

1/1/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "If Hillary thinks she can unleash her husband, with his terrible record of women abuse, while playing the women's card on me, she's wrong!"

- Donald Trump

A TOTAL BETRAYAL AND A CIRCUS TO BOOT

Welcome back, Watchdogs. We trust you had a blessed and relaxing Christmas.

We thought there would be some good news to report regarding the Coon Creek Watershed District (CCWD) and their 44% property tax increase.

It was not to be.

After the Watchdog exposed the taxpayer-abusing proposed levy of 44%, irate taxpayers contacted the CCWD and packed the meeting at which the proposed levy was certified.

On a close 3-2 vote, the board of managers certified the levy. But the story doesn't end there.

Recall that the vote to certify the levy broke down this way:

AYE

Byron Westlund

bwestlund@cooncreekwd.org

Phone:

763.427.7500

Scott Bromley

scott@cooncreekwd.org

Phone:

763.754.3820

Nick Phelps

nphelps@cooncreekwd.org

Phone:
218.838.4735

NAY

Warren Hoffman

whoffman@cooncreekwd.org

Phone:
763.434.5729

Clayton Kearns

ckearns@cooncreekwd.org

Phone:
763.205.2022

The story gets interesting after the vote because a number of local opinion leaders, led by Ham Lake Mayor Mike Van Kirk, worked behind the scenes to craft a positive outcome regarding the levy.

Recall that the levy was significantly increased because CCWD is interested in building an office building for themselves. Moreover, CCWD voted to fund the building through the levy even though most of the technical specs and other details for the building don't exist.

Van Kirk and others worked to convince Byron Westlund to call a special meeting of the CCWD to rescind the levy, institute a far more reasonable levy of 2.44%, and create a committee to carefully and thoughtfully consider CCWD's future office needs, which or may not include constructing a building.

Thus, a special meeting of the CCWD was called for December 22nd.

With Westlund committed to rescinding the levy, it should have been an easy 3-2 vote to pass the agenda.

Of course, we've all learned that nothing is easy with this group and the meeting turned into something of a circus.

To start with the easy stuff, board member Warren Hoffman voted for the new levy, maintaining his position against the 44% increase.

Board member Nick Phelps voted against the new levy, maintaining his

position in favor of the massive tax increase.

Board member Scott Bromley was present by speaker phone, which negated his ability to vote from a remote location. Minnesota law provides that remote voting is allowed only when a) the public has notice; and b) the remotely located official is present via video uplink, neither of which was present for the special meeting.

So far, that puts the taxpayers at a 1-1 tie on passing the new levy.

Here's where it gets convoluted.

Board member Clayton Kearns, who had voted against the 44% increase the previous week, FLIPPED his vote and voted against rescinding the levy, thereby keeping it in place.

Just like John Kerry, he voted against the 44% increase before he voted for it.

According to those in attendance, Kearns justified his flip-flopping by claiming that he would not be "intimidated" into voting for the new levy.

That's an interesting way to look at taxpayers getting behind you to support the vote you took.

Intimidated into what, exactly? Consistency? Common sense? Fiscal conservatism?

So now the vote is 2-1 AGAINST rescinding the old levy and adopting the new levy.

Now we get to Westlund, the prime mover behind the special meeting to adopt the new, more reasonable levy.

Simply put, he abstained from voting.

That's right. He didn't even have the courage to cast a vote.

His vote wouldn't have mattered in any case, as even an "aye" vote to adopt the new levy would have failed on a 2-2 tie because of the Clayton Kearns flip-flop.

What an embarrassment for the CCWD in general and both Westlund and

Kearns in particular.

This whole affair has exposed the CCWD as a bunch of amateurs, unaccountable to the taxpayers yet holding the sacred power to tax.

This is the equivalent of giving a bottle of whiskey and car keys to a teenage boy.

And we wonder why our taxes are out of control.

And we wonder why government has grown into a Leviathan, crushing citizens under the weight of its tyranny.

Collectively, the CCWD has told the taxpayers it taxes that a 44% tax increase is acceptable.

Vote the bums out! Oh, yeah...

COMMISSIONER GAMACHE GETS PARTISAN

If you haven't already seen the article, you should visit the web site of the [Anoka County Record](#) and tune into the controversy brewing over the selection of the official county newspaper.

Currently, the Record is the official newspaper of the county but the selection process is once again open.

While you can (and should) read the [details](#) over at the Record, the Watchdog has taken an interest in this issue because of the central role county Commissioner [Mike Gamache](#) is playing in all of this.

Gamache has emerged as a central opponent to the Record being the official newspaper.

And while Gamache has attempted to couch his opposition in a narrative of being angry that the Record published some naughty words third-hand, it's quite obvious his opposition is based on partisanship of the DFL kind.

Readers may recall that Commissioner Gamache is a Democrat. In fact, he has run for partisan office under the DFL banner in the past.

Moreover, it's obvious to anyone following this issue that Gamache is in league with hyper-partisan DFLers [Mel Aanerud](#) of Ham Lake and [Wes](#)

[Volkenant](#) of Andover.

In fact, both Aanerud and Volkenant are quite public with both their partisanship and their desire to [criticize](#) the Anoka County Record.

This is quite a risk for Gamache, who represents a deeply red area of Anoka County.

As the long-time mayor of Andover, Gamache did a good job of masking his partisan leanings by governing in a pragmatic and thoughtful way.

By joining the likes of Aanerud and Volkenant in throwing around their special [brand](#) of liberal monkey poo (visit just about any week's "letter to the editor" section in the Anoka County Union), he risks alienating a vast swath of voters who regularly check the "GOP" box at the polls and then vote for him based on that history of quiet pragmatism.

He should also remember that his win in the county commissioner race was really a junior varsity match up.

Debbie Johnson was a deeply flawed candidate who never impressed a large number of faithful GOP voters in the district (recall Michelle Benson beating an incumbent Debbie Johnson for the GOP endorsement).

If Commissioner Gamache wants to drive his numbers down to those typical of the DFL in central Anoka County, he's doing the right thing.

If he wants to attract a quality GOP opponent (Peggy Scott? Jim Goodrich?), he's doing the right thing.

The legal and political calculus on this seems pretty upside down for the good commissioner on this one.

1/8/16

In This Issue:

Factoid of the Week: For the second consecutive year, dissatisfaction with government edged out the economy as the problem more Americans identified as the nation's top problem in 2015. According to Gallup's monthly measure of the most important problem facing the U.S., an average of 16% of Americans in 2015 mentioned some aspect of government, including President Barack Obama, Congress or political conflict, as the country's chief problem. The economy came in second with 13% mentioning it, while unemployment and immigration tied for third at 8%.

Editor's Note: The Watchdog acknowledges the announcement of Senator Dave Thompson (R-Lakeville) that he will not seek re-election this year. Sen. Thompson has been a strong and consistent voice for small government and individual rights. He will be missed. Good luck, Dave!

SENATE DISTRICT 35 - THE PREDICTION

Here we are Watchdogs, just four days out from the Senate District 35 GOP primary to fill the seat vacated by Branden Petersen.

For all intents, this race will decide who wins the special election next month, because the seat is not only in a GOP area, the DFL candidate couldn't get elected dog catcher.

Having said that, it's an interesting election because both candidates are flawed and carry their own baggage.

Jim Abeler carries the baggage of a voting [record](#) that isn't at all reflective of the fiscal conservatism of Republicans voters in the area.

Abeler's votes in favor big spending as well as his support for Northstar commuter rail have earned him the enmity of many delegates and activists.

In short, they see Abeler as DFL-lite.

(Editor's Note: The Watchdog strongly condemns Abeler's exploitation of the 35W bridge collapse to justify his veto override of a \$6 billion transportation funding bill. It is an established scientific fact that the bridge collapsed because of a faulty engineering design of the gusset plates, which had

nothing to do with funding. Exploiting a deadly tragedy for political gain is nothing short of disgusting).

On the other side is Andy Aplikowski, who gives pause any thinking Republican because of his ill temper and inflammatory, sophomoric blog posts, which he has blamed on sleep apnea, a [Twinkie Defense](#) if we've ever seen one.

Apparently, we're to believe that Aplikowski will magically transform from a shlubby rabble-rouser into eloquent statesman at the flip of a CPAP switch.

Leslie Davis to George Washington in one fell swoop.

The race has predictably attracted third party interests, with the Freedom Club PAC unloading on Abeler and the Good Ol' Boys, who have been kicked out of every corner of Anoka County politics, banding together to attack Aplikowski in an attempt to revive the Good Ol' Boy network.

So how does it all end on January 12th? What's the prediction of the Watchdog and Harold Hamilton?

As always, this publication isn't afraid of fearless prognostication, probably because we're usually spot on.

Prediction: Aplikowski wins in convincing fashion, 65-35%.

Here's why.

The election next Tuesday will be a very low turn-out affair, as it is the only issue on the ballot and the weather is expected to be a chilly high of 14.

It's therefore an intensity election.

Put another way, people who will show up to vote will tend to be the most hardcore GOP voters, who are motivated by candidates who promise advocate for their brand of fiscal and social conservatism.

And no, there won't be some successful plot by the Left to inspire hundreds of local Democrats to cross over to the GOP primary to vote for Abeler. Those schemes don't work and are more urban legend than anything else.

This type of race favors Aplikowski for a number of reasons, which are all related.

First, he has the GOP endorsement, making him the de facto incumbent.

The GOP get-out-the-vote program will be supporting him, and many loyal GOP activists will head to the polls to support their endorsed candidate.

Second, Aplikowski's politics are simply better suited to the district, especially those who will show up and vote next Tuesday.

His strong stance on fiscal and social issues resonate with those most likely to vote in this election.

Abeler, on the other hand, practices a more moderate brand of politics. That may resonate with voters who split tickets or the people who vote for Jim when they show up for the regular November election because they know him from Rotary Club.

Those people will likely not miss their kid's basketball game or their favorite TV show to vote next week.

Finally, Aplikowski is running a very good campaign while Abeler isn't.

In other words, Aplikowski is running a good special election campaign while Abeler is running a good general election campaign.

Aplikowski understands that this is an intensity election and he has smartly focused on throwing out targeted red meat to the people who will most likely be responsive to it and show up to vote for him.

The consistent theme of Aplikowski's mail is all about "no new taxes" and fighting wasteful spending while attacking Big Government programs like MnSure, all big applause lines for conservatives.

Meanwhile, Abeler pumps out vapid drivel focused on his biography (Jim was valedictorian of his high school!) and vague self-congratulatory bromides (Jim is a voice for police and fire!).

This is hardly the stuff needed to fire up moderate voters to come out to voter for him, much less the conservatives who will dominate turn out.

If this is part of a deliberate strategy, this publication disagrees. A "take the high road, above the fray" strategy doesn't work for this type of election and not in this environment.

The people who will show up next week are angry with government and want someone who will fight the Leviathan.

They don't want some mealy-mouthed careerist who promises compromise and back-slapping collaboration with the special interests.

Like or not, that's the dynamic.

If Abeler was to have a shot in this election, he need to do two things which he has failed to do.

One, emphasize his conservative credentials, including support of the Second Amendment and Pro Life causes.

Abeler does have some of these credentials, and he should have pushed them - hard.

Two, frame Aplikowski as unqualified for office, primarily by highlighting the inflammatory blogging history.

With Aplikowski the de facto incumbent, Abeler needed to tell voters why he was a bad choice.

While there has been a late push in this regard by Abeler's allies, it's too little too late.

To be fair, we can see the rationale behind this strategy, although we don't believe it has a chance to work.

Abeler appears to be attempting to draw less intense voters to the polls because he has no faith in his ability to win over conservative voters, no matter how they feel about Aplikowski.

Instead of winning over the current universe of voters, expand that universe by appealing to the things that independents like to hear (compromise, positive campaigning, make government "work").

It's hard to see how you do that in a GOP special election primary in January with no other issues on the ballot.

The hard truth is that the universe of likely voters in this election knows Jim Abeler and they don't like him.

The outcome of the GOP endorsing convention is a pretty good proxy for this argument.

On the first ballots of the endorsement, Abeler had a little less than 1/3rd of the delegate votes.

As candidates dropped out, his vote totals didn't change in any meaningful way.

And when it became apparent he didn't have the votes to win endorsement, that vote total stayed about the same.

These totals tell us that the conservative base knows Abeler well and most of them don't like him.

His support was solid no matter the dynamics. The problem for him is that this hard core support is in the minority.

Put another way, opposition to Abeler among the base is strong and unchangeable.

In short, Abeler's strategy to expand the voter base is both a hail mary pass and all that he has.

We can understand that argument, but relying on this low percentage strategy isn't real viable, either.

In sum, this type of election is wholly unsuited to Abeler's political identity.

Every person who's legally qualified has the right to throw their hat in the ring.

That doesn't mean they should.

1/15/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Just as the government cannot compel political speech or association generally, it cannot mandate political speech or association as a condition of public employment."

- Michael Carvin, attorney for Rebecca Friedrichs, arguing before the Supreme Court

SENATE DISTRICT 35 - THE AFTERMATH

Alright, Watchdogs. Let's get this one on the table. Our prediction in this race was flat out wrong.

We predicted that Andy Aplikowski would win the GOP special election primary this past Tuesday.

So what contributed to Jim Abeler's win?

After all, this is an election Aplikowski should have won. An open seat in a reliable GOP district. The GOP endorsement. Endorsement of numerous GOP office holders. The Freedom Club State PAC in support. A challenger with a voting record out of step with the GOP base in the district. A primary special election in the dead of January with no other races on the ballot.

So what the heck happened?

Three things tilted this race to Abeler.

IT'S ABOUT THE G-O-T-V

For the uninitiated. "GOTV" is an acronym for "Get Out The Vote." While this concept is always a key part of any political campaign, it was especially important in this race, since there were no other races on the ballot to drive turn out.

Simply put, Abeler did a masterful job both expanding the universe of voters in the election and then turning them out to vote.

Since Abeler was well known and not well liked among the universe of GOP primary voters, he had to rely on strategy to turn out people who don't

normally show up to vote in a GOP primary election.

While Abeler certainly has high name recognition in the district, that name recognition doesn't automatically translate into voters with the intensity to show up and vote.

But it happened.

The numbers show that voters who wouldn't normally turn out did so for Jim Abeler.

In short, he beat the turn out model and motivated people who the conventional wisdom would say aren't easily motivated to vote in this type of election.

Put another way, he got the guys from the golf league and Rotary to show up and vote for him on a cold January day.

On the other hand, the Aplikowski campaign, the state GOP, and the Freedom Club all underperformed the turn out model for this district.

According to multiple GOP sources in the district, some of the bread-and-butter GOTV messaging was missing.

For example, these sources reported no contact from Aplikowski or the GOP regarding early voting and absentee voting options.

With a January election, it would be basic GOTV practice to capture supportive voters who would be out of town, especially snow birds heading for warmer climes.

In addition, these same sources reported not receiving a sample ballot just before Election Day.

Again, these are GOP sources who are on the Party's email and mail lists. They received communications regarding the race in general but nothing regarding early voting, absentee voting, or a sample ballot.

A sample ballot would have been key since Abeler, as a challenger, had high name recognition and had been endorsed by the GOP numerous times in the past.

MONEY MATTERS

Money is the mother's milk of politics, it's been said.
And it's true.

Just as with the GOTV game, Abeler whupped Aplikowski on the money game.

In reviewing campaign finance reports, Abeler outraised Aplikowski 5 to 1. Let's repeat that. 5 to 1. Aplikowski reported raising nearly \$9,000 compared to Abeler's roughly \$45,000.

Some will complain that the gap is due to Abeler being bought and paid for by the special interests and thus the fundraising gap isn't a surprise.

Yes, Abeler sucks the knee caps of lobbyists and special interests.

Heck, he's registered lobbyist himself.

So what.

Getting clobbered that badly in the money race is inexcusable.

If you want to be a senator, you've got to find a way to raise money and keep the gap close.

Making excuses for weak fundraising is just that - an excuse.

Because conservatives can't promise to open the public till to be pillaged, they always face fundraising challenges.

Aplikowski is no different. The difference is that he utterly failed to raise the funds necessary to be competitive.

Perhaps this circumstance is a reflection upon Aplikowski not only as a campaign so to speak, but also as a candidate.

The Watchdog in a certain sense views political fundraising as an exercise similar to raising venture capital for a start-up.

A lack of capital can be a signal that the market place isn't thrilled with the company, its leadership, and its business model.

In the political market place, a lack of money is a proxy for a lack of enthusiasm for the candidate.

Which leads to the third observation.

CANDIDATE QUALITY MATTERS

In our estimation, the base would overlook Aplikowski's numerous flaws and choose him over Abeler because Aplikowski was correct on the issues and Abeler was, well, not so correct.

That turned out to be wrong.

Again, the numbers tell the story. Abeler's vote total beat expectations while Aplikowski's fell short of projections.

Senate District 35 is composed of precincts in Anoka, Ramsey, Coon Rapids, and Andover.

Abeler won every precinct in every city except Andover, where he won two of nine.

In fact, Abeler beat Aplikowski by whopping margins in some of those precincts.

The delegates to the Senate District 35 convention chose Aplikowski despite warning signs flashing on just about every front.

Aplikowski was a first-time candidate.

In fact, he had no real accomplishments anywhere on his resume, including the professional realm, the public service realm, or the educational realm.

More troubling, Aplikowski had a long trail of inflammatory, intemperate, ranting blog posts which have been recounted in small part in this publication.

These blog posts were well known to the delegates. In fact, the Candidate Screening Committee offered Aplikowski's candidacy "with reservation."

There were warning signs all over the place that he wasn't the guy to beat Jim Abeler or serve as a state Senator.

While some will don the tinfoil hat and concoct conspiracy theories and cast blame near and wide, the reality is that Andy Aplikowski was a bad candidate.

To be fair, the field of candidates wasn't extremely robust.

This publication could name 5 residents of Senate District 35 who would have likely beaten Abeler and most certainly would have represented the district with honor at the Capitol.

It's unfortunate that none of these people heard the call of their country to step forward and serve.

So who are the winners and losers here?

Jim Abeler is the big winner. He won his showdown with the local GOP and will cruise to a special election victory.

He will then likely serve as long as he wishes. Of course, a quality candidate may challenge him at some point, similar to Michelle Benson ousting Debbie Johnson.

The other big winner is the Good Ol' Boys network in the county.

After suffering a long string of election defeats, they won one here and will have a guy at the Capitol to help feed at the public trough, at least just a little bit.

And the losers?

The GOP is a major loser here. The Party failed to protect the endorsement in a deep red district in a special election.

The state Party takes yet another step into irrelevancy.

This is a black eye for Chairman Keith Downey and his team.

Aplikowski is obviously another loser in this affair. His shot at the brass ring evaporated into the cold January air.

Finally, it will be interesting to see how this race affects the political fortunes of state Rep. Abigail Whelan of Anoka.

A protégé of Abeler, she has been roundly criticized in local GOP circles for supporting Abeler, an unendorsed candidate.

While Whelan sports a solid conservative voting record after her first year in office, it will be interesting to see if she faces an endorsement challenge from the same camp angry with her over the outcome of this race.

Stay tuned!

1/22/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I take the Constitution very seriously, the biggest problems that we're facing right now have to do with George Bush trying to bring more and more power into the executive branch and not go through Congress at all. And that's what I intend to reverse when I'm president of the United States of America."

- Barack Obama (2008)

IRON RANGE UNEMPLOYMENT

With the REAL ID issue behind the legislature and the idea of solving the racial disparities issue with a one-day special session rightly dismissed as fantasy, legislative leaders and the governor have now focused on the issue of holding a special session to extend unemployment benefits to those impacted by the cratering of global iron ore and taconite prices on the Iron Range.

While the thought of calling lawmakers into Saint Paul for a special session a mere 30 days or so before the start of regular 2016 session begs serious consideration, there is a much larger issue to consider that has received little to no attention.

That idea is as follows: there should be no extension of unemployment benefits at all.

At first blush, many readers will incur a gut feeling that the statement is uncaring, unfeeling, and downright mean-spirited.

Politics is indeed emotional, but good public policy is intellectual.

This publication contends that these workers should not receive an extension of benefits and here's why.

Even though the Iron Range is experiencing real and perhaps long-lasting economic pain, many other areas of the state and the country are not.

These areas are in need of workers, especially skilled workers like electricians, heavy equipment operators and diesel mechanics.

In other words, the market place is sending a very clear signal that skilled labor should move from an area where it isn't needed so much (Iron Range) to an area where it is very much needed (Twin Cities, Rochester).

The provision of extended unemployment benefits has the effect of providing an incentive for skilled labor to remain in place and remain idle.

A properly functioning and efficient economy provides for the free flowing of capital of all types, including human capital.

When government interferes in this flow, it does nothing more than create shortages, inefficiencies, and unnecessary price increases.

After all, in any economy, all resources are limited, including human resources.

There are limited amounts of mechanics, electricians, pipe fitters, carpenters, and iron workers.

The new Saint Croix Bridge is a perfect example. The project is now behind schedule and running above budget in large part because of a shortage of skilled construction workers.

Legislators must resist the temptation to engage in good politics and bad public policy.

Yes, there are human faces behind these numbers and real stories of pain and economic dislocation.

Uprooting family, selling the homestead and moving to a new environment is stressful and emotional.

That's all true.

But the reality is that human capital must move freely from areas where it isn't needed (market exit) to areas where it is needed (market entry), in a capitalist economy.

The Watchdog has heard some legislators on both sides of the aisle remark that these workers should remain in place because when the Iron Range comes back, they will be needed there.

We observe that government never, ever, does a better job allocating resources than the market place.
No one knows when the Iron Range will recover or even what job skills will be needed on which amounts in the future.

Generally, government does a rotten job of predicting the future, much less controlling the future.

The one thing for government to do, if it acts at all, is to help dislocated workers get matched with job creators in need of their services.

Having said that, job creators know how to advertise and find employees and have been doing it long before government got in the business of "economic development," "workforce assistance," and "job counselors."

Do the right thing, legislators. Let the market function.

BONDING BUFFOONERY

So this happened. Governor Mark Dayton released his bonding bill [proposal](#) this week, and it was everything we've come to expect from this governor.

It was bloated, expensive, and displayed the disregard for taxpayers that we've come to expect.

Readers will recall that this is called a "bonding bill," because it is a capital works bill financed with government-issued bonds. In other words, the proposed projects are financed with debt that is repaid, with interest, over time.

Clocking in at a whopping \$1.5 Billion, the proposal is chock full of the pork and vote buying antics one would expect from a DFL governor.

Here's a flavor:

\$2.135 million for a snow making machine in Battle Creek park to support tubing and sledding activities.

\$6 million for the city of Bemidji to build a dental center. While the mission of providing dental care to the indigent is commendable, there's no need to house it in a \$9 million (with local match) facility. There are many private and public facilities that could host this project. Moreover, how is this a state-wide issue? Why is the state involved in a local project for Bemidji?

\$1 million to implement passenger rail. Enough said.

\$1.5 million to create more office space for the bureaucracy. No way. That only encourages government to fill the offices with more unneeded bureaucrats.

\$5 million for a new chair lift at the Giants Ridge Ski Area. The new chair lift offers a faster ride up the slopes. Talk about a core function of government. Perhaps the new \$90 million Senate Office Building needs a chair lift to get Senators from their plush new offices down to the underground heating parking.

\$4 million for the Red Wing Town Renaissance Project. The name says it all. State taxpayers footing the bill for a tourist trap in Red Wing.

So many questions are begged by all of this madness.

First, with a \$2 billion surplus, why not pay cash for projects that truly serve a core governmental interest, thereby avoiding interest payments. Most readers don't realize that the state of Minnesota shells out nearly \$1 billion every year for interest payments on existing bonds.

Moreover, the state already has \$8.2 billion in bond principle outstanding. In other words, the state's credit card is getting quite a work out.

Second, the legislature should be asking some hard questions regarding outstanding bonds which have been authorized but not spent or otherwise encumbered. The legislature frequently authorizes bonding and then forgets to follow up to see if the recipients of bonding have followed through.

According to the Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), there is over \$136 [million](#) in authorized bonding that is sitting on the books unencumbered, some of it going back to 1995. Why not cancel these authorizations and either re-purpose them or return the money to the treasury?

With the GOP in charge of the Minnesota House and 3/5th super majority required to issue these bonds, Republicans are clearly in a position to control the process and act as the adults in the room.

CUBA AND CAPITALISM

News reports this week stated that Congressman Tom Emmer has taken a lead role for the House GOP Conference in moving to normalize relations with Cuba.

While the role will no doubt generate controversy, especially for those who look for any reason to bash Emmer, this is the correct public policy.

As many thinkers have observed, most notably Milton Friedman, capitalism and freedom are inextricably linked.

Where there is capitalism, there must be freedom and vice versa.

Exposing the Cuban people to the blessings of capitalism will not only necessarily entail more freedom, it will provide the strongest inducement for them to demand it.

Moreover, the current system of sanctions has been an abject failure. In place for generations, it has done nothing to diminish the power of their totalitarian leaders and has only punished the very people we aim to liberate.

In fact, Cuban sanctions have proven to be about as successful as America's War on Drugs and War on Poverty.

It's about time for a new path regarding Cuba.

Finally, opening the Cuban market will provide benefits for American businesses as they move into the market do what they do best - provide awesome products and services for PROFIT.

Capitalism: It's great thing.

1/29/16

In This Issue:

"The Department of Human Services did not ensure that all of the people enrolled in Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare met the federal and state eligibility requirements for the program in which they were enrolled. As a result, the department paid benefits for ineligible people enrolled in public health care programs.

The Department of Human Services did not ensure that data accurately and securely transferred from MNsure to the state's medical payment system.

As detailed in Appendix A, the Department of Human Services did not resolve 9 of 11 prior findings included in our Oversight of MNsure Eligibility Determinations for Public Health Care Programs report we issued in November 2014."

- Legislative Auditor James Nobles

LET'S ALL ENJOY SOME MORE GOVERNMENT

Another Mark Dayton production implodes. This time, it's MnSure, the state's arm of Obamacare.

While most readers are familiar with the story, it's important to understand the breadth and scope of this failure, as reported in a recently released audit from Legislative Auditor James Nobles.

Failure #1: The Department of Human Services did not ensure that all of the people enrolled in Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare met the federal and state eligibility requirements for the program in which they were enrolled. As a result, the department paid benefits for ineligible people enrolled in public health care programs.

The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) reviewed the MnSure applications of 157 enrollees.

59 of those enrollees were ineligible for the program in which they were enrolled, an error rate of 38%.

What's worse, that's an error rate double the previous year's error rate of 19%.

What's even worse than that, of the 59 enrollees in the wrong program, 44 of

those 59 weren't eligible for ANY public health care program. In other words, they were collecting public benefits for which they weren't eligible.

These errors projected across the spectrum of enrollees cost taxpayers upwards of \$271 million.

Failure #2: The Department of Human Services did not ensure that data accurately and securely transferred from MNsure to the state's medical payment system.

Of course, the chief executive is full of excuses as to why the government can't make their computers engage in basic eligibility verification functions.

A solution to this problem was offered in the last legislative session by Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R - Mazeppa). We'll let his Facebook post describe it. "So, the MN House passed my bill last session, which would have required outsourcing eligibility verification to an analytics firm to eliminate this waste and fraud, similar to what had been done successfully in Illinois (they saved \$300 million by doing so) and one other state. The Democrats in the Senate and Governor Dayton would not accept it, so it did not make it into law. That bill projected a \$300 million savings to the state over 2 years."

Of course, Democrats have a knee jerk reaction against any solution that might impact the jobs of the public sector unions upon which they depend for political support.

Failure #3: As detailed in Appendix A, the Department of Human Services did not resolve 9 of 11 prior findings included in our Oversight of MNsure Eligibility Determinations for Public Health Care Programs report we issued in November 2014.

Read that date once again. November of 2014, over a year ago. In January of 2016, 9 of 11 major deficiencies were still unresolved. In the private sector, people would have been fired or otherwise held accountable. Don't hold your breath in this case.

These are some of the major programmatic failures that were identified in November 2014 that remain unresolved today:

The Department of Human Services did not resolve discrepancies with social security numbers, citizenship or immigration status, or household income that

MNsure identified for further verification. This is a repeat finding.

The Department of Human Services paid Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare benefits for enrollees whose incomes exceeded federal and state program limits. This is a repeat finding.

The Department of Human Services paid health care costs for some ineligible people and paid incorrect costs for others based on the applicants' reported household size and family relationships. This is a repeat finding.

The Department of Human Services did not detect some people enrolled in MinnesotaCare who were eligible for Medical Assistance. This is a repeat finding.

The Department of Human Services inappropriately used federal funds to pay for health care costs for MinnesotaCare enrollees age 65 and older and enrolled one person in MinnesotaCare when she was eligible for Medicare. This is a repeat finding.

The Department of Human Services did not charge premiums for people enrolled in MinnesotaCare. This is a repeat finding.

Let's all enjoy some more government. Indeed.

PEAK OIL - AGAIN!

Peak oil is here again, but it's not what you think. Just a few short years after the world went nuts over "peak oil," the "peak oil" mania is back, but this time in reverse.

As recently as 2008, many bought into the idea that oil PRODUCTION had reached a peak.

Now, the mania centers on the idea that oil DEMAND has reached a peak.

So we can now add peak oil to the doomsday list of things that would end humanity that didn't. You know, overpopulation, global cooling, global warming, acid rain, alar, AIDS, etc.

Let's go back and revisit 2008. That year, the legislature approved a Peak Oil resolution, calling on the governor to prepare a plan of action to deal with peak oil.

This non-sense passed the House 89-5 and 44-13 in the Senate but was vetoed by Governor Pawlenty.

It's pretty amusing to walk down memory lane and consider what our "leaders" and the "experts" were saying about oil just over 5 years ago.

Experts were claiming that world production of 85 million barrels a day was "unsustainable." Lately, the world has been producing 97 million barrels per day.

One energy "expert," Matthew Simmons, laid down a bet of \$5,000 with any taker that the price of a barrel of oil would reach \$200 by the year 2010. News reports from that year stated he "fully expects" to collect on those bets.

In July of 2008, oil prices hit a record of \$145 a barrel. Today, you can buy a barrel for just \$33.

Finally, let's go back to energy expert Matt Simmons once more. In testimony before a House committee, he stated that the world had reached a "tipping point" where demand was outstripping supply. The result, he warned, would be economic disruption and even economic collapse.

That's rich.

Just remember this nonsense the next time you hear someone warning you about global warming.

2/5/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "With great regret, I am announcing today that I will not be able to call a special session of the Legislature to provide for unemployment benefits for thousands of people on the Iron Range."

- Governor Mark Dayton

Fact of the Week: A special session of the legislature may be called by the governor on extraordinary occasions.

- Article III, Section 12 of the Minnesota Constitution

Editor's Commentary: Classic Mark Dayton. The state constitution has conferred upon the governor and governor alone the sole power to call a special session of the legislature. It's been this way since 1858. If he wanted a special session, he should have called it and not whimped out while blaming the Legislature.

A COUNTRY WITHOUT A MAN

Next Tuesday, the voters of Senate District 35 in Anoka County will go to the polls to elect a candidate to fill the unexpired term of Senator Branden Petersen, who resign last October.

For the first time in many years, conservatives in the deeply red district won't have a candidate on the ballot.

With DFLer Roger Johnson on the ballot along with moderate Republican Jim Abeler and Zachary Phelps of the Legal Marijuana Now Party, the race is missing that solid conservative choice that has not been on the ballot in recent years but also won handily.

The endorsed Republican, Andy Aplikowski, was crushed by Abeler in a GOP primary election in early January.

So what's a conservative to do next Tuesday?

Besides searching for an electable conservative to earn the GOP endorsement for the seat this November, the choices aren't all that appealing.

There are five choices available to conservatives.

The first is to stay home. After all, elections are about voting for people who share your principles and values. If you are a fiscal conservative, you're out of luck. None of three espouses the doctrine of fiscal conservatism and all occupy a position on that spectrum that ranges from the far left of profligate spending to the near-left position of keeping a massive and unneeded surplus "in case government needs it."

As Geddy Lee so astutely observed many years ago, "If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice."

Indeed.

So, a conservative could boycott the whole process, "cast" a protest vote, and work hard to get a conservative elected in November.

The second choice would be to engage in a bit of political guerrilla warfare and cast a cross-over vote for Roger Johnson.

The theory here is that some large number of DFL voters crossed over into the GOP ranks in January to boost Abeler to victory, thereby ensuring precisely that no conservative would be on the ballot for the special election general election next week.

The theory goes on to hold that these insurgents will move back into the DFL camp next week to support Johnson.

So, if a large number of Republicans return the favor, that could put Johnson over the top.

But why? An Abeler loss would make him damaged goods, clearing the way for an electable conservative to easily secure the endorsement and cruise past a possible primary challenge to retake the seat on a long-term basis in November.

Moreover, if Johnson were to win, it would only be for one short legislative session. With the DFL firmly in the majority in the Senate, it's not as if Johnson could do much damage beyond which the DFL Senate would already inflict on the state.

Despite being an incumbent, Johnson would almost assuredly lose to a solid

Republican candidate in November in 2016, given his hard core liberalism and conceited demeanor, both of which are a real turn off in this Anoka County district.

Third, one could cast a vote for Abeler. The upside is that it's a pro-life, pro-gun vote.

Jim Abeler is basically a pro-life Democrat. So while he would spend like a drunken sailor, conservatives would get thrown a couple of bones.

This would be a path of ultimate pragmatism for local conservatives.

The downside is that such a vote would be a ratification of the Abeler campaign, which subverted the coveted GOP endorsement and opened the door for interlopers to hijack the local party.

The power of incumbency would definitely help Abeler, as he would no doubt leverage it to once again give the delegates and activists the middle finger by running in a primary in 2016 if he didn't get the endorsement.

The last two choices don't hold as much legitimacy as the first three.

One of those two choices is to vote for Mr. Phelps of the Legal Pot Party.

In looking at his [web site](#), it's obvious that Phelps is essentially a one issue candidate, with that issue being the legalization of Mary Jane.

Look, the Watchdog thinks the War on Drugs has been an abject failure.

But to base an entire campaign for the state Senate on this issue is a bit loony.

On the other hand, if you're a pothead or in the mood for a real protest vote, he could be your guy.

In any case, the election will give law enforcement in the county a pretty good idea of how many regular pot smokers reside in Senate District 35.

Phelps better make sure his campaign doesn't end up like this Simpson's [episode](#).

Lastly, there's the classic American tradition of the write-in candidate.

While there is no organized effort around one person, the good news is that the path is wide open to select the name of your choosing.

One could choose the patriotic route with George Washington or Patrick Henry.

Another genre could be the celebrity route, like Kim Kardashian, Justin Bieber or Elvis.

The snarkier vote could also opt for some of the classics like Richard Fitzwell or Michael Hunt.

It's your vote, conservatives. It just won't count for much.

OH, THE INEQUALITY

The liberals have been braying more than normal this campaign cycle about economic inequality, which means the equal sharing of government-imposed misery.

Authentic socialist Bernie Sanders is putting the Bern on Hillary Clinton, forcing her to become a fake socialist ("I'm a progressive who gets results!").

The liberal mob is frothing and Hillary is running away from her Wall Street friends faster than she's running from the FBI.

How ironic it was to read this news alongside an article noting how well the Vikings are making out selling season tickets in their new taxpayer-financed facility. Of course, this isn't really an NFL stadium. It's a "People's Stadium" that the Vikings just happen to rent out a few times a year. Governor Dayton was compassionate enough to recognize that high school soccer and Pop Warner football teams could no longer play in an aging stadium that lacked 131 suites and hundreds of high definition screens to show the replay of some second grader throwing that sweet post pattern that was flawlessly executed on a double move by his first grade team mate. Power to the people! Maybe the stadium can double as a homeless shelter, starting with the owner's suite.

Recall that the stadium absolutely befuddled our befuddled governor. Weeks after he negotiated the stadium deal and signed it into law, he was awe struck to learn that the deal contained "personal seat licenses," a kind of surcharge that is applied on a one-time basis and is a major component of stadium

financing in nearly every case.

On top of that, Dayton proposed a goofy and unrealistic financing mechanism relying on electronic pull tab revenue to come up with the state's share of the stadium cost.

The scheme was one of the biggest failures in state government history, collecting less than 5% of projected revenues.

To replace those lost revenues, Dayton and the legislature relied on the old playbook of increasing tobacco taxes.

Now recall that tobacco taxes are the most regressive of all taxes, meaning they disproportionately hit the poor harder than any other tax.

In other words, Dayton hammered the poor in order to enhance the wealth of a billionaire NFL team owner.

Never mind that Dayton railed against tobacco taxes as a candidate in 2010 because of its regressive nature.

Keep this in mind the next time Mark Dayton and DFL carp about income inequality and the need for a special session to deal with it.

The DFL made that inequality worse with this tobacco tax scheme and other proposed scheme like a gas tax increase, which is also highly regressive.

Yes, there were Republicans who voted for the stadium scheme, but they're not the ones calling a press conference to demand a special session to fix the very thing made worse by tobacco taxes, gas taxes, and a business climate that drives away entry level and low skill jobs with punitive minimum wages and other regulations that make labor too expensive.

And all this coming from a guy who donates about .0001% of his inherited wealth to charity.

Beam us up, Scotty.

2/12/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "More than one in three (34 percent) of all New Hampshire Democratic primary voters said that honesty was the most important trait in their decision on which candidate to support. Of that bloc, Sanders won 92 percent of their votes as compared to just 6 percent for Clinton."

- Washington Post

YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK (OR NOT)

Governor Dayton, believing that state employees don't have enough paid time off, this week announced a proposal to give every state employee six weeks of paid time off for "parental leave," after the birth or adoption of a child.

Dayton will include \$6 million in his next budget to pay for the benefit, if it becomes law.

This proposal raises an important and regular topic taxpayers should be watching, that of paid time off for state bureaucrats.

Paying people to be away from work is dead money, with no productivity return whatsoever.

So let's take a gander at the paid time off benefits for state employees, so taxpayers can understand what they're paying for and compare it to what they earn at their own jobs (which pay those taxes so those bureaucrats can enjoy those benefits).

The Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) is one of the many groups of unionized employees in the state work force.

A MAPE employee at the top of the pay scale earns just under \$85,000 per year, which is \$25,000 higher than the median HOUSEHOLD income in the state.

Under the current collective bargaining agreement, here's what a senior MAPE employee is entitled to with respect to paid time off (represented in hours):

Holiday Pay: 88 hours per year;

Vacation Pay: 234 hours per year;

Sick Leave: 104 hours per year.

That's a total of 426 hours of paid time off in a year. Using the standard American work year of 2080 hours, that number equates to over 20% of the work year.

Put another way, if a MAPE employee took advantage of every hour of earned time off in a year, that employee could be paid to stay away from the office one day a week for the entire year.

Note that this number does NOT include the other 14 circumstances of paid time off that a state employee under the MAPE contract may use, including time off for blood donation, voting, attending class for "education," and time off to participate in labor-management activities on behalf of the union.

Now, let's throw in the governor's proposal for another six weeks of paid time off, over and above what was calculated above.

An additional six weeks equates to 240 hours.

Those benefits, if used along with all the others, equates to 666 hours of paid time off in a year (no comment on that total number).

666 hours equates to 32% of the work year.

In other words, if the governor's proposal becomes law, some state workers would be entitled to be paid to be away from work for nearly 1/3rd of the work year!

Imagine that. A state job that pays \$85,000 per year, Cadillac health care and retirement benefits, and the possibility of paid time off for nearly 1/3rd of the work year.

That's outrageous, plain and simple.

When those who work for government live considerably better than those who fund government, we have a serious problem.

Again, consider that the median household in Minnesota brings in about \$60,000 per year. With a senior MAPE member making \$85,000, that means that the state employee is making about 40% more than the median household.

All of this raises a simple question: what's fair?

Think about it.

SPECIAL ELECTION UPDATE

Tuesday night was interesting in the world of politics and not just because voters in New Hampshire were exercising their excessive and outsize influence on the presidential campaign.

Right here in the Metro area, two special elections were held, one for the Senate and one for the House.

In the north Metro, a special election was held to replace Sen. Branden Petersen, who resigned last October.

The district has a high GOP index and it was therefore not surprising that former House member and current lobbyist Jim Abeler cruised to an easy victory.

The margin of victory was unsurprising for other reasons as well, including the fact that a number of Democrats and liberal special interests got behind Abeler and his politics of appeasement.

Heck, even the endorsed DFLer for the seat praised Abeler, and this was long BEFORE Election Day.

Last October, Abeler's opponent, Roger Johnson, was effusive in his praise of Abeler. All Johnson could say in defense of his own campaign and in criticism of Abeler was that Jim should run instead for the county board, which would be a better fit for his lifestyle.

Well, if that's the best you can say about yourself and the worst you can say about your opponent, you're doomed.

Moreover, much of the liberal and DFL base was in Abeler's camp to begin with, including the endorsement of Education Minnesota, the teachers' union. When the teacher's union is satisfied that Abeler will do their bidding, it's hard to convince other liberals to vote DFL.

That's especially true when many of the local DFL opinion leaders are in your camp as well.

It has been rather amusing through all of this to watch nervous Republicans who supported Abeler proclaim that they will "hold Jim accountable" for his votes and help keep him on the conservative path in Saint Paul.

Good luck with all that.

Abeler has a long and demonstrated record of voting against the conservative position again and again.

There is no reason to change that. Abeler went up against the conservative base in Senate District 35 and he won. There's no reason to tack back to the right, especially when there are a number of liberal special interests that will now be seeking some return on their investment.

