

January 12, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Welcome to the first edition of the 2018, the Watchdog's 13th year of publication. This promises to be a very consequential year in politics, public policy, and the economy. Thanks for your loyal readership!

Quote of the Week: "We must let candidates know two things: first, do not take our vote for granted. And second, the Mille Lacs Band will not be your ATM machine."

Asked after her speech if she felt betrayed by the Minnesota DFL party, Benjamin said yes.

"When you go out and ask for help, and it's (viewed as) not as important as other things, yes, I do feel betrayed.'

-Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin

Quote of the Week: 'The workers have no connection to the community, get paid large sums of money and have little to do in their free time. Some will bring trouble, attracting the drug trade, sex trafficking or both. They will pollute the land by day, and women and children by night.'

-Ann Manning, director of Women's Congress for Future Generations and associate director of the Science & Environmental Health Network.

Quote of the Week: 'My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.'

-President Ronald Reagan

Quote of the Week: 'Reagan is an amiable dunce.'

-House Speaker Tip O'Neill

Factoid of the Week: 1,039,839 American workers so far have received notice that they will receive a bonus payment from their employer because of the Republican tax reform plan

RONALD TRUMP

If you were alive and paying attention to politics in the 1980s, you would think there's a time warp spinning about us the past year.

You would think we've been transported back the 1980s and the Reagan administration. President Trump's treatment at the hands of the media and the Left is the exact playbook they threw at Reagan during his time in the White House.

This is more than similarity or parallel. This is an eerie carbon copy.

Reagan was derided as a slacker who didn't understand the weight of the presidency.

He came to the office late and was in pajamas by 6PM.

Trump spends hours watching television, eating junk food, and talking on the phone to friends, much like a teenage boy.

Reagan was a dangerous commander-in-chief who would end the world through a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. He can't be trusted with nukes!

Similarly, Trump is dangerous and will get America into war with North Korea, setting the whole peninsula on fire.

Reagan was an 'amiable dunce' who lacked the ability to grasp important public policy concepts.

Trump may be successful and an Ivy League graduate, but is nonetheless of mediocre intelligence. His daddy set him up for success.

Reagan's mental fitness must be questioned. He's old and forgetful.

Trump's mental fitness must be questioned. He says whatever is on his mind and lack political correctness.

In short, Trump, like Reagan, is the subject of vitriol and downright hatred from the media and their allies on the Left.

Why is that?

First, both were/are bold presidents who were more than caretakers of the country and their party.

Both had/have a vision for their party and their country different from the status quo.

Reagan built a Republican coalition of defense hawks, social conservatives, and small government advocates that expanded what Barry Goldwater started in the 1960s.

Trump is building a similar coalition, with more emphasis on blue collar voters that is reminiscent of the 'Reagan Democrats' of 30-plus years ago.

Both took over the White House after a democrat president and immediately got to work reversing the work of those predecessors, angering those who benefitted from the previous administration.

Reagan worked hard to rebuild the military, cut taxes, and reverse the economic 'malaise' of the Carter presidency.

Trump has worked to reverse Obamacare, Obama's overregulation of corporate America, and the hollowing out of our military.

Perhaps most importantly, both Reagan and Trump had/have an unshakable belief in American Exceptionalism that lies at the heart of their governing philosophy.

Reagan's 'morning in America' and Trump's 'make America great again' differ in detail but both are based on the bedrock belief that America is a unique and special country, destined for greatness by Divine Providence.

Liberals hate American Exceptionalism, instead seeing America as a rapacious and destructive country, obligated to forever atone for a variety of cardinal sins against other nations and cultures.

Far from being exceptional, America is just another piggy colonial empire, in their thinking.

That is the heart of the very deep partisan divide in America today.

One camp hates America and thinks the country is bad.

The other camp sees America as an exceptional nation steeped in greatness.

Is Donald Trump Ronald Reagan?

Only history can render that verdict some years from now.

In the meantime, we will enjoy tax cuts, a shrinking federal work force, and a president who believes in America.

THE DFL CRACK UP

Just like in 2016 and 2017, the media is spending a lot of time talking about how 2018 will be a disaster for Republicans, citing an ill-defined angst with President Trump as the reason.

The media very willingly points out the splinter in the GOP eye while ignoring the log in the DFL eye.

Two examples this week remind us of that oak tree log in the DFL eye.

The first example is the comments from Mille Lacs Band chief executive Melanie Benjamin, who warned the DFL to stop treating her tribe, with its gaming wealth, as an ATM for political contributions.

A long-time DFL constituency, the Mille Lacs Band has been frustrated by the Dayton Administration's failure to help the band with law enforcement and reservation boundary issues.

The second example comes from the pen of Ann Manning, who wrote a scathing hit piece on construction trade workers this week, warning that pipeline work inevitable invites violent crime, as she believes these workers to be violent criminals inclined to engage in drug use and sexual assault.

Manning, who is the director of Women's Congress for Future Generations and associate director of the Science & Environmental Health Network, is no doubt one of those elitist democrats who disdains the Labor Wing of the DFL (excluding, of course, those who 'labor' as government bureaucrats).

According to the urban liberal elite, pipeline work not only endangers Mother Earth, it also endangers women and children.

Read her words once again: 'They (construction workers) will pollute the land by day, and women and children by night.'

Hey, blue collar people! Wake up! The DFL hates your work and clearly puts you in the 'basket of deplorables.'

If there is one message the DFL has successfully pushed recently, it's that they hate blue collar workers.

That message resulted in Donald Trump winning the Iron Range and in the election of Republicans in many traditional DFL districts across rural Minnesota.

Watch for the rest of 2018 as the media predicts a DFL wave and then watch as it doesn't materialize, much like any predicted blizzard or hurricane.

January 19, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'I know that this is likely to probably end my political career, at least for the time being, in Minnesota.'

-Lindsey Port, DFL candidate

Quote of the Week: 'It's disappointing, but not surprising, that Democrats are attempting to force an influential Republican woman out of her duly elected position in the Senate.'

-Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka (R - Nisswa)

Quote of the Week: 'Charlie Nauen is also a key go to lawyer for DFLers, so the lawsuit is likely well-orchestrated from the Senate DFL. As for the plaintiff, it's clear that Destiny Dusosky has some strong connections to the DFL. Her twitter feed is filled with DFL favorable tweets, and her Facebook friends include Rep. Deb Hillstrom and AFSCME official Jennifer Munt.'

-Blois Olson, author of 'Morning Take'

THOSE TRICKY DICK DEMS

They might be tricky, but they aren't real subtle. When Governor Dayton announced his choice to replace disgraced Senator Al Franken, lieutenant governor Tina Smith, Republicans could easily see the machinations and dirty tricks coming to the fore.

As if there was any doubt that the DFL would once again turn to the courts to grab through litigation the victory denied at the ballot box, Minority Leader Tom Bakk issued a crystal-clear public statement to Senate President Michelle Fischbach (R - Paynesville), telling her she can't be both lieutenant governor and senator simultaneously.

Thus, the ham-handed power grab was public.

Using the state constitution as a solemn fig leaf to cover the stinky scheme, Dayton and Bakk would appoint Smith to the senate, which would automatically elevate Fischbach to the junior governor spot, and thus force her from the senate.

With the senate so closely divided (34-32, one vacancy), the plan would be to win the special election on February 12th and then win another special election, the one to replace Fischbach.

Now you have a 34-33 majority in favor of the DFL.

So, it is that the lawsuit filed to force Fischbach from office came as no surprise.

It was also no surprise that the 'citizen' who filed the lawsuit is a DFL hack with clear ties to the DFL.

Would you also believe that the lawyer representing this average, everyday citizen is none other than Charlie Nauen, the DFL attorney who represents that party in each and every legal effort to kick Republicans in the crotch?

If the DFL is suing the GOP, you can bet Charlie Nauen and his law firm, Lockridge, Grindal, Nauen, will be front and center.

In one hilarious moment of feigned secrecy, Nauen refused to divulge to the media who is funding the lawsuit.

Yeah, we can't figure that one out.

The irony, as pointed out by this publication on many occasions, is that the law firm is also a lobbying firm that all too often wins political favors from Republicans.

In other words, when their lobbyists walk through the door at a GOP event and leave a check, the GOP should simply deposit that check immediately in the legal defense fund, as the firm will extract it back when they sue the GOP or one of its candidates for the umpteenth time.

Let's hope neither the courts nor the Republicans reward this shameless scheme to overturn the 2016 elections.

THE PRICE FOR BEING LOUD

Sometimes the mainstream media gets it right.

Briana Bierschbach of the Minnpost news site has engaged in some excellent journalism in covering the sexual harassment scandal at the Capitol in Saint Paul.

She helped break the story of Lindsey Port, the first female to step forward at the Capitol, accusing state Senator Dan Schoen (DFL - Cottage Grove) of harassing her on multiple occasions, including his observation Port had a 'great door knocking ass.'

This week, Bierschbach published a stunning and troubling follow-up piece on Lindsey Port's life, business and political, since stepping forward to accuse a fellow DFLer of unwelcome behavior.

Port is sadly learning the hard lesson that liberal rhetoric is merely a tool to gain political power.

In short, #metoo is little more than a weapon in the minds of many liberals. Thus, it's a good thing when trained on Republicans and a bad thing when turned on Democrats, especially Democrats with election certificates.

It's one thing to step under the microscope by accusing Hillary pals like Harvey Weinstein.

It's another when the accused is elected and in a position to advance the Grand Liberal Dogma.

This revealing and touching piece puts the lie to the 'believe her' movement in the same way that other news articles have put the lie to the 'we're for working people' mantra.

Of course, that's not to say there aren't some thoughtful and sincere progressives who truly believe in both.

But it's just as true to say that there are plenty of progressives who say these things only so long as the issue is used to benefit their political ideology.

And that's a shame, because sexual harassment is real and so is the effort of working people to craft a better life for themselves through mining, pipeline work, and other activities that liberals despise because it conflicts with their arrogant, haughty pursuit of more enlightened objectives, like raw political power.

Below are a couple more powerful quotes from the article, but do yourself a favor and read the whole piece here.

'We started noticing this turn, that first started on social media and DFL Facebook groups. Suddenly people who were talking about supporting women and believing

women were now talking about how these women were liars and how they know how this was just never something [Franken] would do, so this must be some big conspiracy.'

'I've talked to a lot of women in politics, and there are a lot more stories about a lot of different people. Knowing now what's happening, and feeling like I've been blackballed and there are these economic repercussions, those women don't feel like they can speak out.'

SOME WAVE

As we continue to hear of the impending liberal wave that will wash away Donald Trump's 'failures' like the stock market, rising wages, destruction of ISIS, and conservative jurists, we find this week that the even the always-biased Star Tribune poll shows that most Minnesotans approve of Trump's handling of the issues, except the diehards who hate him, refusing to accept defeat in the same way some Japanese soldiers hid in caves for years after the end of World War II.

It's also interesting to observe how many DFLers are retiring from the Minnesota House this year, and we're still many months away from precinct caucuses.

If the DFL was so confident of taking back the House under an anti-Trump wave, you would think these legislators would stick around for a chance to be in the majority and for most of them, chair a committee.

Rep. Paul Thissen (Minneapolis)
Rep. JoAnn Ward (Maplewood)
Rep. Susan Allen (Minneapolis)
Rep. Clark Johnson (Mankato)
Rep. Karen Clark (Minneapolis)
Rep. Sheldon Johnson (Saint Paul)

On the GOP side, only Rep. Abigail Whelan (Anoka) has announced her retirement. Rep. Matt Dean is also rumored to not be running again, but this publication has seen nothing official.

It will be interesting to see how many more announce.

January 26, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'Our brand is [expletive deleted]. Our brand is toxic. People don't know what the heck it is. If you got a hundred Democrats in this room right now, and ask them what the Democratic Party stands for, you'd get a hundred different answers. There's no consistency. No one knows what the Democratic Party is.'

-DFL Party Chairman Ken Martin

Quote of the Week: 'Just tell them the trailer-court story, they're not big thinkers out there.'

-DFL Campaign Staffer, referring to voters in rural MN

GOVERNOR'S RACE PART I

Greetings, Watchdogs. Did you survive the government shutdown? Whew, that was close. What would we have done if the government quit spying on us, regulating us, and harassing us for a few days? Congratulations on surviving.

The governor's race on the Republican side has seen the temperature rise, starting to bubble and froth.

This week, state Rep. Matt Dean of Dellwood dropped out, citing low polling numbers and the need for the eventual GOP nominee to 'scale up' quickly.

(Editor's Note: Dean has also chosen not to run for re-election to his House seat in the northern suburbs, with three hopefuls already announcing for the GOP endorsement.)

Interestingly, Dean made his withdrawal announcement in a joint press conference with fellow GOP candidate Jeff Johnson, with Dean endorsing Johnson.

The endorsement was clearly a shot at fellow candidate and former party chairman Keith Downey, who has sparred with Dean over health care issues during the campaign.

Downey is also in a bit of hot water with Jeff Johnson because of accusations that a Downey staffer is behind a vile fake web site aimed at Johnson (more on that below).

A real 'anyone but Downey' coalition is forming, with many GOP activists and delegates telling the Watchdog that they've been unimpressed over the years with Downey's temperament, interpersonal skills and lack of charisma.

'I would rather watch paint dry than listen to Keith Downey talk,' one GOP insider observed.

It's too bad Matt Dean dropped out this early. His voice on health care and tax issues was needed in this debate. His hard-charging campaign style would help other candidates hone their own.

Moreover, who knows where Dean would have ended up.

In any case, the Watchdog thanks Matt Dean for his hard work over the years on behalf of conservative principles and values.

GOVERNOR'S RACE PART II

'Having been around politics for many years, Harold Hamilton and the fearless cast of Watchdog staffers knows that politics can be a full-contact sport, with campaigns sometimes getting sharp-elbowed and mean.

But even in politics, lines can be crossed, and actions can go beyond the pale.

Such is the case with a rather vile tactic of the Keith Downey for Governor folks. The nasty story is probably best told by the victim, Jeff Johnson, quoting with Facebook statement in full below:

'I love the energy and challenges of political campaigns. It's not without its frustrations, though. In particular, when Republicans engage in a circular firing squad or campaigns stoop to unethical practices.

There has certainly been some frustration in this campaign with negative and misleading tactics. I, however, largely let them roll off my back because the strategy of trying to pull down other Republicans in hopes of being the last candidate standing is wrong and seldom works.

Recently, however, I learned of something much more disturbing than just nasty campaigning.

Several months ago, someone created a fake Facebook site called Never-Trumpers for Jeff Johnson in the hopes of falsely suggesting I either don't or didn't support the President. It was created by 'Kevin G. Bennett' who turned out to also be a fake profile. It appeared to us that 'Kevin Bennett' also had several other false identities on Facebook and was active in trolling my posts.

The fake Never-Trumpers page was not just dishonest, it was quite vile. One post, which was on the site for months, accused me of being a pedophile (yes, you read that correctly):

'Jeff Johnson is a sick pervert who belongs behind bars. He groped my teenage son last year and sent him lewd pictures. Jeff is a disgusting bastard.'

We spent several weeks trying to get Facebook to shut the site down since it was getting significant traffic and causing problems for the campaign. Facebook refused to do so.

Recently, we learned that 'Kevin Bennett' is actually a full-time staffer for Keith Downey's campaign. I've spoken to Keith about this and he acknowledges it's true and that the staffer still has a key full-time role in his campaign, but justifies it by saying he told her to disassociate herself from the site when he learned of it. The site did come down last week, but then came back up a few days later, scrubbed of the pedophile post. It went down again two days ago when someone posted about its source on Facebook.

I will continue to focus on the reasons I'm the strongest Republican candidate in this race. That doesn't mean I'll never explain my differences with other Republicans, but my main job will be to sell myself. I will save my most aggressive fire for the DFL and I will NEVER mislead you in order to raise doubts about my fellow Republicans, nor will anyone who works for my campaign - or at least they won't be around for long if they do.

We need to all be together the minute we endorse a candidate - the nastier we get with each other, the more difficult that will be.

Here's to a spirited, substantive (and honest) Republican fight for endorsement in 2018.'

If true, this slimy episode says much about Keith Downey and his campaign.

If true, he should take responsibility, fire the staffer, and face the delegates.

This publication also invites Keith Downey to respond, if he desires.

As is our policy, we will publish his response without edit.

GOVERNOR'S RACE PART III

Of Course, the elephant in the Elephant's room here is Timothy J. Pawlenty.

Many opinion leaders, donors, and GOP operatives are still on the sidelines waiting for TPaw to decide if he will seek a third, non-consecutive, term in the governor's office.

After publicly declaring that he will not be a candidate for the U.S. Senate, Pawlenty was conspicuous in not saying anything about the governor's office.

Sources close to him say he his 'actively mulling' the race.

If Pawlenty enters, he would be a formidable candidate and the odds-on favorite to not only be the GOP standard bearer, he would be the favorite to outright win.

Sure, he's not the perfect candidate. There would be the tag line that he's a rich Washington, DC lobbyist.

There would be the old, tired narrative that his time in office was all about 'draconian cuts' and poor fiscal management.

So what.

He's got name recognition that none of the other candidates have.

He's a proven winner. Pop quiz: who was the last man to win state-side for the GOP? Yes, Tim Pawlenty.

You might note that his wins were only plurality wins, with a third-party candidate there to help.

It's also true that Minnesota in 2018 is different than 2006. Back in 2006, we didn't have Republicans representing parts of the Iron Range. Or Swift County. Or Inver Grove Heights, South Saint Paul, and Shoreview.

He's a proven fund-raiser. His rolodex is fat after 8 years in the governor's mansion and time spent running for president.

Most importantly, he's a great candidate. He's smart, articulate, funny, charismatic, media savvy, and the experienced candidate Republicans could hope to field.

This publication also thinks that Pawlenty's time in office is a benefit, not a burden.

His time in office saw Minnesota drop several places amongst the 'most taxed' states.

In fact, Pawlenty passed a budget that actually cut spending in real terms.

He didn't simply slow growth. He cut spending.

Moreover, Minnesota continued during that time to lead the nation in a number of quality of life indicators.

A race with Pawlenty would feature his record versus the Dayton record.

Like it or not, the DFL candidates will not only have to defend their own records (good luck with that Chris Coleman, Tim Walz), they would be forced to defend Dayton, since their candidacy would be, in effect, the third Dayton term.

Dayton has presided over massive spending and tax increases that did nothing to enhance those quality of life rankings.

Here's the tag line: Dayton and the DFL spent many more billions to achieve the same or worse results.

And one other thing. At least Pawlenty knew what was in the bills he signed.

There is no question that this race is Pawlenty's for the taking.

February 2, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I am very interested in public service and service for the common good, there are a lot of different ways to do that."

-Tim Pawlenty

Quote of the Week: 'Asked about the need for accountability, Dana Bailey said she didn't have an answer to that.'

-MPR News, quoting Dana Bailey, the bureaucrat in charge of the MNLARS fiasco

Quote of the Week: 'Having taken time to review the proposed road map and reflect on the administration's request, two words keep popping into my head: not acceptable. We will not be bullied, and we will not be threatened into flushing millions more down the drain based solely on the empty promises of executives who have shown no indication they grasp the severity of this catastrophe or that they have any idea how to fix it. If the governor's agencies expect to hold Minnesotans hostage to extract another \$43 million for a vague, generic 'road map' that offers few specifics and zero accountability, they are sorely mistaken.'

-Senate Transportation Chairman Scott Newman (R - Hutchinson)

THE MONEY CHASE

At this point in the gubernatorial campaign cycle, fundraising numbers are a key indicator of campaign strength and support.

Fundraising totals were reported for candidates this week, telling us much in this regard.

There are totals from campaigns that are still active.

DFL candidates: Amount raised/amount on hand

Tim Walz: \$1.1 million / \$488,000

Chris Coleman: \$600,000 / \$300,000

Erin Murphy: \$377,000 / \$147,000

Rebecca Otto: \$320,000 / \$181,000

Paul Thissen: \$300,000 / \$108,000

Tina Liebling: \$100,000 / \$20,000

Overall, DFL candidates raised about \$2.8 million.

Republican candidates: Amount raised/amount on hand

Jeff Johnson: \$260,000 / \$180,000

Keith Downey: \$130,000 / \$53,000

Mary Giuliani Stephens: \$71,000 / \$40,000

Overall, Democrats outraised Republicans by a roughly 6 to 1 margin.

The GOP money leader, Jeff Johnson, was bested by every DFL candidate expect one.

In short, the DFL whipped up on the GOP field during this fundraising cycle.

Clearly, there isn't much enthusiasm for the current field.

The exception may be Mary Giuliani Stephens, who got into the race recently and therefore offered a solid fundraising number, despite small headline numbers.

The elephant in the room remains Tim Pawlenty, who has held money and support on the sidelines.

While this publication always expects spin in politics, the reality is that the Johnson and Downey campaigns have to be disappointed by the numbers and will look to regain some momentum at precinct caucuses next week by doing well in the straw poll.

With Pawlenty unlikely to make a decision until later this month or early March, the straw poll becomes a win-or-go-home scenario for Johnson and Downey.

Winning the straw poll would allow either one to regain momentum.

On the other hand, a loss combined with poor fundraising would likely mean a functional end to their gubernatorial aspirations.

Giuliani Stephens is in a different position, both by virtue of her late start and her status as an outsider to GOP party politics.

She's in a very interesting position that the Watchdog will explore in a future issue.

ANOTHER MARK DAYTON PRODUCTION

By now, you've heard of the massive debacle regarding the state's vehicle licensing and registration system, known by the acronym MNLARS.

A long-planned system upgrade has turned into a massive white elephant, plaguing vehicles owners, banks, car dealers, and other users of the system with outrageous delays.

Originally pegged at a cost of \$48 million, the cost has climbed to \$93 million and the system still doesn't work.

Heck, when the DFL blew \$93 million on an opulent office building for themselves, at least taxpayers got what the DFL spent.

Here, \$93 million has been pissed down the drain and the Dayton administration has nothing to show for it except excuses.

No word on whether Dayton has will award bonuses to those running MNLARS, much as he kicked out bonuses to MnSURE execs, who mismanaged the state's bungled foray into the Obamacare insurance exchange system.

Now, the Dayton administration has presented a 'road map' to fixing MNLARS.

All they want from the taxpayers is another \$43 million and another two years for the fix.

Sadly, this spectacular implosion has all the hallmarks of a typical Dayton boondoggle.

A chief executive asleep at the switch, reacting to the problem.

When he reacts, he defends the indefensible, acts like there's no problem, and then lashes out against Republicans.

'I fully support these recommendations, and urge legislative leaders to work with my administration to ensure we have the funding and support necessary to make urgently needed improvements,' said Governor Nero in a statement.

Step two, put in charge people who have no real experience and expertise but instead offer a background of only political partisanship.

The Dayton appointee in charge of this mess is Dana Bailey, who holds a degree in English Literature from Mankato State.

Somehow, we think knowing Chaucer, Steinbeck, and Fitzgerald won't help you write code.

While Bailey knows very little of computer programming, she certainly knows politics.

Various biographies brag of her managing Dayton's 2010 campaign for governor.

She has also been a political appointee of Dayton and former Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman.

Step three, hold decision makers hostage by claiming that if they don't pay the ransom to fix the problem, then the problem gets worse.

BS.

Thankfully, Senator Scott Newman has set the tone for the legislature by rejecting Dayton's incompetent leadership.

Before one more penny is spent, there should be a thorough investigation of what happened, which will allow decision makers to chart a proper path to move forward.

Trusting the word of the bureaucrats who screwed it up in the first place isn't the place to start.

The best 'road map' forward is the one laid out by Newman:

'Having taken time to review the proposed road map and reflect on the administration's request, two words keep popping into my head: not acceptable. We will not be bullied, and we will not be threatened into flushing millions more down the drain based solely on the empty promises of executives who have shown no indication they grasp the severity of this catastrophe or that they have any idea how to fix it. If the governor's agencies expect to hold Minnesotans hostage to extract another \$43 million for a vague, generic 'road map' that offers few specifics and zero accountability, they are sorely mistaken.

'We have now reached a point where cost overruns for MNLARS are set to go over \$100 million. When will it end? If the original \$48 million projection wasn't enough to

create a functional program, and \$115.6 million wasn't enough to create a functional program, why should we be confident \$158 million will be enough?

