's money out of the pockets of working people and poorer people, and that means kids don't have as much to eat or don't have the same quality of food. Those are addictions, and I think you treat addictions as addictions and you don't penalize the people who are dealing with them economically."

Now, Dayton proposes to raise the cigarette tax by 59%, apparently believing that a 94 cents per pack tax is good but a buck fifty is bad.

But wait, it gets better.

Dayton has also proposed a \$500 property tax rebate, which would apply to every home in Minnesota.

So, Dayton proposes to take money out of the pockets of "working people and poorer people" and stick it in the hands of the Pohlads and his ex-wife. Apparently they need some relief on their mansions.

That's just too good.

Regarding business, Dayton has proposed a 2% increase in the top income tax bracket, from 7.85% to 9.85%, one of the highest income tax rates in the nation.

While some people may be tempted to engage in some good old fashioned class warfare, this tax doesn't hit the idle rich.

First, it applies at \$250,000 for a couple, which is just a wee bit under the millionaire mark.

More importantly, the vast majority of businesses in Minnesota, and especially small businesses, file their income taxes as individuals. This is called "pass through" taxation.

Not many businesses file as corporations under the corporate tax law. They file as individuals.

Thus, Mark Dayton is proposing a bit of an income tax hike on Minnesota job creators.

These small businesses will then have less money to hire, less money to invest in new equipment, less money for raises, and less money for benefit increases for employees.

If you work at a small business in Minnesota, Mark Dayton is set to take an axe to your place of employment.

On top of all this, Dayton is also proposing to extend the sales tax to a host of professional services that businesses provide to one another.

These so-called "B to B" taxes are a massive tax increase on business in Minnesota.

For example, when a company hires lawyers to defend against some bunk lawsuit, the company would pay the sales tax.

When a company hires an accounting firm to deal with the totally unintelligible and illogical tax code, the sales tax gets applied.

This tax would also apply to government. So when a city hires an engineering firm to design a bridge, the sales tax would apply. So, on the one hand Dayton wants to give more aid to cities and then suck it back out in the form of taxing previously untaxed services.

So how does this apply to you?

These B to B taxes are really a hidden sales tax on top of the sales tax you will pay at the register.

Right now, hair cuts aren't taxed in Minnesota. If Dayton gets his way, you will get taxed once when you pay at the register.

But the B to B taxes will also act as a hidden tax embedded in the cost of the haircut.

For example, Great Clips has a need for professional services. They need lawyers to fight suits and draft contracts. They need CPAs to do their financials. They hire consultants to help them run efficiently. They hire PR firms to do marketing research and craft catchy ads.

All these services would be subject to the sales tax. These costs would be passed along to you in the form of a higher price for a haircut, which then gets taxed again when you pay at the register.

Double taxation. One tax hidden, the other transparent. This where no tax existed before.

Again, this is more money taken out of the private economy and pumped into the public coffers. Your place of employment will also have less money for wages and benefits.

So you get hammered at work and get hammered at the cash register.

And this is making the rich pay their fair share?

Nope. This is a shocking money grab and government enrichment program that will kill jobs and drive economic activity out of Minnesota.

Enjoy your government, Minnesota. At least until 2014.

2/1/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Defeated Anoka County commissioner has been reported to be sporting a new name tag at local events. The name tag states, "retired county commissioner." Not quite. "FIRED county commissioner" would be more accurate.

1. **Bad Bill of the Week.**
2. **Tax Plan Update.**
3. **Our Gun Totin' Prez.**

BAD BILL OF THE WEEK

Our bad bill of the week is authored by Coon Rapids' own state Representative Jerry Newton, a man well known to the Watchdog. We really like Jerry Newton the man and we really dislike Jerry Newton the policy maker.

Newton has authored House File 259, which authorizes state bonding money to.... Three guesses, Watchdogs. If you guessed that the bill authorizes state bonding money to repair and replace aging bridges on Highway 65 or Highway 10, you would be flat out wrong.

On the other hand, if you guessed that the bill seeks to expand Northstar commuter rail to Saint Cloud, you would win a \$5 cigar. Winner, winner, chicken dinner!

Ugh. Northstar rail? Really? We know that Newton lost re-election in 2010 and has missed a couple of years at the Capitol, but someone from the local DFL should have clued him in. Psssst, Jerry. Uh, Northstar is a bust. Ridership is way, way off. Subsidies are up. Dan Erhart was kicked out over Northstar's broken promises. No one will take ownership of Northstar anymore. It's political kryptonite.

If someone doesn't help Rep. Newton gain his 2013 legislative bearings, he risks looking like the Doctor Evil of the Capitol. Frozen in time, unaware of the changes. Doesn't have the 411. Needs the info. Looks and sounds just like this [guy](#).

So, is this part of what we're buying with that \$2.1 billion in tax increases? Another 40 miles of heavily-subsidized rides down to the Twins game?

Why does the DFL seem so intent on looking backwards?

TAX PLAN UPDATE

Last week, much was written regarding Governor Dayton's monstrosity of a tax plan.

We're not done with the bad news, folks. It may take weeks or even months to uncover all the zombies buried in this house of fiscal horrors.

Let's start this week with the bill's \$225 million in budget cuts. Oops, let's make that ~~\$225~~ \$167 million in budget cuts.

After Republicans smoked out this gimmick, it was admitted that \$58 million in "cuts" were really just budget reallocations to other budget areas, to be spent just the same.

And here we believed the governor when we were told that this budget was free of gimmicks and accounting tricks.

Dayton is proposing a nearly \$38 BILLION budget.

Cuts of \$167 million? That's about .4% of the budget.

And this is a "tough" budget? A "painful" budget.

Maybe for taxpayers. But certainly not for government.

With this budget, Mark Dayton has chosen the government budget over the family budget.

Those measly, miserly cuts pale in comparison to the net increase in taxes of over \$2 BILLION.

In other words, Dayton proposes \$12 in spending increases for every dollar of cuts.

If the DFL has accused Tim Pawlenty of an "all cuts" budget, this is surely an "all tax increase" budget.

And don't forget about the fees. The governor is asking for \$45 million in additional fees.

This after all the bombast and feigned outrage over Pawlenty's fee increases.

And here we believed the governor when we were told that this budget was free of gimmicks and accounting tricks.

Next, consider the windfall for cities that have their own sales tax. Some cities in Minnesota have received special authorization from the state to levy a local sales tax. Duluth and Minneapolis are two examples.

With the governor wanting to extend the sales tax to host of currently untaxed items like clothing and over the counter medications, these cities, like the state, will reap a windfall of additional sales tax revenue that would make Big Oil blush.

Those cities and counties are estimated to get an addition \$140 million in sales tax revenues under the Dayton budget.

And that's on top of an additional \$120 million in proposed aids and credits to cities and counties.

Wow. \$360 million more for cities and counties.

And what are the guarantees that these city councils and county boards won't raise property taxes?

Uh huh.

There has also been a lot of talk regarding the extension of the sales tax to professional services.

For example, lawyer services. This may seem like an inviting target at first, but what about the battered woman who hires an attorney to help get a divorce and custody of the children?

What about the family that hires an attorney to help navigate the child welfare system when they adopt a "difficult to place" child?

These folks would have to pay the sales tax.

How about those conceal/carry classes for your wife, who works nights in downtown Saint Paul? Pay up!

Swimming lessons to teach kids the necessary skills to stay alive in the water? Pay up!

Fitness classes for senior citizens to keep them healthy and reduce medical costs? Pay up, granny!

Young kids taking classes to help them get better scores on standardized admissions tests to college or grad school? Pay up!

A community education class to learn how to cook or dance? Pay up!

Think about it. The tentacles of this tax plan run very, very, deep.

Finally, we are going to revisit one aspect of the tax plan that deserves special emphasis.

The governor has touted the fact that businesses will get a tax cut while the "richest" Minnesotans will pay a higher income tax.

Folks, don't fall for this sophistry.

Most businesses in Minnesota pay their taxes as individuals, meaning that they will be subject to the income tax increase.

Very few businesses file their taxes under the corporate tax rate. Thus, most businesses wouldn't see a tax cut.

Either the governor doesn't understand this simple fact of the tax code or he is misleading the people of this state.

He needs to quit with the rhetoric of the rich paying more and job creators paying less.

Main street businesses are subject to tax increases, not cuts, under his plan.

Know it.

OUR GUN TOTIN' PREZ

We all know Bill Clinton was fond of telling whoppers. Like when he told reporters he remembered hearing about the Iowa Caucuses as a kid, even though he was in his 20s when they started in their current form. Or when he smoked weed but didn't inhale. Or when he didn't have...

Anyway, it seems our current president told a mighty whopper of his own when he claimed he goes skeet shooting "all the time."

Geez, we could see this whopper a mile away.

Funny, no photographs exist of Mr. Obama busting clays and zapping the orange discs.

Funny, the president has yet to take up the challenge of many Capitol Hill Republicans who have challenged him to a good old fashioned shootin' match.

Exposing the president on his BS is one thing. It's even more galling to hear the silence of the media in calling him out on this one.

Another case of protecting the president and selling out any pretense of objectivity.

A shotgun wielding Obama.

Darn, that's rich!

2/8/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Gunslinger.**
- 2. Washington Spending.**
- 3. Government to Government Means You Pay.**
- 4. State of Denial.**

GUNSLINGER

Aloha, Watchdogs. Things were cooking hot and heavy in Saint Paul and Washington this week.

Did you see that [photo](#) the White House released of our feckless fearless chief executive handling that over/under shotgun with aplomb?

Sure you did. If you shoot a shotgun with any regularity, the photo revealed that our president hardly goes shooting "all the time." Or if he does, he does it poorly all the time. Hardly the form normally displayed by an experienced shooter.

In fact, it looks rather contrived.

Sort of like when Mike Dukakis went on that joy ride in the [tank](#).

Or when John Kerry tried to convince us we wasn't some blue blood elitist by "[hunting](#)" in clothes that we later learned were borrowed from a real red blooded American hunter.

Let's run a poll this week.

What BS photo op gives you the biggest laugh?

- A. Obama the trappist.
- B. Dukakis tanks in the tank.
- C. Huntin' wabbits with John Kerry.

Send your pick to harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

WASHINGTON SPENDING

The president has taken a mighty big step in his presidency. For the current fiscal year ending in September, the federal budget deficit will be \$845 billion (projected), which would be the first time in Obama's presidency that he has managed to bring a fiscal year budget deficit in under \$1 TRILLION. Congratulations.

And that's the good news coming out of Washington. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that it will take \$2 trillion in cuts over the next decade to bring the nation's debt to a reasonable level.

With no changes, the nation's debt will be equal to a whopping 77% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The only other time we have seen a debt to GDP ratio this high was during World War II, when America was fighting a desperate struggle against Nazism and Imperialism simultaneously.

And you want to know how we got here?

Yes, Obama is largely to blame, but you have to see the spending to truly believe it.

Take the first two years of Obama's first term, from 2008 - 2010.

Look at these spending increases by program area over that period:

Commerce: 219%
Education: 181% (Test scores up 181%?)
Energy: 171% (Solyndra)
Environmental Protection Agency: 130%
Transportation: 548%

Galling. Simply galling.

Overall, during this period of the Great Recession, government spending grew overall by 84%.

Meanwhile, family budgets shrank and jobs disappeared.

Bring on the sequester. Bring on the cuts.

But before you break out the champagne and celebrate the spending restraint you so crave, don't forget that the sequester cuts only amount to about .5% of the nation's GDP.

Nonetheless, that won't stop the president from braying on about fiscal doom. That's typical.

So ask yourself. What has all this spending brought about?

We have the weakest economic recovery of the modern era and trillions upon trillions of debt heaped on future generations.

GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT MEANS YOU PAY

Well, it's been two weeks and two editions of the Watchdog pointing out the folly of the Dayton Tax Plan and we're still not done.

We thought we could do it but we failed. We're going to need yet another week to explain how this Leviathan is going to ream you and your family in the name of more and bigger government.

Remember back to the promise of attacking only the "rich?" Ha ha. Ha ha. Ha ha. Ha ha.

A couple of weeks ago, we explained the "business to business" tax, whereby a company pays taxes on the professional services it purchases, such as accounting or legal fees.

Of course, those costs will get passed along to consumers or will be absorbed by the company, which will result in fewer jobs and benefits for employees.

Well, did you know that government will be subject to the same type of taxation?

That's right, when your city or county uses an engineering firm to design a road or if they hire a law firm to defend a bogus lawsuit, they will pay the sales tax.

And this same tax applies to "government to government" services.

Does your city contract with another city or county for professional services to save money? Pay up!

For example, does your city contract with the county for law enforcement services and thus avoid the need to fund a police department? Pay up.

The Watchdog has spoken to sources in city and county government who have tallied up the net effect of the Dayton Tax Plan and have determined that their city or county will lose money.

Guess what that means? It means that your property taxes will go up to pay for the state to have more \$\$\$\$.

Don't get distracted by the shiny object that is the \$500 property tax rebate for your home.

You will pay much more than that over time if Dayton succeeds in pushing what is really a tax dollar transfer from cities and counties up to the state.

If you haven't already, call your city, township or county and ask them what the Dayton tax plan will cost on net. Ask your local elected officials how they plan to deal with the increased expenses.

STATE OF DENIAL

Was that a serious State of the State address the governor gave Wednesday night?

Really? What a dud.

That took some real Chutzpah to take credit for all the reforms and spending reductions the GOP legislative majority forced him to accept, putting the state on a better path to fiscal stability.

Weren't these the very same reforms Dayton and the DFL repeatedly blasted on the campaign trail?

Bragging about \$2 billion in permanent reductions just a few months after bemoaning them?

A new low.

And what about blaming tax cuts for recession? Does Dayton also believe that the rooster causes the sun to rise?

Tax cuts have been enacted around both boom times and bust times. Denying government just a bit of the cash it always craves doesn't cause economic problems.

This is because government doesn't create wealth. Giving government money only recirculates it and usually means it is spent inefficiently.

No matter how much money it sucks out of the private economy, government can never, ever, create wealth.

If you look at government spending and get impressed because you see a bureaucrat at work or see government building another office building, you are in need of some remedial economic education.

Tax cuts mean that more money stays in the private economy, where it can be deployed to create wealth and prosperity.

We were also exposed to Dayton bemoaning the "regressive" nature of the tax system.

Hypocrite.

Sales taxes on clothes? Regressive.

Taxes on tobacco? Regressive.

Increased taxes on gasoline? Regressive.

The tax system doesn't have a regressive bent because the rich are getting away with something.

It's that way because Democrats and some complicit Republicans have jacked up regressive taxes.

Want a more progressive system? Cut the regressive taxes and ask government to live with less.

We can't cut our way to prosperity? No, we can't TAX our way to prosperity.

At least the governor removed any shred of a doubt that he believes in government.

The address was nothing more than a plea for mega government. It was the most government-centric state of the state since at least Wendy Anderson.

Dayton is a believer in Big Government.

Billions in tax increases and a mere \$167 million in cuts.

Finally, we got a big laugh out of the governor's challenge for all of us to give up our selfish interests for the common good.

So, governor, what are the public unions like AFSCME giving up for the common good?

Pay raises? No.

Gold-plated benefits? No.

Vacation and holiday time? No.

Again, governor, what are your political cronies giving up as the rest of us are asked to pay for more government?

2/15/13

In This Issue:

Editors' Note: The results are in! Last week, we conducted a most unscientific poll to find the most ridiculous Democrat presidential photo. The three finalists were Mike Dukakis in the tank, John Kerry with the borrowed hunting clothes, and Barack H. Obama daintily holding a 12 gauge over/under.

You, the readers, were passionate in your picks, stating that your choice HAD to be the winner. Well, the mob has spoken and Obama the trappist has won. Yes, he indeed looks like a vegan holding a Big Mac in that photo.

- 1. Another Victory for the Taxpayer!**
- 2. Nick Zerwas Stands Tall.**
- 3. Dayton the Divider.**
- 4. Special Elections Define the Parties.**
- 5. Bill of the Week.**

ANOTHER VICTORY FOR THE TAXPAYER!

Elections indeed have consequences. In Anoka County, those consequences have been nothing short of excellent for the hard working, middle class folks who make this fair county their home.

This week, the county board repealed "prevailing wages" on large county projects, thereby saving taxpayers money.

Prevailing wage requires a contractor to pay certain wages on a construction project, not what the market will bear.

By repealing prevailing wages, a broader range of contractors will be able to compete for work and the price the taxpayers will pay will be more reflective of market conditions instead of a government-imposed wage that is often times higher than the average wage rate in the market.

Sources tell us that it was a 4-2 vote, with Scott Schulte absent.

Sivarajah, West, Look, and Braastad in favor. Kordiak and LeDoux opposed.

[Contact](#) those four and thank them for coming through on their campaign promises to put the taxpayer and not special interests first.

As for the other two, would you have expected any different?

This is big news, Watchdogs. Your board has come through for you and has taken on a special interest group other counties fear to anger.

Congratulations to the courageous four!

NICK ZERWAS STANDS TALL

Watchdogs in the Elk River area should give thanks to freshman state Representative Nick Zerwas, a Republican, of course.

Zerwas has authored a [bill](#) that would stop the inane practice of cities and counties paying the state sales tax, a true shell game if we've ever seen one.

(Also give kudos to Senator Dave Senjem, who has authored the Senate companion bill).

City taxes the taxpayer and then turns around and sends that money to Saint Paul.

Here's a prime example: your city engages in the core government function of building a fire station to serve a growing population. When the city builds the station, it pays all the sales taxes that normally apply to the purchase of concrete blocks, steel, glass, piping, wiring materials, etc.

What sense does that make?

Oh, and there is a strong element of political influence at work in this scheme.

First, townships and school districts have a blanket exemption from this scheme.

Second, some local units of government are powerful enough to get special exemptions through the legislature. In other words, they have lobbyists to do the deals.

Remember the fire station example? Watchdog sources at the Capitol can't remember the last time a fire station construction project got a legislative exemption from the sales tax.

But guess who did? Northstar commuter rail. Yep, the white elephant of the North was exempt from the sales tax while all the local road and bridge projects in the area paid the sales tax.

The Zerwas/Senjem bill would fix this issue.

And the issue is about to get worse. Much worse.

Governor Dayton's tax scheme seeks to apply the sales tax to all professional services cities and counties purchase (legal, accounting, engineering, human resources).

The Watchdog has covered this issue in recent weeks and it's a serious concern to local units of government, which are finding out that all the additional promised aids and credits will still net out to a cost to these cities and counties - a cost that will be passed on to taxpayers in the form of reduced services or increased taxes.

On a side note, we at Watchdog HQ are getting a huge kick out of the mainstream media finally getting on this issue way after we started talking about it. With right hand, Dayton serves up aids/credits to cities and counties while he dangles a \$500 bill in front of property tax payers.

With the left hand, he delivers a bill for an expanded sales tax that he uses to increase government spending.

And speaking of the Dayton tax scheme, let's get right down to brass tacks. We're so sick of the media attempting to cover up this pig by spilling all sorts of ink parroting the DFL talking points about not looking at any of the ugly individual parts but instead focus on the semi-ugly whole. Or talking points about who won't get hammered by this scheme or finding the one business owner who pays some tax and is eager to see other businesses get hammered as well (any thought to parity by cutting EXISTING "unfair" taxes?).

Or the banter about the rich paying their fair share, even though they pay the vast, vast majority of income taxes (any thought to making the tax system more progressive by laying off the regressive taxes instead of increasing progressive taxes?).

This budget is nothing more than a tax plan to swell and bloat state coffers to enable more spending.

It has nothing to do with reform, cuts, stability, or fairness. It's about growing government. Period. End of story.

At a minimum, conservatives need to stop enabling this propaganda by agreeing with liberals that this is a \$2 billion tax increase. No, it's a \$2 billion NET tax increase, after expenses are netted out like the \$500 property tax check gimmick.

In reality, Dayton proposes a \$3.6 billion tax increase. Not \$2 billion. \$3.6 billion.

DAYTON THE DIVIDER

The underpinning of any good DFL tax plan is a healthy dose of class warfare, the fomentation of envy towards the successful.

Moreover, that fomentation of envy must be accompanied by the insinuation that the successful got that way merely by luck and not their inherent talents coupled with hard work.

Put another way, it's much easier to countenance government confiscation of another's property if it is perceived that the other person never really EARNED it. If they only got it by luck, like finding \$1 million on the sidewalk, then it's cool if government swipes a chunk and "spreads the wealth around" so to speak.

Our governor has got quite a handle on that one. Take his income tax plan. It's only about the "top 2%" paying their "FAIR share." It's about FAIRNESS.

Don't worry, guys. Someone else will pay the tab.

Here we go again.

Much has rightly been made lately of the fact that Dayton's income tax increase will hit the 92% of Minnesota small businesses that pay their taxes as individuals.

Not to worry. Dayton the Divider is on the case again.

Watchdog CEO Harold Hamilton attended a Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce breakfast this morning where the topic of debate was the Dayton Tax Scheme.

HH reports the following:

When this issue was raised, an official from the MN Department of Revenue told anxious small business owners in the audience to take a chill pill.

By this official's estimation, only about 6% of these small businesses are successful enough to be subject to the income tax increase.

Well, that's just swell.

Bill Blazar of the MN Chamber of Commerce was a part of the panel and noted that while statistics are hard to come by, there are anywhere between 150,000 and 400,000 business entities in the state.

That means that between 9,000 and 24,000 businesses would be subject to this massive income tax increase.

How many jobs are at stake when between 9,000 and 24,000 job creating entities are in the kill zone?

Especially when these businesses are among our healthiest and most vibrant?

A small business that makes little or no money ain't hiring, folks. You need positive cash flow and a healthy balance sheet to hire, train, pay, and cover benefits for a new employee.

It's only the top 2%. It's only 6% of job creators.

Someone else will pay the freight. Divide and conquer.

No. It's a tax scheme that will ALL of us.

SPECIAL ELECTIONS DEFINE THE PARTIES

As readers know, there were two special elections for Minnesota House seats this week, one retained by the DFL and the other retained by the GOP.

The Watchdog was struck by looking at each candidate's web site and the way in which each winning candidate presented their biographies to the voters.

In many ways, these bios say much about what each party stands for and the priorities of those parties.

Read and draw your own conclusions.

[Clark Johnson](#) (DFL):

Professional Experience:

- * Minnesota State University, Mankato. Student Relations Coordinator and Social Studies Coordinator. 1985 to present.
- * ITESM, Irapuato, Mexico. High school social studies teacher. 1996-97.
- * West High School, Mankato. Part-time social studies teacher. 1985-87 and 1992-93.
- * Minnesota Valley Action Council, Mankato. Outreach Coordinator. 1982-1984.
- * Institute for Cultural Affairs, Kenya. Volunteer in Community Development. 1981.
- * U.S. Census. District Manager for 1980 Census in eastern North Dakota. 1979-1980.
- * Former Board Member for Echo Food Shelf, Welcome Inn (1980's) and MinorsAsia.org. 2006-2012.
- Advisor to YMCA Youth in Government Program. 1985-2008.

Tama Theis (GOP):

Co-owner, CFO and Office Manager, Greg E. Theis Remodeling
Mentor to small business owners as former President of the Central Minnesota Builders Association
Past Chair & Vice Chair of Chamber Connection, St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce
Sales & Management Program Advisory Board, St. Cloud Technical & Community College

Good Shepherd Lutheran Foundation Board
Commissioner, City of St. Cloud Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Board
President (3rd term) of Birthline, Inc.
Quiet Oaks Hospice House Board of Directors
Helped raise funds and build a skateboard park in St. Cloud
Volunteer, Freedom Flight Inc. - Bringing awareness to POW/MIAs

BILL OF THE WEEK

This week's winner is something else. It's all about giving convicted violent felons the ability to regain the right to possess a fire arm.

That's right. At the same time the DFL legislature is working to take fire arms away from the law abiding, they are simultaneously seeking to give violent cons guns.

[HF 486](#) is authored by Rep. Carolyn Laine of Columbia Heights. Rep. Connie Bernardy of Fridley is a co-author as are reps. Loeffler and Clark of Minneapolis and Moran of Saint Paul.

The Senate [companion](#) is authored by Barb Goodwin of Columbia Heights.

Apparently, those communities are so safe, convicted thugs deserve guns.

The bill essentially says that anyone who has convinced the board of pardons that they are of "good character and reputation" may get the right to own a fire arm restored.

And just who are the people who we define as a "violent felon?"

State law defines, among others, these crimes of violence:

- murder
- kidnapping
- criminal sexual conduct
- stalking
- child abuse
- arson

That's just great. The board of pardons is staffed by humans. Humans who make mistakes. Humans who may take a view of the world that is perhaps a bit too optimistic and utopian regarding the ability of people to change. Humans who may fall victim to a criminal who can fool people regarding their rehabilitated nature.

Handguns for child molesters? Sure.

Handguns for kidnapers? Sure.

Handguns for the law abiding? Nope. Not needed for hunting. Not needed for "legitimate" purposes. Not needed by you.

Wow.

2/22/13

In This Issue:

1. **Thuggery.**
2. **Eating Our Own.**
3. **Good Money After Bad.**

THUGGERY

Well, that didn't take long. In the wake of the Anoka County Board's eminently correct and courageous vote to pare back its prevailing wage ordinance, Big Labor immediately whipped up its membership, inciting them to belligerence and bellicosity.

Check out some of the these Facebook posts from Teamsters Joint Council 32:

Today Anoka County Board of Commissioners voted in favor of eliminating prevailing wage standards in county projects. This is ant-Union and anti-worker. Please call Matt Look @ 612-558-9111, Julie Braastad @ 612-238-2355, Robyn West @ 612-804-8207 and Rohnda Sivarajah @ 763-274-4213. Tell them they should be ashamed by hurting working families!

(Editor's Note: It's "Rhonda," not "Rohnda." At least get the name right. She's only been in office for a few years).

Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look says that the reason he eliminated prevailing wage in Anoka County was because "Union members are lazy." Call him at 612-558-9111 and let him know how insulting and incorrect his comments are.

Anoka County Commisioner Matt Look just a few minutes ago sent a threatening text message because of the calls he's received. Call him again and tell him his threats will not silence our voices! Commissioner Matt Look 612-558-9111.

Also, feel free to call him over the weekend if you didn't get a chance to call him today. He has provided his cellular number on the website because I'm sure he is eager to hear from all of us lazy Union members!

There's nothing wrong with contacting elected officials, but encouraging them to shame board members?

Encouraging texts and cell phone calls on weekends?

Moreover, sources tell the Watchdog that the accusations against Look regarding threats and comments about "lazy" union members aren't true.

We'll stand with Commissioner Look until the Teamsters, who don't get the benefit of the doubt from us, prove otherwise.

In any case, even if true, why post them on Facebook? What is to be gained other than whipping up people and adding fuel to the fire?

No wonder these guys are losing membership and influence. What is this, the 1930s?

Moreover, maybe all this pot stirring is a way to distract Teamster members from the ugly reality that one of their Anoka County locals is mired in financial scandal, which seems to be in the DNA of the Teamsters.

[Teamsters Local 120, based in Blaine, is under heavy scrutiny and emergency trusteeship after an independent panel uncovered alleged acts of misconduct.](#)

Way to go, Teamsters leadership. I'm sure all this thuggery will go a long way towards mending fences with all the commissioners you worked against during the elections last year.

These guys seem to think the Good Ol' Boys are still in charge.

By the way, be sure to contact Matt Look and let him know that the majority of taxpayers are behind him.

You can find his number above, courtesy of the Teamsters.

EATING OUR OWN

Watchdogs, let's take a chill pill and cool out for a moment on state Senator Branden Petersen.

Unless you were a Teamster busy texting Matt Look all week, you know that Petersen publically stated that he will support a bill legalizing gay marriage if certain conditions are met.

Unfortunately, the response from some conservatives was hateful, petty, and fairly ignorant.

A prime example is the Facebook posting of one Anoka County conservative who labeled Petersen a "piece of s**," and wished that Petersen and his father-in-law (who is gay) "get what they deserve."

The Watchdog isn't going to defend Petersen's stand on this issue or argue in favor of gay marriage.

We know that many of our loyal readers disagree with him on this issue and passionately so.

That's fine and it's the constitutional right of our readers to support or oppose candidates for office.

But we need to be more adult about this, folks. Overall, we're on the same team.

And while we won't be advocating gay marriage, we will be happy to defend Petersen's record thus far at the Capitol and point out that he's a true libertarian who is willing to cast his vote in favor of less government and individual freedom.

Remember last year when he took on the Teachers' Union and chief authored a bill to cut back teacher tenure and allow districts to make layoff decisions based on merit and not seniority?

Pretty bold stuff for a freshman from a swing district.

And how about that 2012 Taxpayer's League score? Perfect 100%. Lifetime score of 85.

He also sports an "A" rating from the National Rifle Association.

He is Pro Life and votes that way.

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) has scored Petersen at 100% regarding his votes that affect small businesses in Minnesota.

Hence, you folks out there screaming about Petersen being a RINO and a traitor need to back off.

It's simply not true. Petersen has proven his bona fides and can call himself a conservative and a libertarian.

If you don't like his stand on gay marriage, feel free to disagree. You have the right to withdraw your support from Petersen and to work against him when next stands for re-election.

When 2016 rolls around, the Watchdog will survey Petersen's overall body of work in the Senate and pass judgment then.

In the meantime, we will be happy to thank Petersen for his commitment to free market capitalism, school choice, low taxes and limited government.

Moreover, it's a joke to see some of these anti-gay marriage groups jump on Petersen and use his name to raise money to fight what they themselves brought on with their hare brained constitutional amendment last year.

Remember their claims?

Let's put a gay marriage ban on the ballot in 2012! It will drive conservatives to the polls! It will drain money away from the DFL! People will love it!

How did that all work out?

Liberals outvoted us, we got outspent all around, and we lost our historic majorities in the legislature.

We got killed in some suburban districts because of the marriage amendment.

Frankly, the majority of conservatives in this state are sick and tired of hearing from the same group of incompetent self-described GOP "strategists" who keep giving us losing propositions.

The marriage amendment, Tom Emmer, Kurt Bills, Allen Quist.

Goodness, this crowd managed to lose photo ID! It was an 80% positive issue going into the election.

We've had enough of your bad advice and we're paying the price.

We haven't turned our back on conservative ideals. We've just grown tired of your amazing ability to turn those universal ideals into losing campaigns.

Unlike Midas, everything you people touch turns into...

Branden Petersen isn't the problem.

GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD

The joke we all know as Northstar commuter rail keeps stealing tax dollars and turning into a bigger white elephant day by day.

Let's review the past few months. because the line is a failure, ticket prices were cut, further worsening the lines massive operating subsidies.

We taxpayers also footed the bill for a \$13 million station stop in Ramsey, even though we have a station stop just up Highway 10 in Elk River.

But we needed that stop in order to bail out another taxpayer-financed boondoggle called the Ramsey Town Center.

And now we learn that another \$10.3 million will be blown upgrading the Anoka station stop in order to try and spur the promised economic development that never happened there in the first place.

According to published media reports, the \$10.3 million will be spent on a pedestrian bridge over the tracks and a three story parking ramp on site.

Thus far, the station has been a bust economically, failing to bring the promised jobs and tax base expansion.

What a total joke.

Visit the station on any weekday morning. The existing surface lot is nowhere near capacity.

They we read Mayor Phil Rice stating that the upgrades will facilitate the building of apartments and townhomes.

The last thing Anoka needs is more high density housing, especially if it is taxpayer-subsidized "workforce" housing.

Economic development isn't more apartments, mayor.

Economic development is attracting wealth-creating private sector jobs.

And to think that some legislators want to expand Northstar.

Go ahead. Why should Anoka County shoulder the misery of Northstar by ourselves?

3/1/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Quote of the Week.**
- 2. Freak Out.**
- 3. ObamaCare's Taxes.**
- 4. The Artificial Cost of Labor.**

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits -- either now or in the future."

Who said that? Yes, one Barack Hussein Obama.

Since taking office, his budgets have produced deficits in excess of \$1 trillion every fiscal year.

Our national debt stands in excess of \$16 trillion.

FREAK OUT

Do you have your generator fueled? Guns oiled, functions check completed? HAM radio properly tuned?

Your federal government stands on the cusp of Armageddon. The Abyss. This is worse than Terminator: Judgment Day. Calling Crystal Palace.

The president has done his level best to induce panic in the populace and convince you that Fiscal Holocaust is upon us.

When the bells tolls midnight, your humble, unobtrusive, benevolent federal government will suffer the horror of being deprived of \$85 billion from its \$3.6 TRILLION budget.

Aircraft carriers mothballed. Alien takeover. Meat inspectors furloughed. Zombies on the loose. Fewer TSA agents to grope your buttocks and strip search the elderly at airports. Mongol hordes at the gate. Who will man the drones over Coon Rapids?

A president screaming "fire!" in a crowded theater.

And with 57% believing that automatic cuts are the only way to get the federal budget under control, fewer and fewer are running towards the exits.

The Freak Out parade is a party of one, with perhaps some federal government workers straggling behind.

For beleaguered taxpayers who have seen their taxes rise dramatically while seeing incomes fall under this regime. a 2.3% cut in the budget doesn't exactly inspire panic - or sympathy.

But that these families only had to cut 2.3% from the family budget.

The federal government spends \$10.5 billion a day.

Eight days worth of spending and we're supposed to panic.

Our federal government borrows nearly \$5 billion per day.

Stop the deadbeat routine for a mere 17 days.

About 10% of the \$800 billion "stimulus."

Since taking office, Obama has grown the federal budget by 16.5%.

And we're supposed to run into the streets, tear at our clothes, pull out our hair, and don the sackcloth over \$85 billion.

Yawn...

Republicans need to stand tall and demonstrate that this de minimus cut to federal spending is both necessary and far from tragic.

Having said that, conservatives shouldn't cheer the sequester too much.

The focus on this issue distracts from a much larger issue, that of entitlement spending, the true cause of the budget crisis.

The sequester merely nicks discretionary spending, while doing nothing to address entitlements.

Moreover, these cuts need to be considered in light of Obama's tax increases he has already won.

\$1 trillion over the next 8 years for ObamaCare and the hundreds of billions in tax increases as a result of Republican capitulation on the Fiscal Cliff.

So grab your 40 watt plasma rifle and set phasers for "stun."

~~Global cooling~~ ~~Global warming~~ ~~Alar~~ ~~AIDS~~ ~~acid rain~~ ~~fiscal cliff~~ Sequestration is coming to annihilate the world.

Or not.

OBAMACARE'S TAXES

There are many, many aspects of ObamaCare that trouble any freedom loving citizen.

The nationalization of 1/6th of the nation's economy will do that.

The Minnesota House will take up a bill on Monday afternoon that will implement a state-administered health insurance exchange, making the state a co-conspirator in this enterprise.

While the DFL has the votes to pass the bill, the debate will provide an opportunity for Republicans to weigh in on not only the exchange, but ObamaCare in general.

As a service to the good men and women serving in the House Republican Caucus, we republish this primer from Americans for Tax Reform laying out the biggest ObamaCare taxes.

The five major Obamacare taxes taking effect on January 1 are as follows:

The Obamacare Medical Device Tax: Medical device manufacturers employ 409,000 people in 12,000 plants across the country. Obamacare imposes a new 2.3 percent excise tax on gross sales - even if the company does not earn a profit in a given year. In addition to killing small business jobs and impacting research and development budgets, this will increase the cost of your health care - making everything from pacemakers to artificial hips more expensive.

The Obamacare Flex Account Tax: The 30-35 million Americans who use a pre-tax Flexible Spending Account (FSA) at work to pay for their family's basic medical needs will face a new government cap of \$2500. This will squeeze \$13 billion of tax money from Americans over the next ten years. (Currently, the accounts are unlimited under federal law, though employers are allowed to set a cap.)

There is one group of FSA owners for whom this new cap will be particularly cruel and onerous: parents of special needs children. There are several million families with special needs children in the United States, and many of them use FSAs to pay for special needs education. Tuition rates at one leading school that teaches special needs children in Washington, D.C. (National Child Research Center) can easily exceed \$14,000 per year. Under tax rules, FSA dollars can be used to pay for this type of special needs education. This Obamacare tax provision will limit the options available to these families.

The Obamacare Surtax on Investment Income: This is a new, 3.8 percentage point surtax on investment income earned in households making at least \$250,000 (\$200,000 single).

The Obamacare "Haircut" for Medical Itemized Deductions: Currently, those Americans facing high medical expenses are allowed a deduction to the extent that those expenses exceed 7.5 percent of adjusted gross income (AGI). This tax increase imposes a threshold of 10 percent of AGI. By limiting this deduction, Obamacare widens the net of taxable income for the sickest Americans. This tax provision will most harm near retirees and those with modest incomes but high medical bills.

The Obamacare Medicare Payroll Tax Hike: The Medicare payroll tax is currently 2.9 percent on all wages and self-employment profits. Under this tax hike, wages and profits exceeding \$200,000 (\$250,000 in the case of married couples) will face a 3.8 percent rate instead. This is a direct marginal income tax hike on small business owners, who are liable for self-employment tax in most cases.