Education Minnesota doesn't help you get elected and then just walk away.

Do you really think they're in it for the children?

Yes, Abeler will be a reliable vote on Second Amendment and Life issues. After that, don't hold your breath, conservatives.

What has transpired in Senate District 35 since last fall has been nothing short of a total debacle.

Frankly, it's an embarrassment for Republican Party and Chairman Keith Downey would be well advised to conduct a thorough and unflinching autopsy so these mistakes aren't again repeated.

On a very positive note, House Republicans, under Speaker Kurt Daudt's leadership, won a stunning upset victory in House District 50B.

Republican Chad Anderson won over DFLer Andrew Carlson in a Democrat leaning district (Obama carried the district by 15 points in 2012) that had been held by DFLer Ann Lenczewski, who had held the seat since 1998 but decided earlier this year to not walk but sprint through the revolving door to become a lobbyist.

The House GOP campaign team used new, highly developed techniques to craft messaging and then deliver that messaging to specially targeted demographic segments to drive turn out.

That sophisticated campaign planning and execution led to victory in a tough environment for the GOP.

Just imagine what that template will do this November in districts that lean GOP.

Recall that it has been 14 years since the House GOP flipped a seat in a special election.

It also helped the GOP that the DFL endorsed candidate was a member of the Bloomington City Council and took a number of dumb votes, including one in favor of the city taking over trash hauling.

Certainly, trash hauling has become a Third Rail of local politics, frying up those who dare to touch it.

Looking ahead, Daudt and his team have reason to be very optimistic in their quest to retain a majority in the Minnesota House to act as a check against Mark Dayton's liberalism (see story above).

Most of the seats Republicans won in 2014 to retake the majority we in districts carried by Mitt Romney in 2012 and are situated in rural Minnesota. If Democrats think Bernie Sanders or the newly minted Progressive Hillary will motivate voters out where people still "bitterly cling to their guns and religion," (Obama's words) think again.

Moreover, 9 House races in the Metro were decided by fewer than 660 votes or fewer in 2014. The GOP will be strongly competitive in both rural Minnesota and the Metro.

We leave you on this high note for the week, loyal readers.

[HRCC Bloomington ad.](#)

2/19/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "There is no difference between communism and socialism, except in the means of achieving the same ultimate end: communism proposes to enslave men by force, socialism - by vote. It is merely the difference between murder and suicide."

- Ayn Rand

Quote of the Week: "We should reverse the presumption of confirmation [for justices]. The Supreme Court is dangerously out of balance. We cannot afford to see Justice [John Paul] Stevens replaced by another [John] Roberts, or Justice [Ruth Bader] Ginsburg by another [Samuel] Alito. Given the track record of this president and the experience of obfuscation at the hearings, with respect to the Supreme Court, at least, I will recommend to my colleagues that we should not confirm a Supreme Court nominee except in extraordinary circumstances."

- Sen. Schumer (D-NY) (2007), with 19 months remaining in the Bush presidency

Quote of the Week: "I will be supporting the filibuster because I think Judge Alito, in fact, is somebody who is contrary to core American values, not just liberal values."

- Senator Obama (2006)

Editor's Note: The race for the GOP presidential nomination is close and heated. It's been interesting to monitor the fight among our loyal readers. To that end, Harold Hamilton is conducting a very unscientific poll. Who are you supporting? Send an email to harold@anokacountywatchdog.com. All responses are confidential.

ENSLAVEMENT BY VOTE

Many of our loyal readers consider themselves to be a Democrat. We have a bulletin for those readers: The DFL you once knew, the party of John F. Kennedy Hubert Humphrey, is dead.

Deader than a door nail.

The party, once led by men who no doubt believed in the role of government, was also a party that on the whole supported free enterprise, tax cuts, a vigorous national defense, and a love of country.

In short, the party at its core had a respect for the American ideals of liberty, individualism, and patriotism.

That party has now become a party of group identity politics, group entitlement, government control, global economic and military weakness, and a grievance mentality that blames America for all that ails the world.

Worst of all, the party is now one that outright rejects free enterprise and capitalism in favor of a full embrace of socialism.

This development really isn't surprising. In fact, it's the logical outcome of the liberal ideology.

When one doesn't subscribe to the bedrock American principles of liberty, individualism, and equality, one must logically abandon capitalism and embrace socialism.

The reason is because capitalism is inextricably intertwined with liberty, individualism and equality.

In other words, you can't have big government, interventionist government, and group identity politics alongside capitalism.

Capitalism breeds freedom. Socialism breeds state control.

What we are seeing is merely liberal economic policy catching up to liberal social policy.

Socialism is also attractive because there is an entire generation of Americans who have grown up without the specter of Cold War communism/socialism staring them in the face.

It has been 27 years since communism collapsed under its own weight, and totalitarian government has been relegated to remote corners of the world like

North Korea, while European-style socialism is an ocean away.

Having said all that, there is a stark reminder for all of us regarding exactly what socialism means to our collective freedom and prosperity.

Venezuela has recently adopted radical socialist economic policies under the strongman rule of Nicolas Maduro.

Citizens of the stricken country are experiencing the full-on "benefits" of the shared misery of socialism, including:

- Infants dying in hospitals for a lack of medicine and respirators;
- A rationing of basic utilities like electricity and water;
- Long lines to secure basic staples like rice, beans, and toilet paper;
- Rampant inflation of 700%;
- Economic contraction of double digits.

The steady elimination of economic freedom has been match by a proportionate erosion of individual freedom and the rule of law.

Just last week, the country's supreme court, packed with Maduro supporters, granted the president sweeping powers to nationalize private resources and unilaterally manipulate the country's currency.

It isn't too hard to see that the country is now in a death spiral of increasing command and control economic policy as well as increasing police powers for the central government.

Just as the logical outcome of liberalism is socialism, the logical outcome of socialism is totalitarianism.

That is what the Democrats are offering the American people in 2016.

ASSISTING THE POOR

This week, Pope Francis waded into the American presidential debate, standing at the U.S. - Mexican border to both decry the idea of a border wall and call for society to care for immigrants.

We will leave it to the water cooler debates to decide the wisdom and appropriateness of the Pontiff speaking directly to American politics.

While it garnered less attention, the Watchdog staff was struck by the irony of his call to care for immigrants, who are among the broader group of those the Pope has often said are in dire need of assistance.

The call is ironic because the Pope has demonstrated his rhetorical penchant for simultaneously calling for charity while harshly criticizing capitalism.

The irony is that capitalism is by far the best tool to deliver assistance to the poor and downtrodden.

Every government welfare program and every charitable organization are funded by wealth created by the capitalist system.

Whether in the form of voluntary, private charitable giving or through the force of the IRS, capitalism is the mechanism by which charity and government aid flow.

Which country engages in more charitable works? America or Haiti? Canada or Cuba? Germany or North Korea?

Capitalism is the cure for human misery, not the cause.

NORTHSTAR RAIL - AGAIN

Northstar commuter rail is a zombie project. It just won't go away.

Periodically, the dumb idea of doubling down on this failed project is raised by folks who want to extend the rail line to Saint Cloud.

Stop it. It's a bad idea. It won't work. Never has, never will.

Long ago, the federal government quashed the idea, saying the ridership didn't justify running the line to Saint Cloud.

In 2010, the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA), the joint

powers board that oversees the line, also concluded that the feds were unlikely to say that the metrics supported the extension.

If that's not enough, consider these additional undeniable facts.

Taxpayers were promised that Northstar would take 5,000 cars off the road each rush hour, each work day.

Today, about 2,500 commuters ride the line each day. Unless people have figured out how to drive two cars at once, the math isn't working out.

Northstar is heavily subsidized. In fact, only 17% of the cost of a ride on the train is paid by fares. The remainder is an outright operating subsidy paid by the tax payers.

By comparison, the Hiawatha light rail line has a fare box recovery of 37%.

At last week's Lincoln-Reagan Dinner, House Speaker Kurt Daudt declared that House Republicans would not fund the Southwest Light Rail line.

Mr. Speaker, please do the same regarding Northstar.

2/26/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Senator, you are forming a mob of angry, misinformed people and then turning it on the likely Democratic nominee. That, Senator, is a dangerous and destructive game."

- Larry Womack

Editor's Note: Next Tuesday night, March 1st, is precinct caucus night. Visit mngop.com to find your caucus location.

FAREWELL, REP. SANDERS

The Watchdog staff was disappointed to learn yesterday that Rep. Tim Sanders of Blaine announced that he will not seek re-election to the Minnesota House of Representatives this November.

Sanders represented his district, Anoka County, and the GOP with skill and honor. He possessed that all-too-rare combination of conservative credentials, universal respect, and the ability to find solutions to tough problems.

People might also forget that Blaine was and remains something of a swing area, with a DFL senator currently serving.

Sanders took care of business in the district, making sure that the GOP didn't have to expend resources to assist him in securing re-election.

He was a leader in his caucus, a committee chairman, and an all-around good guy.

And like any talented young professional, the strains of giving up 20 to 80 hours per week for a "part time" political gig can get to be too much.

Good luck, Tim Sanders. We salute your service to the people of Minnesota.

Regarding the future, look for Nolan West, a staffer to Sanders, to declare for the seat and be the odds on favorite to garner the GOP endorsement.

POLL RESULTS

Alright, Watchdogs. It's time to reveal the results of the 2016 Watchdog straw poll, our highly unscientific yet insightful look at who our readership would choose for the GOP nomination among the remaining candidates.

Drumroll, please.

The overwhelming winner is Ted Cruz.

Cruz: 43%

Trump: 24%

Rubio: 24%

Kasich: 6%

Undecided: 3%

Carson: 0%

The comments that accompanied the voting were fairly typical of what pollsters and pundits have been reporting throughout the election cycle.

Cruz supporters maintain that he is not only the most conservative candidate, he's the only one who can be trusted to follow through on campaign pledges to govern as a conservative.

Critics claim that Cruz is simply un-electable in a presidential general election.

Trump supporters like him because he isn't a politician. Supporters told us they don't trust politicians of any stripe so they like the Donald.

Critics are wary because they think he hasn't proven his conservative credentials and can't be trusted to govern that way should he be elected.

Will the Watchdog straw poll predict the GOP nominee? Stay tuned.

BETTER CALL SAUL

Saul Alinski, that is. It is with no small amount of smug satisfaction that we at the Watchdog have watched socialist Bernie Sanders use Alinski's "Rule for

Radicals" against Hillary Clinton.

For years, liberals have effectively used the Rules against Republicans to smear them, trash them, and destroy them.

Now, for the first time in a major campaign, the Rules have been turned inward for a heapin' helpin' of Democrat on Democrat violence.

After she and her sleazy husband used the Rules against political opponents and Bill's victims, Hillary is now crying foul because she's on the receiving end.

Emblematic of this indignation is the "quote of the week" above. The quote comes from a piece written by a self-described liberal "lay about" named Larry Womack, who obviously has lots of time to write missives about how unfair and mean Bernie is being to Hillary.

Kick back, relax, and get a good laugh out of the whining this guy does on behalf of Hillary:

"The problem is that you're talking to people who sense that something is wrong, are angry about it and want to know where to place the blame. You are giving them a cabal of boogeyman bankers, corporations and allegedly bought politicians to bear the brunt of that resentment. You're doing this through a fair degree of dishonesty, and the response of your supporters and campaign to any kind of reality check has thus far been to impugn the motives of impartial observers.

Bernie -- do you mind if I call you Bernie? That's bullshit, Bernie.

Senator, you are forming a mob of angry, misinformed people and then turning it on the likely Democratic nominee. That, Senator, is a dangerous and destructive game."

###

Aw, poor Hillary.

NO BAILOUT!

The infamous Teamsters union is making a ruckus these days about a massive taxpayer bailout of their bankrupt pension system.

No way.

Those pension promises are a private contract between the Teamster's employer "partners" and the union.

If there is an alleged breach of that contract, the remedy for the Teamsters is to sue in a court of law, not seek money from the equally bankrupt federal government to put taxpayers on the hook for billions in bailout money for a problem that the government did not cause and had no hand in fashioning in the first place.

When a contract goes bad for regular people, the government doesn't step in and make up the difference.

When a person's 401(k) dips, the government doesn't offer a bailout.

And let's knock off the talk about "Wall Street got a bailout, so should we."

Uh, no. Wall Street shouldn't have gotten one either. Let's stop treating the government like a really bad bank that hands out money to every Whimpey who promises to pay us all Tuesday for a hamburger (or filet mignon) today.

Union fat cats got together with weak management to assemble irresponsible collective bargaining agreements with unrealistic, fairy tale pensions underpinned by pie-in-the-sky assumptions.

That's indeed a problem, but it's not a taxpayer problem.

And by the way, we didn't even get into the questions about how those pension funds were managed in the first place.

Have they been audited? How well did the fund's investments fare? Were best practices followed?

Again, those questions are really irrelevant because this is a private matter between two sophisticated parties who negotiated an arms-length contract free of force or fraud.

Take it to court, not Washington.

3/4/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Instead of worrying about how much money we're taking out of their pockets, let's put some money back in their pockets. That's going to help this economy."

- House Speaker Kurt Daudt reacting to news that the state's projected budget surplus has decreased by \$300 million

BROADBAND BLOAT

Hey, Watchdogs. Another week, another bloated, Big Government program.

While there has been a lot of attention focused on the state budget surplus and the issues of taxes, transportation, and bonding, taxpayers need to take a moment to focus on the issues of [broadband](#) grants, a burgeoning area of governmental bloat.

If you weren't paying attention, the legislature slipped a \$10.5 million appropriation into the 2015 special session for these grants.

The purpose of the program is to bridge the "digital divide" by hooking up rural homes and businesses with Internet.

This happens through the program offering rich subsidies to for-profits telecoms like Centurylink to hook up rural customers who otherwise wouldn't get broadband because it wouldn't make financial sense for the telecom to do it.

The program is poor public policy for a number of reasons.

First, it's a government subsidy program that uses taxpayer dollars to add to various telecom's customer base.

When XYZ Telecom uses the program to hook up Joe Farmer, Joe Famer is now a customer of XYZ, using XYZ's network.

How nice that government is helping finance the build out of private infrastructure.

Of course, there may be situations where government has decided to be in

the communications business, but the point remains that this is often a subsidy and a sop to for-profit telecoms

This is unlike transportation infrastructure, where there is public ownership. For example, when government hires a private company to build a highway bridge, the public owns it.

Not true for private telecommunications infrastructure.

Second, the grant process lacks competition, which drives up costs. While there is competition to get a grant in that there are more requests than funding available, the grant process does not require that cost-effectiveness be considered in awarding a grant.

Third, as you might suspect, government is encouraging, through subsidy, the build out of increasingly obsolete technology. Delivering broadband through wires buried in the ground isn't the only way to deliver the service and certainly isn't the latest technology.

This is similar to government spending billions on updated street cars and trains, the mass transit of the 19th Century.

If you're looking for some evidence of the massive scale of these subsidies, consider these statistics, which can be found on the state's own [web site](#):

Blue Earth Valley Telephone received \$142,690 to hook up 30 farm houses near Winnebago, MN with Internet. That's a subsidy of \$4,756 per household and represents 38% of the total cost, with the telecom paying the remainder.

Federated Telephone Cooperative received \$4,950,000 in subsidies to hook up 600 homes, 425 businesses (presumably private, for-profit), and 75 "community institutions" in Swift County. That's a subsidy of \$4,500 per address and amounts to 40% of the project's total cost of \$12,484,095.

And that's not all. The remaining 60% of the project's cost will be covered by taxpayers in the form of a loan from Swift County to Federated Telephone. Terms of the loan were not disclosed.

According to data compiled by realtor.com, the average price of homes sold in the county in the past year was \$67,500. That makes for a state subsidy equal to about 6.75% of the sale price of the average home in the county. For

Internet.

New Ulm Telecom took home a grant of \$115,934 to connect 24 addresses in rural Goodhue County, making for a subsidy of \$4,831 each. The grant amount represents a 47% government subsidy, with New Ulm Telecom picking up the rest.

Now consider that Governor Dayton is asking the legislature to appropriate \$100 MILLION for these kinds of grants.

And even though \$100 million can buy a lot of votes in rural Minnesota in a critical election year, the legislature would be well advised to deep six this request.

There are legitimate and pressing needs in rural Minnesota, such as aging public facilities like water treatment plants, deteriorating roads and bridges, and water quality issues.

Hooking up farm houses to the Internet at an outrageous subsidy isn't a core function of government - period.

GOVERNMENT UNION'S EPIC FAIL

The biggest news in Minnesota politics this week wasn't the results of precinct caucuses.

The biggest news was the overwhelming and stunning rejection of union representation in an election that was rigged in favor of the union by Governor Dayton and DFL cronies.

To understand what happened, a little background is in order.

In 2013, when the DFL ran the Capitol, they passed legislation paving the way for an election to organize child care providers.

This legislation was pushed by AFSCME, America's largest public employee union.

Never mind the fact that child care providers aren't government employees. To the contrary, they are independent small business owners.

The fig leaf the government used to deem these business owners

"government employees" was the fact that they receive government payments, called Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) payments, to subsidize the cost of certain children in their care.

Oh, it gets worse.

In determining which business owners received CCAP payments, and were thus eligible to vote in the union election, was limited to only those providers who received a CCAP payment in December of 2015.

The problem with such a definition is that some providers don't bill monthly and thus didn't get a CACP payment in December of 2015.

In some cases, government was to blame. For example, Wright County delayed some payments in 2015, and didn't send out a single payment in December, thus making every provider who took a CCAP payment that year ineligible.

The upshot was that less than half of child care providers registered with the CCAP program in 2015 were sent a ballot.

This was all by design, as the purpose was clearly to rig the election in favor of the union, thereby making for more AFSCME members and therefore more campaign contributions to Democrats.

The whole affair was reminiscent of what happens in banana republics like Cuba and not the democratic ideals enshrined in Minnesota's constitution and usually observed and celebrated by citizens of all political viewpoints.

Heck, even the Star Tribune editorial board called the situation "[troubling](#)."

In the end, none of it mattered, as the small universe of eligible voters overwhelmingly rejected these slimy tactics and voted 1014 to 392 AGAINST union representation.

Chalk up a rare victory to the good guys on this one!

By the same token, all concerned Minnesotans must call out Governor Dayton, the DFL, and AFSCME for their shameful, embarrassing tactics that sullied our democratic institutions.

The fact that they failed is immaterial in this regard. Mark Dayton took an oath to uphold our constitution and see that the rule of law is faithfully executed.

The man is an embarrassment to the state and the most hyper-partisan Minnesota governor of the modern era.

He has spent his time as chief executive doing the bidding of liberal special interest groups at the expense of the greater public good.

Shame on you Mark Dayton, although the emotion is clearly lost on you.

TRUMP ROLLS ON

As readers all know, Minnesota delivered Marco Rubio's sole victory thus far in the presidential race.

For him, the battle now moves to Florida, for a do-or-die showdown with Donald Trump, who is pounding Rubio in the polls and will very likely take the Sunshine State.

It is now apparent that Donald Trump is the prohibitive favorite to win the GOP nomination for president.

Trump racked up impressive, broad-based victories Tuesday night.

Many of the GOP faithful are still in denial, hoping that a too-little-too-late strategy is enough to change the tide surging in favor of the Trump campaign.

We don't see it happening.

Because Trump is disliked and even despised by the Establishment, there is a bit delusion regarding a different path for the party.

It very likely won't happen.

Sure, Rubio could win Florida and Kasich could win Ohio.

Sure, Trump could be denied enough delegates to win a majority heading into the convention, leading to a brokered convention.

Sure, all of Trump's opponents could coalesce at the convention to boost one of them over Trump for the nomination.

Not likely.

Trump has defied every tenet of political conventional wisdom and has blown past every "checkpoint" designed to slow him down.

Clearly, the rules of the presidential game don't apply to him.

Political scientists and commentators will dissect and analyze the "Trump Phenomenon" for years to come.

In the immediate future, the task for GOP rank and file activists is to contemplate a world where the choice is between Trump and Clinton.

3/11/16

In This Issue:

"Oh, for goodness, it's not going to happen. I'm not even answering that question. I'm not concerned about; I'm not worried about it, and no Democrat or American should be, either."

-Hillary Clinton speaking to the possibility of being indicted regarding her email server

Editor's Note: We at the Watchdog aren't worried about, but we think she should be. She doth protest too much.

PROTECTIONIST PABLUM

Truth has been a casualty of political campaigns ever since there's been political campaigns.

Bogeymen, straw men and other villains have been used to justify ridiculous campaign promises for centuries.

One popular bogeyman is the "Free Trade" monster. In this myth, free trade is blamed for a host of economic ills, including jobs that have moved on a one-to-one basis to foreign countries.

This myth has sold well, especially in Michigan, where the local auto industry is a shell of its former self.

It was not a big surprise, therefore, to see the two biggest purveyors of this myth, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, win their respective primaries there.

In fact, exit polling in both the GOP and Democrat primaries in Michigan showed that a majority of voters in both parties believe that free trade is bad for American jobs.

While auto industry in Michigan has declined, the auto industry as a whole is healthy. Moreover, what happened in Michigan has many causes, of which free trade is NOT one of them.

Specifically, the protectionists blame the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The decline of Detroit predates NAFTA.

Going back to the 1970s, Japan recognized that American consumers were interested in smaller, more fuel efficient cars, which they built at a competitive price with high quality. American consumers responded by shifting loyalties to Japanese automotive products.

In the 1980s, quality suffered as smothering union workplace rules raised costs and protected employees who had little interest in quality. Moreover, drug use was often a part of the workplace scene.

And all those jobs that moved overseas? Yeah, some of them. Many others moved to far off places like Kentucky and Tennessee, which weren't burdened by union rules that hindered productivity and efficiency gains while jacking up costs. In fact, many foreign car makers moved production plants to the U.S., including luxury brands like Mercedes and BMW.

More importantly, many of these jobs didn't move - they went away. Compared to 20 years ago, it takes 1/3rd the man hours to build the average car. Advances in technology simply made many production line jobs obsolete.

And what about those jobs that move outside the United States, to places like Mexico?

The reality is that many of the costs car makers seek to reduce are government imposed, and would provide an incentive to remain in the U.S. if those barriers were removed.

For example, Mexico has free trade agreements with 45 countries, while the U.S. has them with 20.

Thus, making a car in Mexico is often cheaper because tariffs can be avoided, reducing the cost of a car by thousands of dollars.

The bottom line is that free trade is an inaccurate and unfortunate target for political rhetoric.

Free trade creates jobs for Americans and thousands of them. Take agriculture, for example. We grow far more commodities than we can eat. Where do you suppose farmers send the rest?

Free trade also benefits consumers by giving them access to a wider range of goods at a competitive price.

If we took the Trump/Sanders argument to its logical extreme, a lot of shelves at a lot stores would be completely bare if imports were banned or severely restricted.

DAYTON VS. DAYTON

Last night in his State of the State address, Governor Dayton renewed his call for increasing the gas tax in Minnesota.

If you're confused about where Mark Dayton stands on the gas tax, that confusion would be understandable.

Even for a man who often doesn't know where he stands regarding his gubernatorial agenda (e.g. farm equipment repair tax, personal seat licenses for a football stadium), this one has been a real doozy.

Back in 2010, Dayton opposed raising the gas tax, correctly noting that it is a progressive tax that hurts the middle class.

He continued to oppose a gas tax increase, even after the DFL took over the House and Senate in 2012.

"I don't support a gas tax. I don't think the people of Minnesota are prepared to support it and that's the critical consideration," Dayton said in early 2013.

Fast forward to early 2015. Dayton proposes a gas tax increase, stating, "No one wants to pay more taxes. But conditions and congestion will keep getting worse until we do something about it."

Stay with us.

Then, late that same year, he declared the gas tax "dead," given large state budget surplus.

Hold on.

Then, in early 2016, just weeks later, he declared the gas tax back on the table.

Noting that his earlier pronouncement was merely an "assessment," he blithely went on to declare, "There are second lives with legislative proposals."

So, the gas tax is back on the table even though the state has a significant budget surplus (the reason the tax was "dead" in late 2015) and the people of the state don't support it (the reason he opposed it back in 2013).

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is your chief executive's leadership summed up in one simple issue.

THE ZOMBIE TRAIN

Those misguided souls who were interested in seeing Northstar rail extended to Saint Cloud got some bad news this week as the media was filled with accounts of a press conference held by a bunch of far Left interest groups who demanded just that.

In a GOP-controlled House, rail is never popular. When it's demanded by the Bernie Sanders crowd, that's a Judas kiss.

The gimme-gimme-gimme philosophy of this crowd was encapsulated by Richard "Dick" Gordon, a student at Saint Cloud State. "[W]e feel we deserve the option to not own a car. I've never owned a car and I don't plan to, so I need this train," he told the Saint Cloud Times.

As we all know, the needs and perceived entitlements of this crowd take precedent.

As taxpayers, let us hop right to it, Dick.

As if Republicans in the legislature needed any more reason to oppose the Northstar extension, check out these stellar numbers comparing 2010 to 2014.

Between 2010 and 2014, fare box collections actually fell on Northstar.

Between those years, ridership numbers have barely crept up.

During that same time, ridership subsidies have remained fairly constant, at roughly \$22 per rider, per trip. That \$44 per rider per round trip. So, for example, a person living in Coon Rapids but working in downtown Minneapolis costs taxpayers \$44 to ride Northstar.

If that person works a normal schedule of 260 days in a year, the taxpayer

subsidy is a whopping \$11,440.

The last thing the taxpayers need is a \$150 million tab to extend this white elephant to Saint Cloud.

3/18/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We're going to put a lot of coal companies and coal miners out of business."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

Quote of the Week: "Holding the line on property taxes keeps more money in the pocket of business owners, money that can be spent to improve and expand their businesses."

- Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West

HOLD THE LINE

Love isn't always on time... Now that you have that pop hit from Toto in your head, we can get to the business at hand. That business being both pro-business and pro-taxpayer.

We're talking about the commitment of the Anoka County board to put family budgets and business budgets ahead of the government budget.

This is timely because election season is upon us, and the results this fall will matter greatly as to whether Anoka County will stay the course in this regard or revert to old days of the Good Old Boys and their free spending, government-first ways.

There are critical elections at the board level this fall and you can bet that the Old Guard, Dan Erhart and his cronies, will be back, trying to undo the reforms, transparency, and right-sizing that has happened over the past 6 years.

Make no mistake, while these guys won't have their name on the ballot, they will be there, lurking in the shadows.

To emphasize the maxim that "elections matter," let's take a small trip down memory lane and compare county property tax levies from a period of time immediately before Dan Erhart got kicked off the county board to the time after.

Consider the period from 2000 until 2010, the year Erhart was given his political walking papers.

In 2000, the county tax levy was \$63,188,892.

By 2010, the levy had ballooned to \$122,175,524, nearly doubling in that time.

The average levy increase over that period of time was 6.27% each year.

Beginning in 2011, real fiscal reform kicked in. The levy increase/decrease (yes decrease!) each year:

2011: 3%

2012: -5%

2013: -1%

2014: -.03%

2015: .89%

2016: 2.49%

That's an average levy increase of .225% each year. In fact, the total 2016 tax levy is just slightly greater than the total tax levy of 2010.

Impressive, to say the least.

Under the leadership of Chairwoman Sivarajah, the county board has delivered on its promises to repair the damage done by Erhart and company while putting the taxpayer first.

Elected officials delivering on their campaign promises is a rare thing these days.

Well done.

ZOMBIE POLITICIAN ALERT

Ugh, why is it that politics is filled with people who just can't stay away? Why do we see the same old faces year after year?

What's worse, we see the same old face after they've been rejected by the voters time and again.

Such is the case with Paul Meunier, a retread and consistent candidate for office.

He first served on the Ham Lake City Council from 2004-2006, then was elected mayor, serving from 2007-2011.

It was during that time that the conservative voters of Ham Lake got a real

snoot full of Meunier's liberal politics, including his support of collaborating with the Met Council to bring city sewer and water to the city.

He then ran for the state Senate in 2010 against current Senator Michelle Benson.

She dispatched him with ease, but he wasn't done.

There was the school board election in 2013, which he lost.

Now, in 2016, Meunier is running for the Connexus Energy Board, which is where every retreat in Anoka County ends up running at some point, regardless of party.

As anyone who has followed Meunier knows, his campaign platform is vague, mostly rhetorical, and loose enough to avoid accountability while leaving ample room for plausible deniability.

A recent campaign mailing offers voters the following:

"A new generation of transparent leadership and expertise capable of making focused decisions with respect for our fellow co-op members."

"Maintain great customer service and a safe and respectful work environment for every Connexus employee."

Huh? What does that mean?

Will Education Minnesota be endorsing Meunier again? That's what we want to know.

Perhaps Mr. Meunier could cut the fog of vague, feel-good declarations and answer the following:

Does he support or oppose Obama's energy plan?

Does he support or oppose the state's renewable energy mandate?

Does he support or oppose lifting the state's moratorium on new nuclear generating plants?

Connexus customers would be well advised to carefully vet all the candidates

on the ballot this year.

As always, the Watchdog won't tell you how to vote, but we always encourage you to be an informed voter.

Didn't we just say that elections matter?

REAPPOINTMENT REJECTION - WE HOPE

Watchdogs who live in the Coon Creek Watershed District are well aware of the buffoonery that has been going on that unaccountable local governmental unit.

Thankfully, taxpayers have an opportunity to receive some help now that the wheels are in motion regarding the re-appointment process for two of the people involved, Clayton Kearns and Warren Hoffman.

Both men have submitted formal communications regarding their desire to have the Anoka County board re-appoint them when their terms expire in late May.

This publication trusts that the county board will not re-appoint these men, especially Kearns.

That they have asked to be re-appointed bespeaks an arrogance that is consistent with the same arrogance that led the watershed district to abuse the taxpayers in the first place.

For those who have missed this issue or don't remember the details, we re-published below a refresher.

TAXPAYERS COME TO LIFE!

Congratulations, Watchdogs! This past week, an informed and assertive citizenry came to life after the Watchdog exposed eye-popping, massive property tax increases on the part of the Coon Creek Watershed District (CCWD), an un-elected and heretofore unknown taxing entity.

We heard from many Watchdogs who contacted us via email to tell us that they had contacted the CCWD, expressing their outrage at the whopping tax increases.

We heard from others who took time to attend the CCWD meeting this past

Monday to tell the district directly what they thought of their tax hike plans.

Ultimately, taxpayers fell just short, as the board approved a massive 44% property tax increase on a close 3-2 vote.

Even after the citizen outrage, three board members voted to jack up their property tax levy for a reason that will blow your taxpaying mind!

Before we get to that reason, know that the three who voted in favor of the tax increase were:

Byron Westlund
bwestlund@cooncreekwd.org
Phone: 763.427.7500

Scott Bromley
scott@cooncreekwd.org
Phone: 763.754.3820

Nick Phelps
nphelps@cooncreekwd.org
Phone: 218.838.4735

As reported in last week's edition, the CCWD has been increasing the levy in order to create a slush fund for the express purpose of building their own office building.

Now, it would be tough to convince the Watchdog that CCWD needs an office building, but it's entirely possible - if you could prove it.

According to multiple sources, the CCWD has not engaged in the due diligence that typically precede the decision to levy the monies to engage in a major capital construction project.

The organization lacks feasibility studies, conceptual drawings, financing analyses, and an overall justification that points to the construction of a building as the best option to meet the anticipated future office needs of the organization.

One elected official familiar with the situation told the Watchdog, "At this point, it's nothing more than a slush fund. If I had approved a major tax levy under

these circumstances, my head would be on a pike. They haven't justified the need for this project."

The same elected official went on to note, "Here we are, slashing budgets and cutting a thousand here and thousand there to keep our levy down, and these guys lard on a million bucks for a building that is just an idea."

While the 2016 levy is now in the books and there is nothing that can be done about this year's levy, there is still much that you, the taxpayer, can do.

Contact your Anoka County commissioner and demand that Scott Bromley, Byron Westlund, and Nick Phelps NOT be reappointed to the watershed board.

Our commissioners need to understand that they need to appoint board members who respect the taxpayers. We're confident they get this - at least 5 of them.

Moreover, the city councils that recommend these board members to the Anoka County Board need to hear from you.

Given where they reside, it appears that Westlund was recommended by Ham Lake, Bromley by Coon Rapids, and Phelps by Blaine.

While the outcome was by one vote a bad one, the response of Watchdogs was outstanding and in the finest traditions of citizen engagement.

This battle was narrowly lost, but we can win the war.

Stay tuned.

3/25/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We found that the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) has not adequately overseen the loans and grants it awards for economic development. In addition, we found that the Giants Ridge Resort, which is owned by the IRRRB, has had large and growing operating losses for many years. We also found that the law establishing the composition and powers of the IRRRB Board is vulnerable to a constitutional challenge."

- Office of the Minnesota Legislative Auditor

Quote of the Week: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

- The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States

MARK DAYTON - WHAT WENT WRONG

It has become an annual ritual. That being the pundits wondering if Governor Mark Dayton can achieve his legislative goals. This question is always accompanied by a tour through the wreckage and carnage of the shattered gubernatorial dreams of previous legislative sessions. A macabre walk through the graveyard of "number one priorities" stillborn.

There is an aphorism among Capitol insiders that "governor's almost always get their way."

So why has this governor found it so difficult to get his way?

This publication spent some time researching the question, speaking with political sources to get their take on things.

Here's what we found.

The first common thread we found pointed to Dayton's staff. The observation is that they are hyper-partisan and lacking in connections to the legislature.

Governor Dayton himself has no legislative service unlike his predecessor Tim Pawlenty, who had served as the House Majority Leader.

Moreover, Dayton's two most trusted advisors, chief of staff Jamie Tincher and lieutenant governor Tina Smith, didn't come from the legislature.

Many senior Pawlenty advisors were either former legislators or were long-serving caucus staffers.

This kind of experience and established relationships helped bridge differences and mitigate personality conflicts.

In addition, some with whom we spoke noted that while every governor and their staff are partisan to some degree, there is a perception of too much partisanship in the Dayton administration.

Lieutenant Governor Tina Smith is a former Planned Parenthood executive.

Chief of Staff Jaime Tincher is a long-time DFL operative and was recently in the news for her role in personally soliciting attendance, from lobbyists and others, at a political fundraiser for Mark Dayton, the evening before the 2016 session kicked off.

Tincher's husband, Adam Duininck, is the head of the Met Council. He is also the former executive director of Win Minnesota, a liberal political action committee that spent enormous sums of money to elect Democrats and defeat Republicans.

Dayton's head of the Commerce Department, Mike Rothman, also has a rather partisan past.

In 2014, it came to light that Rothman, in his role as commissioner, had directed that taxpayer grant money continue to flow to a Minneapolis non-profit that was run by a DFL ally.

News reports said Rothman ordered the grants to continue despite evidence of financial improprieties, because of "political ramifications."

The second observation is that Dayton's harsh personal attacks on legislators, both Republican and Democrat.

"Unfit to govern," "hate government," "right-wing extremists," he has said of Republicans.

And it's not much better for Democrats.

Dayton's most unhinged ad hominem attacks have been trained on Tom Bakk, the DFL Senate Majority Leader.

During a much publicized dispute over massive pay raises Dayton wanted to give to his political appointees, things got crazy.

Dayton claimed Bakk "stabbed me in the back."

He went to exclaim, "I certainly learned a brutal lesson today that I can't trust him, can't believe what he says to me, and that he connives behind my back."

It got even worse. "I'm not going to meet with Sen. Bakk anymore without others present because I don't trust his word," Dayton said.

As a fellow DFLer and Senate Majority Leader, Tom Bakk should have been Dayton's biggest ally. Instead, Dayton didn't burn the bridge. He dropped a tactical nuke on it.

Such a public flogging has rarely, if ever, been seen at the Capitol.

It would be an understatement to say that Governor Dayton is uniquely lacking in personal skills in an environment where relationships are the coin of the realm.

Finally, there is a distinct sense that Mark Dayton has lacked vision and the leadership skills to accomplish the big legacy-building items all governors seek.

In speaking with not only insiders, but in simply reading the newspaper, one gets the sense that the office is a rudderless ship.

The farm equipment tax signed into law by a governor who didn't know he had done so.

The personal seat licenses for the Vikings stadium that he decried after he found out they were authorized in a bill he signed.

The aforementioned "number one priorities" that come and go like a dog fart

on a breezy porch.
The constant clarifications and backtracking.

It seems that the governor's staff spends a good deal of time "clarifying" the governor's off-the-cuff remarks.

The gas tax is on. It's off. It's back on.

Typical is a recent statement out of the governor's office:

"I want to correct any misunderstanding from yesterday about my position on a bill providing retroactive, 26-week unemployment benefits to workers on the Iron Range. I strongly support the passage of such legislation without any other provisions attached to it.

"I strongly disagree with House Republicans' insistence that an unemployment tax reduction for businesses be part of this legislation. As I said in my State of the State last week, I am supportive of such a reduction; however, it should go through the normal legislative committee process. I deplore the heartless tactic of holding the unemployment benefits desperately needed by Range families hostage to such a measure.

"In response to press questions yesterday, I said that, hypothetically, I would sign a bill agreed to by the Senate and House leadership, even if it contained provisions with which I did not agree. In no way, did I state or imply my support for any such additional provisions."

It's truly hard for the Capitol to function well when gubernatorial leadership is missing, relationships are destroyed more often than they are built, and there is an air of putting politics before public policy.

And there are three more legislative session to go with this chief executive.

TRUMP'S RIGHTS

If Americans can agree on anything this election year, they can all agree that the nation is polarized, angry, seething, anxious, and disillusioned.

It is clear to thoughtful people who are paying attention that the blame can be laid squarely at the feet of the current chief executive, whose policies (or lack thereof) have caused this division.

Our much ballyhooed "post partisan" president has proven to be a spectacular failure.

Thus, the current atmosphere, which has made possible the candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, both of whom wouldn't get a sniff of the White House in a normal election.

This has led some to decry Trump's candidacy in particular. These folks see Trump as a threat and a potential tyrant.

What is so bitterly ironic about that point of view is that the very people who make that claim are proving to be a clear and present danger to very core of our political institutions.

That is because these Trump protesters believe that they have the right to disrupt and shut down Mr. Trump's campaign, primarily by attempting to disrupt or shut down rallies and other places where the candidate is attempting to share his ideas and his message.

It is a core American principle that freedom of speech is essential to freedom and liberty.

This is especially true regarding political speech, which has been recognized as the "core" of free speech.

Hence, it is an affront to our shared principles and values to believe that speech, in particular political speech, can be stifled or shut down merely because it may be inflammatory or unpopular.

If this nation were to ever adopt the view that some political speech is unworthy of protection, we will surely be on a path to tyranny.

This is because decisions regarding who could speak in the political arena would be decided either by the government or the mob.

In the sweep of human history, both have proven to be serious threats to freedom, peace, and liberty.

In other words, the behavior of these Trump protestors is a vile and sober reminder of the capacity of humans to engage in mob rule.

Whether one likes Mr. Trump's ideas or not, every American should be appalled by attempts to gag his political speech.

These protestors deserve both our condemnation and prosecution to the fullest extent of the law.

"Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that could most easily defeat us."
- Justice William O. Douglas

4/1/16

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Harold Hamilton regrets to inform our loyal readership that this will be last edition of the Watchdog. After an amazing 11 year run as a highly read, often quoted publication, the time has come to put down the pen.

With the rise of Bernie Sanders, eight years of Obama, the re-emergence of Jim Abeler, and the failure of capitalism to eliminate war, poverty, and the scourge of mass transit, it is time to admit defeat and move on. The fight is no longer worth it.

Instead, it is time to focus more on friends and family, including Harold's beloved niece, April Phoole. She is apple of his eye and a very mischievous girl.

Since today is April's birthday, it would be an appropriate time to step aside and submit to the intellectual gravitas of Bernie Sanders and the moral superiority of Hillary Clinton.

Little April would have it no other way. Farewell, friends.

And if you believe it, you would also believe in April Phoole!

THE ABELER UNIT RE-ESTABLISHED

Since first constituted way back in the spring of 2005, the Watchdog has been on the watch, especially with respect to those elected officials who would raid the public fisc and defile the conservative principles and values that made America great.

One long-time offender is Jim Abeler, who spent nearly twenty years in the Minnesota House casting bad votes, perhaps the infamous of which was the override of a Governor Pawlenty veto to implement a \$6 billion transportation tax increase.

After a brief career as a registered lobbyist, Mr. Abeler is back again, this time wearing the title of "state Senator," representing a deep red conservative district in Anoka County.

This thanks to a fumbled campaign run by a flawed GOP candidate who lost to Abeler in a primary, despite Abeler's abysmal voting record and the fact that Abeler failed to win the GOP endorsement.

That is where the Watchdog comes into play, as a guardian of the taxpayer and a keeper of accurate historical records, not the whitewashed record of the mainstream media.

With Senator Abeler once again holding elective office, our own "Abeler Unit" (AU) has been reconstituted, in order to track his voting record, bill authorship, and fidelity (or lack thereof) to conservative principles and values.

Of course, the AU won't be operating at full speed right now.

Being newly elected, Sen. Abeler will be on his best behavior.

He has the GOP endorsing convention tomorrow and then there's a possible primary and then a general election, all in short order this year.

Moreover, the Senate GOP is in the minority. Without a committee chairmanship and the appropriation authority that comes with it, the tools for growing government just aren't available.

In addition, being in the minority means a caucus dynamic that is focused on a unified front to act as the loyal opposition and oppose majority initiatives.

On top of all that, this is not a budget year for the state, so there isn't a lot of money to throw at things like public Educational Industrial Complex. When you're endorsed by the teachers' union...