'Previously, I said I was hesitant to authorize any new money to the Department of Public Safety and MN.IT until those responsible for the failures of MNLARS have been held accountable, and I stand by that. I still haven't heard any specifics. I still haven't heard any answers. There is no accountability. I will not support spending more taxpayer money on a system that is now scheduled to enter its 11th year of development and still can't function properly. They have the tools at their disposal; they need to stop the excuses and get it done.

'I am especially angry at the complete and utter absence of leadership from Governor Dayton on this issue. As the chief executive of Minnesota, his agency is responsible for this disaster, yet he continues to pass the buck. He needs to take control, fire those responsible, implement the necessary changes to MNLARS operations, and get it fixed. If he continues to avoid taking any real action, the MNLARS mess will be a permanent stain on Gov. Dayton's legacy.'

February 9, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Factoid of the Week: President Trump holds a 48% approval rating today in the Rasmussen daily tracking. President Trump has a stronger approval rating today than Barack Obama did back in 2010 on this same day.

PRECINCT CAUCUS GRADES

With Tuesday's precinct caucuses in the books, we can offer the candidates (and the Party) grades with respect to how they performed vis-à-vis expectations regarding the straw poll.

While the precinct caucuses don't do a great job predicting the eventual endorsee, they provide a good yardstick to measure the health of each candidate and his/her campaign.

Jeff Johnson: 'A'

Johnson ran away with the straw poll and overperformed expectations. The de facto front runner, Johnson kept that status, as for now, by trouncing Keith Downey by a better than 3 to 1 margin.

Spinners can spin, but Johnson did what he needed to do and then some. His total will do much to boost his standing and narrative as 'the' GOP standard bearer and quiets his critics, who questioned just how strong his support was with delegates.

Undecided: 'B+'

This 'candidate' was important Tuesday night because it stood as a proxy for Tim Pawlenty, who is considering another campaign for governor.

'Pawlenty' came in second place, a very respectable showing, especially considering that there was no space for a write in candidate, meaning Pawlenty supporters had to cast a vague vote for 'undecided.'

No 'A' was awarded because Johnson maintained a near 3 to 1 margin here as well.

In the end, the name of the game for Pawlenty was a respectable showing, and he got it here, especially since there was no concerted effort to encourage attendees to vote this way.

Keith Downey: 'F'

There's no way to spin this one, although the Downey campaign has tried hard to do so.

The straw poll was a heads-up contest between Johnson and Downey for front-runner status.

Johnson won it and won it huge.

Moreover, Downey came in behind 'undecided', an embarrassing blow for the recent GOP party chairman.

The reasons for Downey's lack of traction are many.

First, Downey has prosecuted a campaign narrative that is very much at odds with his resume.

Downey has awkwardly attempted to cloth himself in Donald Trump's brash, confrontational, outsider's cloak.

That's a tough sell when he is both a former legislator and party chairman.

The party chairman is the ultimate insider.

Moreover, the attacks on other candidates and heavy spin have fallen flat.

For example, Downey has attacked Johnson for having lost two state-wide races.

That's fair, but it's also true that Downey has lost a legislative race in his own community.

Is Johnson a worse candidate for having lost state-wide?

Johnson also served in the Minnesota legislature and never lost a race.

The delegates are politically involved and sophisticated.

They see these things.

After caucus night, the Downey campaign sent out a press release trumpeting his second-place finish - among candidates.

This spin conveniently ignored the fact the he came in behind 'undecided' as well.

Again, delegates see these things and they don't appreciate being spun.

Downey's attempt to cram his campaign narrative into a Trumpian Procrustean Bed has left him with no real 'lane' in the race.

Downey is naturally an establishment Republican, just like Jeff Johnson.

He could have adopted that more natural mantle and appealed to delegates as one who knows the party and the process while promising bold change.

The attempt to grab the 'Trump' lane has failed because Phillip Parrish has seized that lane and has come off as a more authentic outsider. Why have a faux outsider when you can have the real thing?

Phillip Parrish: 'A+'

Look, Parrish isn't in this race to be governor - he won't be. He's in this race to raise the profile of issues he cares about - namely immigration and border security.

He's the true Trumper in this race and he's successfully occupied the lane.

His base going into the state convention will be small yet vocal. He will wield an amount of influence on the issues debated and will have thus achieved his strategic goal.

He's run a shoestring campaign, if you can even call it that, and turned in a showing that exceeded expectations.

He's cemented a role in the process throughout, again accomplishing strategic goals.

Mary Giuliani Stephens: 'B'

MGS met the goal of turning in a respectable showing, but it was barely that.

She came in last place, save for Lance Johnson, an unknown who will remain so for so long as he's in the race.

Nonetheless, it was respectable showing as she kept it close with Parrish and Downey.

Politics is about timing and MGS is picking a good time, thanks to Gregg Peppin's excellent instincts.

Woman, suburban, outsider, fresh face, no baggage, center-right, leadership credentials as mayor of a large suburb, educated, career and family credentials.

She checks many boxes regarding an ideal candidate.

The problem here is time.

With no path to run a primary race, MGS must win the endorsement in early June in order to remain in the race.

While she's an intriguing candidate, it's hard to see how she gets up over Jeff Johnson within the next 120 days to win the delegate race.

That's very little time to introduce yourself to a state-wide delegate audience and win their support.

MGS may very look back this summer on what might have been.

If she had gotten into the race earlier, she would have given her campaign a real boost.

We think back to 2002, when Brian Sullivan spent many months early on speaking to GOP groups about taxes and spending.

These speeches served as a springboard to his gubernatorial campaign, which very nearly won the endorsement after an epic, multi-ballot war with eventual endorsee Tim Pawlenty.

Time is indeed a valuable commodity.

Lance Johnson: 'I'

Incomplete. Camera shy. MIA.

SENATE DISTRICT 54

Next Tuesday is the special election in the east Metro to fill a vacated state Senate seat.

What will the outcome tell us about November?

Likely not much.

A mid-February special election will boil down to little more than who shows up.

If turnout is low, there will be very little to be gleaned, other than that one candidate did a better job getting folks to the polls than the other.

If turnout is high, comparatively, there may be insights to be gleaned.

Regarding the expectations game, the pressure is on the DFL.

This is their seat.

It's a DFL-leaning district that hasn't had a GOP senator for a long, long time.

And it promises to be a fight.

Denny McNamara is a legendary campaigner, who relishes door knocking and is rarely, if ever, outworked.

Moreover, he and his family have deep roots in the district, with name recognition earned - not bought - over time.

While both candidates have elective office experience, McNamara is first and foremost a businessman who first worked in and then bought his landscape business.

Regardless, the eyes of the state will indeed be on SD 54 next week.

February 16, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "There were nine people at our caucus. A little old lady said Tim Pawlenty might be running for governor. The whole mood of the room changed."

-Josh Anderson, GOP delegate

SPECIAL ELECTION NOT SO SPECIAL

Perhaps readers can help us out. The Watchdog staff is having a hard time figuring out which group of people gets it wrong more often: weather forecasters who frequently call for 'snowmageddon' or DFL leaders who predict 'blue waves.'

After issuing 'blue wave' tsunami warnings, DFL leaders were huge losers Tuesday night as the predicted wave turned into a ripple, much like a predicted blizzard that turned into a dusting of snow.

As readers well know, there were two special elections this week that, overall, delivered a surprising dose of status quo ante.

Let's start in Senate District 54.

Located in the East Metro in the Cottage Grove, Hastings area, SD54 has a long history of electing democrats and hasn't had a GOP state senator in generations.

After the resignation of DFL Senator Dan Schoen, the district was a 'hold' obligation for the DFL and their race to lose.

Leading up to the election, DFL leadership predicted a big victory for their candidate, calling attention to a Democrat special election victory recently just across the river in Wisconsin.

The DFL victory was, at best, underwhelming.

Regardless of the metrics, political scientists would assign the district a 'DFL index', meaning essentially that the district normally votes DFL.

One index we like sets it at 51.3% Democrat.

Karla Bigham won on election night with 50.7%, meaning she underperformed the index.

While some races have been close over the years, the area has sent a DFLer to the state Senate going back decades.

Then there's House District 23B.

Republican Jeremy Munson vanquished DFL candidate Melissa Wagner in 60-40% fashion.

While the rural district in southern Minnesota is Republican, DFL House leader Melissa Hortman predicted that Wagner's gender identity politics would perform political alchemy and flip the district from conservative to one that would suddenly embrace the DFL's agenda of gun control, high taxes, transgender rights and other issues popular only in Minneapolis zip codes.

With a DFL index of 43%, Wagner's showing again underperformed the index, indicating she did worse than she should have.

In short, both DFL candidates performed worse than the hypothetical 'typical' election, dispelling any notion of a blue wave.

These results, while a split decision on the headline, should hearten Republicans who have been hearing from the media that this November will be a disaster and they should all stay home.

A major takeaway is that the results have put the lie to the narrative that Republicans are facing disaster this November.

JEFF JOHNSON GETS DESPERATE

While this publication isn't naive regarding the nature of politics, it was a bit disappointing this week to see gubernatorial candidate Jeff Johnson issue a desperate email this week attacking Tim Pawlenty.

Far from projecting strength, the hit piece had the odor of fear and apprehension about it.

To be clear, this publication is neutral, as always, on candidates and campaigns.

Jeff Johnson certainly has the skills and values to be a good chief executive.

Tim Pawlenty has many virtues as well as some baggage as a candidate.

Both would certainly be better than the current occupant of the office.

Those observations, however, don't change the opinion that the Johnson email was a massive spin job that likely won't move delegates and will perhaps even backfire.

Keith Downey's attack narratives have certainly backfired on him.

While the reasons are many, the primary reason that door is open for Tim Pawlenty is that Jeff Johnson has failed to close it.

Despite being on the campaign trail for months, many delegates remain undecided and most donor money is still on the sidelines.

This email won't help his cause.

Let's examine it in some detail.

*A primary battle will be contentious and costly. It will squander both our unity and the advantage of having a strong GOP candidate this summer while the DFLers beat on each other in their own primary.

This claim is made shortly after Johnson states he would welcome Pawlenty to an endorsement battle.

So, a bare-knuckle fight into a June convention is a good thing for the candidates and the party but if the fight extends two more months into an August primary it's a horrific development that endangers the Republican universe?

The truth here is that Johnson knows he can't compete with Pawlenty in a primary and is thus baiting him into agreeing to an endorsement battle.

In other words, Johnson knows his best and only chance to beat Pawlenty is an endorsement fight.

The absence or presence of a hotly contested primary has no bearing on general election outcomes for governor.

Winning candidates have had both sharply contested primaries and easy paths to the general election.

*There is no clamor among Republicans on the ground for Pawlenty (or anyone else) to enter this race. Anything to the contrary comes from people who don't have much contact with actual rank-and-file Republicans.

This claim is patently absurd.

On precinct caucus night, 'undecided' came in second place. Because there was no room for write in candidates, this block served as a proxy for Tim Pawlenty.

Moreover, the Watchdog has spoken to many delegates around the state who are very much clamoring for Pawlenty to get in the race.

Johnson's poor fundraising numbers and the lackluster turn-out on caucus night are further signs that people aren't excited with the current field.

Finally, Pawlenty held a meeting recently with Republican opinion leaders and donors that was a standing-room-only crowd we are told.

The venue was changed multiple times to accommodate the demand, according to one Pawlenty confidant.

*Money alone will not win this election in a primary or in November. Recent history from Minnesota and nationally is filled with Republicans who had piles of money and lost. This race will be won on grassroots passion and an agenda of true fundamental reform.

We thinks that Jeff Johnson doth protest too much on this one.

While money certainly isn't enough alone, it is absolutely essential to winning a gubernatorial bid.

This isn't a race for a suburban city council seat.

Long history in American politics also shows thousands of candidates who lost because they didn't have the resources to compete.

This argument is little more than an unsophisticated attempt to downplay Johnson's significant weakness in raising money thus far against Pawlenty's significant ability to raise money and lots of it.

Long experience has taught this publication that when candidates start talking up 'grassroots' in their narrative, they are in trouble.

Appeals to 'grassroots passion' is often little more than an attempt to cover weaknesses in important areas like fundraising and the endorsement of prominent thought leaders.

*The 2016 presidential election showed us the blueprint for winning. There are millions of hardworking Minnesotans who will vote for an aggressive reform agenda that fundamentally changes the way our system works and gives them a voice. Having a candidate who can prove they will do that is critical to winning. I can and I will.

Uh, no it didn't. Donald Trump had a good showing in Minnesota, but he nonetheless lost.

Moreover, many endorsed Republicans won in districts Trump lost, and lost big in some cases.

For better or worse, Donald Trump is his own brand and it's a big gamble for candidates to attempt to 'fight the last war' by aping Trump.

And while this publication certainly agrees with Johnson that bold reforms are necessary to not only winning, but actually saving the Republic, we can't think of any bold reforms that fundamentally changed government that Johnson has pushed into law.

This, even though he has been in public office nearly twenty years, serving in the Minnesota House and as a Hennepin County commissioner.

Jeff Johnson is a better man than this memo shows.

But if he is going to lead Republicans into the governor's mansion, he needs to up his game.

Instead of weak attempts to deflect from his shortcomings thus far, Johnson should acknowledge those weaknesses and offer a plan to address them.

Republican delegates are sophisticated and understand politics.

They know that money is important.

They know Pawlenty would be a formidable candidate and there is a desire in many corners for him to run.

While they value the endorsement, they also know that a primary isn't some sort of death knell for the GOP.

Like Keith Downey, Jeff Johnson isn't going to win over delegates with Emperor's-New-Clothes missives like this one.

February 23, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'Taxes on medicines can account for a substantial share of medicine prices. They are regressive. They reduce utilisation, particularly by the poor and elderly, and reduce compliance with cost-effective preventive and chronic disease treatment regimes.'

-World Health Organization

Quote of the Week: "Republican Majorities won't give the governor a blank check -- we will hold the administration accountable, thoroughly investigate where they went wrong with this system, and work with the governor to pass a better solution to get DMV's back on track for Minnesota drivers."

-Rep. Paul Torkelson (R - Hanska), House Transportation Committee Chairman

Quote of the Week: 'If it doesn't flip the majority, you've spent a lot of money to make a statement.'

-Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk, on the litigation to remove Republican Senator Michelle Fischbach from office

MEDICINE TAX MADNESS

The Watchdog has been observing the Capitol in Saint Paul for 13 years now.

In 13 years of coverage, we on occasion run into some really, really bad ideas.

Although this legislative session is only three days old, we've already run into a bill that is making a bid for the Legislative Hall of Shame.

If you can believe it, two Republicans have introduced legislation to tax medicine.

Yes, tax medicine.

While these bills were introduced last year, sources tell the Watchdog that there is a new 'delete everything' amendment to the bill that actually increases the tax.

HF1440 (Rep. Baker) and SF 730 (Sen. Rosen), puts a significant tax on opioid pain killer medication.

You read that right. A tax on opioid painkiller prescriptions.

This kind of tax is unprecedented - and for good reason.

Even the liberal World Health Organization and California Governor Jerry Brown recognize it.

First, medicine taxes are regressive, meaning they hit the poor hardest.

Medication is a staple of life, sometimes improving our quality of life and sometimes saving lives.

Government making medication more expensive with a tax on that medication is both immoral and bad public policy.

Readers can guess what happens when medication is made more expensive.

Poor people often quit taking the medication or they turn to a cheaper substitute, which economists call the 'substitution effect.'

People who quit their medication regimes often end up back in the medical system with their condition worsened. When these people are on government health care programs, it only means that they cost the system more to treat.

In the case of pain medication, it often means that people turn to cheaper, less effective alternatives.

A person in pain isn't simply going to tolerate living in pain. The rational response is to seek relief.

That relief would likely come in the form of alcohol, illegal opioids like heroin, or the misuse of other prescription medications.

Making pain medication more expensive for people is simply bad public policy.

Republicans have rightly fought health care taxes for many years.

In fact, Republicans recently scored a victory in Minnesota when they put a sunset on the hated 2% 'sick tax.'

Moreover, there are the optics for the GOP.

Fighting against health care taxes only to turn around and embrace one is precisely the kind of hypocrisy voters have begun to reject with a vengeance.

Being 'for it before you were against it' is losing politics.

Taxing hospice patients, cancer patients, and people with crippling, chronic pain is downright cruel.

On top of all that, many sources tell the Watchdog that the state will have a surplus approaching \$1 billion when the next budget forecast is released.

Taxes are bad.

Taxes on medicine are worse.

Taxes heaped on top of a budget surplus are insane.

Given how bad this proposal really is, it's hard to see how Speaker Daudt or Majority Leader Gazelka let it happen.

Taxes on pain medication.

You can't make it up.

PLAYING POLITICS

Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk (DFL - Cook) dropped a bombshell this week when he casually noted during a media scrum that pursuing a lawsuit to kick Sen. Michelle Fischbach (R - Paynesville) wasn't worth pursuing unless it 'flipped the majority.'

Wow.

That's quite an admission.

All the high-minded rhetoric about the constitution, separation of powers, and the rule of law was all a bunch of bunk.

The lawsuit was all about leveraging the judicial branch to overturn the results of the 2016 election and thwart the will of the people in the naked, cynical pursuit of political power.

The lawsuit would kick a powerful female legislator out of her seat in order to grab power.

Let's also not forget how Fischbach got embroiled in all this against her will.

Mark Dayton appointed his political crony, Tina Smith, to the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Creepy Al Franken.

Fischbach then automatically became Dayton's lieutenant governor.

DFL politics on the front end and DFL politics on the back end.

It's hard to see how the DFL can pursue this lawsuit with this admission.

The Minnesota Supreme Court, while guided by the rule law, must also act as a separate branch of government to maintain its integrity and goodwill with the public.

For the court to take the case and upset the balance of power in the Senate in light of this blatant admission would shred the court's reputation worse than the Doe v. Gomez case that forced taxpayers to pick up the tab for abortions.

TIM WALZ WALTZ

Whither Tim Walz.

The DFL front-runner for their gubernatorial endorsement ran headlong into his first of many promised flip-flops as he navigates the tricky waters of maintaining his rural 'aw shucks' avuncular veneer while sprinting headlong into crazy town to appeal to the gender-bending fragrance-free crowd of snotty, elitist urban delegates.

His flip-flop on guns this week was only the start of his efforts to dance on the head of a pin as he tries to be all things to all people.

How about pipelines and mining? That's the next shoe to drop, as Walz will no doubt atone for his sins against Mother Earth and pledge fealty to the radical environmentalists who want to live in caves and reintroduce cholera and rickets to the lexicon.

Tim Walz is about to learn the hard way that his white, rural district out in southern Minnesota is a far cry from the radical vortex of state-wide DFL politics.

He may be the front-runner right now, but it's unlikely the delegates want a middle aged white guy from the hinterlands who wears the NRA's scarlet letter to be their standard bearer.

Our money is on Rebecca Otto.

March 2, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'A fourth argument, one that was made by Alexander Hamilton and continues to be repeated down to the present, is that free trade would be fine if all other countries practiced free trade but that, so long as they do not, the United States cannot afford to. This argument has no validity whatsoever, either in principle or in practice. Other countries that impose restrictions on international trade do hurt us. But they also hurt themselves. Aside from the three cases just considered, if we impose restrictions in turn, we simply add to the harm to ourselves and also harm them as well. Competition in masochism and sadism is hardly a prescription for sensible international economic policy! Far from leading to a reduction in restrictions by other countries, this kind of retaliatory action simply leads to further restrictions.'

-Milton Friedman

TRUMP TARIFF TURD

It's been a heck of a week for our fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants president.

It started with him suggesting that government grab guns and then later on offer some sort of due process.

There's nothing wrong with that view point other than it violates the sacred American rights enshrined in the Second, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

We would also point out that this ridiculous suggestion directly contravenes numerous prior statements to the contrary but we have all come to expect such head-spinning contradictions from our multi-faced president. Janus, indeed.

He then tanked the stock market and set off harsh reactions from America's best businesses and allies by announcing his intention to set off a trade war by imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum.

While the exploration of this issue could fill many books, there are some basic truths regarding the president's dangerous and ill-advised plan that readers should understand.

The first is that trade wars ultimately hurt the domestic and global economy and hurt the American worker and consumer.

Tariff actions always invite retaliation, which results in a downward spiral that increases the cost of goods, hurts jobs, and reduces the availability of goods and services.

If you think that America's trading partners won't retaliate with tariffs of their own, you're sharing Trump's fantasy world.

Suppose those retaliatory measures move into the realm of Agriculture. In Minnesota alone, 33% of acres planted in the state are shipped to export markets.

No matter how one cuts the data, Minnesota is a top 5 state regarding agriculture.

It's a multi-billion-dollar industry that directly and indirectly supports over 150,000 jobs in the state.

Chew on that one.

Second, the global economy is so intertwined, it's nearly impossible for America to impose tariffs that don't harm the country.

In today's economy, supply chains, production chains, shipping chains, and sales chains rely in some fashion on foreign goods and services.

Thus, imposing tariffs is sort of like punching yourself in the gut to cure a headache.

Consider that Trump is justifying his tariffs on the dubious legal theory that the tariffs are needed under the auspices of a 'national security' concern.

In other words, America's very national defense needs are at risk from international aluminum and steel competition.

Let's run this theory out in hypothetical, yet very realistic fashion.

Trump imposes a 25% tariff on imported aluminum.

That tariff will certainly raise the price of aluminum, foreign or domestic.

When supply is restricted, the supply-demand equilibrium will move the price point upwards.

Boeing uses aluminum as a substantial input in the manufacture of aerospace products that are critical to national defense, like drones.

Now drones are more expensive to make.

That means fewer drones will be produced, resulting in job losses and reduced revenues for Boeing.

Or it means the federal government will pay more for each drone.

That means that the federal government will have to borrow more money from the Chinese to pay the increased price.

How does that policy enhance our national security?

If this sounds stupid to you, you correctly understand the issue.

If there is a real threat to our sovereignty, it's the federal debt and our indebtedness to the Chinese.

It would certainly be interesting if the Chinese retaliated by refusing to loan us money.

These trade wars are a simplistic, emotional campaign issue that deflect from the real, complex issues surrounding a global economy.

DEMS DEALT DOSE OF DELECTABLE TAX CUT REALITY

Let's take a trip down memory lane way, way back to May of 2017.

At that time, Republicans were successful in pushing Mark Dayton to sign a tax cut bill he is still trying to renegotiate.

Remember the predictions of doom and gloom from the DFL?

DFL Minority Leader Tom Bakk: 'The Minnesota Republican tax bill is unaffordable, unsustainable, and unwise for Minnesota.'

Governor Mark Dayton, on the tax bill he himself signed: 'We're on the precipice of future fiscal catastrophe after the tax bill we passed last session.'

So, what happened?

A projected \$188 million budget deficit is now a projected \$329 million surplus.

Yes, state government is once again over-collecting taxes.

And, yes, the DFL is once again wrong.

Maybe they can back to selling us on high taxes to fund their other winning programs like MNLARS, MnCARE, and light rail transit.

The bottom line is that the DFL favors the government budget over the family budget.

BILL OF THE WEEK

Speaking of the DFL's laser-like focus on the middle class and issues that really matter, here's our 'bill of the week' coming out the Capitol in Saint Paul.

Feast your eyes on Senate File 2901.

This piece of important legislation is authored by Senators Scott Dibble (Minneapolis), John Marty (Roseville/Saint Paul), and Sandy Pappas (Saint Paul). In short, the ideological headquarters for the DFL.

This is a 'resolution calling the United States to 'pull back from the brink' and prevent nuclear war.'

Seriously, this is what the DFL is doing down at the Capitol these days.

The resolution essentially calls for the United States to unilaterally disarm in order to prevent possible climate change.

Need proof?

Consider these excerpts from the resolution:

WHEREAS, the use of even a tiny fraction of these weapons would cause worldwide climate disruption and global famine; to wit, as few as 100 Hiroshima-sized bombs,

small by modern standards, would put at least five million tons of soot into the upper atmosphere and cause climate disruption across the planet'

WHEREAS, a large-scale nuclear war would kill hundreds of millions of people directly and cause unimaginable environmental damage and catastrophic climate disruption'

WHEREAS, as the effects of climate change place increased stress on communities around the world and intensify the likelihood of conflict, the danger of nuclear war will grow'

BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it urges the President and the Congress of the United States to embrace the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and make nuclear disarmament the centerpiece of our national security policy'

Your tax dollars at work!