THE ARTIFICIAL COST OF LABOR

One of the toughest issues for people to grasp is the folly of minimum wage laws.

Perhaps it's because on the surface it seems to be a benevolent and appealing issue.

Who doesn't want people to earn a decent living?

The problem is that, like many liberal ideas, the practical result is harmful to the very people who are allegedly helped.

A person's labor in the market place is like any other commodity. There is a supply and a demand. Where the two meet represents what the market is willing to pay for that labor.

That's the price that consumers are willing to pay and the price producers are willing to sell for.

Whether \$5 or \$500 an hour, that's what the market is willing to pay for that labor.

Just like the market for peanut butter or cars.

When an artificial floor is put in place, the market is disrupted.

When prices are made artificially high, the results are often harmful.

First, all those who possess labor skills below the market value won't be able to enter the marketplace and get hired.

Suppose the government passed a law that cars couldn't be sold for less than \$10,000.

What would happen to cars that were worth less than that on the market?

They wouldn't get sold because consumers would demand only cars that were actually worth \$10,000 or more.

The same is true for labor.

In other words, the most difficult to employ (young people, the disabled) are the first to be shut out of the marketplace.

The disabled greatly benefit from learning skills and knowing the dignity that comes with being a productive and taxpaying member of society.

Young people primarily benefit from entry level jobs because they teach the "soft skills" that are needed for success in any job, whether doctor, soldier, accountant, or otherwise.

Showing up on time, working as a team, being productive.

The alternative for many of these people is dependency, whether on government, family, or the non-profit sector.

Those people and society at large are decidedly not better served by them being priced out of the market place and put on the sidelines.

Moreover, minimum wages artificially raise human capital costs for job creators.

We all know that when you raise the price of something, you reduce demand. Take taxes, which artificially raise costs (ahem, tobacco taxes).

In short, there will be fewer jobs because job creators can afford to buy less labor.

A related issue, is the effect on prices. Another way in which producers deal with higher input costs (in this case labor) is to pass the cost on to customers, to the extent that market place competition allows it.

Those higher prices are paid by consumers, many of whom don't have a lot of discretionary income to pay higher prices to satisfy the political desires of the Left.

In other words, if producers can pass along those costs, they will.

If they can't, they buy less labor, which means fewer jobs and higher unemployment (and higher unemployment costs).

If they can do neither, they go out of business, putting more people on unemployment.

Minimum wages laws reduce employment opportunities for the very people who need them the most while raising costs for both the private sector and for government.

Is it 2014 yet?

3/8/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Everyone is Rich.**
- 2. The Politics of Envy.**
- 3. Hero of the Week.**

EVERYONE IS RICH

Everyone is rich, according to Governor Dayton and the DFL majorities in the Minnesota legislature.

The Party of the Workin' Man, that always pledges to be interested strictly in confiscating from the rich, just can't keep their hands out of every man's wallet. When it comes right down to it, the DFL always, always, picks the government budget over the family budget.

In the past, we have educated our loyal readers about the Suits Index, a system for evaluating how progressive (or regressive) a tax is.

A positive number means the tax is *progressive*, meaning that the tax burden as a share of household income generally increases with income.

A Suits Index of zero means the tax system is *proportional* -- the tax burden as a share of a household income is the same for high income households as for low income households.

A negative Suits Index means the tax system is *regressive* - the tax burden as a share of household income generally falls with income.

The Suits Index can be applied to specific tax proposals or to general tax proposals.

For example, alcohol and tobacco taxes have a highly negative Suits Index. As does a gasoline tax.

So how has our DFL majority treated the Workin' Man so far? No regressive taxes, right?

Wrong.

As mentioned above, alcohol and tobacco taxes are the most regressive, hammering the poor.

Governor Dayton proposes a \$150 million tobacco tax increase. The Suits Index is a whopping negative $-.582$ on the index.

And while the Index can be a complex and nerdy proposition, the point is that there is empirical, scientific data to demonstrate that Dayton and DFL cronies are doing way more than making the rich pay their "fair share."

If the governor's proposal wasn't enough, the legislature has weighed in with a tobacco tax increase of its own.

House File 91 and its Senate companion number 209.

This bill would increase the tax on tobacco products, including cigarettes and snuff, by increasing taxes on distributors as well as retailers, ultimately hammering the consumer. This gem would increase tobacco taxes by \$441 million over the two-year budget cycle.

In other words, this increase is nearly three times as big as the Dayton increase.

And don't forget about that other sin, booze.

While Governor Dayton left that tax stone turned over, the DFL legislature didn't.

Rep. Karen Clark has proposed a bill to nearly quadruple the tax on beer while also jacking up taxes on wine and hard liquor.

That Joe Six Pack. It's about that rich SOB paid his fair share.

Another extremely regressive tax is the gasoline tax and associated taxes and fees revolving around cars, that fossil fuel burning menace that keeps you from riding the trolley and other more eco-friendly modes of mass transit.

The DFL legislature has a plan for that, wanting to raise the gas tax by 9.5 cents per gallon, as well as raising tab fees and expanding the sales tax for transportation items by another half cent.

And we're not done. Bear with us as we share a couple more examples of how the DFL and Governor Dayton are sticking it to the 99%.

The Suits Index regarding the governor's tobacco tax proposal came from his own Department of Revenue (DOR).

The DOR had this to say about two other aspects of his tax plan:

State Sales Tax. In combination, the rate cut (down 20%) and expanded tax base yield a tax increase of nearly \$1.5 billion per year. Modeling the components as best we can

at this time yields a Suits Index of -0.192. The net impact of the sales tax changes are **regressive**, as expected.

Local Sales Taxes. Base expansion will increase local sales tax revenue, as will the proposed 0.25% transit tax in the 7-county metro area - an increase of roughly \$300 million. The Suits Index for the increase in local sales taxes is -0.215.

All of this leads to a vicious DFL-inspired taxing circle.

They raise regressive taxes and then turn around and complain that the system overall is too regressive.

The solution, of course, is to raise progressive taxes, in much the same way a junkie tweaks on uppers and then needs some downers to balance the toxic stew.

Moreover, it points to rank hypocrisy, claiming to be all about the working man while taxing the tar out of him to feed an ever growing, ever more aggressive constituency of takers, voracious consumers of government services and treasure.

Regressive taxes? The DFL is starting to corner the market.

THE POLITICS OF ENVY

Was it really news this week when the Star Tribune reported that a poll they commissioned revealed that the only taxes Minnesotans are interested in raising are those on someone else?

We think the real news there was that only 54% are okay with raising income taxes on the "rich."

Having said that, it was the only tax that got majority approval in the poll.

While the public policy and fiscal implications of tax increases are extremely important, it is just as important to explore the moral and emotional aspects of these policies.

Frankly put, the politics of class warfare is on full display with Governor Dayton's income tax proposal.

He foments and whips up a terribly ugly human emotion - envy. He demands that successful people turn over more of their resources to government, in large part because they deserve it.

Far from being celebrated as job creators and the epitome of the American Dream, successful people are held up as objects of derision and ridicule. Moreover, they are used as wedge issues and the subject of a harsh political narrative.

Look at the rich! They have more than you do! Make them pay more. And watch those Republicans defend them!

It's unseemly, vile, and one of the most abhorrent aspects of our political discourse.

It's also so very European, where the entrepreneur is reviled and as popular the local street criminal.

One of the primary reasons America boasts of remarkable prosperity is precisely because our culture celebrates the entrepreneur and encourages entrepreneurial behavior.

Dayton's rhetoric is just the opposite.

Then again, it is easy to understand why our governor has no connection to labor of love that comes with taking the risk to start your own business, be your own boss, and create a few jobs.

Conservatives want to celebrate success and encourage other to emulate the character traits that lead to success in life.

It seems the Left is more interested in making excuses for not succeeding while punishing those who do.

Envy is indeed an ugly emotion.

HERO OF THE WEEK

Let's hear it for state Senator [Dave Brown](#) (R-Becker). Senator Brown offered an amendment to the disastrous health insurance exchange that was debated and passed last night in the Minnesota Senate.

Brown's amendment would force every legislator to buy health insurance from the very exchange they created.

His amendment was adopted but the victory will be short lived.

It will likely be removed in conference committee.

Nonetheless, Senator Brown is to be commended for this effort and his other actions to promote freedom and limited government.

Three cheers for Dave Brown!

3/15/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Let's Give Thanks.**
- 2. Pennywise and Pound Foolish.**
- 3. Budget Revised, Still Stinks.**

LET'S GIVE THANKS

While we focus on various issues in Saint Paul, we need to keep in mind and give high thanks and praise to our Republican legislators who are fighting the good fight at the Capitol.

Despite the knowledge that the DFL essentially has the votes to pass just about any bill it wants, our GOP legislators are putting up a great battle at every turn.

Offering amendments, speaking with passion, keeping up attendance in committees and generally doing everything in their power to make the DFL pay a price for passing bad legislation.

It would be easier to just vote "no" and head home for the day to family, friends, and private sector jobs.

Instead, these legislators devote untold hours to researching bills, plotting strategy, crafting amendments (get them in 24 hours in advance!) and speaking out against bills that grow government and restrict freedom.

While Senator David Hann and Rep. Kurt Daudt are leading the charge, there are so many other good legislators committed to doing a whole lot of heavy lifting on our behalf.

Yes, you can a vote here or there to gripe about, but the undeniable fact is that one party is for freedom and liberty and the other one isn't.

Watchdogs, be thankful that these good people are in Saint Paul giving their all to protect the principles and values we hold sacred.

Take a moment to drop your Republican legislator [a note of thanks](#). If you are behind enemy lines in DFL territory, adopt a Republican and tell them they are representing you when they vote in favor of freedom.

PENNYWISE AND POUND FOOLISH

Speaking of legislators who are putting in overtime to protect our wallets, the Watchdog has a bone to pick with some members of the family.

In short, you are dead wrong in bad mouthing pay raises for legislators.

It's high time to raise the pay level. Here's why.

The background here is that a compensation council has recommended pay raises for legislators as well as other elected and appointed officials.

Currently, Minnesota legislators make \$31,140 annually, not counting other income and perks like per diem and housing (eligible only if your home is a distance from Saint Paul).

The pay has been at this level since the 1990s.

The compensation council has recommended raising the level to about \$42,000 annually.

It's worth it.

The simple fact is that Republicans not to need a government job and have other options.

Thus, many quality conservative candidates have passed on the opportunity to run for the legislature while others don't stay long, giving the DFL a comparative advantage in terms of experience.

The state has a \$38 billion budget and some want to quibble about a \$10,000 pay raise.

We want quality people managing government.

How many readers out there have a business? Do hire on the basis of lowest pay or do you seek quality and value-added people?

Exactly.

And don't get us wrong. There are some very talented and intelligent folks serving right now.

But what many of them won't tell you is that their service is a tremendous hardship on their careers and their families.

Serving in the legislature isn't like city council or county board. It's a full time job and then some for about half the year.

There aren't many jobs out there that allow you to walk away January through late May.

Hey, if you know of one of those jobs, pass it on to the Watchdog. We would be happy to pass it along to some good legislators we know.

And is it really part-time?

How many of you contact your legislator when the legislature isn't in session and expect a return call or email?

How many of you ask your legislator to attend some event during the interim period?

Sorry, they don't get to turn off the phone or the email during the summer.

That's what's up.

Yes, we wish there were term limits.

Yes, we wish the legislature would meet less often.

Yes, we wish government just didn't matter so much.

If wishes were horses, many would ride.

But the reality is that we've got good conservatives we need to retain and we have others we need to attract.

Legislators shouldn't get rich and public service shouldn't be a career.

On the other hand, it shouldn't be a vow of poverty or a barrier to talented people who simply can't afford to serve.

The case for higher pay would be stronger if per diem was scrapped. Few understand it and it's just a back door pay raise anyway.

The bottom line is that higher pay will retain the talent we have now and help the Cause recruit more.

Opposing a pay raise is pennywise and pound foolish.

A 3% pay raise or a \$1.6 billion tax increase?

Fight the real fight, people.

BUDGET REVISED, STILL STINKS

So Governor Dayton got smoked on his budget and had to retreat from the dreadful ~~European Value Added Tax~~ business to business tax and his plan to tax prom dresses and winter coats.

Let's take a run through the revised and wholly unimproved budget.

INCOME TAX

Yes, the governor still proposes to tax achievement and small business with a new higher income tax on small businesses and other with incomes over \$250,000 (\$150,000 for those filing as individuals).

Don't forget that wealthy Minnesotans pay the vast majority of income taxes already.

And don't forget that most small businesses in Minnesota pay their taxes as individuals.

The governor isn't taxing the idle rich. He's taxing main street job creators.

Finally, punishing successful people for being successful isn't only immoral, it's downright European. It's, well, downright [French](#).

DEBT SERVICE FOR MORE DEBT

The new budget proposes to set aside about \$54.5 million to finance a \$750 million bonding bill. All this even though it's not a bonding year, he did a bonding bill last year, and putting more spending on the government credit card is what got us into this mess in the first place.

Debt service is the fastest growing area of the state budget.

More debt, governor? Really?

EDUCATION SHIFT BUY BACK

Remember that whole campaign last fall about borrowing money from schools? Remember that promise to pay back that rapacious, unjust, abhorrent IOU?

Forget about it. Just kidding. It was only a cynical election ploy.

The governor has withdrawn his proposal and adds it to the "never mind" category.

WATER USE FEE

The governor proposes to jack up water use fees on large consumers of water (read "job creators"). These fees will generate over \$1.5 million in profits for the state.

And here we thought that a "fee" was supposed to only cover the cost of providing the service.

CORRECTIONS

Wow. There are numerous corrections resulting from math errors throughout the budget. How can we trust a budget that comes in with bad numbers time and again?

GOLDY GOPHER EXTORTION

Governor Dayton buys in to the extortion proffered by the U of M. In exchange for freezing tuition for two years, Ski U Mah demands an extra \$42 million in state aid.

This just months after the U was exposed for outrageous administrative costs and pay schemes.

Any reform here? Nope. Just a payoff.

Like the whole state budget, long on government growth and short on reform.

JUST KIDDING - PART III

The governor has proposed cutting tax rates for those businesses that pay under the corporate tax rate.

Just kidding. The governor takes back the \$300 tax cut, leaving Minnesota just as un-competitive as before.

JUST KIDDING - PART IV

Remember the \$500 per household buy off on property taxes? The distraction by the right hand while the left picked your pocket on government to government taxes?

Just kidding. If you pay property taxes, you don't get a break.

But Goldy does. See above.

SCREW THE RICH BUT ALSO SCREW THE POOR

Governor Dayton proposes to raise \$317 million by raising one of the most regressive taxes out there - the cigarette tax.

Notice that the tobacco tax raises more money than taking back the corporate tax cut.

In short, the governor is taxing smokers more than he is taxing Big Business.

Ah, the party of the workin' man.

DON'T HAVE AN ACCIDENT

The governor wants to raise the car rental tax to take in a cool \$15 million.

Need to send your car to the body shop and rent a loaner?

Pay up.

You say your insurance will cover the cost? Yes, and they will recover that cost by charging you more on your premiums.

WE NEED MORE TRAINS

Sales tax increases? Yep. There are more. The governor recommends a \$47 million sales tax increase (quarter cent increase) in the Metro area for what will likely go to funding more trains. Lord knows they don't pay for themselves.

3/22/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Policy or Politics in Anoka County?**
- 2. Property Tax Time.**

POLICY OR POLITICS IN ANOKA COUNTY?

The controversy over the repeal of some aspects of the prevailing wage ordinance in Anoka County won't die down.

That is, the unions who so vehemently opposed this common sense policy won't let it go.

And far from being the kind of respectful public policy debate that should accompany any discussion of a change in law, it was ugly, nasty, disrespectful, and personal.

The union bosses representing certain unions (including some who have NO represented employees working in Anoka County) went on the offensive against county commissioners themselves, criticizing and castigating the way the commissioners conducted themselves as well as attacking them personally.

Remember the whole Facebook fiasco, where social media was used to attack Commissioner Matt Look, encouraging people to contact him on his cell phone or text him on the weekend.

And there was the completely unsubstantiated allegation that Look had called union members "lazy."

Most of that has been removed (why? If it's all indeed true, why not stand behind your venom?).

This one is still posted:

At the Anoka County Board meeting. Shame on [Rhonda Sivarajah](#), Matt Look, Julie Braastad and Robyn West for eliminating prevailing wage standards in Anoka County.

Labor boss Bill McCarthy chimed in:

"At a time when our President, Congress and state legislators are looking at increasing wages for working class people, Anoka County commissioners are lowering wages by repealing the prevailing wage policy for construction workers, who have been hit the hardest by the economic downturn of the last five years - absolutely shameful!"

Perhaps the most ink and activity has been spilled by Dan McConnell, who holds the title of Business Manager for the Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council.

"For a county that prides itself on transparency - that won an award for transparency - there's an awful lack of transparency here."

Well, excuse us. Here we thought the ordinance was repealed at a meeting open to the public.

The issue was fully vetted through the proper committee channels and then debated again before the full board, where a recorded vote was subsequently taken.

That allegation is quite interesting, given the way many union issues down in Saint Paul have been rammed through (check out our sister publication, the Minnesota [Watchdog](#), for more on that issue in our weekly update).

Will McConnell express similar concern with that process? Or is it concern only when the vote is one that the union opposes?

McConnell went so far as to write a letter to the Anoka County Attorney, asking him to investigate possible violations of the law regarding the ordinance repeal.

The Watchdog can find no record of McConnell writing a letter to prosecutors asking them to do a thorough job investigating the alleged corruption in Teamsters Local 120, a union headquartered in Anoka County.

Concern over an ordinance repeal, no apparent similar concern over serious allegations of New Jersey style union corruption.

But is all this concern really over an adjustment of the prevailing wage policy or is it really about politics?

Is it really more about good old fashioned, bare knuckled DFL versus Republican politics?

Unbeknownst to the Watchdog or many taxpayers, McConnell wears two hats.

In addition to being a labor boss, he also holds a powerful role as the chairman of the Minneapolis DFL.

So when McConnell attacks Sivarajah, Look, Braastad and west, is he attacking them in his role as leader of union members or is he attacking them in a partisan manner as a DFL party leader?

The Star Tribune revealed this dual hat role in an article this week that also made it clear that his organization is quite active in conferring political favor on elected officials who toe the line not only on DFL issues, but on labor issues.

Take the Vikings stadium issue.

Many DFL legislators, especially from Minneapolis, opposed government involvement in building a Vikings stadium.

These legislators opposed not only the corporate welfare involved, but also the ignoring of a Minneapolis charter provision that calls for a referendum in these situations.

McConnell himself noted in the article that he has a conflict of interest in holding the two positions.

But for those who fell in line with the union on the stadium got a sweet reward.

According to the article:

Council Member Don Samuels, a stadium backer who attended, recalled feeling surprised at the show of union support because he had not previously enjoyed a close relationship with organized labor.

"I didn't know that that could happen - that all the unions could get together like that, and I got an envelope with ... a couple grand," he said recently.

Really? So you voted one way and you got an envelope stuffed with cash in return?

The article also noted that McConnell was at this meeting to thank those who voted for the stadium.

And these are the kind of people who are getting involved with our politics here in the county?

No wonder the Good Ol' Boys were thrown out of office.

Maybe we can build a checkpoint on all roads leading from Minneapolis to Anoka County.

And let's not forget who the Minneapolis labor people supported in last fall's county commissioner elections:

Dan Erhart (Scott Schulte opponent)
Alison Lister (Matt Look opponent)
Dan Sanders (Robyn West opponent)

Carol LeDoux

Assuredly, the reason that Rhonda Sivarajah's opponent wasn't endorsed is because he was totally unelectable, having numerous run ins with the law.

For this publication, the bruhaha over prevailing wage looks to be a struggle over politics, not public policy.

Thank goodness this county is led by commissioners who are interested in representing Anoka County taxpayers and not Minneapolis labor interests.

PROPERTY TAX TIME

Greetings, Watchdogs. The legislature has gone home for a week's worth of rest and relaxation. Growing government and reducing individual liberties is hard work!

In any case, your local units of government are hard at work as well. Now is a critical time in the calendar cycle regarding your property taxes.

Remember that property taxes are primarily, especially on your residential property, a local tax.

Your county, city, school district, regional rail authority (ugh), and other "special taxing districts" make up the vast majority, if not all, of your property taxes.

To say that Minnesota's property tax system is complex and Byzantine would be an understatement.

The interplay between property value, tax levies and aids/credits requires a PhD in the subject, or at least an advanced degree.

But that isn't an excuse for not gaining a rudimentary understanding of your property taxes in order to ensure you don't get ripped off and to keep your local elected officials accountable.

Notices were recently sent out regarding the "valuation and classification" of your property. That's government speak for what the government thinks your home is worth.

The value of your property is a key component in determining what you owe Mother Government for property taxes.

The good news is that you can appeal this determination if you think that the assessor got it wrong.

Click this link to access an excellent [primer](#) on Minnesota property taxes.

This primer was prepared by the Minnesota Taxpayer's Association (MTA).

The MTA is a non-partisan think tank, not to be confused with our good, friendly, and very partisan friends at the Taxpayer's League of Minnesota.

It is also important to have a basic understanding of property taxes because the complexity invites unscrupulous local elected officials to blame the state for property tax increases.

This famous shell game is based upon the fact that the state offers aids and credits not only to individual property tax payers but also to some local units of government as well.

The old line is that the city or county or school district just had HAD to raise property taxes because of "cuts" in aids and credits.

The first scam is that often times the increase in property taxes goes way beyond what would be needed to backfill any cuts.

The second scam is that this rhetoric ignores the obvious fact that local units of government are free to CUT SPENDING to align spending with revenues.

Here's what the non-partisan MTA had to say about cuts to local government aid and other programs:

Just because state aid has declined does NOT mean that property taxes have to

go up. Like the state, local governments can also cut spending to balance budgets.

When state aids decrease in response to state budget cuts, ask your local officials to

look for ways to cut their budgets as well. Also, when aid is decreased for one type

of jurisdiction and increased by the same amount for another (that is, shifted from one

to another), you should expect the resulting tax increase in the losing jurisdiction to

be somewhat offset by a tax decrease in the jurisdiction getting the increased aid.

Finally, in years when state aid is increased, taxpayers cannot assume that property

taxes will automatically fall. Local government officials may decide that a decrease in one portion of a taxpayer's property tax bill (such as happened for schools in 2002)

may give them "room" to increase taxes in their jurisdiction. Taxpayers must be watchful to make sure that proposed property tax levies are set at an appropriate

level.

In short, state aids can reduce property tax pressures but they can also encourage more spending than would otherwise be supported by local property taxpayers. When the state cuts aids, local governments must either reduce spending or find funding from another source. Determining whether aid cuts really need to trigger property tax increases requires some investigation into revenue and spending issues affecting your local government.

Understand those property taxes, Watchdogs! It is a system ripe for taxpayer abuse.

3/29/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Man, there's some bad news out there. And it's all on the heads of Democrats, who are proving once again that when you push policies contrary to rational human behavior and the laws of economics, you get a big steaming pile of crappy public policy.

- 1. The Many Ugly Faces of ObamaCare.**
- 2. Another Ugly Face.**
- 3. The Case of the Unaccountable Chief Executive.**

THE MANY UGLY FACES OF OBAMACARE

So where do you even start when it comes to perhaps the most ill conceived public policy in American history?

Of course, many of you have read many articles, essays, white papers, and other news items related to this white elephant. In fact, ObamaCare is so bad, no adjective may do it justice. "Obama Care" may in and of itself come to stand for public policy so bad and so devoid of value that in the future we could see the "Obama" prefix attached to wretched, wasteful, unjust legislation, no matter who the elected official who opposes it.

A bridge to nowhere? "ObamaBridge."

A police search and seizure that blatantly violates fundamental liberties? "ObamaStop."

Millions in pork barrel spending? "Pork." Billions in pork barrel spending? "ObamaPork."

Back to the issue at hand.

It was no surprise this week when the Obama Administration had to admit that, indeed, many millions of Americans would see their health care premiums skyrocket under this scheme.

Again, it's basic economics.

When measures to control demand (e.g. price) are artificially reduced or removed, demand goes up, and so do prices.

All resources are limited, including health care. When the doors to the store are thrown open, demand goes up.

When demand control measures are reduced, prices go up, rationing is introduced, or both.

This is what's happening right now.

Some will get free or reduced cost health care because others in the system are subsidizing them. Health care still costs money and is still delivered in many cases by private sector means, both doctors and hospitals.

Because these people and organizations don't offer their resources and talents for free, they have to be paid. Hence, a subsidy flowing from the healthy to the unhealthy.

Moreover, rationing of some type will certainly be introduced, in some cases in a harsh fashion.

Again, all resources are limited. The country can't produce all the radiologists or surgeons the citizens could see. The country can't produce all the Xrays, MRIs, or pacemakers the country could consume.

So, instead of the market acting as a brake on unfettered demand, government will.

Instead of the market place limiting and conserving scarce and valuable resources, some bureaucrat will decide who gets to have a heart transplant.

Any economist from centuries ago could get in a time machine, travel to the present, and tell Democrats this simple fact.

Sorry, Democrats. Alchemy doesn't exist, even political alchemy. You can't turn perceived health care lead into health care gold.

The illusion of health care reform will come in both a massive payment transfer from one group of Americans to another as well as a rationing of health care resources that will simply result in the more politically influential getting their share while others get less.

It is also normal human behavior to be avaricious, which means greedy for our readers from Saint Francis.

It is rational human behavior to desire things, especially when people know they are getting a good deal.

Cash bar at a wedding? Only a couple of drunks willing to pay for the buzz.

Open bar at the same wedding? Drunks galore, puke on the bathroom floor.

When it comes to health care, the same proposition holds true, with an even more important moral component.

An article in the Star Tribune about health care exchanges (note there were no quotes from opponents of the exchange) quoted an older small businessman who was interested in having someone else subsidize his insurance and that of his older employees.

He noted how "unfair" it was to have "discriminated pools" for health insurance.

Really?

And it is similarly unfair that the guy with 10 DUIs pays a higher car insurance rate than the guy who doesn't have a single speeding ticket?

And what of the deadbeat who can't hold a job and has declared bankruptcy twice? Is it unjust that he pay a higher interest rate for a loan than the guy with sterling credit?

And what of the 60 year-old who has smoked his entire life, drinks like a fish, and is 100 pounds overweight. Is it unfair that he pays a higher health insurance premium?

Of course it's not. These claims of "unfairness" and "discrimination" really mask a greedy desire of some people to get something through government coercion they otherwise could not obtain - low cost, high benefit insurance for a person at high risk for major medical problems.

It's the age old scam: politician promises something for one guy, to be paid for by another guy. The guys who get something outnumber the guys who pay for it. Theft by democracy.

A return to democratic republic is in order.

ANOTHER UGLY FACE

Another aspect of ObamaCare that isn't getting enough attention is the cost to local units of government to administer this Leviathan.

We're not talking about benefit sets here or health care delivery. We're talking running the system.

Sources in Anoka County government tell the Watchdog that the county estimates that it will cost \$1.4 million each year to administer ObamaCare and its associated programs.

This is an unfunded mandate and yet another aspect of the hidden and very real costs of this "reform."

Moreover, these sources report that the county is seeking to hire 14 employees alone to beef up the Human Services Department as ObamaCare lurches towards its debut in the county on October 1.

THE CASE OF THE UNACCOUNTABLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As the weeks and months wear on, it becomes more and more apparent that the Vikings stadium extortion is turning out to be an extortion where the important piece, the delivery of money, might not come through.

It's tough to extort someone who doesn't have money. It requires creativity and a pair of stones bigger than the average set found among the already big-stoned extortionist class.

But all this focus on the failure of electronic pull tabs and electronic bingo misses the point or the points, that is.

First, does the buck ever stop with Governor Dayton?

For how long does he apparently get a pass on being incompetent and asleep at the controls of the 747 of state government?

First, the governor was allowed to claim that he had no idea that the stadium bill he negotiated and then signed into law had a provision that allowed for personal seat licenses (PSLs).

Now, he's allowed to claim that he had no idea that estimates of revenue from these games were derived, at least in part, from the companies who hoped to manufacture and sell the games to state government.

That's like asking the car salesman if the rust-proofing package is worth the money.

Every state agency tasked to develop the stadium plan belongs to the executive branch and thus reports to the governor.

That includes the Gambling Control Board, the government agency at the center of the current controversy.

The majority of the board of directors is [appointed](#) by the governor.

The governor led the stadium parade here and now wants to claim he didn't know the parade route, the tune the marching band was playing, or even the purpose of the parade.

No doubt, there will be more examples forthcoming over the next few weeks showing the governor and his administration vouching for the accuracy of the projected revenues and the funding source itself.

The other issue at stake here has nothing to do with the funding source. That argument misses the point.

The real point is that this is just another reason why government shouldn't be involved in the stadium extortion game.

It's simply a game government, especially this government, is ill-equipped to play.

Yes, there are moral reasons for government not to subsidize pro sports. The practical argument is that it's government playing checkers while the pro leagues are playing chess.

Does anyone really think a private bank, hedge fund, or other private financier of a stadium would engage in such a lack of due diligence?

Nope. The consequences are real, unlike in politics, where people like Barack Obama get re-elected after screwing up.

Although the political courage is likely lacking, the real solution here is to repeal the Vikings stadium bill and tell Mr. Wilf that he is welcome to fund the building of his stadium all by himself.

Beyond that, perhaps the governor could help us out by publically declaring that any shortfalls from gaming will be covered in full by Mr. Wilf, with no further obligation or risk on the part of the taxpayers of this great state.

4/5/13

In This Issue:

1. Zygi's Checkbook.

ZYGI'S CHECKBOOK

Wow. Our column last week on the Viking stadium debacle elicited some very, very strong reader reaction.

Of course, our readers are an intelligent lot and they know the folly of taxpayer-financed sports stadiums.

But the toxic combination of a stadium deal combined with dubious and perhaps fraudulent funding has left our Watchdogs in a particularly foul mood.

We received email after email blasting the governor and legislature for not only doing a deal to give Zygi a big subsidy, they gave him one that doesn't work and was known to be a dubious funding source from the outset.

Now those chickens come home to roost.

Of late various issues have come to the fore, and legislators and other elected officials are right to raise them.

It is right to call for slowing down the process, as Senator Sean Nienow and Rep. Mary Franson have done.

It is right to ask for legislative oversight of the exactly what went wrong in the process and who should be held accountable, as Senator Nienow has also done, even when it causes Governor Dayton to go into middle school mode and accuse Nienow of "shooting his mouth off." Way to represent the state, Mr. Chief Executive.

And it is eminently correct to call out the chief executive on his befuddlement and surprise regarding very important aspects of the stadium deal, including the use of personal seat licenses and the preparation of revenue estimates by the very people with a vested interest in the devices that produce the revenues to finance the stadium.

The lack of leadership is palpable and second only to the lack of leadership exhibited by the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

But these issues aren't the real issue.

The real issue here is where Zygmunt Wilf is in this whole debacle.

The public is asking what the governor and the legislature are going to do to fix the stadium funding problem.

The answer is clear: Require Zygmunt Wilf to own this problem.

After all, it's his stadium and is being built to benefit HIS profit-seeking enterprise.

Spare us all the talk of the "People's Stadium."

Little League baseball, Monster Jam, the High School League, and all the soccer moms who roller blade around the concourse didn't come to the legislature asking for a new stadium.

They didn't note how the Dome was inadequate with respect to their insatiable desire for more revenue.

It was the Minnesota Vikings and no one else.

So, it is the Vikings who should pay up.

It shouldn't be government owning this problem.

All the speculation about new taxes, fees, more gambling (haven't we had enough of this unreliable source of income?), is misplaced.

The real revenue stream is Zygi's considerable wallet.

After all, isn't our governor the man who desperately desires that the wealthy pay their fair share?

Most assuredly, Zygi and company are not paying their fair share.

Let's take a close look at what exactly this out-of-state real estate hustler is paying when it comes to the stadium deal.

The price tag for the stadium is put at roughly \$975 million.

Of that amount, the state is obligated for \$450 million.

Separately, the City of Minneapolis is kicking in \$150 million.

Right off the bat, taxpayers are being forced to give a roughly 62% subsidy.

Must be nice to be a private business and get a 62% subsidy on a new building to house your profit-seeking enterprise.

So what of the other \$375 million.

Let's be crystal clear on this point at the outset: this amount isn't coming from Wilf. It's called "private money."

And just what does that mean?

The biggest source of private money is a \$200 million loan from the NFL.

The team has to repay the money, but it won't be done with either Wilf's private funds or even the team's revenues.

When an NFL team plays, the teams split ticket-related revenue.

The important part is this: Pursuant to NFL rules, the VISTING TEAM'S share of premium seat fees services NFL loans. So when teams visit the new stadium, it their share of premium seat fees that pays back the loan, not the home team.

So that's \$800 million that Wilf and the Vikings won't pay.

The next tranche of "private" money will likely come from stadium naming rights.

The net present value of naming rights for the new stadium is estimated by experts to be in the vicinity of \$62 million.

That puts the total at \$862 million of \$975 million, leaving a gap of \$115 million.

Put another way, the non-Wilf payment stands at 88 cents of every dollar to build the stadium.

Anyone out there wish government paid 88 cents of every dollar you needed to buy or build something?

And will the remaining money needed come from Wilf or the team?

Unlikely.

One option are the personal seat licenses (PSLs) that the governor claimed to have no knowledge of, despite the fact that PSLs are authorized in the bill he signed into law and were discussed in public at a Senate hearing and in other forums as well.

As PSL is essentially a surcharge placed on season tickets, remaining in place until the private money obligation is met.

Of course, other options such as higher concession prices, team sponsorships, and other options could also fill the gap.

The bottom line is that Mr. Wilf is not on the hook personally for one dime of a stadium built for his benefit.

The legislature needs to be asking the correct question here.

And that question is as follows: Mr. Wilf, what are YOU willing to do to build this stadium?

What skin do you have in the game?

It is a question asked better late than never at all.

This question is all the more important in light of recent developments in Atlanta, where the Falcons have concluded a deal with government to get a stadium built.

The Atlanta stadium is estimated to cost around \$1 billion, similar to the cost of the stadium here.

The difference is that the public exposure to the cost is limited to a \$200 million contribution, financed by a local hotel tax.

The remaining cost, including cost overruns, will be borne by private money.

In short, the taxpayer's share is 20% of the enterprise and is capped, making the risk to taxpayers known.

Here, taxpayers have ponied up nearly 2/3rds of the cost and have significant exposure because under the current law the general fund of the legislature will cover shortfalls from the gaming revenue stream.

This state of affairs is especially troubling because the gambling revenues were so speculative and so untried in the first place.

Backing up a new, novel funding stream with the state's general fund is legislative/gubernatorial malpractice. Goodness.

Atlanta: Taxpayers responsible for 20% of the cost only.

Minneapolis: Taxpayers on the hook for nearly 66% and the state's general fund at risk.

And Zygi Wilf is nowhere to be found in this conversation.

It's time for the DFL legislature and the governor to bring the man who benefits most from this new stadium into the conversation.

In fact, where is the media on this? No interview with Zygi or even his semi-competent chief lobbyist Lester Bagley? Talk about malpractice.

The bottom line is that Zygi Wilf would love to lay low and make this appear to be solely the legislature's problem.

Let this publication be the first to publically call for him to appear before the people of Minnesota and explain what he intends to do to not only fix this problem, but make for a more equitable balancing of the financing and risks involved here.

The better position would be for no taxpayer involvement, but getting the team to put some real skin in the game would be a good start.

4/12/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Is there any more abused word in government than "investment?"

- 1. More Spending, More Debt.**
- 2. Pro-Business Isn't Pro-Capitalism.**

MORE SPENDING, MORE DEBT

Greetings from Saint Paul, Watchdogs. As the days tick down towards the constitutionally mandated adjournment date of May 20, the full scope of DFL rule is coming into focus.

It's a comprehensive and breathtaking plan to grow government, diminish liberty, increase government dependency, and eliminate the concept of personal responsibility.

The goal is clear: addict people to government and thereby empower government and those who run government.

How sad that we are realizing the full scope of this tragedy at the same time we celebrate and remember the life and leadership of Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady (not to be confused with Anoka County's own Iron Lady, Rhonda Sivarajah, who is very much alive and very much leading the county in the right direction).

This week, both the governor and the House released their capital investment bills, popularly known as "bonding bills" because they are financed by selling bonds.

In other words, the state borrows money and pays back the bonds over a number of years - with interest.

In other other words, this is a loan.

In other other other words, it's putting building projects on the taxpayer credit card. Here are five reasons that these bonding bills shouldn't pass this year:

Reason #1: It's not a bonding year. For many years, until the early 1970s, the Minnesota legislature only met every other year, not yearly.