This means that you likely won't see any major offenses. The most likely would be an oversized bonding bill that runs up the state's credit card debt.

But for the immediate future, taxpayers are unlikely to see the other (true?) version of Abeler.

You know, the ultra-low Taxpayer's League of Minnesota scores, the votes for fat, bloated bonding bills, the support of light rail, and support for public employee unions.

While 2016 may be quiet on this front, 2017 will likely be a whole other ball game.

It's a budget year, with billions and billions in the state budget, just waiting to be spent (or returned to the taxpayers!).

If successful for re-election, Abeler will be unaccountable to voters for four whole years.

Regardless, this publication will be watching.

IRRRB MADNESS

So what if we told you that up on the Iron Range, but in the heart of the DFL, there was a quasi-governmental organization that was set up to spend taxpayer money.

The money is collected locally and spent locally, with "oversight" provided primarily by Iron Range legislators.

The ostensible purpose of this organization, called the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB), is to "diversify" the Iron Range economy and provide job creation.

If you said it sounded like a slush fund ripe for waste and abuse, you wouldn't be alone.

What could go wrong with such a scheme?

Before reading on, what do suppose the track record is of such an organization?

A just-released report from the non-partisan Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA), gives us all a glimpse into how well the IRRRB has carried out its mission.

And it ain't pretty.

Here's how the IRRRB works:

A large part of IRRRB's economic development work is awarding loans and grants. Businesses are the primary recipients of loans; municipalities and nonprofit organizations primarily receive the grants. IRRRB owns the Giants Ridge Recreation Area in Biwabik, which is a public resort that offers golf and skiing, among other activities. In addition, it owns the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm, a museum highlighting the region's history.

IRRRB receives most of its funding from taxes on taconite mining in its service area. Its budget in fiscal year 2015 was \$41 million. Beyond its annual budget, IRRRB also had access at the end of that fiscal year to \$90.6 million in statutorily defined funds for grants and loans.

A governor-appointed commissioner heads the agency. A board of nine legislators approves agency spending and, by law, the governor also reviews and approves certain expenditures. The term "IRRRB" refers to both the agency and the board overseeing it.

Here are some of those OLA program review findings:

Giants Ridge operating losses grew substantially from 2006 through 2014. In addition, IRRRB has not set sufficient targets to evaluate how well Giants Ridge is meeting its goals.

Giants Ridge revenues for operations have not kept pace with its expenses since 2006 (in inflation-adjusted dollars). IRRRB has subsidized Giants Ridge operations by \$17.4 million from 2006 through 2014—an average of \$1.9 million annually. Over this period, IRRRB also paid \$6.7 million for Giants Ridge capital investments and \$19.8 million to retire bond debt.

IRRRB set four goals for Giants Ridge when it first purchased the resort in 1984: create economic development, attract private-sector development, provide recreational facilities to enhance quality of life for people of the Iron Range, and create a year-round recreation destination. However, IRRRB has not established sufficient targets to judge how well Giants Ridge is meeting its stated goals.

Many IRRRB loan contracts we reviewed did not adequately specify objectives for job growth. For many of these loan projects, businesses did not meet job-growth objectives specified in their applications.

State law requires loan and grant agreements over \$150,000 to contain measureable and specific objectives, including numbers of jobs to be created. In addition, economic development literature establishes the importance of specifying detailed objectives in loan contracts. Companies for 10 of 16 loans we reviewed forecast job growth in their loan applications, but their loan contracts did not require job creation.

IRRRB cannot evaluate its loan program because it does not maintain an accurate database of loans.

Developed in 1987, IRRRB's existing loan database does not contain reliable data. Sometimes a single loan has been assigned multiple loan numbers, making it appear in the database as multiple loans. The database does not include fields for important data, such as number of jobs created. It contains codes that current staff neither use nor understand, and it does not reflect changes that should occur following certain events, such as a default.

During the last election, voters punished the DFL in part because of a \$90 million state office building for themselves.

The boondoggle up on the Iron Range makes that situation look like child's play.

Not only is this kind of pork contrary to the principles of representative democracy, it's downright harmful to the citizens who are supposed to benefit from these programs.

The Iron Range has suffered more than its fair share of economic hardship over the generations.

Mining is a very cyclical market segment, subject to magnified booms and busts.

The current collapse in steel prices has devastated the Iron Range economy.

Every citizen has a right to good government.

These citizens are in desperate need of it.

What a shame.

4/8/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "In all of my years as an economist, which is roughly 50 years, I've never seen such nonsense as we just heard from Mr. Trump. And it breaks my heart, it makes me want to cry because I'm Republican, I've never voted for a Democrat, and to think the guy who's our likely standard bearer has such nonsensical ideas on every single aspect of the economy is just breathtakingly horrible."

- Ben Stein on Donald Trump's economic views

Factoid of the Week: U.S. Tax Freedom Day is April 24th. This is the day in which the average taxpayer stops working to pay their federal taxes. It is a measure of how many days of a work year a taxpayer works simply to pay their tax bill each year.

Factoid of the Week II: Minnesota Tax Freedom Day is April 30th, which ranks Minnesota 45th, meaning only 5 states have a later tax freedom day.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Hey, hey Watchdogs. It's another week and another edition of this long-running, widely-read, often quoted publication.

With all that's been happening in the world of politics, the Dog has yet to step back and provide an update on the overall picture at the Capitol as the 2016 legislative session churns on towards its conclusion in just a few short weeks.

Recall that the session started in early March, which is a late start date, even for a non-budget year.

Pursuant to the Minnesota Constitution, Article VI, Section 12, the legislature must adjourn no later than the first Monday after the third Saturday in May. This means that this year's legislature must adjourn no later than May 23rd.

According to the numbers, members of the House of Representatives have introduced 1,458 bills so far this year while their Senate counterparts have introduced 1,249.

Out of those bills, only three have been signed into law so far.

The first two bills were related, one offering extended unemployment benefits to workers in the iron ore and taconite industries and the other rebating a surplus in the unemployment benefit fund.

The other bill dealt with the REAL ID issue, allowing for the state to begin planning to transition to the federal ID.

But we're not complaining. This lack of productivity leaves more space for the private sector to create wealth and leaves individual citizens more space to exercise their individual liberties.

It's also proof positive that we don't need a bunch of government in order to live peaceful, prosperous lives.

But on to the matter at hand, that which needs to be done before legislators go home in May.

That's a trick question. Lawmakers don't NEED to do anything.

Minnesota is on a bi-ennial budget, which means a two-year budget cycle.

Because the budget is set in odd-number years, there is no need for budgetary action this legislative session.

As a point of historical reference, Minnesota legislators only met in odd number years until the 1970s.

Now that we've set the record straight regarding what MUST be done, let's take a rational look at the big issues and what MIGHT be done.

There is a harsh reality at play here, readers.

The first is that the state Senate and the governor's office are occupied by Democrats. That means that if anything is to become law, it has to be done in cooperation with them.

The second harsh reality is that if the session blows up and nothing happens, history has shown that voters will punish legislators, including the GOP House majority, for "not doing their job."

If one needs proof, Google yourself back to the 2004 legislative session, when the legislature passed a number of bills but not a bonding bill. Republicans lost 13 House seats that year.

The reality at play is that there are plenty of GOP legislators who want something in one of the big four bills: transportation, taxes, bonding, and a supplemental budget request.

Check the bill introductions.

Having said all this, let's not immediately label legislators "RINOs" simply because they have a request in this regard.

Many of these bills are consistent with conservative principles and values.

For example, roads and bridges are often funded through state bonding. While we would agree that cash is preferable, this capital infrastructure is of long-term use and therefore amenable to being debt financed.

This is similar to a business making a strategic investment in capital equipment.

Cash flow may not allow for an upfront cash purchase. Investment strategies may call for the cash to be otherwise deployed to higher and better use than the capital investment in question.

Yes, snow making machines and lutefisk museums don't fall into that category, but our roads and bridges do.

The same holds true for those pushing for spending on a transportation bill that does things like improve road safety. Protecting the safety of the public is a core function of government.

And a tax bill is just a no brainer. Tax cuts are always in order. When the state is sitting on a mountain of surplus cash because of over collection, tax cuts are moral, just, and good economic policy.

Now, don't go jumping to conclusions. After more than a decade of conservative crusading, the Dog isn't going soft.

We're not advocating a free for all or that legislators get a free pass simply because this is an election year.

Instead, we're pointing out that there can be good public policy that can come from this session and that some bad may have to come with the good since the Democrats have two of the three legs.

The answer of course, is to elect more Republicans and not shoot at the ones who are here, even though some deserve it (not to mention names, J.A.).

Thus far, it has been slow going on these four issues. Informational type hearings have been offered but no bills are in place, beyond governor's recommendations for some items like bonding and his supplemental budget.

So far, both houses of the legislature have played things close to the vest, not unveiling anything on this front to date.

It will be interesting to see how it plays out.

On the one hand, there is a big surplus of cash, a surplus to satisfy some mix of spending and tax cuts.

Usually, it's far easier to pass legislation when there's some cash laying around as opposed to a deficit.

On the other hand, this is an election year. And while legislators want to bring home some victories, there is a competing interest in not letting the other side get their victories. With the House and Senate in different hands, there's a temptation to bypass a victory in order to deny the other side theirs. Moreover, there are some deep divisions among legislators themselves, which can make consensus building difficult, even in within each of the four caucuses.

Those divisions were laid bare last session in the Senate DFL caucus as Majority Leader Tom Bakk faced a mutiny.

On top of all that, we have a governor who is wanting in the leadership skills department. It takes strong leadership from the chief executive to break through these divides and get something done.

So far, the signs don't point to things getting done "in the normal course," meaning bills that pass committees, pass the floor pass conference committee and then get presented to the governor.

While there is still a lot of game left in session, this is shaping up to be a scenario whereby the Speaker, Senate Majority Leader and the governor disappear behind closed doors at the end of session in an attempt to forge a deal on bonding, taxes, transportation, and bonding.

If there is a deal, it would likely result in the four separate deals being combined into one "take it or leave it" omnibus bill.

On the other hand, neither Speaker Daudt nor Majority Leader Bakk will take a bad deal, in our opinion.

They would likely walk away rather than take a bad deal.

An end-of-session brinksmanship scenario is looking probable at this point.

While we have heard all the criticisms, Watchdogs need to have faith in Speaker Daudt.

Any reasonable interpretation of the results from last session will show he played a weak hand very well.

It was a weak hand in that voters dealt him a DFL governor and a DFL Senate while also dealing him a slim majority in the House.

This publication is confident he will do the same this year to get good results.

Then we can get on to the business of sending him and Sen. Hann some more Republicans.

The key is to devote energy to building the team, not tearing it down.

You can't legislate from your couch. You have to win.

4/15/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, the state's teachers' union, said the union has not decided if it will formally intervene in the case, but said the current laws do not protect ineffective teachers."

- Star Tribune 4/13/16

TAX DAY

Welcome to Tax Day, Watchdogs. Of course, Tax Day isn't to be confused with Tax Freedom Day, which is still weeks away. Today is only the day that your taxes are due. You will be working to pay them for a while longer. Back to the salt mines!

We all know Minnesota's tax climate is bad, but just how bad is it?

Here are some fast facts from the Tax Foundation, sure to turn your stomach:

Minnesota's individual income tax is punitive in the extreme. The top bracket of 9.85% makes our income tax structure 47th in the nation.

When it comes to the corporate tax rate, Minnesota is even worse, ranking 48th.

The sales tax isn't much better, either. Although a bit better at 12th highest in the nation, this ranking is no cause for celebration.

The North Star State's best ranking is the property tax, which clocks in at 16th highest in the nation.

If you're feeling a bit overburdened by the state's tax burden, your feelings would be fully justified.

The good news is that you're in the ranks of the productive and the successful.

Congratulations.

ENDORSEMENT UPDATES

While all eyes have been on the Capitol, it's also the season for partisan endorsing conventions for both political parties.

On the Republican side, three endorsement races so far have produced surprises.

In the Cambridge-Isanti area, incumbent state Senator Sean Nienow was beaten for the endorsement by newcomer Mark Koran. Nienow has yet to announce whether or not he will move forward with an August primary.

In House District 31B, long-time legislator Tom Hackbarth lost his endorsement race to Calvin Bahr.

While Hackbarth has yet to announce plans, rumors are already flying that he has been approached regarding the prospect of challenging incumbent Anoka County commissioner Matt Look.

A third surprise hit the GOP recently when state Rep. Tara Mack from the Apple Valley area announced at her endorsing convention that she would not stand for re-election.

Readers will recall that Mack was engulfed in controversy when she was discovered in a parked car in a Dakota County park with another legislator.

Capitol sources tell the Watchdog that Mack's announcement was a surprise to many, and was apparently very much a last moment decision.

A special endorsing convention will be held in the near future to endorse a replacement.

The DFL has also experienced their own twists and turns.

For the second election cycle in a row, long-serving liberal icon state Rep. Phyllis Kahn will be running in a primary after the endorsing convention in her Minneapolis district deadlocked and failed to confer the endorsement on any of the three candidates vying for the endorsement.

What was different this year, however, was the lack of a WWE-style battle royal that plagued the previous convention, with chairs flying and the room being cleared.

Maybe the DFL can get Shane McMahon to chair their future conventions.

What shouldn't be lost on this whole affair is the sad reality that group identity politics have come home to roost in the DFL.

How to explain Kahn's inability to secure the endorsement?

After all, Kahn has long and well-established record as a proud liberal. She's a liberal's liberal. A feminist's feminist. A lefty's lefty.

The inescapable conclusion is that many delegates at her convention didn't support her because she's white.

This fact was confirmed both by a Watchdog source who attended the convention and public comments reported in the media.

Both of Kahn's opponents are non-white.

There is no doubt a strong undercurrent in DFL politics of demographic groups wanting "one their own" in public office.

Which is the logical outcome of an ideology that emphasizes group identity politics, especially racial identity.

The irony for Rep. Kahn is that she has been at the forefront of that effort.

Now those chickens are coming home to roost.

Kudos to GOP chairman Keith Downey for reiterating the Republican Party's emphasis on recruiting candidates with the right ideas and the experience to serve in elective office.

It looks like only one political party is interested in a color-blind society in which men and women are judged by the content of the character and not the color of their skin.

MORE CHICKENS COMING HOME TO ROOST

Speaking of liberal chickens coming home to roost, it has been satisfying to watch Democrat "super delegates" who are supporting Hillary Clinton complain bitterly of the tactics of Bernie Sanders's supporters.

Unlike the more egalitarian GOP, the Democrat party has a large contingent of unelected national delegates, called "super delegates," who are made automatic national delegates simply by virtue of occupying certain roles in the party, such as being an elected official.

The vast majority of these super delegates have pledged fealty to Hillary.

Super delegates are not bound to support any candidate and may switch their support at any time.

With the race for the Democrat nomination heating up, the super delegates are increasingly providing the margin for Clinton's lead.

Because these delegates can switch their allegiance, supporters of the Vermont socialist are engaging in some very aggressive tactics to "persuade" Clinton supporters to switch to Sanders.

What else would one expect from a party and party leaders who learned politics at the knee of Saul Alinsky, a high priest of "dirty tricks" campaign tactics?

These same super delegates have cheered as the liberal mob used these street tactics against Republicans.

Now that the guns have turned inward, cheers have turned to whining and complaining.

It's been amusing to watch the liberal crack up, as the faithful are learning that group identity politics and political dirty tricks are blunt force weapons that difficult to control and often result on collateral damage.

LIBERATION LITIGATION

Okay, let's take a poll. Raise your hand if you think it's easy to get rid of bad teachers in the public schools.

Raise your hand if you think it's nearly impossible to fire bad teachers because of rules put in place by the teachers' union and their DFL political allies (and Jim Abeler).

That's what we thought.

It was announced this week that two education groups plan to file a lawsuit in Minnesota to overturn these onerous laws and liberate kids trapped in bad schools.

While the lawsuit will likely take issue with many state laws regarding teachers, one in particular stands out.

That law dictates what is called the "LIFO" policy (last-in-first-out). This means that when it comes to layoffs, a school district must lay off teachers by seniority, with merit playing little or no role in the decision.

Really? Raise your hand if your job requires layoffs by seniority, with no room for merit to be taken into account.

Unless you work for the post office or a North Korean state-owned enterprise, odds are layoffs don't happen by seniority.

What a scam.

From school boards up to the White House, the teachers' union has set up a cushy regime to escape accountability by using mandatory union dues to buy influence.

Not only should these unreasonable tenure rules be abolished, the mandatory collection of union dues from public school teachers should similarly be nixed.

EURO-DFL

To end the week, we leave with this little number, courtesy of DFL state Senator John Marty, who chairs the Environment committee.

This language regards electronic video displays and is contained in an omnibus bill he is assembling right now in committee.

Thank goodness the GOP controls the House.

If you doubted that the Democrats look to socialist states of Old Europe, read on:

(b) By September 1, 2008, and each year thereafter, A manufacturer of video display devices sold or offered for sale to a household must include in the registration submitted under paragraph (a), a statement disclosing whether:

(1) any video display devices sold to households exceed the maximum concentration values established for lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, polybrominated biphenyls (PBB's), and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE's) under the RoHS (restricting the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment) Directive 2002/95/EC of the **European Parliament and Council** and any amendments thereto; or

(2) the manufacturer has received an exemption from one or more of those maximum concentration values under the RoHS Directive that has been approved and published by the **European Commission**.

4/22/16

In This Issue:

"Throwing money at programs which has not shown to have any meaningful impact will not solve the problem. We need to deal with the real problem which is we are not giving our kids, our minority students the tools to be successful in our public schools."

- Speaker of the House, Kurt Daudt

EQUITY, DISPARITY, AND CYNICISM

For Democrats, public policy is politics. In other words, legislating with a view towards solving society's collective problems is merely rhetoric designed to cover the vicious truth that the true aim is to gain political power and control by paying off a coalition of constituencies.

Perhaps nowhere is that paradigm on fuller display than in economically depressed areas of the urban core.

These areas of high concentrations of minority citizens share the common societal features of high poverty, low educational outcomes, broken homes, high crime rates, limited economic opportunities, and a general apathy towards the norms and mores common in more prosperous areas.

In short, the very social fabric of these neighborhoods is in tatters.

Overall, very little has changed in the past 50 plus years, since these neighborhoods first went up in flames fanned by social unrest.

A "war" on the causes of this unrest was declared.

Many billions of taxpayer dollars have funded thousands of programs, with no appreciable results.

The situation remains the same, and is in many cases worse.

So what's the response from Democrats?

More of the same ineffective programs, except more of it.

Since the start of the current legislative session, the DFL has listed "addressing racial disparities" as a high priority, going so far as to include the subject in the list of possible items to address in a hoped-for special session before the regular session convened on March 8th.

When a special session didn't happen, the DFL-majority then constituted a "sub-committee on equity," chaired by Senators Jeff Hayden and Bobby Joe Champion of Minneapolis.

Thus far, the sub-committee has considered a number of bills, all purported to "address" (not "solve") racial disparities.

Of course, all of these bills entail spending millions of dollars.

The agenda from April 11th, 2016 is instructive.

That day, 19 bills were considered, all of them having the word "appropriation" in the bill title.

And those appropriations are all in the form of grants, which require no repayment and are accompanied by no meaningful metrics to track outcomes.

But outcomes aren't an objective.

If outcomes were an objective, other means of providing a hand up would be considered.

As opposed to outcomes, the real object is simply to pay off constituencies.

First, let's dispense with the myth regarding outcomes. These grants and appropriations have been expended at the local, state, and federal level or generations, with no meaningful positive outcomes.

Now take a look at the way this system works, as was put on full display recently regarding the controversy surrounding the Community Action of Minneapolis (CAM) scandal.

Readers will recall that CAM is one of the many non-profits in the urban core that acts as a sort of fiscal agent to accept and then distribute government grants for a variety of social programs.

CAM has been under criminal investigation for an alleged misappropriation of taxpayer dollars.

Those allegations include CAM's employees and board members converting funds to personal use, such as junkets, spa retreats, and personal home improvements.

Moreover, Sen. Jeff Hayden has been under fire for his role in CAM, sitting on the group's board of directors.

Note that this same Sen. Jeff Hayden is the co-chair of this sub-committee in charge of handing out the grants.

Connecting the dots yet?

It's also no coincidence that higher level candidates like Hillary Clinton are working hard to court the African-American vote this year.

Now we see a sub-committee dedicated to pandering to this demographic.

This strategy is similar to the raft of bills introduced by the DFL this year targeted to women, thereby building the "war on women" narrative the DFL would like to prosecute against republicans.

What a cynical and tragic state of affairs. Millions of Americans sentenced to poor schools and little chance for the opportunity to succeed.

This country sees the tragedy of millions of our citizens relegated to the economic sidelines year after year, generation after generation.

Of course, individuals are primarily responsible for their own opportunities and success.

But government is responsible for core functions that promote the general welfare and common good of the people.

Clearly, government is failing in this regard and doesn't much care.

For the DFL, that isn't the object of this particular exercise.

HURRY, HURRAY, HUUUURRRRAAAAYYYYYY

We've all heard the carnival barkers, urging the masses to "step right up!" and spend their hard earned cash on paper thin promises, be they a tonic to increase virility, see the bearded lady, or buy that "rare" Chevy sedan that GM only produced about 6 million of before someone else does.

"I had three guys in here this morning looking at the car! It won't last!"

The age-old art of carnival barking has now moved into the world of government, an unholy confluence of nihilism and cynicism sure to accelerate the decline of Western Civilization.

The government's newest barker extraordinaire is none other than Senator Al Franken, a man uniquely qualified to take the public stage and spew so much BS from his yap.

Sen. Franken brought his megaphone to the Southwest Metro this week to urge taxpayers and legislators to step right up and fund the Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) project.

You see, legislators have to hurry, hurry, huuuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrrrrrrrraaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaayyyyyyyyy because if the state doesn't step up with its share of the funding this year, then the federal government's share will be withdrawn and given to some other city.

Yeah, right.

This is an old schtick that's been around for years. Threaten the withdrawal of federal funds unless the state steps up right away.

This trick was used for Northstar rail. Not surprisingly, the federal money was available year after year, even as critics begged and pleaded with the federal government to withhold the money and kill the project.

Unfortunately, that won't happen. The feds will indeed hold out the \$895 million matching money for years to come, even though the money isn't real because the federal government is insolvent and trillions in debt.

The old carnival barker trick here is to induce a sense of urgency and scarcity in the "mark."

Buy this car because someone was here this morning and is at the bank right now securing financing.

Buy this train right now because if you don't seize the opportunity, Portland will.

And, of course, owning a shiny new light rail line also confers upon its owners a measure of hipness and coolness.

All the cool cities have trains. And all the cool millennials who populate the cities think they're cool.

You don't want to be a city without trains. Without a train line or three, you'll be eating lunch alone and won't have a date to the prom.

In addition to all this feel good salesmanship devoid of empirical support, it has been deeply concerning to watch the narrative slowly pivot from the transportation aspects of this mass transit project to the economic development aspects of this mass transit project.

It's as if apologists for the train have lost the transit argument (yes, busses will get you from Eden Prairie to downtown Minneapolis faster) and are now claiming that SWLRT is needed for "economic development."

If that's the case, then why not just admit it and put the \$1.7 billion into direct economic development subsidies?

Why not give a \$2 billion property tax break to businesses in the corridor, for example?

Minnesota has been fooled time and again into building these boondoggles.

Thankfully, many legislators won't be fooled on this project and are resisting the shrill siren song of an intemperate, surly Hollywood carnival barker posing as a U.S. Senator.

4/29/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "What costs you \$900/month? The public subsidy for one person to ride Northstar to and from work for one month. We could lease each one a Mercedes and pay for the gas, and spend less. Thank you, idiots who voted for this."

- State Representative Marion O'Neill

HOUSE DISTRICT 31B UPDATE

Hello, Watchdogs. It's a brand new week and as usual, there are big doings in the world of politics, especially here in Anoka County.

Over the past week or so, the Watchdog has heard from sources who are telling the Dog that state Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R - Cedar) is strongly leaning towards running in a primary against the endorsed Republican for the seat, Cal Bahr.

Readers will recall that Hackbarth, a long-serving state Rep., lost the GOP endorsement to Mr. Bahr at the recent Senate District 31 endorsing convention.

While Hackbarth himself hasn't publically announced a decision, it would make a great deal of sense for him to run in a primary.

Editor's Note: The Watchdog does not endorse candidates and will not endorse a candidate in this race, either in a potential primary or in the general election. These observations are made from an objective point of view, as seen by Harold Hamilton and his experienced team of advisors.

At core, it makes sense for Hackbarth to run in a primary because Bahr has left the door open for him to do so.

After achieving a major tactical victory by securing the GOP endorsement, it appears that Bahr has done little to reinforce and expand upon that win. Military generals would say that Bahr has failed to take his victory into the "exploitation" phase.

For example, the Watchdog isn't aware of any Republican legislators who have endorsed Bahr's candidacy.

Maybe he hasn't asked. Maybe he did and they declined. Maybe he has and has failed to publicize it.

The bottom line is that Bahr looks like a parade of one.

Second, Bahr fundraising has been weak. To be fair, the most recent campaign finance reports only cover the end of 2015, leaving no official reports for 2016 to review.

Having said that, the Watchdog has spoken to recognized GOP donors in the north Metro, all of whom have stated that Bahr hasn't contacted them regarding a donation. In fact, they hadn't heard of him.

And while it's a popular meme to proclaim the power of a "grassroots" candidacy, money is critical for a campaign. It's necessary and vital.

So what do the most recent reports tell us?

Entering 2015, Bahr reported about \$650 in cash on hand. During 2015, he raised another \$653. After expenses were subtracted, Bahr ended 2015 with a cash balance of \$1,007.

Hackbarth on the other hand, entered 2015 with \$9,723 cash on hand. He raised \$12,610 during the year. His cash-on-hand balance at the end of 2015 was nearly \$19,000 cash on hand, a 19 to 1 cash advantage.

Having first been elected to the House in 1994, Hackbarth enjoys a significant advantage with respect to name recognition in the district.

His massive cash advantage will only reinforce that high name ID.

At this point, Bahr has done very little that we can see to close down pathways for Hackbarth to compete in and possibly win a primary.

Hackbarth has name ID, money in the bank, and a platform in Saint Paul to push for things the district supports.

Bahr has one thing going his way - the endorsement. The endorsement has value, but certainly isn't sufficient by itself to take down a long-time incumbent with money in the bank.

If Vegas was offering a line, Hackbarth would be favored to win.

Will he run? Apparently only Hackbarth knows.

ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1 RACE

The Watchdog has been aware of rumors that Rep. Hackbarth, referenced above, would run against Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look in District 1.

Since then, sources have told the Watchdog that there is another candidate who is preparing to run against Look.

That person is Marsha Van Denburgh, who chairs the Saint Francis ISD #15 school board and is a GOP delegate and activist in the area, according to those sources.

In short, it appears that there will be a Republican vs. Republican element to this race.

It will be interesting to see what the candidates say about each other, as each comes from a similar political bandwidth and would be competing for a similar swath of the District 1 electorate.

This is especially true if the GOP BPOUs in the area decide to endorse in the race.

As a challenger, Van Denburgh will have to make a case that Look should be "fired" from the job and she hired.

While this publication will leave it to the candidates to talk about each other's record, we will watch with interest to see how Van Denburgh talks about the fiscal record on the Anoka County Board, which has been among the most fiscally conservative in the state, and certainly a far cry more fiscally responsible than the previous board, under the leadership of Dan Erhart and his crew of big taxers and spenders.

If this race materializes, the Watchdog will be sure to do our best to fulfill our mission to inform our readers to allow them to make informed choices regarding politics and public policy.

ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3 CANDIDATE STATEMENT

The following is a candidate statement from Commissioner Robyn West:

ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER ROBYN WEST ANNOUNCES RE-ELECTION BID

WILL HOLD THE LINE ON PROPERTY TAXES

Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West announced the kickoff of her re-election campaign for the District 3 seat on the Anoka County Board of Commissioners. District 3 includes most of the city of Blaine bordered by University Avenue on the west, County Road 14 on the north, Lexington Avenue on the east and the southern border of Blaine at County Road 10. District 3 also includes the western two precincts of Spring Lake Park.

Currently, West serves as chair of Anoka County's Management Committee and the Benefits and Compensation Committee. In that role, West is the lead commissioner in the area of pay equity. West also serves as vice chair of the county's Airport Committee. In addition West is a working member of the North Metro I-35W Corridor Coalition and the Highway 65 Coalition. West was recently elected by her peers to serve as treasurer of the Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority and as vice chair of the Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. West also serves on the East Central Creating Community Consortium.

Commissioner West also serves as Chair of the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District Board and the Control District's, Executive Board, which covers the Twin Cities metro area including; Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties. West also sits on the board of the Anoka County Community Action Program.

In the last four years, Commissioner West chaired the Transportation Committee, the Information Technology Committee, and the Inter-governmental and Community Relations Committee.

"I'm happy to have served on the transportation committee for the last 6 years," West said. "Roads and bridges are a core service of government and I am pleased with all the improvements we have accomplished," West added. West believes that the key to economic development in Anoka County is having an efficient and well maintained infrastructure creating an ease of movement for Anoka County residents and for commerce. West points to the new express commuter bus service from Paul Parkway and

Ulysses Street to downtown Minneapolis as an example of a transportation project where intergovernmental co-operation benefited residents. The service was a joint effort between Anoka County and Metro Transit and is operated by Metro Transit.

Another project lauded by West is the Armstrong Boulevard overpass across Highway 10, which has already shortened the travel time on Hwy 10 in the western part of Anoka County. "With the joint efforts of several entities, this project was completed very quickly," West explained.

Despite this progress, there is more work to be done. One project Commissioner West is advocating for is the rebuilding of the bridge over Interstate 35W at Highway 97 on the eastern side of Anoka County. This improvement will help businesses and residents in their many transportation needs. Robyn has also worked with the 35W Coalition to get an additional lane on I-35W through the City of Blaine. That is planned to begin within the next two years.

During West's tenure, Anoka County's property taxes have been some of the lowest in Minnesota with Anoka County decreasing property taxes for three straight years. During this time the county also stopped borrowing money to pay for projects as a way to reduce county debt. "Holding the line on property taxes keeps more money in the pocket of business owners and families, money that can be spent to improve and expand local businesses, or ease the burden of hardworking families," West said.

Commissioner West is widely known for her constituent engagement, be sure to be watching for her to show up in your neighborhood or at your events. For more information visit: RobynWest.net.

5/6/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week:

Local governments spent a total of \$8,926,786 on lobbying activities in 2015. This represents an increase of \$687,746, or 8.3 percent, over the amount spent on lobbying services in 2014.

In 2015, 101 local governments (ten more than in 2014) reported that they directly employed staff or hired contract lobbyists in 2015. These local governments spent a total of \$4,674,403 on staff and contract lobbyists. This was \$398,796, or 9.3 percent, more than in 2014.

In addition to the \$4.7 million paid directly to staff and contract lobbyists, local governments paid dues of \$11,683,827 in 2015 to local government associations that also represented their interests before legislative, administrative, or other governmental bodies.⁴ These associations spent \$4,252,383 on lobbyists and lobbying in 2015, an increase of 7.3 percent over 2014. Of the \$4.3 million spent on lobbyists and lobbying by these associations, \$3,776,740 was funded exclusively through dues. This represents an increase of 8.7 percent over the \$3,474,095 in association dues that were spent on lobbying activities in 2014.

- State Auditor Rebecca Otto, quoted from the most recent report on what local units of government in Minnesota spend on lobbying

HOUSE DISTRICT 31B UPDATE

Greetings, loyal readers. There's much to report again this week, so be sure to also subscribe to the Minnesota [Watchdog](#) to keep current on other developments and commentary at the Capitol, around the state, and around the country.

Last week, this publication wrote a piece regarding the possibility of state Rep. Tom Hackbarth running in the GOP primary against Calvin Bahr, who bested him for the GOP endorsement this year.

Questions have been raised regarding whether or not Hackbarth agreed to abide by the GOP endorsement and not run if he lost that endorsement.

To the best of the Watchdog's knowledge and research, Hackbarth himself has not confirmed or denied agreeing to abide by the endorsement.

According to at least member of the Nominating Committee of the convention, Hackbarth indeed committed to abide by the endorsement.

Committee member Dwight McCullough of Ham Lake submitted the following comment via email:

"Malcolm Vinger and myself were the 'nominating committee for SD31.

We were given a promise by all that we interviewed, that they would support the endorsed candidate.

If they do NOT honor that promise, they will then be viewed as not trustworthy at best, and at worst a LIAR.

Should Tom Hackbarth run in the primary election, then it is only obvious to me that he intends to override the will of those whom were chosen by their neighbors to attend the convention and to choose whom we want to be our 'Servant-Leaders' in St Paul and beyond."

End of Statement

Apparently, the committee failed to secure these pledges in writing, which is standard practice and would have put to rest this question, which has now become a very important one.

If Hackbarth decides to run in a primary, it will be interesting to hear what he has to say regarding the pledge to abide by the endorsement.

Stay tuned.

COMMISSIONER MATT LOOK CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look submits the following statement of candidacy:

40 year Anoka-Ramsey resident Matt Look is seeking re-election for Anoka County Commissioner in District 1 which includes the cities of Ramsey, Nowthen, St. Francis, Oak Grove, and precincts 2 and 3 in Anoka. "It has been an honor to serve the last six years on the Anoka County Board. I have had the opportunity to work with really good people and help to chart a course

for the County that will achieve financial stability and security for many years to come," said Look.

Since his election, the County Board cut the levy and controlled spending in a responsible and respectful manner on behalf of the taxpayers. As a result, the 2016 taxes being levied are close to 2010 levels. "Through innovative approaches, this County Board has become the envy of counties," said Look. Anoka County has focused on paying cash instead of adding debt and proactively budgeted in advance for known expenses. As a result, the County has made significant investments in deferred maintenance for facilities and state-of-the-art information technology while paying off debt at record levels. "In the past 6 years, we have paid off \$50 million in debt and we are charted to pay off 77.7% of our debt in ten years," said Look. These best management practices have elevated the County's financial rating from "Good" to "Strong". In short, the focus has been on needs vs. wants which was a campaign promise Commissioner Look made and kept.

District 1 is well represented through the 14 Boards and Committees that Look serves on. Transportation accomplishments include:

- (Anoka) Fairoak and Thurston highway improvements, and Hwy 47 planning for congestion mitigation
- (Ramsey) Improvements on Highway 10 at Armstrong Blvd. interchange, Ramsey Northstar Station, Bunker Lake Blvd. upgrade, County Rd. 83 Armstrong Blvd. overlay, County Rd. 5 overlay, and future work to include underpasses at Sunfish Lake and Ramsey Blvds.
- (Nowthen) County Rd. 22 concrete "white topping"
- (Oak Grove) Oak Grove Cedar Creek Conservation Area (540 acres) purchase, County Rd. 9 and 22 intersection upgrade, County Rd. 22 "white topping"
- (St. Francis) County 9/Bridge St. intersection redesign, a future "safe school route tunnel" for Pederson Trail/Hwy 47, and support for a possible YMCA in northern Anoka County.

Married for 22 years, Look has two children and is a small business owner. A Bethel University graduate, he served on the Ramsey City Council from 2006-2010. Look is an avid outdoor sportsman and enjoys watching his sons play basketball, baseball, and soccer while volunteering with the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association.

"I often get asked how I like being a Commissioner. I absolutely love it. Good people to work with. Good projects to work on. Together we've made Anoka

County Better!" said Look. "We have accomplished a lot in the last six years. There is more work to be done and I am absolutely committed to improving the quality of life in our community." Look would be happy to talk with you and can be reached at 612.558.9111, votemattlook@gmail.com, www.votemattlook.com, and Facebook "Look for County Commissioner".

End of Statement

COMMISSIONER JULIE BRAASTAD CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad offers the following statement of candidacy:

Julie Braastad has announced her bid for re-election to the Anoka County Board in the upcoming 2016 election.

Braastad was first elected to the county board in 2012 to represent the residents of District 2, which encompasses Ham Lake, East Bethel, Bethel and portions of Andover and Blaine. Prior to serving on the county board she served on the Ham Lake City Council for 6 years and the Planning and Zoning Commission for 2 years.

"I'm truly honored and have thoroughly enjoyed serving the people of Anoka County. Since taking office, my highest priority has been promoting efficiency in government and keeping taxes as low as possible, while still providing essential government services. One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is that our county board has been able to reduce the county's debt by approximately 50 million dollars," said Braastad.

In her first term on the county board, Braastad has served as the Chair of both the Public Safety Committee and the Intergovernmental & Community Relations Committee. Other committee assignments include: Finance & Capital Improvements, Human Services, Joint Law Enforcement Council, Tri-County Regional Forensic Lab, MN Extension, Workforce Development Board, Airport Committee, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District Board, Regional Railroad Authority, Housing & Redevelopment Authority and the North Metro TH 65 Corridor Coalition.

Braastad is the past Sr. Vice President and a current member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the VFW Post 10796 in Ham Lake. "I am very committed to supporting our veterans and am thankful for the sacrifices they have made for us," Braastad said. She is one of the organizers of the Toys for Troops drive,

and is a member of both the Ham Lake and East Bethel Chambers of Commerce.

Braastad has lived in Ham Lake for over twenty years and in Anoka County her entire life. She and her husband Rick have two adult daughters, a son-in-law and two granddaughters. Braastad is a certified paralegal and assists Rick in his electrical contracting business. They have been attending Constance Free Church for almost twenty-five years. Follow Braastad at www.JulieBraastad.com .

End of Statement

5/13/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I think electing Donald Trump would be the second-worst thing we could do this November, better only than electing Hillary Clinton to serve as the third term for the Obama administration's radical policies," Jindal writes. "I am not pretending that Mr. Trump has suddenly become a conservative champion or even a reliable Republican: He is completely unpredictable. The problem is that Hillary is predictably liberal."

- Former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal

Factoid of the Week: Donald Trump is in a statistical dead heat with Hillary Clinton in Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

Quinnipiac Poll, 5/9/16

BAILOUT NATION

If you're paying any attention, you have no doubt read this week about the Teamsters Union asking for a pension bailout from the already bankrupt federal government.

The issue has certainly raised the emotions of many taxpayers, with sentiment running strongly against a bailout for a variety of reasons.

Those reasons cited by posters on social media include mismanagement of pension funds, organized crime involvement, overly generous retirement terms, limited federal bailout funds, and taxpayers who say they are struggling to fund their own retirement, much less those of others.

Having said all that, there is one reason and one reason only that the federal government should stay out of this issue: It's a private contract dispute.

The collective bargaining agreements that memorialized these pension promises were contained within a legally binding contract that was negotiated between two sophisticated parties in an arms-length agreement free from force and fraud.

The legislative branch of the federal government has no role to play in ameliorating the failure of failure of the contract to meet pension promises.

If the Teamsters believe management has breached the contract and is liable for damages to the pensioners, then their remedy is in a court of law.

Contracts were designed specifically to create a legal remedy in situations where promises were broken in a negligent way.

Of course, the benefit of running to Congress for a bailout is that nothing needs to be proven and the rule of law is irrelevant.

Raiding the treasury is so much easier than proving damages and fault.

Of course, it may also be the fact that even though the pension fund is tapped out, no one is to blame in a legal sense.

In order to prove that a contract was breached, you have to prove someone was at fault, that they were negligent or reckless.

It may be that sound decisions were made with the pension and it simply went south regardless.

Financial arrangement fail on a regular basis and there is no legal claim. All investments come with a measure of risk. Winners and losers are picked in the markets every day.

Just because your surgery didn't save your arm doesn't mean your doctor was at fault.

Just because that rattle came back two months later doesn't mean your mechanic was at fault.

Just because that "can't miss" stock cratered doesn't mean your financial advisor was at fault.

Finally, it's an incredible moral hazard to open the public till to every party who was harmed by a contract that didn't pan out.

If the Teamsters get a bailout, why shouldn't anyone else who suffered in a similar (or not so similar) way get made whole by the federal treasury?

How about people who lost on their 401(K)?

How about people who lost on their gambling bets?

Where does it end?

THOSE WACKY LIBERALS

This could be a headline every week, but this week has been particularly painful for logical thinking people across Minnesota.

It all started with a ridiculous "news" article in the Star Tribune purporting to demonstrate the high taxes haven't led productive people to leave the state.

Never mind that that the opposite point of view was run by the same newspaper as an opinion piece.

High taxes are fine? News.

High taxes are harmful? Opinion.

That's an interesting point of view for liberals.

Recall that liberals, more than anything, view the tax code as a vehicle to encourage certain behavior and discourage other behaviors.

They cut taxes or offer tax credits to encourage behaviors while raising taxes to discourage other behaviors.

Recall the debate over raising tobacco taxes. The DFL narrative was that the tax increases were needed to discourage smoking.

Tax smoking more, get less smoking.

So how come the same logic doesn't apply to higher income taxes.

Tax productivity and more, get less productivity.

Never let it be said that "logic" is a word commonly found in the liberal vocabulary.

Next, the DFL proposed a 13 cent per gallon gas tax increase.

This, despite a \$900 million state budget surplus.

That's right, only the DFL would propose a massive gas tax increase while sitting on an extra \$900 million of your money.

The proposed increase would be a whopping 46% increase in the state gas tax.

The increase, if passed, would make Minnesota's gas tax the third highest in the country, behind California and Pennsylvania.

Moreover, as loyal readers know, the gas tax is highly regressive, hitting the poor and middle class harder than the wealthy.