March 9, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'I've really come to believe that there are some legislators who don't want us to improve MNLARS. As long as they keep bashing this, it's good political fodder. And you know, if it's fixed by next fall it increasingly becomes a nonissue. If it's still in an acute phase, then it's a live issue. That's the only reason I can see why we can't get 'a transfer of money from one account to another.'

-Governor Dayton on the MNLARS DMV Fiasco

Quote of the Week: 'I'm to blame for this.'

-Governor Dayton on the MNLARS DMV Fiasco

CAPITOL UPDATE

As the legislature wraps up another week, we take a look at all that has happened under the Capitol Dome:

Planet Dayton: Governor Dayton took the all-too-familiar rocket out to Planet Dayton this week when he simultaneously took responsibility and blamed Republicans for the MNLARS vehicle registration and licensure fiasco.

On the one hand, he blamed himself and rightfully so.

On the other hand, he reverted to juvenile lashing out in attacking Republicans for not writing a blank check after Dayton issue an ultimatum that MNLARS repair would shut down without an immediate no-strings-attached \$10 million ransom.

Republicans took the common-sense approach of both refusing to be blamed and refusing to simply turn over \$10 million to Mark Dayton, knowing that such a move would be similar to giving a teenage boy a bottle of whiskey and keys to the Corvette.

What could possibly go wrong?

As if the governor's ranting wasn't laughable enough, he threw another log on the comedy fire by stating that he wouldn't find \$10 million within the vast bureaucracy of the executive branch because doing so would 'cannibalize' state government.

Really.

It's truly Planet Dayton.

A Failure of Leadership: While vacationing on Planet Dayton, the governor may have missed an absolutely scathing report on the elder abuse scandal.

The investigative report was compiled by the highly respected Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA), a non-partisan office that investigates state government.

The OLA faulted Dayton Office of Health Facility Complaints (OHFC) in just about every way imaginable, painting a picture of a truly broken bureaucracy that was charged with protecting vulnerable Minnesotans.

Take a look at just some of the OLA findings:

Between fiscal years 2012 and 2017, the number of allegation reports OHFC received increased by more than 50 percent, reaching 24,100 in Fiscal Year 2017. OHFC triaged for onsite investigation only 5 percent of the reports it received that year.

OHFC does not have an effective case management system, which has contributed to lost files and poor decisions regarding resource allocation.

The majority of OHFC staff do not have confidence in OHFC leadership's ability to lead the office.

OHFC has frequently failed to meet required triage and investigation deadlines.

OHFC's intake, triage, and investigation processes lack sufficient quality control measures.

OHFC does not inform vulnerable adults or their family members whether providers have reported suspected maltreatment.

OHFC posts investigation reports on its website, but the website is incomplete and difficult to navigate.

OHFC does a poor job managing its data, and MDH does not use available allegation and investigation data to identify trends and inform prevention efforts.

Instead of taking immediate action to fix this immediate and critical problem, the governor spends his time defending the failed MNLARS project and holding news conferences to advocate for taxes on pain medication.

It's truly Planet Dayton.

Crony Capitalism: DFL Attorney General Lori Swanson hired a private law firm to represent the state in a lawsuit against 3M, which resulted in an \$850 million settlement.

The firm will walk away with what amounts to a payday of \$48,000 per day for their work, a cool \$125 million.

Questions remain regarding the process the attorney general used to hire this firm and how competitive the bid process was to receive this state government contract.

The Party of the Working Class.

Opioid News: As readers know, some legislators are considering a tax on opioid pain medication.

Even the World Health Organization has criticized taxes on medication as 'highly regressive' and a barrier to faithful adherence to a course of treatment.

In considering an opioid medication tax, Minnesota is in the same boat as that other healthcare policy leader, the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The home of fried chicken and tobacco farms, Kentucky's legislature also features members who think such a tax would be good public policy.

This week, a nationally prominent pain doctor, James Patrick Murphy, issued a statement calling the planned tax 'cruel and immoral.'

Murphy, who has treated thousands of patients dealing with long-term and severe pain, noted, 'If it was cancer patients or heart medicine, they would never do it. It's so offensive.'

A tax on pain medication is one of the worst ideas to come down the legislative pike in some time.

This publication simply can't see Republican majorities going along with such a scheme.

The real question is how much damage will be done entertaining such a bad idea until it falls off the table.

Doctor Duplicity: The Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) is the lobbying arm for the state's doctors, or at least the 1/3rd of physicians who actually belong to the group.

They're quite an interesting group, and that's being charitable about things.

The group this week jumped into Second Amendment issues by calling for an 'assault weapon' ban (please define).

This publication would love to see the empirical data that demonstrate that such a ban would result in healthier outcomes for Minnesotans.

We bet such data don't exist.

The only bigger political blunder the group committed this year is their support for the opioid tax mentioned above.

While an opioid tax would likely result in worse health outcomes for Minnesotans, maybe the MMA has offered up support of the tax in order to expiate the sin of all those opioid prescriptions written by some of their members.

While there is plenty of blame to go around on the opioid crisis, it is a hard fact that only one group of professionals has authorization to allow patients to purchase an opioid.

March 16, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'From my experiences in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and the poorest parts of New York City, I have come to realize how much our lives are proscribed by where we land at birth on this planet.'

-Governor Mark Dayton

PROPAGANDA PARADE

Taxpayers celebrated as Governor Dayton Wednesday evening delivered his final State of the State address to beleaguered Minnesotans who have endured eight years of tax increases, growing government, epic government failures (MNSURE, MNLARS) and the epic failures of the chief executive (what was in that bill I signed?).

The address was a boring as it was predictable.

Job number one for the soon to be erstwhile governor was propagating the myth that he's some sort of budgetary genius. A magician with the budget pen.

You know the chestnut. He inherited a huge budget mess and restored it all to sterling glory through a combination of skill, courage, and intangible talent that willed the state to fiscal nirvana.

The reality is that Mark Dayton is fiscal restraint what Jesse James was to wealth management.

Dayton needed money to feed his vision of an ever-expanding Leviathan.

He and his gang in the legislature stole what they wanted and then some.

They then called it 'fiscal integrity.'

Right. Jesse James stole what he needed and then some, leaving his gang in better financial condition than when he knocked over his first bank.

Theft, whether deemed legal or illegal by government, is just that.

The taking of another's property by force or threat of force is no sign of financial management skill.

It's merely a sign of ruthlessness.

When Mark Dayton was sworn in as governor in early 2011, the state's general fund budget was just a shade under \$30 billion for the 2010-2011 biennium.

As Mark Dayton prepares to leave office in early 2019, the state's general fund budget will sit at \$45 billion, a whopping 50% increase during his tenure.

You read that right. 50%.

And even though state spending has been jacked into the stratosphere in a grossly unsustainable manner (and we still can't get our license tabs renewed), Dayton offered the same old warmed-over bromides about the state budget needing more money for 'wise investments' in 'commonsense' programs.

(Editor's Note: Any time a politician has to label their idea as either a 'wise investment' or a 'Commonsense' measure, you can rest assured it is neither wise nor commonsense).

When I started, the state's funding for elementary and secondary education per \$1,000 of personal income, was in the bottom half of the fifty states. Most recently, we ranked 18th, according to the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence. That's better, but it's not good enough.

'State government's funding for higher education has also declined. In 2012, state support for the University of Minnesota, Minnesota State, and Financial Aid was, in real dollars, the lowest it had been since 1981. Once again, we have restored some of that loss, but we have still shifted too much of the costs of attending our state colleges and universities onto students and their parents.'

'Further damaging the future success of our colleges and universities is the chronic inadequacy of our state's capital investments in their campuses. It's almost impossible to provide world-class educations in antiquated buildings with leaky ceilings, dilapidated bathrooms, worn-out exteriors, and in classrooms without advanced technologies and other learning aids.'

'Another crucial area for infrastructure investments is in transportation, which also was poorly financed for years. Everyone driving in our state knows that traffic congestion and highway conditions keep getting worse, wasting their time and straining their sanity.'

'So, our number one priority - which will be reflected in my budget on Friday - should be tax fairness for individual Minnesotans and their families.'

This all means Dayton will continue to push for more and more government spending until the day he leaves office.

Thank goodness we the GOP in charge of the legislature to put the brakes on the fiscal insanity.

There were also a couple of comical and ironic moments that highlighted Governor Dayton's tin ear, no doubt honed by years of living in an insulated bubble of trust fund opulence and elegance.

At one point, Dayton tried to indict President Trump and the Congress by criticizing tax cuts to lay a foundation for his forthcoming tax increases.

Dayton said, 'Last year, the Legislature reduced business property taxes for each of the next ten years. The federal bill just cut the corporate tax rate by a whopping 40 percent. Combined, they provide huge tax cuts to Minnesota businesses'

Republicans in the chamber immediately rose to their feet to wildly cheer the tax cuts, undermining Dayton's desire for an ominous set up to his call for tax increases.

The best of moment of the night occurred near the end, as Dayton reminisced on his lifetime of leisure and frolic.

'From my experiences in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and the poorest parts of New York City, I have come to realize how much our lives are proscribed by where we land at birth on this planet,' he wistfully observed.

How true. Birth into one of Minnesota's wealthiest families, providing a lifetime of privilege can overcome a whole lot of innate mediocrity.

Indeed.

BILL OF THE WEEK

Our bill of the week this week is a good bill, authored by Sen. Roger Chamberlain (R - Lino Lakes).

Sen. Chamberlain is a true friend of the taxpayer and a champion of limited government.

He has authored Senate File 3490, A resolution memorializing Congress to call a convention to propose amendments to the United States Constitution to impose fiscal constraints on the federal government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, and limit the terms of office for its officials and for members of Congress.

What a great bill. Our constitutional republic is in crisis.

WHERE'S THE OUTRAGE?

Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter enthusiastically joined students at Harding High School this week in a walk out to protest gun violence.

One can only wonder why there isn't similar concern and outrage over the tragedy of abysmal graduation rates among students of color at Harding High School and across Minnesota.

Fewer than 60 percent of the state's black and Hispanic students graduate in four years.

The rate for the state's Native American students is the second worst in the nation at 49 percent.

Minnesota has the worst or second-worst graduation rates among in all four non-white student categories. No other state is in the bottom five in all four groups, and only Oregon comes close with three races in the bottom five.

If there's a walk out to protest the way our public schools and our government fail people of color, we will be there.

Waiting for Superman.

March 23, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Factoid of the Week: Senator Amy Klobuchar is the U.S. Senator with the highest annual staff turnover, at 36%.

CAPITOL UPDATE

This week was the legislature's 'first deadline.' This means that most bills introduced must have passed all necessary committee's in either the House or the Senate to remain alive.

Practically speaking, this means that many of the 4,000 bills out there are dead for the 2018 session.

On the other hand, there is an aphorism that observes, 'nothing is ever dead at the Capitol.'

The strategy for many advocates now turns to trying to get their bill language tucked into the many finance bills that will now begin working their way through the process.

Up next: The 'second deadline' happens March 29th, when those bills that met the first deadline must now pass all relevant committees in the other body. In short, if a bill made first deadline in the House, it now must pass the committee process in the Senate by March 29th.

BILL OF THE WEEK

Man, the 'bill of the week' this week might also take honors as the 'bill of the year.'

Any bill that strikes a major blow for due process, limited government, individual rights, and the rule of law should be recognized and applauded.

House File 3725 and Senate File 3419 seek to reform the odious and unconstitutional practice of 'civil forfeiture.'

Civil forfeiture is a procedure that allows law enforcement to seize and retain the property of citizens who have not been convicted of a crime or even charged with a crime.

The law, meant to fight drug dealers, has become a dragnet and a cash cow for law enforcement and government at the expense of private property rights.

The primary issue is that the person involved is put into the criminal justice system while their property is put into the civil justice system, where standards of proof are lower and legal expenses can be higher.

And even though the person may be discharged from the criminal system without being charged and convicted, their property may languish in the civil system unless and until they move through that system to free their own property.

You see, regardless of what happens on the criminal side of the equation, a person must file a lawsuit in the civil system to recover their property, or the property is forfeited to the government.

Moreover, the value of what has seized often has less value than the cost of hiring an attorney and filing suit.

And on top of all that, many citizens lack the knowledge to navigate the complex civil justice system in the first place.

These bills seek to remedy that problem by putting the seized property in the criminal justice system, where there will be more symmetry between the criminal case against the person and the status of any personal property seized as part of the case.

A wide array of liberal and conservative groups has come together to support this bill.

Watchdogs should take just a moment today to send a word of thanks to both Senator Scott Newman and Representative Jim Knoblach to thank them for their work on behalf of the rule of law.

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651-296-4131

rep.jim.knoblach@house.mn
651-296-6612

THOSE FECKLESS DEMOCRATS

It never ends with the Democrats.

Let's start with Tim Pawlenty.

The liberals and their friends in the media have been obsessing over Pawlenty's salary as head of the Financial Services Roundtable, his most recent job.

Funny, there was never any concern expressed about candidates making millions when Al Franken was a Senator who made his millions peddling rape jokes and other assorted smut out in Hollywood.

Funny, it was just fine that Mark Dayton was an ultra-rich trust fund kid selling priceless art works to fund his campaigns.

But now it's a problem.

Why? Because Pawlenty has an 'R' behind his name.

If he was a Democrat, he would get a pass.

Let's hope Republicans don't fall into this tawdry line of questioning.

We are a party that values success, achievement, and the accumulation of wealth.

We also learned this week that Mark Dayton continues to politicize the state Supreme Court.

He has already appointed one political hack to the bench in David Lillehaug, a prominent DFLer.

Now we learn that State Rep. Paul Thissen is a candidate to replace David Straus on that bench, after Stras was appointed to the federal appeals bench.

Will Dayton reward another political crony with a judicial appointment?

Probably.

March 30, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 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.

-Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution

Quote of the Week: 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.

-Article I, Section 10, State of Minnesota Constitution

THE INCONVENIENCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

Hey, Watchdogs. Another week, another step closer to the end of the 2018 legislative session.

As the sausage making continues apace, we are again this week revisiting one of the most important bills of the session, the reform of civil asset forfeiture.

As loyal readers will recall, we currently have a 'justice' system that allows government to seize and retain the private property of citizens without that citizen being charged with a crime, let alone a conviction.

The bill was heard this past week in the House Civil Law Committee, where the bill was vehemently opposed by the Law Enforcement Industrial Complex, comprised of police groups and organizations representing prosecutors.

Sponsored by Rep. Jim Knoblach (R - Saint Cloud), the bill has three main features that honor constitutional principles,

First, it would end Minnesota's hybrid civil forfeiture process and replace it with criminal forfeiture. Property seizures would be adjudicated only after a suspect is found guilty.

Notice that government can only seize private property AFTER conviction.

Next, it routes forfeiture proceeds to crime victim services groups and similar organizations, as well as the state's general fund. Money would no longer go automatically to the local governmental units making the seizures to supplement to their budgets.

This is a big deal because the current system provides a perverse incentive for law enforcement to seize as much as they can because it funds their own budgets.

The more they seize, the bigger their budgets.

Third, it would introduce procedural protections for spouses, parents and other innocent owner claimants who sometimes lose property to forfeiture even when not suspected of a crime.

As mentioned, Law Enforcement opposed the measure.

And what did they have to say in defense of the status quo?

One Bob Small from the County Attorney's Association complained that such a change would 'glut' the system with extra hearings.

So, the Constitutional rights of citizens are to yield to concerns of administrative convenience?

Maybe in Syria or Venezuela, but not in America, pal.

Yes, the inherent rights of citizens may be inconvenient for the prosecution, but that's really a secondary concern.

Shakopee police chief Jeff Tate (no relation to the Queensryche front man) complained that the seized loot funds all sorts of cool programs like drug awareness posters, officer training, and even academic scholarships.

Well, excuse us. If we knew that Johnny or Susie was getting a couple hundred bucks to defray the high cost of text books, we would have never complained about this shredding of the Constitution.

Heck, if we simply repealed the Fourth Amendment, we could probably even fund light rail.

Frankly, we're a bit embarrassed that law enforcement would even proffer these weak excuses.

Again, kudos to every legislator, Republican and Democrat, who supports this bill.

Finally, this bill ironically may be a moot point as Minnesota courts are also considering a case dealing with this issue.

It really is astounding that this blatantly unconstitutional process has gone on for 20 plus years.

CRITICAL THINKING APPLIED: OPIOIDS

As with many states, Minnesota is considering a bill to tackle the opioid crisis, which is truly a crisis.

Having said that, there are some aspects of the response that don't add up.

Myth #1: Limiting access to legitimate opioids reduces access to opioids.

Hardly. Limiting access to safe, FDA-approved opioids used under a physician's care only pushes many people into the black market, where the opioids are often toxic and lethal.

Take Ohio, a state that has trumpeted its zeal in limiting opioid prescriptions.

Opioid prescriptions have fallen exponentially.

Fatal overdoses have opioids have risen exponentially.

Myth #2: Naloxone works.

Naloxone is the name of a chemical that reverses the clinical effects of opioids, many times saving overdose victims from death or serious injury.

That is all true and Naloxone and its family of drugs has indeed saved lives.

The point here is that, ironically, Naloxone may be encouraging risky opioid use (which already high risk) by inducing a moral hazard.

There is now scholarly work available that supports the proposition that opioid abusers are willing to take on more risk in their addiction, knowing that first responders with Naloxone kits are a sort of safety net that will bail them out of trouble.

Anecdotally, first responders report reviving the same addicts multiple times in a single day.

One paramedic reported reviving the same person in the hospital parking lot.

Within minutes of being discharged from the first overdose, the patient walked into the parking lot and got high - and overdosed - again.

Myth #3: Big Pharma bears all the responsibility.

This is classic politics, as Big Pharma is a classic 'black hat' that makes for excellent rhetoric.

While Pharma no doubt bears some portion of culpability for the problem, there are plenty of other responsible actors here.

As for pharma, look no further than the millions they pour into all those anti-drug groups like Partnership for a Drug Free America.

We wouldn't want medical marijuana to become a competitor now, would we?

At least not until Pharma figures out how to corner that market.

No one but doctors have the power to prescribe. Physicians wrote the scrip for opioids. They enjoyed the 'pain conferences' that were little more than all expenses paid junkets to exotic locations for doctor and spouse.

And how about those consulting fees, sponsored research fellowships and the like?

Doctors certainly weren't the dupes they portray themselves to be.

And what insurance companies? They made a decision that profit considerations mandate quick opioid prescriptions over more expensive, less lethal options like

physical therapy. Cheaper to give a patient 60 days of opioids instead of paying for therapy and acupuncture.

Finally, can we also acknowledge a modicum of personal responsibility?

No one forced addicts to take that pill or fill that needle.

The data strongly confirm that most addicts aren't abusing their own prescription.

To the extent they are using legitimate opioids, they are taking opioids either they or someone else stole or otherwise illegally obtained for them.

Myth #4: Taxing opioids is okay because it holds Big Pharma 'accountable.'

This is simply untrue. The simple fact is that it's impossible to limit a tax on a business only to the business.

These higher costs are inevitably passed on in some form to customers.

In this case, customers are often very sick and indigent people.

Making their medicine more expensive is simply wrong.

Moreover, taxing opioids is a case of government taxing itself.

Many health insurance programs are government programs that pick up the tab in whole or in part for millions of Americans.

If Minnesota (or any other state) taxes this medicine, it's just a case of the state pocket withdrawing money from the federal pocket.

Of course, both pockets belong to the taxpayers.

Moreover, these taxes will result in higher insurance costs for all, regardless of public or private insurance.

The accounting of liability for this crisis will happen in the court system, where some 400 different lawsuits are pending regarding the opioid crisis.

Taxing opioids is simply bad public policy - and bad politics for Republicans.

April 6, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'Having the Democrats watch your money is like having Michael Vick watch your dog for the weekend.'

-Tim Pawlenty

Quote of the Week: 'I give President Obama credit for one thing. He's proven that someone can be less deserving of the Nobel prize than Al Gore.'

-Tim Pawlenty

HE'S IN

Today Tim Pawlenty made his entrance into the governor's race official. His entrance has been encouraged and cheered by Republicans across the party base, from rank and file activists to donors, to thought leaders across the country.

His entrance establishes him as the consensus front runner, meaning he will continue to be the target of attacks from other GOP candidates.

That's okay. It comes with the territory.

But let's get one thing straight: Tim Pawlenty is in this race in large part because the opportunity was handed to him on a silver platter.

The other candidates have been in the race for many months and had every opportunity to seal the deal with delegates and donors.

And they failed to do so.

You could pilot an ocean liner through the opening he has been given.

It will be up to him to capitalize on that opportunity by earning the support of both Republicans and the citizens of this state.

After an eight-year absence, it's clear that he is the GOP's best hope to recapture the governor's office.

UNDERPAID?

Much has been made of teacher compensation of late. Teachers in other states have walked out over perceived lagging pay, with the issue taking on a national profile.

While walk outs haven't happened in Minnesota, the issue has also taken on a high profile in places like Saint Paul.

And while the issue is subjective in some respects, it certainly is possible to quantify teacher compensation and present it for consideration and comparison.

The Watchdog this week reviewed the 2015-2017 collective bargaining agreement between the Saint Paul Public Schools and the union representing the teachers to see what we can learn about teacher compensation in that district, for example.

Our 'example' teacher, we will call her 'Lisa', is at the middle of the pay scale, with 10 years of experience in the district and stands at lane '7/8'.

This teacher carries family health care and takes a 403(b) deferred compensation match.

While there are many opportunities to enhance compensation (e.g. coaching a team or working during the summer), our example focuses on salary, health care, and retirement.

For salary, she earns \$60,445 annually.

The district contributes \$12,720 annually to her health insurance premiums.

The district contributes roughly \$6,000 annually to her defined-benefit retirement plan, which on average will pay her \$26,000 per year in retirement, according to state regulators.

She also takes advantage of the \$1,000 match to her 403(b) account.

That's roughly \$80,000 in district-provided direct and indirect pay.

According to the collective bargaining agreement, the duty year consists of 187 duty days.

If that duty day is a standard 8 hours, Lisa works 1,496 hours each year, not inclusive of any sick days, vacation days, or other paid time off.

The standard work year, by comparison, is 2080 hours, meaning Lisa works 584 hours (or 73 days) fewer than the standard American worker.

The bottom line is that in our example, Lisa is paid over \$53 dollars per hour by the Saint Paul Public Schools.

In the Saint Paul schools, teachers at the bottom of the scale start at a salary of \$40,203 annually. A teacher at the very top of the pay scale earns \$93,749 in annual salary.

The median household income in Saint Paul is \$47,000 annually.

Thus, a brand-new teacher starts at nearly 86% of the median household income of city she serves.

A teacher at the top of the scale earns almost 200% of the median household income in the city.

Do these numbers make teachers 'underpaid?' Overpaid?

You be the judge.

KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES

Pete Stauber is running for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

As readers know, there is an open seat in Minnesota's Eighth District, with incumbent Rick Nolan opting not to run for re-election.

Stauber is an excellent candidate and fits the district well.

Check out this bio, lifted from his campaign web site:

Pete Stauber grew up in Duluth, where he and his five brothers graduated from Denfeld High School. He went on to earn his BS degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Fire Science from Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste Marie, MI. One of Stauber's highlights in college was having the opportunity to meet President Ronald Reagan, after

the LSSU hockey team (which he captained) won the Division I National Championship in 1988.

Stauber was honored to have an opportunity to play hockey with the Detroit Red Wings Organization. After retiring from professional hockey, he returned to Minnesota and began his law enforcement career. He retired from the Duluth Police Department after 22 years of service. Commissioner Stauber was serving as an Area Commander with the department, as well as the President of the Law Enforcement Labor Services Union, Local 363, when he retired in August 2017.

Commissioner Stauber's political career began when he served two terms as a Hermantown City Councilor. In 2012, he successfully ran for St. Louis County Commissioner against a 16-year incumbent. In his second year on the County Board, Commissioner Stauber served as vice-chair, and in his third year; chairperson. In 2016, Stauber was re-elected as County Commissioner with 78% of the total votes. He is currently serving his second term on the St. Louis County Board.