In the post-Watergate orgy of liberalism and DFL ascendancy, the legislature went back to meeting every single year because, well, you know, government is just so dang important that society was suffering without legislators in Saint Paul every single year to pass laws to make life easier and more rewarding.

The rationale that the DFL used was that these bonding bills were so important, the legislature needed to come in during even-number years to consider and pass a debt-financed borrowing bill.

Well, if a bill is to pass this year, let's agree first, before a vote, that pass or fail, there will be no legislative session in 2014.

If the bonding bill is considered this year, that's fine, but then live with the result and agree to come back and haunt the taxpayers in 2015 - after the next election.

Reason #2: The state has a huge backlog of capital investment projects from previous years that ARE STILL on the books.

According to Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), the state's budget agency, the state currently has an outstanding balance of \$2,075,534,400 in AUTHORIZED BUT UNISSUED debt.

In other words, there is some \$2 BILLION in previously authorized bonding that was passed by the legislature in previous bills but has not been issued.

Legislators would be well served to ask the governor and the DFL majority why they are proposing hundreds of millions of dollars in new debt-financed spending when there is over \$2 BILLION still on the books.

Why isn't there a law that states that there shall be no new bonding until previous authorizations are expended?

Where are the cancellations of previous projects that for whatever reason haven't come to fruition?

That number is a whopper.

A massive bonding bill will generally come in at under \$1 billion.

In other words, this \$2 BILLION number is worth approximately two big bonding bills.

Reason #3: Interest payments on debt are one of the fastest growing areas of the state budget.

The state is piling up debt at a torrid pace. Of course, that debt must be repaid - with interest.

Those debt repayments represent tax money that is otherwise unavailable to fund prisons, roads, law enforcement, and other core government functions.

The liberals always love to crow about how cheap it is to rent money.

Well, what exactly does this debt cost?

According to MMB, the state in fiscal year 2012 will pay out \$301,595,000 in debt payments.

That's a lot of salami.

Even worse, MMB estimates that the state in fiscal year 2017 will shell out a whopping \$973,016,000 in debt payments!

That's more than triple the current bill in just six years.

Once again, legislators in the Grand Old Party had best be asking questions about this exponential rise in debt service payments.

Reason #4: The bonding recommendations are filled with non-essential, vote-buying, parochial pork.

As usual, the bonding bill represents more a pork barrel vote-buying exercise than an attempt to craft good public policy that meets the capital repair and renewal obligations of the state.

The envelope please:

- \$16,215,000 for bike trails around the state (about \$50,000 for every bike rider in the state);

- \$4,000,000 for a sports center in Marshall;

- \$15,000,00 for passenger rail projects;

- \$7,000,00 for a sculpture garden in Minneapolis;

- \$7,000,000 for the Chatfield Center for the Arts;

- \$4,950,000 for the NorShor Theater in Duluth;

- \$35,000,000 for the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester (aren't they already getting billions from the state?);

- \$9,000,000 to renovate the Public Television Building;

And so much more.

Reason #5: Republicans Control the Process.

Recall that the Minnesota Constitution requires a three-fifths super-majority to issue bonds. Article XI, Section 5, paragraph (a) demands this elevated level of support.

Simply put, the current DFL majority doesn't have the votes to pass a bonding bill without GOP support.

Put another way, the DFL has now power to incur this debt in the absence of Republican enabling.

Republicans can say NO to this runaway spending. If they have the courage and the will to do so.

If they don't, many taxpayers will be hard-pressed to think of a good reason to return the House to GOP control in 2014.

If the GOP aids and abets DFL debt-financed spending, how can they claim the mantle of fiscal responsibility?

Yes, some GOP legislators may have to say no to the pork dangled before their eyes.

The Watchdog knows how this goes. The DFL will write letters to the editor in the local paper. Editorial boards will chime in as well. Local elected officials and "pro-business" chambers of commerce will all parrot talking points about the jobs that will be created and the economic development that will come with upgrading the local zoo cages, building a volleyball court or adding some new pissers at the local ice rink.

BUNK.

If the GOP can't hang together on this, pack it in. We're done for the foreseeable future.

There are people out there who believe in taking on debt to grow government. There are people out there who don't comprehend that government spending doesn't create jobs or wealth. There are people out there who think that government spending can lift an economy. There are people out there who think Keynesian economics are valid.

Those people are called Democrats.

Republicans are different. The task is to show Minnesota that we think differently and have the political courage to vote that way.

If there are legislators out there who think their re-election hinges on voting for some community center or MnDOT truck station, they're listening to the wrong people back home, who are likely in the minority but are "opinion makers."

A bonding bill? No way.

PRO-BUSINESS ISN'T PRO-CAPITALISM

The Vikings stadium debacle is a good time to revisit a concept that often gets lost on some readers because Republicans so often feed into the problem.

In short, there is often a world of difference between what is good for a profit-seeking enterprise and what is good for a capitalist economy.

Often, Republicans and conservatives are beguiled by projects that are portrayed as "pro-business" because the project purports to create jobs or is supported by the "business community."

Government subsidies are justified as a necessary component of whatever some business wants, with the promise of economic paradise to follow.

The Minnesota Vikings have promised jobs, economic development, and Sundays filled with glory for every man who got cut from the JV football team in high school.

For years, farmers have been another group of businesses who have profited from government subsidies.

This legislative session, many business interests have gotten behind the white whale known as Southwest Light Rail, yet another train that is going to somehow generate all sorts of good things for the economy, even though Northstar rail has proven just the opposite.

This session has also been one that has seen the Mayo Clinic looking for unprecedented taxpayer involvement for their enterprise.

Hey, this is rational behavior. Rent seeking is as old as government. If government is dumb enough to hand it out, business will be smart enough to take it.

Unfortunately, all of this activity is contrary to notions of capitalism, the one true means to wealth creation, efficient allocation of resources, and success based on merit.

All too often, government risks taxpayer money on projects or financing schemes that would never happen with a private lender because the risks were way too high or the funding mechanism wasn't viable.

All too often, government appropriates money to projects that greatly distort market decisions and subsidize location choices that aren't efficient.

For example, the so-called "JOBZ" program of Governor Pawlenty led businesses to locate in areas of Minnesota that didn't make sense but for a subsidy to distort the market enough to interfere with the location decision.

Instead of job creators looking for government to get out of the way, many have instead thrown in their lot with government, looking for ways to leverage government power to enhance their own interests while squeezing out competition.

This is especially true of large corporations that have the resources and sophistication to influence government.

So often, "pro business" is simply a polite way to say "crony capitalism."

4/19/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Sugar, Sugar.**
- 2. Who's on Trial?**
- 3. Is Bachmann OK?**
- 4. Capitol Update.**

SUGAR, SUGAR

*Ah, sugar, ah, honey, honey
You are my employer girl
And you got me wanting to work for you*

With apologies to the Archies, a version of their infectious 1960s pop hit was heard echoing throughout the Red River Valley this week as members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers Union discovered a new found love for their employer, American Crystal Sugar as they approved a new contract that will put them back work processing sugar beets into that sweet, sweet refined [sugar](#). Or this [sugar](#).

Did we say new contract?

Oops, we mean the old, old, old, old, new contract as the one approved was essentially the same one they rejected four previous times.

We guess that the workers concluded that the mean, nasty, imperious employer wasn't so bad after all.

These long-suffering workers will have to suck down a 13% pay increase, and yes, they will be giving up a promotion and layoff system based on seniority.

Oh, the humanity. Workers will now be promoted and retained based on merit. What a novel idea.

Way back in August of 2011 (in the midst of a brutal recession), over 96% of union workers at the company rejected the contract they now embrace, obviously listening to union propoganda and woefully overestimating both their value to the employer in particular and their value to the market place in general.

So what changed? The workers got a big, fat, heaping dose of economic reality.

They found out that it was hard, extremely hard, to replace the job that provided great benefits and \$40,000 per year in wages.

The Watchdog spoke with a number of contacts in the area who verified this very simple yet powerful truth.

The bottom line is twofold here.

One, in the private sector, the market place doesn't let anyone engage in fantasy. When employers or employees aren't realistic about their business plan, marketing plan, or value to the market, reality will step in and impose a harsh truth.

Second, the union ate a massive dose of humble pie. No matter how it's spun, the union delivered nothing but 20 months of pain on its membership.

This episode is another example of why many American workers question the value of union membership.

WHO'S ON TRIAL?

As readers know, the Watchdog tends to focus on issues of capitalism and economic liberty while steering clear of social issues.

Having said that, we always reserve the right to explore those issues, especially when they corroborate our point of view.

Over the past two weeks, a particularly egregious social issues has proven our opinion that the mainstream media (MSM) is hopelessly liberal and biased.

You wouldn't know it by watching or reading the MSM, but a man is on trial in Philadelphia, accused of running a house of horrors, where illegal abortions and outright infanticide took place under grisly and appalling conditions.

Not only is there little media coverage of this offense against humanity, the MSM seems uninterested in putting abortion advocates on trial.

There is no media scrutiny whatsoever of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) or Planned Parenthood (PP).

The leaders of these organizations aren't put under the spotlight and accused of creating and fostering an atmosphere of cheapening human life.

They aren't asked in a very accusatory way if they don't bear some responsibility for the atrocity.

They aren't asked to what their solution is to the horror that took place in that unsanitary and bloody building.

We don't see or read unflattering portraits of abortion rights leaders.

But you know what?

The MSM did that very same thing to the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook tragedy.

The NRA, its leadership, and every member was put on trial by the MSM, accused of creating the monster who murdered so many.

The NRA was vilified, accused of creating a culture of murder and firearms anarchy simply because the organization supports and defends the Second Amendment.

NRA leadership was portrayed as bumbling dunces, incapable of understanding the politics and public policy of firearms legislation.

Gun owners who opposed draconian guns confiscation proposals were mouth breathing "nuts" unfit for participation in our democratic process.

Yet none of that happened to the abortion industry and those who lead it.

What hypocrisy.

IS BACHMANN OK?

It's time the conservative family had a conversation.

Since we're in regular contact with thousands of freedom loving folks across this great state, we know what you're thinking.

And you're thinking that Michelle Bachmann may be in trouble for 2014.

You're thinking that she has taken on water and may be taking on more, instead of bailing out the boat.

There's nothing wrong with having that conversation.

In fact, now is that time to start that conversation.

Silence masquerading as party loyalty is downright disloyal and is a form aiding and abetting our political opponents.

That kind of thinking has produced the disastrous candidacies of Tom Emmer, Kurt Bills, and Allen Quist (pick any campaign since 1983).

Look, this piece isn't some diatribe against Bachmann or an opinion piece that reaches any conclusions other than that the family would be well served to think long and hard about who is the best candidate to keep the Sixth Congressional District of Minnesota in Republican hands.

Losing the district would be a severe embarrassment and would represent the third election cycle in a row in which the GOP suffered a humiliating black eye.

We say this because there will be many harsh and irrational responses demanding that conservatives all shut up and pretend nothing is wrong.

There will be responses blaming Bachmann's problems solely on the media, George Soros, and the Viet Cong.

The facts are simply that in the last election, Bachmann woefully underperformed the district, especially for an incumbent.

Legal problems continue to mount regarding her failed presidential campaign, with a former loyalist and trusted lieutenant coming forward to corroborate allegations of campaign finance law violations.

Constituent services continue to be a major problem, with many people who live in the Sixth District telling us that she and her office continue to have big issues with basic constituent services.

And it doesn't help that with a major liability being the charge that she ignores her district, she has spent to no small amount of time this week bragging about a trip to England for Margaret Thatcher's funeral.

Hey, it's a cool deal to be there to send off the Iron Lady, but the good people of England don't vote in Minnesota's Sixth District.

Moreover, there is trouble ahead with Jim Graves stepping forward for a rematch.

Make no mistake, Graves is a successful businessman who doesn't undertake any big project without excellent due diligence.

The Watchdog has spoken with a person who has knowledge of the Graves decision to run for re-election. That source tells the Watchdog that the data suggests that Graves has a strong chance of winning next year, at least as things stand today.

The bottom line is that now is the time to consider this situation and deal with it.

Let the discussion begin.

CAPITOL UPDATE

Here's your Capitol update for this week:

DFL proposes \$2.6 billion in tax increases

DFL proposes \$600 million in fee increases

DFL proposes hiring hundreds of new state workers

GOP Watchdog Rep. Par Garofalo offer amendment to reduce state commitment to Vikings stadium. DFL rejects in the name of being the Party of the Downtrodden Masses.

See you next week, Watchdogs!

4/26/13

In This Issue:

1. DisHonour.
2. DFL War on Profits.
3. KSTP Poll.
4. Calling all Patriots!

DISHONOUR

So Scott Honour is the first Republican out of the chute to announce for governor against Mark Dayton. Given the governor's record, there will surely be more.

What the Watchdog finds so funny and "dishonourable" is the ultra-koo-koo liberal special interest group, Alliance for a Better Minnesota (ABM), bagging on Honour because he is a successful business leader. In short, criticizing him because he's rich, thanks to the fruit of his labor.

ABM noted on their Facebook page shortly after Honour announced: *"Surprise, surprise the first GOP candidate for MN Governor is a corporate CEO with mega-millions. He lives in a mansion on Lake Minnetonka."*

Uh, did the AMB forget that the guy they spent millions on to get into the governor's mansion is a mega-millionaire himself? That he grew up in a mansion in that very same area? That he still lives in a mansion and has a trust fund - in South Dakota?

Now, surely the ABM knows this because the person who funds this special interest group is none other than Alida Rockefeller Messinger, heir to the Rockefeller fortune AND Mark Dayton's ex-wife.

It's been even more humorous watching the DFL scramble to "clarify" their ripping on a self-made successful entrepreneur (they're just a bit sensitive right now, given their war on success), realizing that their rich guy guy didn't do a whole lot to earn his wealth. In fact, he did nothing.

DFL state Representative Ryan Winkler of Saint Louis Park took to his Twitter account to amend his party's vitriolic screed:

The problem with Scott Honour isn't that he's rich, it's that his business didn't produce anything except capital gains.

And so he would be a good candidate in DFL eyes if he were a member of the Idle Rich, who did nothing to earn it?

Here's the first bumper sticker of the campaign: Scott Honour: At least he earned his millions.

DFL WAR ON PROFITS

If there was any doubt that the DFL is in full-on combat mode against capitalism and success, their tax plans have utterly erased all doubt.

While you could close your eyes and randomly pick a page in the DFL tax bill and hit upon some punitive and confiscatory tax, the proposed tax on alcohol demonstrates the contempt with which the DFL treats entrepreneurs and small business owners.

On paper, the massive income tax increase on small businesses and family farms looks to be the biggest middle finger the DFL could raise to success and individual merit.

But in the media, the alcohol tax takes the prize this week, because of what the DFL said in response to complaints of brewery owners regarding the confiscatory level of taxation proposed by the DFL.

These brewers and others involved in the liquor industry, in a nod to hundreds of years of observed economic behavior, noted that these massive taxes would be passed along to consumers of alcohol.

In response, key DFLers noted haughtily that if liquor producers passed along tax increases, it was their choice and that doing so meant that they were interested in making a profit.

"If the folks involved in the liquor industry want to get a little profit off their customers because they're hiding behind a user-fee that hasn't been raised in 26 years, I think you need to ask all of them why they're choosing to go after their customers because that's not required in the law," said one House DFLer.

The observation must be based on their collective experience in creating jobs, starting small businesses and meeting payroll all while living under business regulations instead of making them.

Riiiiiiiiight.

The rational pursuit of profits underpin American prosperity.

Profits drive individuals to take the risk of starting a business.

Profits grow the economy and grow the economic pie.

Profits expand businesses and allow access to credit markets.

Profits create jobs.

Profits support charity.

Profits even fund government.

No profits, no jobs, no prosperity, no government revenues.

Are these Democrats really that ignorant of basic economic principles?

Let the Watchdog proudly reiterate our support of the rational pursuit of wealth and profits.

Yeah, they may not do it that way in North Korea, but we still think profits are pretty cool, no matter what Strongman [Kim Jong Un](#) and the Senate DFL say about profits.

KSTP POLL

The Watchdog normally ignores polls, but the KSTP poll is usually fairly reliable and uses decent methodology.

Moreover, this recent [poll](#) touches on some hot legislative topics, and it doesn't look good for the DFL and Governor Mark Dayton.

Here are five takeaways from the poll:

Takeaway #1: Mark Dayton and the DFL legislative majorities are under water on approval ratings.

Governor Dayton has an approval rating under the critical 50% line, coming in at 49%. This number is obviously close to 50% and there is a long way until November 2014, but underwater he is.

The numbers are far worse for the DFL-led legislature, where the entire House of Representatives is up for re-election in 2014.

Only 28% approve of the job the legislature is doing. Buyer's remorse, Minnesota?

Takeaway #2: The DFL tax plan isn't real popular either.

57% oppose taxing services like haircuts and automotive repair, a key item in the Senate DFL tax scheme.

A whopping 74% oppose taxing clothing.

A bare majority of 51% support taxing ~~the rich~~ consumers of alcohol.

The only nugget of good news for the DFL is that playing the class warfare card is apparently still popular in Minnesota. Too bad we can't figure out a way to tax people's envy that someone else has achieved success.

69% stand up and cheer when asked if people making more than \$500,000 should be punished with higher taxes.

It's too bad the question wasn't "do YOU want your income tax rate increased to fund more government?" I guess we got the answer to that above. Don't tax my underwear, booze, or haircuts, but it's cool if you tax the guy who hired me and all the other guys who create the jobs.

And then we will wonder where all the jobs went.

Takeaway #3: Minnesotans are opposed to the DFL's all tax budget. A paltry 9% want the budget deficit to be resolved with tax increases only. Yes, 9%. Crap, that number is lower than the approval ratings for Washington.

Remember that the DFL budget plan increases spending by billions while making only minor "cuts," which are in most cases just a reduction in planned spending increases.

A significant 41% want cuts only.

47% demand that tax increases and cuts be equal.

So, 88% think an all tax budget is bad. That's what you're getting, Minnesota. Elections have consequences.

Takeaway #4: Everyone knows Zygi Wilf ripped us off. Given a menu of four options to make up for the stadium funding shortfall from electronic pull tabs, a strong majority of 52% demand that the Vikings pay more.

It's too bad we haven't seen the courage from the governor and the legislature to do just that. Instead, we see proposals to tax baseball cards and kid's replica jerseys (5% approval) or go back to the tired old proposal to do more gambling, the same gimmick that got us in trouble in the first place (20% approval).

Takeaway #5: You didn't earn a raise. Strong majorities are opposed to a pay raise for both legislators and the governor. Can't say we're surprised, given how this gang has managed the place.

The bottom line we take away is that when you say you're going to tax only the successful, the voters take you at your word.

Trust us, the DFL won't be able to back off their thirst for taxing many, many more than just the rich. The dirty secret is that the rich don't even have enough money for the DFL.

CALLING ALL PATRIOTS!

It's time for all good patriots to come to the aid of their state by participating in the 2013 [Tax Cut Rally](#).

The 2013 rally is this Saturday on the Capitol Mall, starting at 10:00 AM.

This year's rally holds special appeal, thanks to 1) a roster of great speakers, including Grover Norquist; 2) a toxic tax and spend environment in Saint Paul and Washington; and 3) great weather!!!

Come on down and enjoy the fellowship of right thinking brothers and sisters, including the Watchdog Himself, Harold E. Hamilton.

Stop by our tent where Harold will be on hand to sign autographs, hang out, and dispense criticism of all things liberal.

The Watchdog is a proud sponsor of the rally, as usual.

BE THERE!

5/3/13

In This Issue:

1. Ramsey Can't Get it Right.

RAMSEY CAN'T GET IT RIGHT

What's happening, Watchdogs? With the legislature taking a jackhammer to the foundations of the American Dream, we've been focused on Saint Paul, as we are every legislative session, which means we go a little light on covering Anoka County.

But when it comes to Ramsey, we can quote one Ronald Wilson Reagan. Here they go again.

Whether it's the failed Town Center Project and the latest contract dispute, the firing of city staff, the turnover of city staff, or the election of this new crew of Good Ol' Boyz to the city council, there's no shortage of drama over in Ramsey.

And now comes before us the curious case of the new/old Economic Development Manager.

A few days ago, the city made a contingent [job offer](#) to one Sean Sullivan for the job of Economic Development Manager.

It's back to the future because Sullivan worked for the city's economic development department from 2000-2010. Presumably, the turnover on the city council paved the way for Sullivan's return.

Now let's turn our attention to the east, over in the fair burgh of Oak Grove.

This past November, Sean Sullivan was elected to the Oak Grove [City Council](#).

As a member of the Oak Grove Council, Sullivan sits on the [board of directors](#) for the city Economic Development Authority.

The purpose of an economic development authority is to attract and retain businesses to a city in order to enhance the tax base and assist in the growth of prosperity in the city. Of course, it is an open question as to what government's role should be in economic development, but let's set that aside for the moment.

Check out the job description Sullivan was offered on contingency last week (in part):

The Economic Development Manager position plays a key role in preserving and ensuring the growth of the City's tax base in its industrial and commercial sectors. This

tax base and job creation has a direct relationship to the financial health of the City and our opportunities for continued growth into the future.

At no time greater than the present have our efforts in retaining and attracting businesses to the community been more important. Our local businesses require our support and advocacy in ensuring that they survive this downturn in the economy.

No doubt, the Oak Grove EDA has a similar mission statement.

The question posed, which is an important one is: **Are these two roles in conflict? Put another way, is there an inherent conflict of interest?**

To be legalistic for a moment, this issue comes down to agency law and the duty of loyalty. A person who is an employee or decision maker for an organization has a duty to be loyal to the organization and do nothing that would harm to the organization.

Moreover, these same people have what's called a duty to avoid "usurpation of a corporate opportunity." This means that the person can't do anything to take away an opportunity for the organization to fulfill its mission. In this case, that includes opportunities to attract and retain businesses for the city.

If hired, is there an inherent conflict of interest?

Assume he takes that job in Ramsey and stays on the Oak Grove council. When he's out on the job each day, is he working to bring economic development to Ramsey or Oak Grove?

While sitting on the board of directors in Oak Grove, will there be votes he will be called upon to make that benefit Oak Grove at the expense of Ramsey?

He will also have knowledge and access to proprietary information from both cities regarding strategies and resources available for economic development.

There is no doubt that these two cities are competitors when it comes to attracting and retaining businesses.

The situation would be similar to a person being hired to work as a senior vice president for Ford while serving on the board of directors at GM.

Moreover, there is a political component to this analysis.

Sullivan ran a successful campaign for city council last year.

Did he receive political contributions from donors who have an economic interest in the City of Ramsey?

If so, does he owe a debt of political gratitude to people who will then lobby him to make decisions in Ramsey that accrue to their financial benefit?

The Watchdog won't hazard a guess regarding a formal legal analysis.

What we do know is that common sense would tell anyone that this situation bears some careful legal analysis.

Perhaps Ramsey and/or Oak Grove have undertaken this analysis.

If not, why not?

It all looks curious to the Watchdog.

5/10/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Update From Ramsey.**
- 2. What About the Budget?**
- 3. Recall Follies.**

UPDATE FROM RAMSEY

Last week, the Watchdog uncovered a potential conflict of interest situation regarding Sean Sullivan, a person who offered a job in the Ramsey economic development office while also serving on the Oak Grove economic development authority, as an elected official in that city.

Sources tell the Watchdog that Sullivan has declined the offer of employment from the city.

These sources further tell us that the reason given for the withdrawal is the potential conflict between his economic development roles in two cities.

Specifically, we are told that the issue centered on concern over campaign contributions received by Sullivan during his successful campaign for city council.

A review of Sullivan's campaign finance report shows that Sullivan took in a \$200 donation from James Deal.

Deal is a well-known real estate player in Ramsey and is also a rather prolific donor to DFL candidates and causes.

And wouldn't you know it, Deal is also a former contributor to Dan Erhart, the FORMER county commissioner.

Indeed, had Sullivan taken the job, questions would have been raised regarding his potentially dealing with a real estate investor who had donated to his campaign.

In a rather shocking revelation, these same sources tell the Watchdog that the city council had no knowledge of Sullivan's seat on the Oak Grove council and didn't learn of it until revealed by this publication.

Why staff apparently didn't include this information in the background materials is puzzling to say the least.

Oversight? Intentional? Certainly, staff owes the council some answers on this one.

At this point, there are many questions but few answers.

Again, there is an appearance of either incompetence or something worse.

Given the turmoil surrounding Ramsey politics and the tawdry past of the Town Center project, it would be wise for the city to have a full and thorough accounting of exactly how Sullivan came to be offered the job without anyone in the chain of authority considering the implications of hiring an elected official from a neighboring city.

So, there you have it. The Watchdog breaks another story and adds another chapter to a growing book of investigative excellence here in Anoka County.

The Anoka County Watchdog: Always on the Watch!

WHAT ABOUT THE BUDGET?

As readers well know, the Watchdog is dedicated to capitalism and economic issues. We simply don't address social issues, except in a tangential way.

The issue of gay marriage is one of those issues. We have loyal readers on both sides of the issue who happen to share a mutual passion for free market capitalism.

Thus, we do not take a position on that particular issue.

But we can't help but note some real hypocrisy here regarding the issue, starting with the DFL majority.

For better or worse, the House GOP majority in 2011 decided to pursue a constitutional amendment to prohibit gay marriage.

At that time, the DFL minority raised a hue and cry that Republicans were pursuing the issue at the expense of important economic issues.

The media jumped right in to parrot this talking point.

Well, excuse us. The 2013 legislative session ends on May 20 and the state's budget is still unresolved, even though the DFL owns the House, the Senate and the governor's office.

The economy hobbles along and the issue du jure is gay marriage.

How can we pursue divisive social issues when the budget, the economy and jobs deserve attention, said the DFL in 2011 as the media chimed in as well.

So what's different about 2013?

The only difference here is that it's the DFL in charge and the issue now one of approving gay marriage, which is where most of the mainstream media stands.

The other aspect of thy hypocrisy is the talk of how respectful the debate over the issue was in the House Thursday afternoon.

Rep. Karen Clark, the chief author of the gay marriage bill, marveled at the respectful debate, knowing full well the bill would pass.

The respectful and thoughtful debate was indeed a good thing.

But that tone stands in stark contrast to Rep. Clark and her filibuster of the Defense of Marriage Act in the House as well as her standing in the middle of Governor Pawlenty's State of the State Address and turning her back to the governor.

What if a Republican had filibustered this bill? What if Rep. Gruenhagen or Rep. Scott had done that?

It certainly wouldn't be portrayed as a Profile in Courage by the media.

And what if Rep. Scott had stood up in the middle of a Mark Dayton State of the State and turned her back to the governor?

We know how that would have been portrayed.

It looks like respect goes one way, and the media wouldn't have it any other way.

RECALL FOLLIES

With gay marriage passing the Minnesota House and poised to pass the Senate, some are arguing for recalling legislators who voted in favor of the bill.

How about not doing that.

This viewpoint has nothing to do with the issue and everything to do with not acting stupid and thus looking stupid in the eyes of the very voters we will need in 2014.

A recall election? Really?

There are just a few hurdles to jump to recall a legislator.

Here's the thumbnail sketch of the 18 steps needed for recall, highlighting some of them:

First, petitioners must demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that a legislator engaged in "malfeasance" "nonfeasance" or a "serious crime." Under even the most liberal definitions of the law, supporting a bill to recognize homosexual unions does not constitute "malfeasance" "nonfeasance" or a "serious crime."

Malfeasance means intentionally doing something unlawful or wrong while performing duties of the office; the act must be substantially outside of the scope of duties and substantially infringe upon another's rights.

Nonfeasance means intentionally and repeatedly not performing required duties of the office.

Serious crime means a crime that is a gross misdemeanor and involves assault, intentional injury, threat of injury, dishonesty, stalking, aggravated driving while intoxicated, coercion, obstruction of justice, or the sale or possession of controlled substances. Serious crime also means a misdemeanor crime that involves assault, intentional injury or threat of injury, dishonesty, coercion, obstruction of justice, or the sale or possession automatically removed from office, so a felony conviction is not specified as grounds for recall.

Even if the petitioner convinces the Chief Justice of the MN Supreme Court, a special master and the entire state Supreme Court that there was malfeasance, nonfeasance or a serious crime, then the petitioner must collect signatures within the district equal to 25% of the number voting for that office in the last election. Even in a House district, that's many thousands of votes.

Even after all that, you have to run a candidate and win the election, kicking out the incumbent in a special election.

Just a wee bit impractical.

And let's face facts here. The pro gay marriage forces absolutely whupped the other side in terms of money, organization, and enthusiasm in 2010.

Be careful of wishing to take on those guys in a special election.

Let's get practical here. For those who are upset with their legislator for supporting gay marriage, take it up in the proper forum, either at the endorsing convention and/or the general election.

For now, let's not give the media a story about crazy conservatives. They're only too happy to oblige.

5/17/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog has more information regarding the growing scandal surrounding the Sean Sullivan issue in Ramsey/Oak Grove/Isanti. That information and commentary will appear next week. This is the last issue of the Watchdog before the 2013 legislative session adjourns on Monday and this issue focuses on all that has transpired at the Capitol this week.

Quote of the 2013 legislative session:

*"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."
- Abraham Lincoln*

1. Tick, Tock.
2. Tax Bill Bust.
3. All-Nighter.

TICK, TOCK

With the legislative session concluding Monday pursuant to constitutional timelines, the DFL is working hard to contradict popular wisdom that one party rule is easy and good for society, from both an operational and moral perspective.

As this issue goes to press, Governor Dayton has yet to sign a major budget bill into law. In fact, only one budget bill has passed both the House and Senate, that being the jobs and economic development bill.

The legislature continues to be consumed with other "priorities" like forced unionization of private business, outrageous solar energy mandates, legislative pay raises, and a bonding bill that would put \$800 million on the state's credit card.

What's on tap coming up? Another debate on forced unionization of private day cares and a constitutional amendment for legislator pay raises.

Apparently, the budget will be dealt with after the DFL is done repaying the multiple constituencies that engage in the symbiotic relationship with the DFL of electing them and then having them throw open the treasury to loot it empty have been satisfied.

TAX BILL BUST

The Watchdog is surprised - NOT.

The DFL announced a deal on raising taxes and growing the state budget last night. Before getting into the details, the overall philosophy of the bill is really bad public policy.

First, the bill grows government by \$2 billion yet includes not a shred of reform, government streamlining, or implementation of systems to improve accountability, transparency, or efficiency.

This tax bill does nothing more than divert \$2 billion from the private economy over to the government economy to lard more money on top of a bloated, antiquated, sclerotic bureaucracy.

And why \$2 billion in new taxes? The state budget deficit stands at around \$600 million, which could also be dealt with by spending cuts, by the way.

Governor Dayton noted at the press conference last night that 31% of the new taxes would take care of the deficit.

Soooo, put another way, nearly 70% of the tax increase will be dedicated to growing government.

Moreover, the tax bill contains nothing new or bold regarding the tax code. Well, the only bold thing is the breathtaking scope of the tax grab, which is nothing short of punitive and confiscatory.

Remember back to the start of this legislative session? We heard all sorts of immodest boasts from the governor and DFL leadership that they were going to reform the tax code. The new code would recognize the transition to a service-based economy. The base would be broadened, the rates lowered, stability and predictability enhanced.

So what did they deliver? A predictable, stale menu of income tax increases on the "rich" and a whopping cigarette tax on all those rich people who smoke.

Way to go, guys. Way to surprise this cynical, jaded publication that finds predicting DFL political behavior as difficult as walking and chewing gum simultaneously.

We too lazy to consult the archives, but we called this tax outcome about 24 hours after the governor released his budget promising a new way of doing business.

Take a look at the whole legislative session. What was unpredictable? This is the way it always goes with the DFL.

They have no new ideas and never do anything different.

That's because the DFL doesn't want political power to effectuate change.

Politics for that party is about power for the sake of having power while repaying the constituent groups who seek favors from the treasury.

So why expect anything else from this group?

On to the details of the tax deal.

INCOME TAX INCREASE

The deal calls for increased income taxes on the top bracket of 9.85%, making Minnesota's top rate one of the highest in the country, up there with California, Hawaii, and Oregon. Minnesota will now be #4 on the income tax list.

Readers of this publication well know that contrary to DFL claims, this tax is not one on the idle rich guy out on Lake Minnetonka (or in the governor's mansion).

Most small businesses file their income taxes as individuals. Thus, this is a major tax increase on main street business.

TOBACCO TAXES

The other major piece of the deal is jacking up taxes on cigarettes to \$2.83 per pack, giving Minnesota the 6th highest per pack rate in the nation.

Again, readers of this publication will recall that we have long noted that tobacco taxes are particularly regressive, hitting the poor hard.

Moreover, Governor Dayton campaigned against increased tobacco taxes for precisely this reason.

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

One of the promised benefits of this deal is that there is \$400 plus million of property tax relief in the bill.

Not true. Not at all true.

The bill doesn't provide direct property tax reductions. Instead, the bill offers money to local units of government that may or may not result in reduced property taxes.

Undoubtedly, some cities or counties will take the money and jack up spending even more.

There is NO guarantee that these spiffs to local government will trickle down to you.

Talk about tickle down economics.

To be fair, there is a minor ray of sunshine in this F5 tornado of taxation destruction.

The bill makes two changes to tax policy that are welcome news.

First, the bill provides an "upfront" exemption to the sales tax levied on capital equipment purchases by business.

For many years, a business has been required to pay the sales tax and then file paperwork with the state to get a refund of the sales tax paid.

This puts the exemption upfront and eliminates the paperwork drill.

Second, the bill eliminates the sales tax local units of government pay to the state when they buy things.

Having one unit of government pay a tax to another unit of government makes no sense.

On the whole, this tax bill is too much taxing and too little reform.

It's nothing more than a very predictable play on the part of the DFL.

ALL-NIGHTER

Conservatives everywhere have expressed outrage at the bill forcing private daycare businesses to unionize.

When the bill was presented this week, Senate Republicans did something about it.

The caucus united behind an all-night debate of the bill, engaging in 17-hour marathon that included upwards of 78 amendments, setting a modern day Senate record for debate length.

Every member of the caucus participated in this display of legislative fortitude, demonstrating what is possible when the team comes together.

And, by the way, let's have some acknowledgement from our RINO hunter friends out there that some of your favorite targets were heroes in this debate.

Instead of spending money hammering these folks, you might spend some money praising their actions.

Every reader should send a note of thanks to every GOP senator.

It would have been real easy to make a couple of speeches, vote red and go home to family.

Instead, these good people put up a hell of a fight for us and for our future.

Kudos are in order for Senate Minority Leader David Hann and his staff.

Let's hope Rep. Kurt Daudt and his team will do the same when this bad bill is presented on the House floor tomorrow.

5/24/13

In This Issue:

- 1. A Tale of Three Cities.**
- 2. We Have a Loophole in the Ethics Laws.**

A TALE OF THREE CITIES

Greetings, Watchdogs. Last week, we indicated that there would be an update on the Sean Sullivan situation this week.

And one is needed. More and more, this situation is starting to acquire the whiff of scandal. More and more, this situation is starting to acquire the malodorous and all-too-familiar whiff of a Good Ol' Boy operation.

Readers will recall the genesis of this affair from our [issue](#) three weeks ago.

As the situation currently stands, here's where Sean Sullivan is positioned with three different cities:

Oak Grove: sitting city councilman, member of the city's economic development authority.

Isanti: withdrew resignation May 7th, remains employed as the city's economic development director.

Ramsey: Withdrew contingent offer of employment as city economic development coordinator May 7th.

Three weeks after the Watchdog broke this story, many questions remain unanswered.

In Ramsey, questions remain regarding exactly how Sullivan made it through the interview process and was offered the job apparently without all council members being aware of his position on the Oak Grove City Council as well as no red flags being raised over inherent conflicts of interest.

Moreover, there are conflicting reports with respect to Sullivan's reason for suddenly withdrawing his name from the Ramsey job just four days after the Watchdog broke the story.

In discussions with one Ramsey City Council member, the Watchdog was told that the council was not made aware of Sullivan's position on the Oak Grove Economic Development Authority nor was any note made by staff of a potential conflict of interest.

If true, this represents a massive breakdown of the human resources function in the city, or something worse.

Whether city staff missed the fact that Sullivan was an elected official in another city or knew of it and failed to inform the council, there's a problem here.

It will be interesting to see if the city council thoroughly gets to the bottom of this issue and demands accountability from staff.

It appears someone at Ramsey City Hall was either incompetent or less than honest regarding Sullivan's application.

Moreover, there are radically conflicting accounts regarding the reason why Sullivan withdrew his name from consideration from the Ramsey job.

According to a report in the May 9th edition of the [Anoka County Record](#), Ramsey City Administrator Kurt Ulrich stated at a May 7th meeting of the Ramsey City Council that Sullivan had withdrawn his application from the Ramsey job because of questions regarding campaign contributions and conflict of interest considerations.