Funny, the tobacco tax is also highly regressive. The party of the "working man" is only an empty slogan and representative of a long-gone era.

The party is now firmly in the hands of wealthy, educated, urban elites. These elites have no care for the needs or desires of regular people.

Those people cling to guns and religion. They work in "dirty" industries like mining and pipelines. They live in rural areas, and (gasp!) don't have baccalaureate degrees or a curriculum vitae.

These urban elites also don't really care about poverty in the urban core. They merely feign interest in order to garner votes in poor urban areas to keep themselves enriched and in power.

News reports this week highlighted a Met Council Section 8 voucher program that works to get poor people out to the suburbs, where, according to research, there are good schools and good neighborhoods. That research further shows that when kids live in these good neighborhoods and attend these good schools, they tend to have a better chance to succeed.

DUH.

Let's put aside for a moment the question regarding the "right" of people to live in neighborhoods they can't afford.

The larger point is the acknowledgement by liberals that good neighborhoods and good schools foster success.

So why aren't liberals working to make inner city neighborhoods of better quality?

Why is it that only a select few, chosen by government, get a life boat out of the bad neighborhoods, created in part by failed liberal policies?

Instead of shipping a select few to a better school, why not give that choice to all by offering vouchers, tax credits and other products that empower parents to choose the best school for their kids?

Oh, yeah. Those urban elites are interested in maintaining their unholy alliance with the teachers' union, which needs a captive "head count" to keep their schools "adequately" funded, which, of course, is never adequate.

This is especially true when your school district can't keep track of \$17 million, right Minneapolis?

Maybe Johnny can't count in Minneapolis because the highly paid bureaucrats can't count, either.

Beam us up, Scotty!

5/20/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I'm not the one who's going to have a tough time in the election cycle, because I'm very easily and very deeply on the side of the public, and the public is very much backing my position."

- Speaker of the Minnesota House Kurt Daudt

2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SPECIAL EDITION!

THE BITTER END

Well, we knew it would come down to this. After weeks and weeks of legislative activity, there is still no agreement on major fiscal issues in Saint Paul and negotiations have gone behind closed doors.

The bad news is that these negotiations have gone behind closed doors, out of sight of taxpayers.

This publication has been on record numerous times decrying the opaque nature of these important deliberations. There has to be a better way. Both DFLers and Republicans have for many years been a part of this end-of-session ritual. Add our voice to the chorus calling for reform in this area.

Now the very good news. You can be thankful that there is a House Republican majority that has been fighting, and continues to fight, to protect your wallet down at the Capitol.

Without that majority, another parade of horror would have ensued, much like the previous bi-ennium, when the DFL went on a taxing and spending binge.

Without Speaker Daudt and company, your gas tax would have been increased 45%, your tab fees would have spiked the \$900 million budget surplus would have been blown like it was controlled by a drunkard at a Vegas craps table. And don't forget about that \$1.5 billion "bonding" bill that would have loaded up the state's credit card to fund governmental "priorities" like snow making machines and roof top gardens.

Every conservative should be happy things aren't happening in Saint Paul. There was a great deal of expediency and cooperation and good

feelings at the Capitol back in 2013 and 2014. Those years, the DFL controlled everything and we paid for it.

Strategically, Speaker Daudt has to walk a fine line in these negotiations.

On the one hand, the state's budget was set last year and the state is fully funded until July 1 of 2017.

If there is no deal, state government will move on, status quo.

But that's also the problem.

With a \$900 million surplus, tax cuts are in order and this money should be returned to the private economy, where it can be invested and otherwise deployed to enhance wealth creation.

With no deal, this money remains sequestered and unproductive.

Moreover, there are core governmental functions that should be beefed up, most notably roads and bridges.

No reasonable person can deny that our crumbling infrastructure is in need of repair and expansion, for example.

More importantly, there is a big political problem if agreement isn't reached on at least a couple of these big issues.

The year 2004 is a prime example.

That year, the House of Representatives passed a bonding bill but the State Senate failed to do so.

Because a bonding bill is the marquee item on the legislative agenda in even number years, the failure of that bill to pass made headlines.

The narrative that took hold across the state (thanks to the liberal media) was that legislators went to the Capitol and "didn't do their job."

It was portrayed that legislators sat around, collected their money, did nothing. All because a bonding bill didn't pass. Even though hundreds of other pieces of legislation were signed into law.

The public bought the narrative, as Republicans running for re-election reported hearing from irritated constituents that "You didn't do your job. If I didn't do my job, I would be fired!"

That November, the Republican majority in the House dropped from 81 to 68, a stinging loss of 13 seats, which created a bare majority of 68-66 in the Minnesota House.

This new parity was a GOP majority in name only, as RINOs like Rep. Jim Abeler (now Sen. Abeler) held the balance of power, jerking the caucus to the left.

Thus, a failure to strike a deal and bring some of the major issues to resolution holds real risk.

Make no mistake, the GOP will be blamed and the media will amplify that message, framing the narrative. That's a fact. An ugly and lamentable fact, but a fact nonetheless.

There's recent history to prove it. Google it.

Thus, burning down the place isn't a realistic strategy. It may sound good to conservatives. It certainly feels good to talk about it.

But the bottom line is that such a strategy is penny wise and pound foolish. That result would assuredly place the House majority in jeopardy.

Here's the bottom line: Speaker Daudt is looking to thread the needle by getting the best agreements he can with a DFL Senate Majority Leader and a DFL governor. He's doing this to best position Republicans to retain the House majority while helping the GOP try to take the Senate majority.

We hear many conservative groups rip on the speaker and GOP legislators, criticizing them for not being conservative enough.

In this governing environment, that's difficult because of the dynamics.

We all want more conservative government. The way to get that isn't to blast the Republicans who are there. Instead, the way to get there is to elect the

Republicans who aren't there to join them in a sustainable center-right governing coalition.

If you want more conservative leadership in the legislature, give that leadership more Republican votes.

Reducing the majority through a circular firing squad is surely a recipe disaster.

Guns pointed outward is the path to less government and more freedom.

So where do things stand as this issue goes to press?

Speaker Daudt, Majority Leader Tom Bakk and Governor Dayton are all negotiating spending targets for the major spending targets.

If an agreement is reached, it is likely that there will be a tax bill, a bonding bill, and supplemental appropriations bill to boost spending in some areas.

A transportation deal looks elusive at this point, although sources tell the Watchdog that there is still a chance to reach agreement, despite pessimistic public comments from leaders.

Per the state constitution, the legislature has until midnight Sunday to pass legislation.

Stay tuned.

5/27/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "No light rail funding, no bonding bill. When will the House figure this out?"

- State Sen. Ron Latz (DFL - Saint Louis Park)

Editor's Note: Next Monday, is Memorial Day. Memorial Day is a national holiday to honor those men and women who have died serving in the national defense. This is a friendly reminder that it's not a day to thank veterans, cops, or the guy who walks your dogs. Social media will be filled with chowder heads doing this. Don't be one of them. It's a day to remember our war dead - period.

SESSION WRAP UP - OUR TAKE

Well, that was interesting, to say the least. The 2016 legislative session, much like the 2015 session, ended in chaotic fashion.

And that's okay. Only the mainstream media and Big Government sheeple are concerned with a smooth and non-confrontational process in our democratic institutions.

The clashing of political interests is normal in a democracy (or a representative republic for you purists).

Back in 2013 and 2014, the process in Minnesota ran very smoothly because the DFL had majorities in the House and Senate and a liberal governor. They all agreed with each other to tax the snot out of taxpayers and jack up spending. Our state was very efficiently driven off the cliff.

Much of the inefficiency and "gridlock" of the past two years can be attributed to the House Republican majority putting the brakes on the typical DFL overreach regarding taxes, spending, and social issues, such as putting gay marriage on the same moral and legal plane as traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

Moreover, the House GOP did more than simply slow down the DFL Big Government Express.

They also outmaneuvered the DFL Senate and Governor Dayton to implement some good ideas.

How thankful we can be that the House GOP limited the current state budget to the second lowest level of growth in the past 50 years!

So what are the takeaways from the 2016 session?

TAKEAWAY: It wasn't a "do nothing" session.

With Republicans controlling one leg of the three-legged stool of governance, the mainstream media just couldn't help themselves in blaming Republicans in the bogus "do nothing" narrative.

No matter what Republicans do in Saint Paul, the media can be counted upon to criticize their actions, all in the name of supporting the DFL and the liberal world view, to which most of them subscribe.

The reality is that many things were accomplished this session, while the things that weren't done were the result of DFL intransigence, particularly the single-minded obsession with the \$2 billion light rail line known as "Southwest LRT."

Let's put aside for a moment the merits of the bills passed by the Republican House and simply focus on the idea that House Republicans "didn't do their job" at the Capitol this year.

According to the Governor's official legislative tracker, 61 bills have been signed into law so far during this 10 week legislative session. Moreover, there are scores of bills awaiting gubernatorial action that were passed in the last three days of the legislative session.

Recall that our constitution gives the governor 14 days to act on bills that are passed in the last three days of the legislative session. If not signed or vetoed during that period, the bills do not become law, the victim of a "pocket veto."

Many of those bills were of significance, including a tax cut for businesses in the form of a reduction in the unemployment insurance tax, drug sentencing reform, a presidential primary, and enhancements against patent infringements for companies like Medtronic and 3M.

There are other bills awaiting action, like the omnibus tax bill, that cut taxes \$279 million this year and will grow those cuts to over \$500 million next year.

All those bills were passed with significant bi-partisan support.

And the same holds true for the media's Holy Grail bill of the 2016 session, the bonding bill.

The media has created a false and misleading narrative that because a bonding bill didn't pass, the legislature (read "Republicans") didn't get anything done this legislative session,

BS. The House Republicans indeed passed a bonding bill. That bonding bill passed with significant support, with 60 Republicans and 31 Democrats voting "aye" and sending the bill to the DFL-controlled Senate.

Over in the Senate, the DFL dithered and dallied while working to get funding language for the Southwest Light Rail line inserted. By the time it was all done, it was too late to send the amended bill back to the House for consideration.

Agree or disagree with the contents and merits of the four major bills, the House passed a tax bill, passed a supplemental spending bill and passed a bonding bill, all with significant bi-partisan support.

Only the most partisan and biased observer could attempt to claim that the House GOP didn't take care of business this session.

Even on a transportation bill, the House put together a pretty good offer that the DFL rejected.

The bottom line is that the House GOP cannot be blamed for not getting things done this session.

To the extent that things didn't happen, they stemmed primarily from the DFL's insistence on funding a boondoggle train that won't move people faster than busses or cars and will be financed primarily with yet another big IOU to the federal treasury, which is now \$18 trillion in debt and counting.

TAKEAWAY: The Republican "Big Four" bills were pretty darn good. Well, three of them.

Start with taxes. Cutting taxes is always a good thing. The omnibus tax bill cut taxes nearly \$280 million this year and over \$500 million in the out years.

Perhaps most significant was a tax cut businesses hammered by the statewide business property tax.

There was also a welcome tax cut for Big Tobacco. Back in 2013, when the DFL ran the show, they jacked up the taxes on cigarettes to pay for the Vikings stadium after Mark Dayton's idea to fund the stadium with electronic pull tabs failed in an epic way.

One of the tricks the DFL pulled was to "index" the cigarette tax, which provided for regular and automatic tax increases.

Tax increases on auto pilot are horrible public policy and the indexing of cigarette taxes was unique to Minnesota.

Moreover, it is also dubious public policy to use the tax code to make people act a certain way. The tax code is a tool to raise revenue, it isn't a behavior modification tool like a shock collar.

So Democrats and Republicans took the cigarette tax of the index and made some other changes, which provided yet another opportunity for Governor Dayton to drop his pants and look stupid.

He now running around claiming he didn't know this change to the cigarette tax was in this major tax bill.

Gee, where have we heard this before? Personal seat licenses, farm equipment repair tax...

Here we go again. Either Governor Dayton isn't telling the truth or he and his staff are utterly incompetent. Both, perhaps? What an embarrassment.

On top of that, don't forget that candidate Mark Dayton was OPPOSED to raising tobacco taxes, saying those taxes were regressive and hit the poor harder than others, which is all true.

Don't hold your breath waiting for the media to call him out on that.

The transportation bill the GOP offered was also a nice one. No gas tax was a good start.

The bill contained \$255 million in repurposed funds out of the general fund that involved taxes from auto-related sales and services like the sale of auto parts and the car rental tax.

There were also funds from bonding, a leveraging of federal funds, and other revenues totaling \$730 million in the next fiscal year.

Now there was some consternation over authorizing both the Met Council and the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) authority to levy a 0.25% sales tax.

While we agree that this authority should come with reforms, this provision has taken a bit of a bad rap in our opinion.

First, this is about local control. Yes, the Met Council needs to be more accountable and that should happen. In this case of CTIB, it is made up of county commissioners from the 5 counties who comprise it. Don't like CTIB, vote out your county commissioner.

Now check out these additional features. For CTIB, in exchange for this authority, the board would be required to pay for 100% of the capital and operating costs of light rail after July 1, 2016. In other words, the state would be out of the light rail game.

For the Met Council, the plan would limit the Met Council to paying only for busses, except for the ongoing Blue and Green line operating subsidy, which would move from the state general fund to the Met Council. Again, the state would be out of the rail game.

This publication would like to see more accountability out of the Met Council than staggered terms.

Putting elected officials on the board, like the CTIB, would be one way to go. The Met Council has to be more directly accountable to voters or at least local elected officials should have some sort of veto power. The power of taxation demands representation. Met Council members currently represent the governor who appointed them, not the voters who have to live under the mandates of the Council.

Next is the bonding bill. While clocking in at a hefty \$1.4 billion (cash and bonding), the contents of the bill were best we've ever seen, with a heavy emphasis on roads and bridges and the maintenance of existing capital assets like college buildings and prison security upgrades.

For example, the transportation portion invested over \$700 million in roads and bridges:

- \$149 million for local bridge repair/replacement
- \$137 million for local road improvements
- \$27 million for railroad crossing grade separations
- \$200 million for roads and bridges and key corridors of commerce
- \$101 million for state/local roads
- \$100 million for state roads
- \$62 million for state trunk highways

Overall, the bill was surprisingly devoid of the typical crap in bonding bills like civic centers, snow making machines, ski jumps, and roof top gardens.

The fourth big bill was supplemental spending. We get that that is part of the deal when dealing with Democrats, but state government agencies are fully funded for the upcoming fiscal year and there is no need to boost their spending. We can't support that.

So what happens next? Here's our prediction: Dayton signs the tax bill into law, he signs the supplemental spending bill into law, there is a one day special session to pass a bonding bill (without funding or authorization for Southwest light rail), and the transportation bill falls by the wayside over insurmountable differences over Met Council and CTIB reform.

If Governor Dayton and the Democrats want to kill a bonding bill over Southwest light rail, let them. There are critical infrastructure projects in every corner of the state from transportation to prison safety upgrades to flood mitigation needs. Let the Democrats campaign this fall on the message of not doing THEIR job on a bonding bill, all because of light rail.

Speaker Daudt has the upper hand here. His bonding bill attracted 60 GOP and 31 DFL votes in the House, all without light rail funding.

The House has a well-established position on bonding. He should stick to it.

6/3/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I wish the county would levy more."
- Marsha Van Denburgh, county commissioner candidate

DISTRICT 1 MATCH UP

The race for county commissioner in Anoka County District 1 heated up last week with the announcement that Marsha Van Denburgh, a member of the Saint Francis school board, would challenge incumbent Matt Look.

What's interesting about the race is that Van Denburgh is active in local GOP politics, leaving many district 1 Republicans we contacted scratching their heads. Many wondered whether or not there was some sort of personality conflict or other dispute.

Her press release provides this rationale for her campaign: "I want to bring back fiscal responsibility to Anoka County, strengthen sagging relationships, create a climate to bring business here, fix and repair Hwy 10, and restore the prevailing wage."

Now we're scratching our heads.

Generally speaking, "fiscal responsibility" is synonymous with "fiscal conservatism," especially in district 1 of Anoka County.

When it comes to fiscal conservatism, Matt Look has been indisputably at the fore, leading to intense praise - and criticism - across the political spectrum.

During Look's tenure, he has been a vocal supporter of all county budgets that resulted in no net increase in the property tax levy.

This year, when the levy was increased a modest 2.49% to account for increased unfunded state and federal mandates, Look nonetheless voted "no."

It was this modest tax increase that caused Van Denburgh to lament, "I wish the county would levy more," according to a report in the Anoka County Union dated December 11, 2015.

The record of this county board is one of zero levy increases or very small increases.

That record also includes paying off county debt and greatly reducing reliance on issuing debt, a hallmark of the Dan Erhart era.

So what does Van Denburgh mean by "bring back fiscal responsibility?" What precisely, is the corollary "fiscal irresponsibility" to which she refers?

In this same vein, how does her stated support of restoring the county prevailing wage support the goal fiscal responsibility?

For uninitiated, the prevailing wage law sets wage floors for building projects involving government dollars.

While thoughtful people will offer good arguments for and against prevailing wages as a matter of public policy, there is no dispute that prevailing wage laws boost wages and make labor more expensive.

So how is restoring prevailing wage laws, which make public projects more expensive, "fiscally responsible?"

These observations also tie into her pledge to "create a climate to bring business here." It seems to us that low taxes would be an excellent draw for job creators. The reality is that Anoka County has to play to its strengths. The county isn't doesn't sit on major transportation arteries like the international airport. Major colleges and universities are in other counties. Low taxes and a minimum of governmental oversight are strengths that should be reinforced and emphasized as the county's proposition to the marketplace.

That seems to be working. The county is growing and jobs are coming with it. Trying to be something it's not isn't a strategy for success.

As for those "sagging relationships," the Anoka County board is more accessible and united than it ever was under the rule of Dan Erhart. Yeah, there are probably some local politicians who chafe under the fiscal conservatism of the county and the board's refusal to engage in the good ol' boy politics of the past. Telling people with their hand out "no" isn't something that often happens in government, but it does with this board.

Of course, if Ms. Van Denburgh wishes to submit a response we would be pleased to publish it.
It looks as if this campaign will be defined, at least in part, by a debate over fiscal responsibility.
That works for us.

Let the most fiscally responsible candidate win.

THE PRIMARIES IN 31

With the filing period for legislative office closed, a few interesting primary races unfolded.

In Senate District 31, both the 31A House seat and the 31B House seat will have Republican primaries.

In 31B, the primary isn't a big surprise. Cal Bahr, who may or may not exist, won the GOP endorsement over long-serving incumbent Tom Hackbarth.

(Pro tip for Bahr: when you're a candidate, it's a good thing to get your name out there. Earned media is a great way to do that. Legislative campaigns aren't covert operations, dude).

Hackbarth, who had kept his plans regarding a primary close to the vest, filed to run on May 24th.

As this publication discussed in a previous issue, Hackbarth clearly has the advantage here.

He has excellent name ID, the ability to raise money, a solid voting record and a good work ethic.

On the negative side, according to numerous eyewitnesses, Hackbarth pledged to abide by the endorsement and is now reneging on that promise, which tends to draw the ire of local activists and others who make campaigns successful.

Moreover, Hackbarth has demonstrated a proclivity to alienate and turn off just about every person he meets. Politics is a relationship business and he doesn't relate to people very well.

Negative karma has a tendency to catch up with you.

Bahr, on the other hand, has been fairly invisible since his endorsement. If this guy is actually out there running a campaign, we would like to hear about

it. We've seen CIA operatives with a higher profile than Bahr. I could confirm the existence of my campaign, but I would have to kill you...
On the 31A side, Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt picked up a late primary challenge from Alan Duff (of the famous beer family?).

Duff appears to be running primarily to reduce license tab fees.

Tax cuts are great and all, like the military pension tax cuts and business property tax cuts Daudt put forth, but Duff is wrong in calling to cut tab fees.

Why?

Because tab fees are constitutionally dedicated to roads and bridges.

Now, if you think our roads and bridges are over-funded, you should call for a cut.

This publication can think of a 100 higher priorities for tax and fee cuts and reductions before getting after a constitutionally-dedicated funding stream for roads and bridges.

Will Duff's campaign signs say "Duff: fewer roads and bridges!"?

Until we see something from Duff, it will be hard to take this guy seriously. Thus far, he appears to be another one of the tin foil hat crowd up that way.

SIVARAJH CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Anoka County Board Chair Rhonda Sivarajah submits the following statement of candidacy:

LINO LAKES, MN - Rhonda Sivarajah has filed to seek re-election to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners for District 6, which includes all of the communities of Centerville, Circle Pines, Columbus, Lexington, Lino Lakes, Linwood Township and parts of Blaine.

In 2011 and each subsequent year, Sivarajah has been elected by her peers to serve as Chair of the County Board.

Under Sivarajah's leadership the County Board has delivered real results!

- Reduced the county's property tax levy for three years straight-the first reductions in over 40 years. As a result the property tax levy for 2016 is nearly the same as it was back in 2010.
- Paid down \$50 million worth of debt without borrowing for over three years. Today, 77% of the county's debt will be paid off within 10 years.
- Prioritized roads and bridges thus improving the overall pavement quality of our county road system.
- Restructured the county's mental health system in order to provide services to more people effectively and efficiently.
- Expanded services available to the senior population in order to meet the growing needs.

All of this and more was accomplished while maintaining services and healthy reserves.

During her tenure, Sivarajah has never forgotten that she was elected to be a strong voice for you, the taxpayer. Sivarajah is running for re-election to the County Board for one reason-to continue to make a difference for the people of Anoka County.

"Thank you for allowing me the honor of representing you on the Anoka County Board. As your County Commissioner I will continue to be a dedicated, hard-working, community-oriented representative who uses common-sense approaches to solving issues," said Sivarajah.

"I want Anoka County to continue to be a great place to live, work, and raise a family. That is why I am asking for your vote on Tuesday, November 8, 2016."

Sivarajah was born and raised in rural Cambridge, Minnesota. She earned a Bachelor of Arts from St. Cloud State University. She and her husband, Ran, a retired police officer, reside in Lino Lakes and have been married for 26 years. They have two children in college-Sonjay and Asha.

6/10/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

- Sun Tzu

KNOW THY OPPONENT

Our loyal readers should understand the importance and broader implications of the current standoff between House Republicans and Governor Dayton over a potential special session. To understand those implications, readers should either refresh their memory or learn the following "rules for radicals" from Saul Alinsky, the father of modern liberal political guerilla tactics:

RULE 1: "Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have." Power is derived from 2 main sources - money and people. "Have-Nots" must build power from flesh and blood.

RULE 2: "Never go outside the expertise of your people." It results in confusion, fear and retreat. Feeling secure adds to the backbone of anyone.

RULE 3: "Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy." Look for ways to increase insecurity, anxiety and uncertainty.

RULE 4: "Make the enemy live up to its own book of rules." If the rule is that every letter gets a reply, send 30,000 letters. You can kill them with this because no one can possibly obey all of their own rules.

RULE 5: "Ridicule is man's most potent weapon." There is no defense. It's irrational. It's infuriating. It also works as a key pressure point to force the enemy into concessions.

RULE 6: "A good tactic is one your people enjoy." They'll keep doing it without urging and come back to do more. They're doing their thing, and will even suggest better ones.

RULE 7: "A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag." Don't become old news.

RULE 8: "Keep the pressure on. Never let up." Keep trying new things to keep the opposition off balance. As the opposition masters one approach, hit them from the flank with something new.

RULE 9: "The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself." Imagination and ego can dream up many more consequences than any activist.

RULE 10: "If you push a negative hard enough, it will push through and become a positive." Violence from the other side can win the public to your side because the public sympathizes with the underdog.

RULE 11: "The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative." Never let the enemy score points because you're caught without a solution to the problem.

RULE 12: Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." Cut off the support network and isolate the target from sympathy. Go after people and not institutions; people hurt faster than institutions.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S AT STAKE

After reading and understanding Alinsky's rules, it's easier to understand what's at stake here.

This isn't about some bonding project in some far-flung corner of the state. It isn't about some bus line in the urban core. Nor is it about some tax break for some group of citizens.

This is all about political power, especially as that power and the allocation of it are at stake in November, when all 201 legislative seats are up for grabs.

In short, the composition of the both the Minnesota House and Senate are at stake, with the DFL hoping that they can hold the Senate and win the House, leading to the DFL once again controlling the entire legislature and the governor's office.

It's not about some project. It's not even about more spending in some budget bill. It's about who controls the levers of governmental power in this state.

When you understand the play, the messaging of the DFL, as amplified by the media, becomes clear and understandable.

Consider rules 5 and 12. Speaker Daudt has been held up to scorn and ridicule. "He should do his job." "He should compromise." "It's his fault things didn't get done." "His radical world view has caused the stalemate."

That ridicule is then expanded to the House GOP in general.

Consider rule 8. Governor Dayton vetoed a tax bill that passed in a broad bi-partisan fashion. That veto contributed to the pressure to agree to a broad-reaching special session to include a host of other issues. Negating every aspect of bi-partisan compromise contributes to pressure on the GOP when it's amplified by the media. If one has watched the recent press conferences and scrums, Speaker Daudt is often asked if he's meeting soon with Governor Dayton or when he plans to do so. Funny, that same question isn't posed to Sen. Bakk, the DFL Senate Majority Leader.

Consider rule 2. The message to the DFL masses is simple. Help your team fight for more government. More transit, more spending, more government. It's what the DFL coalition and its constituent organizations do - they fight for more government largesse.

Now consider rule 3. It may not be apparent at first glance, but this rule is what underpins the governor's obsession with the "\$100 million error" in the tax bill. Part of increasing the anxiety and uncertainty of the opponent is to raise irrelevant arguments and make them a headline. This is exactly what is in play here. The error was a simple mistake between two conjunctions, "and" and "or."

These drafting errors happen on a regular basis. In fact, there are bills every year that make these corrections, called "Revisor's Bills" and "Corrections Bills."

Whether the tax bill was assembled the first day of session or the last, this drafting error may have happened. There isn't one ounce of proof that the date on the calendar or the time on the clock that day caused this administrative error.

More importantly, a special session isn't needed to give the proper words in this regard their intended effect.

It has long been the practice at the Capitol, whether under DFL or GOP control, that the chairs of committees have jointly penned letters explaining these administrative errors and making clear the true intent of the language.

Now, this minor drafting error has become the headline and the rationale for killing a major, bi-partisan tax cut bill, while blaming the GOP.

"Their last minute management led to this (Dr. Evil voice) \$100 MILLION tax error!"

Irrelevant and a non-issue. Unless, of course, you're viewing the issue through the lens of rule #2.

In many respects, we are not fighting a battle here over a couple of outstanding issues. We are very much fighting a war.

Thus it is vital that the conservative team be united in pushing back against this false narrative and give full-throated support to the true narrative, which bears repeating.

Tell your friends, neighbors, family and co-workers the truth about the tax bill that was vetoed.

That bill was a conference report, jointly authored and unanimously passed by a House-Senate conference committee.

That bi-cameral conference committee was comprised of the following legislators:

Sen. Rod Skoe (DFL - Clearbrook) - Senate Tax Committee Chairman

Sen. Paul Gazelka (R - Nisswa)

Sen. Ann Rest (DFL - New Hope)

Sen. Lyle Koenen (DFL - Clara City)

Sen. Kari Dziedzic (DFL - Minneapolis)

Rep. Greg Davids (R - Preston) - House Tax Committee Chairman

Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R - Mazeppa)

Rep. Bob Barrett (R - Lindstrom)

Rep. Chris Swedzinski (R - Ghent)

Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL - Winona)

The conferees assembled a bill that passed the full House by a vote of 123-10.

House Minority Leader Paul Thissen has been leading the chorus against the bill, now that it has been vetoed.

Let the record reflect that the following DFL members of the House voted for the conference report: Allen, Anzelc, Applebaum, Atkins, Bernardy, Bly, Carlson, Clark, Considine, Davnie, Dehn, Ecklund, Erhardt, Fischer, Flanagan, Halverson, Hausman, Hilstrom, Hortman, Isaacson, Johnson C., Kahn, Laine, Lein, Lillie, Loeffler, Mahoney, Mariani, Marquart, Masin, Melin, Metsa, Moran, Mullery, Murphy M., Nelson, Newton, Norton, Pelowski, Persell, Poppe, Rosenthal, Schoen, Schultz, Wagenius, Ward, Yarusso, Yuakim.

In fact, only 9 House Democrats voted "no."

Now let's check the Senate DFL who voted in favor of this bill:
Eaton, Jensen, Sheran, Bakk, Eken, Johnson, Pappas, Sieben, Bonoff, Kent, Skoe, Carlson, Franzen, Koenen, Reinert, Sparks, Champion, Latz, Rest, Stumpf, Clausen, Goodwin, Tomassoni, Cohen, Hawj, Lourey, Torres Ray, Dahle, Hayden, Marty, Saxhaug, Hoffman, Metzen, Scalze, Dibble, Schmit, Wieger, Dzedzic, Wiklund.

ZERO Senate Democrats voted against this bill. ZERO.

In the entire legislature, only 9 DFLers voted against this bill the governor vetoed.

And the liberal narrative is that the Speaker Daudt needs to get off his high horse and compromise?

This what compromise looks like.

For one more example, let's look at the bonding bill that Speaker Daudt and the House GOP passed out of the House and the Senate killed.

Democrats who voted in favor of the bill:
Anzelc, Bly, Carlson, Clark, Dehn, Ecklund, Erhardt, Fischer, Frieberg, Hausman, Isaacson, Johnson C., Johnson S., Kahn, Lien, Lillie, Mahoney, Mariani, Marquart, Masin, Melin, Metsa, Moran, Murphy M., Newton, Pelowski, Pinto, Poppe, Rosenthal, Sundin, Yarusso.

These votes put the lie to the bogus liberal Alinsky-inspired narrative.

All Republicans and allied organizations need to push back with vigor against this Big Lie.

Compromise has happened.

If the governor wants compromise, he should agree to sign the tax bill he vetoed and agree to sign the bonding bill passed by the House.

6/17/16

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

- The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

"There seems to us no doubt, on the basis of both text and history, that the Second Amendment conferred an individual right to keep and bear arms."

- District of Columbia vs. Heller, Justice Scalia

"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

- The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

"The makers of the Constitution conferred, as against the government, the right to be let alone -- the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men."

- Justice Louis D. Brandeis

SHERIFF STANEK'S SURREPTITIOUS SURVEILLANCE STATE

Here he goes again. Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek continues to find new and innovative ways to secretly spy upon the citizens of Hennepin County, all without disclosure to the citizens he represents nor the policy makers at the state level, who are charged with Article I, Section 10 of the Minnesota Constitution, which states:

Sec. 10. Unreasonable searches and seizures prohibited. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated; and no warrant shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched and the person or things to be seized.

The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is the only law enforcement agency in the state, as far as we know, to employ facial recognition technology.

Formally known as Image Identification Technology, the technique uses software to analyze thousands of points on a person's face, found in a picture, to create a profile that is used to search for a match against a known name and photo.

Although it's unclear exactly how the use of this technology came to light, a private citizen in Hennepin County became aware of its use and filed requests for disclosure under the state's Data Practices Law, which revealed that the Sheriff's Office has been using the technology since August of 2013.

After a court finally compelled Stanek to release the data pursuant to state law, citizens and legislators learned of this situation through a newspaper article.

This isn't the first time Sheriff Stanek's office has been called out for utilizing far-reaching invasive surveillance technology.

Back in 2010, Stanek requested, and finally received, funding to acquire cellphone exploitation technology. This technology, known as "Kingfish" or "Stingray," is used to collect and track cell phone data by ticking phones into believing that the tracking device is a cell phone tower.

The acquisition of the technology created an uproar, and was only approved by the Hennepin County Board after first being tabled twice over policy concerns.

With regard to Kingfish/Stingray, the legislature two years ago passed a law requiring a signed judicial warrant to use the technology against citizens, with the requirement that the warrant be unsealed after 90 days.

According to a recent Fox 9 report, these kinds of warrants routinely remained sealed, and out of the public eye, long after state law requires their unsealing. As one might expect, Hennepin County was one of the jurisdictions cited in the report as violating state law in this regard.

The ongoing and growing surveillance state in Hennepin County is especially troubling for two reasons.

First, it points to the dire need of the legislature to get proactive in crafting meaningful, comprehensive safeguards to guarantee the protection of citizen privacy rights against this technology, as guaranteed by both the federal and state constitutions.

For example, the state has no policy regarding the classification and use of facial recognition technology, despite the fact that it has been in use in Minnesota for three years.

The legislature needs to get in front of the use of this surveillance technology and stop addressing the situation in piecemeal, after-the-fact fashion.

It's clear that a dedicated committee or sub-committee on privacy and technology is desperately needed.

It's disturbing to think that our core constitutional privacy rights are in many respects protected only by internal Hennepin County Sheriff's Office policies or Hennepin County board policy.

Every Minnesotan deserves a uniform and comprehensive protection of their constitutional rights.

And don't think this problem is limited to Hennepin County. According to media reports, other law enforcement agencies are shipping photos over to Sheriff Stanek, asking his office to run images through his software for possible facial recognition matches.

Moreover, there may be now or in the near future other law enforcement agencies using this or other invasive surveillance technology.

This technology is here and is here to stay, likely to get even more invasive.

Of course, there is a role for this technology in maintaining public safety. If it was simply a matter of banishing it from any use, the issue would be an easy one.

Having said that, it is the opinion of this publication that the situation is far, far out of balance, with the right to privacy under assault and eroding with each passing day.

It is a core function of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of state government to support and defend the state constitution.

On the privacy front, they are failing.

Second, Rich Stanek is perhaps the most politically active sheriffs in the state. He is a former Republican legislator and a frequent speaker at Republican functions.

Moreover, he is rumored to be a candidate for governor in 2018, despite some significant baggage (more on that in a future update).

Republican activists and delegates should be asking all the candidates who come before them seeking the GOP endorsement where they stand on issues of privacy and liberty.

This is especially important regarding those who will seek the endorsement for governor in 2018.

The chief executive is, of course, the person charged with seeing that the laws of this state are faithfully executed.

If Stanek seeks the endorsement, an excellent opportunity will present itself for the GOP family to have a robust discussion regarding the balance between safety and privacy.

We look forward to engaging in that debate.

LIBERALS ON FULL-TILT

Tilt is a poker term for a state of mental or emotional confusion or frustration in which a player adopts a less than optimal strategy, usually resulting in the player becoming over-aggressive.

The recent terrorist attack in Orlando has put the Left on full tilt as the attack represents the confluence of multiple issues that put liberal ideology at odds with reality, which in turns prompts them to lose their collective minds and go on "tilt" against conservatives.

The first clash with reality comes in the form of the gun issue.

For the Left, this is a Holy Grail issue. For the self-identified liberal, hating guns and denying the plain text of the Second Amendment is article of faith.

The issue also represents an opportunity for liberals to once again prove that facts are nothing but an inconvenience, to be cast aside much as one would swat away an annoying mosquito.

"We have to stop the sale of automatic weapons," proclaimed comedian Lewis Black.

Sorry, Lew. The long gun used in the attack wasn't an automatic rifle. In fact, automatic rifles have been illegal for the average citizen to possess for a long, long time.

"We need to get the AR-15 'assault' rifle off street by making sales illegal."

Sorry, libs. The long gun used in the attack wasn't an AR-15. Moreover, the AR-15 is a popular hunting rifle and is also commonly used to control varmint populations in rural America, a place liberals know nothing about and care for even less.

"We need an assault weapons ban to make us safe." Sorry, we had an "assault" weapons ban back in the 1990s and the evidence shows it did nothing to make our streets safer.

Sadly, recent events in Europe have proven that even the strictest of gun control measures don't work. This week, a member of the British Parliament was shot dead in a country that has among the strictest gun laws in the world.

Paris wasn't kept safe by that countries strict gun laws. Nor were the people of Brussels.

Moreover, it's somewhat amusing to watch liberals deny both the plain text of the Second Amendment and the Supreme Court's reasonable interpretation of those clear words.

Social media is filled with caustic remarks about the "so-called" Second Amendment while other chowder heads presume to limit or deny the constitutional rights of their neighbors by proclaiming what types of firearms and for what purpose they may be kept.

Really.

Because abortion on demand is another liberal article of faith, let's apply the same rhetoric to their sacred cow.

Abortion is a "so-called" right. In fact, it's a made up right, discovered in a made-up part of the federal constitution.

The word "abortion" and the phrase "reproductive rights" are nowhere to be found in the constitution.

Instead, the Supreme Court simply decreed that the majority had found something called a "penumbra of privacy" that included the right to have an abortion.

That's what we call judge-made law, not the Second Amendment, which is there in black and white for the whole world to read, complete with a historical record to demonstrate that the Framers of the Bill of Rights knew exactly what they wanted when they guaranteed the right to keep and bear arms.

Remember reading in civics class about the great debate in Philadelphia to protect the right to have your baby's head crushed with a forceps and the brain vacuumed out? Neither did we, because it never happened.

Liberals are also cringing over Orlando because it is forcing them to confront the ugly reality of radical Islam.

Liberals continue to deny the existence and danger posed by radical Islam, refusing to even utter the term, in many cases.

Radical Islam has proven to be an ugly, vile, "twofer" in Orlando.

First, radical Islam is virulently anti-gay. Lutherans and Methodists aren't pitching gay men off roof tops and torturing them to death.

That same virulent hatred was on full display in Orlando, as the Pulse nightclub was no doubt deliberately targeted as a symbol of the gay lifestyle.

Terrorism is, in essence, about attacking symbols. The Twin Towers were a symbol of American capitalism. The Pentagon a symbol of American military might.

The Pulse was similarly a symbol of that which these terrorists despise.

The liberal narrative is always about attacking Western culture and American institutions as oppressive bastions of white male privilege.

That narrative lies in tatters today.

This attack has forced liberals to come to terms with the idea that their response to radical Islam has been weak and ineffective, this time resulting in a horrific attack on a constituency that liberals enjoy bragging about supporting and protecting.

Hence, all the hyperventilating over guns. It also serves as a convenient distraction from the failure to confront radical Islam - the real issue.

The common thread in domestic terrorist attacks isn't guns.

We have seen these attacks carried out with guns, box cutters, pressure cookers, and air planes.

Instead, the common thread and the common weapon is the radicalized Muslim.

Like so many other lies, this liberal lie has been tragically exposed.

Guns aren't the threat here. The terrorist who would wield a gun, or any other weapon, to kill innocent Americans is the clear and present danger.

6/24/16

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week: "If you like your doctor, you're going to be able to keep your doctor."

- Barack Obama

"If you like your insurance plan, you will keep it. No one will be able to take that away from you. It hasn't happened yet. It won't happen in the future."

- Barack Obama

"According to the indictment and documents filed in court, between March 2007 and October 2014, at least \$250,000 in CAM funds intended to be used to provide services to low-income residents of Minneapolis were instead diverted to W. DAVIS' personal use and the use of his family and friends."

- FBI Press Release

"For years people in the nonprofit world questioned the financial dealings of Bill Davis, and every time, his powerful DFL friends stood behind him."

- Jon Tevlin

A BIG, BIG DEAL

Greetings, loyal readers. Welcome to the "Let's all enjoy some more government" edition of the Watchdog.

This week, we will examine some of the things government is doing to, er, for you, the taxpayer.

Let's start at the federal court house in Minneapolis, where DFL kingpin and putative non-profit CEO William Davis finally decided to acknowledge his fraud and deceit by throwing himself on the mercy of the court (he deserves none) by pleading guilty to all 16 counts of federal law breaking.

For the record, here's what he was charged with doing, as charged by the U.S. Attorney:

- Conspiracy to commit theft concerning programs receiving federal funds, one count
- Mail fraud, 10 counts
- Wire fraud, one count
- Theft concerning programs receiving federal funds, four counts

Recall that Davis was the CEO of a non-profit called Community Action of Minneapolis (CAM), which was responsible for administering federal heating assistance grants as well as other grants to provide job training to people in need of job training skills.

Check out some of the low lights from this low life's tenure at CAM, according to the FBI:

"According to the indictment and documents filed in court, between March 2007 and October 2014, at least \$250,000 in CAM funds intended to be used to provide services to low-income residents of Minneapolis were instead diverted to W. DAVIS' personal use and the use of his family and friends, including JORDAN DAVIS. As part of the scheme, W. DAVIS caused CAM funds to be used for personal expenses, including airline tickets, hotel stays, rental cars and a Caribbean cruise. In total, between January 2009 and October 2014, W. DAVIS caused \$77,000 of CAM funds to be used for personal travel expenses for himself and his friends and family members."

"According to the indictment and documents filed in court, W. DAVIS used intimidation and retaliation to prevent CAM staff from informing anyone, including CAM's Board of Directors, that he was using his position as CAM's CEO to divert CAM funds to his personal use and that of his family and friends."

"From at least March 2007 until January 2011, J. DAVIS (Bill Davis' son) continued to receive his full paycheck, \$1,320 biweekly, for his work at the Ben & Jerry's, even though he was doing no work for the ice cream shop. J. DAVIS endorsed and deposited the paychecks every two weeks. In total, J. DAVIS endorsed and deposited at least 105 paychecks for his no-show job. As a result of W. DAVIS and J. DAVIS's fraud scheme, CAM paid J. DAVIS more than \$140,000 for a job he did not perform."

This isn't some run-of -the-mill fraud case.

This is because Bill Davis is a power broker in the DFL and very politically connected.

As columnist Jon Tevlin pointed out recently (see the quote above), Bill Davis was untouchable for many years because of his DFL political connections.

For example, the CAM board of directors included high power DFL politicians like state Senator Jeff Hayden and Congressman Keith Ellison, both of whom ran off the CAM board like rats off the Titanic when this scandal hit the media.