Pete's wife, Jodi, is an Iraq war Veteran and is retired from the 148th Fighter Wing as its first female Command Chief. The Staubers have 4 children and reside in Hermantown.

This is a seat the GOP can definitely win.

Now you know Pete Stauber.

April 13, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'Finger pointing is just another example of how divisive politics has become in Minnesota today.'

Factoid of the Week: Famed political scientist Larry Sabato moved the Minnesota Governor's race from Lean D, to Toss-Up after Tim Pawlenty officially announced his candidacy.

Tip of the Week: Candidates for governor are required to report their fundraising totals for the period ending March 31st. Expect Tim Pawlenty to announce totals exceeding \$1 million. By comparison, Jeff Johnson raised \$259,000 for all of 2017.

ADMINISTRATION WATCH

There has always been a certain hypocrisy about Democrats, a certain casual dismissal of reality when that reality interferes with the political narrative.

But things are really getting out of hand as Tim Pawlenty's entrance into the governor's race clearly triggered the DFL establishment, causing a stampede to safe spaces and a histrionic lashing out.

Start with the titular head of said political party, one Mark B. Dayton.

The sitting governor, taking a break from fiddling with Saint Paul burns (more on that momentarily), this week proceeded to castigate Tim Pawlenty for all manner of alleged fiscal sins during his tenure as governor.

The interview, which could have been alternatively titled 'Grandpa's Yelling Again,' was classic Mark Dayton, replete with the usual attacks and divisive pandering to his base.

'I don't know what he's going to run on because his record as governor was so abysmal,' Dayton piously intoned.

The interview, posted in a local newspaper, was truly an example of Dayton pointing out the splinter in Pawlenty's eye while ignoring the log in his own.

It never fails to amaze this publication that Democrats shamelessly clothe their brand of gangster government in the rich vestments of fiscal responsibility.

Government 'needs' a dollar.

Democrats raise taxes and confiscate from the productive class \$1.50.

They spend \$1.25.

They call the extra 25 cents in over-taxation 'surplus' and evidence of their skilled budgetary management.

Yes, and Jesse James was a skilled wealth manager.

It bears repeating that government can only raise money by diverting wealth from the private economy into the public economy.

Every dollar that government expropriates is a dollar that is unavailable to the private sector for investment or other deployment as decided by the person or entity that earned that dollar.

Now back to the 'administration watch.'

It is more than a little ironic that at the same time the DFL is engaging in revisionist history by comparing the Pawlenty years to the Dark Ages, their governor is presiding over multiple disasters and failures of basic governmental competence.

Let's start with welfare health care programs.

Readers will recall that the Dayton administration had all sorts of problems with basic software management when it rolled out its version of Obamacare in 2014.

These software problems led to billing errors that weren't corrected until the spring of 2016.

Those two years of errors has led to over \$30 million in premiums not being collected by the state.

If that wasn't bad enough, the state this week announced that they will simply write off the uncollected premiums.

You read that right. The state has decided that it will simply write off \$30 million.

In other words, the taxpayers will eat \$30 million in free health care premiums for others.

Thankfully, Republicans in the legislature are pushing legislation that would force the bureaucracy to do its job and collect the money.

Next, the MNLARS debacle regarding driver services continues to be a dumpster fire of epic proportions.

The latest flare up concerns customer service, where it has come to light that emails to the customer service center take up to two weeks to garner a response.

The previous response time on emails was an average of 3.5 days.

Phone calls into the service center is even worse.

Approximately 75% of calls into the service center meet with a busy signal.

Of the calls that got through, only 50% of those calls resulted in the caller actually talking to someone because the other half dropped off after sitting on hold too long.

Moreover, the call volume has exploded since the ham-handed roll out of the MNLARS system.

Prior to the roll out, the call center received an average of 277,000 calls per month.

After the roll out, those calls increased to about 500,000 per month.

And the DFL has gall to call out Pawlenty.

When he was governor, at least you could get your license tabs renewed.

The final goof up (at least for this week) happened with a group called the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

BWSR promulgated rules this week that would result in draconian fines for farmers and others who violate rules regarding buffer strips of land between agriculture and water.

Republicans and farm groups went ballistic on the new rules, declaring yet another iteration of Dayton's liberal elite War of Agriculture.

Even though BWSR is his agency, Governor Dayton expressed his shock and dismay at the proposed new penalties, declaring, 'I was surprised and disturbed to learn about your proposed Administrative Penalty Order for the Buffer Law that is out for public comment. The proposed fines are unreasonable. They have come as a shock to not only myself, but also to Minnesota farmers.'

What, Mark Dayton unaware?

Say it ain't so, governor.

THE PALACE COUP REVISITED

The Minnesota Senate is closely divided, 34-33 in favor of Republicans.

Readers well know about the issue of Senate President Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville) being elevated to the position of lieutenant governor by operation of the constitution when lieutenant governor Tina Smith was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Al Franken, who finally embarrassed himself out of office.

Because the GOP maintain that she can serve in both offices (citing court precedence), the DFL filed a lawsuit to kick Fischbach out of office to make for a 33-33 tie in the Senate.

That lawsuit was dismissed by a judge months ago.

The news here is that the lawsuit was recently refiled.

The other news is that the media continues to inaccurately report on the case.

Specifically, the inaccuracy is that the lawsuit was dismissed the first time around merely because of a timing issue.

The judge was far more definitive in pointing out the problems the plaintiff will have in kicking a sitting senator out of office.

What the media is missing is that the judge in his earlier ruling opined that the judicial branch has no authority to remove a sitting senator from office.

'There is nothing in the Constitution granting courts the authority to remove legislators from office through citizen lawsuits,' Judge John Guthmann wrote.

While a higher court might overrule Guthmann, the media should at least report this important aspect of his earlier ruling instead of the misleading characterization that the suit was dismissed because of timing.

April 20, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'Dayton Seeks Tax Relief for Families.'
-News Headline

Factoid of the Week: Mark Dayton's tax plan proposes to raise taxes on 100% of taxpayers.

MOTHER'S MILK

It has been said (by Jesse 'Big Daddy' Unruh, to be specific) that money is the mother's milk of politics.

It takes money to win elections and that's a fact.

While some may decry money in politics, the reality is that fundraising fundamentally serves as a metric for candidate support, candidate work ethic, and candidate skill.

The other harsh reality is that there is no good way to wring money out of politics.

It's like capitalism, the worst economic system ever devised - except for all the others.

In short, campaign money not only serves as a metric of candidate strength. It also serves as a platform to support the candidate's core First Amendment right to free speech.

Money allows a candidate to amplify their ideas and agenda across a broad spectrum, making the message available to a wider audience.

Put another way, our system certainly has its flaws but overall, it's pretty darn good, especially compared to what other countries have to offer in this regard.

So, let's take a look at what the major candidates for the major offices reported raising in the first quarter of 2018 and what they have in cash on hand.

Here's what the governor's race shows:

(Money raised/Cash on hand)

Tim Pawlenty: \$1,013,000/\$972,662

Jeff Johnson: \$105,656/\$210,062

Tim Walz: \$528,292/\$628,027

Analysis: Tim Pawlenty absolutely blew away the field, besting DFL front-runner Tim Walz by nearly 2 to 1 and shellacking Jeff Johnson by a stunning 10 to 1.

It's even more noteworthy to observe that Pawlenty only started raising money in mid-March, after he terminated employment with the Financial Services Roundtable at about the same time.

Put another way, it was a \$1 million haul in two weeks of activity.

Fundraising prowess like that makes Pawlenty the instant front runner in the race, clearly demonstrating GOP donor and base support.

On the other hand, Jeff Johnson turned in another anemic performance, getting outraised 10 to 1 by Pawlenty and 5 to 1 by Walz.

While raising the most money certainly doesn't anoint a candidate as 'the' candidate, Johnson's numbers aren't really about Pawlenty as much as they are about his own campaign.

Raising just over \$100,000 just isn't viable for a gubernatorial candidate.

It's not that he got lapped by Pawlenty. He also got lapped by Walz.

CD 1

Jim Hagedorn: \$636,103/\$330,058

Carla Nelson: \$330,295/\$215,958

Let's focus on the GOP numbers in this district, which will be one of the most contested races in the country, with incumbent Tim Walz vacating the seat to run for governor.

While Jim Hagedorn outraised Nelson by almost 2 to 1 here, Nelson raised respectable numbers that certainly make her viable.

Make no mistake, Hagedorn did well, but Nelson is right there, especially given the cash on hand numbers.

Hagedorn showed a very high burn rate, spending about half of what he raised.

That's a serious burn rate that should be a cause for concern.

CD 2

Jason Lewis: \$1,270,593/\$884,625

Angie Craig: \$1,089,476/\$749,744

While challenger Angie Craig might look close to incumbent Jason Lewis, recall that she outspent Lewis by 4 to 1 last election.

At 1 to 1 parity and with the advantage of incumbency, Lewis should be in better shape this time around than when he beat her the last time.

CD 3

Erik Paulsen: \$2,675,256.54/ \$2,000,909.52

Dean Phillips: \$1,625,667.00/ \$695,234.67

Erik Paulsen has certainly taken care of business, raking in over \$2 million and having over \$2 million cash on hand.

DFL opponent Dean Phillips raised respectable numbers, but showed a high burn rate and sits at about a 3 to 1 disadvantage cash on hand.

National Democrats love to dream about beating Paulsen, but the dude does his homework and represents his district very well.

He'll be fine in 2018 as another Democrat fantasy is shattered.

CD 8

Pete Stauber: \$529,906.22/ \$292,870.05

Jason Metsa: \$132,657.00/ \$116,938.42

Joe Radinovich: \$108,455.25/ \$94,520.92

This seat is a golden pick up opportunity for the GOP and perhaps their number one target this cycle.

As mentioned in a previous edition, Republican Pete Stauber is a tier 1 candidate who is running un-challenged for this open seat.

On the DFL side, the party is deeply fractured, with no candidate emerging with the endorsement, making for a divisive and bruising primary where four candidates will duke it out.

(Only two of the four raised enough money to earn press with this publication.)

It's amazing to consider that Minnesota may be the nation's biggest battleground state in 2018.

Two Senate races, an open seat for governor, and four competitive House races will make the North Star state the center of America's political universe.

For political junkies, this will be a very exciting time in our state's history.

TAXES, TAXES, TAXES

It was yet another 'Ruh Roh' week in the Dayton administration when his own budget office released an analysis of his tax plan that showed that the governor's plan raises taxes on EVERYONE.

Yes, his tax plan will raise taxes on every taxpayer, according to his own budget folks.

In fact, the largest tax increases would fall on the bottom 10% of income earners.

What compassion.

Kind of like when Dayton said he wouldn't raise tobacco taxes because of how hard those taxes fell on the poor.

Then he raised exactly those taxes when then his rich NFL buddies needed a new football stadium to enhance their 'revenue streams.'

April 27, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'It's not like it's a free ride and everything's going to be fine.'

-Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer (R - Big Lake) on the attempt to add money to a finance bill on the Senate floor that would have studied extending the North Star commuter train to Saint Cloud

Quote of the Week: 'As I have said earlier, I will not call a Special Session.'

-Governor Mark Dayton (emphasis original)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Before we examine the coolest bill of the week, a brief update on the big picture in Saint Paul.

The House and Senate are moving supplemental omnibus spending bills through the process, which has consumed most of this week.

In fact, the Senate last night moved a massive all-in-one spending bill off the Senate floor on a party-line vote.

The House finished moving several spending bills that merged some program areas together into single bills through the committee process, setting up floor action in that body for next week.

Once that process concludes, the House and Senate will move into some sort of conference committee process to reconcile differences and produce a conference committee report(s).

It's unclear right now exactly what that process will look like or how/when the administration will be involved.

Also unresolved right now is the issue of global budget targets, which would tell the conferees how much money they must spend in each program area.

The governor, through his commissioners, has also laid down several veto markers regarding various policy proposals contained in the supplemental bills.

Whether there is a final work product of any type that becomes law remains to be seen.

All three leaders have indicated that there are no mandatory 'to do' items, since a comprehensive budget was passed last year.

Thus, there is no real pressure to get things done and Republicans may be content to take the gamble that they will hold the House this fall and elect a GOP governor, who will obviously be less of an obstacle to passing bills.

On the other hand, there will be pressure to pass tax conformity measures to provide citizens with some certainty regarding their taxes next year.

There will also be pressure to pass a bonding bill to allow legislators to bring home public works projects to their districts.

Finally, the governor has one last chance to establish his legacy and should want to negotiate with Republicans to get some of his priorities enacted.

No governor wants to finish his tenure with an 'incomplete' on the report card.

This publication could see a tax bill, a bonding bill, and two other bills passing into law (opioids, elder abuse) and the rest falling to the cutting room floor.

Stay tuned!

BILL OF THE WEEK

Man, we've got one heck of a good 'bill of the week' this week.

SF4010 and companion HF4450 seek to implement a great idea that causes Watchdogs to say, 'why hasn't this been done already?'

Authored by Sen. Roger Chamberlain (R - Lino Lakes) and Rep. Greg Davids (R - Preston), the bills would trigger an automatic reduction in the income tax and corporate taxes if certain budget surplus criteria are met.

In short, if government over-collects by a certain amount, automatic tax cuts are triggered.

Sweet.

In testimony, Sen. Chamberlain noted that 11 states already have these provisions in law, so there is no new public policy ground ploughed here.

These other states have not plunged into anarchy and civil unrest because there is an over-collection cap on government.

Of course, the Dayton administration has concerns that government would have a circuit breaker on its confiscation of citizen wealth.

The great news here is that Chamberlain and Davids are the chairmen of the taxes committee in their respective bodies.

You can bet that this bill will be part of the larger conversation in the omnibus tax bills this session.

Hopefully, they can get the bill over the finish line and over Dayton's objection.

CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS CRAP

You should have been there to see the wailing and gnashing of teeth from special interest groups this week as a House committee debated a constitutional amendment that would dedicate auto-related sales taxes to roads and bridges.

A who's who of public trough feeders lined up to protect the gravy train from a possible diversion of tax money into the state's dedicated fund for roads and bridges.

Never mind the fact that the diversion would represent about 1% of the state's general fund.

Never mind that the state has a constitutional obligation to fund and maintain roads and bridges.

The hypocrisy was running thick throughout the hearing.

It started with the much-debunked narrative that money should be pumped into roads and bridges through a tax increase on gasoline and license tabs.

First, taxes are high enough. Taxpayers shouldn't have to reach into their pockets yet again in order to have a transportation system that meets their needs.

Second, the very same Democrats calling for these tax increases are the very same Democrats who chose not to raise those taxes when they were in charge.

It's sort of like those Republicans who voted to repeal Obamacare when they were in the minority and then failed to do so when they were in charge.

Second, don't forget that many of the same Democrats opposed to this constitutional amendment supported the so-called 'Legacy Amendment' that constitutionally dedicated sales tax money to the environment AND the arts.

That's right. If you didn't know it, a portion of the sales tax you pay is constitutionally fenced off to arts projects.

So, they don't support auto-related taxes for roads and bridges but DO support general sales taxes being fenced off for the arts.

Last year, \$441 million of your tax dollars went to these projects.

Over the 25-year life of the sales tax dedication, it is estimated that over \$1.2 billion will be doled out for these projects.

Here are a couple of examples of those constitutionally important programs:

Lake Bemidji Dragon Boat Festival Documentary

Norwegian Holiday Traditions Documentary

Green T Productions will host master artist David Furumoto (Onoe Kikunobuhide) for a series of training workshops in the Japanese traditional dance drama forms kabuki, noh, and bunraku, culminating in a public demonstration and workshop.

Suchitra Sairam will develop Natya Gurukulam, an intensive residential learning opportunity for Minnesotan Bharatanatyam students to enhance their skills in Bharatanatyam and allied arts.

So there you go.

We can fence off funds for the Lake Bemidji Dragon Boat Festival, but we can't fence off funds for our roads and bridges.

Things were best summed up by Jason George of the Operating Engineers Union that represents heavy equipment operators.

He said, 'We're told we can't build pipelines because it harms the climate. We're told we can't dig mines because it harms the water. Now we're told we can't build roads and bridges because it takes money from the children.'

May 4, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'We have not yet seen any conclusive evidence that opioid taxes will combat addiction or drug abuse. But there are indications that the cost of such a tax could be passed on to patients, and lead to higher insurance and medical costs.'

-Grover Norquist, Americans for Tax Reform

Quote of the Week: 'A fee is related to a tax, in that it is also a charge paid to the government by individuals or by a business. However, a fee is specifically applied for the use of a service. The fee rate is directly tied to the cost of maintaining the service. Money from the fee is generally not applied to uses other than to providing the service for which the fee is applied.'

-Small Business Law Chronical

Quote of the Week: 'Sometimes, a tax will be incorrectly labeled as a fee, often for political reasons. For example, if a politician wishes to keep a promise that he will not raise taxes, but still wishes to increase government revenue, he may push for an increase in certain kinds of taxes that can be labeled as fees. This is because, for voters, a 'fee' does not always have the same loaded political connotations that taxes do.'

- Small Business Law Chronical

TAX VS. FEE AND THE SOPHISTRY

Some things never change, especially here in Minnesota. The political trickery of labeling a 'tax' as a 'fee' to fool the taxpayers.

It's happened before and it's happening again, this time with a tax on opioid pain medication.

Sen. Julie Rosen (R - Vernon Center) has once again modified her proposal to tax opioid pain medication to be a 'registration fee' slapped on opioid manufacturers and wholesale distributors who sell into Minnesota.

The average citizen would consider a registration fee to be a fee charged by the agency responsible for processing the registration that covers the cost of providing the registration service.

Currently, the registration fee is only a couple hundred dollars.

The new scheme, based on a recent New York law that will likely be struck down in court, simply states that the state wants to collect \$20 million off the fees each year and apportions the fee across those required to register.

\$20 million to administer a few licenses? Bunk.

In fact, the bill actually apportions money to activities and government accounts that have nothing to do with administering a registration license.

Not many taxpayers buy the argument that fee that collect a few thousand bucks suddenly requires \$20 million.

Suddenly, a \$235 fee becomes one of a \$150,000 (according one wholesaler) to approaching a whopping \$9 million for one manufacturer.

By comparison, no state currently charges more than \$2,000 for a license and some charge as little as \$50.

This new language is simply a tax on FDA-approved pain medications all dressed up in the vestments of a 'fee.'

The Watchdog has recently explained the bad politics and bad public policy behind taxing medication.

This new language exacerbates the problem by attempting to fool taxpayers into thinking that a new, heavy tax on their medication isn't what they see; it's merely a 'fee.'

The Watchdog bets that taxpayers won't be so easily fooled.

It's bad enough to tax medicine. It's even worse to claim that it's not really a tax.

EMERGENCY ADEQUACY

Did we just mention that some things never change? Another thing that never changes is the annual cry to 'adequately' fund our 'underfunded' public schools.

Of course, those who call for adequacy are never able to answer the question begged. Just how much money equals adequacy?

Then again, the adequacy slogan isn't meant to be answered. In fact, it isn't meant to be thoughtfully analyzed as any minimal analysis would reveal the ridiculousness of the slogan.

Instead, the slogan is merely a chanting point designed to rally Big Government lemmings.

So just as the seasons change and sun rises each day, we see Democrats and their media allies trot out the shopworn and tiresome stories regarding inadequacy of funding and the need for more and more money to satisfy the great unknowable number that constitutes 'adequate' education funding.

Related to the Great Unknowable Number is the narrative that school districts have funding problems because of the aforementioned inadequate funding.

But is the real issue revenue, or is it spending?

Indeed, the real problem in education financing is that school districts outspend their revenue.

It's an undeniable fact that school funding at both the state and local level has gone up (in some cases exponentially) year after year.

Take a look at state level education funding in the recent past:

FY10-11: \$12 billion

FY12-13: \$15 billion

FY14-15: \$17 billion

FY16-17: \$18 billion

FY18-19: \$19 billion

The reason for the overspending is quite simple.

When the teacher union and the school board sit down to negotiate a contract, they are often all sitting on the same side of the bargaining table.

Because Education Minnesota is allowed to collect dues and spend a portion of it on politics, the union is the 800-pound gorilla in school board elections.

Thus, many school board officials are suffering a conflict of interest at the bargaining table.

On the one hand, they are charged with representing the taxpayer and advocating zealously on their behalf.

On the other hand, they are beholden to the union because the union endorsed their candidacy and contributed to their campaign.

In short, everyone is sitting on the union side of the table.

Is it any wonder revenues are overspent?

Is it any wonder blame is laid on the taxpayer for not ponying up enough?

The U.S. Supreme Court is right now considering a case that would free public employees from mandatory union dues.

This case, if decided in favor of the employee against the union, a more correct balance can be obtained.

The only better outcome would be to recognize that union membership is incompatible with public employment and pass a law repealing public unionization.

THE RIGHT TO WHOLE FOODS

The latest manifestation of Big Government is the idea that Americans are now entitled to organic food and health club memberships.

You can add it to the growing list of 'rights' that now include 'free' college, a universal minimum income, and a guaranteed job.

Just like France.

The federal government is now designating certain areas 'food deserts,' where citizens lack access to what is vaguely described as 'nutritious' food.

Liberals are now starting to decry the 'fat gap' between rich and poor, that purports to show that obesity rates are higher among lower income people than wealthy people.

You know what it is coming, folks.

Taxpayer subsidized organic and other high-end food.

And taxpayer subsidized gym memberships.

An Obama phone, a transit card, a membership card to Lifetime fitness, and voucher to Whole foods for some kale and Alaska-caught sockeye salmon.

While the expanding list of government guaranteed rights is concerning, the pernicious aspect of this is constant, drum beat narrative to eliminate the concept of personal responsibility from our culture.

While some people are in difficult circumstances through no fault of their own, many are undeniably in trouble because of poor lifestyle choices.

Many Americans are obese because they can't muster the initiative to get off the couch and put down the Taco Bell.

Providing the option of a trip to Whole Foods and Snap Fitness won't be enough motivation to overcome the inertia of a bag of Cheetos and another 8 hours of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare.

Personal responsibility is a cornerstone of our republic and its elimination from the public discourse will be another nail in America's coffin.

May 11, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: There are 10 days left in the 2018 legislative session.

BONDING BLUES

As readers well know, the end of the legislative session entails a flurry of activity on a host of issues.

Like the last two minutes of a basketball game, the end of session is where 80% of the action takes place.

Just like any other year, major issues remain undecided, including supplemental spending, a tax bill, and possible changes to laws governing sexual harassment, elder abuse, and opioids.

One of those issues is bonding, the issuance of state debt to finance capital improvements to government assets of regional or state-wide significance.

This week saw the unveiling of bonding bills in both the House and Senate.

Each bill came in at roughly \$825 million in spending, depending upon how one calculates the various debt financing (e.g. general obligation, trunk highway bonding, and even cash).

The bottom line with bonding is that the GOP should think very carefully about whether or not to have a bonding bill this year.

Recall that a \$1 billion bonding bill was passed just last year.

With the governor coming in this year with a \$1.5 billion proposal, any compromise bill would surely come in at well over \$1 billion.

If that happened, the GOP-led legislature would have the distinction of presiding over north of \$2 billion in bonding in a single bi-ennium.

This would be a record amount of debt-financed spending in one bi-ennium.

Obviously, such a distinction would fly in the face of the core GOP narrative of fiscal restraint and would instead look more like Washington's orgy of debt spending under those Republicans.

Moreover, while these bonding bills contain spending for core functions like prisons and bridges, they are also filled with more dubious projects that cause taxpayers angst.

\$4 million for the Glensheen Mansion;

\$2 million for a swimming pool in New Hope;

\$2.85 for public TV in Austin (do we need public tv in this day and age?);

\$18 million for Second Harvest food shelf (important charity, but not a government building);

\$100,000 for the Litchfield Opera House;

\$2.7 million for the Saint Paul Humanities Center (whatever that is);

TAXING THE POOR

In a very troubling and disturbing development, the state Senate yesterday voted on a bill that would slap a \$20 million tax on opioid medication in Minnesota.

Only 6 brave Republican senators voted against the misguided bill.