The Record noted, "Mr. Ulrich made reference to Mr. Sullivan receiving campaign contributions from Ramsey businesses and other conflicts of interest related to his service on the city council in the City of Oak Grove."

Yet Sullivan's letter of withdrawal specifically *denied* conflict of interest considerations and what Sullivan termed "compatibility of office" issues.

Sullivan wrote in his letter, " City Administrator Ulrich has communicated to me that there have been questions asked by City Council members pertaining to a Compatibilities of Office and Conflict of Interest issues holding the positions of Economic Development Manager for the City of Ramsey and sitting as an elected official on the Oak Grove City Council. Although there are **NO** compatibilities of office and **NO** conflicts of interest issues with the Ramsey Economic Development Manager Position and the Oak Grove City Council, there would be some that would question them anyway." (Emphasis original).

How very interesting that Sullivan denies the situation by simply stating a conclusion and walking away.

Did an attorney conduct a formal legal analysis that led to this conclusion? That's doubtful.

Simply put, the Ramsey City Council owes the taxpayers an investigation to determine how it was the Sullivan was offered the job apparently without any issues being raised regarding both conflict of interest and compatibility of office considerations.

Over in Isanti, the same questions first raised regarding Sullivan's impending employment in Ramsey are now hanging over that city.

In short, does Sullivan's continued employment by that city constitute either an outright conflict of interest or the appearance of one?

The fact remains that Sullivan is a key economic development staffer in one city while simultaneously sitting on the economic development board of another city by virtue of his elective office.

The fact also remains that Sullivan accepted a contribution from a man with real estate interests in the area.

In an email addressed to business interests in that city, Sullivan wrote that he wanted to "clear up any uncertainty as to my employment with the City of Isanti."

No mention was made in the email to the growing controversy over campaign contributions and conflict of interest issues.

Sullivan continued, "I was offered another job in another community but after careful thought and consideration I felt that remaining in Isanti was the right thing to do."

Meanwhile, over in Oak Grove, the city council has taken on the issue.

The Anoka County Record covered the meeting and reported on the comments made by three city council members regarding the Sullivan situation.

At the May 15th city council meeting, Mayor Mark Korin addressed the issue directly, stating in part, "You can't be employed by a full time city government job as an economic development authority and then have the same responsibility on the EDA and as a city council member, making decisions for land use, zoning and variances. To me there is a conflict pure and simple."

Added Councilman Dan Denno, "We are talking about a situation where your livelihood depends upon your job. If we had a company that was looking at Oak Grove and Isanti and your livelihood depended on getting that company to Isanti, how do we know that there is not a potential conflict of interest?"

Councilman Scott Lawrence opined, " If it comes down to bringing in a company to one place or another, you obviously have to make a choice, I'm not sure how that isn't a conflict."

The Watchdog has high praise for the Oak Grove City Council regarding their handling of this issue.

First, they took it on. In many other cities, this would have been buried in the interest of not "rocking the boat."

Instead, the council raised this important issue in the economic interests of the city and in the interest of transparency and accountability, qualities sorely lacking in government today.

Second, the council initiated the conversation in a public and transparent way, raising the issue at a city council meeting, duly noticed, recorded, and open to the public.

No closed doors. No back room dealing. Cards were laid on the table for all to see, with three of the council members stating their concerns in public, allowing Councilman Sullivan an opportunity to hear the concerns and respond.

Having said that, the issue is far from over. Expect the city attorney to analyze this issue and offer a formal legal opinion in the near future.

WE HAVE A LOOPHOLE IN THE ETHICS LAWS

The issue surrounding Mr. Sullivan shouldn't even be allowed to happen.

This affair begs the question regarding why state law allows employees of the state or its subdivisions from holding elective office.

Of course, the answer isn't easy as there are good arguments on both sides.

On one side, there are First Amendment reasons for allowing citizens, including government employees, to participate in the political process by running for and holding elective office.

On the other side, there are real concerns that this practice can lead both the appearance of impropriety as well as actual impropriety encouraged by a system that allows public employees to receive campaign support from people who may later come before them in their public employee role to apply for governmental favors.

In this case, the Watchdog believes that the obligation of government to impartially apply the law in a fair and transparent manner outweighs the political speech interests of the public employee.

Put another way, the government has a compelling interest in preventing graft and corruption as well as fostering trust and faith in our democratic institutions.

Interestingly, the federal government agrees with the Watchdog and has since passing the Hatch Act in 1939.

The Hatch Act essentially forbids federal employees from running for or holding elective office.

Moreover, the Hatch Act extends to state or local employees if any federal funds are used to fund the position.

The Watchdog calls upon members of the Anoka County legislative delegation to craft legislation for introduction during the 2014 legislative session that would bar state or local government employees from holding elective office.

This gaping loophole in our ethics laws must be changed.

5/31/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Bachmann.**
- 2. Who's Next?**

BACHMANN

Nothing short of a political earthquake shook the Sixth District of Minnesota this week when Congresswoman Michele Bachmann suddenly announced that she would not seek re-election in November 2014.

The announcement incited a flurry of speculation regarding who might step forward to seek the Republican endorsement in the reddest congressional district in Minnesota (more on that below).

Inevitably, the retirement of any high profile politician begs for a retrospective look at that person's tenure and what it mean to the body politic.

Bachmann is no different in this respect and is, in fact, a more compelling figure than nearly any other Minnesota politician to come down the pike in recent years.

To say that she was a polarizing figure would be a serious understatement. Bachmann was much like any famous rock band, loved or hated but never, ever ignored.

Few constituents of hers were undecided or found in the middle of the political road when it came to opinions regarding their member of Congress.

This publication is well aware of that dynamic, as any praise of Bachmann resulted in angry responses from her critics accusing us of having a bias that clouded any objective consideration of her words and actions.

On the other side, any criticism sparked immediate and vitriolic feedback that clearly showed us that she has loyalists who refuse to believe that this woman is anything less than infallible, her foibles being little more than Left Wing media lies and distortions designed to derail a career destined for Margaret Thatcher-esque Greatness.

In short, objectivity can be lacking in evaluating her time in the public eye.

At the outset, she did a great service to the GOP in making her announcement in a timely fashion, giving the party, delegates, and potential candidates time to conduct a fair and thorough vetting process to fully prepare the eventual standard bearer to face a well-funded and now experienced opponent in hotel magnate Jim Graves.

Why Bachmann decided to step down will remain the subject of speculation for some time.

Was it simply time to step down as politics wasn't meant to be a career?

Was it the ongoing and multiple investigations into her failed presidential campaign and events in Iowa?

Perhaps the prospect of a grueling re-election campaign that held some inherent risk of a losing effort?

We will never know for sure, but it seems a bit implausible to this publication that it was merely time to step aside and pursue other opportunities.

After all, this is a person who seemed to greatly enjoy the spotlight and very recently ran for president.

In praising her time in Congress, the Watchdog acknowledges not only Bachmann's voting record, but her adherence to principle.

She never stuck her finger in the wind and voted the polls or the focus groups. Michele Bachmann consulted her principles and values in deciding her vote.

While the Watchdog appreciates that voting record, the bigger service she rendered to us all was to remind us that some elected officials actually vote their conscience, not the polls, not the lobbyists, and not the caucus leadership.

Whether you agree with those votes or not, it was more than refreshing to see a member of Congress both vote like a true conservative and vote her conscience.

If more members of Congress voted like Bachmann, the nation would be better for it.

The problem is that the admirable voting record came with way too much drama.

Outrageous statements wholly unconnected with facts happened far too often and diminished her credibility.

Bizarre events like the hiding-in-the-bushes-at-the-gay-rights-rally and the false imprisonment tale at the town hall meeting took too many headlines and were a major distraction.

Were these stories amplified and sensationalized by the Liberal Media? You bet.

The media has an undeniable bias and engages in journalistic profiling against conservatives.

But that's not an excuse. It's simply a burden conservatives must carry. Because they are profiled and scrutinized by the mainstream media, the requirement is to give them nothing with which to sensationalize. Don't give them any fodder.

Sadly, Michele Bachmann just couldn't seem to refrain. She far too often played into their two left hands and gave them ammunition to assassinate her character.

She knew anything she said and did would be used against her in the court of the mainstream media.

The other area of concern that doesn't get much attention but is nonetheless critical is constituent services.

For whatever reason, constituent services in her congressional office were too often below par.

Whether the constant staff turnover or some other reason, many Sixth District constituents walked away disappointed.

Over time, this disappointment has a pernicious effect on the elected official. Nominal supporters or neutral voters become disenchanted. They talk to family, friends, and co-workers, propagating and multiplying the negative view.

Ask anyone who has ever staffed the office of an elected official. Constituent services are critical and serve as the primary contact mechanism between elected official and the people they represent.

Few citizens are connected to politicians via the campaign. The vast majority learn of their elected officials and form opinions of them through constituent outreach and services.

In sum, the Watchdog offers a sincere thanks to Michele Bachmann for her service. Many people don't realize the sacrifice involved in Congressional service.

Michele Bachmann was ultimately a passionate champion of conservative principles and values.

She should be remembered for that.

We wish her the best of luck, wherever life may take her next.

WHO'S NEXT?

Even though the election is some 17 months off, speculation is running rampant and an impending cattle call of candidates brewing in the race to succeed Michele Bachmann.

The coming days and weeks will shake out the field and separate the contenders from the pretenders.

So, what should conservatives in the district be looking for in a candidate?

One thing that is certain is that there will be few differences between the tier 1 candidates on the issues.

All will be pro-life, pro Second Amendment, and all will oppose tax increases and the unchecked growth of government.

Moreover, electability won't be a major concern - at least in the District. Even a poor GOP candidate can likely win this district.

Thus, those who will confer the GOP endorsement for this race should carefully consider each candidate's potential as a face and spokesperson for conservative principles and values across the state.

A seat in Congress is a high profile one, and the Republican members of the Minnesota delegation have the duty to articulate the message both down ballot and across the state to areas that may be represented by the party opposite.

So, who can fulfill that role?

Who can skillfully articulate conservative ideas? Who can persuade main street Minnesotans that conservative ideas and policies are good for them? Who can take abstract principles and make them understandable and visible to regular people?

The Watchdog firmly believes that conservative principles and values are correct.

Republicans have not faltered because liberalism is correct or even that most voters side with liberal ideas.

We need to do a better job explaining HOW conservative values positively impact regular lives and regular family budgets.

It is imperative that the person who survives what is sure to be a grueling and arduous endorsement process is the kind of person who not only holds conservative values, but can skillfully and persuasively articulate those values to the masses.

Not everyone has this gift. Those who have the privilege and responsibility for choosing the GOP endorsee must choose wisely.

It isn't always the loudest or most flamboyant personality in the room that is the best messenger.

It's the person who is seen as a credible voice. It is the person who knows how to explain that conservative ideas are for everyone, no matter their station in life or personal circumstances.

In short, delegates will be picking far more than a candidate for Congress. They are picking a party leader. They are picking a public face for our ideals, our principles, and our values.

6/7/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Tom Emmer Announces.**
- 2. Sean Sullivan Wrap Up.**

TOM EMMER ANNOUNCES

Editor's Note and Disclosure: Harold Hamilton has publically encouraged Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah to run for this office.

The race to replace Michele Bachmann in Congress officially kicked off Wednesday evening as Tom Emmer announced his candidacy.

Emmer is the first of what is expected to be many candidates on the GOP side of the ledger. On the DFL side, it appears no one wants the task of defending high taxes, government waste, Obamacare, government spying, gun confiscation, IRS tyranny, low job growth, and the exploding government debt to the good people of the Sixth Congressional District of Minnesota.

Because the Sixth leans GOP, the endorsement process promises to be a long and arduous process, as the candidates compete fiercely for the coveted GOP endorsement.

That's a good thing. GOP delegates, activists, and donors have to get this right. The MN GOP is in need of a comeback after the 2012 elections. The long endorsement process will provide for a thorough vetting process to shake out both the positives and negatives of each candidate.

This process should be a dry run for what will undoubtedly be a rough and tumble brawl for a rare open seat in Congress.

The emerging candidate should be battle hardened and battle tested by the time the liberals start carpet bombing.

This vetting should be a thorough no-holds-barred process. Why? Because we know the liberals and their wealthy benefactors will find these issues and spend millions to exploit them, spin them, and yes, even lie about them.

No issue should be "off the table" for any candidate because no issue is off the table for liberal special interest groups.

It's better that negative candidate issues, if any, get raised sooner rather than later. And that holds true for every candidate who enters the race.

There is no doubt that Tom Emmer is a candidate who comes to the race surrounded by controversy regarding both the conduct of his 2010 campaign as well as business and personal affairs.

Perhaps this is because of who Emmer is or perhaps it's because Emmer is the only candidate in the discussion who has run for state-wide office and has experienced a higher level of scrutiny.

Only time will tell if he has more warts than other candidates or whether his warts are the ones that are known to the public.

Like our readership, the Watchdog will be asking tough questions of all the GOP candidates throughout the campaign.

We will publish the responses we receive. We will also publish any statement of candidacy that accompanies that response.

Here are our 5 questions for Tom Emmer.

1. What was learned from your unsuccessful 2010 gubernatorial campaign? What went right? What went wrong? What would you do differently this time? Specifically, what lessons were learned from the "tip credit" affair?

Waiting [Tables](#).

Tip credit [summit](#).

2. Your 2010 gubernatorial campaign experienced personal issue distractions ranging from criminal justice issues to lawsuits to financial issues. How will you keep these issues from serving as a distraction in 2013 and 2014? Moreover, are there any other issues in this regard that activists should know about?

3. According to the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, you are a registered lobbyist. How can you be a voice to "clean up politics" when you are a registered [lobbyist](#), and one who is [affiliated](#) with DFL opinion leaders like Steve Novak and Roger Moe?

4. The GOP endorsed candidate will have a high profile role and a responsibility to help GOP candidates up and down the ballot. What is your plan to assist these candidates? What unique skills and experience helps you in fulfilling this obligation?

5. In June of 2010, you announced at a press conference that you were "[open](#)" to rail projects. Are you still open to rail projects? If so, which ones?

SEAN SULLIVAN WRAP UP

Hey, loyal readers. Although the weather speaks of March, it's June and it's time for another installment of entertaining, penetrating political analysis here at the Anoka County Watchdog.

After a break in the action last week, it's time to put a wrap on the Sean Sullivan affair.

As things stand, Sullivan is still a city employee in the economic development department in Isanti and is still an elected official in Oak Grove sitting on the economic development authority in that city.

There appears to be little doubt that Sullivan's dual role don't present any kind of issue regarding a conflict of interest.

Instead, the issue appears to be one of whether the dual roles present either an ***inherent*** conflict of interest or a ***potential*** conflict of interest.

The difference is that an inherent conflict of interest means that the roles are in conflict no matter the circumstances. In other words, it's a conflict by definition.

A potential conflict of interest means that there is a potential conflict of interest depending upon the circumstances.

As mentioned in a previous update, the Oak Grove city attorney should conduct research and produce a legal opinion for the city.

An inherent conflict would essentially force Sullivan to pick a job. A potential conflict would require both Oak Grove and Isanti to establish rules for Sullivan defining conflicts and what to do should one arise.

In the last update to address this issue, the Watchdog also called for a law governing elected officials who are also government employees.

We asked whether it made sense to allow government employees to also serve as elected officials, given that there could be conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts.

Surprisingly, the issue was hotly debated via the feedback we get at harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

Many readers agreed with our position while others thought that it should be up to voters to decide on a case by case basis.

The problem with that scenario is that it may not be apparent to voters that a candidate is taking contributions from a person or a group that is in a position to benefit from the candidate's role as a government employee.

Some readers also took offense, believing that we had maligned good conservative politicians who are also government employees.

City council members like Jason Tossey in Ramsey, Shari Bukkila in Andover, and Gary Kirkeide were all mentioned in emails.

Let us be clear, there are many fine conservatives who are also government employees, including these three.

Gary Kirkeide in particular has been a stalwart in Ham Lake and veteran of many battles.

The problem is that we believe in the rule of law and we can't write a law that says only conservatives can serve simultaneously as employees and elected officials.

The bottom line is that Watchdogs need to be vigilant for issues like Mr. Sullivan.

6/14/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Search and Seizure.**
- 2. Rhonda Sivarajah Enters the Race.**

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

One of the most profound constitutional issues we have faced in our lifetimes was thrust to the fore in recent days as the American people learned that their phone, email, and Internet activities were under surveillance by the federal government.

The surveillance is troubling on a number of fronts and demands a national debate on the subject of domestic surveillance.

The confluence of generational leaps in technological advances and the age old temptation to abuse power appear to have created a runaway train of sorts that threatens the very foundation of our Constitutional right to be from unreasonable searches and seizures under the Fourth Amendment.

The chief executive and his senior bureaucrats have displayed a shocking lack of concern for this issue and a disgusting lack of understanding of the Constitution and the system of federal governance.

To wit:

If people can't trust not only the executive branch but also don't trust Congress, and don't trust federal judges, to make sure that we're abiding by the Constitution with due process and rule of law, then we're going to have some problems here.

The above quote from the president is an actual quote and not a bad attempt at humor.

Mr. President, no person who understands his obligation as an American citizen would ever abandon the requirement to keep government accountable and simply "trust" that government is doing the right thing.

The Constitution of the United States was crafted precisely because the Framers didn't "trust" that government would act as a benevolent force and jealously safeguard personal freedoms.

Divided power, checks and balances, and periodic elections underpin the basic philosophy of the Framers that government cannot be trusted to protect fundamental liberties.

These men clearly understood that government was a threat to personal liberty and that citizens would need iron clad guarantees of their rights if the nation was to be free of the oppression and tyranny that has marked the course of government throughout human history.

Mr. President, we do have a problem here, but you don't see it. The problem isn't that we don't trust government. The problem is that you arrogantly and ignorantly expect that we should.

If a healthy distrust of the federal government has become a viewpoint that is outside the mainstream and is viewed as a fringe thought, then we do indeed have a problem.

Second, don't be fooled by the false argument that these domestic surveillance measures may have preempted terrorist attacks.

That may be true and if it is, that's undoubtedly a good thing.

But it's also a distraction from the real issue.

The real issue is what kind of cost we are paying through the erosion of our liberty.

Enhanced security of the flip side of this coin.

Taken to its logical extreme, it can be argued that suspending the Constitution and declaring martial law would further enhance security and potentially thwart even more attacks.

Instead, the question centers on the price we are paying in diminished liberty. What is the trade off? And is it worth it?

And before conservatives take too much pleasure in bashing a president who has presided over the largest governmental intrusion into our private lives, any principled conservative should not fail to hold Republicans accountable as well.

Many of these programs were initiated by George W. Bush. Many congressional Republicans voted for domestic surveillance programs in the usual manner, meaning

that there was no serious debate because very few members of Congress read the bill or understood what was in the legislation they were supporting.

In fact, Minnesota GOP delegation members Bachmann, Kline, and Paulsen have all expressed support for these programs. They need to explain why they hold this view.

This publication recognizes that drawing the line and balancing security against liberty isn't always an easy task. In fact, it is frequently difficult and is the subject of scores of Supreme Court decisions as our society advances and we collectively debate the proper balance between liberty and security.

When it comes to sweeping collection of wireless metadata, we firmly believe that the collection of this data as described in the media violates the Fourth Amendment rights of Americans.

Any analysis of guaranteed privacy begins with a simple question. Do citizens have a reasonable expectation of privacy in a particular place or thing?

Here, the question is whether citizens have a reasonable privacy expectation in the wireless metadata.

If not, the debate is over and the government is free to inspect and collect that data without justification.

If the answer is the opposite, then rights attach to the data and government must then satisfy certain obligations in order to collect and inspect.

We come down decidedly in favor of privacy rights attaching to this data.

How would you feel if your cell phone records, including number of calls, destination number, length of calls, and potentially your location and the recipient's location during each call, were made available on a public web site each month?

We firmly believe most citizens would object to this data being available to the public, thus demonstrating that a privacy right is expected and reasonable.

Take another example. Suppose your neighbor put a file cabinet at the end of his driveway and put a "free" sign on it.

If neighbors or passersby stopped to inspect the cabinet by opening it and looking inside, your neighbor would rightly be viewed as unreasonable if he became upset or attempted to stop people from looking inside. This would be an example of a situation where an expectation of privacy would be decidedly unreasonable.

Of course, the drawing of these lines can be very subjective and it presents the fundamental dilemma in the privacy argument.

In this case, the collection of metadata is both sweeping and suspicionless.

While the law can be complex, Fourth Amendment jurisprudence generally requires a reasonable suspicion in order to allow the government to infringe legitimate expectations of privacy.

Broad, sweeping dragnets of millions of citizens who have given government no reason to believe they are engaged in criminal activity is offensive to the Constitution and therefore illegal.

These dragnets are the virtual version of random police checkpoints. Few citizens would tolerate law enforcement establishing random, suspicionless roadblocks around the Twin Cities.

Similarly, they shouldn't tolerate on the airwaves.

If federal law enforcement has reason to believe a Verizon subscriber is engaged in criminal activity, then law enforcement should make that case to a judge and obtain a search warrant for that person's cell phone data.

Moreover, a real question exists regarding the data itself. What is government doing with that data? When is it destroyed, if at all? What safeguards are in place to ensure the data isn't misused?

This issue is one of both fundamental liberty and urgency.

Government has the technology to listen to our conversations, read our email, see our license plates from satellites, keep drones aloft for hours on end, and see through walls with thermal imaging devices.

Today, the technology exists to literally wipe out our right to privacy.

Technology has taken an exponential leap forward. Our public policies to balance personal liberty interests must be updated to reflect this new reality.

Individual liberty is a cornerstone of the American way.

Without robust individual liberty guarantees, our nation will look distinctly different from the America we cherish, the one envisioned by those who sacrificed so much to establish this wondrous American Experiment.

RHONDA SIVARAJAH ENTERS THE RACE

Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah formally entered the race for the Sixth Congressional District this week, becoming the second candidate to formally announce.

Standing in a small business in Ham Lake owned by a supporter, Sivarajah emphasized her accomplishments - and her perseverance - on the board.

She noted that she joined a county board dominated by liberals, so much so that she often couldn't get a "second" to her motions in order to discuss and debate them.

Today, that 6-1 conservative deficit is now a 5-2 conservative majority, with commissioners LeDoux and Kordiak clinging to the old tax and spend model of yesteryear under the reign of Dan Erhart.

Commissioner Sivarajah listed her major accomplishments as:

- Cutting property taxes in real terms;
- Using cash instead of borrowing to fund capital works projects;
- Repealing major portions of the county's "prevailing wage" ordinance.

As we noted when former state Representative Tom Emmer announced, we would ask all the declared candidates questions regarding their candidacies. Here are five questions for Rhonda Sivarajah:

1. In 2010, you were on a GOP ticket with state Rep. Marty Seifert that ultimately lost the endorsement to the Emmer-Meeks ticket. What lessons did you learn from that unsuccessful race that would apply to this run for major office?
2. You have not declared that you will abide by the GOP endorsement. What is your viewpoint regarding the endorsement and a possible primary?

3. One of the few things that could derail a GOP victory in this district is an embarrassing personal issue. Are there any issues in your background that could prove to be a distraction, such as criminal justice issues, personal finance issues, lawsuits, delinquent taxes, etc.?

4. Some have criticized you for voting for Bill Clinton in 1992. What is your response?

5. It appears that you and Tom Emmer share similar views regarding major issues such as taxing/spending, Second Amendment rights, and the debt. Thus, differences in approach and style will become more important. How is your approach/style different from your opponent?

6/21/13

In This Issue:

- 1. U.S. Senate Comedy Tour.**
- 2. Rummies in Ramsey?**
- 3. Border Buffonery.**

U.S. SENATE COMEDY TOUR

We all know Senator Al Franken is a clown first, a mediocre comedian second, a man with anger management issue third, and a U.S. Senator somewhere down the line after that.

In many ways Franken personifies Washington. No substance, no understanding, no results. Vapid celebrity-speak quotes, angry tirades, and little else.

Yet even more comedy was injected into the mix this week when Anoka's very own taxing and spending Republican, Jim Abeler [declared](#) his candidacy.

We needed the cavalry and we got the carnival.

No Daniel Boone. Only Howdy Doody. No Lone Ranger. Only Woody.

Honestly, this publication had to look for some type of confirmation that Abeler would even run as a Republican.

That's not only true, but intends to actually test the delegates by asking them to endorse his candidacy, according to the Anoka County Union.

He still has not decided on whether or not he would go to primary IF unsuccessful in seeking the endorsement.

His campaign announcement was not the typical kind, to say the least.

There was no press event, endorsements from fellow Republicans, or any other evidence that this is a serious or legitimate campaign.

The Anoka County Union reported that a "formal" announcement of the Abeler for Senate campaign would come later. Maybe 2015?

Jim, if you're going to be taken seriously, you need a serious campaign.

Psssst. A Hotmail email account isn't the sign of a legitimate U.S. Senate campaign.

We're still not sure this is all legitimate.

Abeler appears to be concerned about government growth and spending:

Government spending is out of control and unsustainable. Massive debt to foreign countries threatens our sovereignty. Our children and grandchildren are born into a future as indentured debtors of our country's careless spending. When we are dependent on the government, we are absolutely not free.

That's great and all, but it will indeed require some remarkable verbal and political gymnastics to reconcile this statement with Abeler's voting record.

Without doing any research, delegate and activists should ask Abeler how his statement can be squared with the following votes:

- One of six House GOP members to vote to override Governor Pawlenty's veto and impose a \$6 billion transportation tax on Minnesotans;
- Voted to fund Hiawatha Light Rail Line;
- Voted against allowing school districts to opt out of the Profile of Learning;
- Not only a supporter, but a champion of the \$317 million boondoggle we call Northstar commuter rail;
- Voted for a \$400 million tobacco tax increase disguised as a "health impact fee."
- Bought into the global warming scam by voting for the "25 by 25" mandate that requires 25% of the state's energy come from renewable resources;
- Voted for a "cap and trade" system to artificially limit carbon emissions;
- Voted for numerous bonding bills filled with pork and financed with debt;
- Voted to remove the requirement that school boards must put a property tax levy on the ballot;
- Voted for Vikings stadium.

Good luck with all that, Rep. Abeler.

The Watchdog believes in a Big Tent party, but we're skeptical that many Republican activists will find you to be the guy with the right stuff. Maybe Tom Snell, but not many true activists or delegates.

Needless to say, there remains a wide open door for other candidates to enter this race.

RUMMIES IN RAMSEY?

The Watchdog wondered how the city would be governed after a new majority took over.

So far, the results are looking pretty incompetent and diffused with nincompoopery.

First, there was the scandal with the city trying to hire a guy to run the economic development department who is also on the Oak Grove economic development

authority and who has also taken campaign contributions from a DFL real estate tycoon with land interests in the area.

Now, sources tell the Watchdog that city staff used official city letterhead to write letters to a judge vouching for the character and good reputation of a former city council member convicted of felony embezzlement.

According to the source, city administrator Kurt Ulrich, police chief James Way and fire chief Dean Kapler wrote letters of support to the court on city letterhead.

If true, this is another black eye for the city.

High ranking employees ought to know better than to use city resources to express a personal opinion unrelated to city business, especially to express support for a convicted felon.

If the Watchdog will be happy to report any correction to this information, but experience tells us we are correct 99% of the time.

If this keeps up, even the most well-funded PAC won't be able to arrest a tidal wave of ticked off voters.

Needless to say, Ramsey voters are about out of patience regarding tomfoolery coming from city hall.

BORDER BUFFONERY

DFL delusions abound around borders, whether the U.S. - Mexico border, the Minnesota - Dakotas border, or the Hennepin - Anoka County border.

Here, the lunacy is on the western border of the state, where North and South Dakota are doing very well and Minnesota not so much.

The statistics are clear. When comparing contiguous border counties between Minnesota and the Dakotas, the Dakotas are faring much better.

But it's almost more tragically comical to watch the liberals attempt to explain this away.

First, they claim uncompetitive taxes on the border don't matter. We are told to ignore basic human behavior and believe the businesses and people simply ignore taxes.

If that's true, then why do DFLers in Saint Paul work so hard to offer special tax breaks to border communities? If not to mitigate the devastating effects of high taxes, they for what purpose?

Visit the Minnesota Legislature web site and type "border city tax break" and see what happens.

Next, the liberals like to include the Twin Cities in the statistics, which is comparing apples to oranges and skews the numbers.

It's a simple fact that North and South Dakota don't have major metropolitan areas and the economic, cultural and other advantages that come with a major city - yet.

It was a variety of historical factors that led Minneapolis and Saint Paul to grow (no, high taxes wasn't one of them).

And it is the constant motion of a dynamic economy that is building the Dakotas, especially North Dakota.

Minnesotans, especially the more "progressive," have always been guilty of a certain smug arrogance regarding their place in the world.

For now, let's compare Minnesota minus the 11 county Metro and see how we stack up against the Dakotas.

And if we aren't careful, we could see other bordering states eat our lunch and start build the kind of metropolitan institutions that we enjoy.

Moreover, that's not to say that a state has to have a football team and ten colleges to be successful. But the offerings of a major city are attractive to many, especially white collar professionals.

World history is filled with cities that used to be something. Lisbon, Timbuktu, and Athens used to matter.

Taxes do matter. Taxes do influence behavior.

Today Minnesota may be on top. That may not be the case tomorrow.

6/28/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Anoka County Watchdog will pause next week to observe Independence Day. We hope you will celebrate by setting off copious amounts of fireworks while commemorating America's founding.

1. Circular Firing Squad.

CIRCULAR FIRING SQUAD

Republicans are still having difficulty resisting the urge to attack fellow Republicans first and Democrats second.

Apparently, the lessons of 2012 haven't yet resonated with some people.

Whether it's activists operating at the lowest levels of political action or well-funded PACs, the urge to punish a candidate or elected official who doesn't meet some litmus test is alive and well.

Ronald Reagan counseled us to remember that two people who agree on politics 80% of the time are friends and allies.

We recall recent legislative sessions where well-funded conservative PACs thought it good strategy to send attack mail and conduct push polling in GOP legislative districts like those of state Rep. Greg Davids and state Sen. Carla Nelson.

You know, the same Rep. Davids, the ranking Republican on the House Tax Committee, who has led the charge in blasting Governor Dayton's tax plans.

You know, the same Senator Carla Nelson who voted against the massive corporate subsidy to the Mayo Clinic even though she represents Rochester.

Often, assisting the DFL in attacking Republicans simply leads to a Democrat being elected in place of the attacked Republican.

These must be the same political masterminds who thought putting a constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage on the ballot would divert liberal funding away from DFL candidates and drive GOP turn out at the polls.

How has that all worked out?

At some point, and perhaps we've reached it, the conservative/Republican/libertarian camp will realize that the only path to majority rule and thus checking liberalism is through unity.

Or, so long as some demand purity and zero deviation from their own dogma, minority status will be the result.

Of course, there are few absolutes in politics. Some Republicans can certainly stray so far from shared values that they are outside the mainstream of collective thinking regarding the role of government in a free society.

As this publication noted just last week, U.S. Senate candidate Jim Abeler may be in that place.

But state Senator Branden Petersen is most certainly not in that place.

This week, Petersen was subject to a "no confidence" vote by the executive committee of his BPOU.

To be real honest, actions like this are embarrassing to our cause.

We fully understand that some people are very upset with Petersen because of his vote in favor of gay marriage.

That's fine. Every citizen has the right to be a one issue voter if they choose.

Those same citizens also have the right to withdraw their personal support for Petersen if this one issue is that important to them.

But these collective attacks that come dressed in the formal imprimatur of Republican Party cause Democrats to chortle and make us look petty, punitive, and wholly unreasonable.

A no confidence vote on this guy?

Branden Petersen was a 2012 "Friend of the Taxpayer," garnering a perfect 100% score in defending the taxpayer. He voted against the Vikings stadium, the bloated half billion dollar bonding bill and also voted in favor of cutting taxes and spending.

Petersen also scored a perfect 100% on the latest NFIB scorecard, earning the "Friend of Small Business Award."

In the past two legislative sessions, Petersen has voted against a Minnesota Chamber of Commerce position only once.

Petersen sports a lifetime 82% rating from the Legislative Evaluation Assembly (LEA), one of the highest scores among GOP lawmakers.

Sen. Petersen is endorsed by the Republican Liberty Caucus.

Most recently, he was recognized as a protector of personal liberties by Liberty Minnesota.

And he's not too shabby on social issues as well.

Branden Petersen has a perfect score from Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL), the state's leading pro-life organization.

The Second Amendment? Petersen is also a staunch defender of America's "First Freedom."

In short, no reasonable conservative can claim that there is no place for Branden Petersen under our tent.

And let's be clear about something as well. Those angry with Petersen ought to be honest about it. Claiming that the issue isn't gay marriage but is actually Petersen's integrity doesn't wash. You're angry about the gay marriage vote. Fine. Admit it.

Having said that, it's easy to why you want to make it about something else.

Petersen has an impeccable conservative voting record and you realize that you look a little crazy suggesting that he ought to be run out of the party on a rail because of a single vote.

In fact, if there is no room for Branden Petersen under the tent, we will all be meeting in a phone booth after the 2014 elections, even deeper in the minority.

Look, there are plenty of people willing to call Senator Petersen a loser and a low life. They're called Democrats.

There are plenty of people who will be working to see that Branden Petersen doesn't get re-elected. Those people are also called Democrats.

If this one issue causes someone to walk away from him, so be it.

They just don't have to aid and abet the DFL by attacking and working against a guy with a strong pro-jobs, pro-life, pro-gun record.

And we wonder why we look crazy to large chunks of the electorate.

7/12/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: State Senator Branden Petersen will hold a town hall meeting July 17th at 7PM at Anoka City Hall.

- 1. Stadium Fraud.**
- 2. Image Problem, Real Problem.**
- 3. The Lessons of Capitalism.**

STADIUM FRAUD

Entire books have been written on the subject of taxpayer-subsidized sports facilities.

This publication wholeheartedly agrees with critics who argue that nearly all the alleged benefits of those stadiums are illusory and just plain bunk, especially the economic arguments.

Here in Minnesota, it's also illuminating and a bit disgusting to consider another alleged benefit of these new sports palaces: the winning product.

When the snake oil is hawked down at the legislature, one of the arguments is that a new facility will allow the benefitting team to field a better team, resulting in winning records and championships which will do nothing to fulfill government's role in our lives but will make some low-information citizens feel good and distract them from the banality of their vapid lives. Bread and circus is obviously of timeless appeal.

Yes, these new facilities will attract quality players, free agents, recruits, and other superstars who will bring glory to town. You know, makes us feel "big league" and make us better than Iowa or Omaha. Na na na na na. We have a team and you don't. Childish but true.

So how has that all worked out for you, taxpayers?

The Minnesota Twins moved into their palace at Target Field in 2010. This year, the team is on a pace to lose 95 games and finish with one of the worst win-loss records in major league baseball.

In 2010, the team finished with a record of 94-68. The team won the American League Central division, but was swept out by the New York Yankees in the playoffs.

In 2011, the team was 63-99, and was the worst team in baseball except for the Houston Astros.

In 2012, the team was 66-96, and posted the worst record in the American League.

As mentioned, the team is on pace for a similar record in futility this season, a projected 67-95 record.

You don't need to be a baseball fan to conclude that all the extra revenue isn't going to build a better team with higher payrolls to pay higher income taxes.

Instead, that money is going into the pockets of team owners, who enriched themselves at the taxpayer trough.

Do you really think things will be different with the Vikings, who may or may not actually their \$1 billion palace built because it was funded with a smoke-and-mirrors plan that is ultimately backed up by the state's general fund?

With a big election year upcoming in 2014, let's take a moment to recall those legislators who will be asking for your vote and where they stood on these issues:

Twins vote [here](#).

Vikings vote [here](#).

IMAGE PROBLEM, REAL PROBLEM

In our broken public education system, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The names change, the kids change, legislators change, education budgets grow, but the test scores stay the same - flat.

But Education Minnesota, the Leviathan beast of public employee unions, has a new president.

Did we mention how things stay the same?

Denise Specht, the new president, offered more of the same old, same old we've been hearing from this union for years.

She wants fewer standardized tests, thereby reducing accountability. What a surprise.

And like any union, she's interested in keeping artificial barriers to limit market entry.

For example, she opposes Teach for America, an innovate program that puts talented young people in the classroom while they earn their teaching licenses.

Said Specht, "When you have somebody on your team that you're worried about whether they're prepared or whether they have the tools that are necessary to do well, that's a concern for everyone."

Oh, really?

If that's truly the concern, then why not support Republicans in their effort to make it easier for administrators to terminate bad teachers?

Why all the support for tenure and the grievance rules that make it virtually impossible to fire the bad ones?

Why not support policies that reward good teachers and punish the bad ones?

Yeah, that would require subjecting teachers to objective accountability standards, which is anathema to this union.