As far back as 2011, staffers inside the Minnesota Department of Commerce were raising red flags concerning possible, waste, fraud and abuse by CAM.

But Commissioner Mike Rothman, a Mark Dayton appointee, refused to investigate Bill Davis and CAM because of "political ramifications."

Here's what an MPR story had to say about the political connections that insulated Davis from scrutiny:

"Commerce analysts had grown increasingly alarmed that money meant to aid the poor was going to people who were not eligible to receive it. Those staffers, who requested anonymity because they aren't authorized to speak, say the red flags raised in 2011 were the first alerting Rothman that Davis, his DFL political ally, was mismanaging money from the energy assistance fund run by Commerce.

The warnings, they say, were repeated over the years but went nowhere. Rothman would not sever ties with Community Action. Several in the department say they were told the contracts would continue because "the political ramifications are greater than staff would understand," a characterization Rothman does not dispute."

The bottom line is that this is a major, significant political scandal by the DFL, of the DFL, for the DFL.

Much the Senate Office Building debacle back in 2014, the GOP would be well served to make CAM the poster child for DFL graft, corruption, and arrogance this election cycle.

In this respect, the GOP will choose from an embarrassment of riches in deciding which DFL policy failures to highlight.

The CAM fraud?

MnSURE?

The bonding bill that was killed because of light rail?

The vetoed tax cut bill that was supported by 90% of the legislature?

The anti-mining and anti-pipeline attitude?

The push for a gas tax while government sits a \$1 billion surplus?

It's a good problem to have, and we suggest that CAM be part of the narrative.

THE IVORY TOWER

Regular and real people have known for generations that our colleges and universities are populated by professors and leaders who are out of touch with what's happening on the ground on Main Street.

This has been especially true since the 1960s, when the spoiled brat children born of Greatest Generation parents became adults (at least physically) and turned academia into a haven for their special brand of liberalism.

University of Minnesota Professor of political science Larry Jacobs reminded us of this sad truth this week when he authored an [opinion](#) piece in "The Hill" regarding Obamacare.

Jacobs, who earns a salary of over \$200,000 from the taxpayers, chides voters for not appreciating and understanding the genius and success of Obamacare (ACA).

He's puzzled by the low approval numbers of the ACA compared to its success as a matter of public policy.

He's stunned that about 50% of respondents in a long-running tracking poll disapprove of the ACA.

He observes that these negative views "fly in the face of the ACA's accomplishments."

The Professor then goes on to blame the "political environment" and "hyper-partisanship" for the negative view of the ACA.

Really.

This publication could spent the next ten editions laying out in a very factual way the failures of the ACA but we won't. We trust that our readers are well aware of the ACA's massive failure and have likely experienced those failures first hand.

Massive premium increases. Expensive policies that don't offer what consumers want. Losing your doctor. State insurance exchanges failing. Health insurance companies leaving many markets. Unresponsive bureaucrats leaving citizens in endless waits on the phone. Paperwork lost.

Only a university professor could wonder why the great unwashed masses don't support Obamacare.

In addition to living in the Ivory Tower, Jacobs is also out of touch because he enjoys a Cadillac health insurance plan paid for by the taxpayers. If he had to get on the exchange and use Obamacare, his tune would probably change.

But that's a liberal for you. They think Big Government is good - good for other people.

Instead of hanging out in the faculty lounge sipping lattes with equally liberal and out of touch colleagues in their echo chamber of snotty elitism, perhaps Jacobs should spend some time on Main Street and see what liberal policies have done to regular people.

7/1/16

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Per long-standing Watchdog policy, we pause this week to honor our sacred Independence and give thanks for the blessings of freedom and liberty. This publication will resume next week in our ceaseless quest to protect and maintain that hard-earned freedom and liberty. Happy Independence Day, Watchdogs!

Quote of the Week: As the representatives signed the Constitution, Franklin watched. George Washington's chair was at the front of the hall, and a sun was painted on the back of the chair. Franklin told some of the members near him that it was always difficult for painters to show the difference between the rising sun and the setting sun. He said that during the convention he had often looked at the painted sun and wondered "...whether it was rising or setting. But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

- From numerous historical resources

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

While Ben Franklin is rightly recognized by all thinking Americans as one of our greatest citizens, many of those folks don't realize or have forgotten the many critical roles he played in founding our great nation.

Among his long list of remarkable achievements, Franklin was the only man to sign all three documents that freed the United States of America from colonial rule: The Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris, and the Constitution.

He was perhaps the man most responsible for shepherding the Constitution to passage at the convention in Philadelphia.

When the Constitutional Convention convened 1787, Franklin was 81 years old and in poor health. He was also deeply revered and highly respected by the delegates.

He played a critical role in bridging the significant philosophical differences among the delegates.

He also set the example in bearing personal defeats gracefully in the name of the greater purpose of establishing a constitution for the country.

For example, Franklin wanted a unicameral legislature and wanted a committee of chief executives instead of a single president.

He lost on both counts but history recorded that he bore those defeats with grace and dignity while working to secure compromise and consensus among the delegates.

In particular, Franklin is credited with helping secure passage of the Constitution in two instances.

The first was his role in forging the "Great Compromise."

As our readers know, the convention was deadlocked with respect to the composition of the legislature.

How would power be allocated among the states? Would it be an equal number of votes? Would it be determined by population?

Franklin called for compromise. He said, "When a broad table is to be made, and the edges of the planks do not fit, the artist takes a little from both, and makes a good joint. In like manner here, both sides must part with some of their demands in order that they may join in some accommodating purpose."

Brilliant.

When the proposed constitution was nearing a final vote, many delegates were worried that there were enough disgruntled delegates to scuttle the document.

September 17th, 1787, was the last day of the convention.

Franklin prepared a final speech he planned to give, a plea for unity for the greater good.

Franklin, too weak to deliver the speech, had fellow delegate James Wilson of Pennsylvania deliver it:

Mr. President,

"I confess that there are several parts of this constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better

information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgment of others. Most men indeed as well as most sects in Religion, think themselves in possession of all truth, and that wherever others differ from them it is so far error. Steele a Protestant in a Dedication tells the Pope, that the only difference between our Churches in their opinions of the certainty of their doctrines is, the Church of Rome is infallible and the Church of England is never in the wrong. But though many private persons think almost as highly of their own infallibility as of that of their sect, few express it so naturally as a certain french lady, who in a dispute with her sister, said "I don't know how it happens, Sister but I meet with no body but myself, that's always in the right - Il n'y a que moi qui a toujours raison."

In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such; because I think a general Government necessary for us, and there is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered, and believe farther that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in Despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other. I doubt too whether any other Convention we can obtain, may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our enemies, who are waiting with confidence to hear that our councils are confounded like those of the Builders of Babel; and that our States are on the point of separation, only to meet hereafter for the purpose of cutting one another's throats. Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they shall die. If every one of us in returning to our Constituents were to report the objections he has had to it, and endeavor to gain partizans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally received, and thereby lose all the salutary effects & great advantages resulting naturally in our favor among foreign Nations as well as among ourselves, from our real or apparent unanimity. Much of the strength & efficiency of any Government in procuring and securing happiness to the

people, depends, on opinion, on the general opinion of the goodness of the Government, as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its Governors. I hope therefore that for our own sakes as a part of the people, and for the sake of posterity, we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution (if approved by Congress & confirmed by the Conventions) wherever our influence may extend, and turn our future thoughts & endeavors to the means of having it well administred.

On the whole, Sir, I can not help expressing a wish that every member of the Convention who may still have objections to it, would with me, on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument."

7/8/16

In This Issue:

"I never received nor sent any material that was marked classified."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

"FBI investigators announced July 5 that Hillary Clinton sent or received more than 100 emails over a private server while secretary of state that contained information that was classified when it was sent."

- Multiple news outlets

"But I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time; never. These allegations are false. And I need to go back to work for the American people. Thank you."

- President William Jefferson Clinton

"I did have a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky that wasn't appropriate."

- President William Jefferson Clinton

"We know the attack in Libya had nothing to do with the film. It was a planned attack. Not a protest."

- Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in an email to the Egyptian Foreign Minister

LIES AND THE LYING LIARS WHO TELL THEM

Remember that book title? That was written by erstwhile coke head and current doofus and U.S. Senator Al Franken.

He used the title, of course, to denigrate Republicans. If he had any decency or integrity, he would have applied to real lying liars - William Jefferson and Hillary Rodham, the Clinton duo.

We could go over the sordid details of the latest scandal, that being the home brew email server, but the facts of the scandal are well known to our readers and are but supporting documentation to the bigger and more important point.

The American public has, over the past 25 years, seen an extensive and pervasive pattern of disturbing behavior from the Clintons.

Step 1: Get caught in a seedy, tawdry or other type of scandal (Monica Lewinsky, Rose Law Firm, cattle futures, Vince Foster, Benghazi, Whitewater...).

Step 2: Offer an explanation about the scandal ("I did not have sexual relations with that woman...Ms. Lewinsky," "Benghazi was a protest march that got out of hand," etc.).

Step 3: Explanation is subsequently proven to be an outright lie (Over 100 emails WERE classified at the time they were sent and received, Bill admits to having sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky, Hillary Clinton knew Benghazi was a terrorist attack).

Step 4: The Clintons walk away unscathed.

It's quite clear from the extensive evidence and long national experience that Hillary Clinton lacks the character and integrity to be a drug pusher, much less the chief executive of the United States of America.

There are indeed two legal systems in America. One for the political elites like Bill and Hillary, and one for everyone else.

One legal system is increasingly burdensome and powerful, the other isn't really a legal system at all.

MORE "FREE" STUFF

You know campaign season is upon us when the Democrats start offering the electorate free stuff.

Like a gift from Santa Claus, all the promised things are free and without obligation.

And like Santa Claus, the whole thing is fake and based on a feel-good fantasy.

In this case, the freebie is college.

There must be a secret hideaway somewhere where liberals sit around and ponder the question, "what kind of free stuff would entice voters to overlook all our failed programs, our scandals, and our ineptitude in order to put us in

power for another term?"

This month, the liberal carnival barker encourages voters to step right up and grab some free college. Grab some for junior. And some for momma. And some for little Susie and little Johnny. Don't be shy! There's enough for everyone!

Of course, the liberals have identified a very real problem. The costs to attend a college or university have exploded over time, far outstripping inflation.

As the means for most Americans to achieve upward mobility, access to a post-secondary education is important.

Of course, having government give out free college is dumb public policy and, of course, is the worst possible remedy.

To start, the reason that college is so expensive is because government has enabled colleges and universities to jack up costs by masking those costs through subsidies in the name of loans and grants.

The game is an easy one to follow. Colleges and universities jack up tuition by a dollar. Government follows suit by increasing grants and loans by a buck.

Pretty soon, the tuition is going up by thousands, followed by increasing grants and loans to match.

In other words, consumers, at least in the short run, are insulated from the negative impacts of price increases.

In a free market system, price acts as a signal.

Increasing prices discourage consumption.

But when price increases are met with a higher subsidy, the cost to the consumer is masked, encouraging the consumer to operate in a distorted market.

When that \$100,000 car looks like a \$30,000 car in the sale manager's office, it's an easier buy.

When that \$500,000 home is financed with a negative amortization or jumbo loan, it look easier to afford.

How ironic that Democrats decry one form of this chicanery but fully embrace the other.

If consumers were exposed to the full downside pressure of increasing college costs, those costs would be held in check and even fall as demand for college fell.

Now, Hillary Clinton is proposing, at least in some form, to completely untether college from the supply-demand equilibrium.

Decoupling any product or service from a market-driven price ultimately proves disastrous.

This is because while price acts as a signal, it also acts as an enforcement mechanism to visit discipline on the market.

If college is "free," what is to stop the supplier from raising prices well beyond what is rationally justified?

If college is "free," what is to stop the consumer of this product from wasting it?

Junior has no business going to college because he's a horrible student and he's lazy, but it's "free" so what's to lose? Get him out of the house and let Faber College babysit him, goes the thinking of thousands of parents if this becomes law.

And if thousands more are attending college, that means that there should be more professors and more buildings, and more support infrastructure for colleges.

The pricing signal in a capitalist economy helps ensure allocative efficiency, meaning that resources are dedicated to their highest and best use.

When capital is allocated to a college or university, it means that capital isn't being allocated elsewhere.

Think about human capital and how this proposal would distort the market.

Under normal circumstances, Johnny would become a carpenter and learn his trade through his private employer.

Now Johnny is at Springfield University, getting some "free" college paid for by the taxpayers.

Johnny would have been better served as a carpenter, but market distortion steered him away.

The same goes for Susie, who would have enlisted in the Air Force and spent a career there.

So college is free? Free to whom? Not to the employers who rely on a workforce that doesn't require a college education.

And no, those careers aren't lesser careers. A career in the construction trades or the military, for example, can be rewarding and provide good pay and benefits for a lifetime.

On the other hand, a college degree is no guarantee of prestige or financial security.

It's not free to the taxpayers, who would be on the hook for yet another government program, the costs of which are heaped on to the \$18 trillion pile of debt our feckless national government has racked up.

This shameless pandering is also another step on the road to socialism, as government would have yet one more "right" to ensure - the right to go to college and make your neighbor pay for it.

This publication was reading just the other day of the pablum of liberals who are now declaring access to the Internet to be a "basic human right."

Now the woman who could very well be the next president would have us believe that attending Animal House is a government-guaranteed right.

Bluto Blutarsky would be proud.

ABOVE THE LAW

No, this piece isn't about Hillary Clinton or other Washington power brokers.

This piece is about our own state government and the bureaucracy defying an act of the legislature.

The Board of Teaching, which is responsible for issuing teaching licenses, was recently found in contempt of court for failing to process applications for alternative licensure.

Alternative licensure is a process whereby skilled professionals can seek a license to teach by taking an alternative route.

An example would be a career chemist from 3M who retires and wishes to teach kids as a second career.

The chemist lacks a degree in education but holds a PhD in chemistry and boasts decades of experience in the field.

This person wishes to teach in a local high school without going back to school to get a degree in education.

Alternative licensure allows this to happen.

Of course, the teachers' union hates alternative licensure, as do colleges and universities.

The union seeks to boost pay and benefits by limiting the number of teachers while colleges want tuition and more of it.

The court found that the Board of Teaching simply failed to process applications and respond to applicants.

Their excuse?

The response was that the law is "muddied and confusing."

Let us all remember that excuse when filing our taxes next year.

7/15/16

In This Issue:

FREE TRADE TROGLODYTES

"Over 6 million American manufacturing jobs are dependent upon free international trade and an export economy."

- United States Chamber of Commerce

"1 of every 3 acres of crops planted in America is planted for foreign markets."

- United States Chamber of Commerce

"Tariffs and other penalties proposed by Donald Trump are estimated to cost a family of 4 approximately \$3,100 per year in increased costs of purchased products."

- United States Chamber of Commerce

It has become fashionable this campaign season to blame free trade for the economic woes of some pockets of the country and some economic sectors.

Not long ago, presidential candidates from both parties recognized the net positive affects of free trade.

In fact, both Clintons used to acknowledge the value of free trade agreements.

Here's what Hillary Clinton USED to say about these agreements, prior to pandering to the Bernie Sanders Bots:

"The United States welcomes Japan's interest in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which we think will connect economies throughout the region, making trade and investment easier, spurring exports, creating jobs." That was in 2012.

Or this one: "This TPP sets the gold standard in trade agreements to open free, transparent, fair trade, the kind of environment that has the rule of law and a level playing field. And when negotiated, this agreement will cover 40 percent of the world's total trade and build in strong protections for workers and the environment."

Now, both candidates pander to disgruntled voters by feigning sympathy with the bogus narrative that trade agreements caused their jobs to

disappear. Even more fantastically, both Trump and Clinton claim they can make these jobs reappear in the very same place they disappeared from, presumably at the same wage and with the same benefits as before. Presto, change-o!

In a very disappointing development, the draft Republican platform has retreated from recognizing the net positive value of free trade. This sort of pandering is expected in a presidential campaign but nonetheless disappointing.

As the statistics above note, millions of American jobs depend upon open, free trade exports.

Moreover, many of the manufacturing jobs lost over the past 20 years didn't go overseas, as the story goes.

Instead, they simply disappeared, displaced by automation or lost to innovation.

In today's modern auto manufacturing plant, one worker does the work of what three did 30 years ago.

The jobs aren't coming back because they disappeared. They didn't go to China or Mexico.

Of course, there is real economic dislocation in any dynamic market place. Some jobs have indeed moved to lower cost areas, be those areas Alabama or India.

But on the whole, the world is richer and more prosperous because of free trade.

Just we can't tax ourselves into prosperity, we can't tariff ourselves into creating or repatriating jobs.

THE SUPREME COURT'S REPUTATION

"I can't imagine what the country would be - with Donald Trump as our president."

- Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg

"He says whatever comes into his head at the moment. He really has an ego."

- Justice Ginsberg, speaking of Donald Trump

-

"The judiciary, on the contrary, has no influence over either the sword or the purse; no direction either of the strength or of the wealth of the society; and can take no active resolution whatever. It may truly be said to have neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment."

- Federalist Papers, #78

There is a very good reason why Supreme Court justices don't weigh in on certain subjects, including politics.

While the Supreme Court holds the awesome power to "say what the law is," and invalidate acts of the legislature, the judicial branch is also weak, with no power over the purse and no power over the sword.

In other words, the strength and legitimacy of the Supreme Court lies in the court's reputation as a fair and neutral arbiter of legal interpretation.

Citizens must have faith that the court will be a fair referee and not a participant on the field of play.

When members of the court run off at the mouth like Ginsberg did, it does great harm to the court's reputation and causes far more damage than the indiscretions of either a president or member of Congress in this regard.

If citizens perceive that the Supreme Court is guided by personal political views or other biases, the court will lose its legitimacy and be seen as nothing more than a political, not legal, institution.

When that happens, respect for the rule of law itself will be in danger.

The shocking lack of discretion displayed by Justice Ginsberg therefore demands that she resign from the bench in order to protect the integrity and legitimacy of the Judicial Branch.

MARK DAYTON FUMBLES AGAIN

"Would this have happened if those passengers, the driver and the passengers, were white?" Dayton said. "I don't think it would have. ... I think all of us in Minnesota are forced to confront that this kind of racism exists."

- Governor Mark Dayton

Like Homer Simpson, we have all come to expect buffoonery and inchoate rantings from our governor.

Whether it's screaming that Republicans are unfit to govern, or whether he's blasting special interests for "hiding" things in bills to which he has affixed his signature, The governor displays no hesitancy to combine a curmudgeonly "you kids get off my lawn!" attitude with the vicious and unthinking rhetoric of a hardened political hack.

In most cases, that behavior has caused serious people to merely lament the lack of leadership and lost opportunities inherent in such scorched earth rhetoric.

In the case of the Castile shooting, it was downright tragic and even dangerous.

With virtually no facts at hand, the governor fanned the flames of emotion and fomented anger and frustration.

This at a time when the state needed calm, poised leadership.

At a time when patience was at a premium, Mark Dayton displayed none and rushed to judgement.

At a time when facts were desperately needed, he discarded that need and simply stated a conclusion - and a dangerous one at that. The governor declared in so many words that Castile was shot precisely because of his skin color and nothing else.

This despite utterly no evidence to support such a bold and inflammatory claim.

While this publication won't declare that Dayton's words contributed to any direct violence against law enforcement, we can say with certainty that his words breed disrespect for law enforcement and contribute towards an attitude of distrust and contempt for the men and women who wear a badge and uphold our laws.

If this publication wasn't so committed to journalistic excellence and propriety, we would declare Mark Dayton the one unfit to govern.

7/22/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "He's still not sure if he'll vote for Trump in November, saying he assumes Clinton will easily win the state and that his vote probably won't matter."

- Star Tribune, writing of Minnesota National Delegate Andy Aplikowski

"You're on fire! You're on fire, stupid!"

- Cleveland police officer to a flag burning protester

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLEVELAND

As this issue goes to press, the GOP family is wrapping up the national convention and heading home to do battle with Democrats in every state, county, and precinct in the country.

Overall, the convention exceeded expectations, even if only because the bar was set fairly low.

There was no anarchy, whether on the street or in the convention hall, even if some people on both sides of the front door showed that they are of minimal talent and character.

On one side, a couple of America-hating clowns self-nominated for the annual Darwin Award by failing to properly set fire to our National Colors by also setting one their own on fire.

Don't ask these guys to start your grill or fire place. It's apparently a complex task for them.

On the other side of the door, two men, one at the top of the GOP team and the other towards the bottom, displayed poor judgement, a lack of leadership, and a general display of morale-busting defeatism quite ill-suited for both their positions within the party and the situation.

The guy at the bottom of whom we speak is Andy Aplikowski, who is well known to our readers as the ill-tempered and ill-mannered author of an unpopular blog, the state Senate candidate who lost a GOP primary to Jim Abeler, and an attention seeker who never misses an opportunity to put a bad face on the GOP.

So let's parse for a moment the above quote:

1. He's not sure he will vote for the Republican-endorsed candidate for president;
2. He assumes Hilary Clinton will "easily" win Minnesota;
3. His vote won't matter.

Some readers may conclude that these statements aren't outrageous as they likely reflect what some Minnesotans, including some Republicans, think about how our state will fare in November.

But that thinking entirely misses the point.

The point is all about leadership and leadership positions.

Aplikowski made the quote in his role as a Minnesota delegate to the Republican national convention.

The delegation is supposed to comprise the "best of the best" of Minnesota Republicans.

The delegation is supposed to represent our most talented, passionate, and visionary leaders.

Ask yourself if those comments reflect the words of a leader.

Leaders are supposed to be the ones who boost morale, set the example in difficult circumstances, and display a "never say die" attitude.

The Navy SEAL creed states in part, "I am never out of the fight!"

Can you imagine Vince Lombardi walking into the locker room and telling his team they will likely lose?

Could you imagine a combat leader in Afghanistan telling his troops that the upcoming mission will likely fail and therefore their efforts on the field of battle won't matter?

Can you imagine the CEO of a young start-up telling his employees that they can't take on the legacy companies in their field?

There was no bigger optimist in American politics than Ronald Reagan. Reagan was a great president in large part precisely because he believed America was always in the fight and he made every American believe it.

How can the thousands of loyal party activists get motivated to make calls, knock on doors, put up lawn signs, and march in parades when our own leaders express doubt and pessimism?

It's July and already one leader has declared defeat.

If this is the attitude and outlook of Minnesota's party leaders, we are doomed.

What an embarrassment.

But Aplikowski shouldn't despair. He's not the only one who displayed a lack of leadership in Cleveland.

Ted Cruz did much to embarrass himself and show his true colors.

As readers know, Cruz pointedly failed to endorse Donald Trump during his speech, thereby undercutting the party, undercutting the party's nominated candidate, and working against the very purpose of the convention itself.

Again, the role of the person at issue is the point.

There are many Republicans in the "never Trump" camp, even some prominent leaders.

The difference is that these leaders had the class and the maturity to stay away from Cleveland and not make a scene that became a distraction.

Not Ted Cruz. He came to Cleveland, took the speaking slot, took the spotlight, and proceeded to torpedo the party's nominee and otherwise make things all about him.

While a big ego is certainly a prerequisite for running for president, Cruz showed that his ego and self-centeredness has totally crowded out any altruistic reasons he may have in running for president.

It's almost unbelievable that a man in his position, a sitting Senator, a strong presidential contender, a party leader supported by millions, would show up and urge the faithful to "vote their conscience," which is a clear slap in the face to the man who beat him for the nomination.

In doing such, Cruz revealed himself to be a venal, small, petty man more interested in self-aggrandizement than the common good.

His prime-time speaking slot was offered for the sole purpose of uniting the party behind the one man who can beat Hillary Clinton in November.

He ignored that obligation in favor of an attempt to boost his own standing with movement conservatives and position himself favorably for the future.

The good news is that Cruz's jackass performance has vaporized any chance he had of being a legitimate presidential candidate in 2020 or any other year.

If you can't support the process and the team, it's hypocritical to expect the team to support you down the road.

Lock her up!

This chant was a familiar refrain throughout the convention as delegates expressed their opinion that Hillary Rodham Clinton be imprisoned for her failure to properly handle classified information as it transited her home-brew email server in the basement of her New York mansion.

It's been amusing to watch liberals freak out as they decry the chants and the attempt to "silence" Hillary. "This is what dictatorships do," they whine.

Of course, this refrain intentionally and artfully confuses the issue.

"Lock her up!" refers to her behavior regarding the email issue and has nothing to do with her right to free speech as a candidate.

Indeed, dictatorships lock up political opponents. But democracies allow average citizens to speak out against the political elites.

It is a sign of a healthy democracy that concerned citizens can speak out against political elites who are above the law and operate under a different set of rules.

Moreover, it's a sign of healthy democracy when citizens demand that the rule of law prevail and that the bedrock principle of "equality under law" be enforced.

Democracies have one set of laws for all citizens, regardless of their station. Banana Republics ignore the rule of law and allow their elites to operate above the law.

Thus, we say to our liberal friends: LOCK HER UP!

7/29/16

In This Issue:

"We are not interested in moving forward on the Southwest light rail project. I think we need to get real with our priorities in Minnesota on how we spend our transportation dollars. Our plan is to spend them on roads and bridges."

- Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt

"Minnesota House Speaker Kurt Daudt has been unapologetic about his resistance to funding the Southwest Light Rail project. Even when members of his caucus were open to a deal he stood firm."

- Saint Cloud Times Editorial

The Circular Firing Squad - AGAIN

In the words of the late, great Ronald Reagan, "There he goes again."

By "he," we mean Bob Cummins, the uber wealthy business man who seems more focused on attacking Republicans than in beating Democrats.

While this has been going on in various, ways, shapes, and forms over the years, the latest skirmish in his quest to stir internecine warfare among Republicans is perhaps his biggest.

In examining the most recent public campaign finance records, it is clear that Cummins and his ilk are spending significant resources to attack the highest ranking Republican in the legislature - Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt.

Speaker Daudt is being challenged in the Republican primary by Alan Duff.

Duff's most recent campaign finance report shows a \$1,000 donation from Bob Cummins.

Moreover, all of Duff's major individual contributions have come from outside the district, including from known associates of Bob Cummins like Cush Minar, who contributed \$1,000 as well.

Campaign finance reports also show that a political action committee (PAC) called the "New Leadership PAC" has spent money ONLY in the Daudt - Duff

race, with all expenditures reported for the cycle going either to support Duff or oppose Daudt.

This PAC received all the reported revenues for the cycle from one person.

Bonus points if you can guess the last name of the sole contributor.

If you answered "Cummins," you would be a winner.

In this case, the Cummins in question is Joan Cummins, wife of Bob.

Although listing "homemaker" as her profession, Joan Cummins has donated thousands of dollars to candidates and PACs.

A homemaker has thousands to give to politicians?

Really.

The other curious thing about this PAC is that it is run by Sheila Kihne, another captain of the Tin Foil Hat Club.

Readers may, may, recall that Sheila Kihne went out tilting at windmills in the 2014 election cycle when she tried to "primary" state Rep. Jen Loon in Eden Prairie.

Loon dispatched her with ease.

Bob and Joan Cummins were generous donors to Kihne, each giving \$1,000.

It looks like they all enjoyed that losing campaign so much they decided to take things to the next level have a PAC together.

So here we have a Republican donor funding a PAC, run by a Republican activist, aiding and abetting the Democrats in attacking and harassing the Speaker of the House in his own district.

This means that the leader of the House GOP, the one thing Republicans control in state government, staying home in his district to campaign in a primary.

His time in raising money for the caucus, helping vulnerable Republicans, and appearing before media throughout the state to deliver the GOP message is greatly reduced.

Are Joan and Bob similarly funding a PAC dedicated to attacking Democrats?

If so, we can only hope it is run by someone who has actually won something.

If know nothings like Sheila Kihne and Jack Rogers are pulling the trigger on the circular firing squad, Bob Cummins and his main squeeze are buying the bullets.

Much like the Minnesota Family Council and the Freedom Club, we will give these groups recognition when the successfully take out the liberals who are taxing us to death.

Attacking Republicans, and thankfully failing, isn't something this publication admires.

Our prediction is that come August 10th, Speaker Daudt will have prevailed and he can get back to work preserving the GOP majority in the MN House that has single-handedly saved us from the machinations of Governor Dayton and the DFL majority in the state Senate.

If you want more conservative government, you do it by sending more Republicans to Saint Paul.
And, one more thing for those readers who think so highly of Alan Duff, Daudt's opponent.

We hope you've done your homework on his voting record on the Isanti County Board and the things he's said as a commissioner.

You might want to be fully informed on that front before you cast your vote or declare your support.
A word to the wise.

THEY FINALLY ADMITTED IT!

We hope you didn't miss the big news this week that the Dayton Administration has finally admitted what conservatives have known - and proclaimed - for generations.

Namely, that simply throwing money at our public schools won't increase outcomes, especially for poor kids.

The context of this news is the sobering fact that Minnesota standardized test scores have been flat for three years running, with scores for minority children running far, far behind, bespeaking a large achievement gap.

Overall, only 60% of Minnesota students are proficient in math and reading.

For black students, the proficiency rate is about 33%.

For white students only, the proficiency rate is about 70% in both subjects.

In the face of this news, Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius admitted, "schools alone can't solve the achievement gap. Factors outside the classroom have to be addressed."

Really.

Like the importance of an intact family led by a father and mother?

Like the importance of preventing teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and crime?

Like encouraging the dignity of productive work?

Conservatives have been talking about the importance of an intact family to instill good principles and values for many years while liberals have recommended more of the same poison.

You're right, commissioner. Throwing money at schools won't fix the problem.

Let us remember your words when the legislature considers a new education budget in 2017.

Of course, the liberals will declare that the solution is more government, more "supportive" programs run by unionized bureaucrats with no accountability metrics and no clear outcomes.

More "early childhood" programs, more "nutrition" programs, more "training" programs.

No, no, and no.

The solution is for government to create an environment in distressed neighborhoods in which to allow for residents to give themselves an opportunity to thrive.

Reduce crime, reduce barriers to business location, increase accountability for bureaucrats like teachers in the local public schools.

The rest is up to each individual.

WE DON'T NEED LIGHT RAIL

And finally this week, we have more confirmation that light rail is ultra-expensive and doesn't do anything for economic development.

That isn't the opinion of right-wing think tanks.

It's the opinion of some of the very bureaucrats who are in charge of helping to make it happen.

There was an article in the Star Tribune this week that pensively asked, "What will happen with SWLRT isn't built?"

Here's a couple of opinions:

"I think St. Louis Park obviously has done quite well even without having light rail and will continue to do well without it."

That quote from Kevin Locke, the Saint Louis Park Community Development Director.

"From a planning perspective, most of the work on transit-oriented development is still relevant, even without the line. When I'm really honest about it, I say that Hopkins will be fine."

Kersten Elverum, the Hopkins Director of Economic Development.

And the liberals want to claim Republicans in the area are in jeopardy of losing their seats by opposing the line.

Whatever.

8/5/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "He can't learn what he doesn't know because he doesn't know he doesn't know it."

- Newt Gingrich, on Donald Trump

ALAN DUFF - CONDUCTOR, BRAKEMAN, ENGINEER

Greetings, Watchdogs. This is your special "Primary Election" edition of the Watchdog, as we go to press just 4 days before the primary next Tuesday.

Make sure you get out to vote next week or vote early, pursuant to Minnesota law. Unless, of course, you're a Democrat. In that case, bring your utility bill or have some paid liberal operative vouch for your identity.

To find your polling place, click [here](#).

While most voters will see rather sleepy primaries or none at all, there are some barn burner primaries out there, perhaps none more than that happening in House District 31A, which encompasses parts of Isanti, Anoka and Sherburne counties.

It also happens to be the district represented by Kurt Daudt, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the highest ranking Republican in Minnesota government.

Daudt is being challenged in the primary by Alan Duff, a former colleague on the Isanti County Board of Commissioners.

While Duff is the ostensible challenger, this primary is really a political proxy war between Daudt and a feckless alliance of wealthy outside special interests and local sore losers who have been unsuccessfully trying to undermine and depose Rep. Daudt for some time.

What unites these forces is an obsession with attacking fellow Republicans for an alleged lack of conservative purity and a desire to focus attention on themselves. Oh, and they also wear matching tin foil hats.

Thus, candidate Duff has been presented as THE personification of principled conservatism. THE embodiment of constitutional originalism and fealty to limited government and personal liberty.

Pop quiz: one candidate in the race opposes taxpayer-financed rail projects. The other one supports them.

Guess which one is which.

If you guessed that Rep. Daudt is the rail supporter, you would be wrong and you would go home with a nice parting gift, like a set of Ginsu knives or a sporty piece of carry-on luggage.

The Watchdog has obtained, courtesy of state Rep. Pat Garofalo, [video](#) of Alan Duff speaking glowingly of the proposed Northern Lights Express passenger rail train between Minneapolis and Duluth.

That's right. Incontrovertible video evidence of the "more conservative" candidate speaking in support of a subsidized rail project that could top \$1 billion in construction costs, before any operating subsidies are even factored in.

And don't forget what the Minnesota GOP Party Platform says about rail, both directly and indirectly:

We believe economic prosperity is driven by individuals, not government. We support lowering the tax burden, exercising spending restraint, and creating and maintaining a fair, honest and competitive business environment to promote economic prosperity.

We support keeping government functions in state, local or private hands, electing honest and responsive legislative bodies, advocating for fair election processes, and generally making government smaller and better.

Gas and motor vehicle taxes should not fund rail transit construction and operation.

Road and bridge safety should take precedence over new light rail construction.

If you think a taxpayer-subsidized train is consistent with the Party platform, raise your flipper, er, hand.

If you think government ought to be in the business of building and operating trains, raise your hand.

While the video, excerpted, is undated, it appears to be from a candidate forum for Isanti County commissioner candidates.

In the video, Duff references Congressman Jim Oberstar, who left office after being defeated in 2010.

According to Duff's biography, he served on the county board from 2009-2012. Thus, the video was likely from the 2008 campaign cycle.

While readers can review the video themselves, the Watchdog has made an effort to provide a transcript of Duff's rail remarks:

The commuter rail option is on the table, being discussed very extensively, does make a lot of sense. I have been working very closely with my friends down in Anoka County, the Northstar coalition on that issue and I hope to see it come here sooner than later. Paying for this, it ain't (sic) going to be cheap. I'm fully aware of that, I looked at the price tags (sic) today on that and it's, uh, millions and millions of dollars and I think what we'd do is work closely with Congressman Oberstar and work with the various legislators who are supporting this on the national and state level and do what we can to get the funds from those sources, because it's going to be an expensive proposition, that's for sure.

So there you have it. The candidate who proudly proclaims his vehement opposition to taxes and government spending embraces one of the most expensive proposed public mega-works projects.

So, Mr. Duff, how exactly does this rail project "make sense?"

You're right, it "ain't" going to be cheap.

So how does government come up with the money to pay for this white elephant? More Chinese-financed debt? A tax increase, which you would oppose, according to your own words.

At the state level, this money is generated through debt in the name of "bonding." Are you saying you would support putting the state's share on the government credit card?

By the way, you no longer have "friends" down in Anoka County.

After Rhonda Sivarajah, Matt Look and others swept out the Dan Erhart crew, one of the first things they did was withdraw Anoka County from membership in the joint powers group pushing this project.

Jim Oberstar and Dan Erhart aren't around anymore, Mr. Duff.

Here we have the self-proclaimed purest of the pure backing a candidate who proudly supports commuter rail.

The Watchdog has been around for over a decade and we thought we had seen it all.

In the words of Mean Gene Okerlund, "What a shocker! What a bombshell!"

CROSSING THE LINE

In the interest of full disclosure, Harold Hamilton and the Watchdog staff in its entirety are unimpressed with Donald Trump.

We're not Trump supporters.

His opposition to free trade concerns us.

His obvious lack of interest in learning important issues like foreign policy is unsettling.

His remarkable lack of discipline and utter inability to deliver a message and stay on message is appalling.

What's even more concerning, unsettling, appalling - and unsurprising - is the complicity of the legacy media is giving Hillary Clinton and her universe of supporters a free pass regarding their appalling behavior.

While there are myriad examples of this behavior, perhaps the most damaging to our political institutions is the way in which the current care takers of those

institutions have disregarded the practices that maintain the integrity and credibility of our democratic institutions.

It started with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg criticizing Trump.

It was unprecedented for a sitting Justice to insert herself so directly into the partisan debate surrounding the election of the person who will lead a separate, co-equal branch of our federal government.

And President Obama got in on the act. The sitting president deeply inserted himself into the presidential race by calling Trump "unqualified" and demanding that Republican office holders withdraw support for Trump.

While the president in many respects acts as the head of his political party, the president also holds an office that demands that he represent the country, including those who support candidates the sitting president may not like.

It's one thing to support a candidate for the presidency. It's a whole other matter to so strongly criticize a contender for the White House.

This is especially true when the man uttering the attacks is himself uniquely unqualified, with a track record to prove it.

Every American, regardless of partisan affiliation, should condemn the calculated and pre-mediated way in which the president and Supreme Court justice have endangered and undermined the credibility of our democratic institutions in the name of scoring political points.

It proves, once again, that Democrats are more concerned with power and maintaining than power than they are in ensuring that the American people have faith that there will be equal justice under law and that some things are above partisan politics.

Of course, this is intentional.

In our system, political institutions are designed to act as a check and balance against unfettered power.

In other words, liberals like Ginsberg and Obama see our system as a large barrier against the kind of concentrated power needed to implement their world view.

It's hard for government to do "big things" when no one person can impose their will on the country.

Hence, all the political games from Obama regarding executive orders, recess appointments, and others abuses of power.

For him, divided government is anathema.

And the same holds true for judges who think like he does.

In their world view, the rights of individuals are subordinate to government's "right" and ability to govern for the "collective good."

This publication is disgusted by the way in which these two have trashed our Supreme Court and the Office of the Presidency.

For shame.

8/10/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "So I may have short-circuited it and for that, I will, you know, try to clarify."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

PRIMARY ELECTION SPECIAL EDITION!

THE RESULTS ARE IN

Last night's primary races provided precisely the kind of topsy-turvy and unpredictable results that have become the norm in this unique election cycle.

There were a number of interesting races and results, starting in Senate District 31, where both incumbent state Representatives faced intense primary challenges.

Perhaps the marquee primary of the cycle featured House Speaker Kurt Daudt being challenged by former Isanti County commissioner and former Commissioner Daudt colleague Alan Duff.

The race was closely watched as it was really a proxy battle between the House Speaker and special interests from outside the district who wanted to depose Daudt.

In particular, wealthy GOP donor Bob Cummins and his wife went after Daudt by establishing a PAC to play in the race. The PAC was run by Sheila Kihne, a failed candidate who herself attempted to "primary" an incumbent GOP state Rep. in the Eden Prairie area in 2014.

These outside interests teamed up with certain activists within the local party, who may have taken the term "teamed up" a bit too far, as a campaign finance complaint was lodged against these activists. If the facts as alleged are true, these activists flagrantly and blatantly broke the law. The Watchdog will be following this case closely and report findings as they are made available.

In the end, it was a bit anti-climactic as Daudt shellacked Duff by a whopping 72-28% margin.

The result didn't surprise this publication.

Given that there were two closely watched primaries in the area, the staff spent a good deal of time talking to Republican activists and opinion leaders in the area to get their take on both this race and the Tom Hackbarth / Cal Bahr primary race.

The overwhelming sentiment from these observers was that Kurt was a good man who had done a good job both representing the district and leading the House GOP in Saint Paul.

It was also clear that Daudt's extensive family history in the area was a benefit. Many people knew the Daudt family or had a connection to the family.

This race was clearly about more than one state Rep. in a far northern exurban district.

In many respects, it was about control of both the local GOP and the direction of the House GOP caucus.

Kurt Daudt is decisively and firmly established his control of both.

The loss has to be a real embarrassment for Bob Cummins and his crew. The took a shot at the title and got humiliated.

On the other side of the district, the match-up was Cal Bahr against incumbent and long-serving Rep. Tom Hackbarth.

Many of the same interests that opposed Daudt also supported Bahr.

Bahr defeated Hackbarth, putting an end to Hackbarth's 20-plus year stint in Saint Paul.

Some see Bahr's win as an upset, but upon further examination that isn't the case.

While Bahr must be given credit for really stepping up a campaign that stumbled a bit out of the gate, it's also true that Hackbarth was a deeply flawed candidate who was ripe for a fall.

It wasn't quite the David vs. Goliath match-up less informed folks are portraying it to be.

While Hackbarth had over two decades of name identification and a voting record that pleased most activists.

On the other hand, there were warning signs everywhere, starting with Hackbarth's loss of the endorsement.

The endorsement loss was a clear signal activists were displeased with him.

Hackbarth then exacerbated the endorsement issue by reneging on a pledge to abide by the endorsement.

Many activists with whom we spoke were upset with both the choice to run against the endorsed candidate and reneging on the pledge.

The second major factor at play was Hackbarth's demeanor and personality. As this publication has noted on many occasions, he has a well-earned reputation for being a jerk.

Despite the reputation, we were nonetheless surprised by the number of people who had a story to tell of being insulted, berated, or belittled by Tom Hackbarth at some point. Many of those people didn't know Cal Bahr well but were eager to cast a vote against Hackbarth.

Finally, this is definitely an election year where experience isn't an advantage. Many activists were receptive to a message of change and renewal after 20-plus years of the same legislator.

In a low turn-out primary, all of the above equaled a not-so-surprising loss.