The tax has been sold as a 'licensing fee' on manufacturers and distributors.

Whether a tax or a fee, it is an undeniable truth of economics that a tax placed on any business is passed along to consumers.

While much has been written about this subject in recent Watchdog editions, it should be re-iterated that not only are taxes passed along to consumers, a tax on medication is highly regressive, hitting the sick and poor especially hard.

In fact, three of the most regressive taxes known to man are those on tobacco, gasoline, and medication.

Sadly, the legislature has now raised taxes on all three in recent years if this tax comes to fruition.

Special recognition should be given to the six who voted against:

Sen. David Osmeck;

Sen. Paul Utke;

Sen. Carla Nelson;
Sen. Karin Housley;
Sen. Andrew Mathews;
Sen. Michelle Fischbach

This is exactly the kind of bill that has a lot emotional appeal but will visit some nasty consequences on innocent people if it becomes law.

Let's hope cooler heads prevail over in the House.

ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

The governor travelled around the state last week to tout his call for \$138 million in 'emergency' funding for our chronically underfunded public schools.

In a brilliant move, Senate Republican communications staff followed each visit to a different school district, called out the millions in extra state funding each received this past year and simply asked, 'what did they do with the money?'

This is a simple but powerful question Republicans should be asking these school districts.

Put the governor and the public schools to their proof.

Before asking for more money, show the taxpayers what you did you do with the additional funding just received?

Republicans would be well served to resist the narrative that funding has been lacking.

May 18, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'When Tim entered the race just last month, he indicated that seeking the endorsement at the Republican party's convention in early June may not be realistic in light of his late entrance into the race - Tim appreciates the convention delegates, but his late entry into the race effectively precluded a fair fight for endorsement at the convention. As a result, he has decided not to participate in the convention and instead will make his case directly to the broader and larger group of voters who will be participating in the Republican primary on Tuesday, August 14th.'

-Pawlenty Campaign

Quote of the Week: 'Tim claims to be the 'A Team' and the only strong Republican in the race, but a strong candidate would be able to win the support of the most active Republicans in MN. If he can't even compete for the support of his base, he'll be a disaster in the General Election.'

-Jeff Johnson

Editor's Note: The legislature has only hours left in the 2018 session. By the state constitution, bills must be passed by midnight Sunday night. No major bills have been agreed upon, including taxes, supplemental spending, bonding, and school safety. Next week's issue will have a recap of what happened (or didn't). Stay tuned!

THE RACE HEATS UP

With just a scant couple of weeks before the state endorsing conventions for the DFL and GOP, the races for governor have heated up substantially, with major developments across the board.

Perhaps the biggest news this week came from the Pawlenty camp, where it was announced that he would bypass the convention and go directly to the August primary.

A press release noted that Pawlenty's late entrance into the race 'effectively precluded a fair fight' regarding the GOP endorsement.

Like life, most decisions in politics come with benefits and drawbacks.

Overall, the decision to bypass the endorsement makes sense for him.

First, not competing for the endorsement avoids the pandering to hardcore delegates that entails taking positions and offering rhetoric that is often a turn-off to both the general election electorate and even the partisan primary electorate.

It's simply a fact that convention delegates from both parties tend to tack towards the ends of the ideological spectrum and hold viewpoints that aren't shared by vast swaths of the general electorate.

Bypassing the primary allows Pawlenty to hone a center-right message geared towards winning primary and general election voters.

Of course, there is a downside in that many active and committed GOP delegates will be turned off by the decision and refuse to support him, perhaps even in a general election, instead choosing to sit home or skip his name on their ballot.

Having said that, there are other normal downside risk factors that simply aren't there in this situation.

Normally, bypassing the endorsement, especially the GOP endorsement, would put the candidate at a disadvantage because of the resources the party endorsement confers on the endorsee.

Sadly, for many years the Minnesota GOP has been mired in deep debt, hampering the party's ability to offer candidates significant support.

That debt resulted in other conservative organizations like the Minnesota Jobs Coalition filling the void by developing platforms and techniques to take on functions normally undertaken by a political party.

Pawlenty has further diminished the negative impact of not being the endorsed candidate by his demonstrated ability to raise significant resources and his high name recognition.

Moreover, it is quite likely any peeved delegates will come home in November if Pawlenty prevails.

After 8 years of Governor Dayton and the prospect of another liberal DFL governor, the GOP base will be hungry for a Republican chief executive, especially if it means total GOP control of state government.

And it's not like Pawlenty is offering a milquetoast agenda. Being tough on 'sanctuary' cities, cracking down on welfare fraud, and a pro-growth agenda have been at the top of his talking points on the stump.

In short, the reality is that Tim Pawlenty doesn't need the endorsement to win the primary.

THE MOTHER OF ALL SCANDALS

Since none of our loyal readers live under a rock, you have read about the massive scandal involving daycare fraud.

A whistleblower within the Department of Human Services alleges that a daycare subsidy scam running as high as \$100 million a year is being perpetrated on the taxpayers of this state through 'no show' children at daycare centers.

Even worse, it's further alleged that much of the skimmed money is being sent overseas, perhaps to organizations with terrorist ties.

If even a fraction of what's alleged is true, this would be the biggest scandal in the history of the state, bar none.

The story has gone viral and is the subject of national news.

Sadly, Minnesota has been the subject of way too many stories of late regarding government malfeasance or incompetence.

MNLARS, Community Action of Minneapolis, MnSURE, elder abuse allegations not investigated, and on and on.

While the legislature has admirably investigated and acted on these and other issues, now is perhaps the time to consider creating a legislative oversight agency with the resources and power to regularly and thoroughly audit state programs and agencies.

The Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA) does a good job in this regard. Perhaps it's resources and mission should be expanded.

This function should be coupled with a prosecutorial team dedicated to charging and prosecuting government employees and citizens who defraud the taxpayers, creating a strong deterrent.

Finally, the legislature should enhance penalties for these crimes, giving prosecutors the tools they need to make examples out of fraudsters.

Corruption in government is extremely corrosive and needs to be stamped out right away.

And one final thought on the subject.

Government shouldn't do so much and spend so much. Less government means fewer targets for these criminals.

ODDS AND ENDS

It was appalling to watch Governor Dayton use school children as a background prop for his veto of the omnibus tax bill.

It was especially cringe-worthy to watch him encourage the children to vocally participate in the veto.

Whoever thought it would be a good idea to use children as a veto prop should be fired.

Under Dayton, that person will probably be released from salary limitations and given a 500% raise.

By the way, that same staff should educate the governor that the omnibus tax bill passed by Republicans isn't 'tilted' towards corporations.

While liberal chanting points are rarely based in fact, the reality is that the GOP tax bill actually slightly raises taxes on corporations.

This fact doesn't exactly please the Watchdog, but it certainly dispels the narrative that the bill was nothing but a goodie basket for job creators and successful people.

Finally, we learned this week that the beleaguered Southwest Light Rail project is no projected to cost \$2 billion.

Of course, these projects never come in at or under budget, so we can add a couple hundred more million right off the top.

\$2 billion for a 14.5 mile train line.

A train line that even advocates admit is slower than taking a car.

Republicans would be nuts to go along with this project and have been right to oppose it.

The price tag shocks the conscience and is an egregious proposal.

We would be better off buying a fleet of helicopters and flying people between Eden Prairie and downtown Minneapolis.

May 25, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: We pause this week to remember those courageous Americans who gave all in the defense of this Great Nation. We are free because of their sacrifice.

Quote of the Week: 'I can't answer why Governor Dayton wasn't engaged during session. He'll have to answer those questions. His parking spot sits empty almost every day - he doesn't even come to the Capitol. He hasn't been engaged at all in his job here.'

-House Speaker Kurt Daudt

Quote of the month: 'This session wasn't a failure. Our governor was a failure.'

-House Speaker Kurt Daudt

Quote of the Year: 'The governor is behaving like a toddler - emotional, impulsive, and unreasonable. It is just another part of his legacy of chaos and failure.'

-Sen. Roger Chamberlain (R - Lino Lakes)

AN EXPENSIVE SMUGNESS

Liberals have always displayed a not-so-subtle disdain for capitalism and business. It's similar to the smug disdain they show for working people like electricians and pipefitters.

Here in Minnesota, that smugness is amplified by a certain elitism that holds our brand of liberalism over that of other jurisdictions and other people of all ideological stripes.

'We don't want to become a cold ____ (fill in the blank)' goes the mantra, usually chanted in the context of jacking up taxes to fund some government program that apparently underpins Minnesota's entire quality of life and the absence of which makes the comparative jurisdiction an inferior loser.

That smarmy, condescending attitude was on display again this week when Mosaic, a large corporation, announced it was leaving the Minnesota tundra for sunnier, more tax friendly climes.

'Good riddance' was the reply from the North Star Elite. The attitude of those folks was that if Mosaic can't smell Minnesota's qualifications, it's no big deal. Some other

corporation will come along to gladly pay the high taxes that make Minnesota a magical, fantastical utopia.

Unlike many business leaders who are frequently cowed by liberal politicians and the threat of further political harassment and persecution, CEO Fritz Corrigan penned a passionate and brilliant indictment of the arrogance plaguing our hometown liberals.

Just a couple of excerpts well illustrate what Corrigan is talking about, which every taxpayer should be thinking about:

'Minnesota's high state and local taxes, now not deductible on federal tax returns, make it more difficult to hire and retain top-quality executives to manage Mosaic. By comparison, Florida has no state income tax.'

'Minnesota's vaunted quality of life isn't that great, particularly in the winter. Don't forget that most days of the year, Florida has friendlier weather. That is a factor in many snowbirds' decisions to head south. Don't delude yourselves.'

'Minnesota is losing 150 well-paid executives. If the average salary of Mosaic's headquarters office is \$175,000 and state income taxes are 9.85 percent, that is \$2.6 million. Property taxes these people pay probably average \$20,000 per person. That is another \$3 million lost until 150 other well-paid executives move to Minnesota.'

'Surely Amazon didn't give Minnesota a second look. Not even a follow-up phone call. And nobody at the Star Tribune and in government seemed to care. How many jobs has Minnesota failed to attract and because of its smugness doesn't even know or care?'

'I wish Mosaic would stay in Minnesota, but the company is making the right choice. To be competitive in a very competitive global industry, it can't afford this wintry place when it can choose a lower-tax, warmer climate.'

Well-said. Very well-said.

A LEGACY OF FAILURE AND PERFIDY

As readers well know by now, Governor Dayton has vetoed the two biggest bills of the legislative session, the omnibus tax conformity bill and the omnibus supplemental finance bill.

Other publications have well explained what was in those bills and why they were important pieces of legislation for Minnesota taxpayers.

What they really represent is the final chapter in the failed tenure of Governor Dayton.

Once again, Dayton demonstrated that he really isn't up to the job of being chief executive of the state.

Thus, he leaves a legacy of failure, a legacy of failing to lead and unite a divided state.

Beyond that, he has no legacy. He has no signature achievements he or his liberal brethren can brag up.

MnSURE failed. His desire for universal Pre-K didn't happen.

He is really left with only the dubious claim that presided over a massive increase in the state income tax, a sort of Holy Grail for liberals that visits upon the successful the misery of bearing their 'fair share' of income taxes, which really means somewhere around 70% of the total burden.

It will be interesting to see how an artist will construct the governor's portrait.

If it's at all accurate, it will show Dayton bug-eyed, waving a finger as he attacks legislators both Republican and Democrat in vicious terms, slurring his words the entire way.

The background, if honest, would surely show his empty parking space at the Capitol, evidence of disengagement and a bunker mentality.

It would include football goal posts, emblematic of an erratic governor who could never clearly articulate his priorities and communicate them to the legislature.

It would surely show the school children he used as props in his veto theater over the 2018 tax bill.

Such propaganda is usually reserved for totalitarian strong men.

The background would also show long lines and people waiting anxiously on hold, as they beg the bureaucracy for a measure of mercy in their quest for health insurance information or license tabs.

A final touch would show his political appointees flashing wads of cash, the result of obscene pay raises and bonuses not earned but handed out nonetheless.

That Dayton failed as a governor should come as no surprise.

There was nothing in his privileged background that prepared him to lead strong political personalities and manage the Leviathan-like state budget.

When that lack of leadership acumen and managerial experience is combined with the angry embarrassment of a man who knows he has enjoyed privilege far beyond what he's earned, it's a recipe for failure.

All good leaders share certain personality traits.

They are poised. They are patient. They are focused. They are mature. They are skilled at finding solutions to difficult problems. They know how to find common ground.

Mark Dayton is none of this.

The utter lack of talent is best illustrated by Dayton's regular and frequent name calling of both the legislature in general and certain legislators in particular.

Dayton frequently labeled those with whom he disagreed as 'vile' or 'untrustworthy' or 'unfit to govern.'

He labeled the efforts of others as 'the worst he's ever seen' or 'totally mismanaged.'

He said of the Senate Minority Leader, a fellow Democrat, that he could never trust him again and would never meet with him alone.

He lashed out at those around him in a vicious and juvenile way that hasn't been seen in Minnesota politics, ever.

Even Jesse Ventura, the eternal man-child, treated those around him in better fashion.

It was clear that Mark Dayton failed to lead the state precisely because he didn't know how to lead the state.

Instead, he covered for his lack of talent and experience by seeking to tear down those around him. If one can't rise up by building up, rise up by tearing down those around you.

The image any thinking Minnesotan will have of Mark Dayton's tenure is that of this week's press conference after he vetoed the big bills.

When asked to name the reasons for his veto, he fumbled over his words, made a weak attempt to name a reason or two, then stared off into space for an uncomfortable period of silence.

He finally said simply, 'It's on a sheet I left in my office.'

<https://twitter.com/mnsr/status/999397025014865920>

A failed governor.

June 1, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Have we had the discussion, 'When do we turn back and say this is too expensive?'"

-Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson

THE HO HUM CONVENTIONS

There is a bit of irony in the air this week as both major parties prepare to convene their state conventions to confer endorsements on state-wide candidates.

This irony is particularly pronounced in the governor's race, where an open seat opportunity awaits the candidates.

The irony is that despite the hotly contested nature of the gubernatorial election, the conventions matter little this year, having been relegated to a smaller role.

This isn't to say the endorsement doesn't matter. It does, but only to a certain extent.

Take the Republican convention, for example. The biggest name on the GOP ledger isn't even coming to the convention. Tim Pawlenty has already announced he is going directly to the August primary.

That news makes the GOP endorsement for governor a fait accompli, with Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson the prohibitive favorite to walk away as the endorsee.

A Pawlenty-Johnson primary contest will be the real GOP race for governor this year.

And while activists and observers will critique Pawlenty's decision for weeks to come, his decision essentially moots any interest or drama surrounding the convention.

On the DFL side, there is a bit more drama, but only a bit more.

The presumptive front runner, Congressman Tim Walz, has announced he won't abide by the endorsement, while the other two major candidates, Rep. Erin Murphy and Auditor Rebecca Otto, will abide.

Thus, the endorsement only matters to the extent that Walz can clear the field and avoid a meaningful primary battle if he can secure the endorsement.

According to Watchdog sources within the DFL activist ranks, the most likely outcome of the convention is a deadlock that results in no endorsement.

Moreover, many of the sources also opine that Rep. Murphy's campaign is gaining velocity and could pull an upset endorsement win.

Recent high-profile endorsements, combined with the likelihood that Otto's moribund campaign will result in her delegates moving to Murphy, all point to a deadlocked convention.

Thus, the real endorsement contest will happen this August, for sure in the GOP and most likely in the DFL.

If the endorsement matters little this year, it's fair to ask how much the endorsement has mattered at all over the state's past few decades.

There has been a mythology, especially in GOP circles, that the endorsement is dispositive of the ultimate victor and thus a key stepping stone to the governor's mansion.

But is it true?

History begs to differ.

Over the past 36 years, 4 of 5 governors won the office without major party backing.

This started in 1982, with Rudy Perpich winning sans the DFL endorsement.

Next up was Arne Carlson, who won not once but twice without the endorsement.

After that was Jesse Ventura, who won without the blessing of either major party.

Mark Dayton in 2010 was banished from the DFL convention for the sin of ignoring the endorsement. As we sadly know, he won and then won again in 2014, beating Jeff Johnson soundly.

2018 promises to be another year in which the endorsement is likely to mean little.

The pace of technology will only accelerate this process.

In years past, political parties served as a key information conduit for the party faithful, controlling voter lists, activist rolls, and interfacing between endorsed candidates and donors.

Not anymore. Technology platforms allow candidates with a modicum of sophistication access to data that helps them directly interface with voters, activists, and donors.

For example, standard consumer data has proven to be more accurate in helping candidates identify and micro-target voters than even the most up-to-date party rolls.

The car you drive or the place where you buy your groceries tells operatives more about your voting tendencies than being on some list from four election cycles ago.

While there will be sound and fury this weekend, August will be the bigger game in town for the governor's race.

A TRAIN TOO FAR?

Maybe, just maybe, liberals have finally broken light rail.

The news this week that the Southwest light rail project (SWLRT) is now projected to cost more than \$2 billion (you can bet we haven't seen the last cost increase, either), was greeted with concern across the ideological spectrum.

It appears that the \$2 billion number has perhaps proven to be a psychological number that may be hard to overcome.

While an increase in the cost of material and labor has contributed to the cost increase, the real culprit is the legal and practical doubt of spending \$2 billion to run a 14-mile rail line that even advocates admit will move people no faster than a car.

Liberals in the upscale, tony Kenwood neighborhood are waging a NIMBY lawsuit against the project that clearly confirms they think mass transit is good for other people.

A local railroad, TC&W, is waging a battle to mitigate negative impacts the project will have on their operations.

Funding from the federal government is uncertain.

In short, policy makers at all levels from both parties are asking the question that heretofore wasn't discussed: At what point does government pull the plug, acknowledging that a tipping point has been reached that makes the project not worth pursuing?

Conservatives have long held the correct view that the tipping point was reached long ago.

What's different now is that Democrats, at least some of them, are asking the same question.

Taxpayers may be witnessing history in the making.

They may be witnessing the demise of a rail project.

CHANGES

The bi-ennial announcement of legislative retirements is a rite of spring.

In certain election cycles, however, that news carries big weight.

Such is the case this year, with two announcements drawing particular attention.

The first was the bombshell news of late last week that Senate President Michelle Fischbach had resigned her seat and would take the oath of office as Mark Dayton's lieutenant governor.

The news immediately erased the GOP's 34-33 advantage in the Senate and put control of the chamber in play this year.

Governor Dayton has already set a special election date this year to coincide with the regular election day (editor's note: The Senate is not up this year; this is the only state senate seat on the ballot).

Current state Rep. Jeff Howe (R - Cold Spring) has announced his candidacy for the seat, giving the GOP a strong advantage in retaining the seat.

As if that news wasn't enough of a shocker, Tim Pawlenty announced Fischbach as his running mate at a Thursday morning press conference.

Fischbach is an excellent choice, with high standing within major GOP constituencies.

She will help smooth over any hurt feelings regarding the decision to bypass the state convention.

The second major announcement came on Wednesday of this week, when House Majority Leader Joyce Peppin (R - Dayton) said she would resign her seat and retire from legislative service.

Peppin will immediately take a lobbying job.

Other legislative retirements announced this session:

Rep. Peggy Flanagan (DFL-St. Louis Park) - Running on the Walz ticket for governor

Rep. Jon Applebaum (DFL-Minnetonka)

Rep. Abigail Whelan (R-Ramsey)

Rep. Clark Johnson (DFL-North Mankato)

Rep. JoAnn Ward (DFL-Woodbury)

Rep. Susan Allen (DFL-Mpls)

Rep. Mark Uglem (R-Champlin)

Rep. Jim Newberger (R-Becker) - Running for U.S. Senate

Rep. David Bly (DFL-Northfield)

Rep. Linda Slocum (DFL-Richfield)

Rep. Matt Dean (R-Dellwood)

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls)

Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul)

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) Named to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

June 8, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog notes the 74th anniversary of Operation Overlord this week, June 6th. The brave men who landed on Normandy beaches and behind enemy lines via parachute and glider demonstrated uncommon valor did much to create the label 'Greatest Generation.' May we never forget their selfless sacrifice.

Quote of the Week: "Let's work through this, let's slog through this. Let's come out of this convention unified."

-DFL Chairman Ken Martin

Quote of the Week: When Forum News Service asked May (sic) Quade if she knew what E85 is, she replied "I am still learning a lot." However, she said it sounded like something dealing with oil.

-Quoting DFL-endorsed lieutenant governor candidate Erin Maye Quade

FLIRTIN' WITH DISASTER

I'm travelin' down the road

I'm flirtin' with disaster

I've got the pedal to the floor,

My life is running faster

I'm out of money, I'm out of hope,

It looks like self-destruction

-Molly Hatchet

Wow. Just wow. This past weekend's DFL state convention showed that the Democratic Farmer Labor Party is falling apart, with a permanent fracture of the modern coalition on the horizon.

As this publication has explored on many occasions, there is a growing schism between the party's urban, liberal faction and its rural 'Reagan Democrat' pragmatic faction.

This impending divorce was on full display this past weekend in Rochester and portends an impending disaster for the party this fall.

The convention was a disaster.

The August primary will further divide the DFL.

The general election will feature extreme DFL candidates.

It is for these three reasons that the Watchdog predicts the 2018 election will be a winner for the GOP.

THE CONVENTION WAS A DISASTER

There is a popular saying that starts 'you had one job'

DFL Chairman Ken Martin and his crew had one job this past weekend, unite the party behind a slate of endorsed candidates.

That didn't happen, obviously.

And while it isn't uncommon to have primary races, even hotly contested, this past weekend went beyond anything in modern Minnesota politics.

The DFL left the convention wholly divided and divided on many levels.

The governor's race is a three-way primary contest* that features three legitimate contenders:

State Rep. Erin Murphy (endorsed);

Congressman Tim Walz;

Attorney General Lori Swanson.

*There are two other candidates who merit little more than 'C' list consideration.

Another state-wide race, attorney general, is a five-way primary contest, with four legitimate contenders:

Matt Pelikan (endorsed);

Deb Hillstrom (state Rep.);

Mike Rothman (former Commerce Commissioner);

Keith Ellison (Congressman)

A third state-wide race, state Auditor, will also see a primary between endorsed candidate Julie Blaha and Jon Tollefson.

The only DFL state-wide race on the ballot that won't feature a primary is that of Secretary of State, where Steve Simon will move on to the general election.

And while congressional district race endorsements don't happen at the state convention, the attorney general fiasco prompted District 5 Congressman Keith Ellison to abandon a bid for re-election and jump into the attorney general race.

The open seat in District 5, which is heavily DFL, has created an 8-way free-for-all, with many prominent names:

Ilhan Omar (state Rep.);
Bobby Joe Champion (state Sen.);
Margaret Anderson Kelliher (former House speaker);
Patricia Torres Ray (state Sen.)
Kim Ellison (Keith's ex);

This race will have a big impact on the DFL primary (as explained below).

THE AUGUST PRIMARY WILL FURTHER DIVIDE THE DFL

The governor's race more than anything else will divide the DFL base and lead to further fractures.

With three legitimate candidates, they have no choice but to attack one another to gain an upper hand with primary voters.

Moreover, those attacks will inevitably focus on the divisions within the base, forcing each candidate to speak to certain elements.

Take Second Amendment issues. Lori Swanson specifically pointed out in her announcement that she was running for governor that she is in favor of gun rights, a hot button topic.

Erin Murphy, on the other hand, is a gun grabber and has no regard for the Second Amendment, as does her running mate.

There is no middle ground here. This is a fault line within the DFL and one that candidates will jump up and down upon.

Mining is another example. Swanson and her running mate, Rick Nolan, favor mining.

Murphy does not.

They will attack each other on this subject, inflaming passions.

As for Tim Walz on these issues, who knows.

His fatal flaw may be that in attempting to be all things to all DFL voters, he has ended being nothing.

He may be the man who stood in the middle of the road and got run over.

As a congressman, he proudly took the NRA endorsement. For governor, he's run away from the NRA.

He claims he supports mining and pipelines, but his running mate has been a vocal and active opponent.

This may explain why Walz spent over a year and a million dollars running for governor, only to lose the endorsement and attract a quality opponent to enter the primary (Swanson).