Did you know that we have teachers in the classroom who didn't pass the basic skills test to teach?

Where was Education Minnesota on that one?

Specht then went on to complain that teachers were "taking a beating in the court of public opinion" and that teacher morale is at an "all-time low."

We agree. And the reason is Education Minnesota and its leadership.

Morale is low because good teachers see the bad ones get away with incompetence and even rewards.

They see a pay system that fails to recognize merit and achievement.

Instead, teachers are paid on a Soviet-era industrial grid of "step and lane" movement that recognizes only seniority and how many on-line credits a teacher got from the Minnesota Bartending Institute.

Any organization that fails to set and enforce high standards is doomed to low morale. When no distinction is made between the high achievers and dead weight, the system will break down.

And there is a good reason why public teachers don't enjoy a good reputation in many quarters.

It's because their union spends no small amount of resources essentially telling the public that teachers have a crummy professional life, need more pay and benefits, and less accountability.

Look, most taxpayers are smart. They can smell BS. And when Education Minnesota tries to pee on our legs and call it rain, we see right through it.

This is because most taxpayers live in a far different world than most teachers.

We are held accountable at work as "at will" employees who can be terminated when we don't get the job done.

We work a standard work year and then some. We don't get summers off. We don't get two weeks for Christmas. And a week off for spring break. And days off for "staff training." And days off in October for our union meeting.

We have a defined contribution pension program. We don't get to retire at age 55 with a Cadillac defined-benefit program.

We know what teachers get paid and we know the benefit structure as well as the work environment.

So, please. Don't tell us our local schools are a North Korean gulag. We think you're doing okay.

The problem is that Education Minnesota continues to spout off about how bad teachers have it while resisting attempts to improve educational outcomes.

Until this changes, there will be low morale and a poor public image.

But don't blame the taxpayer. You brought this on yourself.

THE LESSONS OF CAPITALISM

Friends, the primary purpose of this publication is to extol the virtues of free-market, laissez faire capitalism. Yes, we seek to proselytize the masses on the subject of free markets and free men.

Unfortunately, we spend most of this time showing the virtue of capitalism by way of the folly of many government programs.

Such is the case this week in Nevada.

As readers know, the Las Vegas real estate market was among the hardest hit by the recession.

The response of the Nevada legislature was to pass a harsh foreclosure bill that has essentially imposed a moratorium on foreclosures in Nevada.

Thus, deadbeats continue to live in homes for free, while many trash the homes.

Banks and credit unions suffer with non-performing loans, which harm shareholders, customers, and employees.

Buyers who would otherwise be in the market are frozen out of the short sale market and the market is deprived of the one sure mechanism to reduce the inventory of distressed homes.

Moreover, a perverse incentive is created to build new homes precisely where they aren't needed as homebuyers look to get into the market. There is demand for homes. Since foreclosures can't meet the demand, the new home market will.

The primary lesson here is market efficiency. Free markets are inherently more efficient than government in allocating scarce resources.

In this case, a government program has encouraged the overbuilding of homes and prevented the market from turning distressed assets into productive assets through the transfer of ownership of foreclosed homes.

Look for President Obama to try and use Nevada as a national model.

7/19/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Republican Gubernatorial Forum.**
- 2. The Lobby Gravy Train.**
- 3. Dependency Nation.**

REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL FORUM

Greetings, Watchdogs. A forum for the Republicans who hope to send Governor Dayton packing will be happening soon.

A forum for declared Republican candidates for governor will be held Thursday, August 1st at the Mermaid Restaurant and Lounge at 2200 County Hwy. 10 in Mounds View. Talk radio host and former Ramsey County Board candidate Sue Jeffers will open the forum at 7 p.m. Walter Hudson of the North Metro Tea Party Patriots will moderate.

At press time, declared candidates are Jeff Johnson, Scott Honour, Dave Thompson and Kurt Zellers. A social hour with a cash bar will precede the forum beginning at 6:15 p.m. Questions from the audience will be taken as well as questions presubmitted by the sponsoring Republican Party units of Senate District 31, 35, 36 and 37. The forum will serve as a fundraiser for these party units and will be held in the back (westside) of the building in the Coral Bay Ballroom. Admission is \$10.00.

THE LOBBY GRAVY TRAIN

It's that time of year, Watchdogs. The time of year when the Minnesota State Auditor office releases its annual report on how much local units of government spend to lobby the state.

Like a game of 3D chess, you need to pay close attention to the different layers of lobbying.

First, note that this report is only about what our local units of government pay to lobby the state. It DOES NOT include the amounts spent to lobby the federal government.

(In 2012, local units of government in Minnesota spent approximately \$1.1 million lobbying Washington).

Now, it's important to pay attention to the different layers of lobbying that go on at the state level.

First, many local units of government have their own employee lobbyists on staff, who make a nice salary and benefits. Think former state Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, who for some reason is still employed by Anoka County.

Second, many units of local government also have "hired gun" contract lobbyists who do work for one or multiple local units.

Third, many local units also pay dues to special interests who in turn lobby at the state Capitol. The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) is one such organization. Nearly all local units have one or more of these arrangements.

In 2012, local units of government in Minnesota spent an aggregate of \$7.8 million directly lobbying the state.

Of that amount, approximately half was spent on employee or contract lobbyists while the other half was spent on dues to local government associations which were in turn spent by them to lobby the state.

Among the many troubling aspects of the report is the big spending by governmental agencies that are not accountable to the electorate.

Out of the top 10 spenders on state lobbying, four of them are not directly accountable to voters through election and re-election of leaders.

The Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission, which had to work hard to push the Vikings stadium across the finish line, spent more money on lobbying in 2012 (\$340,941). than any other local unit of government except the City of Minneapolis, which also lobbied for the stadium.

In fourth place is the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC).

After the MAC is some group called the Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. Anoka County Watchdogs might be interested to learn that the City of Anoka participates in this organization. Maybe it has something to do with that ugly windmill that sits on the high school property.

After that, the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) rounds out the top 10. Anoka County participates in CTIB, which is funded with that neat "wheelage tax" that the county foisted on us during the Reign of Erhart. Perhaps this county board will repeal the wheelage tax and give county taxpayers a break.

Here in Anoka County, the county board is moving things in the right direction when it comes to lobbying.

Over the years, the county has become a perennial top 10 lobbyist payer, thanks to Dan Erhart and the Good Ol' Boys hooking up their buddies, who would then in turn contribute to their political campaigns.

A review of State Auditor records by the Anoka County Watchdog finds that the county's lobbying expenses have indeed been moving in a very positive direction.

In fact, over the past five years, the county board has cut lobbying expenses by over 1/3rd!

2008: \$187,083

2009: \$188,545

2010: \$165,485

2011: \$170,320

2012: \$121,166

Much of those savings can be attributed to the county finally getting rid of Steve Novak and getting out of the Metropolitan Inter-County Association (MICA).

Of course, the Star Tribune happily gave voice to the public fretting of remaining Good Ol' Boys commissioners Jim Kordiak and Carol LeDoux, who claimed that Anoka County would be "isolated" if the board undertook those bold, refreshing moves.

So, loyal readers, do you feel any less served by your county government because we're no longer members of MICA? Please send an email to Harold Hamilton to share your horror story of our now MICA-less county.

Looks to us like the roads still get paved, the sheriff still arrests the bad guys, and our parks are open and available.

Notice the correlation between electing conservatives to the board and reduction in lobbying expenses?

Kudos to this board. Once again, Rhonda Sivarajah, Robyn West, Matt Look, Scott Schulte, and Julie Brastad deserve our highest thanks and praise.

Anoka County once again leads the way in delivering results.

How many other counties cut lobbying expenses by 1/3rd?

We look forward to even more cost cutting in the future. By the way, it was reported that \$62,838 of Kathy Tingelstad's pay and benefits are related to lobbying. Just sayin'.

Regarding Anoka County cities, expenses are mostly tied up in paying dues to special interest groups who in turn lobby for cities.

Your top 5:

Coon Rapids: \$79,161

Blaine: \$65,284

Andover: \$41,670

Anoka: \$39,867

Lino Lakes: \$29,252

How many potholes could we fill with that money.

Remember these numbers the next time your city council talks about budget reductions. Ask them how much is being paid out for lobbying.

And if they claim they need a lobbyist, tell them they have lobbyists already. They're called the city council.

DEPENDENCY NATION

Under President Obama, America has accelerated the march towards a Food Stamp nation. A nation in which work, productivity, and self-sufficiency are de-emphasized in favor of dependency on government and dependency on those who fund those programs - Democrats.

Under Obama, more and more Americans ride in the wagon while fewer and fewer are left to pull it.

One of the ways in which dependency is fostered is to expand eligibility criteria.

Frankly, people who aren't impoverished are treated as if they are so.

Recently, the Watchdog gained possession of a "free and reduced" school lunch eligibility memo from the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

For a family of four, eligibility is available up to a household income level of \$43,568 annually.

According to federal 2013 poverty guidelines, the poverty level for a family of four is \$23,550 annually.

Put another way, you can get your neighbor to help you take care of your kid's lunch needs even if you are nearly 200% over the federal poverty guideline.

Put another way, you can make nearly \$21 an hour at your job and still get a subsidy for your child's meals.

Now, \$43,568 per year isn't living rich, but that isn't the point. The point is that you can well afford to feed your kids on \$3,630 per month.

One of the most immoral aspects of the liberal ideology is the intentional addicting of people to government, even when they don't really need it.

Whether Solyndra, AIG, or the guy down the street, the liberals constantly seek out ways to get people on a government program while de-stigmatizing membership in such programs, which comes at the cost of undermining critical shared values like productivity, individualism, and self-reliance.

The values liberals cherish aren't found in American principles and values. Instead, they are found in European Socialism.

7/26/13

In This Issue:

- 1. The Real Root of Detroit's Implosion.**
- 2. Wisconsin Unions Vote with Feet.**
- 3. William Wilkins.**

THE REAL ROOT OF DETROIT'S IMPLOSION

Yes, we said "implosion." Detroit, like a black hole of stellar mass, left us awe struck with an overwhelming and fearsome display of almost preternatural power as the city collapsed on itself, without a photon of light escaping (or maybe that was just the lamp posts not working).

A city of 1.5 million becomes a city of less than half that size, with 47% of its remaining residents functionally illiterate, a number associated with many Third World countries.

A city where it takes an hour for the cops to show up. Where 1/3 of ambulances are inoperable.

Corruption. Blight. A death spiral. A canary in the coal mine. A cautionary tale.

While many factors were at play in Detroit, one cause, above all others, led to this calamity.

It wasn't race relations.

It wasn't corruption.

It wasn't the auto industry getting eaten alive by legacy costs (getting warmer).

It wasn't out of control government spending (starting to sweat).

It wasn't even unsustainable pensions (getting way hot).

The root cause of Detroit's problems boils down to the public policy decision made in the 1960s and 1970s to allow public employees to form unions and collectively bargain for pay and other benefits.

It should come as no surprise that public unions are bankrupting cities, counties, states and the federal government with unsustainable pension costs.

Don't think that Detroit is the only jurisdiction with un-funded pension liabilities. Here in Minnesota, not a single public employee union is fully funded. Overall, these pensions

have just 75 cents for every dollar of pension obligation. The deficit stands at nearly \$17 billion dollars.

Moody's Investor Services estimates that the nation in the aggregate faces \$2 trillion in unfunded pension obligations.

Detroit, it turns out, is just the tip of the iceberg. Other municipal bankruptcies also portend this imminent fiscal calamity.

But massive unfunded pension obligations and legacy health care costs for public sector retirees are merely symptomatic of the underlying malignancy.

Allowing public employees to bargain with politicians for these goodies is the real problem.

This is because the normal restraints and guardrails present in private sector bargaining are wholly absent in the public environment.

(This discussion is focused on public sector unions, which is not an endorsement of collective bargaining in the private sector.)

First, collective bargaining is premised on the mutual tension that normally exists between labor and management.

For example, private sector companies have a fiduciary obligation to shareholders and investors. Because labor is an input cost, management has an incentive to keep those costs as low as possible.

Unions, on the other hand, have an incentive to maximize pay and benefits.

This tension keeps most union contracts within what the market will support.

Which leads to another factor not present in the public sector: the free market.

In most labor negotiations, both labor and management realize that market forces put a governor on what can be gained in terms of pay and working conditions.

Get it wrong, and shareholders lose their investment and employees hit the bread line. The price for financial failure is severe.

Recent history at both General Motors and Hostess Brands demonstrated this fundamental principle in action.

Yes, Obama bailed out GM, but the point remains. GM management got it wrong on the economics and they bankrupted the company. Obama, in reality, shifted the losses normally borne by employees over to GM shareholders, bond holders, and the taxpayer.

They all took on losses they normally wouldn't have so that union workers experienced less economic dislocation than what the market would have visited upon them.

In short, the absence of market place financial realities too often un-tether unions, and more importantly, management from reality when they bargain in the public sector.

Moreover, there is an absence of the inherent economic tension between unions and management in the public sector.

The combination of the lack of these two key restraint devices is an invitation for fiscal disaster.

In the private sector, the bargaining table is often the place where fundamental clashing interests over pay and working conditions are resolved to assure labor peace for a time.

In the public sector, the bargaining table is often the place where unions and management get together to carve up the spoils of political war.

Often, the very same unions that are on the other side of the table are responsible for electing the management team.

In other words, there is no "other side" of the table. All are sitting on one side of the table.

The concept of collective bargaining is literally turned on its head. Management is effectively colluding with the union to bilk the company so the union can turn around and use the windfall to ensure that management stays in power at the next election.

And because government has no bottom line, no profit/loss statement, and the power to tax, there are no market forces to impose cost controls.

Thus, government is left to utilize two tools to impose market discipline.

One is the ballot box (more on this below).

And the other is bankruptcy. Even government runs out of money at some point. Greece, and Detroit are two recent examples of government finally running out of money.

In sum, the public policy decision to allow government employees to unionize has been one of the most irresponsible, reckless, and detrimental actions our government has undertaken.

The normal checks and balances and swift penalties for failure found in the private sector are wholly lacking in the public sector.

Elections or bankruptcy. That's the reality, whether AFSCME and Education Minnesota like it or not.

WISCONSIN UNIONS VOTE WITH FEET

Watchdogs, have you been following what's happening in Wisconsin with their government unions?

We all know Governor Scott Walker and courageous Republicans were successful in beating these ultra-powerful unions and instituting much needed reforms (see above).

But that's not nearly the end of the story.

Now that these reforms are in place, government employees are voting with their feet and leaving their unions in droves.

Two years ago, Wisconsin public employees were given the freedom to choose whether or not they wanted to belong to a union, freeing them from compulsory membership.

As Governor Walker stated, he wanted unions to demonstrate value. If they were a good deal, employees would see it and freely belong. If not, they would keep their money and their freedom from union control.

So how is it working out for the unions so far?

AFSCME Local 48 had 9,000 members and income of \$7 million when the law passed.

Today, this union local has 3,500 members and had a \$650,000 deficit.

AFSCME District Council 40 has lost 36% of its membership.

The Wisconsin Education Association has lost nearly 50% of its membership.

The Wisconsin State Employees' Union has lost 13,000 members out of the 22,000 who were on the rolls when the law passed.

When given a choice, it seems that government workers aren't so hot to belong to a union and take advantage of all the alleged benefits they offer.

It would be interesting to see some type of study done to determine why government unions have lost so many members in Wisconsin.

We can certainly think of some reasons.

Starting with government unions protecting lazy, incompetent employees. There are probably many honest, competent, hard working public servants who are sick and tired of paying for the union to protect and keep employed insufferable colleagues.

Or the fat cat union boss pay and perks. The Watchdog in the past has exposed Education Minnesota's Cadillac pay and benefits and numerous lobbyists on the payroll.

In any case, Wisconsin public servants are clearly voting with their feet and sending a message to their erstwhile union bosses: You provide no value. You're fired!

WILLIAM WILKINS

William Wilkins. Ever heard of him?

He's the chief counsel for the Internal Revenue Service and a big time Democrat.

He's also becoming the focal point in the latest stage of the Congressional investigation into the Obama Administration's use of the IRS to pursue and harass groups Barack doesn't like.

Wilkins is also a long-time lobbyist, having been a lobbyist for over 20 years before coming to the IRS in early 2009, just after the Community-Organizer-in-Chief took over the White House to save humanity.

Wait a minute. Wasn't Obama going to ban lobbyists from government? Stop the revolving door?

Prior to going to IRS, in fact, Wilkins was a lobbyist on tax issues, representing groups that wanted favorable treatment by either the IRS or members of Congress who wrote tax law.

Huh. Nearly a year after Wilkins was hired, Obama said this in his 2010 State of the Union Address: "We've excluded lobbyists from policymaking jobs or seats on federal boards and commissions."

Now we learn that Wilkins was very likely making policy, indeed.

It appears that he had a hand in fashioning a policy that singled out conservative groups for special scrutiny in applying for a certain tax status.

Does anyone believe this president anymore? He has not a shred of credibility remaining.

8/2/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Much has rightly been written about the moral, fiscal, economic, and social collapse of Detroit, America's "Atlas Shrugged" moment. The Watchdog encourages readers to take a moment to read this first-hand account of the [implosion](#). This is an excellent account of what happens when liberalism is taken to its logical conclusion. No amount of money will save Detroit. The only solution is to wipe away the dysfunction and establish a system that enforces some measure of accountability, transparency, and the rule of law.

1. Tax Goes Bye-Bye.
2. Property Tax Cuts?
3. MetroNorth Chamber = Suckers.

TAX GOES BYE-BYE

Trivia: When the last time a tax was actually repealed? Answer: Just last week. Of course, Barack Obama didn't do it. Governor Mark Dayton didn't do it.

But Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah did. So did Commissioner Look. And Commissioner West. And Commissioner Schulte. And Commissioner Braastad.

Last week, the Anoka County Board voted 5-2 to repeal the county "wheelage tax" that taxed county citizens who own a vehicle in the county.

The tax was repealed. It wasn't replaced with another tax or fee. There was no smoke and mirrors or bait and switch. Taxpayers in the county received the direct benefit of a tax cut.

This feat is noteworthy for a number of reasons, besides the simple fact that a tax cut actually happened instead of hearing elected officials just talk about it. Results, not rhetoric up here in Anoka County.

Just a few short years ago, the county was in the vice grip of a cabal of commissioners who talked a fiscally conservative game but voted a liberal one.

With hard work and some financial resources to level the political playing field, the ideological make up of the board changed from a 6-1 liberal make up to a 5-2 conservative composition.

These five public servants haven't squandered their opportunity to reform government.

In the short time that this majority has governed, Anoka County has undergone a transformation.

Budgets have been trimmed without a reduction in service quality, property taxes have been held flat, the county has reduced its borrowing and debt service, eliminated memberships in special interest groups, and the commissioners have introduced a unprecedented level of cooperation with employees to share ideas to maximize service while minimizing expenses.

In short, Anoka County has implemented a true model of lean government that is producing results.

This model should serve as a template for other jurisdictions to follow, especially when many of those same jurisdictions are living on borrowed fiscal time, heading towards an ugly day of reckoning. Just this past week, investment grading houses have downgraded a number of Minnesota local governments because of these looming fiscal issues.

Any smart county or city administrator would have Anoka County come in to share their reform successes.

But don't count on it. In fact, most counties are either implementing the wheelage tax for the first time or they are doubling it, as authorized by the DFL-dominated legislature and Governor Dayton.

In fact, this is the real danger for all 5 county commissioners.

You see, there is a very powerful status quo in government. There are powerful forces that like the status quo of simply piling more money on the same old dysfunctional system.

Entrenched bureaucrats, lobbyists, public sector labor unions, and those who gain benefits from government spending are very alarmed by this development in Anoka County.

The Fab Five of Sivarajah, Schulte, Look, Braastad and West are showing citizens that there is a better way that can really work. In other words, they are successfully challenging power interests who don't want change and reform.

Thus, don't at all be surprised when these 5 are attacked publically and privately through a whisper campaign.

They will be portrayed as "radical" and "extreme." Anoka County will be called an "outlier" and on the "fringe" of rational and reasonable government.

We've already seen the articles from a compliant and co-conspiratorial media.

Remember the hysterical articles when Anoka County took the simple step of leaving the Minnesota Inter-county Association (MICA)? You would have thought the board voted to leave the Union.

Look for more of this same propaganda in the future.

But that's okay. The media and the entrenched special interests don't vote and the Fab Five don't care about them because they don't represent them. They represent the citizens of the county.

Readers should press the issue by asking their other local and state officials what they are doing to control costs and improve quality like Anoka County. If Anoka County can do it, why can't others?

The answer is that they can if only they have the courage and energy to do so.

Reforming government is hard work. These commissioners spend untold hours on the subject.

It always makes this publication laugh when some politician says, "raising taxes is hard. It's a last resort."

Bullshit. Piling money on the status quo is easy. And it's popular among the special interests.

What Sivarajah and company are doing is hard work. And it's greatly appreciated.

And, by the way, you readers in Andover and Coon Rapids ought to contact [Commissioner Carol LeDoux](#) and ask her why she is so opposed to these common sense reforms.

This woman talks the conservative game and votes the liberal.

But that's okay. She is up for re-election in 2014 and her fate is the one experienced by one similar to her: Dan Erhart. That's coming.

And [Commissioner Jim Kordiak](#)? Cuba is instructive. Isolate and wait for regime change. Kordiak is ineffective and has no bearing on the overall politics or public policy of county government. No one listens to him anyway.

PROPERTY TAX CUTS?

Speaking of local units of government and their spending, we won't hold our collective breath waiting to see if that big money windfall they got out of Mark Dayton and company will be passed along to property tax payers.

Recall that cities and counties got access to all sorts of cash this past legislative session.

For example, aid to cities to cities and counties was increased \$130 million in the recent budget that was passed.

Moreover, cities and counties no longer have to pay the state sales tax on many purchases. While this change is good public policy, it will save cities and counties \$172 million.

In addition, as described above, counties may implement a \$10 per vehicle tax as well, one that goes directly to the counties.

So, will cities and counties use the money to cut property taxes or will they simply spend the money?

History would indicate that cities and counties will simply spend the money and continue to raise your property taxes.

A report from the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) showed that cities and counties have historically used 82% of the aid to increase spending and 18% to provide property tax relief.

In short, the recent windfall to local units of government was really nothing more than payback to local elected officials who support DFLers for legislative office.

Remember what we said above about a powerful group that supports the status quo?

This is part of it.

METRONORTH CHAMBER = SUCKERS

We just had to laugh out loud when we read the headline in the recent MetroNorth Chamber newsletter decrying the raft of new business taxes passed by the DFL.

The Chamber didn't seem so concerned about the prospect of these taxes when they endorsed state Rep. Melissa Hortman for office back in 2012.

And it wasn't like they weren't warned. This publication and numerous anti-business votes in previous legislative sessions provided ample warning that Hortman was no friend of business and capitalism.

Yet they endorsed her anyway, even though there was a choice in her opponent, a well-known friend of jobs and capitalism.

Or, there could have been no endorsement.

Now, the Chamber has an ostrich egg on its face after Hortman voted for these taxes, voted for the health exchange, an onerous energy bill, and other bills opposed by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

In fact, Hortman voted against the Minnesota Chamber position every single time save for once.

Chamber membership should be clamoring for some accountability here, especially when one considers that Hortman's uncle chaired the committee that made the endorsement.

The board of directors ought to be asking the chair of the Chamber PAC and the Chamber executive director how a candidate like Hortman made it through the endorsement process.

What an absolute embarrassment for the Chamber.

But then again, embarrassment is nothing new for this group.

From supporting school property tax levies to supporting a sales tax increase for the Vikings stadium to supporting the failed Northstar train to supporting anti-business candidates, the MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce has been an easy mark for Big Government charlatans for many years.

If you want a real chamber of commerce, we suggest you look a little bit south to the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce.

8/9/13

In This Issue:

- 1. The Apologists.**
- 2. LeDoux is Out.**
- 3. Candidate Alert.**
- 4. Bachmann's New Job.**

THE APOLOGISTS

Hey, Watchdogs. Another week, another raft of liberalism and Big Government to swallow.

Did you read the articles this week quoting commissioners Carol LeDoux and Jim Kordiak explaining their votes against cutting taxes for their constituents?

We could only shake our heads at their illogical and bizarre apology (classic definition) for their votes on eliminating the so-called "wheelage tax."

Essentially, the argument from the Liberal Two is that this tax is really a "user fee" and that since it goes to roads, it's an acceptable tax.

First, words matter. This is a wheelage TAX, not wheelage fee. The nomenclature is correct because it is indeed a tax. A fee is a charge that is levied to directly cover the cost of providing a service. For example, paying a fee to get your driver's license renewed is a fee. Paying a general tax that goes into a large pool of funds to pay for systemic maintenance and construction of county roads is not.

Moreover, it's not a USER fee because it only applies to a segment of users, not all.

For example, there are people who don't own a car and therefore don't pay the tax.

Yet these people clearly use the roads and derive a benefit. They often drive with others. They ride busses. When they have a medical emergency, the ambulance doesn't use it a magic carpet. It uses the roads. The groceries get to the store by truck. If the house is on fire, the fire truck uses the roads to get to the fire.

In short, it's not a "fee" and it's not a "user" fee as those terms are commonly understood.

Of course, obfuscation and incorrect descriptions of their agenda isn't new to the Left. Just listen to President Obama on any given day. For example, he recently was on the Jay Leno show, where he pronounced that there was no domestic spying program when there clearly is one.

It has long been a tenet of the Liberal ideology to call black white and white black.

So it is in this case.

Second, the tax was justified as something absolutely critical and essential to providing a core government function.

For example, LeDoux offered the obligatory preface to her apology by noting that she "struggled" with the issue.

LeDoux frequently "struggles" with votes before voting against taxpayers.

Moreover, the rhetoric around the wheelage tax from these two simply hides the real issue and merely seeks political cover for supporting a tax increase.

To be clear, there will be no loss of funding because of the tax cut. As Commissioner Schulte has noted many times, the county will backfill road and bridge funding with other funds realized through savings and efficiencies, meaning that the funding will remain steady while the tax levy will not increase because of the tax cut.

Well, imagine that. A reduction in the cost of government without any reduction in service.

This is exactly what conservative governance means and is the toughest kind of governing because it requires some hard work and due diligence to find the efficiencies and implement them.

Any clown can lard another tax increase on the status quo. It takes a leader to change the status quo in a way that reduces tax burdens while preserving or improving service. The Good Ol' Boys are from status quo. The conservatives are from the reform camp.

And don't fall for all this talk about putting the road budget on property taxes.

The road and bridge budget was always on the property tax levy, which is okay.

Since 1857, Anoka County has been building and maintaining roads. And there wasn't a "wheelage tax" until 2006, some 149 years later.

It wasn't as if the wheelage tax came along and replaced the role of the property tax.

The property tax has always been a source of revenue for roads and bridges and always will be.

The simple fact is that if this repeal was an prime example of good governance. The tax burden will be reduced while the level of service will not be.

It's unfortunate but not surprising that commissioners LeDoux and Kordiak can't understand that simple concept.

LEDOUX IS OUT

Speaking of Commissioner LeDoux, reliable sources tell the Watchdog that she has made the decision not to run for re-election in 2014, leaving an open seat that can certainly be won by a candidate with world view more consistent with that of the governing majority.

District 5 basically covers the south half of Andover and the eastern half of Coon Rapids, with one precinct in Fridley.

Andover is a conservative bastion, having elected Republicans to office time and again.

Coon Rapids has long been a bellwether and a swing district, but voters in the city have always been receptive to a message of fiscal conservatism.

Moreover, 2014 promises to be a year in which swing district are sure to respond to a message of fiscal sanity, given President Obama's mismanagement of the economy and the many tax increases Governor Dayton and the DFL imposed on middle class and poor voters, including a tobacco tax increase and business tax increases, including those that will come with unionizing daycare providers.

There are no announced candidates as of yet, but the Watchdog has it on good authority that at least two people are seriously contemplating a candidacy.

Sources tell the Watchdog that Andover Mayor Mike Gamache is strongly considering a run and will very likely throw his hat in the ring.

This announcement should make local DFLers happy as Gamache is indeed a popular local elected official.

Gamache years ago unsuccessfully ran for the legislature as a DFLer. He then ran, as many Andover Democrats do, on a non-partisan ballot and won.

Interestingly, he supported the imposition of a "prevailing wage" ordinance in Andover that was strongly favored by labor unions.

His support of prevailing wage, which makes public works projects more expensive, stands in contrast to the county board, which recently significantly scaled back the county's prevailing wage law.

The other candidate considering the race is conservative in world view and would please many readers of this publication.

The Watchdog is withholding his name at this time pursuant to his wishes.

There will undoubtedly be many more candidates who will jump into the race.

Uberliberal non-profit executive Becky Fink has to be considered since she has unsuccessfully run for office in Coon Rapids almost as often as Jerry Newton.

Get going, Watchdogs. A 6-1 conservative bloc would be sweet.

CANDIDATE ALERT

Friends, it was certainly a happy day when state Rep. Jim Abeler announced his quixotic campaign for the U.S. Senate, meaning that he would not seek re-election to the House.

While we would be tempted to say that the Republican who retains this seat (sorry, DFL) will be an improvement, one candidate has stepped forward who merits your consideration.

Jason Tossey of the Ramsey City Council has announced his candidacy for the Abeler seat.

While the Watchdog doesn't endorse candidates, we can vouch for his voting record on the Ramsey City Council, which is public information.

We have many times noted his words and actions on the council and believe his [candidacy](#) is one you should learn about to decide for yourself if he's the right person to represent District 35A, comprising Ramsey and Anoka.

BACHMANN'S NEW JOB

In case you were scratching your head over Rep. Bachmann's enthusiastic embrace of President Obama's domestic spying program, the Watchdog has learned the source of her compliance: a job with the Obama Administration.

That's right. Washington sources tell the Dog that Bachmann has been tapped as a lawyer for the NSA, reviewing all manner of spying activities.

These same sources say the NSA was particularly impressed with Bachmann's own willingness and skill in engaging in her own version of domestic spying.

The agency reviewed footage of Bachmann [hiding in the bushes](#) at a gay rights rally in 2005 when she was a state senator and marveled at her stealthy tactics, techniques, and procedures.

And she would have gotten away with it, if not for those meddling kids and their [dog](#).

Of course, we're only kidding on the NSA job.

But the point remains. Bachmann is flat out wrong on this issue, as are Reps. Kline and Paulsen.

The domestic spying program is a serious breach of our Fourth Amendment rights.

We know some of our readers are going to have a conniption and send hate mail regarding our satire.

Just remember one thing: we put principle before party. Just because a politician has an "R" behind the name means little.

Those who are reluctant to stand up for our individual liberties will be called out.

The joy of being an independent publication wholly self-funded is that you can trust us to be honest and upfront.

We have no need to kowtow to any person or special interest.

The Watchdog will always be your independent source of real news and commentary in Anoka County.

8/16/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Many readers have contacted the Watchdog regarding the sale and demolition of the adult bookstore in Ramsey. Is there more to the story? Stay tuned.

- 1. Sixth District Update.**
- 2. Endorsement vs. Primary.**

SIXTH DISTRICT UPDATE

With the election well over a year away, the open congressional seat in the Sixth District continues to draw interest.

Sources tell the Watchdog the former state legislator and former Sixth District candidate Jim Knoblauch has made the decision to enter the race.

This is in addition to recent news that former state Representative and Taxpayer's League of Minnesota president Phil Krinkie has announced his candidacy for seat.

Krinkie will be leaving his post at the Taxpayer's League and a search for his replacement is well underway.

The entrance of Krinkie and likely entrance of Knoblauch makes for two of three unsuccessful candidates for the seat in 2006 seeking the same seat next year.

Krinkie, Knoblauch, and Saint Cloud business executive Jay Esmay were all bested by Bachmann for an open seat created by Mark Kennedy's ill-fated decision to run for the U.S. Senate when Mark Dayton announced that he wouldn't seek re-election and would instead cower in his basement, hiding from impending attacks from Martians, zombies, and an army of man-eating mutant ants specially trained by the Tea Party to seek out and annihilate liberal politicians.

Krinkie and Knoblauch are interesting candidacies in that both candidates are seeking a place in the Republican narrative that is already occupied.

In other words, there are already announced candidates who have occupied both the geography and the philosophy these candidates represent.

For Krinkie, he is competing against Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah for GOP delegates and donors based in that county.

And like Krinkie, Sivarajah has a strong record of conservative activism. While their styles and resumes may not be identical, both are certainly identified as rock rib conservatives who believe solutions are found in the private and not public sector.

For Knoblach, should he run, the same dilemma holds true with candidate John Pederson, a state Senator and businessman based in Saint Cloud.

Pederson and Knoblach are both based around the Granite City and would be competing for those delegates and donors.

Moreover, both men have a nearly identical proposition to the political market place. Both present themselves first and foremost as businessmen who are problem solvers with practical results.

In other words, ideology is de-emphasized in favor of a pro-business approach. While it wouldn't be accurate to describe them as moderate, they wouldn't be identified by delegates as the most conservative candidates.

It is rare in intra-party politics for multiple candidates to seek the same narrative. Each candidate who enters the race seeks to create a unique proposition to delegates and activists.

One candidate may be rural. The other Metro. One strong on social issues. The other a warrior for capitalism.

The field is getting crowded and that's a very good thing.

Candidates will need to sharpen their fundraising and public speaking skills to separate themselves from the pack.

Moreover, the Watchdog is just fine with a primary campaign, explained below.

ENDORSEMENT VS. PRIMARY

Much ink and perhaps even some blood has been spilled with the Republican family of late over the value of the endorsement process.

After the 2010 campaign of Tom Emmer and the 2012 campaign of Kurt Bills, some have called for scrapping the endorsement in favor of a primary election.

The opposition has been just as vigorous, claiming that the endorsement process is a genuine grassroots enterprise that protects the party from outside influence and produces a candidate who is more loyal to party principles than would a primary system.

The Watchdog thinks activists on both sides of the issue are incorrect.

The endorsement does matter. It is beneficial for candidates to first test their mettle against the most dedicated and passionate activists.

The endorsement process can be an early test for a candidate's ground game and a barometer of popularity within the base.

Moreover, the endorsement process isn't an abject failure that produces losing candidates.

Erik Paulsen has gone through this process and has won in a district that is not a slam dunk for the GOP.

In addition, the delegates themselves has shown the ability to change direction when needed.

Not long after winning the endorsement for governor, Tom Emmer was rejected in the race for a seat to the Republican National Committee from Minnesota.

Yes, we know the two pools of delegates who endorsed and rejected Emmer aren't the same, they are comprised of many of the same people. The Venn diagram has much overlap.

On the other hand, a primary can play a beneficial role in producing a candidate who is seasoned and tested for a general election contest.

If the delegates have truly selected the best candidate via the endorsement, then that candidate should have no problem trouncing his or her primary opponents.

The hard truth is that the primary electorate and environment more closely matches the general election environment than the endorsement environment.

Put another way, winning the endorsement does little to prepare a candidate for the environment of the general election.

A primary can also keep a candidate and their campaign staff on their toes and force them to hone and refine the campaign plan.

It is also true that sometimes the delegates get it wrong. Sometimes they endorse a candidate who isn't the best in the field.

A primary can offer a chance for redemption.

At the very least, Republicans need to get away from the notion that a failure to heed the endorsement is some sort of heresy against the party and the party faithful.

This is especially true in the post *Citizens United* era. The old argument was that a primary would drain away precious resources from the candidate that would be better spent in the general election.

The fact is that an increasing amount of campaign spending is coming from someone other than the candidate or even the party, often from people and organizations who are under very liberal spending limits.

The bottom line is that there is no clear cut answer one way or the other. There are times when the endorsement is sufficient. But there may be times when a primary race is a good thing for the candidates involved.

Whether you agree with the Watchdog or not, primary challenges will no doubt become more prevalent in the years to come, starting with 2014.

8/23/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Legendary Hans' Bakery in Anoka will be re-opening next month under new ownership. The Watchdog salutes owner Kelly Olsen's entrepreneurial spirit and wishes her the best of luck in reviving an Anoka County institution. Check it [out](#).

- 1. Anoka-Hennepin School Board Election.**
- 2. Metro North Chamber Freak Out.**

ANOKA-HENNEPIN SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

Greetings, Watchdogs. Welcome to another week of journalistic excellence and commentary in Anoka County.

While many readers are getting fired up for big state and federal elections next year, don't overlook a big local election just around the corner this November.

Three of the six seats on the Anoka-Hennepin School Board are up this November 5th.

With half of the board on the ballot, Watchdogs should be out there learning about the candidates and getting active in the races.

The board has faced no small amount of tumult lately, as "bullying" and gay rights issues have dominated the agenda while a meaningful discussion of the district's lackluster test scores is pushed to the back burner.

Moreover, there has been a great deal of turnover on the board. In fact, two of the three seats up for election feature incumbents who were recently appointed to the board and were not elected by their constituents.