The other big primary news was in Minneapolis, where two long-serving liberal stalwarts were turned out of office.

With a combined 64 years of legislative service, state Reps. Joe Mullery and Phyllis Kahn lost their primaries to newcomers.

While the mainstream media doesn't want to talk about it, the primary issue in this primary was race and ethnicity.

Both incumbents possessed impeccable liberal credentials, so that wasn't an issue.

Even gender wasn't an issue, as each candidate faced a challenger of the same gender.

Candidate qualifications weren't an issue, either. Both Kahn and Muller possess advanced degrees and a long list of legislative accomplishments, especially Kahn.

Mullery faced Fue Lee, a native of Laos while Kahn faced Ilhan Omar, a native of Somalia.

Thus, the real difference in each race was group identity politics.

While other issues may have touched each campaign and motivated certain voters, it was racial politics that played a strong role.

Many voters in both races were motivated to vote for the challengers because of that person's immutable characteristics.

Of course, this is nothing new. Ethnic groups new to the United States have had a history of organizing themselves and exercising political power precisely by rallying around a candidate of the same ethnicity or religion.

This observation shouldn't be construed to take anything away from either Lee or Omar. Both candidates have impressive resumes.

But that doesn't mean that an examination of the role race played in these races should be off limits.

The point here is that it's a bit ironic that legislators like Mullery and Kahn who promoted a focus on group identity politics have themselves now become victims of the same.

While Minneapolis will remain a liberal bastion for the foreseeable future, those carrying the liberal torch are likely to look a whole lot different as new refugee groups mature and learn to master the levers of societal influence.

Finally, we end of up in the south Metro, where Jason Lewis won a four-way primary for the GOP endorsement for Minnesota's Second Congressional District.

Lewis was the conservative favorite and prevailed rather easily over his challengers.

The real race here was between Lewis, the activists' favorite, and Darlene Miller, the Establishment favorite.

Miller, in fact, garnered the endorsement of incumbent John Kline.

While some may argue that Miller was the candidate better positioned to win the general election, Lewis is precisely the type of candidate the district and America need.

Washington is hopelessly broken and Establishment candidates won't cut it.

While this publication can thank John Kline for his service, he voted for Medicare Part D and did very little to control Washington's debt-fueled spending orgy.

For far too long, we've heard promises out of Republicans in Washington about fixing things.

So far, it's been a bunch of bunk and even the most thoughtful of Republicans are sick of being played for fools.

It's time for real change.

8/19/16

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week:

"Agriculture is highly dependent on trade, and a well-implemented Trans-Pacific Partnership is essential for economic vitality and job security, not only for our state, but for our nation."

- Land O' Lakes CEO Chris Policinski

"Moving toward a trade protectionist agenda is not the answer to our economic challenges for the country and certainly not for Minnesota."

- MN Chamber of Commerce President Doug Loon

ANOKA COUNTY CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS

Greetings, loyal readers. In a presidential election year, your local races can get lost in the clutter of federal and national races, as millions upon millions are spent telling you just how bad the other guy is.

But don't forget about those local races. Your local elected officials have the power to tax and they have a lot to say about how you live, including the power of zoning.

This is especially true at the county level, where recent years have seen a sea change in county commissioners and the governing philosophy of those commissioners.

It wasn't that long ago that a Good Old Boys network ran the county, jacking up taxes, taking on all sorts of debt, taking taxpayer-financed junkets around the country, and hiring friends and political supporters.

Anoka County taxpayers remember all too well the abuse suffered at the hands of Dan Erhart and his crew of toadies - Dick Lang, Paul McCarron, Margaret Langfeld, Dennis Berg, the LeDoux, the McCauleys.

The Good Ol' Boys were replaced in short order by a slate of public servants dedicated to delivering more efficient county services at a lower cost.

More than rhetoric, these commissioners delivered on their promises, which is demonstrable fact.

For example, check your property tax levy over the past 5 years and compare it to the Good Ol' Boys.

It is said that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.

To that end, this publication hopes you're tracking county board elections this fall, especially in two races.

Over in District 1, incumbent Matt Look is facing a challenge from Marsha Van Denburgh.

In District 3, incumbent Robyn West is opposed by Nyle Zikmund.

In politics, as in life, people are defined by the company they keep.

This is especially true in politics, where it's easy for politicians to talk a good game and mislead their audience.

Recall the reign of Dan Erhart, where he was often heard to say, "I'm as fiscally conservative as they come."

Or his other infamous BS, "I've seen all the studies and they confirm that Northstar rail is best option for Highway 10."

Talk about diarrhea of the mouth.

So, how does one go about determining what kind of company a politician keeps?

The best way is to check who's been giving money to that candidate.

If a person is giving money to a candidate, you can bet they've got a relationship - and an agenda.

So what kind of company have the challengers in these two races been keeping?

Let's take a look at the most recent campaign finance reports for both Marsha Van Denburgh and Nyle Zikmund.

On Van Denburgh's report, there are 18 itemized contributions.

Of those 18, 8 (nearly half) are from the Erhart clan, including Dan Erhart:

William Erhart (\$600)

Kathleen Erhart (\$200)

Elizabeth Erhart (\$600)

Ellen Erhart (\$600)

Lianna Erhart (\$600)

Kathy Erhart (\$600)

Dan Erhart (\$600)

Ted Erhart (\$382)

Van Denburgh has also claimed Republican credentials. Curiously, she also reports \$1,200 in donations from Pamela Deal.

Deal and her husband, Jim, are uber wealthy DFL donors who have contributed enormous sums to support Democrats.

For example, a search of the Minnesota Campaign Finance web site lists \$567,800 in contributions from James Deal to DFL candidates and allied groups since 2006.

The same search for Pamela Deal lists \$118,000 in the same type of donations.

A search of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) database also reveals big donations to Democrats at the federal level.

James and Pamela Deal aren't the only partisan DFLers to get behind Marsha Van Denburgh. Betsy O'Berry, who has run as an endorsed Democrat in the past, is also listed as a donor.

Oh, and here's another one. She lists a Ruth Stanoch of Bloomington as a donor. As you might guess, Stanoch has a history of donating to DFL candidates at both the state and federal level.

And finally, she lists a \$600 donation from the SEIU PAC. SEIU is a union that represents a variety of workers in fields like health care.

According to the web site Open Secrets, SEIU made nearly \$26 million in political contributions in the 2012 campaign cycle. It was \$24 million in 2014 and over \$8 million so far this cycle.

Thus, it's fair to ask Van Denburgh why she's supported by the Erhart crew as well as wealthy and faithful DFL donors as well as the SEIU union.

Where does her world view and political agenda intersect and align with folks like Dan Erhart and SEIU?

Over in District 3, a very similar donation picture has emerged.

If the donations to Van Denburgh and Nyle Zikmund were laid out in a Venn Diagram, there would be a good deal of overlap.

Zikmund lists 20 itemized donations to his campaign, similar to Van Denburgh's 18.

Check out the list of donors to both campaigns, with a comparison of donation amounts:

William Erhart (identical amount)
Elizabeth Erhart (identical amount)
Ellen Erhart (identical amount)
Lianna Erhart (identical amount)
Dan Erhart (\$500)*
Kathy Erhart (\$500)*
Ted Erhart (identical amount)
Jim and Pam Deal (\$1200)**
Ruth Stanoch (\$50 more)

*Dan and Kathy Erhart are itemized as one donation for \$1,000 total. The donation has been divided equally by the Watchdog on the presumption that it was intended to be so.

** On the Van Denburgh report, Jim Deal isn't listed. Since he is married to Pamela Deal, the Watchdog has, for comparison purposes, linked their donations together.

Just as with Van Denburgh, voters in District 3 should ask just Zikmund how his vision and governing philosophy aligns with those of his donors.

It appears that voters in these two districts will have a very clear choice this November, both with respect to their own county commissioner, but the overall direction of the county as well.

Changes in either or both districts would bring about major changes for the board as a whole.

Voters need to engage in a high level of education regarding their candidates and decide what kind of commissioner and county government they want.

8/26/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Our commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so called 'trigger warnings,' we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual 'safe spaces' where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own."

- John Ellison, University of Chicago Dean of Students

AT THE FAIR

It's that time of year. The Great Minnesota Get Together is upon us and that means the traditional farewell to summer, excellent junk food, and lots of politics.

If you haven't, make sure you stop by the booth sponsored by the Minnesota House of Representatives, located in the Education Building.

The booth is manned by staffers and legislators, who volunteer time and appear on a bi-partisan basis, with a legislator from each party present.

It's a great opportunity to meet legislators, get the latest legislative news, and take the famous annual survey.

Here's a sneak peek at this year's questions, courtesy of Harold Hamilton:

ONE. Do you support an increase in the Metro area sales tax to fund mass transit, including bus and light rail projects?

TWO. Should criminal background checks be required on all gun sales, including private transactions and at gun shows?

THREE. Should schools and businesses be able to require individuals to use bathroom and locker room facilities based on biological sex, as defined at birth?

FOUR. Should government agencies and institutions be required to obtain parental consent before disclosing personally identifying data on students to a third party, other than law enforcement?

FIVE. Would you support increasing the state's 28.5 cent per gallon gas tax by at least 10 cents to help fund highway and bridge needs across the state?

SIX. An ignition interlock device requires users to blow into a breathalyzer device on the vehicle's dash board; if the device detects the presence of alcohol the vehicle will not start. Should everyone convicted of DWI be required to use such a device for a prescribed period of time before they can regain full driving privileges?

SEVEN. Should it be mandatory that employees in work places with six or more workers accumulate one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours worked, with a maximum of 40 hours accrued in a work year?

EIGHT. When a mentally capable adult is dying from a terminal illness, do you think this adult should be allowed to receive a prescription for life-ending medication they may self-administer?

NINE. Should it be illegal to talk on a wireless communication device while driving?

TEN. Should the state provide an individual income tax credit of up to \$5,000 for principal and interest payments on student loans?

ELEVEN. From 1913 until 1973, legislators were elected on nonpartisan ballots, meaning there was no political designation for individual members. Should legislators be elected without political party designation?

TWELVE. State legislators currently earn \$31,140 annually, and they are eligible for additional per diem and other expenses. Should an independent, citizens-only council be created to set salaries for legislators? The question will be on the November 2016 ballot as a proposed constitutional amendment.

Vote wisely, Watchdogs.

TRAIN IN VAIN

Once again, the DFL has been caught playing political games. For once, this publication hopes they pay a price for their feckless partisanship and willingness to place politics ahead of governance.

As readers know, the DFL killed a special session of the legislature that would have delivered over \$550 million in tax cuts and over \$700 million for roads and bridges all because Kurt Daudt, David Hann and their GOP colleagues wouldn't agree to fund the Southwest Light Rail Project.

This week, a bombshell was dropped when House Speaker Kurt Daudt revealed the existence of an email from Met Council Chairman Adam Duinick to Governor Dayton stating that the federal government has no plans to execute a funding agreement until sometime in 2017 because of ongoing litigation regarding the project.

"He's (Dayton) hid that from the public and from the Legislature and from the press since January of this year. We know the federal government is not going to fund it for a year and a half. There is no deadline. There is no reason that we have to take action now on Southwest light rail," said Daudt. Moreover, if this project was such a critical priority, how come it wasn't a priority?

Consider that the DFL-controlled Senate unveiled a massive, kitchen-sink bonding bill that clocked in at a whopping \$1.8 billion. Was the relatively meager \$135 million in state funds for light rail included in that bill? Nope.

Moreover, did every single DFL Senator vote for that bonding bill? Yep.

Did the DFL-controlled Senate have any hearings on the project? Nope.

This is the same cynical political ploy the DFL used on the gas tax. They had every chance after the 2012 elections to pass a gas tax, as they controlled both houses of the legislature and the governor's office.

Did they pass it? Nope.

Did they have the time and political capital to pass gay marriage? Yep.

Did the gas tax suddenly become a priority once the GOP took the House after the 2014 elections? Yep.

Governor Dayton and his DFL cronies have made the obvious decision that they see some sort of political advantage in failure and grid lock.

Blame the GOP, hope the voters swallow it, win back the House and hold the Senate.

If successful, the game becomes a whopping "twofer" for the DFL as they bank all sorts for money to waste.

With no tax bill this year, there is \$550 million added to the bottom line.

With no bonding bill, there is a cool billion in bonding to spend.

Do you think DFL one-party rule in 2017 would pass \$550 million in tax cuts?

Hell no. It would be \$550 million in giveaways to favored constituencies like the teachers' union.

Do you think the DFL bonding bill would feature hundreds of millions in spending on roads and bridges?

Hell no. Look for cultural centers, solar gardens, wellness centers, and ski jumps.

One has to wonder how many times the DFL can get away with scamming the public until people wake up and realize they're being played for fools.

WHAT'S A MICA?

This week's installment of questionable government spending comes in the form of dues some counties are paying for a lobbying association called the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).

This group claims it represents (read "lobbies") urban and "growing" counties in Minnesota.

This group isn't to be confused with the Association of MN Counties (AMC), another lobbying group that already represents these counties.

Note that all these dues are funded with tax dollars from each of these counties.

For example, according to state documents, Dakota County paid over \$108,000 in dues to MICA in 2015.

Saint Louis County paid \$53,000.

The normally conservative counties of Scott and Carver also pay into this organization.

How many pot holes could be filled with this money?

Perhaps hire a sheriff's deputy instead?

Maybe even cut taxes!

These four counties all have fiscally conservative county commissioners in their ranks.

Watchdogs who live in these counties should contact these friends of the taxpayer and ask why one dime is going to support this MICA group.

Don't these counties already have lobbyists in the AMC who represent them already?

In fact, Saint Louis, Dakota and Scott have contract lobbyists working for them in addition to AMC.

Do they really need a third organization? Really?

Contact them today.

Dakota County: Chris Gerlach. chris.gerlach@co.dakota.mn.us

Dakota County: MaryLiz Holberg. maryliz.holberg@co.dakota.mn.us

Scott County: Mike Beard. mbeard@co.scott.mn.us

Carver County: Tom Workman. tworkman@co.carver.mn.us

Saint Louis County. Chris Dahlberg. dahlbergc@stlouiscountymn.gov

9/2/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Many Minnesotans have serious doubts about the wisdom of tying their environmental and economic future to a fossil industry of a soon-to-be past era."

- Willis Mattison

Quote of the Week: "The DFL environmentalists want to deprive us of our quality of life and use of our wilderness. These fakes who call themselves Democrats oppose mining, the right to own a gun, freedom of speech, our American values, and the style of life we have on the Iron Range."

- Robert Vlasisavljevich. Mayor of Eveleth

Quote of the Week: "we're going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business."

- Hillary Clinton

Fact of the Week: Exploitation: "the action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work (or vote!)."

EXPLOITED

As we approach Labor Day and move closer to a pivotal election, many working class voters are taking a long, hard look at the Party that professes to have their back, the Democrat Farmer Labor (DFL) Party.

For generations, certain segments of the American populace have loyally voted DFL - and received nothing in return.

While there may have been a time when the DFL was ruled by leaders with an authentic egalitarian world view, that time has long passed.

Today's DFL party is run by wealthy, urban elites who hold views that are diametrically opposed to those held by the working class, be it the minority working class in the urban core or the white working class in rural counties.

These urban elites are deeply involved in politics to promote radical gun control, abortion on demand, gay marriage, a radical environmentalism, and economic policies that appear to be progressive but instead leave massive

loopholes through which they escape their self-professed obligation to "pay their fair share."

These radical views are not only at odds with those in the working class, they are harmful.

Today's DFL is led by a trust fund governor who's lived a life of carefree luxury.

It's led by a House Minority Leader who lives in a tony Minneapolis enclave and pays more in property taxes than some people make in a year.

It's led by a clownish U.S. Senator who made a fortune playing the fool in Hollywood, writing vacuous trash while doing dope.

All three live in Minneapolis and consider walking down to the farmer's market to pick up some kale to be "farming."

These feckless politicians string along these groups, promising help and support that never comes.

Take mining. The Iron Range has always been sensitive to economic shocks, as any commodity-dependent area would be.

The plunge in commodity prices, particularly iron ore, has wrought economic devastation that has resisted the general recovery being experienced across the country.

Economic distress is quite evident across the Range.

Of course, the antidote for this malaise would be to get more mining jobs up and running, especially for those minerals, ferrous and non-ferrous, that have recovered in price point.

But the urban elites who run the DFL won't allow it.

Instead, they engage in a cynical game of stringing people along, claiming that there's just "one more" environmental regulation to clear.

Years later, miners are still waiting for good jobs. They won't be coming, at least so long as Mark Dayton is governor.

You see, there is no intention to allow this mining to start up. It's all a smoke screen to cop some more votes out of Iron Rangers for the next election.

It's about the false hope. The DFL party has delayed considering a resolution to oppose mining.

It wasn't defeated. Only delayed until after the election. Just like Hillary's calendar.

There are some signs of life in the traditional constituency. The unions representing construction trades men and women, the skilled mine workers, have been courageous in calling out Dayton and the Democrats.

There are also Iron Range Democrats who have also bravely declared that the emperor has no clothes.

And it's not just mining. Enbridge Company recently announced that they will bypass Minnesota in building an oil pipeline out of the Bakken Oil Field.

The pipeline, and its jobs and tax base, will simply bypass Minnesota.

The oil will still flow, it will still be transported, it will still be consumed.

Nonetheless, the DFL environmentalists will thump their chest publicly while private cheering that the pipeline won't run near their lake home, the one they use when they're not at the Minneapolis condo.

In the urban core, the same exploitation occurs with black citizens.

For generations, the DFL has run our urban cores. For blacks, the schools are horrible, the crime is worse, and the economic opportunity non-existent.

Nothing has gotten better for that demographic.

It could.

Education reforms could make the schools much better. But the DFL would never offend the teachers' union.

Reforming welfare programs would help. But there is an industrial complex of government workers and non-profits that rake in government money to administer these growing and failing programs. Can't offend the government unions and the non-profit executives who attend the swanky fundraisers.

It's about exploitation.

Consider the Huffington Post [article](#) this week regarding the leaked memo from Nancy Pelosi's staff, encouraging DFL congressional candidates to distance themselves from black activists.

The memo reads, "Listen to their (BLM) concerns, but don't offer support for concrete policy positions."

The memo puts the lie to the concern Democrats claim to have for black lives.

It's kind of like transportation. When they had control, there was no gas tax. Now, it's all about the gas tax.

Also consider an opinion piece this week regarding the continued folly of Southwest Light Rail.

The author, Mary Pattock, describes meeting some black supporters of the transit line, which doesn't offer service to the most underserved areas in Minneapolis and those most in need of transit options.

"We really didn't know the facts and were told what to say," one black testifier related. After being told how the route circumvented their neighborhood, they ripped off their stickers.

Exploitation.

It remains to be seen if members of these exploited groups will fight for their right to self-determination and do more than vote DFL by rote.

The Iron Range appears to be moving that direction.

The big test will come in the campaign between DFLer Rick Nolan and Republican Stewart Mills.

If Mills wins, we can say that the Iron Range and northern Minnesota are waking up.

The urban core still appears to have a ways to go. In the meantime, you can rest assured the DFL will do nothing to enhance educational outcomes, reduce crime, or encourage a culture of work and personal responsibility.

9/9/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Donald J. Trump on Wednesday called for a vast expansion of the military, including 90,000 new soldiers for the Army and nearly 75 new ships for the Navy, requiring up to \$90 billion a year in additional spending."

Associated Press (9/7/16)

Factoid of the Week: The United States currently spends more than \$600 billion a year on the military, more than the next seven countries combined.

TRUMP AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Donald Trump launched a foray into the military affairs realm this week by proposing a massive expansion of the military, requiring up to \$90 a year in additional spending to cover the cost.

With national defense often cited by voters as an important issue this election, both Trump and Clinton have been racing to establish their bona fides as military leader, which is difficult for both since neither served and have little to offer in establishing their experience to serve as Commander-in-Chief.

Trump has apparently settled on a "more is better" strategy, hoping voters see his call for quantitative military expansion as evidence of competence.

This approach raises three important issues.

First, how does he propose to pay for the expansion? Thus far, the answer has been in the form of vague platitudes about reducing "wasteful spending," expanding energy production, and collecting unpaid taxes.

Good luck with that. That's about as realistic as the candidate who proclaims he eliminate the federal tax code and replace it with a post card.

The reality is that a Trump administration would be forced to lift the "sequester" that cut both military and domestic spending in order to get the extra appropriations.

That would mean domestic spending (read welfare spending) would also skyrocket, on at least a dollar-for-dollar basis.

In short, there would have to be a deal with the devil to bust spending caps.

And don't think for a minute there would be a plan to pay for the spending buffet. It would come at the expense of our children and grand-children, already handcuffed to \$18 trillion in national debt.

This observation leads to the second question. Why does this country need a military budget approaching \$700 billion per annum, which is more than the next seven countries combined?

Sadly, the debate over military policy has started to mimic our debates over public education.

It's become all about the money. It's a debate only over how much to spend.

Just like with education, it would be nice if Trump and Clinton would first define the national security interest, as they see it.

When the national security interest is defined, the resources needed to defend it come into view. Without it, it's nothing more than the military-industrial complex feeding at the public trough, much like the teachers' union.

A critical and related question concerns our allies. Both candidates should clearly articulate the role that our allies should play in defending common security interests around the globe.

For 70 years, our leaders have operated off of a post-World War II template, treating allies like global wards of the state.

If America has common cause with the likes of Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, France, Germany, and Britain, those countries should contribute resources commensurate with their global status.

It's high time that these allies pull their weight and stop freeloading off American military resources.

Doing so wouldn't signal American weakness or the abdication of this nation as a global leader in defending common interests regarding freedom of navigation, territorial integrity, or the fight against radical Islam.

This isn't 1945. Or even 1965. It's 2016 and it's time for a commander-in-chief who acknowledges a new geopolitical template in military affairs, one that includes more robust participation from allies who share our values and strategic goals.

Finally, it will be interesting to see how Trump's message plays in rural areas dominated by working class whites.

While feelings of patriotism run high in these areas, there is also a weariness of global military ventures.

These areas send a disproportionate number of sons and daughters to fight our wars. These areas bear the brunt of the death and injuries inherent in armed conflict.

Will Trump be seen as a defender of America, one who stands in contrast to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's appeasement? Is this part of making America great again?

Or will he be seen as a chicken hawk calling for more sons and daughters to be fed to the war machine?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LIBERALISM

The following report was submitted by a loyal watchdog who serves as the accountant for a number of small businesses:

I want to share a story of a client of mine who is impacted by the new minimum wage law that took effect August 1st. The law requires employers to pay \$9.50/hr if gross sales are above \$500k during the last 4 quarters (this business is at approximately \$575k).

This business is a small fast food restaurant franchise. The newly enacted law will add about \$2700 in additional payroll costs per month, for an annual cost of \$32,400. This is a business that opened up in late 2013. As of 2015, it had not reached profitability yet. These new payroll costs will most likely force it out of business. Its payroll consists mainly of part-timers who will now be out of work.

This is social engineering at its worst. Thinking you can magically increase someone's pay without considering the consequences is insanity. Now, 30

employees will be out of work, but liberals will feel good about themselves. This is what fighting for the middle class looks like.

When government artificially raises the cost of labor, consequences indeed follow.

Those costs include fewer workers hired, especially those in need of entry-level jobs (e.g. teenagers and the disabled).

Those costs include higher prices for consumers, as employers pass along those higher labor costs.

Those costs also include fewer employers as some are forced to close because of yet one more governmental mandate, as well as fewer employers because fewer and fewer Americans want to the risk and hassle of dealing with the government in the time-honored quest to make a buck.

It's much easier to get a cushy government job and become the one enforcing the stupid rules as opposed to one absorbing the stupid rules.

COLIN KAEPERNICK DOESN'T MATTER

There has been a whole lot of outrage regarding San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's refusal to stand for the National Anthem.

The Watchdog says, who cares?

First, the guy has a First Amendment right to sit out the Anthem. No person can be compelled to stand for its playing. Heck, there is a First Amendment right to burn the flag.

Look, it is a well-settled principle of American jurisprudence to interpret the First Amendment, in part, as defending unpopular speech.

In short, Americans have a constitutional right to talk and act like a jackass.

Kaepernick's stunt is the epitome of jackass behavior.

Only in America could a mediocre, soon-to-be-retired journeyman quarterback earn a \$61 million contract, live in a mansion, be worshiped like a rock star, and still complain that he lives in an oppressive country.

Moreover, this publication isn't into feigned respect and faking it in general.

If this petulant punk doesn't respect America, then who wants his fake pride and patriotism?

And best of all, the right of free speech works both ways. If we were to call for Kaepernick to be chop blocked, crack-block blocked, hit after the whistle, or horse-collared, it would be totally cool.

Here's to hoping you get under center soon, Colin.

9/16/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I'm not saying we are writing off the Iron Range, but you don't need the Iron Range to win statewide."

- DFL Chairman Ken Martin

Quote of the Week: "The Republic may not give wealth or happiness; she has not promised these. It is the freedom to pursue these, not their realization, which the Declaration of Independence claims."

- Andrew Carnegie

Quote of the Week: "I would rather not have to vote for her, although she is a friend I respect. A 70-year person with a long track record, unbridled ambition, greedy, not transformational, with a husband still dicking bimbos at home (according to the NYP)."

- Colin Powell

EXPLOITED - ROUND 2

Here they go again. It seems as if the DFL is working hard to kick the working class out of their party, which is starting to mimic the European social model they desire. That model consists of one class of ruling elites and another comprised of a dependency class bereft of dignity and hope, clinging to government programs that offer only base sustenance and plenty of hopelessness and despair.

Minnesota DFL chairman Ken Martin this week offered the ultimate insult to the Iron Range by declaring that the DFL doesn't need the Iron Range.

Martin, who doesn't live on the Iron Range, or in rural Minnesota, or even in a suburb, couldn't have been more condescending and dismissive in his remarks.

Never mind that in 2010, Mark Dayton won the governorship by fewer than 9,000 votes out of 2.1 million cast. One could easily say that the Iron Range was the difference. But when you're purging the party of under-educated people who work with their hands, believe in church, and own guns, what difference do the facts make?

The Iron Range and the whole northern tier have been economically reeling, especially with the continued weakness in commodity prices.

The slow economic recovery from the Great Recession has certainly not reached many areas in the Eighth Congressional District.

This malaise is a double-whammy, with a slow economy compounded by Governor Dayton slowly killing mining and pipeline projects in the area.

The Twin Metals project, Polymet mining, and the Sandpiper pipeline stand as short-hand for DFL apathy and outright hostility towards the working class.

The haughtiness displayed by the urban DFL elites reared its head again this week as they defended themselves by declaring that Governor Dayton has been present to dispense welfare benefits throughout the economic crisis he has helped foster.

How compassionate.

"Thou shall not know the dignity and security of a good job, but thou shall have welfare, sayeth I," Dayton was heard to proclaim as his private jet crossed Saint Louis County on its way to Napa Valley.

Any shred of doubt regarding DFL elitist hostility was obliterated this week as well when the Obama Administration ignored the rule of law and marched head-long into lawlessness when federal agencies, in defiance of a court order, suspended work on the Dakota Access pipeline.

Ironically, the Dakota Access is the alternative pipeline project to the aforementioned Sandpiper project.

As readers know, the Dakota Access has been the subject of violent protests, with protesters trespassing on pipeline property to vandalize equipment, assault construction employees, and disrupt the project.

Opponents filed for an injunction in federal district court, seeking to halt the project.

The case was dismissed, as the judge found "no reason" to delay or halt the project.

Within minutes of the ruling, the Obama Administration stated it would refuse to issue a critical easement permit, saying the project "needed review," even though the pipeline owner had played by the rules and cleared every hurdle.

With over \$2 billion invested, the project is at standstill, with workers idle.

Talk about moving the goalposts.

Talk about gangster government.

Democrats don't want good blue collar jobs. They want another class of government dependents.

Wake up, people. Wake up, blue collar people!

GANGSTER GOVERNMENT

Under Barack Obama and Mark Dayton, gangster government is everywhere.

Essentially, gangster government is the absence of the rule of law.

In the previous story, gangster government refused to let a project move forward despite the ruling of a federal judge.

The rule of law said there was no reason to halt the project. Gangster government said otherwise.

Minnesotans recently learned that MnSure, the state Obamacare exchange, was in deep trouble, with steep premium increases and the withdrawal of many insurance providers.

In order to both save the exchange and their collective hides, the Dayton administration starting reaching out to insurance providers, asking them what kind special exemptions and waivers they would require in order to enter the exchange market and provide insurance policies.

As if the bureaucracy ever had the authority to unilaterally grant a license to ignore the law.

Taxpayers have already seen the thousands of exemptions the Obama Administration has granted regarding the federal law's Obamacare mandates.

The IRS has also reported that only about 33% of those who fail to obtain health insurance are being fined, as required by federal law and as upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

While the term "gangster government" is somewhat satirical, the subject is very serious.

The rule of law and equal protection under the law are bedrocks of our democratic institutions.

In a representative democracy, the governed have to perceive in equality under the law. It is the very glue that holds democratic government together.

In a government by the people, of the people, and for the people, disparate treatment is a poison because it is so antithetical to democratic principles.

And that's exactly what we have had under DFL rule in Saint Paul and Washington.

The selective enforcement of the law and the granting of favors to favored constituencies have given rise to a feeling that the deck is stacked against most average Americans.

It's Solyndra and special favors. It's waivers from Obamacare to favored groups. It's an executive order forcing personal care attendants and daycare providers into labor unions as a favor to those unions.

No wonder people are angry. They're getting jobbed by gangster government and they're smart enough to see it.

They work hard. They play by the rules. They do the right thing. Yet they can't get ahead and they watch the gangsters and the hustlers get ahead, gaming the system to suck yet another goodie out of the government they have rigged in their favor.

It's a donation to the Clinton Foundation that yields a meeting with Hillary Clinton. It's pay to play.

And some wonder why and outside like Donald Trump is doing well.

TOO CUTE, TRUE COLORS

We're used to DFL dirty tricks, but this one really takes the cake.

The lawsuit to throw Donald Trump off the ballot over a minor technicality went beyond the pale and failed the very low expectation this publication has for the DFL and chairman Ken Martin.

The DFL and their legal team got excited when the state GOP didn't elect alternate presidential electors at their state convention this summer.

The DFL state party immediately jumped into action, claiming that they were only upholding our sacred election laws.

It was bitterly ironic to see the crowd that cried "disenfranchisement!" over photo ID voting requirements seeking to disenfranchise the hundreds of thousands who want to vote for Donald Trump.

It's a rare day in court when a political party seeks to use the judicial branch to rig and steal an election.

Again, this coming from people who oppose photo ID, support same day voter registration, and think that having the whino down the hallway vouch for your identity at the polls is sufficient.

The Minnesota Supreme Court rightly recognized these shenanigans and refused to get played by a group that has no respect for the rule of law (see above).

Voters must remember these dirty tricks in November.

Trying to throw the GOP nominee off the ballot. A new low.

9/23/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "The County's budget flexibility remains very strong, as demonstrated by the maintenance of very strong fund balances, reflecting strong management practices."

- Standard and Poor's, commenting on Anoka County

Quote of the Week: "The biggest chunk of the 2016 budget, \$34.5 million, is earmarked for road and bridge projects."

- Fridley Sun Focus, commenting on Anoka County's 2016 capital investment budget

Quote of the Week: "The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting is the highest form of recognition for governmental budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting. It recognizes that the county's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) meets the highest standards, including demonstrating a "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial position to the public. This is the twenty-eighth consecutive year Anoka County has earned GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting."

- News report, December of 2015

CUTTING THROUGH THE CRAP

Every election cycle, there are lies, damn lies, BS, whoppers, little white lies, misrepresentations, tall tales, and all manner of untruthfulness that voters have to wade through.

Of course, this cycle is no different. That's why the Watchdog is here and has been here since 2005.

Readers should know that there is a whole bunch of BS and whoppers being told in the races for the Anoka County Board.

With four seats in play, control of the board is at stake.

So let's put on our hip boots and visit the rumors, whispers, and accusations being hurled around with abandon.

BOND RATING

Like any government or business, Anoka County borrows money to build and maintain capital improvements, like roads, bridges, and county buildings.

A borrower's "bond rating" is a measure of the borrower's creditworthiness.

Thus, a bond rating is very similar to a credit rating. These ratings set both the amount and interest rate associated with borrowing money.

For a number of years, Anoka County had a sterling "AAA" bond rating.

In late 2014, the county's bond rating was dropped one notch to "AA+."

The Good Ol' Boys network, backing certain challengers for the board, have cited this downgrade as evidence of fiscal mismanagement under the current conservative-majority board.

In other words, it's the board's fault for the downgrade.

So, what's the truth?

The truth is that the bond rating was dropped because the rating agency, Standard and Poor's, changed their rating criteria in response to the Great Recession.

That additional criteria measured the buying power of county taxpayers and had nothing to do with county government.

Under this new criteria, the county's taxpayers were deemed to have "effective buying power" that just missed the cutoff to maintain the "AAA" rating.

In fact, Standard and Poor's lavished praise on the county's financial management practices, noting that financial practices were "strong, well-embedded and likely sustainable."

Let's also not forget that the New Guard, unlike the Good Ol' Boys, instituted a policy of paying for projects wherever possible with cash, instead of borrowing money and paying it back with interest.

In fact, as recently as 2013, the county didn't bond for any capital improvements, instead paying cash.

Moreover, this board has established a cash account from which to pay for capital improvements.

It doesn't pay for all of them, but it cuts down on the practice of borrowing money, which ran rampant under Dan Erhart, King of the Good Ol' Boys.

And that's one more thing to remember. Another claim is that the board is "spending down reserves" to fund capital improvements.

Not true. This fund is designed to pay for projects and isn't a reserve fund at all.

TRANSPARENCY

A second allegation is that this board isn't transparent, that it "operates in secret."

Of course, the county is subject to the state's open meeting and data practices laws, which come with heavy penalties for non-compliance.

Next, the county web site has an entire page dedicated to transparency, called the "transparency [portal](#)."

The page is chock full of notices, documents, and county policies.

Nest, there is yet another web page where interested citizens can sign up for email [notifications](#) for just about any activity with which the county is involved.

Of course, there could always be more transparency, but the answer to "how much" has to be weighed against other considerations.

For example, should every single committee meeting be televised? What about all the joint powers groups, like the Mosquito Control District or the Solid Waste Management Board?

Perhaps more importantly, the county's current practices should be compared to past practice.

How ironic that Dan Erhart and his cronies are propagating a bogus narrative about a lack of transparency.

One Watchdog staffer remembers calling the county board when Erhart was chairman, asking to address the board during the public comment period.

The staffer was informed that there was no such agenda item and that if he wanted to speak, he had to obtain prior permission from the board as well as submit the proposed comments, in writing, for review.

Or recall when Erhart wouldn't publish his county email address. He instead listed a phone number, both to avoid emails which could be requested under the Data Practices Act and to avoid a written record of responses to an issue.

And these guys whine about transparency.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

A third claim is that the county is difficult to work with, especially when it comes to attracting and retaining jobs.

To the best of this publication's knowledge, the challengers and their Good Ol' Boy backers haven't provided any concrete examples or empirical data to support the claim.

Again, the county [web site](#) provides a great number of resources to assist businesses in navigating government and doing business in the county.

At least two county newsletters recently have featured extensive articles on business development.

The county also participates in organizations that engage in business development, such as the Itasca Group.

And there's also that small matter of taxes. This board has cut taxes or held the levy flat time and again. Low tax rates matter and this board has kept rates low, unlike their predecessors.

The old board thought a \$317 million train on the west side of the county was "economic development."

Really. Go drive by the stations in Fridley, Coon Rapids, and Anoka and look for the "economic development." If you find it, let us know. We haven't seen it.

And speaking of transportation, it is clear from this board's budgets that roads and bridges are the priority, and not trains.

In fact, it was this county board that withdrew the county from the Northern Lights Express train from Minneapolis to Duluth. They must have figured one train was enough.

And don't forget about junkets. Remember the old days when the commissioners went on regular junkets, including Hawaii, where some arrived a day early "to avoid jet lag?"

Remember when Dan Erhart and Dennis Berg went to Idaho to "inspect" Northstar rail locomotives, even though neither is a diesel mechanic and the locomotive could have easily been "inspected" in Anoka County when they arrived a few days later?

We bring up the way things were in Anoka County not so long ago for reasons beyond a simple trip down memory lane.

It is quite clear that the Good Ol' Boy network is strongly supporting some of the challengers to the current board.

Names like "Erhart" are all over campaign finance reports. Reports from the field indicate that the Good Ol' Boys are out there campaigning on behalf of challengers.

Dan Erhart himself and his toady sidekick, Steve Novak, are very visible around the campaigns.

These circumstances provide county voters with a very clear choice in November.

If you like the current style of county governance in the county, you should vote the incumbents.

If you want to go back to the Good Ol' Boy style of governance, the challengers are for you.

Regardless of how you choose to vote, however, you should know the facts.

Every man is entitled to his own opinion but not his own set of facts.

It is obvious that the Good Ol' Boys are waging a proxy war against the current board by supporting challengers.

There is a clear contrast and thus a clear choice for voters in November.

9/30/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "The public deserves to know if you're on their side or only care about the people who bought your election."

State Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL - Golden Valley)

Quote of the Week: "Without [donor] information, it's hard for people to know exactly who is spending money to influence their vote."

- State Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL - Minneapolis)

Quote of the Week: "Big money goes around the world, Big money underground, Big money got a mighty voice, Big money make no sound, Big money pull a million strings, Big money hold the prize, Big money weave a mighty web, Big money draw the flies."

- Geddy Lee

THE BIG MONEY

Let's be honest. Money buys votes. Money buys influence. Money buys elections.

While money has always been "the mother's milk of politics," even Big Daddy Unruh would be surprised by the way the money chase has come to dominate today's politics.

And while Unruh, an infamous Democrat who died in 1987, would have likely been surprised by the money flowing into politics today, he surely would have been pleased at the way Democrats have mastered the vote buying game.

The Party of the Workin' Man no longer gives a crap about him (other than demanding his vote).

The Workin' Man has a job that pollutes Mother Earth, an unenlightened values system, and a wallet too light to play in the political arena.

The Democrats who own today's DFL live within two or three zip codes in Minneapolis, drive a foreign car, and don't know anyone who gets paid by the hour except their own au pair, gardener, chef, and housekeeper.

This set includes the union bosses who share a big equity stake in the machine.

This week, candidates, political parties, and special interest groups were all required to turn in their latest campaign finance reports.

These reports detail the revenues and expenditures of these people, giving the average voter a look at the people who really matter to politicians - the ones who fund their re-election.

And make no mistake, this is where the action is centered when it comes to funding elections.

The quaint notion that candidates raise and spend money may still be true, but it matters less and less.

In short, the lion's share of political spending happens outside of what the campaigns themselves raise and spend.

Moreover, the realm of special interests and their campaign spending is a shell game with money shuttling back and forth between groups like a game of three card monte.

Follow that dollar. Now you see it, now you don't.

Let's examine the machine in action by taking a look at the campaign spending of Education Minnesota, the teachers' union.

You know, the union that forces to every public school teacher to fund the union whether they want to or not. It's the law, a law written, passed, and protected by DFL legislators.

Why would that be?

Could it be that this union's political spending makes it nothing more than a campaign arm of the DFL?

The period covered in the latest reports is January 1, 2016 through September 20, 2016.

During that period, the Education Minnesota PAC brought in a whopping, eye-popping \$2.2 million.

They turned around and spent all but \$160,000.

The bulk of the expenditures went to:

- Contributions to candidates (\$75,550)
- Contributions to political parties (\$707,700)
- Contributions to other political funds and PACs (\$931,625)
- Independent Expenditures (\$65,000)

Contributions to candidates

Did we say that Education Minnesota is an arm of the DFL? We take that back. Only 98.7% of their contributions went to DFL candidates.

The rest went to Republicans - all three of them.

Not that this publication is pleading for bi-partisanship here. Since concepts like merit, productivity, and accountability are foreign to the teachers' union, it's not a surprise that they do their best to keep Republicans from introducing such concepts to our taxpayer-funded education workforce.

Contributions to political parties

This is the pot of money that flows to organizations like the House DFL caucus, the Senate DFL caucus, the state DFL party and local DFL units.

For example, the PAC gave \$291,250 to the House DFL caucus, which seeks to gain a DFL majority in the Minnesota House.

The Education Minnesota PAC also gave \$316,000 to the Senate DFL, hoping to help them keep a DFL majority in that body.

\$95,000 was shuttled over to the state DFL, to assist in electing and re-electing DFL endorsed candidates.

The remaining money was sent out in smaller tranches to local DFL parties. This practice is a bit of money laundering. Because there are contribution limits to candidates, the trick is to give to the local DFL party once a PAC maxes out to a candidate. For example, the Education Minnesota PAC will max out to a candidate in Senate District 100. Then, the PAC will send money to the Senate District 100 DFL, which will very likely spend the money on behalf of their endorsed Senate candidate in that district.

Slick, huh?

Contributions to other political funds and PACs

This is where the shell game gets really confusing. Under this category of funding, we see all sorts of PACs and other political interest groups shuttling money around and between each other for purposes that aren't at all clear, other than electing Democrats to office.

For example, the Education Minnesota PAC sent \$456,625 to something called the Alliance for a Better Minnesota Action Fund.

This PAC is funded in a big way by unions like Education Minnesota as well as other shadowy interest groups like one called WIN Minnesota.

Note also that the Education Minnesota PAC gave \$300,000 to WIN Minnesota.