Nonetheless, he is still a formidable candidate.

The bottom line is that DFL stands to leave the primary election a bruised and battered entity, with one faction feeling alienated and thus prone to stay home or vote GOP.

THE GENERAL ELECTION WILL FEATURE EXTREME DFL CANDIDATES

The Watchdog predicts that the most extreme DFL candidates will emerge from the primary, meaning their ticket will feature the least electable candidates.

Here's why.

First, the DFL is wholly funded, owned, and operated by the wealthy urban elites who hail from about three zip codes in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

These king makers are extremely liberal in their world view and thus support candidates who are extremely liberal in their world view.

In short, the DFL establishment these days favors extreme liberals who hail from the urban core.

Second, August primary elections are classic base elections where the candidate who best panders to the base will likely win.

Today's DFL base is far more liberal than in the past. The sheer numbers favor liberals, and it favors liberals who live in Minneapolis or Saint Paul.

A third (and related) point goes back to what was written above about the 5th Congressional District.

With an open seat in this district (Minneapolis and surrounding suburbs), primary turnout in this district will be greatly enhanced, as voters go to the polls to support one of 8 candidates for the seat.

When one considers that the 5th already exercises outsize influence in terms of DFL vote numbers, you have a recipe for electing urban liberals.

Take a look at the 2016 vote for president.

Hillary Clinton received 273,402 votes in the 5th.

That is more than twice the number of votes she received in either the 1st, 7th, or 8th congressional districts.

Look at the numbers another way. Combining the 4th and 5th districts (Saint Paul and Minneapolis), Clinton took 497,205 votes.

In districts 1,7, and 8 combined, she took 374,062, some 123,000 votes less than the urban core.

This imbalance will only be exacerbated by an open seat in the 5th, where the DFL primary IS the general election, since the winner will win the district.

This means that the likely primary winners will be Erin Murphy for governor and Keith Ellison for attorney general.

These two candidates are a dream for the GOP, where their voting records and Ellison's personal baggage will be a liability with respect to a general election.

This isn't to say the GOP will have a cake walk.

The GOP faces its own primary for governor, with the risk of divided party post-primary.

Having said that, the chance to retake the governor's office after 8 years of Mark Dayton will provide a powerful glue to hold the party together in November.

There is also a great deal of apprehension among many Republicans regarding Doug Wardlow, the endorsed attorney general candidate.

A former legislator, Wardlow earned a reputation for intemperance and immaturity during his brief tenure.

Many are worried those same character traits will emerge on the campaign trail this year.

Time will tell.

Moreover, the GOP has quality candidates running at the top of the ticket, with names like Karin Housley, Jason Lewis, Tom Emmer, and newcomer Pete Stauber exciting the base.

House Speaker Kurt Daudt is an experienced campaign leader and has his caucus primed to hold the House.

Overall, as things stand today, the GOP has the wind at their back, thanks to the DFL's very bad, no good, rotten convention.

June 15, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: 'Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel.'

-DFL State Rep. and congressional candidate Ilhan Omar

THE HYPOCRISY NEVER ENDS

Greetings, Watchdogs. Welcome to another week of big political news, as summer hasn't slowed down politics or the cynical hypocrisy of the liberals.

As readers well know, Governor Dayton vetoed a huge amount of important, bi-partisan legislation this past session.

Tax cuts, tax conformity, education reform, opioid abuse funding, MNLARS funding, suicide prevention funding, and the list goes on.

The DFL justified this unjustifiable gubernatorial temper tantrum by proclaiming that Republicans should have passed this legislation as separate, stand-alone bills.

As readers will recall, the legislature passed much of this legislation in 'omnibus' spending bills, including a comprehensive supplemental omnibus funding bill, derisively called a 'garbage bill.'

Such a bill rolls all programmatic spending (education, transportation, agriculture, environment, human services, etc.) into one bill.

While the Watchdog recognizes and shares the concern that these bills offend the state constitution's mandate that bills embrace only a single subject, it is galling to see the DFL complain about such omnibus bills when they have done the same thing.

It is curious that the media hasn't called out the DFL for complaining about the omnibus supplemental spending omnibus bill when many of those same DFLers voted for such a bill when they were in charge.

In 2008, the DFL controlled both the House and Senate.

That year, they passed a similar, almost identical, omnibus 'garbage' bill.

That bill ran 281 pages.

The bill's title ran 2 and a half pages alone.

It's high time that these DFL legislators who are using this session's omnibus spending bill as an excuse get called out for voting for such legislation.

Here is that roll call of those who voted for it before they voted against it:

Rep. Karla Bigham (Cottage Grove) (now in Senate)
Rep. David Bly (Northfield)
Rep. Lyndon Carlson (Crystal)
Rep. Jim Davnie (Minneapolis)
Rep. Rick Hansen (South Saint Paul)
Rep. Alice Hausman (Saint Paul)
Rep. Deb Hilstrom (Brooklyn Park)
Rep. Frank Hornstein (Minneapolis)
Rep. Melissa Hortman (Brooklyn Park)
Rep. Carolyn Laine (Columbia Heights) (now in Senate)
Rep. John Lesch (Saint Paul)
Rep. Leon Lillie (Maplewood)
Rep. Diane Loeffler (Minneapolis)
Rep. Tim Mahoney (Saint Paul)
Rep. Carlos Mariani (Saint Paul)
Rep. Paul Marquardt (Dilworth)
Rep. Erin Murphy (Saint Paul)
Rep. Mary Murphy (Hermantown)
Rep. Mike Nelson (Brooklyn Park)
Rep. Jeanne Poppe (Austin)
Rep. Jean Wagenius (Minneapolis)
Sen. Tom Bakk (Cook)
Sen. Jim Carlson (Eagan)
Sen. Dick Cohen (Saint Paul)
Sen. Scott Dibble (Minneapolis)
Sen. Ron Latz (Saint Louis Park)
Sen. Tony Lourey (Kerrick)
Sen. Sandy Pappas (Saint Paul)
Sen. Ann Rest (New Hope)

THE ANTI-SEMITES AMONG US

While the media has been engaged in a running obsession with Donald Trump, pointing out every perceived foible and error (some made up), there has been an eerie silence regarding the DFL's tolerance of blatantly intolerant, anti-semitic behavior on the part of two prominent members of their own party.

Since arriving on the Minneapolis political scene recently, state Rep. Ilhan Omar has been celebrated as a rising star.

A Muslim, Somali immigrant, Rep. Omar has made national news as an example of the new face of Democrat politics.

In only her first term in the legislature, she is now a candidate for Congress.

Congressman Keith Ellison is a darling of the far Left and the first Muslim elected to the U.S. House.

The trouble is that both have a troubling history of anti-semitic behavior.

Ihan's most infamous statement is our quote of the week: 'Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel.'

Ellison, who is now running for Minnesota Attorney General, has longer history in this regard, including a history of association with virulent anti-semite Louis Farrakahn.

Various non-legacy media outlets have documented Ellison's history of anti-semitic, anti-American hatred.

<http://freebeacon.com/politics/9-potentially-damaging-facts-keith-ellison-frontrunner-chair-dnc/>

<http://www.powerlineblog.com/archives/2011/08/keith-ellison-for-dummies.php>

<https://legalinsurrection.com/2016/11/keith-ellisons-troubling-relationship-with-anti-israel-groups/>

The DFL continues its race to the far, far Left.

THE ODDEST FILING

While attention this campaign cycle has rightly been focused on the DFL's three ring circus, there has been little attention given to former state Rep. Tom Hackbarth filing to run for his old seat in the House.

According to the Secretary of State's office, Hackbarth filed for House District 31B on May 29th.

The filing lists no campaign web site or email.

A search of the Internet shows no press release, campaign web site, quotes, or other news regarding a 2018 campaign.

Such a campaign would make no sense, whatsoever.

To start, the man who beat Hackbarth for the GOP endorsement and then thumped him in the primary, Cal Bahr, is running for re-election.

Bahr has been an excellent legislator who has cast conservative votes and been a staunch voice for individual liberty and limited government.

In fact, Bahr had the highest score of any House member on the Legislative Evaluation Assembly score card in 2016.

In short, this publication is having big trouble thinking of a strategy that would oust Bahr in favor of Hackbarth.

It's hard to see why GOP delegates would endorse Hackbarth over Bahr or why they would choose Hackbarth in a primary.

Hackbarth lost the endorsement in 2016 to Bahr after 31B delegates finally got sick and tired Hackbarth's ethics problems as well as his unprofessional demeanor.

Hackbarth then burned his bridges by reneging on a pledge to abide by the endorsement to run in a primary.

In short, good luck with all that.

The situation was best summed up by loyal Watchdog reader and conservative activist Dwight McCullough.

After Hackbarth lost the endorsement in 2016 and was publicly contemplating a primary run, McCullough was quoted in the news as stating, "Tom Hackbarth's integrity goes down the tubes," if he decides to run in the primary after committing to abide by the endorsement.

Odd, indeed.

June 22, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "The elite! Why are they elite? I have a much better apartment than they do. I'm smarter than they are. I'm richer than they are. I became president and they didn't."

-President Donald J. Trump

Quote of the Week: 'She has been so great. She's got a big race coming along. It's going to be so great.'

-President Trump, endorsing the Pawlenty/Fischbach Ticket in an oblique sort of way

Quote of the Week: 'I love how Trump has to keep finding more and more remote places for his hillbilly jerkoff rallies. Tonight: Duluth, MN. Next Month: Some trailer park in Huckleberry, MS.'

-Tweet from another liberal, expressing their true, collective feelings about any part of America not within 5 miles of a skyscraper

TRUMP'S VISIT

Unless you were in a coma, you knew that President Trump visited Duluth this week for a patented MAGA rally.

All presidential investments of time are made for strategic reasons.

So why Duluth, and why now?

Who won and who lost with Trump's appearance?

Clearly, Trump is establishing a road map for 2020 and laying the foundation for re-election.

Minnesota hasn't gone with a Republican presidential candidate since Richard Nixon in 1972, the same year Harold Hamilton founded Micro Control Company.

The biggest winner by far from the rally was Pete Stauber, the GOP candidate for the open 8th District seat being vacated by Rick Nolan.

The rally provided great visibility for Stauber, raised his profile, and enhanced his gravitas as a strong candidate in one of the most highly targeted races this cycle.

Conversely, the rally diminished the DFL candidates, who are competing in a divisive primary and were relegated to an amateurish counter-rally where they all dispassionately regurgitated the same old shop-worn attacks on the president.

The GOP is well on its way to capturing this seat.

The other big winner here is Republicans across the Eighth Congressional District up and down the ticket.

As this publication has noted on many occasions, there is a true political realignment taking place across the district. This rally was another nail in the DFL coffin in the 8th and another chapter in the GOP rise in the area.

Trump won the district by 16 points in 2016 and there is nothing to counter the presumption that he will do even better in 2020.

Another big winner was Tim Pawlenty. Pawlenty has thus far deftly navigated the treacherous political cross-currents of our divisive president.

State-wide GOP candidates need to secure the support of both rural voters who embrace Trump as well as suburbanites, many of whom despise Trump.

Pawlenty pulled off the master stroke of having it both ways.

He stayed away, preventing photo ops and other fodder for opposition literature later this year.

By the same token, his running mate was there to embrace Trump and she earned the coveted 'shout out' from the president, who proclaimed, 'she has been so great.'

While some have declared Congressman Erik Paulsen a 'loser' here because his absence would be noted by the base in his district, we disagree.

Paulsen has proven to be very attuned to the mood of his suburban district, and his decision to stay away won't hurt him. In fact, staying away shows an element of independence that is expected and rewarded in the district.

Paulsen knows his district and will win re-election. The DFL dreams of beating him every election cycle in the same way the GOP dreams of beating Collin Peterson.

The loser from the Trump visit had to be Jeff Johnson.

Way behind in the money race and looking for a boost to build on his endorsement win, his camp was looking for Trump's help by way of some praise, if not an outright endorsement.

It didn't happen.

Throughout, Johnson's campaign narrative has been to identify as the ideological heir to Trump in Minnesota.

That Trump failed to acknowledge him or his campaign was a blow for sure.

Having said all that, it's important to acknowledge that any president's influence isn't absolute, especially in Minnesota.

Minnesota has a history of ticket splitting, and 2016 proved that a 'Trump effect' is limited.

For example, there were many districts that elected a Republican or Democrat to the Congress or legislature but also voted for the presidential candidate of the party opposite:

1st Congressional District: Voted for Trump, Re-elected Tim Walz;

3rd Congressional District: Voted for Clinton by 10 points, Re-elected Erik Paulsen by 13 points;

7th Congressional District: Went for Trump by 31 points, Re-elected Collin Peterson;

8th Congressional District: Went for Trump by 16 points, Re-elected Rick Nolan;

House District 49A (Edina): Clinton won by 27 points, elected Dario Anselmo;

House District 42A (Shoreview): Clinton won by 14 points, elected Randy Jessup;

House District 52B (Inver Grove Heights): Clinton won by 7 points, elected Regina Barr;

House District 4B (Moorehead area): Trump won by 21 points, Re-elected Paul Marquardt;

House District 6A (Iron Range): Voted for Trump, elected Julie Sandstede by 18 points.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate the old political axioms that all politics is local and that the quality of candidate matters.

So, while President Trump will certainly influence down-ticket races across the country this year, that influence will be tempered by both the limitations of presidential appeal and the fact that in many ways Trump is more of a unique political brand rather than a standard bearer for a major party.

LIBERAL UPDATE

In case you missed it, this is what the DFL liberals in Minnesota have been up to, and stand for, as we move into the heart of a critical election season:

Endorsed for governor a Saint Paul liberal who, among other things, wants single-payer health care;

That same candidate chose for her running mate another Metro liberal legislator who is so ineffective she has yet to pass a single bill into law;

Fought against a bill to enhance penalties for people who shut down freeways and airports;

Endorsed a candidate for congress with a history of anti-semitic statements;

Have a candidate for attorney general with a long, long history of anti-semitic associations and activities;

Still supporting a governor who vetoed important tax reform legislation but couldn't explain why he did so;

Are preparing protest camps along the Line 3 route to specifically vandalize the project and assault construction workers.

Yes, please tell us again of that Blue Wave that's coming our way.

June 29, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We conclude that this arrangement violates the free speech rights of nonmembers by compelling them to subsidize private speech on matters of substantial public concern."

-Justice Samuel Alito

Quote of the Week: 'If you see anybody from that Cabinet in a restaurant, in a department store, at a gasoline station, you get out and you create a crowd and you push back on them and you tell them they are not welcome anymore, anywhere.'

-Rep. Maxine Waters (CA - 43)

A MAJOR DECISION

Watchdogs, you read this week of one of the most consequential Supreme Court cases to be issued in decades.

The case, Janus vs. AFSCME, held that government workers cannot be compelled to pay 'agency' or 'fair share' dues as a condition of employment.

These so-called 'fair share' dues are ostensibly used only to pay for the costs associated with union services that benefit all members, such as the cost of bargaining a contract.

Public unions double-pinky swear that no fair-share dues end up being spent for other purposes.

If you believe that.

Put another way, Janus established right-to-work for government employees in the 22 states that compel such dues as a condition of public employment.

The decision was an eminently correct decision that will reverberate for decades to come.

First, the decision was correct from a legal perspective. Basically, Mark Janus and his counsel argued that all speech coming from a public-sector union is inherently political.

Thus, the payment of any dues constitutes a violation of the First Amendment rights of the one compelled to pay because he may not agree with that speech.

The positions taken by these unions, whether at the bargaining table or at a swanky fundraiser for some DFL politician, are indeed political. Teacher tenure, school discipline, how much taxpayer money should go to wages versus after-school programs, it's all political and entails public policy choices. No public employee should be compelled to pay for a teacher union lobbyist who is down at the Capitol testifying against a freeway protest bill or in favor of open borders.

In the same manner, no public employee should be forced to subsidize some union leader making \$150,000 to argue that layoffs should only be conducted in reverse order of seniority, with no account given to merit.

Second, the Court was right to prune back public-sector union power. In fact, it is right to ask whether public employees should be allowed to organize at all.

This is because public sector labor relations lack that true tension between labor and management interests that results in hard-won compromise and balance.

We all know how this game works. The union spends gobs of money to elect supine, compliant politicians. In turn, these politicians pledge loyalty to the union, not the taxpayers they are charged to represent.

Thus, the bargaining table in the public sector is often one-sided, with both sides looking out for the union and no one looking out for the taxpayers.

Ever wonder why so many public union retirement funds are bankrupt? Unsustainable, kid-in-the-candy-store financial promises, that's why. Because no one was at the bargaining table to enforce any restraint or push back against outlandish union desires.

Inherently clashing interests create the tension that upholds the beneficial nature of bargaining. In fact, it is the cornerstone of labor relations.

When everyone lines up to raid the cookie jar, it's little wonder there is quickly nothing left but crumbs.

Third, these public unions were in desperate need of being reigned in from a political perspective.

Some of these unions hurled hundreds of millions of dollars at Democrats in a shameless display of hyper-partisanship and not-so-subtle influence peddling.

The Watchdog has spoken to many former and current GOP legislators about this subject.

All of them, to a person, recounted stories of groups like Education Minnesota making no meaningful effort to reach out or work with them. It was clear to these legislators that groups like Ed MN and AFSCME were little more than an extension of the DFL.

A search of campaign finance records shows that these unions generally give about 99% of their donations to the DFL.

A union is supposed to be about representing their membership, not supporting one political party.

In fact, most union issues shouldn't be hyper-partisan. We also know that no union has a membership that votes 99% DFL. One of the truly interesting statistics from the 2016 election is how many self-identified union members voted for Donald Trump (40-50% in the construction unions).

Fourth, the arrogance of union leadership is evident in their lashing out at the Supreme Court, the president, the Congress, and the pizza delivery guy over Janus.

They are angry that upwards of 30% of their membership will walk away, taking millions and millions in union dues (and political power) with them.

If a person runs an organization that sees 30% of their customers flee when given a chance, shouldn't that be an invitation for that leader to look in the mirror?

After all, Janus didn't go so far as to outlaw these unions. It only made dues voluntary.

If the union was providing a value to the membership, there wouldn't be the predicted mass exodus. Sure, there will always be a few freeloaders, but these can't be so arrogant and out of touch as to label nearly 1/3rd of their membership as deadbeats. Can they?

The simple fact is that big money, big politics, and big egos caused these unions to ignore the very people they should care about: their membership and the taxpayers who fund their wages and benefits.

Finally, it's a sad commentary on the state of American politics that any case or the retirement of any justice of the court should cause national strife.

It's a clear indicator that the federal government's authority has washed over the guardrails established by the Framers and has engulfed every aspect of our lives.

It is cold comfort to patriots to take joy in seeing the Leviathan created by the Left eat them alive.

The simple truth is that the Judicial Branch shouldn't have this much power over our daily lives.

The real goal of conservatives shouldn't be a conservative court. The real goal should be to move our entire federal government back within the confines of what our Founding Fathers intended it to be.

SHE'S COME UNDUN

She's come undone

She found a mountain that was far too high

And when she found out she couldn't fly

It was too late

-Bruton Cummings

Before we start, all you uncool readers need to understand the spelling of 'undun' is due to the artistic license of one Burton Cummings. We don't need emails from middle-aged geeks correcting things, thank you.

Now back to one Maxine Waters and the mania of the Left.

We have been witnessing the Left come undone once again lately in a way the country hasn't seen since the violence of the 1960s.

Pay attention, readers. The behavior of the Left in harassing Trump staffers and other behavior is a stark reminder that at its core, liberalism doesn't respect individual rights.

The Left will trammel people who stand in the way of their collectivist march and not think twice.

While people who subscribe to norms of human decency can and should decry this behavior, it should surprise no one.

History is replete with Leftist violence committed in the name of collectivist goals.

While conservatives are supposed to quietly sit down when Obamacare and gay marriage are on the docket, the Left feels entitled to bully, intimidate, harass, and riot when their political agenda is thwarted.

Know it. Remember it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgBGnwGwKpY>

July 6, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

Editor's Note: Welcome to the Independence Day edition! Each year, the Watchdog celebrates by honoring American heroes who have sacrificed much to earn and maintain our freedoms and liberties. This edition is no different. Read this edition in order to remember these heroes so that we may never forget what they have done on our behalf.

Editor's Note: The Watchdog will not publish next week. We will return for the July 20th edition.

HEROES

This year, we are celebrating heroes from recent conflicts. Namely, we recognize a sampling of those who have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Each winner presents a story of courage and honor under fire, demonstrating the uncommon valor inherent in earning the nation's highest military honor.

Name: Edward Byers, Jr.

Branch: U.S. Navy

Hometown: Toledo, OH

Date/Location: Qargah'i District of Laghman, Afghanistan, December 8-9, 2012

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as a Hostage Rescue Force Team Member in Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM from 8 to 9 December 2012. As the rescue force approached the target building, an enemy sentry detected them and darted inside to alert his fellow captors. The sentry quickly reemerged, and the lead assaulter attempted to neutralize him. Chief Byers with his team sprinted to the door of the target building. As the primary breacher, Chief Byers stood in the doorway fully exposed to enemy fire while ripping down six layers of heavy blankets fastened to the inside ceiling and walls to clear a path for the rescue force. The first assaulter pushed his way through the blankets, and was mortally wounded by enemy small arms fire from within. Chief Byers, completely aware of the imminent threat, fearlessly rushed into the room and engaged an enemy guard aiming an AK- 47 at him. He then tackled another adult male who had darted towards the corner of the room. During the ensuing hand-to-hand struggle, Chief Byers confirmed the man was not the hostage and engaged him. As other rescue team members called out to

the hostage, Chief Byers heard a voice respond in English and raced toward it. He jumped atop the American hostage and shielded him from the high volume of fire within the small room. While covering the hostage with his body, Chief Byers immobilized another guard with his bare hands, and restrained the guard until a teammate could eliminate him. His bold and decisive actions under fire saved the lives of the hostage and several of his teammates. By his undaunted courage, intrepid fighting spirit, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of near certain death, Chief Petty Officer Byers reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Name: Ryan Pitts

Branch: U.S. Army

Hometown: Lowell, MA

Date/Location: July 13, 2008, Wanat Village, Kunar Province, Afghanistan

Sergeant Ryan M. Pitts distinguished himself by extraordinary acts of heroism at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Forward Observer in 2d Platoon, Chosen Company, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade during combat operations against an armed enemy at Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler in the vicinity of Wanat Village, Kunar Province, Afghanistan on July 13, 2008. Early that morning, while Sergeant Pitts was providing perimeter security at Observation Post Topside, a well-organized Anti-Afghan Force consisting of over 200 members initiated a close proximity sustained and complex assault using accurate and intense rocket-propelled grenade, machine gun and small arms fire on Wanat Vehicle Patrol Base. An immediate wave of rocket-propelled grenade rounds engulfed the Observation Post wounding Sergeant Pitts and inflicting heavy casualties. Sergeant Pitts had been knocked to the ground and was bleeding heavily from shrapnel wounds to his arm and legs, but with incredible toughness and resolve, he subsequently took control of the Observation Post and returned fire on the enemy. As the enemy drew nearer, Sergeant Pitts threw grenades, holding them after the pin was pulled and the safety lever was released to allow a nearly immediate detonation on the hostile forces. Unable to stand on his own and near death because of the severity of his wounds and blood loss, Sergeant Pitts continued to lay suppressive fire until a two-man reinforcement team arrived. Sergeant Pitts quickly assisted them by giving up his main weapon and gathering ammunition all while continually lobbing fragmentary grenades until these were expended. At this point, Sergeant Pitts crawled to the northern position radio and described the situation to the Command Post as the enemy continued to try and isolate the Observation Post from the main Patrol Base. With the enemy close enough for him to hear their voices and with total disregard

for his own life, Sergeant Pitts whispered in the radio situation reports and conveyed information that the Command Post used to provide indirect fire support. Sergeant Pitts' courage, steadfast commitment to the defense of his unit and ability to fight while seriously wounded prevented the enemy from overrunning the Observation Post and capturing fallen American soldiers, and ultimately prevented the enemy from gaining fortified positions on higher ground from which to attack Wanat Vehicle Patrol Base. Sergeant Ryan M. Pitts' extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, Company C, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade and the United States Army.