School board elections tend to get overlooked and that shouldn't happen.

Those who are elected this November will play a critical role in establishing curriculum and other policies that will not only affect learning, but also the direction of Anoka County moving forward.

Good schools that give kids a quality education have a "downstream" effect on the area's economy both in the long term and the short term.

Of course, the long term effect is what happens when the kids who graduate from our local public schools become adults. Are they knowledgeable and productive? Can they compete in a global economy?

The short term effect is the attraction of middle class and upper middle class families to the county.

Anoka County has for many years suffered a reputation of being inferior to other Metro counties.

Quality schools are a key criterion when middle class and upper middle class families think about where to buy a home.

And guess what. Those families are interested in test scores and teacher quality. They don't give a rip about the district's GLBT (gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender) policy. In fact, the overemphasis on this issue may very well drive away prospective county residents or drive away others who have the means to relocate to Scott or Carver county.

Tied into the school board's agenda is the labor relations component and how the board will support the taxpayers it is charged to represent.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Anoka-Hennepin Education Minnesota (AHEM), the teachers' union, will have a hand in this election, as they always do.

Making sure that the school board is bought and paid for is a primary mission for the union.

That way, the pay and benefits will keep going up and up as the test scores stay flat.

"Merit" and "accountability" are anathema to the teachers' union and they certainly don't want any trouble at the bargaining table.

Thus, Watchdogs, you need to be involved. That starts with contacting the candidates and asking them some basic questions.

One, do you intend to seek the Education Minnesota endorsement? If so, hang up the phone and scratch that candidate off the list. If the answer is "no," move on to the next question.

Two, ask them if they support linking teacher pay and advancement to student achievement. If they use the phrase "high stakes testing," hang up. It's code for refusing to acknowledge that it's possible to measure performance and thus introduce accountability into the system.

Three, ask them what they will do to increase student achievement. If the first words out of their mouths talk about "investing" in education or "adequate" funding, hang up the phone. Any candidate who believes that throwing more money at the same system will yield better results is clueless and doesn't deserve to sit on the school board.

Now, it may be that there isn't a real choice in one or more of these races. We will have to collectively make that assessment.

So, who are those candidates and what do we know of them?

In District 3 (which includes Champlin and the portions of Dayton within the district plus the northwest section of Coon Rapids), Bill Harvey was appointed to the seat in January and has filed for re-election.

The Watchdog knows very little of Harvey, but we do know that he would have to be quite a liberal to be any worse than his challenger.

Bill Harvey:

8108 109TH PLACE NORTH
CHAMPLIN, MN 55316
(763) 3917664
WJHARVEY65@GMAIL.COM

Harvey's challenger is Grace Baltich, a public union employee, a partisan Democrat, and one of those people who runs for office as often as some people buy panty hose.

11711 DOUGLAS DR. N.
CHAMPLIN, MN 55316
(763) 2501047
GRACEBALTICH@GMAIL.COM

Baltich has been whopped in the past by state Rep. Joyce Peppin (a true Watchdog) and Baltich was an applicant for the appointment ultimately won by Harvey.

Here's what the Watchdog said of Baltich when she was an applicant for appointment:

Ten [candidates](#) have filed applications to be appointed to the Anoka-Hennepin School Board to fill the vacancy created when board member John Hoffman was elected to the legislature.

We can't we know much about the ten except Grace Baltich of Champlin. She is a partisan DFL and government labor union hack who most certainly doesn't belong on our local school board.

Baltich has been rejected by the voters a couple of times when she ran for the legislature.

Here's what she says about herself (social worker):

Advocating for working families as a labor leader

President, AFSCME Local 2685
Vice-President, AFSCME Council 65

Here's who endorses her legislative campaigns:

Senate District 36 DFL
womenwinning
AFSCME Councils 5 & 65
Conservation Minnesota
National Association of Social Workers
Clean Water Action
Education Minnesota
Friends of DFL Women
49rs Int'l Union of Operating Engineers
IBEW
Minnesota AFL-CIO
Minnesota Nurses Association
Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Coun
North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters
OutFront Minnesota
Project 515
SEIU MN State Council
Team MAPE

We don't need a hyper-partisan hack on our school board.

[Contact](#) the school board and let them know you expect someone less partisan.

School board shouldn't be either a fallback for a two time loser or a stepping stone to the next campaign.

Over in District 4(which includes the portions of Nowthen, Ham Lake and Oak Grove located within the district plus a large share of Andover and the northeastern section of Ramsey), long-time board member Mike Sullivan is retiring after he was first appointed to the school board by Henry Sibley. Okay, not that long ago but a long, long time ago.

Three candidates are lined up in this race.

The first is Janelle Kirkeide.

2152 - 158TH. LN. N.E
HAM LAKE, MN 55304
(763) 4349762
jkirkeide@gmail.com

Kirkeide is the spouse of Ham Lake Watchdog Hall of Famer Gary Kirkeide. While this publication would never presume that the politics of a married couple are identical, if she is half as conservative as Gary, she would please many of our readers in that district.

Another candidate out of Ham Lake for this seat is former Mayor Paul Meunier.

3020 160TH LN NE
HAM LAKE, MN 55304
(763) 4344190
paulmeunier@comcast.net

This guy is most decidedly not a Watchdog. He's liberal and has also run for office on multiple occasions, mostly unsuccessfully.

Many residents of Ham Lake disliked his less-than-conservative governance of Ham Lake when he was mayor, which is why he isn't there anymore.

Ask anyone who served with him on the Ham Lake City Council and they will likely confirm our observation.

The other candidate is William Fields, an unknown to this publication.

17178 ARGON ST NW
ANDOVER, MN 55304
(228) 2290678
fields4schoolboard@gmail.com

Over in District 6 (which includes northern Coon Rapids and southern Andover) appointee Jeff Simon is running unopposed.

12252 THRUSH STREET NW.
COON RAPIDS, MN 55448
(763) 7550554
CONTACT@JEFFSIMON.ORG
Get involved, Watchdogs!

METRO NORTH CHAMBER FREAK OUT

So we got word last week that some folks involved with the Metro North Chamber of Commerce freaked out that the Watchdog called them on the carpet over their foolish, ill-advised endorsement of state Rep. Melissa Hortman, an endorsement that also may have been based on nepotism.

What's the big deal? We have been calling out this chamber for many years, because they have been doing dumb things for years.

Let us once again reiterate our strong opinion that the Twin Cities North Chamber is a superior chamber of commerce that is well run, efficient, and a true voice of business AND capitalism.

Having said that, those who want to accuse Twin Cities North ED Tim Roche of somehow being involved in this piece are way, way off base.

While Roche is one of the reasons that chamber is run so well, he had no role to play in what was written.

As readers can appreciate, Harold Hamilton doesn't confer, conspire, or consult with anyone regarding the content of his weekly email updates.

The updates are an internal affair researched and written each week by Hamilton, assisted by his trusted staff.

Have we mentioned that we're super impressed with the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce?

Yes, very impressed.

8/30/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself." - *Milton Friedman*

- 1. Candidate Statement - William Fields.**
- 2. Anoka-Hennepin Test Results.**

CANDIDATE STATEMENT - WILLIAM FIELDS

William Fields, a candidate for the Anoka-Hennepin School Board, has submitted a candidate statement to the Watchdog:

About Me: William Fields is seeking the District 4 seat on the Anoka-Hennepin (District 11) School Board.

I am a married father of four and earned my Bachelor's degree from the United States Air Force Academy. After serving 10 years in the Active Duty Air Force, I decided to move to the Twin Cities to be near family. While in the Air Force I held various positions, but my time spent as an instructor and training manager was where I developed an appreciation and interest in the academic environment and enjoyed finding greater efficiencies to improve learning performance. After serving on active duty, I continued my service through the Air National Guard. In addition to military service, I have also been involved with local soccer teams as an assistant coach.

My purpose in running for a position on the School Board is to bring new ideas to the table and to seek as many ways possible to enhance cost effectiveness. As I have enjoyed a career of public service, a position on the school board would provide a way to further serve our community and pursue a continued interest in bettering educational opportunities for our future leaders. I believe that venues such as online learning are a way to promote collaboration and bring our students into a more technical-oriented future.

Important Issues: Fiscal responsibility is paramount to having successful schools, and it is something that I take seriously. Like anything related to government expenses, ensuring that operations are efficient is critical to gaining public trust. While funding for schools is important, the solution is not to merely raise taxes on residents but to find smarter ways of doing things. I believe that raising taxes will only force people out of the district due to unnecessary financial burdens and subsequently reduce the number of students, which can compound the problem.

Additionally, we as a community need to continually promote competitiveness in our students. I would like to see our schools offer high quality technical courses, such as

programming and engineering. If our students do not fill the present and widening knowledge gap in the U.S. then it will be filled by students from outside of our country. We need to provide them with the technical know-how that will not only enable them to find good jobs, but also to promote stability within the region. If you have questions, I can be reached via email at fields4schoolboard@gmail.com.

ANOKA-HENNEPIN TEST RESULTS

Speaking of test results, Another batch of standardized test results have come in for school districts, including Anoka-Hennepin.

The big news is that grade 3 through 8 reading scores for this year are based on a new, more vigorous test based on the Common Core, a new national curriculum.

Education officials have dismissed the major drop off in test scores as simply the result of basing scores on a harder test.

So what does that say about the old test?

And what does that say about all the bragging school officials did when scores improved under the old test system?

It's not hard to leap over low bar. Unfortunately, global economic competition doesn't award a "tallest midget" ribbon. You educate your citizens to compete or you fail. It's that harsh, no matter how hard the liberals protest life's unfairness, all the way from the classroom to the athletic field to the boardroom.

There is no two class system in the global arena, no class "A" system to drop to if "AA" is too hard.

So how did Anoka-Hennepin cut it? Here are the aggregated district-wide reading scores for grades 3 through 8 (score is percentage of students deemed "proficient"):

Grade 3

2012-2013: 61%

2011-2012: 80%

Grade 4

2012-2013: 58%

2011-2012: 80%

Grade 5

2012-2013: 69%

2011-2012: 85%

Grade 6

2012-2013: 62%

2011-2012: 77%

Grade 7

2012-2013: 57%

2011-2012: 75%

Grade 8

2012-2013: 54%

2011-2012: 75%

Every single grade level in the district saw a double-digit drop in proficiency. So why hasn't the mainstream media asked why the previous test was so easy? Why was the bar set so low?

Every percentage point drop represents students previously labeled "proficient" in reading who are now below the proficiency line.

In fact, some of the drop off is remarkable, some 20% or more.

Having said that, this publication is glad that at least one area of public education is moving towards higher and not lower standards.

The dumbing down of America has certainly touched every school district in Anoka County.

We're also relieved to discuss something other than homosexual issues in the district.

There's much to do to make these schools truly competitive in a global economy.

The first thing would be to get rid of a teachers' union that protects the incompetent and resists attempts to make teachers more accountable for the results they deliver.

And we will acknowledge that the school district is [pleased](#) with test results, having seen scores that beat other districts and in some cases the state-wide averages.

It's great to see improvement vis-a-vis other Minnesota districts, but that's still a tallest midget analysis.

Where do our students stack up against international competition?

Where are we compared to students in Taiwan, Japan, Finland, and Germany?

It's one thing to beat the scores out of Brown County. It's another to beat the scores out of Bavaria.

We can't be satisfied doing well against intra-state districts. We need to strive for excellence as measured against international competition, where we are still woefully weak.

By international standards, American kids are middle of the pack in reading and science while they are below average in math.

When Polish kids are smoking U.S. kids on reading scores, it's hard to brag.

When South Korean kids are besting our kids in math, it's a wake up call.

We invite the Anoka-Hennepin district and others to put away the party balloons and the cake until we see true progress as measured against top international competition.

9/6/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Commerce is real. Foreign aid is just a stopgap. *Commerce and entrepreneurial capitalism take more people out of poverty than foreign aid*, of course we know that." - U2's Bono

1. Northstar Rail Propaganda - Again.
2. Dan Erhart Shows Up.

NORTHSTAR RAIL PROPAGANDA - AGAIN

Like a [Potemkin](#) village rising on the Russian Steppes, the Northstar commuter rail line passes the hard working taxpayers of Anoka County each day, empty of passengers, full of subsidies, and just chock full of work for the propaganda apparatchiks and political officers who work full-time trying to convince the masses that the train is really not what we see.

The latest communiqué from the Ministry of Truth and Official Pronouncements tells us that the Northstar line is "paying dividends" in the form of "economic development."

According to a recent article in the Star Tribune, Northstar is a veritable engine of economic progress and prosperity.

So what kind of economic development is being drawn into our fair county by the irresistible economic magnet that is Northstar rail?

Well, there's that 230-unit apartment complex in Ramsey. And the 50-unit "affordable" townhome complex as well.

And there is the 27 acre mixed use development in Fridley, including a 120-unit apartment building.

Fridley is also talking to a developer who is interested in, you guessed it, more rental housing.

Up in Big Lake, there is also construction taking place, consisting of..."affordable" housing.

Oh, yeah. There's also a strip mall going in as well.

In Elk River, that city is building....wait for it...apartments, both of the market rate and the "affordable" kind.

Really? Is this the "economic development" we were promised in exchange for a \$320 million train?

The recollection of this publication and our search of the Northstar archives supports that recollection.

No one promised more high density rental housing and perhaps some strip malls.

Where are the high tech manufacturing jobs to increase the tax base?

Where are the white collar professional jobs to enhance Anoka County's image and assist in making the county a destination for raising a family?

In fact, more high density "affordable" housing is just what the county doesn't need.

It is a fact that we have more than our fair share of this type of housing and the social obligations that frequently accompany it.

For years, city leaders in Anoka County have rightly complained that we have accepted more than our fair share and that a better balance of housing stock is needed.

Every politician who voted for Northstar ought to be held to explain this state of affairs. Jim Abeler, Melissa Hortman, and Barb Goodwin should be called to account.

Same with county commissioner Jim Kordiak, the last of the Good Ol' Boys.

How ironic that Brooklyn Park just landed Baxter Medical with governmental assistance. Rochester just received a Mayo Clinic expansion through legislation.

Same with Bloomington and the Mall of America.

Here in Anoka County, we get more "affordable" and "workforce" housing.

Far from enhancing our quality of life, it is made worse.

Now, it can be correctly argued that government shouldn't distort these market location decisions.

Having said that, why is it that other jurisdictions are working to get high tech jobs and commercial/industrial properties while we accept more apartments and subsidized housing?

Oh, another Caribou Coffee? Wow. That will boost the tax base like a rocket. We really needed a \$320 million train, and ongoing subsidies, to bring that in.

What a travesty.

DAN ERHART SHOWS UP

Some people just don't know when to leave the stage.

And others are a problem no matter where they go, the proverbial "locker room cancer." some people are both.

Hence, Dan Erhart.

Since being unceremoniously kicked out of elective office, Erhart has apparently been causing a nuisance in appointive office, in this case with the troubled Minnesota Racing Commission.

It's a story featuring Dan Erhart, the Minnesota Racing Commission, and the oft-troubled Running Aces track, another Dan Erhart "economic development" project (see Northstar story above).

What could possibly go wrong?

According to a story in the Star Tribune, plenty.

The story centers on Mary Manney, the deputy director of the Commission.

She was tasked to regulate and oversee racing and Running Aces.

She resigned and was hired by...wait for it...Running Aces just days after she resigned her position overseeing...wait for it...Running Aces.

It would be bad enough to see such a blatant case of Revolving Door Syndrome without any controversy attached to it.

But with this gang, you just know the drama is going to be thick.

According to the Star Tribune, a state report investigation of Manney and Running Aces discovered a number of irregularities and problems.

Licenses were granted before background checks were complete.

In another case, a trainer was given a license even though California had banned him for allegedly fixing races.

Mediocre horses were winning so often, horse doping was suspected by track judges.

Manney herself "engaged in misconduct" and demonstrated a "pattern of prejudicial behavior" towards two horsemen.

She also violated commission orders and communicated with a track judge, who was a potential witness in the investigation.

In other words, she looked to be auditioning for a role as the newest Anoka County Good Ol' Boy.

But this isn't the kicker.

The kicker is Dan Erhart.

Upon Completion of the investigation, Manney was served a letter of reprimand.

Subsequently, the board removed the letter of reprimand from Manney's file on a 4-2 vote, led by Danno himself.

The vote was based in part, on Erhart's own investigation of the matter.

Apparently, Inspector Erhart's crack investigative skills saved the day for Manney.

"They (the state) didn't talk to the right people," Encyclopedia Brown Erhart sniffed to the Star Tribune.

Well, we didn't know that Erhart would spend his time out of office riding around in a green van solving mysteries with Shaggy, Scooby and company.

This whole affair stinks to high heaven and is a classic Dan Erhart episode.

A regulator is faulted for numerous violations of her duty.

She resigns and takes a job days later at Running Aces.

Dan Erhart conducts his own "investigation" as the basis to overturn employee discipline.

At least this kind of crap is no longer a feature of the county board.

Add appointing Dan Erhart to the Racing Commission to Governor Dayton's growing list of downright stupid moves.

Congrats, governor. He's your problem now.

9/13/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: *"I think business is a wonderful institution, provided it has to face competition in the marketplace and can't get away with something except by producing a better something at a lower cost, and that's why I don't want government to step in and help the business community."*
- Milton Friedman

Right, Zygi Wilf? Shutterfly? Baxter Medical? Mayo Clinic? Solyndra? GM? Chrysler? AIG? Morgan Stanley?

- 1. Anoka County Leads the Way.**
- 2. Ramsey Regressing.**

ANOKA COUNTY LEADS THE WAY

It was nothing short of a history-making week here in Anoka County, rivaling the day the county board first instituted an actual cut in the property tax levy or the day Dan Erhart was finally kicked off the county board.

This week, the county board approved a preliminary 2014 property tax levy that again reduce property taxes through a reduced levy.

(Editor's Note: the preliminary property tax levy will be ratified in December. The board, by law, may not raise the levy but can reduce it further).

This is the third year running that the county board has reduced the property tax levy.

All told, the 2014 levy will be a cool \$1 million smaller than 2013.

When the Reformers first took back government from the Good Ol' Boys, they hit the ground running, implementing new and efficient ways of doing business.

They stopped the rampant "borrow and spend" programs under the Reign of Erhart and started paying cash for projects, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest costs.

They showed the door to Good Ol' Boy underlings like Steve Novak (still waiting for lobbyists Best and Flanagan to be shown the door, however).

They stopped focusing on grandiose and useless mega projects like the Vikings stadium and re-focused county government on its core functions, like public safety and our roads and bridges.

At first, these actions could only be described as that - actions. There was an open question as to whether this new board would or could sustain the momentum.

Three years on, the answer is clear. This board has turned conservative governmental action into true conservative governance.

This is significant because there is so little history of actual conservative governance here in Minnesota or in Washington.

Most often, conservative coalitions are thwarted because they are simply not a majority or run into opposition from another chamber or a chief executive who doesn't share that ideology.

Having said that, there are times when we learn that conservative candidates only talk like conservatives. Once in office, we their true colors as they reveal that they really aren't conservative or they become scared that conservative governance will lead to their ouster.

And we wonder why so many conservative citizens have grown frustrated and cynical with respect to politics and government.

Today, Anoka County stands as a beacon, a shining example of sustained, conservative governance at a time when confidence is at an all-time low.

We have a president who has piled on trillions in debt while muddling his way through every issue both foreign and domestic.

We have a governor who signs bills he doesn't understand while lashing out at his opponents in juvenile fashion.

All the while, we in Anoka County enjoy a county board that does the hard work involved in conservative governance. No drama, no rhetoric, no smoke and mirrors.

This is the kind of governance taxpayers in the county want.

For decades, the Good Ol' Boys engaged in narcissistic self-aggrandizement by pursuing legacy projects that meant little in terms moving the county forward and creating prosperity for all.

Enabled by stooge commissioners who lacked the back bone to challenge them, Good Ol' Boys like Dan Erhart enjoyed dinners with lobbyists at restaurants average citizens could never afford while taking taxpayer-financed junkets to places most county taxpayers will never see.

We now have a commuter rail line that sucks in massive operating subsidies while attracting little more than yet another tranche of "affordable" rental housing that does nothing to enhance the tax base, prosperity, or the county's image.

Another boondoggle in the news is that casino in Columbus that masquerades as a horse track.

Running Aces has provided nothing more than financial problems, low paying service jobs, and more image problems for the county.

What business would be attracted to the county by a struggling race track with dubious ties to former regulators?

What middle class family wants to make a proactive decision to move to Anoka County because of an abundance of subsidized rental housing?

History will no doubt show that this board will bring good jobs, prosperity, and an enhanced image to Anoka County through conservative governance.

Low commercial and industrial taxes and fewer regulations will catch the eye of job creators looking to locate in a jurisdiction that maximizes shareholder value while assisting, not harassing, those who create commerce.

A focus on core governmental functions like quality roads and strong public safety will attract families who want safe neighborhoods, low taxes, and government that focuses on delivering core services.

Readers shouldn't forget that our work isn't over.

This conservative board can be taken away if we aren't vigilant and supportive of our commissioners.

Rhonda Sivarajah may very well find herself in Washington soon. We may need to defend that seat.

Scott Schulte, the dragon slayer, will stand for re-election next year because of redistricting.

Matt Look represents Ramsey, which appears to be a Good Ol' Boy sanctuary these days. Don't think that the Good Ol' Boys aren't after him.

What kind of county government have we? A conservative one, as long as we can keep it.

RAMSEY REGRESSING

Speaking of Good Ol' Boys and what can happen when they control government, one need do nothing more than look over to the City of Ramsey to see this type of governance in action.

This bumbling gang has been tripping over itself for some time, including buying out a porno book shop only to see another one open immediately afterwards to the offering of an economic development staff position to a man who sits on a neighboring city council.

Now comes yet another middle finger to the taxpayers, this one in the form of new ~~taxes~~ fees the city is imposing on residents.

Watchdog city councilman Jason Tossey reports the following via his Facebook account:

Last night my colleagues on the Ramsey city council passed the first official step towards unfair taxing with the passage of the franchise fee. This new revenue stream adds 8 dollar fees to both your electric and gas bills (\$16 total) a month. This "fee" (tax) is disproportionately regressive toward the low and middle income families in Ramsey.

Folks know that I am opposed to progressive taxes because I believe they are unfair, but this regressive tax is unfair as well. Property taxes are a flat tax, each residential property in a municipality is taxed at the same rate i.e. flat tax. This particular tax could raise taxes on low valued homes nearly 20%, while high valued homes pay very little.

You'll hear that the city NEEDS this money to pay for roads. I argue that's what property taxes were meant for in the 1st place. Instead, the council intends to raise the levy for unneeded programs such as the EDA and HRA, commissions that are often used to provide subsidies to businesses. So not only will families of 4, who own a modest home, have to pay a disproportionately higher tax from franchise fees, their property taxes are available to subsidize businesses.

If you live in Ramsey, you need to contact your city council [member](#), who will likely blow you off or give some lame excuse as to why government needs the money more than you do.

Anoka County is offering to strongly contrasting visions of government. One is at the county level, the other is showcased in Ramsey.

Which one do you want?

2014 will be a time for choosing across the county, at all levels of government.

9/20/13

In This Issue:

Factoid: The United States has now experienced over 1,000 consecutive days of average gas prices over \$3 for a gallon. This is the longest streak in U.S. history. We wonder where the media is on the this story. Then again, we don't.

- 1. Abeler Lands the "Big" Names.**
- 2. Property Tax Levies Up.**
- 3. Taxpayer's League Has New Leader.**

ABELER LANDS THE "BIG" NAMES

A candidate, like a man, is known by the company he keeps.

In the race for U.S. Senate, candidates are lining up some of the biggest names in GOP circles to back their candidacy.

For example, Saint Louis County Commissioner Chris Dahlberg recently secured the endorsement of media mogul Stanley Hubbard.

For some candidates, the list of supporters isn't so big, and in this case, isn't so Republican.

The Watchdog has obtained an invitation to an upcoming fundraiser for Abeler that is hosted by individuals with, ahem, a rather "obscure" record of supporting the GOP or GOP candidates.

Check out some of the names on the host list:

Bill Erhart

Dan Erhart!

Jim Kugler

Leo Luskey

Natalie Steffen

Sarah Strommen

Really? Dan Erhart? What candidate thinking clearly would want the Judas Kiss of Erhart's support? Really? Dan Erhart?

A review of state and federal campaign finance records shows that the folks listed above certainly have no meaningful record of supporting the GOP or GOP candidates.

In fact, many have donated to causes and candidates opposed to Republican candidates and Republican principles.

For example, Dan Erhart has made numerous contributions to DFL candidates.

Natalie Steffen has donated to [Women Winning](#), a liberal special interest dedicated to electing women who support abortion on demand.

According to their web site, the mission of the group is to "*encourage, promote and support pro-choice women's leadership in all political parties and levels of public office.*"

So Jim Abeler counts among his strongest supporters a person who has donated to a pro-choice special interest?

To be fair, Abeler's invitation lists these individuals as "business leaders" and not "conservative leaders" although we think the former label is nearly as ridiculous as the latter.

Since when has Dan Erhart been a "business leader?"

So just how many jobs have these "leaders" created?

It seems rather odd that in a crowded GOP field for U.S. Senate, Abeler would tout the support of folks who have so little influence in GOP circles.

Perhaps Abeler doesn't intend to run as a Republican?

After all, he has very little chance of securing the endorsement or winning a GOP primary.

Is a third party candidacy in the offing?

Time will tell.

PROPERTY TAX LEVIES UP

When the DFL and Governor Dayton passed their massive tax increases last session, they bragged that these tax increases would hold down property taxes.

So how has it worked out?

In East Bethel, the council set a preliminary property tax levy that is a whopping 17.5% higher than 2013.

The city council cites bond payments that are coming due as the primary culprit.

That may be true, but the city is also planning to hand out pay raises to employees this year.

It's hard to have any sympathy for a city that plans to hand out raises and then pleads poverty to the extent that they may hammer tax payers to the tune of a 17.5% property tax increase.

Over in Spring Lake Park, the preliminary 2014 property tax levy is set to rise 6%.

(Editor's Note: These are preliminary levies. Under state law, the final levy may be reduced from the preliminary number but not increased.)

In Andover, it's a 3.29% increase.

But all is not bad news for property tax payers.

In Anoka, the city plans to reduce the levy 2.5% from the 2013 level. Kudos to Anoka.

And, of course, Anoka County itself has led the way again this year with a remarkable back-to-back-to-back levy decrease.

The bottom line appears to be that the promises of lower property taxes from the DFL are like much of their promises - so much bunk.

As the publication has always maintained, the property tax is a local tax and thus in the hands of local elected officials.

Some will do the hard work to lower that burden while others will raise that burden while citing circumstances that are, of course, beyond their control.

No word yet on whether the governor will claim he didn't know that local units set their own property taxes, much like the Wilfs setting the personal seat license fee at the Vikings stadium.

Elections matter. If you think that race for city council or county commissioner doesn't matter, think again.

Property taxes are in the hands of your local elected officials. Hold them accountable.

TAXPAYER'S LEAGUE HAS NEW LEADER

The Taxpayer's League of Minnesota (TLM) has announced that long-time president Phil Krinkie has resigned his post to pursue his bid for Congress.

The League has also announced that former state Senator Ted Lillie has been appointed to succeed Krinkie.

The Watchdog hails this hire and congratulates Lillie on his new role.

Ted Lillie is smart, aggressive, talented, and a man of integrity.

Moreover, Lillie has spent his professional life creating jobs. He knows what it's like to meet payroll and sign the front side of a pay check.

This is a great hire for the League.

Congratulations, Ted! We look forward to your leadership.

Here's Lillie's biography:

Ted Lillie is a business leader and former member of the Minnesota Senate (2010-2012) who represented District 56, which included portions of Washington County in the eastern Twin Cities metropolitan area. He and his cousin are the co-publishers of Lillie Suburban Newspapers.

In the Minnesota Senate, he was elected to serve as the first freshman Republican Majority Whip in state history. He also served as assistant majority leader, and was a Vice Chair of the Legislative Commission on Local Governments and the Jobs and Economic Growth Committee. He also served on the Transportation, State Government Innovation and Veterans committees.

Lillie graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. Active in the eastern Twin Cities community through the years, he serves on the board of directors of the Oakdale Business and Professional Association, Platinum Bank, and the Co-Action Academic Resources Foundation, an organization providing scholarship opportunities for post-secondary education. He has also served as Chair of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, and on the board of directors of the Health East Foundation, the School District 622 Education Foundation, the Thrive Youth Asset Building Initiative, the Boy Scouts Gateway District, and the School to Careers Local Council.

Lillie was awarded the 2011 Leaders in Public Policy "One to Watch" award by Politics in Minnesota, and has been recognized as "East Metro Business Leader of the Year" in 2009 by the Regional Business Organization Conference.

Lillie's wife Dr. Lynne Lillie is a family physician serving the Red Wing area. They live in Woodbury, have 2 children and are expecting a second grandchild.

9/27/13

In This Issue:

SPECIAL OBAMACARE EDITION

- 1. Zero Hour Approaches.**
- 2. Milton Friedman Destroys Nationalized Healthcare in One Paragraph.**
- 3. There is no Health Care Alchemy.**
- 4. Unions Not Spared.**

ZERO HOUR APPROACHES

Well, friends. Here we are. Just days away from Obamacare formally kicking off, although the administration is trying hard to tamp down expectations since there will no doubt be a number of "glitches" to be overcome.

Imagine that. Government nationalizing health care. What could go wrong?

Of course, the hope from the president is that he can implement this massive transfer payment program and anchor it in American society before the people truly understand Obamacare for what it is.

In a blinding flash of the obvious, a recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) update noted that health care costs would increase for younger and healthier people while costs would probably go down for sicker and older people.

Duh. That's the best we can say about that.

Of course, Obamacare is little more than a massive transfer program, designed to subsidize health care for some, to be paid for by others in the form of higher health care costs, either directly in the form of higher premiums and co-pays or indirectly in the form of taxes and fees levied on third parties that will be passed on to individuals.

As this publication has noted many times, Obamacare isn't some sort of political alchemy concocted by Doctor Obama that has unlocked a massive store of untapped health care.

It's not as if Obama has unlocked the formula to turn health care lead into health care gold.

Health care, like any resource, is limited. There's only so much to go around. And any expansion of the resource costs money to produce. Covering more people, covering more procedures costs money. Lots of it.

While many, many essays, columns, and white papers have been written regarding the impending doom of nationalized health care, we chosen this week to focus on some of the most relevant things being said about Obamacare recently and how those items affect you both practically and philosophically.

Make no mistake, Obamacare is one of the most significant expansions and intrusions by government into our private lives in generations.

And that's saying something, given that this president alone has put domestic spying, drone use, environmental overregulation, and deficit spending on steroids that would make Jose Canseco and Barry Bonds blush.

Here's what you need to know about Obamacare right now.

MILTON FRIEDMAN DESTROYS NATIONALIZED HEALTHCARE IN ONE PARAGRAPH

What's wrong with our health care system and why does more government make it worse? Milton Friedman wrote back in 2001:

"Third-party payment has required the bureaucratization of medical care. ... A medical transaction is not simply between a caregiver and a patient; it has to be approved as 'covered' by a bureaucrat. ... The patient has little ... incentive to be concerned about the cost since it's somebody else's money. The caregiver has become, in effect, an employee of the insurance company or, in the case of Medicare and Medicaid, of the government. ... An inescapable result is that the interest of the patient is often in direct conflict with the interest of the caregiver's ultimate employer."

Obamacare, of course, empowers all except the health care consumer. Individuals have fewer choices and less freedom under Obamacare, which is a great outcome for politicians who believe that government makes better choices for citizens than the citizens themselves.

THERE IS NO HEALTH CARE ALCHEMY

Producing more health care costs money. So how does Barack Obama get the money? At least he has now admitted to the tax increases for nationalized health care:

*"So what we did - it's paid for by a combination of things. **We did raise taxes on some things.**"*

Here are those things, based upon an analysis from Americans for Tax Reform (ATR):

Starting in tax year 2013:

Obamacare Medical Device Tax: Medical device manufacturers employ 409,000 people in 12,000 plants across the country. Obamacare imposes a new 2.3 percent excise tax on gross sales - even if the company does not earn a profit in a given year. In addition to killing small business jobs and impacting research and development budgets, this will make everything from pacemakers to artificial hips more expensive.

Obamacare High Medical Bills Tax: Before Obamacare, Americans facing high medical expenses were allowed a deduction to the extent that those expenses exceeded 7.5 percent of adjusted gross income (AGI). Obamacare now imposes a threshold of 10 percent of AGI. Therefore, Obamacare not only makes it more difficult to claim this deduction, it widens the net of taxable income.

According to the [IRS](#), 10 million families took advantage of this tax deduction in 2009, the latest year of available data. Almost all are middle class. The average taxpayer claiming this deduction earned just over \$53,000 annually. ATR estimates that the average income tax increase for the average family claiming this tax benefit will be \$200 - \$400 per year. To learn more about this tax, click [here](#).

Obamacare Flexible Spending Account Tax: The 30 - 35 million Americans who use a pre-tax Flexible Spending Account (FSA) at work to pay for their family's basic medical needs face a new Obamacare cap of \$2,500. This will squeeze \$13 billion of tax money from Americans over the next ten years. (Before Obamacare, the accounts were unlimited under federal law, though employers were allowed to set a cap.) Now, a parent looking to sock away extra money to pay for braces will find themselves quickly hitting this new cap, meaning they would have to pony up some or all of the cost with after-tax dollars.

Needless to say, this tax will especially impact middle class families.

There is one group of FSA owners for whom this new cap will be particularly cruel and onerous: parents of special needs children. Nationwide there are several million families with special needs children and many of them use FSAs to pay for special needs education. Tuition rates at one leading school that teaches special needs children in Washington, D.C. (National Child Research Center) can easily exceed \$14,000 per year. Under tax rules, FSA dollars can be used to pay for this type of special needs education. This Obamacare tax provision will limit the options available to these families.

Obamacare Super Saver Surtax: A new, 3.8 percent surtax on investment income earned in households making at least \$250,000 (\$200,000 single). This tax hike results in the following top tax rates on investment income:

	Capital Gains	Dividends	Other*
2013+	23.8%	23.8%	43.4%

**Other unearned income includes (for surtax purposes) gross income from interest, annuities, royalties, net rents, and passive income in partnerships and Subchapter-S corporations. It does not include municipal bond interest or life insurance proceeds, since those do not add to gross income. It does not include active trade or business income, fair market value sales of ownership in pass-through entities, or distributions from retirement plans.*

Obamacare Medicare Payroll Tax Increase:

	First \$200,000 (\$250,000 Married) Employer/Employee	All Remaining Wages Employer/Employee
Pre-Obamacare	1.45%/1.45%	1.45%/1.45%
	2.9% self-employed	2.9% self-employed
Obamacare	1.45%/1.45%	1.45%/2.35%
	2.9% self-employed	3.8% self-employed

Starting in tax year 2014:

Obamacare Individual Mandate Non-Compliance Tax: Starting in 2014, anyone not buying "qualifying" health insurance - as defined by President Obama's Department of Health and Human Services -- must pay an income surtax to the IRS. The Congressional Budget Office recently estimated that [six million](#) American families will be liable for the tax, and as pointed out by the Associated Press: ["Most would be in the middle class."](#)

In addition, 100 percent of Americans filing a tax return (140 million filers) will be [forced to submit paperwork](#) to the IRS showing they either had "qualifying" health insurance for every month of the tax year or they obtained an exemption to the mandate.

Americans liable for the surtax will pay according to the following schedule:

	1 Adult	2 Adults	3+ Adults
2014	1% AGI/\$95	1% AGI/\$190	1% AGI/\$285
2015	2% AGI/\$325	2% AGI/\$650	2% AGI/\$975
2016 +	2.5% AGI/\$695	2.5% AGI/\$1390	2.5% AGI/\$2085

(Delayed by Obama to 2015) Obamacare Employer Mandate Tax: If an employer does not offer health coverage, and at least one employee qualifies for a health tax credit, the employer must pay an additional non-deductible tax of \$2,000 for all full-time employees. This provision applies to all employers with 50 or more employees. If any employee actually receives coverage through the exchange, the penalty on the employer for that employee rises to \$3,000. If the employer requires a waiting period to enroll in coverage of 30-60 days, there is a \$400 tax per employee (\$600 if the period is 60 days or longer).

Obamacare Tax on Health Insurers: Annual tax on the industry imposed relative to health insurance premiums collected that year. The tax phases in gradually until 2018. Fully imposed on firms with \$50 million in profits.

Starting in tax year 2018:

Obamacare Tax on Union Member and Early Retiree Health Insurance Plans: Obamacare imposes

a new 40 percent excise tax on high cost or "Cadillac" health insurance plans, effective in 2018. This tax increase will most directly affect union families and early retirees, who are likely to be covered by such plans. This Obamacare tax will be levied on insurance policies whose premiums exceed \$10,200 for an individual and \$27,500 for a family. Middle class union members tend to be covered by such plans in states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Higher threshold (\$11,500 single/\$29,450 family) for early retirees and high-risk professions. CPI +1 percentage point indexed.