Do you feel like your swirling in a cesspool of political influence?

Good. You're a normal and concerned citizen.

Essentially, this category attempts to capture the spending done by PACs and "PACs of PACs" that aggregate astronomical sums of money to influence electoral outcomes.

Money flows in and out, almost like a Panamanian banking system.

These expenditure totals are emblematic of the way in which The People have lost control of their government.

They've lost control because their government in many measures has been bought and paid for by special interests.

And DFL politicians stand in front of microphones to decry the influence of money in politics.

What a bunch of BS.

Independent Expenditures

These expenditures consist of mailings in favor of legislative candidates favored by Education Minnesota.

Every single mailing was on behalf of a DFLer save one, those for Jim Abeler, when he ran against the endorsed Republican to win the special election in Senate District 35.

One can't help but wonder what Jim Abeler is prepared to do to return the favor.

There you have it, Watchdogs. A primer on the dirty, murky world of special interest political spending.

This is how we lost our democratic political institutions.

You take the Education Minnesota PAC and multiply it by thousands of similar organizations operating across the country at the federal, state, and local level.

Americans are rightly demanding that the money changers be ejected from the temple.

Guess which candidate for president offers hope in that regard?

10/7/16

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week: "So you've got this crazy system where all of a sudden 25 million more people have health care, and then the people who are out there busting it, sometimes 60 hours a week, wind up with their premiums doubled and their coverage cut in half. It's the craziest thing in the world."

- Bill Clinton

"The only thing we're going to try to do is lower costs so that those cost savings are passed onto you. And we estimate we can cut the average family's premium by about \$2,500 per year."

- Barack Obama

"We are far better off doing it our way and having control over it."

- Mark Dayton, upon signing MnSure into law

"This is the most significant reform of health insurance we've seen in Minnesota in 50 years."

- State Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL - Inver Grove Heights)

MNSURE MELTDOWN

The state's insurance exchange has imploded. Just as many, including this publication, predicted.

As readers have surely learned over the past week, the state's Obamacare exchange is collapsing, with similar meltdowns occurring across the country.

Now, before you think this piece is just a recitation of the bad numbers spilling out from MnSure and Obamacare, read on.

There are two important things you need to know about the MnSure debate as it unfolds just weeks before Election Day.

The first thing to know is an important historical fact regarding healthcare in Minnesota that will surely play into the debate and public discourse.

Back in 1976, the legislature created the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association (MCHA).

The government-regulated non-profit was designed to offer health care coverage for the "hard to insure," those with very difficult health care issues that made them hard to insure.

Essentially, it was a high-risk insurance pool that sought to provide coverage.

It was a model health care idea and it worked well for 38 years, until it was closed down in favor of, you guessed it, MnSure.

MCHA was one of the innovations that made Minnesota a leader in health care and showcased our state as one with among the lowest numbers of uninsured in the nation.

So why bring it up?

We raise this historical item because the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The Star Tribune, a font for liberal/DFL ideas and collaboration, this week penned an editorial describing their "fix" for the broken MnSure system.

The "fix" consists of putting citizens with difficult health issues in a special pool where they can shop for health insurance, with heavy state subsidies.

Wait a minute. That sounds exactly like what the state used to do with the MCHA high risk pool.

So the state wasted over \$150 million on a web site, including consultant's fees and employee bonuses, created a mess, and the solution is to simply go back to where we were before Obamacare.

Only in government.

Recall that Governor Dayton and DFL own this debacle lock, stock, and barrel.

They created this mess without a single GOP vote.

Of course, that hasn't stopped DFL politicians from trying to pin blame on Republicans.

This finger pointing comes in the form of demanding that the GOP help the DFL get out of the mess and find solutions to their problem.

This is typical, expected, and emblematic of the shameless nature of their politics.

DFLers set fire to some issue, and then jump up and down demanding that the GOP play fireman (fire person?) and douse the flames.

It's all part of the deflection of the issue. This all follows a familiar pattern:

First, DFL identifies some issue as being in need of a government solution.

Two, DFL creates policy that makes situation worse.

Three, DFL blames some boogie man (e.g. Big Insurance Companies) and demands GOP fix problem.

Four, DFL uses the we-care-about-people-so-our-results-don't-matter excuse.

Five, GOP fixes problem. Or if they don't, DFL blames GOP for not caring and not having a solution.

Needless to say, the GOP has solutions, and has had solutions.

The House and Senate GOP should go through the record and tally the number of amendments that were offered by their members in all committees and on both floors.

Amendments were offered by the GOP. The DFL rejected them.

Now, the DFL wants GOP ownership of their problem.

We would love to see a response that goes like this: "The GOP offered X suggestions to improve MnSure. They were rejected. Legislative Republicans hope Governor Dayton and DFL legislators will now listen to our ideas now that their ideas have been tried and have failed."

The GOP should stand firm in demanding true reforms in exchange for any fixes. If not, the FL can lump it. They own it.

This is a big issue. The Watchdog has spoken to many legislative candidates over the past few weeks. Many say the biggest issue they hear about on the trail is the cost of health care and the damage wrought by Obamacare.

No wonder the Star Tribune and the DFL are demanding fixes. Their Big Idea is under fire.

What a debacle.

MEET YOUR CANDIDATE - ROB FARNSWORTH

Between now and Election Day, the Watchdog will occasionally highlight interesting legislative candidates.

This week's candidate is Rob [Farnsworth](#), who is running as the endorsed Republican in District 6A, in the heart of the Iron Range.

Farnsworth is interesting because he represents the vanguard of political realignment on the Iron Range.

He's Republican through and through. He's pro-life. He's pro Second Amendment.

He supports the Range economy, backing mining and other skilled trade jobs.

But he's also proudly pro-union and pro-labor.

In other words, he's precisely the kind of person to represent the folks on the Iron Range, folks who are increasingly ignored by the DFL.

Farnsworth recently earned the [endorsement](#) of the Duluth News Tribune, hardly a conservative mouthpiece.

But it's easy to see why he's earned support across the political spectrum.

Listen to what he had to say regarding his candidacy: "The DFL that most Iron Rangers are voting for hasn't existed for 20 years. The DFL in the Twin Cities, that has taken over the DFL in Minnesota, wants to end mining. At their convention and then again at their executive board meeting in the Twin Cities, they tried to pass an anti-mining resolution that I believe will be passed in November because they just pushed it down (the road). This is not a group that is in favor of mining."

Farnsworth grew up in Chisholm, the son of a miner. He's living down the road in Hibbing these days, teaching in the Hibbing School District.

Can he win? Of course it's an uphill climb, but there is always someone who is at the forefront of change.

Two years ago, few people thought Rep. Tim Miller would win his traditionally DFL district in western Minnesota.

He shocked the world in 2014 and looks poised to hold the seat in 2016. Sources tell the Watchdog Miller is in excellent shape, which is a credit to him and to the changing politics of the district.

Is Rob Farnsworth this year's Tim Miller?

Conventional wisdom would argue against it, but conventional wisdom is out the window this year.

The Iron Range is another area turning red. Farnsworth is the darkest of dark horses, but it's a race we will be watching closely on Election Day.

GETTING SLIMED

Recent campaign finance reports have shown, not surprisingly, that liberal special interest groups have accumulated millions to dump into (and on to) legislative races.

Republican candidates around the state in targeted races are telling the Watchdog that they are getting "slimed" with all sorts of negative advertising, telling voters what evil people they are, simply because they chose to throw their hats in the ring as Republicans.

The liberals say, "When they go low, we go high."

Yeah, right.

To showcase the DFL high road, Harold Hamilton encourages Republicans to scan the negative mail and send it to him at harold@anokacountywatchdog.com.

Or send it to him on Facebook.

Let the world see the "high road" the liberals are taking this year.

10/14/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "There's never been anybody in the history of politics in this nation that's been so abusive to women. So can anything you want to say about it, but Bill Clinton was abusive to women. Hillary Clinton attacked those same women and attacked them viciously."

- Donald Trump

Editor's Note: Loyal Republicans are facing a true dilemma this year. Not in many generations has the Grand Old Party been so divided over its nominee for President.

Thoughtful and dedicated activists across the country are on opposite sides of the central question of the election cycle: Whither Trump?

This week, the Watchdog delves into this question, making the case both for and against Donald J. Trump.

THE CASE AGAINST TRUMP

Donald Trump is going to lose. The handwriting is on the wall. He has no realistic path to 270 electoral votes and will hand the keys to the Oval Office to Hillary Clinton, one of the most unpopular figures to ever run for president.

Trump has only himself to blame for this debacle.

He lacks the temperament needed to run for, win, and serve as President of the United States.

Republican voters should have seen it way back in the early primary contests, with Trump mocking and belittling his opponents in a juvenile, middle school sort of way.

Any dime store political operative could have seen that this schtick wouldn't sell to a general election audience, even against an opponent as reviled as Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It is now time for Republican leaders to publicly break with Trump for a greater good - the Party itself.

It is time to break with Trump, who is going to lose anyway, in order to save Republican majorities in the House and Senate, as well as further down the ballot in state legislatures.

These majorities are at historic levels at the state and federal level, representing years of hard work that is in jeopardy from an insurgent candidate who cares little for the Republican brand and did nothing to help build and nurture it in the first place.

A perfect narrative presents itself here. Speaker Ryan and Leader McConnell should make the case that GOP majorities are needed in Washington to act as a check and balance against a Clinton presidency.

With fully 60% of voters finding Hillary Clinton untrustworthy, they will be highly receptive to such a message. As unpopular as Trump may be, she is running right behind him.

This "check and balance" message allows GOP candidates to run against both Trump and Clinton, thereby freeing themselves from these two political millstones while forcing their Democrat opponents to stand by Hillary Clinton.

The "ick" factor regarding the Clintons is alive and well. Republicans would do well to exploit it.

There is no loyalty to Donald Trump regardless. Trump has consistently bad mouthed GOP leadership and has no real relationship with the national party.

In these circumstances, Congressional Republicans are on firm moral ground to distance themselves from this very flawed and already defeated candidate, who appears hell bent on going out in a blaze of scorched earth glory.

With Hillary Clinton and her abusive husband back in the White House, checking her reckless and feckless ambitions will be paramount to saving the Republic.

Just as importantly, breaking with Trump is necessary to save the national party and the GOP brand in general.

In essence, politics can be seen as a numbers game. You need more votes than the other guy to win.

Given America's changing demographics, it's political suicide to be seen hurling insults and thinly veiled racism against the very people Republicans need to win over to remain competitive in coming years.

The party of Abe Lincoln offers ideas and principles that benefit every American, regardless of race, gender, etc.

Trump's pandering to certain elements interferes with this important outreach and is a losing strategy in the long term.

No matter the outcome of the election, Trump has already visited much damage to the brand in this regard. It's time to stanch the bleeding and begin those outreach efforts anew once Trump is a historical footnote.

Moreover, some of Trump's policy positions are anathema to core Republican principles and therefore also threaten the brand. For example, He opposes free trade. Republicans support free trade and understand the net benefit free trade confers on the country.

Another example is spending. Trump proposes to expand a host of domestic spending programs while also cutting taxes, a formula to bust spending caps and accelerate the already staggering federal debt.

A political party is united by shared principles and values. The core principles shouldn't be sacrificed at the altar of particular campaign, even a campaign for president.

THE CASE FOR TRUMP

While the path may be narrow, the path still exists, and it is worth pursuing.

The stakes couldn't be higher. The next president will appoint at least, if not multiple, justices to the Supreme Court.

The president serves as commander-in-chief. With America facing multiple threats from a host of sophisticated and dangerous foes, ceding the election seems foolish.

Donald Trump, though flawed, is a far cry better than Hillary Clinton on numerous important issues besides just these.

Moreover, Donald J. Trump is the duly endorsed Republican nominee for president. He deserves the full support of the party and the party faithful.

The practice of other Republican office holders denouncing Trump is a dangerous precedent and threatens to weaken the party as a whole, sewing seeds of disunity to division that won't disappear after Trump, especially if he loses. Finger pointing, recrimination, and infighting will be result, thereby weakening the party instead of saving it.

While Trump is crude and brutally honest, it's not as if he a convicted criminal or even stands accused of the things that Bill Clinton ever did.

Instead of knuckling under to the Democrat Establishment, Republicans should rally around Trump and help fend off attacks that make crude banter look like a criminal offense.

In many respects, Donald Trump is precisely the man needed for these times.

He's a true fighter against the Establishment, which is perhaps the only "crime" he's really committed.

The Washington Establishment sees in Trump a mortal threat to their secretive rule.

If the past couple of years have shown us anything, they have clearly shown us all that there is indeed an Establishment that serves the interests of the privileged few at the expense of the masses.

Edward Snowden demonstrated that there exists a massive surveillance state that engages in surreptitious and invasive domestic spying, shredding our Fourth Amendment rights in a way that shocked us all.

Other recent email document releases proved that the Democrat Party rigged their nomination process in favor of Hillary Clinton, putting the lie to the idea that there was a competitive race.

Like him or not, Senator Sanders and his supporters had the fundamental right to a fair and equal campaign for the Democrat nomination. He never had a chance.

More recent email leaks have shown that our major media outlets have been

conspiring with Hillary Clinton to provide her favorable coverage. Reporters friendly to Clinton have leaked questions to her prior to interviews, have given her veto power over stories before their publication, and otherwise slanted coverage in her favor.

On the other side, coverage of Trump has been clearly biased. While stories such as the leaked and now infamous audio tape are newsworthy, many of the follow on stories clearly are not.

For example, Watchdog staff recently saw a news report in which some forgettable contestant on "The Apprentice" from many years ago recently heard from another contestant that Trump allegedly made a negative comment regarding her skin tone.

Really? A hearsay comment from 2007 is now a news story?

There is a reason that Trump is the recipient of this avalanche of negative media.

It's because he's fighting the Establishment and fighting for us.

Donald Trump isn't nearly the Neanderthal he's portrayed to be.

The Establishment would have done it to any of the GOP candidates, don't kid yourself.

Mitt Romney was about as close to a Boy Scout as a presidential candidate can be.

The Establishment took his time at Bain Capital and used it to make Romney look like a destroyer of worlds.

Do you wonder why Hillary Clinton gets a pass on her email, Bill's sexual assaults, and tough questions about her troubled tenure as Secretary of State?

Do you wonder why Donald Trump is constantly asked about audio tapes over 10 years old, comments about someone's appearance, and other assorted hearsay regarding height, weight, etc.?

Really? This country is burning to the ground and the Establishment wants to

distract us with sob stories from years ago regarding hurt feelings, bullying, and self-esteem.

This is the ultimate Establishment con job.

If we can't see through it, we don't deserve anything other than to live under the yoke of the Elites.

Finally, far from undermining the Republican Party, Donald Trump is building it, helping shape a political realignment that is moving millions of rural "Reagan Democrats" into a permanent home in the party.

This year's GOP primaries and caucuses saw record numbers, with new voters participating for the first time.

These folks were inspired to attend because of Trump's candidacy and his alone.

Moreover, these voters are far from the ignorant louts the Establishment portrays them to be.

They are hardworking people who play by the rules and have clearly come to see that the game is rigged against them.

Faulty trade deals have sent their jobs to low cost foreign destinations.

These deals might be good for the wealthy elites, but they have decimated once proud and thriving towns across this great nation.

Millions of hard working people are working even harder, only to see their pay and benefits cut.

Political correctness in the form of speech codes, "safes spaces," "trigger words," "micro aggressions" and other forms of censorship are strangling our cherished right to free speech.

Opposition to the squelching of the free exchange of ideas isn't racism. It's a well-founded regard for the role free speech plays in a free society.

The American people are smart. They know that their democratic institutions have become corrupted and are no longer serving the common good.

Donald Trump has tapped into that concern.

The elites who favor the status quo are powerful and work to destroy those who threaten their hold on power.

That they're attempting to destroy Donald Trump is no surprise.

10/21/16

In This Issue:

IF NOT RIGGED, HEAVILY TILTED.

Much has been made of Donald Trump's assertion that the presidential election is "rigged" in favor of Hillary Clinton.

Of course, the mainstream media has heavily excoriated Trump for this (and nearly everything else he says) because, as they say, there is no evidence of "widespread" voter fraud.

But "rigged" is not synonymous with "widespread" voter fraud.

In fact, Trump's description really has nothing to do with voter fraud, although there are certainly many well-documented cases, usually in favor of Democrats, because it's orchestrated by Democrats.

Instead, Trump makes a valid point regarding how our democratic institutions have become corrupted, thereby breeding a distinct lack of faith among average citizens that they're living in a two-class political system.

Despite the media and Democrats portraying Trump's claims uninformed, even crazy, the evidence points to Trump being right.

Consider the hallmarks a democratic republic.

One is an independent media.

While conservatives have always pointed to media bias, the recent Wikileaks email revelations have proven this institutional bias beyond a reasonable doubt.

These email revelations have demonstrated that the media has often coordinated and conspired with the White House and the Clinton campaign to amplify their messaging.

Far from acting as an independent investigatory body providing objective news and analysis, the media has been in secret collusion to play the public for fools.

CNN provided debate questions in advance to the Clinton campaign.

The AP colluded with Clinton's State Department to launch favorable stories at convenient times.

The Clinton camp was given veto authority over quotes in news stories before they were published.

Today, an independent media doesn't exist in this country. Journalism is a lost art.

Another hallmark of a free nation, even the bedrock of such a nation, is the Rule of Law. It's the principle that no person is above the law and that all stand equal before Lady Justice.

Hillary Rodham Clinton has proven time and again that some people are above the law. The rules don't apply to them.

Clinton and her predatory husband have successfully ignored the criminal justice system for decades.

It's his sex crimes. Her billing records. Cattle futures. Email servers.

They walk free (and rich) while other citizens who engage in the same or lesser crimes are held accountable.

How ironic that many condemn Trump rhetoric about a rigged system yet turn a blind eye to the actions of the Clintons and others who give rise to that rhetoric.

Trump is only the messenger who has proclaimed that when it comes to the rule of law, the emperor has no clothes.

There's one set of rules for the Clintons and another set for the rest of us.

Even our political institutions are under assault.

Without Wikileaks, who would have believed that the Democratic nomination was indeed rigged, yes rigged, in favor of Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders.

Email evidence demonstrated that Democrat party officials were colluding with

Clinton staffers to favor her with respect to the nomination.

So powerful is the Establishment that even Bernie Sanders has been co-opted, now campaigning on behalf of Clinton, even though he was shut out of the nomination illegally.

We also learned this week that Democrat operatives were behind much of the violence at Trump campaign rallies earlier in the campaign.

The public now has irrefutable proof that Democrats intentionally incited violence at the campaign events of the Republican nominee in order to discredit him.

Even worse, these scummy political operatives used mentally ill people to incite the violence, sending them into the rallies to incite others to assault them.

Talk about exploitation.

A third hallmark of a true democratic republic is equal opportunity.

The belief that with hard work, the right attitude, and a whole lot of ambition, a person can get ahead and enjoy a decent life.

That isn't happening. Millions of Americans are playing by the rules, working hard, and trying desperately to get ahead.

They are being held down in many cases by laws and policies made by their own government.

Environmental extremism has deprived them of quality construction trade jobs.

Obamacare has raised healthcare costs through the roof while reducing their health care options.

Unfair trade practices like steel dumping and currency manipulation have killed jobs and opportunities.

In this environment, it's little wonder that Donald Trump has secured millions of followers who know our nation is in crisis and are willing to get behind an anti-establishment outsider.

They're so desperate for change and so angry with the ruling elites that they are "all in" for an exceptionally flawed candidate.

They don't care.

While the media and the Clinton camp have conveniently attempted to distract the public with stories regarding Trump's alleged behavior, the real story remains front and center in millions of living rooms, bar halls, and coffee shops across this great land.

The real story is the ongoing debate about whether or not this nation has lost its way.

The real story is about how the American Dream is becoming unavailable to the average citizen, in large part because our large and overbearing government is making it so.

Put another way, it is increasingly apparent that our government serves the ruling elites at the expense of the rest of us.

Hillary Clinton represents that ruling elite.

No wonder they doing everything they can to destroy Donald Trump.

If our system isn't fully rigged, it's certainly tilted heavily against the rest of us.

10/28/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Following a review of both the Complaint, and the documents Mr. Field submitted in support of the Complaint, the undersigned Administrative Law Judge has determined that the Complaint sets forth a prima facie violation of Minn. Stat. §§ 211A.02 and 211A.12 (2016). For the reasons detailed in the Memorandum below, Mr. Field should be permitted to proceed to a probable cause hearing on these claims."

- Administrative Law Judge Eric Lipman, regarding a campaign practices complaint filed against Marsha Van Denburgh

BUSTED?

Well, it looks like not every candidate for office gets away with breaking the law.

Over the course of the past six weeks, the Watchdog has been following a campaign practices complaint filed by a citizen of Anoka County District 1, Joe Field, against Marsha Van Denburgh, who is running for a seat on the Anoka County Board.

At the outset, it should be noted that a final determination of guilt has not been reached as the case is still working its way through the system to final adjudication.

Therefore, like on "Cops," we note that all subjects, including Van Denburgh, are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

First, let's get readers up to speed on the procedural posture of the case, or what normal people call the chronology.

On September 12, 2016 Mr. Field filed a [complaint](#) with the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) regarding a number alleged violations of Minnesota campaign laws.

On September 14th, 2016, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Eric Lipman issued a finding of "probable cause" with respect to some of the alleged violations and ordered a probable cause hearing for October 6th, 2016.

Sources tell the Watchdog that the ALJ at the probable cause hearing found enough evidence of wrong doing to schedule the matter for an evidentiary hearing on October 31st.

In order to move a case to this step, the ALJ must determine the following: At the conclusion of the probable cause hearing, the Administrative Law Judge will either: (1) dismiss the complaint based on a determination that the complaint is frivolous, or that there is no probable cause to believe that the violation of law alleged in the complaint has occurred; or (2) determine that there is probable cause to believe that the violation of law alleged in the complaint has occurred and refer the case to the Chief Administrative Law Judge for the scheduling of an evidentiary hearing. Evidentiary hearings are conducted pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 211B.35 (2016).

According to our sources, the ALJ on October 6th found the latter to be true: (2) determine that there is probable cause to believe that the violation of law alleged in the complaint has occurred and refer the case to the Chief Administrative Law Judge for the scheduling of an evidentiary hearing. Evidentiary hearings are conducted pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 211B.35 (2016).

In other words, it's not looking good for Marsha Van Denburgh.

So, what was in the complaint that led to the upcoming evidentiary hearing?

Below is a summary of the violations that the ALJ initially found to be valid at the first hearing.

Count One: Required Financial Reports

Mr. Field maintains that the information provided in Ms. Van Denburgh's most recent campaign financial report is inaccurate. The accounting of the costs of the printed tee-shirts, or the rental arrangements for the events at the Fountains of Ramsey Event Center and the New Life Church, are not clear from the campaign finance report dated July 25, 2016. The Administrative Law Judge finds that, although Mr. Field did not specifically identify a violation of section 211A.02 on the complaint form, the gravamen of the complaint is that sums for these items are not reflected on the required financial report. The complaint has alleged sufficient facts to support a prima facie violation of Minn. Stat. § 211A.02, subd. 2.

Count Two: Limitations on Contributions

Limitations on Contributions (Minn. Stat. § 211A.12) Minn. Stat. § 211A.12 provides in relevant part: A candidate or a candidate's committee may not accept aggregate contributions made or delivered by an individual or committee in excess of \$600 in an election year for the office sought and \$250 in other years; except that a candidate or a candidate's committee for an office whose territory has a population over 100,000 may not accept aggregate contributions made or delivered by an individual or committee in excess of \$1,000 in an election year for the office sought and \$250 in other years. Mr. Field maintains, by pointing to the contribution schedules accompanying Ms. Van Denburgh's July 29, 2016 campaign finance report, that Pamela Deal made two contributions of \$600 during the reporting period - one on June 9, 2016 and another on June 23, 2016. The Administrative Law Judge finds that the complaint has alleged sufficient facts to support a prima facie violation of Minn. Stat. § 211A.12.

Note the name of the contributor, Pamela Deal.

The Watchdog noted the \$1,200 donation at issue back in our August 19th edition.

Here's what we reported:

Van Denburgh has also claimed Republican credentials. Curiously, she also reports \$1,200 in donations from Pamela Deal.

Deal and her husband, Jim, are uber wealthy DFL donors who have contributed enormous sums to support Democrats.

For example, a search of the Minnesota Campaign Finance web site lists \$567,800 in contributions from James Deal to DFL candidates and allied groups since 2006.

The same search for Pamela Deal lists \$118,000 in the same type of donations.

A search of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) database also reveals big donations to Democrats at the federal level.

James and Pamela Deal aren't the only partisan DFLers to get behind Marsha Van Denburgh. Betsy O'Berry, who has run as an endorsed Democrat in the past, is also listed as a donor.

Stay tuned.

The Watchdog will be closely following this important and emerging story.

If the facts as alleged are found to be true, we will have a full-blown campaign finance scandal on our hands here in a county commissioner race.

TOO MANY TOWNS

An article in the Star Tribune recently noted that a shocking 66% of all local offices on the ballot this fall have either one or no candidates running at all.

While theories as to why this problem exists are many, one reason is that there are surely far too many counties and cities in Minnesota.

When you have a city of 25 people, it can be hard to convince 20% of the populace that they should serve on the city council.

Minnesota is ranked 21st among the states, measured by population.

Yet we have over 800 cities and 87 counties.

The state has 23 cities with fewer than 25 residents.

Fully 20 of the state's 87 counties have fewer than 10,000 residents.

These local units of government are wholly the creation of the state and can thus be adjusted by the state.

This is yet one more reason why the state should become more proactive in encouraging the merging of counties and cities or the un-incorporation of cities back into townships.

The primary reason, of course, is government finance. These small cities and counties lack the tax base and population density to provide services with any great degree of efficiency because of high marginal costs.

This manifests itself primarily in the need/desire for buckets of state aid for everything from school busses to water treatment facilities to maintenance garages to public golf courses and swimming pools.

In short, the state has too many cities and counties to serve 5.5 million residents, who are clustered primarily in the seven county Metropolitan Area (nearly 3 million).

The inefficiencies inherent in so many units of government serving so few people is another issue receiving little attention this election cycle.

No worries. Let's spend another few weeks discussing groping allegations from the Jimmy Carter era or what was said on a hot mic over 10 years ago.

That's the state of our republic and our public discourse.

11/4/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I'm probably in the minority in wishing you would levy more."

- Marsha Van Denburgh, candidate for county commissioner

Editor's Note: This is the last edition of the Watchdog before Election Day next Tuesday. It's almost over! Now, you need to do two things: One, make sure you're fully informed and ready to vote (if you haven't already). Two, go out and vote!

Here's where you can find your polling location and sample ballot:

<http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

<http://myballotmn.sos.state.mn.us/>

THE ANOKA COUNTY BALLOT

It would occupy too much space to cover every contest on the ballot next Tuesday, here are five candidates from five races who are worth checking out.

BEN RIECHERS - ANDOVER MAYOR

Watchdogs who live in Andover should consider the mayoral campaign of Ben Riechers, who is challenging incumbent mayor Julie Trude, who has been on the city council for about 150 years or so.

Ben is a long-time citizen of Andover and a long-time Republican activist.

He's never held elective office.

Moreover, he is a veteran who has spent a career in the private sector dealing with budgets and finance.

If you like the philosophy and world view of leaders like state Rep. Peggy Scott and Congressman Tom Emmer, you owe it to yourself to check out Ben Riechers.

If you're planning on voting GOP this year, or at least voting against the scallywags on the DFL ticket, you should take a moment to investigate down the ballot, at least as far as mayor.

<http://benforandover.com/>

BRAD GRESKOWIAK - COON RAPIDS CITY COUNCIL

Taxpayers in Ward 1 of this city will find much to like in Grekowiak's background.

Like many residents of Coon Rapids, he has roots on the Iron Range, growing up in Hibbing.

Like Ben Riechers, Greskowiak is a political outsider who has never held public office, instead bringing a background in business, including owning a small business and working for Fortune 500 companies.

His service to community includes volunteer work with the Boy Scouts, youth athletics, and Epiphany Church.

If you're looking for a city councilor who understands budgets, finance, and the need to match spending expectations with available revenues, visit his web site to learn more.

<http://www.brad4council.com/>

ANTHONY WILDER - HOUSE DISTRICT 37A

This race, covering parts of Coon Rapids, Blaine, and Spring Lake Park, is a competitive race that has flown under the radar this season.

The district is a competitive district, sending both DFLers and Republicans to the Minnesota House in recent years.

Moreover, it's an open seat, with incumbent DFLer Jerry Netwon seeking the open state Senate seat in the district.

This is one of those races where there are very clear distinctions between the candidates.

This is best exemplified by the Star Tribune's giddy endorsement of the DFL-endorsed candidate, Erin Koegel.

As is their modus operandi, the Red Star has once again this year endorsed a spate of liberal democrats, with some token Republican endorsements sprinkled around to maintain an air of plausible liberal-bias deniability.

For example, if you research the GOP endorsements, you will see that the Republican is nearly always a "narrow" choice over the "equally qualified" Democrat. Also, the Republican candidate is often endorsed in the hope that he or she will be a "moderating influence" on the GOP caucus.

Some of those endorsed Republicans are good people and good candidates, but it doesn't diminish the fact that the mainstream media is horribly biased and has proven that bias this year beyond a shadow of a reasonable doubt.

So, let's take a look at what has the Star Tribune all ga ga and compare with Anthony Wilder

First, the editorial board noted that Koegel is a "volunteer coordinator" for a government-subsidized non-profit, which has caused her to be around the legislature "most of her adult life."

This supposed knowledge of how to leverage the public treasury better prepares her "to make an impact."

Wilder, on the other hand, has spent his professional life involved in the private sector, helping run the family business, the Metro Gun Club in Blaine.

He is also involved in many other job-creating ventures and well understands what it takes to get the economy moving, especially in the district where he was born and raised.

Koegel's other endorsement-worthy credentials include a master's degree in "advocacy and public leadership" from U of M - Duluth. If any readers know what the means, please contact the Watchdog and let us know. We suspect the program may be co-located with the Womyn's Studies program.

Wilder himself is college educated, so there can be no elitist bias against him that one needs a college degree to be in public service.

This publication submits that the candidate who best understands the private sector is better prepared to serve, as opposed to the candidate who simply knows The System.

Moreover, the Star Tribune editorial board conveniently failed to consider two other important factors when considering an endorsement.

The first is temperament. We should aspire to elect only people who demonstrate good temperament.

Members of the Watchdog staff have met Wilder and found him to be civil, thoughtful, and poised.

And while we have never met Koegel, her temperament, or lack thereof, has been on full display via social media.

Throughout the campaign, her Twitter account has been filled with foul-mouthed rants, insults hurled against Republicans, and even one connected to #donttrustthepolice.

This district contains thousands of households that vote Republican, and many law enforcement officers live in the area.

How does she propose to represent these constituents and get things done with GOP colleagues, given her immature and disgusting comments?

Funny, her newspaper endorsement didn't mention any of this.

The second factor is connection to the community and shared values.

Anthony Wilder has lived in the area his whole life and understands the shared values of the community, especially on social issues.

Wilder is a certified DNR firearms safety instructor. He also understands the intrinsic value of human life.

As for Koegel? Born in Duluth, raised Maple Grove. Moved to the district at some point, not identified on her web site.

But her web site is filled with endorsements from groups like Planned Parenthood, public employee unions, and the radical liberal Take Action Minnesota group.

One can't help but wonder who she plans to represent should she win.

Now you have the other side of the story.

<http://wilderforhousemn.org/>

MATT LOOK - ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Readers know that political types like us have been keeping tabs on this race all year.

With the Erhart clan and other assorted Good Ol' Boys involved, you know that sleaze and slime will be the order of the day.

It's gotten so out of hand that Matt Look had to construct a "truth vs. rumor" web site to address all the mud coming his way. <http://votemattlook.com/truth-vs-rumors.html>

The latest scam comes in the form of a mailer that implies that Senator Jim Abeler has endorsed Look's opponent.

The piece was so egregious that Abeler was forced to issue a statement on it: "I am neutral in the race for Anoka County Commissioner District 1. While I have a good deal of respect for each candidate, I have endorsed neither. Recently a colorful mailing was sent out with photos of Marsha Van Denburgh and me, implying my support. That was done without my knowledge or permission."

ROBYN WEST - ANOKA COUNTY COMMISSIONER

The hotly contested race in District 3 in many respects boils down to a fundamental difference between the candidates: one wants to raise your taxes and the other doesn't.

Incumbent Robyn West has a demonstrated record of cutting spending and opposing tax increases.

Her opponent, Nyle Zikmund, has called for a re-introduction of the "wheelage tax," a tax on every vehicle garaged in the county.

The tax was adopted by the Good Ol' Boys back in 2006, but repealed in 2013 by West, Sivarajah, Look, Braastad, and Schulte. Entrenched liberal Jim Kordiak and Carol LeDoux voted to keep it.

If Zikmund will re-introduce this tax, what other taxes will he be willing to raise?

<http://robynwest.net/>

11/11/16

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog pauses today to recognize the service of those Americans who have worn the uniform of our country in the Armed Services, including Harold Hamilton, United States Navy.

Quote of the Week: "Silver added that in the past 24 hours, Clinton's odds of victory increased by about 5 points-from 65 percent to 70 percent."

- Nate Silver, 538 Poll 11/8/16

Quote of the Week: "Hillary Clinton leads Donald Trump by 8 percentage points among Minnesota likely voters in the latest Star Tribune Minnesota Poll."

- StarTribune 10/23/16

Quote of the Week: "According to a new KSTP/SurveyUSA poll, Craig leads Lewis 46 percent to 41 percent."

- KSTP 10/19/16

ANOKA COUNTY WRAP

Hey, readers. It's over. Election 2016 is in the books and observers will be dissecting the results for years to come.

This edition breaks down key races in Anoka County.

PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Anoka County went for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton 50-40%.

As expected, Trump fared better in the northern part of the county than in the southern part, which is still traditional DFL territory.

There are some interesting comparisons from the presidential tally from four years ago.

Trump got almost the same percentage of the vote as Mitt Romney, about 50%

The big difference is that Hillary Clinton underperformed Barack Obama in the county by a full 7%.

Somewhere along the line, she lost votes to third party candidates or people who simply chose not to vote for president.

In that sense, the county was once again a bellwether in that one of Clinton's biggest problems was that she failed to replicate the Obama coalition of 2008 and 2012.

This is especially true in that Trump, unlike Romney, almost universally underperformed other endorsed Republicans on the ballot.

In 2012, Romney in most cases ran within a couple of percentage points of the endorsed Republicans for Congress and the legislature.

Trump, on the other hand, usually ran behind, sometimes by double digits.

This gets really interesting when one considers that both Romney and Trump got nearly identical numbers of raw votes, with only 89 votes separating them.

For Clinton, she underperformed Obama (2012) by over 13,000 votes.

What this tells us is that the problem was Clinton. She lost votes that didn't go to Trump. She simply lost votes to third party folks or "none of the above."

CONGRESS

In the Third District, Erik Paulsen won in Anoka County and overperformed his total, with 56% overall and 58% in the county.

Similarly, opponent Terri Bonoff was 2% under her aggregate percentage, 43% overall and 41% in the county.

In the Fifth District, incumbent socialist democrat Keith Ellison won 56% in Anoka County and 69% in his district. These numbers aren't surprising, considering that most of the 5th lies in Minneapolis.

In the Sixth District, Tom Emmer's Anoka County numbers were similar to his district-wide numbers, 62.71% in the county versus 65.58% district-wide.

LEGISLATURE

While there are some new faces, the song remains the same, so to speak, regarding the composition of the legislative delegation. In other words, there were no real surprises.

In Senate District 31, incumbent Republican Michelle Benson smoked DFLer Ricky Englund 68-32%. What beat down.

(Editor's Note: The numbers here reflect Anoka County numbers. Some districts cross county lines.)

In Senate District 35, the result was similar, as pragmatic, moderate Jim Abeler dispatched perennial losing candidate Roger Johnson 67-32%. Roger Johnson must be close to some sort of record for futility. This guy has yet to win an election and has run multiple times - and his last name is Johnson! Perhaps Roger can start running in contests more suited to his talent level, like best booya in Coon Rapids, or DFL captain for his block (or address). Maybe recording secretary for bridge club. Anyway, we're just trying to help. Roger, we're embarrassed for ya, buddy!

In Senate District 36, incumbent John Hoffman eked out a narrow victory over Republican Brooklyn Park Mayor Jeff Lunde.

While the Watchdog thinks Sen. Hoffman is a decent man, we can't say the same about the campaign his allies ran against Lunde.

It was vile, untruthful, and undeserved. Jeff Lunde is a good man who would have served the Senate well.

It's too bad this race, featuring two smart and competent candidates, had to devolve into a mudslinging affair dominated by outside special interests.

In the 37th Senate District, DFL state Rep. Jerry Newton retained an open seat for his party against Republican Brad Sanford.

Newton's high name recognition and Sanford's personal foibles, including a bankruptcy, were enough to push Newton to a 51-48 win.

In District 38, incumbent Republican Roger Chamberlain cruised to a comfortable 60-40% win.

In District 41, DFL state Rep. Carolyn Laine retained an open seat for her party, beating Gary Johnson (the other one), 63-37% in a district that tilts heavily to the DFL.

In House District 31A, House Speaker Kurt Daudt won a 69-31% whopping against his DFL opponent, which was about the same winning margin as the Speaker had in his GOP primary, when the tinfoil hats in his district ran a ham-handed campaign against him. Pro tip for the tinfoil hats: if you're going to run someone to the right of the incumbent in a GOP primary, it helps if the challenger DOES NOT support light rail.

Over in HD31B, Cal Bahr won a nice victory over his DFL opponent. Readers will recall that Bahr beat entrenched incumbent Tom Hackbarth in a GOP primary. What will Hackbarth do in retirement? We don't know, but customer service, motivational speaker, or parking lot security probably aren't in the cards.

HD 35A saw Rep. Abigail Whelan win her first bid for re-election 61-38% over the Democrat candidate

In 35B, GOP incumbent Peggy Scott predictably whopped DFLer Wes V. 65-35%. Somehow, Wes's "Wes V for 35B" rap didn't push him over the top. After seeing "Average Joe" Zimmer, Sam Scott (same last name trick), and "Wes V for 35B," for this seat over the years, it will be enough to see the DFL stop embarrassing themselves with cheesy, campy candidates.

What's next, Roger Johnson in 2018?

In 36A, Republican Mark Uglem secured another term, winning 52-48 on the Anoka County side of this district.

In 36B, DFLer Melissa Hortman will hang around for another two years. She's been quiet of late, sparing her constituents the tedium and embarrassment of goofy bills bringing the Olympics in or imposing California emission standards on our cars.

In 37A, DFLer Erin Koegel limped into office over Anthony Wilder, 47-45%. A Wilder win was spoiled by a libertarian candidate who empowered a DFL win by taking over 8% of the vote. No doubt, had he not been in the race, Wilder would have prevailed.

In 37B, Republican Nolan West won a close 168 vote win over his DFL opponent.

West was dogged throughout by social media comments regarding race and politics.

While the Watchdog joins others in condemning these comments, we also believe in redemption and remorse.

Nolan West has taken responsibility, acknowledged his regrettable actions, and asked for forgiveness.

In politics, there is a real bloodlust on both sides to kick the crap out of candidates for mistakes and personal failures forever and ever.

We hope all parties move on from this campaign and maybe just once give a person the benefit of the doubt.

In 38B, Rep. Linda Runbeck will return to Saint Paul for another term, winning easily.

In districts 41A and 41B, the democrats won. No surprise.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Four seats were up this time and much was at stake.

With four conservative members standing for re-election, the Good Ol' Boys crawled out from under their slimy rocks to bring back the 1980s and win back power by putting up some stool pigeons to do their bidding.

The biggest race was in District 1, where Matt Look was challenged by Marsha Van Denburgh, who portrayed herself as a Republican.

If that was the case, she showed her partisanship in a strange way by receiving support from the Erhart clan, Democrat super donor Jim Deal, and B level political hack Steve Novak.

The Erharts and Steve Novak used to be a big deal, back when MTV used to play music videos and all the kids were grooving on Pac Man down at the arcade, wearing their Vans and Ocean Pacific Ts.

Now they're just pathetic old men trying to recapture the magic of the old days, back when people knew who they were and feigned attention because they had election certificates.

Yawn.

Look snapped them all back to reality with a crushing 65-35% duck blind beat down.

Don't go away mad, Steve and Dan. Just go away.

Over in District 3, the Erhart's also brought the circus to town against Robyn West.

While it was a different tent, it was the same result.

West easily won and sent the circus packing.

In District 2, Julie Braastad ran up the score on her opponent 79-21%! That's not a misprint.

A big win, to say the least. And well deserved.

In District 6, conservative stalwart Rhonda Sivarajah won easily, but the margin was troubling.

At 66-34%, we can't help but wonder who voted for her opponent, a man with no campaign, no agenda, and long history of contact with law enforcement.

The 7,319 voters who picked Kevin Ryan over Rhonda Sivarajah do little to restore our faith in humanity. Any of the 7,319 are free to contact the Watchdog and tell us why they voted as they did.

LOCAL RACES

At the risk of missing someone, we were pleased to see the following city council members elected and re-elected.

In Coon Rapids, newcomer Brad Greskowiak was elected and will be great. In addition, Steve Wells was returned to the council.

In Andover, Sheri Bukkila won re-election.

In Ham Lake, Gary Kirkeide and Tom Johnson won.