Name: Michael Murphy

Branch: U.S. Navy

Hometown: Smithtown, NY

Date/Location: Near Asadabad, Afghanistan, 28 June 2005

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as the leader of a special reconnaissance element with Naval Special Warfare Task Unit Afghanistan on 27 and 28 June 2005. While leading a mission to locate a high-level anti-coalition militia leader, Lieutenant Murphy demonstrated extraordinary heroism in the face of grave danger in the vicinity of Asadabad, Konar Province, Afghanistan. On 28 June 2005, operating in an extremely rugged enemy-controlled area, Lieutenant Murphy's team was discovered by anti-coalition militia sympathizers, who revealed their position to Taliban fighters. As a result, between 30 and 40 enemy fighters besieged his four-member team. Demonstrating exceptional resolve, Lieutenant Murphy valiantly led his men in engaging the large enemy force. The ensuing fierce firefight resulted in numerous enemy casualties, as well as the wounding of all four members of the team. Ignoring his own wounds and demonstrating exceptional composure, Lieutenant Murphy continued to lead and encourage his men. When the primary communicator fell mortally wounded, Lieutenant Murphy repeatedly attempted to call for assistance for his beleaguered teammates. Realizing the impossibility of communicating in the extreme terrain, and in the face of almost certain death, he fought his way into open terrain to gain a better position to transmit a call. This deliberate, heroic act deprived him of cover, exposing him to direct enemy fire. Finally achieving contact with his Headquarters, Lieutenant Murphy maintained his exposed position while he provided his location and requested immediate support for his team. In his final act of bravery, he continued to engage the enemy until he was mortally wounded, gallantly giving his life for his country and for the cause of freedom. By his selfless leadership, courageous actions, and extraordinary devotion to duty, Lieutenant Murphy

reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Name: Paul Smith

Branch: U.S. Army

Hometown: Tampa, FL

Date/Location: Near Baghdad International Airport, Baghdad, Iraq on 4 April 2003

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty: Sergeant First Class Paul R. Smith distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with an armed enemy near Baghdad International Airport, Baghdad, Iraq on 4 April 2003. On that day, Sergeant First Class Smith was engaged in the construction of a prisoner of war holding area when his Task Force was violently attacked by a company-sized enemy force. Realizing the vulnerability of over 100 fellow soldiers, Sergeant First Class Smith quickly organized a hasty defense consisting of two platoons of soldiers, one Bradley Fighting Vehicle and three armored personnel carriers. As the fight developed, Sergeant First Class Smith braved hostile enemy fire to personally engage the enemy with hand grenades and anti-tank weapons, and organized the evacuation of three wounded soldiers from an armored personnel carrier struck by a rocket propelled grenade and a 60mm mortar round. Fearing the enemy would overrun their defenses, Sergeant First Class Smith moved under withering enemy fire to man a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a damaged armored personnel carrier. In total disregard for his own life, he maintained his exposed position in order to engage the attacking enemy force. During this action, he was mortally wounded. His courageous actions helped defeat the enemy attack, and resulted in as many as 50 enemy soldiers killed, while allowing the safe withdrawal of numerous wounded soldiers. Sergeant First Class Smith's extraordinary heroism and uncommon valor are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Third Infantry Division, Rock of the Marne, and the United States Army.

Name: Kyle White

Branch: U.S. Army

Hometown: Seattle, WA

Date/Location: November 9, 2007, Aranas, Afghanistan

Specialist Kyle J. White distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a radio telephone operator with Company C, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry

Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade, during combat operations against an armed enemy in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan on November 9, 2007. On that day, Specialist White and his comrades were returning to Bella Outpost from a shura with Aranas Village elders. As the soldiers traversed a narrow path surrounded by mountainous, rocky terrain, they were ambushed by enemy forces from elevated positions. Pinned against a steep mountain face, Specialist White and his fellow soldiers were completely exposed to enemy fire. Specialist White returned fire and was briefly knocked unconscious when a rocket-propelled grenade impacted near him. When he regained consciousness, another round impacted near him, embedding small pieces of shrapnel in his face. Shaking off his wounds, Specialist White noticed one of his comrades lying wounded nearby. Without hesitation, Specialist White exposed himself to enemy fire in order to reach the soldier and provide medical aid. After applying a tourniquet, Specialist White moved to an injured Marine, similarly providing aid and comfort until the Marine succumbed to his wounds. Specialist White then returned to the soldier and discovered that he had been wounded again. Applying his own belt as an additional tourniquet, Specialist White was able to stem the flow of blood and save the soldier's life. Noticing that his and the other soldier's radios were inoperative, Specialist White exposed himself to enemy fire yet again in order to secure a radio from a deceased comrade. He then provided information and updates to friendly forces, allowing precision airstrikes to stifle the enemy's attack and ultimately permitting medical evacuation aircraft to rescue him, his fellow soldiers, Marines and Afghan Army soldiers. Specialist Kyle J. White's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, Company C, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade and the United States Army.

July 20, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

Quote of the Week: 'If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.'

- Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson

CULTURAL CHAOS

Greetings, Watchdog. After a week-long summer hiatus, Harold Hamilton and company are back in the saddle and ready for what promises to be a barn burner primary election season up to the August 14th election.

Before we get there, it's important to make a few observations about social issues, a subject we normally don't cover but which is nonetheless important and becoming more so.

One aspect of that subject area is gender, the biology of male and female and the role it plays in a healthy society.

It's amazing and quite troubling to see what has become of the state of gender and gender roles over the past 20 years and even past 5 years.

Not so long ago, the subject of who was a boy and who was a girl was easy and straight-forward.

Not so long ago, knowing which urinal to use was easy to discern.

Not anymore.

Like other institutions that have anchored society for centuries, the concept of gender has become chaotic, muddled, and a veritable tower of babel.

To wit:

Some parents are now raising 'theybies', meaning infants and young children who are intentionally denied a gender from birth through childhood, insisting that the child and the society around them use genderless pronouns and other devices to cloak the child's gender.

There is a movement to erase all personal pronouns from our societal discourse, including made-up pronouns like 'ze' to replace 'he', 'she' and other identifying personal pronouns.

Within the related field of sexual orientation, one needs a Google alert system to track the proliferation of various sub-groups, including 'non-binary', 'queer', 'transgender', 'agender', 'bigender', 'cigender', 'demisexual', 'genderqueer', 'intersex', 'pansexual', 'skoliosexual', 'third gender', 'transman', 'transwoman', 'bigender', 'BlaQueer', 'furry', 'gender fluid', 'Non-monosexual', 'omnigender', and 'Ursula', although this list is certainly not comprehensive.

So, what's wrong with this state of affairs?

What's wrong with an individual deciding what their gender and sexual orientation shall be?

The short answer is that these identifications and declarations are often implemented as policies and laws that destroy the First Amendment rights of others as well as their fundamental right to be safe and secure.

For example, the recognition of 'pansex' or 'non-binary' people is often accompanied by policies that threaten discipline and other negative sanctions for others who don't recognize that identification or disagree with it.

A recent story in the local media is a prime example.

The University of Minnesota has once again come under negative scrutiny, this time for floating a draft policy that formally recognizes the alphabet soup of gender identity and also threatens punishment for any student or employee who refuses to do the same.

'University members and units are expected to use the names, gender identities, and pronouns specified to them by University members.'

'Violations of the provisions of this Policy could constitute discrimination or harassment based on gender identity or gender expression.'

'Discrimination or harassment based on gender identity or gender expression may result in appropriate responsive action, including but not limited to disciplinary

action up to and including termination from employment and academic sanctions up to and including academic expulsion.'

Put it all together, and we have what amounts to a speech code that suppresses conservative expression of opposition and has an obvious chilling effect on speech and the free exchange of ideas.

How ironic, coming on a college campus.

For example, suppose that a student insists on using the 'ze' personal pronoun. Furthermore, that student insists that their name is Bigender Bill.

Any student or faculty member who refuses to use the name or pronoun when referring to the student is now subject to discipline, according to a plain reading of the text of the proposed policy.

This scenario, on its face, is compelled speech which violates the First Amendment rights of the one forced to utter the words.

And let's be clear, the words contain significant meaning.

The use of the made-up personal pronoun 'ze' by the transgender student is surely liberating and empowering to them.

Conversely, being forced to use that pronoun is just as surely demeaning to the one forced to use it and represents a suppression of their sincerely held belief and therefore constitutes compelled speech and represents a violation of conscience.

Of course, this is very intentional. As this publication has observed on many occasions, a pillar of liberal strategy is coercion.

Whether tax policy, health care, social security, or otherwise, all liberal public policies rely on coercion.

In other words, liberals don't seek the acceptance of mainstream society.

Instead, they demand imposition.

Of course, the question is also begged regarding how a student would know that the biological man who now identifies as a woman and whose birth name of Joseph

Anderson is now named Ursula Bear Queen and demands to be known as such.

Tower of Babel indeed.

The other major aspect of these policies is that they tend to endanger the right of others to safety and security.

Again, look to the proposed U of M policy on the subject:

'Individuals may access gender-specific facilities that correspond with their gender identities and may participate in University activities and programs consistent with their gender identities including, but not limited to, housing, restrooms, locker rooms, recreation services and activities, and camp programs.'

Under this proposal, it is quite possible that a young woman could find herself sharing a locker room, bathroom, communal shower, dorm room, or other living quarters with a biological man who is sexually attracted to women.

The fatal conceit here is that the University's policy presumes an unstated premise that a student will identify with a specific gender or sexual orientation, even if that identification isn't aligned with their biology.

According to gay rights advocates themselves, many people who identify with that group broadly don't fit into any particular category.

In fact, many intentionally and outright reject the idea being confined to any particular sexual or gender identification.

Hence, terms like 'gender fluid', 'pansexual', and 'non-monosexual.'

The upshot is that a young woman could find herself sharing living quarters or other intimate spaces with a person who last month professed to being attracted only to men who is now attracted to women.

And if that young woman objects to living with that person, is she not now in violation of the University's policy on the subject?

It would be sheer folly to ignore these risks inherent in the proposed policy.

The simple fact is that men have been separated from women in certain situations across the sweep of human history, for obvious reasons.

The larger observation here is that our society is becoming increasingly polarized, with various factions adopting public policy viewpoints that may be irreconcilable.

In this case, you either believe that people should use facilities consistent with their biological gender assignment or you don't.

Moreover, the debate here is representative of our civil discourse in general.

There is no respect for opinions inconsistent with the liberal viewpoint.

Any differing viewpoints are met with shouting, name calling, intimidation, and even violence.

Just ask any member of the Trump administration who tries to enjoy a night out.

Surely, there is a Silent Majority in this country that is rising.

It is still the case in America that the majority believes in things like traditional marriage, traditional gender assignments, and other social issues deemed backwards and unenlightened by the urban elites.

The political upshot is that the Watchdog predicts that the GOP will do well this fall.

By definition, the Silent Majority won't show up in legacy media polls.

They won't be seen or heard in interviews.

They won't march in the streets, as they will be at work.

But come Election Day, they will be heard.

July 27, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

Quote of the Week: 'The politics of the past is to tinker around the edges, do the things that sound good or poll well and not make waves. That works just fine for the political class - but it doesn't make a lasting difference.'

As Governor I will not be content to operate in the status quo system that exists now because it's a system that has become arrogant, unaccountable, incapable - and that's not going to change until the system changes.'

- GOP Candidate for Jeff Johnson

OVERTHROW THE STATUS QUO?

Greetings, loyal readers. The August 14th primary will soon be upon us, and the Watchdog has yet to offer any commentary on the GOP gubernatorial primary.

The Dog has been watching the field develop, especially with the late entrance of Tim Pawlenty and the exit of other candidates from the field.

With the primary now a contest between Tim Pawlenty and Jeff Johnson, we can take a look at the race in some detail and examine each candidate.

In particular, the Watchdog can take a hard look at the extensive record of each and compare it to what they are saying and promising on the campaign trail.

Having said that, taking a hard and unflinching look at the record doesn't mean harsh, ad hominem attacks.

Ronald Reagan taught us well regarding how Republicans should treat each other, which is especially relevant in this environment.

In fact, this publication has become quite troubled by Jeff Johnson's personal attacks on Pawlenty.

For example, Johnson recently commented in a negative way on Pawlenty's moral compass.

At the outset, we believe that both Johnson and Pawlenty are men of high character

and integrity who would be a far cry better than any DFL'er as governor.

There's nothing wrong with Pawlenty's moral compass, or Jeff Johnson's.

So let's get down to business.

At the outset, the facts show that Jeff Johnson has cast many conservative votes during his extensive political career, having served in the legislature from 2000-2006 and then on the Hennepin County Board from 2008 to the present.

No reasonable person can deny Jeff Johnson has a conservative world view.

But how does the record match up with the rhetoric?

This is especially important in Johnson's case as he has cast himself as one who will fundamentally alter and reduce state government power and spending. 'Overthrow the status quo' is his slogan.

Put another way, Johnson's proposition to the political marketplace is that he will take a sledgehammer to state government in a radical and unprecedented way, without regard to popular opinion.

The record, as far as we can discern, doesn't show this type of world view from either Rep. Johnson or Commissioner Johnson.

In short, is 'Overthrow the Status Quo' a slogan or a governing philosophy?

After all, this narrative is clearly designed to draw a contrast with Pawlenty. It's designed to position Johnson to the right of Pawlenty in the primary fight. In other words, the proposition is that Governor Johnson would govern far more conservatively than Governor Pawlenty.

And while no one can predict the future and know what's in Jeff Johnson's head, we can look at the voting record to discern what he has done in the past, both as a legislator and as a county commissioner.

His own campaign web site has no 'accomplishments' section or reference to a bill or ordinance he successfully passed to fundamentally pare back the size and scope of government.

Our research doesn't show legislative accomplishments that fundamentally alter the sad trajectory of government growing ever larger and ever more powerful.

And while his web site is filled with statements of principle that conservatives can cheer, it is short on specifics.

For example, under the 'action plan' section, his specific plans for health care and transportation are 'coming soon.'

Coming soon? Johnson announced for governor in May of 2017 and we are a shade over two weeks from the primary.

The man or woman who will serve as the next chief executive will take office just over 5 months from today.

It isn't unfair to say that Johnson's own web site is thin on past accomplishments and specific plans to 'drain the swamp.' Especially for an elected official who has been in office almost continuously since 2001.

Moreover, Johnson has cast a number of votes that certainly don't bespeak an allegiance to overthrowing the status quo.

For example, Johnson attracted the attention of libertarians and privacy advocates when he voted against tabling county funding for a surveillance platform called 'Kingfish' that mimics cell tower functions in order to extract data from personal cell phones.

To be fair, Johnson later declared that he regretted his vote, but it's nonetheless troubling that he was apparently conflicted about an issue so fundamental to personal privacy.

There are also aspects of Johnson's legislative career that aren't consistent with overthrowing the status quo.

For example, although he has decried omnibus spending bills as unconstitutional, he has nonetheless voted for many omnibus bills.

The conservative Minnesota Legislative Evaluation Assembly (LEA) called HF3270 (2002, veto override vote) called that omnibus budget bill 'creative bookkeeping' and a budgetary 'sleight of hand.' The LEA went on to compare the bill to the same

accounting gimmicks that brought down Enron.

Johnson has also supported another issue of importance to fiscal conservatives, that being bonding bills.

Bonding bills authorize state issuance of debt, and are often criticized by conservatives as filled with pork and the equivalent of putting big ticket spending on the state's 'credit card' to be paid back with interest.

In 2003, here's what the LEA said about Special Session HF8: 'This bill got so bloated and distorted that the House author could not vote for it. Only 12% of the money went for transportation projects, and none of that went for freeway upgrades. Instead, \$5 million was set aside for a National Sports Conference Center, \$7.5 million for 'Greater Minnesota Business Development Grants, and \$25 million for rebuilding the Guthrie Theater (a privately owned company). Moorhead got money to build the Trollwood Performing Arts School, Wabasha got money to build a National Eagle Center, Saint Paul got money for upgrading the Roy Wilkins Auditorium and for constructing a 'Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community Building,' etc.'

In 2005, Johnson voted in favor of doubling the government-mandated ethanol content in motor fuels. Again, the LEA: 'Doubling the amount of ethanol in gasoline is destructive to the economy and to many engines. It has not been substantially proven to decrease dependency on foreign oil. This bill was designed to appease agricultural and producer interests, with total disregard to the consumer and the taxpayers. Because bio-diesel and ethanol are so inefficient and expensive to produce, they cannot compete in a free market.'

In 2006, Johnson voted in favor of a new University of Minnesota football stadium. Stadiums, whether for professional or college teams, are seen by conservatives as an illegitimate expenditure of public funds.

These votes give an insight into Jeff Johnson's world view and offer a clue as to how he would likely govern as the state's next chief executive.

To that end, this publication offers this opinion.

First, the 'overthrow the status quo' rhetoric appears to be just that. There is very little this publication can find in Johnson's legislative/county voting record to indicate that he has been interested in driving radical, reconstructive change in government.

Second, there is much in Johnson's record to show that he is ideologically conservative. Various scorecards from well-regarded conservative groups like the Taxpayer's League and the LEA show that more often than not, Johnson has voted correctly on a number of issues important enough to be included on yearly scorecards.

Thus, Johnson, in our opinion, would likely govern in a center-right fashion, much like Tim Pawlenty did over his eight years in office.

In other words, the typical infighting in intra-party politics over which guy is most conservative is really just loud conversation.

When it comes to world view, there really is no meaningful difference between them.

They both believe government is too big and powerful. Both want to cut taxes. Both are pro-life. Both support the Second Amendment.

Partisans for each camp can both point to instances where each man has cast the correct vote and to some instances where he didn't.

Such is the nature of intra-party contests.

Instead, we think Republican primary voters will likely make the same conclusion and base their primary vote on other factors, such as electability, fundraising capability, oratory skills, charisma, name recognition, past electoral success, and other important criteria.

For every member of the Republican family, it will all boil down to which man is best positioned to win in November. All would agree that Johnson and Pawlenty would both be superior to any of the DFL candidates. What we don't need in November is another four years of liberal rule from the governor's mansion.

August 3, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

Factoid of the Week: The 'Medicare for All' plan pushed by Sen. Bernie Sanders and endorsed by a host of Democratic congressional and presidential hopefuls would increase government health care spending by \$32.6 trillion over 10 years, according to a new study.

- From News Reports

THE MONEY CHASE UPDATED

Here we are loyal readers, less than two weeks from a pivotal, critical primary race.

And while there are some indications of candidate strength, such as internal polling, nothing is a better proxy for candidate strength than the finance reports.

Polling has been sparse, it's often biased, it's increasingly unreliable in the age of cell phones, and an August primary makes the 'likely voter' metric almost impossible to nail down.

Money, on the other hand, is a good indicator of strength, although not dispositive.

First, money serves as a proxy for support in that people won't put their hard-earned money into a candidate unless they believe in the candidate and the candidate's 'business plan' to win the race.

Money is clearly a proxy for political marketplace bull or bear sentiment.

Second, money shows the candidate's talent for organization. Proper fundraising takes a well-planned and executed strategy to reach identify, reach, and persuade donors.

This is especially true in a primary, where there is little or no difference between the candidates on issues.

On the DFL side, for example, all the candidates are pro-choice, support gay rights, and are toadies to the public sector unions.

The upshot is that the candidates in a partisan primary race are all similar on the major issues, hence donations tend to flow to the candidates that donors believe

can win both the primary and the general election.

So, what do the most recent campaign finance reports tell us about the candidates? Specifically, we'll take a look at the governor candidates and the legislative caucuses.

Cash as of 1/1/18
Individual Donations
Lobbyist Donations
PAC Donations
Party Unit Donations
Total Donations

Campaign Expenses
Non-campaign expenses
Total Expenses
Cash on Hand

Tim Pawlenty
\$0.00
\$2,049,230.08
\$35,025.00
\$28,000.00
\$20,000.00
\$2,132,255.08

\$1,028,561.13
\$76,880.53
\$1,108,573.66
\$1,023,681.42

Jeff Johnson
\$179,763.24
\$284,638.12
\$4,400.00
\$5,200.00
\$18,486.78
\$313,375.85

\$282,106.65

\$17,809.80
\$299,916.45
\$193,222.64

Erin Murphy
\$147,579.15
\$502,973.84
\$19,003.00
\$26,357.33
\$21,200.00
\$587,794.23

\$471,168.46
\$19,769.36
\$501,557.82
\$233,815.56

Lori Swanson
\$0.00
\$496,694.96
\$26,225.00
\$26,850.00
\$40,000.00
\$609,719.96

\$466,386.04
\$8,079.40
\$474,465.44
\$135,254.52

Tim Walz
\$488,194.57
\$1,127,061.70
\$36,945.00
\$120,700.00
\$4,550.00
\$1,295,020.96

\$1,216,337.33
\$65,101.39

\$1,283,773.72

\$499,456.81

So, what do the numbers tell us?

First, regarding donations received, Tim Pawlenty is the class of the field, both intra-party and inter-party.

He nearly lapped the DFL leader, Tim Walz, and absolutely crushed Jeff Johnson by a 7 to 1 total donation ratio.

Walz and Pawlenty are the only two candidates who raised the type of funds that show viability as a gubernatorial candidate, as both reached the \$1 million threshold.

On the DFL side, endorsed candidate Erin Murphy showed poorly, as Lori Swanson, a very late entrant, beat Murphy with respect to total donations.

On the Republican side, there is simply no way to put a positive spin on Johnson's numbers.

In addition to being out-raised 7 to 1 by Pawlenty, Johnson came in dead last in fundraising numbers across the field - by a large margin.

He was outraised by nearly 2 to 1 by the next worst numbers, those of Erin Murphy.

The DFL leader, Walz, outraised him roughly 4 to 1.

Three other interesting things jump out regarding fundraising.

First, both endorsed candidates came in last in the field. We can't help but wonder if that says something about the endorsement process and how it has evolved in recent times.

Second, Tim Walz, not Tim Pawlenty, led the pack in donations from lobbyists and PACs.

For all the 'Wall Street banker' rhetoric, it's the other Tim who is taking in the most special interest money.

They hypocrisy continues. The aw-shucks, hayseed, public school teacher, enlisted soldier is also the one in the race who has spent the most time in The Swamp and it shows.

Of course, Walz gets a pass from liberals in the same way Dayton, the ultimate idlerich, trust fund kid, got a pass.

Third, Jeff Johnson himself took thousands in lobbyist and PAC money. Taking special interest money seems inconsistent with his 'drain the swamp' narrative.

We will see very soon how well money correlates with votes.

LEGISLATIVE CAUCUSES

1/1/18 Balance
Receipts
Expenses
Cash on Hand

House GOP
\$697,790.40
\$870,907.38
\$485,805.18
\$1,083,002.30

House DFL
\$447,024.12
\$1,524,398.88
\$720,933.02
\$1,258,592.82

Senate GOP
\$878,455.49
\$714,274.71
\$381,576.41
\$1,211,153.79

Senate DFL
\$236,122.74
\$952,014.95

\$886,005.84
\$302,131,.85

Recall that the Senate isn't on the ballot this year, save for the special election because of the Sen. Fischbach resignation.

In any case, the Senate GOP is in a great position, with a 4 to 1 cash on hand advantage.

Moreover, by the time the 2020 election comes around, the *Janus* decision will be in full force, depriving the public unions of their much of their funding, as newly freed members will vote with their pocketbooks and refuse to fund them.

On the surface, it looks like the House DFL had a great haul, perhaps signaling that the political marketplace is bullish on a DFL takeover of the House this fall.

Not so fast.

In perhaps the largest story of this reporting period, the House DFL was essentially bankrolled by a handful of special interests and wealthy donors (the 1%, as it were).

Check out these donation numbers from the House DFL report:

AFSCME: \$300,000
Education Minnesota: \$250,000
Laborers Union: \$100,000
Nurses Union: \$100,000
AFL-CIO: \$50,000
Alida Messinger: \$50,000
Vance Opperman: \$50,000
Shakopee Tribe: \$50,000

In other words, nearly 2/3rds of the DFL receipts were from these special interests.

The DFL Senate report was much the same.

Thank *Janus*, this kind of special interest influence on our politics is going away.

Just remember these kinds of numbers the next time some DFL politician stands up and decries special interest money in politics.