UNIONS NOT SPARED

In one of Obamacare's most ironic twists, many of the labor unions that so enthusiastically supported Obama for president are seeing their guy eviscerate their health care trust funds.

Basically, Obamacare imposes a significant excise tax on multi-employer health care funds allowed under the Taft-Hartley Act. As the previous item on Obamacare taxes states, there is a new 40 percent excise tax on high cost or "Cadillac" health insurance plans, effective in 2018. This tax increase will most directly affect union families and early retirees, who are likely to be covered by such plans. This Obamacare tax will be levied on insurance policies whose premiums exceed \$10,200 for an individual and \$27,500 for a family. Middle class union members tend to be covered by such plans in states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Here's what one union, the International Union of Operating Engineers had to say in a letter to Obama, in part:

On behalf of 500,000 "covered lives" of members of the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) and their families who participate in multi-employer health and welfare trusts organized under the Taft-Hartley Act, I write to you with serious concerns about the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

Labor and Management trustees of Operating Engineers' plans are puzzled, disappointed, and, in some cases, outraged, especially in light of the political commitment you made in August, 2009, in Grand Junction, Colorado, and elsewhere when you said that, *"If you like your health plan, you can keep your health plan."* Unless

significant changes are made to the regulations and guidance implementing the Act, that political commitment is in jeopardy.

The International Union of Operating Engineers respectfully requests that you and your Administration reconsider regulations and guidance developed by the three federal agencies (HHS, Treasury and Labor) charged with implementing ACA that will have deleterious effects on the delivery of health care to thousands of participants in multi-employer health plans.

Until next week, readers, when the disaster that is Obamacare comes into focus for the sheeple who haven't been paying attention.

10/4/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Why would we want to do that?"

- Senate Majority Leader "Dirty" Harry Reid, in response to a question asking why he wouldn't agree to fund federal pediatric cancer programs during the government slimdown.

Uh, maybe to save some lives? Are there any slimdown hostages you're willing to spare, Senator?

- 1. Mayor Mark - Order of the Watchdog.**
- 2. Quote of the Month.**
- 3. The Economic Development Myth - Revisited.**

MAYOR MARK - ORDER OF THE WATCHDOG

This publication has long acknowledged the Watchdog Army that keeps our fair county committed to capitalism, liberty, and freedom.

Thousands of citizens everyday use our shared principles and values to establish a bulwark against the graft, waste, and overreach of the Welfare State.

However, some citizens stand out and demonstrate an effort and commitment above and beyond the call of duty, acting in a manner befitting those who founded this great nation.

Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah is in the pantheon of Watchdogs. So is Ham Lake councilman Gary Kirkeide.

Others are well on their way to Hall of Fame status (Look, Braastad, Schulte, West, Schmitt, Denno, et, al.).

The Watchdog selection committee met this week to consider Mark Korin, the Mayor of Oak Grove.

During his time on the council and especially as mayor, Korin has demonstrated uncommon valor and oodles of common sense in bringing reform to the city.

To wit:

In the past three years, the city property tax levy has been cut an eye-popping 26%.

The building department has been eliminated and outsourced to the private economy.

The finance director position has been eliminated and payroll outsourced to the private economy.

One employee holds both the city manager and city planner positions.

He saved the city over \$200,000 in law enforcement costs by resisting requested changes by the sheriff.

Mayor Korin has also amply demonstrated the selfless service that marks the public service of a true Watchdog.

As one would expect, Korin's efforts to reduce government's footprint were met with resistance, especially from the Bureaucratic-Industrial Complex that told him that staff just couldn't be reduced.

In fact, some departments argued that they need MORE staff.

When the city manager resigned, Korin served as acting manager (without additional compensation), saving the city thousands upon thousands of dollars.

The Watchdog also acknowledges that a mayor can't make things happen without the support of allies on the city council. Korin's allies on the council, including Dan Denno, also need to be acknowledged.

The work of Mark Korin has literally put the lie to constant bleating we hear out of other local units of government, who always seem to have an excuse as to why they just can't seem to find ways to do things more efficiently.

Well done, Mark Korin!

The Order of the Watchdog is hereby conferred upon you.

May you continue to serve the taxpayers well.

(Editor's Note: This piece is based upon article that recently appeared in the Forest Lake Times on October 2).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

At the Watchdog, we love our readers. Informed, passionate, patriotic, and often just as snarky as the people who run this publication.

We just had to offer special recognition this week to Bobbi and Gene L., who replied to one of our Morning Blotter articles on Governor Dayton's support of the minimum wage.

Their simple response:

Our governor isn't worth \$9.50 an hour.

Boom!

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MYTH - REVISITED

Goodness, can we please stop with all the propaganda about Northstar rail and the "economic development?"

It's beginning to hurt. Like water torture.

The latest chapter comes in the form of yet another Anoka County Union article on the subject.

The Anoka County Pravda tells us that a governmental body called the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) toured the Ramsey Town Center Project recently to see all the economic development that has taken place in the past many years, as the project has lurched from crisis to crisis in search of occupants of this planned, sustainable urban village in the heart of Anoka County.

The article tells us the members of the CTIB heard from Ramsey bureaucrats about all the neat and swell prosperity being generated.

For example, a briefing was held in some apartment building, where a bureaucrat from the city with the title of "Development Services Manager" told tales of economic development in the apartment's "outdoor living room," complete with a salt water pool and grills.

Wow. \$317 million for an apartment building with grills and a pool? Just what the county needs.

But, wait. There's more!

How about a church auditorium? Church is cool and all, but churches don't pay property taxes. And while they build souls, they don't build wealth.

What about the new VA clinic? Serving our veterans is important, but government can only spend money diverted from the private economy. There is no net gain in wealth.

But wait! Wait! What about the McDonald's? Getting an Egg McMuffin in convenient fashion is nice, but those aren't the jobs that build a prosperous tax base.

Heck, the article even mentions with a hint of melancholy that Super America won't be coming, after all.

I guess we'll all have to look for donuts and gas at the other 37 convenience stores on Highway 10.

Maybe Ramsey can hire Mark Korin to get this straightened out. After all, Ramsey has no problem hiring folks have duties to other local units of government.

10/11/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: *"The strongest argument for free enterprise is that it prevents anybody from having too much power. Whether that person is a government official, a trade union official, or a business executive. If forces them to put up or shut up. They either have to deliver the goods, produce something that people are willing to pay for, are willing to buy, or else they have to go into a different business."* - Milton Friedman

1. Acceptance Speech.
2. Anoka-Hennepin Lawsuit Moves Forward.
3. Sixth District Update.

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

After humbly accepting his Order of the Watchdog last week, Oak Grove Mayor Mark Korin wrote to us expressing his thanks and wanted to make one point in lieu of making an acceptance speech to "thank the Academy" and talk until the music was keyed up to signal "time's up."

Mayor Korin simply asked the Watchdog to ensure that a sincere and strong "thank you" was extended to Oak Grove council members Dan Denno and Scott Lawrence for their help in assisting Korin in making Oak Grove a city accountable to the taxpayers.

Watchdogs in Oak Grove should send Denno and Lawrence a [note](#) of thanks.

But we can't help but notice two other members of the council who appear to have had little to do with reducing the city's footprint.

Perhaps it's also time that taxpayers in the city contact Mike Wylie and Sean Sullivan and ask them exactly what they're doing to serve the taxpayer.

ANOKA-HENNEPIN LAWSUIT MOVES FORWARD

No matter you live, we have all been chagrined to see the blatant campaigning that takes place in a particular school district whenever the district has a property tax levy referendum on the ballot.

Suddenly, electioneering literature starts coming home in back packs, teachers start telling students that the school will cease to exist if mommy and daddy don't pony up at the polls, and campaign ribbons and buttons start appearing all over school.

Well, someone finally did something about it.

The Minnesota Voters Alliance (MVA), filed a lawsuit against the Anoka-Hennepin School District, alleging violations of the laws that prohibit such campaigning with taxpayer resources.

Specifically, the lawsuit relates to the 2011 levy, in which three levy questions were posed to the electorate. One of the questions passed comfortably, one narrowly passed while the third failed.

The original complaint was filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) in early 2012.

As further background, here's what the MVA had to say about the issue back in July, when a judicial decision went against them, on procedural grounds:

On July 1, 2013, we filed our appeal brief to the MN Court of Appeals in our case against the Anoka Hennepin School District which claims that the District used taxpayer funds to promote their ballot levy in 2011.

Specifically, the complaint alleges that the school district violated Minnesota Statutes 211A and 211B by using public funds to promote the views of advocates of the levy while suppressing the arguments of the opposition. This complaint is the first of its kind and provides the courts with an important opportunity to define the limits on all Minnesota school boards who might seek to cross the line between the proper presentation of a full set of facts and the illegal distribution of biased advocacy.

We filed our appeal on the ruling of the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), who initially found prima facie violations, and then wrongly dismissed the case on statute of limitation grounds.

This case is the first opportunity the court will to lay out the criteria for distinguishing between a (disallowed) "promotional" brochure and an (allowed) "informational" brochure. Further, we feel our case is very strong for holding the school board accountable and requiring them to publicly disclose their self-serving expenditures. Such a decision would mark the end of school boards' successful stonewalling of all other attempts to increase their transparency.

MVA appealed the decision of the lower court to the Minnesota Court of Appeals. The Court of Appeals this week announced that the appeal would be heard, scheduling the hearing for October 25th.

Specifically, the hearing will be held at the Minnesota Judicial Center (near the Capitol) at 10:00AM that day.

This is a case that will give the appeals panel the opportunity to establish clear criteria regarding acceptable "informational" material and illegal "electioneering" taxpayer-funded literature.

MVA's most recent press release stated:

On November 2, 2012, we filed a complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) charging the Anoka-Hennepin School District with disseminating false statements and using taxpayer funds for political purposes with regard to school levy questions on the November, 2011, ballot.

Specifically, the complaint alleges that the school district violated Minnesota Statutes 211A and 211B by using public funds to promote the views of advocates of the levy while suppressing the arguments of the opposition. This complaint is the first of its kind and provides the courts with an important opportunity to define the limits on all Minnesota school boards who might seek to cross the line between the proper presentation of a full set of facts and the illegal distribution of biased advocacy.

The case is now before the Minnesota Court of Appeals and will provide it with its first opportunity to restrict school districts from advocating for passage of their own levies and to lay out criteria for distinguishing between a (disallowed) "promotional" brochure and an (allowed) "informational" one. Further, we feel our case is very strong for holding the school board accountable and requiring them to publicly disclose their self-serving expenditures. Such a decision would mark the end of school boards' successful stonewalling of all other attempts to increase their transparency.

Visit www.mnvoters.org to learn more about the lawsuit and the actions of the school district that led to the lawsuit.

This is potentially a far-reaching judicial decision that may finally give some teeth to law designed to protect taxpayers and keep government from being a player when it should be a referee, a situation all too prevalent, starting with the president of the United States.

SIXTH DISTRICT UPDATE

We've got an update in the race to replace Michele Bachmann, and it's not about the Republican side of the race.

Did you even know there was an announced Democrat in the race?

Well, apparently, there are two DFL candidates, but the "leader" in this tallest DFL midget contest is Judy Adams of Circle Pines.

It's not lost on us that a candidate named Adams is a part of the DFL, the original political Addams Family.

In a fit of compassion, this publication thought we would give Ms. Adams some exposure in the county's leading political publication, especially since Ms. Adams apparently lacks even a web site to tout her candidacy. Talk about a suicide mission.

As mentioned, Judy hails from Circle Pines and states her profession as "environmental activist," which should attract legions of voters in this conservative district, who are surely itching to elect another Democrat to Congress who doesn't seem to have a real job and who thinks that the federal government ought to be doing more to make it difficult to grow and retain jobs in America.

The staff chose to write a piece on Adams after she told the Anoka County Union this week that, "When I see a small business fail, that's a reason to cry."

Excuse us? You hate to see a small business fail?

You mean like when a business closes or cuts jobs because of Obamacare? Or when a business closes because of high taxes, especially high taxes on the personal tax rate, which is used by most small businesses to file taxes? Or when a small business struggles with high Worker's Compensation rates?

That quote was just too rich to ignore.

And so, ~~Morticia Adams~~ Judy Adams, what do you propose to do to reduce the regulatory and other governmental burdens placed on small businesses?

Let us guess. Your solution would be more government in the form of some "subsidies" and "tax credits" and "job credits" to force job creators to come to government on bended knee asking for a favor. Let us guess. Government assistance that is based not on merit, but on political favoritism.

No thanks. Judy Adams, Don Adams, John Adams, Ansel Adams, Gomez Addams, Uncle Fester or even Pugsley, couldn't win this thing.

The GOP will retain this seat by a country mile, helping the Republicans hold the House in 2014.

That's the fact.

10/18/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "It's a moral problem that government is making into criminals, people who may be doing something you and I disapprove of, but which hurts no one."

- Milton Friedman

- 1. Shutdown Over, Democracy Saved.**
- 2. Another Joins the Race.**
- 3. Exurban Moochers?**

SHUTDOWN OVER, DEMOCRACY SAVED

So the federal government "shutdown" ended this week and all the world rejoiced as 17% of the non-essential bureaucracy got back to work (with retroactive pay) harassing citizens while Wall Street rejoiced that the Congress has authorized Barack Obama to drive us yet deeper into debt, all without any meaningful reforms or victories.

GOP Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell sounded like a Twins executive hosting press conference to announce the signing of some second rate free agent as he told the Republican base that we should all celebrate extending Sequester level spending in exchange for both bringing back the federal Leviathan as well as enabling a hopelessly debt-addicted government to score some fiscal smack from our Chinese pushers for another few months.

Yippee.

The problem was most certainly not the Republicans pushing things to shutdown or the brink of our debt ceiling. The real sin here is that Republicans pushed the issue so far to get so little.

Nothing on Obamacare. Nothing. And the debt limit has been extended yet again. In essence, Republicans risked much merely to extend the status quo a few more months. The logic of this strategy fails us. What was gained could have easily been won with a much smaller expenditure of political capital.

It's not that the fight wasn't worth fighting. An epic was in order because an epic battle for the soul of this nation is raging. The real sin here is that Republicans waged an epic battle but settled for a very small "victory."

If the fight is worth fighting, go for it. Don't rush up the mountain and then plant your colors on the mole hill,

Republicans seem at a loss when it comes to beating our feckless president on the debt ceiling issue.

Somehow, in our through the looking glass presidency, it is the responsible thing to do to run the nation's future into the ground but reckless to furlough 17% of the bureaucracy or hold the line at a mere \$17 trillion of debt.

The president says it's embarrassing to shut down the government? No, it's embarrassing to watch our president act as the cheerleader-in-chief for yet more debt and more spending for a government that has no money left.

The federal government is headed for fiscal calamity, that's a fact. Yet, a president who has no plans to do a damn thing about it is hailed as a leader for driving the nation over the fiscal cliff at warp speed.

For all of you keeping score at home, the federal government goes to market each and every day to borrow \$1.8 billion dollars to feed the beast. Every single day.

Each American owes our creditors about \$53,000. Of course, many will die without paying their bill, passing that bill to the next generation.

History will note that the Baby Boom generation was without question the most selfish generation in American history.

The self-absorbed arrogance of the 1960s has led to the self-absorbed entitlements of today.

It will be interesting to see how the Republican family handles this situation in a political sense.

Will politicians like Mitch McConnell survive or will they be replaced with more conservative alternatives?

The situation is indeed dire. If Republicans can't lead on meaningful reforms with respect to entitlements, they stand to be replaced with candidates who promise to stand for the principles and values the "refounders" of the GOP embrace.

ANOTHER JOINS THE RACE

The Watchdog has learned that a major candidate has decided to join the GOP race for governor.

Watchdog staff was personally briefed on the candidate's near term campaign plans and strategic goals to win the office in 2014.

The Watchdog will respect the candidate's desire to unveil the campaign on an internal timeframe and will reveal no further details at this time.

This development adds another quality name to an already star-studded cast on the GOP side to take on Mark Dayton.

Republicans should feel great about the slate of candidates running for governor.

The strength of the field is a strong indicator of what we already know. Namely, that Governor Dayton has been a miserable chief executive with a record of bumbling and stumbling through his term in office.

EXURBAN MOOCHERS?

With the economy on the mend, the Twin Cities exurbs are once again seeing home construction on rise, a development that clearly drives liberals nuts.

There's nothing that drives a liberal up a tree more than the inability to tell someone where to live, especially when that location choice frustrates the public policy goals of killing cars, making everyone ride transit, raising population density, and otherwise forcing us all to engage in some "sustainable" urban living.

For those readers who have the stomach to read the Star Tribune, reading the "comments" section of a recent article on this subject was simultaneously hilarious and horrifying.

Apparently, exurban living causes concern amongst the urban arts and croissant crowd such that many of them feel the need to pop off under the anonymity of the Strib comments section.

Of course, many express fear of what living in the exurbs does to Mother Earth, what with all the car driving and bonfires on Friday nights.

Even funnier are the comments from urban dwellers that they are sick and tired of paying for exurban roads and bridges.

Really? Okay, here's the deal.

We exurban dwellers will pay for our roads provided we no longer have to pay for your local government aid programs, your social welfare programs, your failing public schools, your bike paths, and your police misconduct lawsuits.

Deal?

Funny, you people normally tell us that "we're in this together," especially when you need our money for your tax increases.

So who are the moochers?

10/25/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: *"So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear. That there is no alternative way, so far discovered, of improving the lot of the ordinary people that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a free enterprise system."*

- Milton Friedman

- 1. Busted!**
- 2. School Board Candidates.**
- 3. Obama's Debt Limit Argument.**

BUSTED!

It appears that Anoka-Hennepin school board candidate [Grace Baltich](#) holds Joe Biden as her ideal political candidate because she, [like Biden](#), has a problem with stealing other people's words and ideas and passing them off as her own.

We're talking plagiarism people, plain and simple.

And isn't it ironic that one who wants to serve on the board of directors for a school district stands accused of a moral crime that is especially frowned upon in the halls of academia.

According to a Pioneer Press article this week, Baltich's campaign Facebook page contained a number of posts that stole the words and ideas of other people and organizations with no attribution.

Some of the purloined ideas came from the Ohio Department of Education and the National Education Association (NEA).

This state of affairs is supremely hilarious because Baltich is a public employee, a [public union activist](#), and is not surprisingly endorsed by the Anoka-Hennepin teachers' union (AHEM).

Ms. Baltich, a campaign such as yours is easy to construct and requires no plagiarism whatsoever.

Heck, the Watchdog could have constructed your campaign narrative in 5 minutes: spend more money, oppose all results-oriented metrics, and protect bad teachers.

That's the campaign of every teacher union-endorsed school board candidate of the last 100 years.

And you had to plagiarize? Beyond funny.

And just like the teachers' union and the liberals, Baltich took absolutely no responsibility and proceeded to blame the misdeeds on volunteer campaign staff.

According to the article, "Baltich went on to say the posts, which included various opinions about educational issues, were created by her volunteer campaign staff and not the candidate herself."

Then, in typical liberal double speak, she proceeded to announce that she took responsibility for the posts and everything that happens regarding it.

That ought to be a Liberal Commandment: Thou shall take full responsibility, but only after casting full blame on others.

No word on whether Baltich has blamed George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, the Tea Party, or Big Oil for the plagiarism.

It should also not surprise readers that Baltich has absolutely no plans to withdraw from the race.

In a pleasant surprise, the AHEM teachers' union has withdrawn their endorsement of Baltich.

That has to be one of the few times in recent memory that this union has followed standards of accountability.

What's funny, if it had been a classroom teacher disciplined for plagiarism, the union would have likely filed a grievance and gone to the mat to protect the teacher.

Now that the teachers' union has done the right thing, will the other groups that have endorsed her follow suit?

For example, AFSCME Council 5 has [endorsed](#) her. Will they withdraw their endorsement?

On a positive note, the Watchdog sends kudos to the Parents' Action League, a group that helped expose this tawdry state of affairs and worked to expose the plagiarism.

Liberals like to complain of attacks from the "Right."

We taxpayers here in Anoka County, on behalf of the Children, hereby lodge a complaint against Grace Baltich. We're being attacked from the "Write."

Vote November 5th!

SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

Long-time readers know that the Watchdog is a non-partisan organization that does not endorse candidates for office.

Having said that, we strive to educate our readers regarding candidates and where they stand both on particular issues but also as a matter of their world view and ideology.

Oak Grove city council member and staunch Watchdog Dan Denno has sent us the following communication regarding his view of certain school board candidates.

Dan Denno statement follows:

WHO'S GUARDING YOUR PURSE?

BEWARE!!!! The legislators in Minnesota have given the school boards of Minnesota a special dispensation on the CRIME of PICKPURSING.

The school boards were the lucky recipient of a new statute that will allow them to pick your purse, or pocket, of \$300.00 PER PUPIL PER YEAR without even so much as a "please" or "thank you". They can now vote their district an additional levy of up to \$300 per student every year just by raising their hand at the school board meeting; no public vote, no public hearing, no justification.

My local school board from ISD 15 did just that last month. When asked why they needed the money and what they planned on spending it on their response was that they didn't need the money, but they'd figure out somewhere to spend it after they got it.

Unfortunately there were only two dissenting votes. One of those board members who voted against stealing more of our money is running this fall, Marsha Vandenburg. Two new candidates with the same attitude about protecting our money are Malcolm Vinger and Scott Schwarz.

In Fridley Jay Lowinske and in ISD 11 District 4 William Fields are the right candidates.

These people do not believe in stealing more of our money to salve the public education machine. They actually believe in schooling for what it should be, a sound, basic education leading to a more enriched life for the children.

As we all know, the amount of money spent by a school board has no relationship to the quality of the education. So why do school boards keep asking for more money and getting worse results?

These candidates will spend their time expecting and getting results, not getting more educated in pick-pursing.

Vote for better education, not higher taxes.

OBAMA'S DEBT LIMIT ARGUMENT

As many conservatives know, the president's argument for jacking up our national debt and diminishing our sovereignty is utterly ridiculous, to say nothing of extremely [hypocritical](#), even for a politician.

Although this video isn't new, it does a great of showing just how ludicrous the president's argument really is.

What's ironic is that the video was shot way back when Obama had run up only a \$14 trillion debt, which is now close to \$17 trillion.

This [video](#) is a must see!

A silly man who is a silly president running a silly administration, with disastrous results.

11/1/13

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Year: *"If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period. If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period. No one will take it away, no matter what."*

- President Barack Obama, 2009

"So if you're getting one of these letters, just shop around in the new marketplace."

- President Barack Obama, 2013

Underscoring the president's challenge, the HealthCare.gov website was down, because of technical difficulties, during his remarks.

1. Election Day.
2. Stealth Candidates.
3. SNAP Math.

ELECTION DAY

Aloha, Watchdogs. This is the last issue prior to Election Day, next Tuesday, November 5th.

Although this is an "off year" election with fewer races on the ballot, there are nonetheless important races in many different cities and school districts across Anoka County.

For example, there are important school board races in both Anoka-Hennepin and Saint Francis schools that offer a stark contrast in the world view of the candidates.

In Coon Rapids, a \$17.4 million park bond levy will be on the ballot.

Turnout promises to be low, meaning that every vote will take on extra importance.

It is incumbent upon Watchdogs to educate themselves regarding candidates and issues and then vote their conscience.

With respect to voter education, many of our readers want to know which candidates follow a conservative ideology.

After hearing from trusted Watchdogs who live in these jurisdictions, the following school board candidates are described as "conservative" in world view"

Anoka-Hennepin School District:

District 4: William Fields

District 3: Bill Harvey.

Saint Francis School District:

Four-year term (three seats open):

Marsha Van Denburgh

Malcom Vinger II

Two-year term (one seat):

Scott Schwarz

Get educated and vote on November 5th!

Find information regarding where to vote and the races on your ballot [here](#).

STEALTH CANDIDATES

In the Anoka-Hennepin school district, two of the three races on the ballot are competitive, with multiple candidates facing off in districts 3 and 4. In the other race, district 6, only one candidate is on the ballot.

What's interesting, is that two of the candidates have won the backing of the teachers' union but have kept that endorsement under wraps.

Why are they hiding the endorsement?

In district 4, Paul Meunier is running against William Fields.

The Watchdog has received copies of two Meunier campaign mailings that mention nothing of his endorsement by the special interest group Anoka-Hennepin Education Minnesota (AHM).

The Watchdog learned of this endorsement only by doing research on the teachers' union.

In addition to the mailings, the Watchdog can find no mention of the endorsement on Meunier's Facebook page.

While this publication cannot read Meunier's mind, there is clearly an incentive to omit this endorsement.

District 4 covers Andover and Ham Lake. These two communities are both conservative, having elected by wide margins strong conservatives like Congresswoman Bachmann, state Senator Michelle Benson, and state Representative Peggy Scott.

If voters were aware of the Meunier endorsement, many would be inclined to vote for another candidate, one not beholden to this special interest group.

And make no mistake, to be endorsed by the teachers' union, one has to stake out particular positions on important education issues. There is a screening process that involves a personal interview, centered on education issues and where the candidate stands.

In fulfilling our duty to educate voters, we declare: PAUL MEUNIER IS ENDORSED BY THE TEACHERS' UNION.

Over in district 3, the same holds true for Grace Baltich, running against Bill Harvey. Or, at least it was true. It was true until Baltich was busted for plagiarism.

After the bust was revealed, the union quickly backed off the endorsement, realizing that it was bad PR to back such a candidate.

It's hard to hide behind The Children when you steal the intellectual property of others.

Nonetheless, Baltich impressed the union bosses enough to earn their endorsement for the status quo plus more spending.

After reading this publication, voters will have a better idea which candidate better represents their world view, their principles, and their values.

SNAP MATH

SNAP, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is the latest catchy name for food stamps.

The Star Tribune, in a surprise to no one, this week ran an article vilifying Republicans, who want to pare back the explosive growth of this welfare program.

You know, because we're \$17 trillion in debt and really don't have the cash to finance the massive expansion of yet another entitlement program.

This week, the Star Tribune headline blared, "Food stamp demand rises in Minnesota as budget shrinks."

The article then went on to crucify Republicans for wanting kids and the elderly to starve by "cutting" a program that provides a mere \$1.29 per meal in assistance.

Here's what the legacy media don't want you to know about SNAP and it's explosive growth.

In inflation adjusted dollars, the SNAP program doubled under President George W. Bush from \$20 billion to \$40 billion.

Under President Obama, that figure has gone from \$40 billion to \$78 billion. In other words, the program has nearly quadrupled in the past 13 years, just like most federal spending programs.

These numbers were left out of the Star Tribune story and are obviously relevant in helping readers form an opinion.

Democrats are willing to cut \$4 billion from the program while Republicans want in the neighborhood of \$20 billion.

Moving to the GOP number would still leave the program nearly three times as large as when Bush took office.

This is typical of the Democrats in pillorying "cuts" when the real issue is merely paring back a fraction of the growth.

What Republicans are really talking about is leaving the program \$18 billion larger than when Obama took office.

The number isn't so unreasonable in that light, is it?

11/8/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I think it's very important for Latin America and other countries to end the situation in which the government can simply print money to pay for its debts, which leads to inflation and disaster."

- Milton Friedman

Paging Barack Obama...

In This Issue:

- 1. David vs. Goliath.**
- 2. Buying Influence.**

DAVID VS. GOLIATH

Tuesday night's elections were a mixed bag for conservatives, seeing some nice victories while watching the Left win a few.

For example, it was difficult for Watchdogs to watch school levy after school levy pass with ease. Yet again, the Children were held hostage, while more taxpayer money will be spent with no enhanced accountability for student achievement and teacher competence, much less excellence.

Having said that, there were indeed victories on election night, including a major upset in the Anoka-Hennepin School District.

In one of the biggest upsets in Anoka County in recent years, underdog (and Watchdog) William Fields defeated liberal darling Paul Meunier, who was backed to the hilt by the Education Industrial Complex, otherwise known as Education Minnesota.

It will be interesting to see the campaign finance reports from this race, but it will only be interesting to see how badly Fields was outspent by Meunier and the Teachers' Union.

The difference will surely be measured by exponentially.

To give readers some perspective, the Watchdog has verified that at least four separate mailings were sent to Anoka-Hennepin District 4 voters by either the Meunier campaign or the Anoka-Hennepin Education Minnesota (AHM).

The Watchdog has also seen emails discussing a phone bank on Meunier's behalf, urging voters to get to the polls to vote for Meunier.

Conversely, Watchdogs in District 4 reported that while Fields did much to take advantage of earned media, there was not much in the way of campaign resources beyond a few lawn signs.

In other words, it was a true grassroots campaign.

Grassroots campaigns are often times labeled that way in order to mask a lazy campaign.

But true grassroots campaigns are nothing of the sort.

Done correctly, they reflect the best in American political life, demonstrating that any person with the right ideas, the right character, and the right attitude can earn the privilege of representing his fellow citizens in elective office.

It doesn't require personal wealth, social status, pedigree, or the approbation of the elites.

If you read his statement of candidacy, it is obvious that Fields was motivated to run by a genuine desire to to serve. To serve the common good, that is. And not to serve the special interests, especially one with a stranglehold on our public schools.

In addition to a candidate who shows genuine motives and espouses good ideas, the grassroots candidacy needs grassroots support.

It was indeed heartening to see neighbors talking to neighbors across actual fences or the virtual fence to discuss Fields' candidacy.

Despite all the money and the support of the union bosses down at AHEM, Fields prevailed, in convincing fashion, no less.

This was the kind of victory that can go a ways towards restoring our faith in the electoral process, which is saying a lot considering the what the voters have given us lately.

At the very least, Anoka County has added another name to the roster of conservatives representing the county.

Conservatives continue to roll here in the County. How sweet is that?

And, best of all, taxpayers will have Fields' voice on the school board.

We look forward to his leadership.

Congratulations, William!

Now, about that Teachers' Union. They will undoubtedly come knocking at your door, saying all sorts of nice things about "working together" and the like.

Don't believe it.

Your principles and values are very likely incompatible with their agenda.

The union will no doubt bad mouth you and work like crazy to defeat you for re-election.

Beware.

BUYING INFLUENCE

What were we just saying with respect to restoring faith in our system of governance?

This week saw the release of the latest Minnesota lobbying expense reports.

These reports, mandated by law, show the extent to which lobbyists and their bosses influence our politics and public policy.

Having said that, it must be acknowledged that many organizations lobby in order to protect themselves from government.

With government forcing its way into every nook and cranny of life, many are forced to lobby as a way to keep government at bay.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who live at the Capitol in order to gorge themselves at the public trough.

And wouldn't you know it?

Education Minnesota, the teachers' union, leads the pack when it comes to expenditures (disbursements) to influence legislative action.

Education Minnesota spent \$840,235 to influence the legislature in 2012 (the latest reporting year).

Other trough feeders include AFSCME, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, spending \$142,360 to make sure the public employees they represent get theirs.

And there are the rent seekers, the private organizations looking for a handout from government.

A prime example is the Minnesota Vikings Football Club, spending \$122,856 to influence the legislature, for a stadium no doubt.

The Mayo Clinic also spent big dollars to squeeze some tax dollars out of the legislature.

The Mayo spent \$110,408, which is the fraction of the value of the tax dollars they got to build the "Destination Medical Center," which will no doubt bring some big dollars into both the Mayo and Rochester.

Rent seekers and bureaucrats, after your dollars.

11/15/13

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week:

"The voters' intent is not undone simply because the statutory mechanism for collecting and directing the sales tax revenue funding the stadium precludes the city from using that revenue for any other purpose."

Judge Philip Bush, ruling that the Vikings stadium should have triggered a voter referendum in Minneapolis, contrary to what Mayor Rybak claimed.

- 1. Big Government in Fridley.**
- 2. Urban and Sustainable.**

BIG GOVERNMENT IN FRIDLEY

Greetings, Watchdogs. We've got a developing situation in Fridley.

The City of Fridley is considering taking over garbage hauling, overturning the free market trash hauling system that has served the city for, oh, as long as garbage trucks have been picking up trash.

In much the same way that Obama thinks he should pick your doctor, some Fridley leaders apparently think they should pick your trash hauler.

Here's the situation: This past week, the city's Environmental Quality and Energy Commission (EQEC) voted to recommend that the city council begin the process of "organized collection," which is a euphemism for the city taking over trash hauling, stripping residents of their ability to choose their own hauler and telling haulers where they can do business in the city - or that they can't at all.

The vote was 4-1, so the Watchdog salutes the lone commission member with the common sense to be troubled by this nonsense.

Talk about government run amok.

The process used by the EQEC was a classic example of bully government ramroding through a pre-determined outcome, cloaked in rhetoric about "research" and "analysis."

First of all, the city never [posted](#) the commission's agenda on the web site, denying citizens the opportunity to be noticed regarding the meeting and the important subject matter. (In fact, the commission hasn't posted an agenda since September.)

Second, members of the public who were aware of the agenda through the grapevine were denied an opportunity to express their concerns, being gavelled down and told that the meeting "wasn't an open forum" and that if citizens had concerns, they could "talk to the city council."

So much for serving the citizens.

It was obvious to those in attendance that there was a pre-determined outcome, based on both the gagging of the public and the lack of true debate regarding the merits of the "report" prepared by staff that made a number of glowing observations regarding the merits of government-run garbage collection.

No word on whether the Obamacare folks had a hand in preparing the EQEC report.

Moreover, the "report" was not made available to the public, save for a single copy that had to be shared among the same taxpayers who paid for the report, the meeting room, the staff, and everything else connected to the charade.

Try to find the report on the city web site. Good luck with that.

Perhaps most telling was the attitude of some commission members. One stated that he favored government-run trash collection because "sometimes people need their hands held."

So people think you're too stupid to select a trash hauler. Amazing.

The arrogance of this city and its staff is breathtaking.

No word on whether city manager Wally Wysopal has been recruited as an Obamacare navigator for Fridley.

Too stupid to pick a hauler. Too stupid to pick a doctor. Too stupid to pick a health care plan. Too stupid to pick a car. Too stupid to pick a day care provider. Too stupid to pick your diet.

Big Government is Big Government. Where does it end?

The next step is for the city council to take up the commission's recommendation in the near future.

Sources in Fridley tell the Watchdog that the prime mover behind this takeover attempt is very likely Wally Wysopal, the new city manager, who was recently the chief bureaucrat in North Saint Paul, a city with government-run trash collection.

Perhaps Wysopal believes that Big Government horse hockey that infects Ramsey County cities can be exported to Anoka County.

He should have read the election returns of the past couple of election cycles before taking the job.

Watchdogs, this is a call to arms!

The city council has yet to take up the commission report but will likely do so in the near future.

There are three action items Watchdogs should take to support their fellow Dogs in Fridley.

First, [contact](#) the city council and tell them we don't need Big Government trash collection in Fridley.

Second, the same grassroots prairie uprising that has made our county a conservative beacon has already come to Fridley.

Watchdogs have started a Facebook page, "I Oppose a Fridley Garbage Monopoly." Visit that page and "like" it.

There's also a blog spot for the issue [here](#).

Third, small, independent trash haulers have a web site called, [Haulers for Choice](#).

The web site has great information regarding the folly of government-run trash collection.

Folks, it doesn't matter if you live in Fridley or not. Get involved.

Your friends need your help. Moreover, Big Government is like communism. The goal is domination. If Fridley falls, Coon Rapids will next. Then Andover. Then Ramsey...

This is a great opportunity for Watchdogs to once again put Big Government in its place.

To the ramparts!

URBAN AND SUSTAINABLE

So why is it that the sustainable urbanites can't leave us alone?

Most of us moved out to Anoka County to get away from the social and economic ills prevalent in the urban core.

We want safe streets. We want to bon fires in the back yard. We want schools that don't need metal detectors. We want a decent back yard and shorter drive to the cabin.

And that drives the liberals nuts.

The suburbs represent the freedom they so desperately resent.

While this issue has been somewhat below the radar, the threat is real.

Make no mistake, liberals are intent upon forcing suburbanites and exurbanites into the urban core, where we can all be controlled and live our lives as THEY wish us to live.

The latest salvo from the liberals concerns the cost of commuting in the Twin Cities.

According to some new metric, the cost of commuting is very close to the cost of housing in this area.

Never mind the fact that housing costs may be comparatively low to other metro areas.

And so what if commuting costs are comparatively high? It's a deliberate and conscious choice made by citizens based on a rational thought process.

Of course, the liberals used the report as a call to action to get people into the urban core.

What was most galling, however, was the claim by liberals that the urban core is "subsidizing" the choice to live in the suburbs.

Not long ago, the Watchdog took on this bunk - again.