Congratulations to you all.

11/18/16

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week:

"On election day, students at Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter, MN, received an email from their Dean of Students-Jones VanHecke-who said that pro-Trump and pro-NRA chalk messages found around campus may be considered 'hate speech' or 'bias language.'"

The email also stated that the writings were 'being reviewed' by the 'College's Bias Response Team.' (Really? What does that even mean?) They stated they will determine if the college will take actions to punish the responsible parties."

- Downtrend.com news report

"The University of Michigan Law School announced a 'post-election self-care' event with 'food' and 'play,' including 'coloring sheets, play dough (sic), positive card-making, Legos and bubbles with your fellow law students.'"

- USA Today news report

"Stanford emailed its students and faculty that psychological counseling was available for those experiencing 'uncertainty, anger, anxiety and/or fear' following the election."

- USA Today news report

BACK TO BASICS

Alright, Watchdogs. With the election over (for everyone except crybaby slackers on college campuses and violent street protesters), it's time to revisit some political fundamentals that will surely arise during the coming political debates at both the state and federal level.

Fundamental Rule: Liberals will always maintain that the solution to every failed government program (and there are many) is more government.

Nowhere will this prescription more pronounced than the coming debate over the future of Obamacare.

Many Democrats will no doubt push for everything from an increased IRS "individual mandate" penalty to increased government control over healthcare

to an outright universal "single payer" system, which is the ultimate goal of liberals.

In the reality-challenged world of the typical liberal, they believe that "universal" healthcare means that government provides all the healthcare that citizens care to consume.

In other words, these knaves believe that with a stroke of the pen, government can provide what the private sector can't produce: an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord of high quality healthcare at rock bottom prices.

Of course, that a bunch of fantasy and feel-good aspirational rhetoric.

The Iron law of Economics is that all resources are limited, including health care resources.

Government-controlled "universal" health care only provides universal access and not universal care nor the universal provision of what each citizen may need.

Put another way, universal single-payer care really changes only the mechanism for allocating health care resources.

Because health care is a limited, it must be allocated in an environment where there is more demand than supply.

In a free market system, it is allocated by the market and thus allocated efficiently, by definition.

Of course, there is no truly free market health care system that we can think of.

At best, health care markets in some countries are mixed, with elements of free markets intermingled with heavy governmental regulation.

Some liberals really think that citizens in Canada or England really get all the health care they need at a low cost.

Think again.

While access may be greater, quality suffers. Have you heard of any Americans rushing to Canada to get that specialty procedure or that heart bypass?

Any doctors leaving America to practice in Great Britain, where they are government employees represented by a union?

This is because government in Europe can't escape the fundamental issue of scarce resources. They must still confront the issue of deciding how to allocate healthcare.

They choose to do it by rationing, governed by a system that is inherently inefficient because the market they created lacks price signals that tell the market what to produce or not produce.

If you want to see the future of single payer universal health care in America, look no further than the Veterans' Administration system.

It's a total disaster, featuring the worst government has to offer. Rotten quality, a lack of accountability, and a distinct lack of service to the very people the system was created to serve.

The federal government should open the VA health care system of any elected official who supports universal health care. That should quiet them down, as it's a hallmark of liberalism to find their ideas to be good for OTHERS.

There is no such thing as universal health care. We can only debate how to best allocate the resources available.

Let's visit another fundamental topic, that being how government sets budgets and spends money.

With Republicans controlling both houses of the Minnesota legislature, taxpayers will surely be subjected to no small amount of whining and crying from the DFL that Republicans are "cutting" some plethora of much needed government programs. "Cut to the bone" in fact. "Draconian" cuts, even.

Here's how most of those "cuts" really shake out.

You see, most government programs are on auto pilot.

There is a baseline, there is a projected expenditure, and the projected trajectory becomes the new expenditure, subject to legislative intervention.

This is where political deception comes into play.

Let's say there's a government program that spent \$100 million in the last budget cycle.

The projection is that more people will take advantage of the program in the upcoming cycle, making for a 40% over the baseline, to \$140 million.

Republicans, being cruel and uncaring, want to reduce the increase over baseline to 25%, way above inflation and population growth.

Nonetheless, Democrats will decry the 15% "cut" that the mainstream media will then parrot which in turn will mean thousands of people actually believing it.

Thus, only in government will you find a situation where a 25% increase becomes a "Draconian cut."

Now think about the deceptive rhetoric that happens when Republicans hold spending for a program area flat.

In the example above, the press release now decries the "40% cut." Dramatic! The humanity!

Think about how stupid this sounds when applied to the real world.

An employee at a small business is told that the plan is to give him a 15% raise at the end of the year in recognition of his good work and his value to the company.

The company, for various reasons, fall on some hard times.

Nonetheless, the employee is given a 10% raise instead of the promised 15% raise.

Would he then go home and tell his family his pay was cut 5%?

Hardly.

But in government that is precisely what happens.

So, when your favorite liberal friend of politician tells you about all the "cuts" coming from Republicans, be sure to ask how the new spending compares to the previous budget.

Odds are that you will find a spending increase. It just doesn't equal what the liberals wanted.

Look for this stupidity to rear its head in education, health care, and local government aid programs.

11/25/16

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week: "We're in a room full of liars, the deceitful, dishonest media who got it all wrong."

- President-Elect Donald J. Trump

"Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

- John Adams

"In a democracy, there is nothing to check the inducement to sacrifice the weaker party or the obnoxious individual."

- James Madison

"Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos."

- Chief Justice John Marshall

Editor's Note: A very Happy (and belated) Thanksgiving, Watchdogs! We hope your day was filled with rest, joy, and the company of loved ones. For those away from family who spent the day defending our great nation, we salute your service and offer our thanks for your dedication and sacrifice.

Today's edition focuses on the things for which we at Watchdog HQ are thankful this year. Enjoy!

THANKFUL. We're thankful for the Electoral College. Contrary to what most chowder heads believe, America is NOT and NEVER WAS a democracy. Our Framers had a thorough understanding of both human nature and political history.

They correctly saw direct democracy as a threat to individual liberty. They saw democracy as akin to mob rule.

For those who didn't pay attention in sixth grade, our federal constitution is a representative republic model, where the preservation of individual liberty is the touch stone.

The temporary passions of the mob, like the 2016 presidential election, do not rule the day.

We guess this is apparently breaking news to the clowns who can't let go of the election and have yet to reconcile themselves with the fact that Donald Trump will be the next president of the United States.

Our constitution is replete with checks against mob rule and the "dilution" of popular opinion: lifetime judicial appointments, a bi-cameral legislative branch, a Senate based on statehood and not population, six-year Senate terms, Marbury vs. Madison, the Bill of Rights, a chief executive veto power.

The main idea here is that America was founded upon the principle of individual rights and not on the idea that popular opinion should carry the day.

Our Framers clearly understood that democracy was a threat to individual rights and that the two were often in conflict.

In short, you folks clamoring for a popular vote for president are in favor of mob rule.

THANKFUL. Thankful for Donald Trump, the right man at the right time. Yes, the Watchdog staff has shared the disgust of others regarding Trump's behavior and demeanor.

In life, timing is everything and there's a reason Trump won even though he would have been toast in just about any other year.

After years of being pushed around and bullied by the Liberal Left, Donald Trump embodies the feelings of millions of Americans who have been yearning for a champion who will punch back.

A great deal of Trump's support comes from people who are sick and tired of watching mealy-mouthed conservatives apologize for their beliefs and values.

Trump is champion who won't take their BS and will give it better than he gets it.

Jeb Bush, Mitt Romney, Colin Powell. Establishment whimps.

If nothing else, Donald Trump has the guts to take on the Establishment.

THANKFUL. Thankful for the large number of Democrats who think the path to a sustainable center-left governing coalition runs through San Francisco, Minneapolis, and New York.

So let's get this straight. Democrats suffered a stinging rebuke from Middle America on election night.

The party is in danger of becoming a regional protest party based in urban areas, the Northeast, and the Left Coast.

The solution to that issue is to put Nancy Pelosi (San Francisco), Chuck Schumer (New York) and Keith Ellison (Minneapolis) in charge?

Wonderful. Please do.

The Watchdog has observed for years that the Democrats have abandoned rural America in favor of group identity politics.

This publication strongly encourages Democrats to double down on that strategy.

The Republican Party hasn't been this strong across the country in over 80 years.

Soon, it will be easier to find a unicorn than a Blue Dog Democrat.

See Colin Peterson while you can.

Keep it up Democrats, we're pulling for you.

THANKFUL. Thankful for a GOP majority in both houses of the Minnesota legislature.

We're thankful for many reasons, but the one that comes to mind is MnSURE, the failed Minnesota branch of the failed Obamacare program.

After getting spanked by the voters in large part because of MnSURE, Governor Dayton's "solution" to the problem is to raid the state treasury to pay for an expensive \$300 million band aid to paper over the program's systemic flaws - for just one year.

Legislative Republicans are right to demand fundamental changes to the program as a part of any agreement with a governor who proves nearly every day that he's just as out of touch as the other Minneapolis elites who lead the DFL.

And just like their federal counterparts, the DFL just can't help themselves when it comes to the smug, self-righteous superiority of the urban elites who rule their party.

Have you seen the names being floated for governor in 2018?

Erin Murphy (Saint Paul), Tina Flint Smith (Minneapolis), Chris Coleman (Saint Paul).

See you in January, governor.

THANKFUL. Thankful for Brooklyn Park Mayor Jeff Lunde. Mayor Lunde ran for state Senate against a DFL incumbent this year in a district that leans DFL.

Given Lunde's popularity and tireless efforts on behalf of his city, the DFL took his candidacy seriously and went to work destroying him in a relentless campaign of negativity.

Lunde absorbed the sling and arrows his grace and poise.

And his opponent, John Hoffman?

He was narrowly re-elected, before the Dayton administration made public a decision regarding a potential conflict of interest with Hoffman's employer.

During the 2016 session, Hoffman authored legislation that appropriated money for grants to certain non-profits.

Hoffman's bill was amended to greatly narrow the number of applicants eligible for the grants.

One of those few eligible applicants is Hoffman's employer, Ally People Solutions.

The state agency charged with overseeing these grants pulled the applications, citing a lack of conflict of interest language.

Huh.

THANKFUL. Thankful for our readers and our fellow travelers on the road to a Minnesota based on limited government and individual liberty.

Readers, thank you for your loyalty!

12/2/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Whenever there's a question which has been given some high public visibility about the potential misuse, alleged misuse of public resources, I think the public deserves a quick and objective answer."

- Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles

Quote of the Week: "The governor has yelled at me before, he probably will again."

- State Rep. Matt Dean (R - Dellwood)

Quote of the Week: "By greater than a 3-1 margin survey respondents support environmentally-responsible mining in the region. Additionally, by more than 2-1, respondents support the building of new copper-nickel mines and believe copper-nickel mining can be done in an environmentally-responsible way. More than 60 percent support the Twin Metals underground copper-nickel project."

- Twin Metals Minnesota

A PETULANT CHILD

Well, that didn't take long. Just days into the new post-election reality, the man-child in the governor's office threw a temper tantrum befitting any well-adjusted, normal 3 year-old child.

Perhaps the governor grew overheated because he needed a nap.

Perhaps he threw the category 5 tantrum because the subject matter was one he knows well - art.

In this case, they weren't talking the kind of art that one sells out of the family trust fund to pay for political campaigns.

Instead, the subject matter was the kind of art that will hang in the governor's office now that needed and extensive remodeling is nearly complete.

As any visitor to the Capitol knows, art depicting Minnesota's role in the Civil War is prominent throughout the building.

This is because Minnesota played a vital role in that major historical period and because the Capitol itself was built at a time when Civil War veterans played a large role in the state's politics.

This week, a commission charged with overseeing these issues met to discuss whether various Civil War paintings would be re-installed in the governor's office.

When legislators who sit on the panel expressed their preference for keeping the paintings where they were, contrary to Dayton's wishes, he blew his top.

(Editor's Note: Now word on what paintings Dayton would install. Maybe one of him signing the stadium bill he didn't understand? Maybe signing the MnSure bill that wasted millions and condemned thousands to crappy, overpriced policies?).

As usual, Dayton screamed at his critics while labeling their concerns as "politics."

But in a new twist on his old antics, Dayton stormed out of the meeting.

It's about time Dayton be held accountable for his petulant, disrespectful and childish behavior.

Whether you agree or disagree with Dayton on various issues, every Minnesotan should condemn his behavior.

With his incompetence and behavior control issues, Dayton would be fired from any private company, if he would have even been hired in the first place.

SUITNESS IS THEIR WEAKNESS

Yes, we've all heard by now of the scam by which Dayton political appointees have been using two luxury suites at U.S. Bank stadium as their own patronage fiefdom to reward political cronies and give themselves and their families a taste of the good life.

With all that has been written, this one needs some clarity and analysis that only the Watchdog can provide.

Excuse #1: We can't provide the guest list.

Wrong. These suites are taxpayer assets, built and operated with tax dollars. The taxpayers have every right to know who is using these taxpayer assets and why. This isn't some CIA covert operation that demands secrecy and discretion.

The legislature should make crystal clear next month that the guest list is public data and that a guest list must be kept.

Excuse #2: The Suites are for marketing purposes.

If so, then why were people using the suites who clearly don't have an interest in renting the stadium?

So, former DFL legislator and DFL lobbyist Andy Kozak are now concert Promoters? Are they executives with the X Games? Please.

The common tie here is that they're political cronies of Mark Dayton and part of the DFL power structure. They were there to get some political payback. Period.

Excuse #3: The suites are needed to market the stadium.

Uh, no they're not, actually. A potential renter doesn't need to spend 3 hours in a luxury suite during a Vikings game filling his face with taxpayer-financed food and a VIP parking space to understand how the stadium may or may not be suitable for a particular event.

Potential renters can get a tour, sample food, see a presentation, ask questions, and get all the information they need without sucking up a hi-ho time on the taxpayer dime.

Perhaps the legislature should simply pass a bill that bans use of these suites.

This publication has yet to hear of a valid reason why they are needed.

Excuse #4: We can give tickets to our friends and family because we work long hours.

How arrogant. How totally out of touch.

Ted Mondale and Michele Kelm-Helgen, the folks responsible for this mess, are nothing more than political appointees who know nothing about building or running a stadium. They have done nothing in their adult lives other than live off political favors, just like their boss, Mark Dayton.

Having been in politics for a lifetime, they know better than to say dumb things like that. Their collective arrogance is so overpowering, they can't even act like politicians, offering strategic lies and doubletalk to protect their hides.

Long hours? Prove it. We bet they can't.

And even if they did, so what? These two political appointees are on salary. Salary means getting the job done, no matter what it takes.

In fact, these two make nearly \$300,000 between them and God only knows what kind of sweet benefits. Odds are pretty good these two don't have to use MnSure to get health insurance.

Only Mark Dayton would think it acceptable to hire these two jokers to run a stadium.

To top it off, the two jokers have stated they will hold off on dispensing tickets to friends, family, and their book club until things are "clarified."

What's to clarify? Giving tickets to friends isn't okay. Got it?

Excuse #5: Governor Dayton will wait for the legislative auditor to tell him what to do.

The icing on the cake. Mark Dayton, yet again, displaying an utter lack of understanding regarding the reality of the situation.

Just yesterday, Dayton said he "expressed concern" to Mondale and Kelm-Helgen.

Really? Way to take a decisive and bold stand, governor.

What does that even mean?

Dayton is apparently content to stand by and watch Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles investigate and then explain to chowder head Democrats why abusing taxpayers for their pleasure is a no-no.

No action from our intrepid governor. Not even a condemnation of the behavior.

Only some vague talk of "expressing concern."

You can't make it up.

That's the problem. It's a big one.

Here's the solution, if the suites aren't simply eliminated.

One, a guest list must be kept that states exactly who attended and why that person attended. Guests must have a legitimate interest in renting all or part of the facility.

The list shall be public data.

Two, all guests must pay fair market value for their ticket, parking, and food/beverage and other benefits.

Three, a nepotism rule shall be in effect that bans stadium board members and staff from providing benefits to family relations.

Four, stadium board members shall be appointed by the governor and subject to Senate confirmation. Board nominees shall have a demonstrated record of success and experience in the field of finance, construction, or related private-sector market segment.

It's time to use the new majority to check a governor who is clearly having trouble governing effectively.

12/9/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We certainly will challenge the claim of the sports facilities folks. Their claim that those lists of people who sit in suites is not public - what law says that?"

- Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles

Quote of the Week: "Six priceless paintings depicting Minnesota soldiers in Civil War battles will be rehung in the Governor's Reception Room and anteroom over Gov. Mark Dayton's objections."

- News Headline

Editor's Note: Just another week in the Dayton Administration.

THE GOOD OL' BOYS: THE LAST CHAPTER?

Could we dare dream it? Could it be possible?

To be honest, it's quite doubtful, since that crew has never known when they're beaten.

But the question is asked because the judicial branch this week struck the coup de grace to the Good Ol' Boys utterly failed political campaigns in Anoka County.

That death blow was struck when a three judge panel found candidate Marsha Van Denbergh violated multiple campaign finance laws in her failed quest to unseat incumbent Matt Look.

The Anoka County Record, a publication of legal notices and news in the county, crafted an excellent summary of the panel's decision.

You can visit the Anoka County Record [here](#).

That article is printed below, with permission from the Record's December 6th edition:

On November 16th, eight days after losing the county commissioner race to incumbent Matt Look, Marsha Van Denburgh was fined a total of \$600 for three violations of Minnesota campaign finance laws.

In September, Ramsey resident Joe Field filed a complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings alleging that Ms. Van Denburgh violated several sections of Minnesota's Fair Campaign Practices Act. A probable cause hearing was held by telephone conference call and it was determined that four separate items should proceed to an evidentiary hearing. The four potential violations of Minnesota law were as follows:

1. Accepting larger contributions than allowed;
2. Failure to report a campaign contribution;
3. Failure to report an in-kind campaign contribution;
4. Failure to report a facility rental campaign contribution.

An evidentiary hearing was held on October 31st in front of three Administrative Law Judges. At the hearing, Eric Lipman (Presiding Judge), James Mortenson, and Jessica Palmer-Denig took written and verbal testimony from several parties.

Of the four potential violations of Minnesota law that were reviewed by the Court, they found Ms. Van Denburgh guilty of violating counts 1, 2, and 3. And as a result, Ms. Van Denburgh was fined \$200 per count for a total of \$600 to be paid to the Treasurer of the State of Minnesota by December 31, 2016.

Accepting Larger Contributions Than Allowed

Concerning the first count, accepting larger contributions than allowed, the Van Denburgh campaign illegally accepted a second \$600 contribution check signed by Pamela Deal for a total of \$1200 for 2016. Contributions are limited to \$600 per person per year. Nothing on either check indicated that Ms. Deal's husband, Ramsey property developer Jim Deal, was a co-contributor. As a result, the Van Denburgh campaign was fined \$200.

Failure to Report a Campaign Contribution

The second count, failure to report a campaign contribution, involved the campaign's failure to report Ms. Van Denburgh's personal payment of \$331.68 for campaign shirt printing. All contributions, even if made by the candidate in the form of a loan, must be reported. The Van Denburgh campaign was fined an additional \$200 for this violation of the law.

Failure to Report an In-kind Campaign Contribution

The third count, failure to report an in-kind campaign contribution, involved a Ramsey restaurant named The Lunch Box Coffee & Deli (Lunch Box). In addition to their restaurant across the street from Ramsey City Hall, they also do catering and event hosting at the Fountains of Ramsey Event Center (Event Center). The Event Center can be rented for meetings, expos, and weddings.

On June 9th, the Van Denburgh campaign held a fundraiser at the Event Center, which was catered by the Lunch Box. After the fundraiser was held, manager Matt Kuker wrote Ms. Van Denburgh informing her that she would not be billed for use of the facility and restaurant expenses. Mr. Kuker valued the contribution at \$200 and stated that he was paying this fee as a contribution to her campaign. The failure to properly report this in-kind contribution at the proper time was deemed by the Court to be a violation of the law. The campaign was fined an additional \$200.

Whether the stated fair market value of \$200 was truthful, was also a question before the Court. The law requires that the fair market value of goods and services received at no cost be reported as an in-kind contribution to the campaign. Due to a lack of evidence, the Court was unable to determine if \$200 represented the fair market value of goods and services received by the Van Denburgh campaign from the Lunch Box and Event Center. The complainant, Mr. Fields, provided information to the Court from another caterer who also uses the Event Center, bringing the \$200 amount into question. The Court ruled that the price charged by another caterer is not evidence of the prices charged or any discount rendered by the Lunch Box or the Event Center to the Van Denburgh campaign.

Illegal Business Contribution to Campaign

Had Mr. Fields proven that Mr. Kuker's \$200 valuation was low, any additional sum beyond this may have been considered a contribution directly from the Lunch Box and Event Center to the Van Denburgh campaign. The Lunch Box website lists food selections in the \$5 to \$10 range. The Event Center website lists a minimum \$150 rental fee with a food and beverage minimum of \$3,000 with a cash bar.

A direct contribution from the Lunch Box and Event Center to the Van Denburgh campaign could have been problematic as both appear to be organized as corporations. Under Minnesota law, corporations are prohibited from contributing any money, property, free service of its officers, employees,

or members, or thing of monetary value to a campaign committee or candidate running for public office. They may only be involved in expenditures independent from a candidate or candidate committee.

Lunch Box manager Mr. Kuker, Ramsey developer Jim Deal, and the Lunch Box and Event Center businesses are all connected. The Court identified Mr. Kuker as the manager of the Lunch Box. The City of Ramsey identifies Mr. Kuker as one of the owners of the Lunch Box. The business networking website LinkedIn identifies Mr. Kuker as the Chief Operating Officer at PSD, LLC. The Minnesota Secretary of State identifies Jim Deal, as the manager of PSD Holding, LLC. Both LLC's, the Lunch Box, and the Event Center, are located at the same address in Ramsey, MN. LLC's are considered to be "corporations" under Minnesota law.

If at some point in the future, the \$200 sum stated by Mr. Kuker is proven to be false. Any additional amount would be considered an illegal corporate contribution to the Van Denburgh campaign.

Church Provided Free Use of Space for Political Event

The Court determined that the Van Denburgh campaign did not have to claim an in-kind contribution for use of space at New Life Church for a political fundraising event. No evidence was brought forward which placed a value on this use. The Court noted that there was no evidence that the Church offered space to other members of the public at a particular price or that the price was higher than what was charged to Ms. Van Denburgh. Further supporting this was a letter and \$100 donation sent by Ms. Van Denburgh to the Church six days after the event thanking them for the use. In the eyes of the Court that was only reviewing compliance with campaign finance laws, no violation occurred.

Generally all churches have 501(c)(3) tax exempt status which prohibits participation in certain political activity. What will remain to be seen is if a complaint is filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against New Life Church. The Court record proves that the Church provided free use of their property for a political fundraiser. (Editor's note: It was also brought to our attention that the Church promoted this event on their website.)

On July 13, 2015, the Evansville Courier & Press ran an article on a mayoral candidate forum and fundraiser scheduled to be held at a local church. After a press inquiry, the fundraiser portion was quickly canceled.

In the Courier & Press article, Notre Dame law professor Lloyd Hitoshi Mayer, an expert on nonprofit and election law and prohibited political activity stated, "Renting for a fundraiser violates federal tax law if you only make it available to one candidate or you give it to them for free," he said. "The key thing is bias, favoritism. That's what the tax law is concerned about. If you say, 'We'll rent it to any candidate that wants it, at fair market value,' that's not a problem under federal tax law. So if the opponent shows up the next week and says, 'I want to rent the church facility out to host something and do a fundraiser,' the church has to say, 'Sure.' Same price, same deal. They have to say yes."

According to IRS publications on election year activities, all 501(c)(3) organizations, "are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. The prohibition applies to all campaigns including campaigns at the federal, state and local level. Violation of this prohibition may result in denial or revocation of tax-exempt status and the imposition of certain excise taxes." Furthermore, "Allowing a candidate to use an organization's assets or facilities will also violate the prohibition if other candidates are not given an equivalent opportunity."

Conclusion

The Court bluntly stated that, "Ms. Van Denburgh failed to suitably acquaint herself with the requirements of state campaign finance laws and supervise a campaign treasurer who was new to this field." They further stated that the campaign was, "not able to accurately report to the public the essential details: the campaign's "cash on hand"; the specifics of each disbursement by the campaign; and the identity of higher-dollar campaign contributors." With the results of the election known by the time the ruling was issued, the Van Denburgh campaign having lost the race by a large margin, the Court stated that the \$600 fine was partially based upon the fact that, "these violations had a minimal impact upon voters."

12/16/16

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We certainly will challenge the claim of the sports facilities folks. Their claim that those lists of people who sit in suites is not public - what law says that?"

- Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles

Quote of the Week: "Six priceless paintings depicting Minnesota soldiers in Civil War battles will be rehung in the Governor's Reception Room and anteroom over Gov. Mark Dayton's objections."

- News Headline

Editor's Note: Just another week in the Dayton Administration.

THE GOOD OL' BOYS: THE LAST CHAPTER?

Could we dare dream it? Could it be possible?

To be honest, it's quite doubtful, since that crew has never known when they're beaten.

But the question is asked because the judicial branch this week struck the coup de grace to the Good Ol' Boys utterly failed political campaigns in Anoka County.

That death blow was struck when a three judge panel found candidate Marsha Van Denbergh violated multiple campaign finance laws in her failed quest to unseat incumbent Matt Look.

The Anoka County Record, a publication of legal notices and news in the county, crafted an excellent summary of the panel's decision.

You can visit the Anoka County Record [here](#).

That article is printed below, with permission from the Record's December 6th edition:

On November 16th, eight days after losing the county commissioner race to incumbent Matt Look, Marsha Van Denburgh was fined a total of \$600 for three violations of Minnesota campaign finance laws.

In September, Ramsey resident Joe Field filed a complaint with the Office of Administrative Hearings alleging that Ms. Van Denburgh violated several sections of Minnesota's Fair Campaign Practices Act. A probable cause hearing was held by telephone conference call and it was determined that four separate items should proceed to an evidentiary hearing. The four potential violations of Minnesota law were as follows:

1. Accepting larger contributions than allowed;
2. Failure to report a campaign contribution;
3. Failure to report an in-kind campaign contribution;
4. Failure to report a facility rental campaign contribution.

An evidentiary hearing was held on October 31st in front of three Administrative Law Judges. At the hearing, Eric Lipman (Presiding Judge), James Mortenson, and Jessica Palmer-Denig took written and verbal testimony from several parties.

Of the four potential violations of Minnesota law that were reviewed by the Court, they found Ms. Van Denburgh guilty of violating counts 1, 2, and 3. And as a result, Ms. Van Denburgh was fined \$200 per count for a total of \$600 to be paid to the Treasurer of the State of Minnesota by December 31, 2016.

Accepting Larger Contributions Than Allowed

Concerning the first count, accepting larger contributions than allowed, the Van Denburgh campaign illegally accepted a second \$600 contribution check signed by Pamela Deal for a total of \$1200 for 2016. Contributions are limited to \$600 per person per year. Nothing on either check indicated that Ms. Deal's husband, Ramsey property developer Jim Deal, was a co-contributor. As a result, the Van Denburgh campaign was fined \$200.

Failure to Report a Campaign Contribution

The second count, failure to report a campaign contribution, involved the campaign's failure to report Ms. Van Denburgh's personal payment of \$331.68 for campaign shirt printing. All contributions, even if made by the candidate in the form of a loan, must be reported. The Van Denburgh campaign was fined an additional \$200 for this violation of the law.

Failure to Report an In-kind Campaign Contribution

The third count, failure to report an in-kind campaign contribution, involved a Ramsey restaurant named The Lunch Box Coffee & Deli (Lunch Box). In addition to their restaurant across the street from Ramsey City Hall, they also do catering and event hosting at the Fountains of Ramsey Event Center (Event Center). The Event Center can be rented for meetings, expos, and weddings.

On June 9th, the Van Denburgh campaign held a fundraiser at the Event Center, which was catered by the Lunch Box. After the fundraiser was held, manager Matt Kuker wrote Ms. Van Denburgh informing her that she would not be billed for use of the facility and restaurant expenses. Mr. Kuker valued the contribution at \$200 and stated that he was paying this fee as a contribution to her campaign. The failure to properly report this in-kind contribution at the proper time was deemed by the Court to be a violation of the law. The campaign was fined an additional \$200.

Whether the stated fair market value of \$200 was truthful, was also a question before the Court. The law requires that the fair market value of goods and services received at no cost be reported as an in-kind contribution to the campaign. Due to a lack of evidence, the Court was unable to determine if \$200 represented the fair market value of goods and services received by the Van Denburgh campaign from the Lunch Box and Event Center. The complainant, Mr. Fields, provided information to the Court from another caterer who also uses the Event Center, bringing the \$200 amount into question. The Court ruled that the price charged by another caterer is not evidence of the prices charged or any discount rendered by the Lunch Box or the Event Center to the Van Denburgh campaign.

Illegal Business Contribution to Campaign

Had Mr. Fields proven that Mr. Kuker's \$200 valuation was low, any additional sum beyond this may have been considered a contribution directly from the Lunch Box and Event Center to the Van Denburgh campaign. The Lunch Box website lists food selections in the \$5 to \$10 range. The Event Center website lists a minimum \$150 rental fee with a food and beverage minimum of \$3,000 with a cash bar.

A direct contribution from the Lunch Box and Event Center to the Van Denburgh campaign could have been problematic as both appear to be organized as corporations. Under Minnesota law, corporations are prohibited from contributing any money, property, free service of its officers, employees,

or members, or thing of monetary value to a campaign committee or candidate running for public office. They may only be involved in expenditures independent from a candidate or candidate committee.

Lunch Box manager Mr. Kuker, Ramsey developer Jim Deal, and the Lunch Box and Event Center businesses are all connected. The Court identified Mr. Kuker as the manager of the Lunch Box. The City of Ramsey identifies Mr. Kuker as one of the owners of the Lunch Box. The business networking website LinkedIn identifies Mr. Kuker as the Chief Operating Officer at PSD, LLC. The Minnesota Secretary of State identifies Jim Deal, as the manager of PSD Holding, LLC. Both LLC's, the Lunch Box, and the Event Center, are located at the same address in Ramsey, MN. LLC's are considered to be "corporations" under Minnesota law.

If at some point in the future, the \$200 sum stated by Mr. Kuker is proven to be false. Any additional amount would be considered an illegal corporate contribution to the Van Denburgh campaign.

Church Provided Free Use of Space for Political Event

The Court determined that the Van Denburgh campaign did not have to claim an in-kind contribution for use of space at New Life Church for a political fundraising event. No evidence was brought forward which placed a value on this use. The Court noted that there was no evidence that the Church offered space to other members of the public at a particular price or that the price was higher than what was charged to Ms. Van Denburgh. Further supporting this was a letter and \$100 donation sent by Ms. Van Denburgh to the Church six days after the event thanking them for the use. In the eyes of the Court that was only reviewing compliance with campaign finance laws, no violation occurred.

Generally all churches have 501(c)(3) tax exempt status which prohibits participation in certain political activity. What will remain to be seen is if a complaint is filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against New Life Church. The Court record proves that the Church provided free use of their property for a political fundraiser. (Editor's note: It was also brought to our attention that the Church promoted this event on their website.)

On July 13, 2015, the Evansville Courier & Press ran an article on a mayoral candidate forum and fundraiser scheduled to be held at a local church. After a press inquiry, the fundraiser portion was quickly canceled.

In the Courier & Press article, Notre Dame law professor Lloyd Hitoshi Mayer, an expert on nonprofit and election law and prohibited political activity stated, "Renting for a fundraiser violates federal tax law if you only make it available to one candidate or you give it to them for free," he said. "The key thing is bias, favoritism. That's what the tax law is concerned about. If you say, 'We'll rent it to any candidate that wants it, at fair market value,' that's not a problem under federal tax law. So if the opponent shows up the next week and says, 'I want to rent the church facility out to host something and do a fundraiser,' the church has to say, 'Sure.' Same price, same deal. They have to say yes."

According to IRS publications on election year activities, all 501(c)(3) organizations, "are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. The prohibition applies to all campaigns including campaigns at the federal, state and local level. Violation of this prohibition may result in denial or revocation of tax-exempt status and the imposition of certain excise taxes." Furthermore, "Allowing a candidate to use an organization's assets or facilities will also violate the prohibition if other candidates are not given an equivalent opportunity."

Conclusion

The Court bluntly stated that, "Ms. Van Denburgh failed to suitably acquaint herself with the requirements of state campaign finance laws and supervise a campaign treasurer who was new to this field." They further stated that the campaign was, "not able to accurately report to the public the essential details: the campaign's "cash on hand"; the specifics of each disbursement by the campaign; and the identity of higher-dollar campaign contributors." With the results of the election known by the time the ruling was issued, the Van Denburgh campaign having lost the race by a large margin, the Court stated that the \$600 fine was partially based upon the fact that, "these violations had a minimal impact upon voters."

12/23/16

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: As is our custom, the Watchdog pauses over Christmas to recognize this season of joy, good cheer, family, faith, and country.

We pause to give a word of thanks and offer prayers for those who are deployed abroad in the defense of our great nation.

The Watchdog will return next week with a full production.

Merry Christmas, Watchdogs!

In the meantime, we offer a Christmas story - one of our favorites.

Twas the night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck...
How to live in a world that's politically correct?
His workers no longer would answer to "Elves",
"Vertically Challenged" they were calling themselves.
And labor conditions at the North Pole,
were alleged by the union, to stifle the soul.

Four reindeer had vanished without much propriety,
released to the wilds, by the Humane Society.
And equal employment had made it quite clear,
that Santa had better not use just reindeer.
So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid,
were replaced with 4 pigs, and you know that looked stupid!

The runners had been removed from his beautiful sleigh,
because the ruts were deemed dangerous by the EPA,
And millions of people were calling the Cops,
when they heard sled noises upon their roof tops.
Second-hand smoke from his pipe, had his workers quite frightened,
and his fur trimmed red suit was called "unenlightened".

To show you the strangeness of today's ebbs and flows,
Rudolf was suing over unauthorized use of his nose.
He went to Geraldo, in front of the Nation,
demanding millions in over-due workers compensation.

So...half of the reindeer were gone, and his wife
who suddenly said she'd had enough of this life,
joined a self help group, packed and left in a whiz,
demanding from now on that her title was Ms.

And as for gifts...why, he'd never had the notion
that making a choice could cause such commotion.
Nothing of leather, nothing of fur...
Which meant nothing for him or nothing for her.
Nothing to aim, Nothing to shoot,
Nothing that clamored or made lots of noise.
Nothing for just girls and nothing for just boys.
Nothing that claimed to be gender specific,
Nothing that's warlike or non-pacifistic.

No candy or sweets...they were bad for the tooth.
Nothing that seemed to embellish upon the truth.
And fairy tales...while not yet forbidden,
were like Ken and Barbie, better off hidden,
for they raised the hackles of those psychological,
who claimed the only good gift was one ecological.

No baseball, no football...someone might get hurt,
besides - playing sports exposed kids to dirt.
Dolls were said to be sexist and should be passe.
and Nintendo would rot your entire brain away.

So Santa just stood there, disheveled and perplexed,
he just couldn't figure out what to do next?
He tried to be merry he tried to be gay,
but you must have to admit he was having a very bad day.
His sack was quite empty, it was flat on the ground,
nothing fully acceptable was anywhere to be found.

Something special was needed, a gift that he might,
give to us all, without angering the left or the right.
A gift that would satisfy - with no indecision,
each group of people in every religion.
Every race, every hue,
everyone, everywhere...even you!

So here is that gift, it's price beyond worth...

"MAY YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES, ENJOY PEACE ON EARTH"

12/30/16

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Welcome to the last edition of 2016! The Watchdog concludes 11 years of ongoing commentary with this edition. It was an amazing year in politics, with the election of Donald Trump and the ascendancy of the Republican Party, which is at a high-water mark not seen in many generations.

While we don't know what 2017 will bring, one magical moment is certain - the day Barack Obama leaves office. He has wrought a great deal of damage to our economy, our democratic institutions, and our standing both at home and abroad.

History will likely judge Obama harshly, putting him in the same category as Jimmy Carter. Both were bright men who entered office with high expectations but demonstrated that they simply weren't up to the task of governing a superpower.

The good news is that these eight years have proven that the Framers established a resilient and stable form of government. Over this time, the American people have quietly and deliberately engaged in a course correction, culminating with the election of the biggest outsider in modern American history.

Moreover, this course correction has also been happening at the Congressional, state, and local level, where Democrats have lost over 1,000 seats since Obama claimed that "he's got game," and that he would calm the oceans.

He's a funny president - funny like a clown.

Now begins the hard part. Republicans must govern in the manner in which they campaigned. They must, must deliver on their promises.

An opportunity exists to move the GOP beyond a protest party and make it one of a sustainable, center-right governing coalition.

The reality is that the GOP has a poor track record in this regard. All too often, the governing mandate has been ignored in favor of pursuing a narrow

social agenda that doesn't resonate with the general electorate and has nothing to do with the reasons that electorate put them in charge.

Memo to the GOP majorities: Remember why you won. Deliver results.

If not, you will rightly be called out by your friends and foes alike.

A critical component of fulfilling the mission is pursuing an agenda that unites and grows the GOP coalition.

Divisive issues that cause family fights are counter-productive and have no place in the broader agenda.

Speaker Kurt Daudt once observed, "The GOP needs to stop drawing lines and shoving people on the other side of them."

As we stand at the dawn of a new year, the promise of a renewal of the American dream beckons.

Will the GOP deliver? We will be carefully and hopefully watching.

On behalf of my entire staff, I wish you a blessed and prosperous 2017.

The Watchdog looks forward to our 12th year in 2017!

- Harold E. Hamilton

Quotes of the Week:

"The hardest places in the United States to overcome poverty are the nation's cities, where rich and poor live in separate worlds and where most poor and most black children live."

- Star Tribune, quoting a recent academic study from Harvard and UC, Berkley

"Many of the places with the greatest so-called "income mobility" in the United States, where poor children grow up to be more affluent than their parents were, are in rural Minnesota and nearby states. Poor children in Minneapolis and St. Paul tend to stay poor, just as in most other big cities across the country."

- Star Tribune, quoting a recent academic study from Harvard and UC, Berkley

ANOTHER NAIL IN THE COFFIN

And you thought 2016 was a bad year for music, as Prince, David Bowie, George Michael, and other luminaries passed on this year.

That was nothing compared to the year liberals and their failed ideology experienced.

After the stinging repudiation at the ballot box, liberals are now suffering repudiation in academia, with new studies showing just how destructive their ideas really are to the very people they self-righteously crow about helping.

This week, the Star Tribune (liberal legacy media outlet) featured an article highlighting a study by Harvard (liberal ivory tower institution) and UC - Berkley (ultra-liberal ivory tower institution) that concludes that poor people have the greatest chance at upward mobility living in the suburbs and rural areas than in the city.

In fact, the study concludes that there is essentially zero upward mobility out of the urban core.

Say what?

The results here cannot be ignored and should be headline news around the country.

Read this one more time: there is a growing and irrefutable body of empirical data that show the best place for the poor, especially minorities, to rise above poverty is in the suburbs and rural America.

So, the land of opportunity within the Land of Opportunity is in Red America and not Blue America.

For years and years, the urban, wealthy, liberal elites have lectured the rest of us regarding the best way to improve the lives of the poor.

In fact, these elites have gone beyond lecturing and have frequently denigrated the lifestyle of non-urban dwellers.

Our cars are too big.

Our homes and lots lack the proper density.

Our guns should be confiscated.

Our churches have no place in the modern Enlightenment.

Our jobs should yield to radical environmentalism.

Their cities are the real economic engines.

Their transit is superior to our outmoded roads and bridges.

Hell, they are just smarter and morally superior - in their minds.

The data sets tell a different story.

While the reasons for this disparity in opportunity will be hotly debated for years to come, there are some universal truths at work.

First, there is a limitation to what government can do regarding the elimination of economic disparities.

At a basic level, private societal institutions provide stronger support in binding together families and individuals to establish the mores and values that create opportunity.

In other words, the very institutions liberals have dismissed all these years really do matter.

Government programs can't replace churches.

Government programs can't replace private charity.

Government programs can't replace neighbors helping neighbors.

Most importantly, government programs can't replace intact families that raise children.

These institutions are weak in the cities and much stronger in rural areas.

Second, and related, cities don't offer opportunity because those who govern there only pay lip service to opportunity.

Our cities are a haven for segregationist policies.

In the urban core, the rich and the poor live in different universes.

The rich generally send their kids to elite prep schools. Ask Governor Dayton or any member of the Minneapolis legislative delegation where they send their kids to school.

The urban poor are sentenced to failing public schools, where school choice is vehemently opposed by the teachers' union.

The urban poor live in certain zip codes in the city while rich have their own zip codes.

In rural America, there is more opportunity because there are shared opportunities.

For example, there tends to be one school where everyone gets an education, regardless of race, color or creed.

There tends to be only teachers and some staff, and a distinct lack of a bureaucracy like diversity coordinators.

Other centers of daily life like hospitals and businesses are smaller in number, meaning everyone works at or patronizes that establishment.

In short, rural and suburban America tend to be more of a true "melting pot" of shared experiences and hence, shared opportunities.

On the other hand, our urban centers have become very much like legacy European societies, marked by little upward mobility, a permanent underclass, limited job opportunities, and a semi-permanent elite who wield influence based more on political connections than business acumen.

The urban core doesn't offer economic opportunity?

What a shocker.