Here's what we said on October 18th and we stand by it now:

Apparently, exurban living causes concern amongst the urban arts and croissant crowd such that many of them feel the need to pop off under the anonymity of the Strib comments section.

Of course, many express fear of what living in the exurbs does to Mother Earth, what with all the car driving and bonfires on Friday nights.

Even funnier are the comments from urban dwellers that they are sick and tired of paying for exurban roads and bridges.

Really? Okay, here's the deal.

We exurban dwellers will pay for our roads provided we no longer have to pay for your local government aid programs, your social welfare programs, your failing public schools, your bike paths, and your police misconduct lawsuits.

Deal?

Funny, you people normally tell us that "we're in this together," especially when you need our money for your latest government program.

So who are the moochers?

11/22/13

In This Issue:

1. Fridley Garbage Grabbers.

FRIDLEY GARBAGE GRABBERS

Happy Friday, Watchdogs. It's time for another foray into politics and public policy in Anoka County.

As we reported last week, the City of Fridley is well on its way to having government take over trash collection.

Why? Does Fridley handle the core functions of government so well that taking over trash is the next frontier in Big Government?

Is it because the free market system of trash collection that has worked well for the last 50 years is suddenly no good?

Is it because Obamacare has proven to be such a great success in taking over health care?

At core, Fridley is marching towards taking away yet another citizen freedom because there is an attitude among some at city hall that government makes better decisions than citizens themselves.

If government is in charge of trash, a better result will take place than allowing the idiot masses to be in charge of their trash decisions, so the thinking goes.

If you like your trash hauler, you WILL NOT be able to keep your trash hauler.

Like Obamacare, you will get the trash hauler government picks for you.

And like Obamacare, arrogant government will tell you that you're getting a better deal than the one you could get for yourself.

And what are the odds that you will get some big, Wall Street hauler with the "right" contacts over at city hall?

Pretty damn high.

No word on whether Solyndra has started a trash hauling company.

In case you're doubting that a "we're-the-government-and-we-know-better" attitude has taken hold at city hall, consider the attitude of one Sam Stoxen, who sits on the Fridley

Environmental Quality and Energy Commission, the Politburo-style "citizen commission" that has endorsed the government garbage grab.

Stoxen couldn't be bothered to attend the meeting last week to actually weigh and consider the staff ~~propaganda~~ report justifying the garbage grab, but that didn't stop him from endorsing it.

Why? Because he thinks government can think for you better than you can think for you.

Thanks to Watchdogs in Fridley, the Watchdog has obtained an email Stoxen sent to the commission regarding his view of the garbage grab.

Here it is in its entirety (emphasis added):

From: Sam Email
Sent: Monday, November 11, 2013 5:17 PM
To: Qualley, Kay
Subject: Re: Staff report on Organized vs. Open collection systems

Hey Kay.

It looks like I have some work things I need to do tomorrow evening. That federal furlough really messed things up and set me back.

*If it matters I would probably vote for a single hauler. The road wear data seems to support the concept. **People might not want government making their decisions for them but they also don't want to pay for road improvement so they might need to have their hand held in some decision making.***

I'll mark my calendar with next years EQEC dates just to make sure work doesn't fall on any of those dates. I'm hoping we avoid another furlough mid January.

Sorry for not being able to make it. I hope there is enough people for quarum.

Sam

We're guessing Sam I Am doesn't work as an educator, although his email makes clear that he is involved with the federal government, perhaps helping to develop fix healthcare.gov.

While the loss of freedom of choice is the primary argument against the government garbage grab, there are many, many other reasons to oppose this silly idea.

Consider that when government takes over trash, government gets to run trash hauling and therefore needs a bureaucracy to manage things.

Take Maplewood, for example.

In 2011, city hall took over trash hauling.

Among other things, city hall now owns the headache of managing accounts, particularly those deadbeats who don't pay their bills.

Under the free market system, that is a private contractual matter between the hauler and the citizen.

The City of Maplewood now needs to expend city resources to go after people who don't pay their trash bills.

Below is a memo from a recent city council meeting regarding the need to go after deadbeats who don't pay their trash bill:

MEMORANDUM

TO: R. Charles Ahl, City Manager

FROM: Gayle Bauman, Finance Director

DATE: November 5, 2013

SUBJECT: Approval of Resolution Certifying Special Assessments for Unpaid Trash Bills

Introduction

Beginning this year, the City will levy special assessments for unpaid trash bills on property within Ramsey County. The accounts affected are those that have amounts due that are at least 6 months old. 266 notices were sent to individuals that had unpaid bills. The notices indicated that the balance due for the services along with 10% interest would be added to their 2014 property taxes if payment was not made within 30 days. A few payments were received in response to these notices. The remaining unpaid bills in the amount of \$41,519.92 plus 10% interest of \$4,152.26 should be certified as special assessments.

Budget Impact

This process assists with the collection of past due amounts.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the attached resolution be adopted to certify \$45,672.18 of unpaid trash bills for collection with 2014 property taxes which includes interest at the rate of ten percent on the total amount for one year.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO.

RESOLVED, that the City Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to certify to the Auditor of Ramsey County the following trash bills totaling \$45,672.18 for collection with the taxes of said property owner for the year 2013, collectible in 2014, which included interest at the rate of ten percent (10%) on the total amount for one year.

So this is what it's come to.

Government is so big and so out of control, it not only wants to own your health care, it wants to own your trash.

Whether it's your hard earned money, your body, or your coffee grounds and snotty Kleenex, government wants to own it.

Let's wake up, Fridley!

It's time to tell city hall to butt out of our banana peels and moth eaten socks.

More information to follow.

11/29/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Per tradition, the Watchdog publishes a limited issue Thanksgiving week as we pause to offer thanks for our loyal readers, those elected officials who fight for capitalism and limited government, and a Nation founded upon the principle of individual liberty - if we can keep it.

Happy Thanksgiving, Readers!

- 1. Action Alert - Fridley.**
- 2. The True Story of Thanksgiving.**

ACTION ALERT - FRIDLEY

The Fridley Great Garbage Grab is on the move!

As we reported last week, the Fridley City Council is on a path to take over garbage collection and decide for YOU who can haul your trash.

Don't let them take your freedom of choice!

The city council will take up this issue this Monday:

December 2nd
7:00PM
Fridley City Hall
6431 University Ave. NE, Fridley, MN 55432

How interesting that the public notice of this meeting was published late in afternoon the day before Thanksgiving.

And how interesting that the city council meeting to consider this item happens on the heels of a national holiday.

Perhaps the city council is counting on citizens to be complacent and not show up.

Will you prove them right?

Watchdogs, you need to be there to make your voice heard. The only thing that has ever stopped a city from doing this is citizen anger.

If the city council refuses to listen, three members of the council are on the ballot next year.

And since Fridley is a charter city, perhaps a charter question protecting the freedom to choose a hauler will be on the ballot next year as well.

Take note, city council!

THE TRUE STORY OF THANKSGIVING

Did you know that the story of Thanksgiving is truly a tale of the triumph of capitalism over collectivism?

The true story of Thanksgiving has been retold many times. The following version is excellent and was authored by Dr. Milton Wolf, originally published in the Washington Times:

The Plymouth colonists were socialists before socialism was cool. They entered into a contract with one another and a finance company called Merchant Adventurers to create an egalitarian commune in which their wealth, food in particular, would be collectively stored and redistributed equally among members. This was the forebear of the modern-day American counterculture collectivist commune or even Israel's more mainstream kibbutz, which survive on government subsidies. Equality is put before freedom or even productivity.

To his dismay, Bradford quickly discovered the fundamental flaw of collectivism: its perverse incentive to be less productive. The strong, young men of their commune, he noted, should have been their most productive members, but they resented being assigned extra work that benefited another man's family, so they refused. The less productive members, believing someone else would provide for them, had little incentive to improve their ways, so they didn't. And who can blame any of them?

At this point, the statist would seek government intervention.

When, for example, in the 20th century Joseph Stalin collectivized the Soviet Union's farms under the guise of freeing the peasant farmer, it required a small army of overseers to force the farmers to actually farm the collectivized "kolkhozy." With little incentive to be productive, farmers were known to cut every corner they could. They'd leave rotting vegetables among the good, which hastened the entire crop's spoilage. They'd plow their fields only deep enough to fool inspectors, but not enough to be suitable for optimal crop production. Stalin's answer was to unleash even more overseers, but it was never enough, and each inspector represented a man who otherwise might be farming. The result: On some of the most fertile land on Earth, a man-made famine contributed to about 11 million deaths.

Back to our Pilgrims. Bradford had a much simpler and effective solution: free-market capitalism. Instead of guaranteeing equal results to each family, he guaranteed equal

protection under the law. He carved up the land and gave plots not to the collective, but instead to each individual family. Private property is, of course, the basis of capitalism, and with it, the profit motive is the oxygen that ignites a firestorm of productivity.

In short order, the colonists not only escaped the threat of starvation, but, as their newly incentivized creativity and industry were unleashed, began a new era of prosperity. Instead of being dependent on others, they produced more food than they could possibly consume and soon began trading with American Indians and other colonists, which itself unleashed a second wave of prosperity.

This turnaround was monumental. When they first arrived, Bradford was hardly some right-wing ideologue. He initially believed, as liberals do today, that their collective colony "would make them happy and flourishing - as if they were wiser than God" but he soon learned the reality that collectivism "was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort." The same holds true today.

The fundamental flaws of collectivism may be easier to mask within a group of 310 million than a group of 100 - at least temporarily - but ultimately, its harsh reality is every bit as inescapable. Still today, some of our misguided contemporaries agitate for collectivized health care, higher education or anything else that would destine us to repeat those early tragedies at Plymouth, the more recent ones of Stalin or even the Israeli kibbutz. Instead, let's take this time to relearn the complete lesson of the first Thanksgiving: Charity is noble, and capitalism works. Let's teach it to our children. And let's give our thanks for the prosperous United States of America.

12/6/13

In This Issue:

- 1. Don't Blame the Genius, Blame His Machine.**
- 2. The Great Garbage Grab of 2013 - Update.**

DON'T BLAME THE GENIUS, BLAME HIS MACHINE

The epic fail known by its namesake, "Obamacare," is nearly impossible to track through a weekly publication like the Watchdog.

With the S.S. Obamacare hitting technical ice burgs on a daily basis, reporting on the actions (and inactions) of Captain Obama as the ship takes on water is a full-time job that requires intensive resources.

Full-time employment for journalists. Finally! An Obama jobs program that works.

It's an open question whether Captain Obama is even fit to command the S.S. Minnow for a three hour tour. Sadly, we're now on a three YEAR tour, without the company of Ginger or Mary Ann.

Well, don't blame Obama for this catastrophic failure. It's not the fault of the brilliant, yet bored, chief executive of the United States of America.

Just ask him.

In a recent interview with Chris Matthews, whose bromance with Obama is well documented, Obama laid the blame for Obamacare squarely on the bureaucracy, absolving himself of any blame whatsoever.

The headline from [RealClear Politics](#) says it well: Obama: Ongoing Obamacare Problems Don't Reflect On My Personal Management Style.

Barry acquitted himself of negligence by stating: "And, you know, the challenge, I think, that we have going forward is not so much my personal management style or particular issues around White House organization. It actually has to do with what I referred to earlier which is we had these big agencies, some of which are outdated. Some of which are not designed properly."

Oh, excuse us dumb peasants for having the temerity to question your leadership and management skills.

We were too busy clinging to our guns and religion to properly discern your unquestioned genius.

But, Barry, isn't this the very same government machine you and your liberal ilk worked so hard to build over the years?

Isn't this the same bureaucracy that was so sophisticated and enlightened that it could replace non-profits, churches, private social institutions and even the family?

And that system can't even build a web site to allow people to shop for a product?

We pause to thank the President of the United States for acknowledging that the bureaucracy doesn't do anything well, a clear observation liberals have refused to admit thus far.

Obama then went on to paint Obamacare as an anomaly, just one disaster in a sea of achievement. Just one turd in a punch bowl of heavenly nectar.

Said Obama: "I think it's important to distinguish between this particular project, this healthcare project, where it is obvious that we needed additional controls in place, because it didn't deliver on time the way we wanted. And how we've managed incredibly complex problems for the last five years. Everything from wars to pandemics to, you know, natural disasters to, you know, expanding student loans for young people."

Really? Compared to your management of the federal debt? Benghazi? Syria? Fast and Furious? IRS targeting of conservative groups? Solyndra? The "stimulus?"

Forget about that, taxpayers. The president expanded student loans for young people, so they can be even deeper in debt after graduating with that psychology degree.

We're so ever grateful.

The fact that the president refuses to accept responsibility is proof positive of his lack of leadership skills.

The leader is responsible for everything his organization does or fails to do. This is the credo of the military officer corps of which he is the Commander-in-Chief.

Keep talking, Mr. President. No one believes you anymore. Your credibility is zero and all the spin in the world won't change that reality.

THE GREAT GARBAGE GRAB OF 2013 - UPDATE

Readers, we have to say that the Fridley city council's ongoing takeover of a free market trash hauling is some of the worst strong arm, cram down style of government we've seen in a long, long time.

From both a policy and process perspective, the city council has manifested an arrogant, we-know-what's-best style of government that would make the White House proud.

In terms of arrogant government and its attitude towards the citizens it represents, this is Fridley's Obamacare.

Let's be clear about what this is. It's government-run and government-managed trash collection.

Called by the euphemism "organized collection," it is a process whereby the city takes over collection and turns it over to either a single monopoly hauler or a cartel of a few haulers who divide up the city.

In all cases, what it means to you is that government picks your hauler for you and you have nothing to say about it. Government decides what you will pay for trash service and there's nothing you can do about it. Government gives you no recourse if you don't like the hauler they pick for you. You get what you get.

And because the chosen hauler(s) have a contract with the city and not you, the favored hauler(s) have no incentive to serve you and your needs. They aim only to please the bureaucrats down at city hall.

Does this all sound to you like anti-competitive, anti-trust style behavior?

That's because it is.

But the law gives government the authority to authorize this harmful behavior in the name of whatever it is the city thinks is a higher priority than consumer protection, the free market being the ultimate protector of the consumer.

Here's what the law says about anti-competitive conduct under "organized collection":

Subd. 7. Anticompetitive conduct.

(a) A political subdivision that organizes collection under this section is **authorized to engage in anticompetitive conduct** to the extent necessary to plan and implement its chosen organized collection system and is immune from liability under state laws relating to antitrust, restraint of trade, unfair trade practices, and other regulation of trade or commerce.

(b) An organization of solid waste collectors, an individual collector, and their officers, members, employees, and agents who cooperate with a political subdivision that organizes collection under this section are **authorized to engage in anticompetitive conduct** to the extent necessary to plan and implement the organized collection system, provided that the political subdivision actively supervises the participation of

each entity. An organization, entity, or person covered by this paragraph is immune from liability under state law relating to antitrust, restraint of trade, unfair trade practices, and other regulation of trade or commerce.

Does that sound like behavior that benefits the consumer?

It's also deeply concerning that the city has taken no public comment regarding this issue since the issue was revived in 2013.

The city's Environmental Quality and Energy Commission took no testimony when it adopted a "report" recommending that the city initiate the process to adopt organized collection.

Then the Planning Commission took no public testimony.

And then the city council took no public testimony, a shameful display when the chambers were crowded with taxpayers demanding what is their inherent right: the right to address their governmental official.

Mayor Lund refused public comment, hiding behind the law, saying that he had to follow the law and allow no public comment until later in the process.

What a load of malarkey. The law mandates a public hearing later in the process, but that is a floor and not a ceiling regarding public input. Public input would have certainly been in order at that time.

Either the mayor knowingly gagged public comment or he doesn't understand the law and neither does the city attorney.

And make no mistake, the city has begun the process of moving to organized collection. Again, read the law:

Subd. 4d. Participating collectors proposal requirement.

Prior to establishing a committee under subdivision 4a to consider organizing residential solid waste collection, a city or town with more than one licensed collector must notify the public and all licensed collectors in the community. The city or town must provide a 60-day period in which meetings and negotiations shall occur exclusively between licensed collectors and the city or town to develop a proposal in which interested licensed collectors, as members of an organization of collectors, collect solid waste from designated sections of the city or town.

The city has done this and will soon begin negotiations with the haulers in the city. Again, this has happened. The fuse has been lit.

So let's not believe the city leaders when they tell us they are just kicking the tires and exploring organized collection. This is no longer research and information gathering.

It's entirely possible the city could collude with the haulers to craft a cartel system that the city would ratify without a single voice of public input.

Banana Republic.

While it's true that the city is under no obligation to adopt organized collection, you have to wonder why they started the formal, legal process if they weren't serious about taking away your right to choose your hauler.

By the way, you can read the entire law [here](#).

Why is the city doing this? What's wrong with the current system that has served the city for decades?

What's behind all this?

The city claims citizen input is driving this issue.

Now, what the Watchdog is about to tell you is the ground truth. You can verify it right [here](#).

The city states that in a 2009 city newsletter, the topic of organized collection was raised and citizens were instructed to provide feedback.

A grand total of 28 responded, with 21 favoring organized collection.

Fridley has a population of roughly 26,000.

That would mean less than .1% of the city's residents expressed interest in government hand holding them on waste hauling.

That's a joke and frankly the city ought to be embarrassed to be citing such a ridiculous source as a justification for pursuing this foolishness.

That's okay city council. Three of you are up for re-election next year and the city charter can always be amended.

If this happens, we'll see you at the polls.

12/13/13

In This Issue:

1. **Quote of the Month.**
2. **Threepeat!**
3. **Great Garbage Grab Update.**

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

George Will is one of the greatest conservative thinkers of the last 100 years.

He has been instrumental in educating Americans regarding the value of conservatism and the dangers of unchecked liberalism.

He provided, once again, profound and humorous commentary on our feckless Chief Executive (Obama in this case, not Dayton).

Here's what Will said regarding Obama's recent comment that Obamacare has failed, not because of him, but because of the Big Government bureaucracy:

GEORGE WILL: The education of this president is a protracted and often amusing process as it was this week. As he continues to alight upon the obvious with a sense of profound and original discovery, he's alighting on what is obvious to governors. This is really why governors more often than Senators as president.

The president is saying the trouble with big government is that it's so darn big. And like a lot of other big organisms, dinosaurs spring to mind, is it has a simple nervous system. It's sporadic. It's governed by inertia and it's hard to move. This from a man who's devoted his life to increasing the power of government as an instrument of the redistribution of income because government is wiser than markets at that. It's as I say, highly amusing.

Highly amusing, indeed!

THREEPEAT!

Shoot, do we need to pay Pat Riley a [royalty](#)?

In a feat of political strength unmatched by any level of government anywhere, perhaps at any time post-World War II, the Anoka County Board of Commissioners has reduced the net levy by \$2 million.

This is the third year in a row that the board has cut the amount of property taxes it collects from taxpayers, known as the net levy.

It cannot be underestimated what an achievement this is in American governance.

So many elected officials talk a good game. They pay lip service to property taxes and government spending and then turn around and give us all sorts of stories as to why they can't cut taxes and spending.

This crew has delivered once, twice, and now three times.

There is no other politician in this state who can lay claim to this public policy holy grail.

Washington, DC is \$17 trillion in debt and has fashioned a budget that hasn't done jack squat except find a way to repeal \$63 billion in oh-so-modest spending reductions.

Mark Dayton and his band of DFL co-conspirators in Saint Paul raised taxes by over \$2 billion to cover their insatiable desire to spend and grow the government budget at the expense of the family budget.

And here in Anoka County, our commissioners have done the real work of honest, representative government.

They have cut taxes while maintaining and enhancing services.

Board Chairwoman Rhonda Sivarajah said, *"We work on behalf of the taxpayer and it's our mission to dig in and deliver these kinds of savings, while doing the hard work to make sure our services don't suffer. We are continuing to 'right' size County government and make the most of technology to be more effective and efficient."*

Amen. This is our quote of the week, and a front-runner for quote of the year.

So how did this get done for the third year in a row?

First, the county has reduced debt payments. Under Dan Erhart, who had [ties](#) to the county's bond underwriters, the county heavily relied on debt to finance capital projects.

Under Sivarajah, the county shifted to relying on cash to fund these projects, saving debt service payments.

The county is saving \$700,000 annually in debt service payments.

Second, technology integration has boosted employee productivity and reduced the use of paper by 27%.

Don't hold your breath, though, waiting for the liberals to give this board credit for such an environmentally friendly cost savings.

Moreover, the Left is sure to trot out the old meme that the county has managed to implement a levy reduction only by cutting government services.

Look for the tired, shop worn bromides about "slash and burn" governance and services "cut to the bone" to be thrown about without underpinning in fact or in reality, for that matter.

You see, the Left can't let Anoka County's success spread.

They have a vested interest in growing government, which is primary mechanism by which these people gain, maintain, and enhance political power.

If word gets out that government can tax and spend less while delivering better results, the scheme begins to collapse.

In any case, a reduction in government service is not the case in Anoka County.

For example, the county has enhanced preventative services in the field of mental health, which is a smart expenditure of taxpayer dollars.

Treating mentally ill people in the emergency room or housing them in the county jail cost far more and is far more ineffective.

And don't forget about the county abolishing the hated "wheelage tax," another Dan Erhart tax increase.

The repeal saves taxpayers \$1.4 million per year.

Finally, we all remember the arrogance, secrecy and lack of transparency under the Good Ol' Boys.

Remember when the public wasn't allowed to speak at board meetings without prior permission and approval of the content of the proposed remarks?

Remember when the board meetings weren't broadcast?

Remember when Dan Erhart didn't publish his county email so there wouldn't be a paper trail of accountability?

Remember all the secret dinners with lobbyists at swanky, upscale steak houses?

That's all gone, replaced by a culture of humility, transparency and a taxpayer-first mentality.

The county's openness has resulted in an award from the nationally-recognized Sunshine Review. The county earned an "A+" rating.

Watchdogs, elections matter and we are enjoying the tasty harvest of elected officials who live by the credo that government is of the people, by the people, for the people.

GREAT GARBAGE GRAB UPDATE

Sources tell the Watchdog that the city and the haulers servicing the city will begin negotiations to implement a trash hauling cartel on December 16th.

We are further told the negotiations are not open to the public.

The Watchdog will do its best to leverage sources to keep readers informed.

12/20/13

In This Issue:

- 1. V-A-C Day.**
- 2. Northstar Has Failed.**
- 3. Garbage Rising.**

V-A-C DAY

Hey, Watchdogs. Did you forget that this week is a special week honoring a special day? Did you not realize that December 18 holds a special place in the heart of every Watchdog?

December 18th is commemorated because it was on this date in 2012 that we collectively experienced Victory-Anoka-County Day. It was on December 18th, 2012 that Dan Erhart sat on his last county board meeting before his involuntary exile to Pine County.

Thirty years of taxpayer abuse came to an end on V-A-C Day and the Watchdog will observe this anniversary for years to come.

No word on whether the county board has decided to declare December 18th as an observed holiday for the county.

Of course, the Watchdog has a certain nostalgia for old Danno. His bullying, blustering Tammany Hall way of conducting himself lent itself to countless Watchdog columns and kept the staff as busy as a one-legged man in a butt kicking contest.

It was if a time machine had transported Erhart from 1960s Alabama or 1930s New York to present Anoka County.

Rarely has Minnesota seen such a political hack.

But the liberation of Anoka County taxpayers was a much higher, more noble calling than reporting on Erhart's latest junket, meal at a 5-star restaurant or some bloviating statement about the virtues of a Vikings stadium, commuter rail, or unicorn stable that should be located in Anoka County and heavily subsidized by the taxpayers.

Perhaps most amusing were Erhart's vehement denials of things that frequently were never said.

These we-thinks-he-doth-protest-too-much quotes proved the biggest indictment of his antics and were ultimately a large cause of his political downfall.

I'm as fiscally conservative as they come!

I've never done anything to benefit myself!

I only vote in the interests of the People!

I'm not a liberal!

All the studies show Northstar is a great project!

I'm for low taxes!

Sounds like another guy who said, I did not have sexual relations with that woman...

In case you think Dan Erhart is yesterday's news, don't forget that Scott Schulte is up for re-election next year.

And while there is little doubt in our mind that Schulte would spank Erhart in a re-match, never underestimate the allure of politics for those who see politics as their identity.

In any case, these sweet words are found in the last paragraph of the official minutes of the December 18th, 2012 county board meeting:

Commissioners Look, Kordiak, Sivarajah, West, and LeDoux; County Attorney Tony Palumbo, and County Administrator Jerry Soma thanked Commissioners Westerberg and Erhart for their years of service and dedication to Anoka County.

Have we seen the last of Erhart?

Stay tuned.

NORTHSTAR HAS FAILED

Pointing out the numerous broken promises of Northstar commuter rail has become almost too easy. Like pointing out the broken promises of Obamacare or pointing out that Mark Dayton doesn't know what's going on in his own administration.

It's like shooting fish in a barrel.

The time has finally come to simply declare the obvious: Northstar rail is a failed social experiment in mass transit.

It hasn't delivered on its promises and won't, not now, not 10 years from now, not 50 years from now.

A recent Star Tribune article noted that the rail line's operating subsidy is around 83%, among the highest in the country for a commuter rail line.

Put another way, Northstar is the shortest midget when it comes to determining the tallest midget in the commuter rail category of the Bad Public Policy Ideas Tournament.

Having said that, it's important to point out and continue to point out, a couple of key points regarding this textbook white elephant.

First, let's stop with all the talk about extending the line to Saint Cloud as some sort of savior for the line.

While liberals work hard to spin a narrative that the line was cut short at Big Lake "because of conservative opponents," that's not at all true.

If conservatives had their way, they would have killed this bad idea before Dan Erhart, Kathy Tingelstad and friends blew hundreds of millions of our hard-earned tax dollars.

The reason the line was not built to Saint Cloud as originally planned is because that proposed line FAILED to meet the Federal Transit Administration's cost-benefit metrics.

Thus, if the line would have gone to Saint Cloud, the state and locals would have paid for it without the federal subsidy.

Yes, Northstar failed to meet even the federal government's low standards regarding value.

The same bureaucracy that has racked up \$17 trillion in debt with profligate, wasteful spending said Northstar was too much of a bad idea.

Yet some people continue to run off at the mouth saying the line needs to run to Saint Cloud.

Do they know what they're talking about? Of course not, but that's never stopped a liberal.

If truth and facts were important to them, they would be without a governing philosophy.

Running the line to Saint Cloud would be helpful just like adding another deck to the Titanic would have helped.

It is clear that here in Minnesota, the next liberal Big Lie is going to be that running Northstar to Saint Cloud will fix it.

What's just as bad, the article noted that unnamed members of the Minnesota congressional delegation are asking the FTA to actually relax the cost-benefit standards to allow the broke federal government to bless the extension to Saint Cloud.

If any Republican is part of this scheme, that Republican should be primaryed.

The other important aspect of the Northstar debacle is to hold elected officials accountable.

The Watchdog has noted many times how ironic it is that you can't seem to find a politician these days who will confess to having supported Northstar rail.

Just a short few years ago, they were tripping over each other at the North Metro Chamber meetings to express support for the debacle, with only a few brave souls in opposition.

Funny, Northstar isn't the topic of conversation anymore. At least not any conversation started by an Anoka County politician.

So who are the legislators who voted for Northstar over on this side of town?

Really, there are only 4 members of the county delegation who were serving in the legislature back in 2004 and 2005, when the issue was raging:

Barb Goodwin
Connie Bernardy
Jim Abeler
Tom Hackbarth

All four consistently voted in favor of Northstar.

[Here](#) and [here](#).

Of course, Bernardy and Goodwin will be lauded for their "vision" regarding Northstar.

It will be interesting to see how the Northstar vote plays out for Abeler and Hackbarth, as Abeler runs for U.S. Senate and Hackbarth runs for re-election with a challenger for the GOP endorsement.

Now that the rail line is a proven boondoggle, it is likely to emerge as an election issue.

Past is future, especially in politics.

GARBAGE RISING

Fridley's pursuit of government-run trash collection is stirring up a lot of opposition and it's not just in Fridley.

Watchdogs across the county are taking notice, especially those who live in government-run trash hauling cities.

The Watchdog has spoken with activists in both Blaine and Circle Pines who are interested in breaking the government-imposed, government-protected racket that denies them the benefits of free market hauling in these cities.

These activists intend to push the issue hard, and if their city councils balk, the ballot box is the next step.

It's time for elected officials at all levels of government to get serious about getting government out of certain corners of our lives.

To say government has become intrusive and overbearing is an understatement of immense proportions.

And so it is with your trash. Is nothing beyond the reach of government?

12/27/13

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: As the last edition of 2013, Harold Hamilton and the entire Watchdog staff want to wish you and yours a joyous and prosperous New Year!

Readers should know that the Watchdog, as usual, will not publish next week. Harold Hamilton and staff will be ringing in 2014 at an undisclosed Caribbean location, enjoying fine cigars, hot dice, and the best rum we can find, out of the reach of U.S. laws, but not the NSA.

Happy 2014, readers! We will be back in two weeks, for our 9th year of journalistic excellence.

In This Issue:

1. 2013 - Top Story.

2013 - TOP STORY

This year proved to be one of the best in recent memory for the taxpayers of Anoka County.

Compared to the other cities and counties that make up the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, Anoka County has turned into a leader with respect to low taxes, governmental innovation, and the idea that government can continue to fulfill its core mission with fewer resources.

Of course, this isn't true at every level. There are certainly many cities in the county that have leadership better suited to Ramsey County thinking (Commissioner Blake Huffman excepted).

These positive stories stand in very stark contrast to the situation facing taxpayers just a few short years ago, when Anoka County was an embarrassment to citizens, spending money like crazy, leveraging debt like deadbeat drunk, handing out contracts to friends, junketeering, pursuing white elephant "mega projects" and otherwise ignoring the unglamorous yet critical work that comprise the core mission of county government.

Of course, the news isn't all positive. The county continues to experience the legacy costs of the previous regime, including debt repayment and the money pit known as Northstar rail, which is nothing short of a disaster, costing county taxpayers millions every year.

Without further ado, here are the nomination for our top story of 2013:

1. Sean Sullivan's Conflict of Interest. Back in March, the Watchdog learned from sources in Ramsey and Oak Grove that Oak Grove city councilman Sean Sullivan had

been offered a job by the City of Ramsey to serve as the leader of their economic development department.

The Watchdog broke the story and was again an opinion leader, asking how the two jobs could avoid a conflict of interest situation.

As an elected official in Oak Grove, Sullivan has the obligation to pursue and economic development opportunities for that city.

As an employee of Ramsey, he would be under a similar obligation.

With the two cities so close geographically, how could he possibly avoid a conflict?

When speaking with a job provider regarding a possible relocation, which hat would he be wearing? Would he be advocating for Oak Grove or Ramsey?

In other words, as a legal agent of each city, he would be under an ethical obligation to use his best efforts to bring opportunities to each - at the same time. Impossible.

In addition, it was revealed by the Watchdog that Sullivan had accepted a campaign contribution from a well-known Anoka County real estate developer, raising questions about the ability of Sullivan to objectively deal with that developer in either city.

Thanks to the Watchdog's work, Sullivan withdrew from the Ramsey job but still holds a similar [position](#) in the City of Isanti, which he held prior to the Ramsey dust up.

2. Anoka County Cuts Levy. 2013 saw the Anoka County Board cut the county property tax levy for a remarkable third consecutive year.

While that feat is certainly worthy of a great deal of public praise, it has at times overshadowed the fact that the county cut the levy - again - without reducing service levels.

Moreover, the county has instituted other reforms and innovations that have led the way in Minnesota, at all levels of government.

Anoka County has set the standard for other governments to follow. It is led by a smoothly functioning board and administered by a capable staff.

The board sets clear and unambiguous policy goals that are executed by Jerry Soma and staff in a professional and competent manner.

Compare that to the debacle we are witnessing at the state level, where we suffer a chief executive who signs legislation he doesn't understand and we get policy failures like the "e-pull tab" stadium scheme, the MnSure Obamacare web site, and a \$90 million office building for legislators.

3. Northstar rail dies. 2013 was the year that demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that Northstar rail is the failure we predicted it to be.

Northstar's administrators have tried every trick in the book to juice some type of success, but nothing has worked.

Big marketing campaigns, reduced fares, free rides to bread and circus events down in Minneapolis. Fail.

Sure, ridership may be up but that's only because the fares were cut, resulting in bigger subsidies to fill the huge operating deficit, among the highest in the country.

We admit that Northstar has some sentimental value for this publication. It was the whole mania surrounding Northstar that gave birth to the Anoka County Watchdog.

With so many opinion leaders seized by the irrational fever surrounding the project and a true lack of critical thinking (It's just the right thing to do!!!), this web site was started to critically examine the project and hold elected officials accountable for all their decisions.

In the meantime, take a walk down memory lane to the time when politicians were stepping over each other to get a photo op with the shiny new train. Photo [gallery](#).

How many of them are still in office? How many of them who are still in office are touting their support of Northstar?

A failed project, plain and simple.

4. Mayors Rising. In addition to the county experiencing success of behalf of the taxpayers, the county has also seen strong leadership from some mayors.

Mark Korin of Oak Grove and Mike Van Kirk of Ham Lake stand out amongst this crowd. These two, like Anoka County, have put conservatives ideas into action in their cities.

Of course, it has to be acknowledged that these mayors are supported by city council members who share their view of limited government.

Drum roll, please.

The biggest story of 2013 is Anoka County cutting its levy for an unprecedented third year in a row.

Here's what we said about the levy cut earlier this month:

THREEPEAT!

Shoot, do we need to pay Pat Riley a [royalty](#)?

In a feat of political strength unmatched by any level of government anywhere, perhaps at any time post-World War II, the Anoka County Board of Commissioners has reduced the net levy by \$2 million.

This is the third year in a row that the board has cut the amount of property taxes it collects from taxpayers, known as the net levy.

It cannot be underestimated what an achievement this is in American governance.

So many elected officials talk a good game. They pay lip service to property taxes and government spending and then turn around and give us all sorts of stories as to why they can't cut taxes and spending.

This crew has delivered once, twice, and now three times.

There is no other politician in this state who can lay claim to this public policy holy grail.

Washington, DC is \$17 trillion in debt and has fashioned a budget that hasn't done jack squat except find a way to repeal \$63 billion in oh-so-modest spending reductions.

Mark Dayton and his band of DFL co-conspirators in Saint Paul raised taxes by over \$2 billion to cover their insatiable desire to spend and grow the government budget at the expense of the family budget.

And here in Anoka County, our commissioners have done the real work of honest, representative government.

They have cut taxes while maintaining and enhancing services.

Board Chairwoman Rhonda Sivarajah said, *"We work on behalf of the taxpayer and it's our mission to dig in and deliver these kinds of savings, while doing the hard work to make sure our services don't suffer. We are continuing to 'right' size County government and make the most of technology to be more effective and efficient."*

Amen. This is our quote of the week, and a front-runner for quote of the year. So how did this get done for the third year in a row?

First, the county has reduced debt payments. Under Dan Erhart, who had [ties](#) to the county's bond underwriters, the county heavily relied on debt to finance capital projects.

Under Sivarajah, the county shifted to relying on cash to fund these projects, saving debt service payments.

The county is saving \$700,000 annually in debt service payments.

Second, technology integration has boosted employee productivity and reduced the use of paper by 27%.

Don't hold your breath, though, waiting for the liberals to give this board credit for such an environmentally friendly cost savings.

Moreover, the Left is sure to trot out the old meme that the county has managed to implement a levy reduction only by cutting government services.

Look for the tired, shop worn bromides about "slash and burn" governance and services "cut to the bone" to be thrown about without underpinning in fact or in reality, for that matter.

You see, the Left can't let Anoka County's success spread.

They have a vested interest in growing government, which is primary mechanism by which these people gain, maintain, and enhance political power.

If word gets out that government can tax and spend less while delivering better results, the scheme begins to collapse.

In any case, a reduction in government service is not the case in Anoka County.

For example, the county has enhanced preventative services in the field of mental health, which is a smart expenditure of taxpayer dollars.

Treating mentally ill people in the emergency room or housing them in the county jail cost far more and is far more ineffective.

And don't forget about the county abolishing the hated "wheelage tax," another Dan Erhart tax increase.

The repeal saves taxpayers \$1.4 million per year.

Finally, we all remember the arrogance, secrecy and lack of transparency under the Good Ol' Boys.

Remember when the public wasn't allowed to speak at board meetings without prior permission and approval of the content of the proposed remarks?

Remember when the board meetings weren't broadcast?

Remember when Dan Erhart didn't publish his county email so there wouldn't be a paper trail of accountability?

Remember all the secret dinners with lobbyists at swanky, upscale steak houses?

That's all gone, replaced by a culture of humility, transparency and a taxpayer-first mentality.

The county's openness has resulted in an award from the nationally-recognized Sunshine Review. The county earned an "A+" rating.

Watchdogs, elections matter and we are enjoying the tasty harvest of elected officials who live by the credo that government is of the people, by the people, for the people.