Of course, what they really mean, as they always do, is that they oppose any who disagrees with them having any sort of voice in politics.

In Sum, here's are the takeaways:

The biggest collector of special interest money in the governor's race is Tim Walz.

The biggest collector of special interest money among the legislative caucuses is the House DFL.

Despite all this, Tim Pawlenty and the House GOP are still well-positioned to compete in November.

The Senate GOP is also well-positioned to win the special election and retain control of the Senate in 2019 and 2020.

Janus is one of the most consequential Supreme Court decisions to come along in many years.

This decision alone makes the Trump election worthwhile.

August 10, 2018

Public Policy Commentary

Editor's Note: This is the last edition of the Watchdog before the primary election next week. Make sure you either get out to vote next Tuesday or you take advantage of the opportunity to vote early.

You can find your election day polling location here: <https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

Early voting ends August 13th:

<https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-in-person/>

Register to vote: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/register-to-vote/>

Factoid of the Week: 88.5% of the donors to Ilhan Omar, DFL candidate for Congress (MN-5), are from outside Minnesota. Only 11.5% of her donors are residents of Minnesota.

Quote of the Week: 'Jeff Johnson is a poser. He pretends that he's for all these things, that he's going to get all these things done. He's been in politics all of his adult life and he's actually accomplished none of them. If Johnson wants to be considered a conservative leader, he has to do more than take up space and sit in a chair and vote 'no.'

-Tim Pawlenty

SQUARE PEG, ROUND HOLE

We're just days away from an important primary election. Who will win? We don't know, and anyone who claims to know is merely guessing.

A hotly contested August primary is a relatively new thing in Minnesota.

It's a mid-August election in a place where people make the most of their summer leisure time before the harsh reality of our climate sets in, blacking out the sun and heat for six months at a time.

In short, elections depend in large part on who shows up and we simply don't know

who will show up on both the GOP and DFL side.

Thus, we don't know who will win between Tim Pawlenty and Jeff Johnson, but we can say that Jeff Johnson has run a curious campaign.

We say curious because he has clearly adopted a strategy and accompanying narrative at odds with both his personality and his record.

The strategy is clearly premised on selling himself to GOP base voters as the heir to Donald Trump.

On the one hand, we can see the logic in the strategy.

Donald Trump nearly won Minnesota and maintains a strong approval rating among Republican voters.

Thus, wrapping oneself in the vestiges of Trump makes some sense.

The problem is that it isn't who Johnson is and doesn't reflect his record.

No one who knows him well would describe him as bombastic, insulting, or condescending like Trump.

That's a compliment.

More importantly, Johnson has wrongly portrayed himself as some sort of disciple of Trump while attacking Pawlenty as lacking sufficient fealty to the president.

The line of attack reached ridiculous proportions when Johnson asked Pawlenty at the MPR debate who he wanted to win on election night in 2016.

(For the record, Pawlenty voted for Trump.)

But the record clearly shows that Trump wasn't Johnson's first choice and that Trump's behavior gave him pause.

Johnson endorsed and was involved as Minnesota chairman for Marco Rubio.

And in supporting Trump's candidacy, it was with reluctance, saying the following: 'I will vote for him, but not with great enthusiasm.' (Star Tribune 7/30/16)

'I'll support the nominee, but it would be with different levels of enthusiasm depending on the candidate. With Trump it would mean voting for him but not doing a lot more than that.' (Star Tribune 3/6/16)

There is certainly nothing wrong with having reservations about Trump, given his behavior.

In fact, it's Trump's boorish behavior that is costing Republicans votes and putting legislative majorities in danger.

It becomes a problem when you attack your opponent for not being sufficiently enthusiastic about Trump.

The same holds true for attempts to govern and forge compromise.

Take the whole bruhaha over Johnson's support for a 3% property tax levy increase while on the Hennepin County Board.

Johnson is the lone conservative board (6-1) and the best he can do in bringing a conservative prospective to the board is to take the rough edges off progressive ideas.

In this case, it appears that Johnson was doing his best to limit an inevitable property tax increase.

That's a good thing.

It's a really bad thing, however, to criticize your opponent for the same thing.

Johnson has frequently criticized Pawlenty for failing to constantly adhere to the conservative ideal in his time as governor.

That's an impossible standard when one considers that Pawlenty never had a Republican House and Senate to work with.

In fact, there was a time during his administration when the DFL controlled both houses.

In fact, there was a time when the Senate DFL had a veto-proof majority.

That's correct. The Senate GOP couldn't even uphold his vetoes.

Moreover, the caucus leaders were both hard core Minneapolis liberals, with Larry Pogemiller leading the Senate and Margaret Kelliher leading the House.

Therein lies the cardinal sin. Jeff Johnson wants a pass in saying he is doing his best in dealing with liberals on his board while at the same time refusing to acknowledge Pawlenty had his own liberals to wrestle.

Plus, there's that other issue of Johnson denying he pushed for a 3% increase when the video clearly shows he did.

And, as was explored last week, Johnson's voting record simply doesn't support the 'overthrow the status quo' mantra.

That conflict was again on display this week at Farm Fest, when Johnson said of biofuel mandates and subsidies, "I will not pull the rug out from under it."

Isn't pulling the rug out from under the Establishment exactly what 'overthrow the status quo' means?

Again, there is nothing wrong with governing from a center-right perspective that honors the concept of compromise in the name of governance.

But, again, it becomes a problem when you say something different on the campaign trail and attack your opponent for doing the same.

In sum, while this publication doesn't know if Johnson will win next week or not, it seems quite apparent that a win would happen in spite of his campaign, not because of it.

We're not so naive as to deny that campaigns often say and do things that don't exactly reflect reality. It's part of the game.

This is especially true when the campaign attempts to jam the candidate into a Procrustean bed that fits an atmosphere at odds with candidate's personality and record.

That is the case here, indeed.

Jeff Johnson simply isn't the destroyer of status quo politics.

In any case, voters will decide who stays and who goes next Tuesday.

August 17th, 2018

Quote of the Week: “It is the era of Trump and I’m just not a Trump-like politician.”

- Tim Pawlenty

THOUGHTS, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS FROM PRIMARY NIGHT

Pawlenty: In many conversations with GOP operatives around the state, the consistent theme that emerged is that Pawlenty was “absent” or “disengaged” in the minds of many primary voters, leading them to vote for Johnson.

This perception, true or untrue, is tied into strategic decisions made by the Pawlenty campaign:

First, late entrance into the race. The decision was made to get into the race later rather than sooner, which simply left less time to engage in retail politics, attending corn feeds and the like.

Second, the decision to ignore Johnson. The decision to adopt a “general election” posture and ignore Johnson wasn’t a bad decision, but it was wrong. Johnson’s strength was underestimated until it was too late.

Third, the decision to bypass the endorsing convention. This decision was another function of the decision to get in the race late. Part of the takeaway from Tuesday is that the endorsement still matters for the GOP. Clearly, the decision to not participate in the endorsing convention fed a perception of aloofness.

While there will be many Monday morning quarterbacks who will cluck over things the Pawlenty team could have done better, the simple fact is that the team made reasonable assumptions that turned out to be false.

Moreover, at a base level, campaigns are about selling something to the political marketplace. At the end of the day, voters are either interested in buying the product or they’re not.

In his concession speech, Pawlenty noted that in an era of Trump, he’s not a Trump-like candidate.

In short, it was more about a Pawlenty campaign that didn’t fit the times as opposed to a well-executed Johnson campaign.

Johnson: Having said that, Johnson in many respects did well with the meager resources he raised. Declaring in May of 2017, Johnson has definitely put in time on the road and has worked hard, beating out a host of other candidates.

Johnson also did well to adopt the Trump mantle, although the help it offered in the primary campaign may not be of such benefit in the general election campaign.

While criticisms of Johnson's campaign skills are legitimate, it's true that people aren't giving him any credit for what he's done.

Sure, he's lost every state-wide race he's run, but he's also gotten to the big dance three times now. We will see if the third time around he's any better.

DFL: It was a tough night for the DFL party in that endorsed candidates for governor and attorney general were decisively defeated.

Every election cycle, the endorsement becomes less relevant for the DFL. Whether that really matters in the grand scheme of things remains to be seen.

Tim Walz: The victory of Tim Walz was not surprising but nonetheless interesting.

Like any successful candidate, Walz benefitted from the luck of unforced errors on the part of his opponents.

Erin Murphy fatally hobbled her campaign by selecting as a running mate a fellow Metro legislator who clearly wasn't ready for prime time. Her running mate was a rookie legislator who hadn't passed a single bill during her brief time in the legislature, and it showed.

The selection turned a possible Walz vulnerability, time in the Swamp, into an asset, experience in office.

Lori Swanson ran what can only be described as a bizarre, bunker campaign where she hid out while sending out campaign ads but remaining in hiding like a Colombian cartel boss.

Swanson quickly showed that she herself wasn't ready for prime time and reinforced a Watchdog rule of politics: The Transfer Rule.

The Transfer Rule posits that success in one political office doesn't automatically

transfer to another.

Think Skip Humphrey, who dominated campaigns for attorney general. He ran for governor in 1998 and promptly lost to Jesse Ventura.

Minnesota politics will rightly remember the Swanson gubernatorial campaign as one of the worst in state history.

As one reporter asked, “Does anyone know any real humans who are supporting Lori Swanson?”

Back to Walz, who pulled off the age-old trick of being everything to everybody.

He’s the NRA-endorsed guy who now favors gun control.

He supports the blue-collar construction trades yet picked a running mate who has actively opposed their jobs, especially in mines and along pipelines.

He’s proud of his rural roots yet calls rural America “A bunch of rocks and cows.”

He’s the Swamp creature of many years, yet portrays himself as the avuncular football coach, teacher, and enlisted man.

Yet, he pulled off the primary win against a very authentic tinfoil hat liberal in Erin Murph and her goofy “politics of joy.”

He beat the Bernie Bros and proved that there are a lot of Democrats who want to win and not just make a point.

Thoughts on Johnson vs. Walz:

Advantage, Walz: Walz has better positioned himself towards the middle than Johnson. Johnson ran hard to the right against Pawlenty and now has to figure out how and where to pivot. Yes, state-wide elections in Minnesota are still about winning independents. The Watchdog had access to internal polling and focus group data that showed independents breaking hard for Pawlenty vs. Johnson.

And lest readers think that it’s all okay because Trump “almost” won Minnesota, recall that the close race was more about Hillary underperforming than Trump overperforming.

Hillary in MN 2016: 1,367,716
Trump in MN 2016: 1,322,951
Obama in MN 2012: 1,546,167
Romney in MN 2012: 1,320,225

Clearly, 2016 was about HRC underperforming Obama while Trump ran nearly even with Romney's numbers.

Advantage, Johnson: If done right, Johnson should make this race a referendum on Dayton, Walz, and the DFL in general.

MnSURE, MNLARS, elder abuse, Ellison, daycare fraud. Dayton was a disaster and today's DFL has gone off the rails, with the radical Keith Ellison as exhibit "A".

Moreover, Tim Walz has spent over a decade in the Swamp and has a record to match.

Another major Achilles heel is Walz's attendance record. Murphy and Swanson blew it by not hammering home this point.

Voters of all stripes take a dim view of politicians taking a pay check but not showing up to work.

The "empty chair" is still a powerful attack ad.

Johnson should ignore the task of cutting the Gordian Knot of "overthrowing the status quo" in favor of reminding those independents why Walz and the DFL are not to be trusted.

Advantage, Walz: Walz has shown good fundraising chops, while Johnson's ability to raise funds has been quite suspect.

Can Johnson now raise sufficient funds? Will third parties like the Republican Governors Association spend money in Minnesota?

Money matters, and Jeff Johnson doesn't have it.

In sum, Johnson should make this race about out of touch liberals while Walz should make the race a one-on-one affair, man versus man contest.

Stay tuned.

August 24th, 2018

Editor's Note: This week's edition is a fascinating read regarding Jeff Johnson's upset primary win over Tim Pawlenty. While the author writes that he foresaw the win, many didn't.

Can Jeff Johnson and his team replicate the win in November?

Editor's Note: This essay was authored by Max Rymer of the firm Nativ3, which worked on behalf of the Johnson for Governor campaign for the primary and now the general election.

The Watchdog has received permission from the author to re-publish his essay.

ESSAY FOLLOWS:

Jeff Johnson: A Case Study

August 14, 2018

Jeff Johnson was an apparent underdog. Even those who believed he'd win or wanted it, stretched their imagination to think the big money and establishment infrastructure of Tim Pawlenty could be overcome. Not many people knew he would win.

We did.

Make no mistake, Jeff's message was a winning one. His political instincts are impeccable, his message genuine, and his integrity unmatched in the world of politics. He will be our next Governor because of that. But at Nativ3, we knew he'd win the primary because that's what social data was telling us.

Let me explain.

Nativ3 was hired by the Jeff Johnson for Governor campaign on June 13th, shortly after his endorsement at the [Minnesota State Convention](#). At this point in time, the campaign challenges were obvious: name ID in the prospect of Tim Pawlenty, fundraising in the prospect of Tim Pawlenty, and ensuring we could get OUR people out to the poll August 14th in the prospect of Tim Pawlenty. Nativ3 partnered with graphics guru [Derek Wehrwein](#) to ensure – from a social media perspective, a paid

search perspective, a re-marketing and display ad perspective, and from an overall digital strategy perspective, that we lapped Tim Pawlenty in creativity, execution and hustle. We're a small team at Nativ3 – 7 of us to be exact. Understanding the fundraising gap, every dollar we spent, every initiative we undertook, and every message we deployed would need to be maximized, analyzed, tested and pinpointed to a controllable audience. We won't get too much into the inside baseball of what that took, because we now have a general election to win.

But I wanted to cover the high points of what worked digitally. It worked so well that my message through our basecamp project management software read like this when we sent our final report to the campaign: "When Jeff or Justin (campaign manager extraordinaire) or anyone on the team write their autobiography, I want to be the first one on record: We're going to win the primary tomorrow." The [polling numbers](#) were scoff-worthy in the face of hard social data.

A LOT went into the victory of Jeff Johnson – especially on the digital front. But what it boiled down to was the following 3 main points:

immense target testing
diverse and contrasting creative assets
giving the voter something to do.

First, Immense Target Testing

One of the best data assets that the Johnson campaign brought to the table was the list developed from [Jeff running for Governor before](#). As an agency, we run list-based targeting for businesses of all shapes and sizes – and you usually get a hodgepodge of old friends, names with spelling errors, and half correct information. I've noticed a similar trend with typical political lists and Secretary of State information. [Nativ3](#) segmented the lists by issue specific trends, modeled the data to match likely primary voters, and ultimately developed 50 separate campaigns to beat the living pulp out of that list with diverse ads, compelling calls to action, and actionable ways for them to engage with the Johnson campaign (more on that later). Keep in mind with list targeting, you can [upload a controllable universe](#) to Facebook advertising, Google Search, YouTube Preroll, and Display Advertising, and can even utilize certain Twitter targeting features.

Lists are the lifeblood of a campaign. I'm more convinced of that than ever before.

Later, as the vote got closer we further broke down the list and actually

created [lookalike audiences](#) to broaden out the scope of our targeting. As the campaign team and I discussed, we thought that there were names and numbers and emails and personality types that could not be accounted for in any lists: namely, [Trump voters](#). We modeled demographics and behaviors off of the large list we already had, so with nearly every advertising campaign created we dealt with 3 audiences: [Jeff's loyal supporters](#) (an immovable base and an incredible campaign asset), our modeled primary audience (which we segmented from Jeff's list), and a broader audience of people who matched similar traits as our listed audience. This equated to a universe of 400,000 people. Our goal was to use our two precious months to drive home name ID, build contrasting messaging on all platforms to Tim Pawlenty, and get a commitment from the prospective voter in some form or fashion. The data operation coordinated between the Johnson Campaign and Nativ3 was one of the complex executed in Minnesota politics (hourly monitoring, rapid spend increases and decreases, and rapid A/B testing). As campaigns began and ended, Nativ3 manipulated budget towards the ads that were most compelling, altered text and calls to actions, and created micro-targeted assets that maximized both engagement on their respective digital media platform AS WELL AS ensured that the voter would want to see the landing page beyond the ad.

As we closely monitored data and competition – socially, organically, video content, and paid search, it was incredibly apparent that the Pawlenty campaign did [not](#) prioritize digital strategy as fiercely as they needed to. In fact, the [ONLY](#) campaign that was comparative to impression numbers in this race (from what we could tell) was [Tim Walz](#) – which primarily came from a video campaign that ran the last month of the race. Our estimates put that at a 6-figure investment and the targeting was VERY broad.

At the end of the day, we honed in on a finalized voter universe of 329,000 voters, served them nearly 10 million impressions (30 impressions per voter over the course of 2 months), garnered 50,000 conversions (voter commitments), and spent very little money comparatively to do so. The Johnson campaign ran a lean, tight ship. We loved being part of such an execution-oriented team. But in order for those numbers to work, the creative must also be spot on. The creative needed to be on point, which leads us to the next [H2](#):

Diverse and Contrasting Creative Assets

Before explaining what went well, I want to give another tip of the hat to [Derek Wehrwein](#). Derek ran most of the graphics production, which was an incredible strength of the Johnson for Governor primary campaign. Understanding we needed

to not only foster better name ID statewide for Jeff, but also create a contrasting message for the future from Tim Pawlenty, we catered almost every post, every ad, and every theme around that premise: build Jeff Johnson's name up and contrast him to Tim Pawlenty. As we dug deeper into some data around the Pawlenty name ID (something viewed as a great strength by most pundits statewide), we quickly realized that not all of that ID was positive. We needed to put the proverbial boot on the proverbial throat repeatedly, every day, to that controlled audience. Part of our challenge was not only helping boost Jeff's name ID online, but also reminding Minnesotans of who Tim Pawlenty was.

Nativ3 and the Johnson campaign both handled day to day posting on social media platforms. Obviously, it's critical to show campaign activity. Bruce Miller, the Johnson Campaign driver (and SO many other things) captured imagery that Nativ3 could use for daily posting. We made sure maintenance activity and posts were regular, effective, edited, AND always tied back to Jeff's messaging. It's one thing to talk about being at a business round table. It's another thing to talk about being at a business round table AND talk about how Minnesota's tax system is broken for small business owners. The engagement numbers between those two types of posts would blow your mind.

But beyond maintenance and static posts that I liken to 3-4 yard off-tackle hand-offs (to use a football analogy), we also threw Kirk Cousins-like bombs. A lot of them. Remember that targeting we talked about in the last section? We dropped some of the most compelling and creative imagery, video content, boosted posts, and audio assets in front of that list. Facebook was our main driver. But we also utilized Paid twitter (VERY little), Youtube Preroll and Adwords to drive home the engagement and impression count. The two days before election, Jeff occupied most early vote searches on Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

We ran through several issue specific campaigns, utilized earned media and boosted it to the universe we had, and then a massive GOTV and engagement push the final 3 weeks of the campaign. You'll notice, even in polling and predictions, Jeff was climbing statistically. The polling, though, still did not reflect how effectively the base was turned out.

Grabbing impressions within a controlled universe and using those impressions and creating compelling content are all critical for building name ID (what what our world calls "top of funnel awareness"). But you can't complete a deal – if you're a politician or an e-commerce website or an HVAC Contractor – unless you give your user something to do. Impressions without action don't mean a hill of beans.

Giving Voters Something to Do

At every turn, with every ad, we needed the voter to do something and commit to something once they clicked through. This is simple in nature, but it modeled Donald Trump's digital strategy. We knew that farming ads targeted toward those who cared about ag issues in our modeled universe would be attractive to click on. What happened next would be far more critical than a mere click. Our creative revolved around "Here's what Jeff believes", "Subtly, here's how Tim Pawlenty hurt you", and "Now we need you to do something about it". With each landing page, we either asked for a voter commitment or a small contribution RIGHT AFTER and RIGHT NEXT TO a presentation of compelling emotional issues or political concern. We did not let an impression go to waste. We needed to ensure that there were actionable items we could give to the potential voter. At every turn, getting a voter commitment was the critical end goal of each campaign we ran: be it adwords text ads, YouTube pre-roll, re-marketing campaigns, or Facebook ads/boosted posts. When it was all said and done, with new online voter commitments and DEFINITE supporters within our database, we knew our floor was 70,000 voters. For computing purposes, assuming 70,000 voters brought .3 voters along with them the polls, we were 99% confident we had victory in our grasp August 13th.

Giving voters something small to buy into allowed us to create new email audiences, new remarketing audiences to ask for another donation/ask, and ultimately a very targeted GOTV effort to those who already supported our campaign.

Making the ask, even if it's online, proved to be incredibly effective.

In Conclusion

Jeff Johnson is an amazing candidate. The grassroots participation in his campaign, and how he inspired so many people restored my faith in Republican politics. Volunteerism, especially Republican volunteerism is a force to be reckoned with. Experts will debate in the coming weeks what his upset of Tim Pawlenty means. As a firm, we are so looking forward to the coming months of this campaign and pivoting to a general election strategy. Jeff will continue to inspire voters with his message, drive grassroots activists to action, and hustle for every vote touring the state. He proved that in this primary process. Nativ3 will need to be sharper than ever in matching his veracity for the general election.

But at the end of the day, the data proved that this was not nearly the upset we might want to make it out to be. Data-driven targeting and inbound marketing principles played out. You can adapt or you can lose. Jeff's vision for innovation in this campaign is one of the major components of what won him this election and what will help him win in November. As a small digital firm, we've been humbled to be part of the process. The Johnson campaign took a chance on us. We loved being part of this process.

Digital is the present in political marketing, as it is for big brands and small businesses alike. There is no "future" in digital and inbound marketing principles.

It's here.

It's critical.

It works.

And you need to start if you want to win. It's not just throwing hundreds of thousands of dollars towards a campaign. It's building a measurable relationship and asking for "buy in" with every impression you pay for. Jeff Johnson had a winning message. We ensured that voters heard it online, cared about it, and derived actionable next steps from it.

As for our next step: all eyes are on November. Our universe is considerably bigger, but the methodology doesn't change.

August 31st, 2018

Factoid of the Week: Minneapolis and Saint Paul are home to 50% of the state's worst-performing schools.

MORE MONEY, SAME RESULTS

Stop us if you've heard this before: standardized test scores for Minnesota students are flat or declining.

Stop us if you've heard this before: The only thing going up in Minnesota public education is the amount of money spent on education.

Stop us if you've heard this before: The teachers' union and school officials downplay the results, deflect blame and accountability, and vow that improvements will be made that never come to fruition.

Well, it's happening again. Another round of test scores was released this week that show, frankly, that many of our public schools aren't educating students and aren't even coming close – again.

Overall, only 60% of the state's students met state reading standards, which made the results flat for three years running.

In math, only 57% met the proficiency mark, a decline from the 59% who passed in 2017.

Put another way, only 6 in 10 Minnesota students can read proficiently.

Perhaps they can be sent for remedial training at the Zoolander School for Kids Who Don't Read Good.

Put another way, 43 out of every 100 Minnesota students can't make the grade in math.

The proficiency numbers for minority students were absolutely abysmal and heartbreaking.

66% of black students can't read to grade standards.

72% of black students can't make the proficiency standard for math.

For Latino students, the numbers are just as depressing.

62% are below standard in reading.

67% are below standard in math.

The same holds true for American Indian students.

65% didn't make the mark in reading.

71% didn't make the standard in math.

The Minneapolis public schools continued its dubious distinction of lagging severely in test scores as well.

In the aggregate, 55% of students weren't proficient in reading.

In math, 58% of students weren't proficient in math, overall.

In Saint Paul, the scores were even worse.

62% of students in that district failed to reach proficiency in reading.

A full 67% of students in the district aren't proficient in math.

Of course, the response has been as canned and insincere as one would expect.

A dude at the Minneapolis Public Schools who carries the important and New Age title of "Chief of Accountability, Innovation and Research" took no accountability by noting dryly, "We have not seen the math and literacy trends we want to see."

Really. How profound.

We're sure the answer lies in shop-worn bromides about "adequate" funding, along with some expensive new program to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic.

And, of course, the next superintendent will demand an even more exorbitant and opulent contract.

If ever there was an area of government in need of Jeff Johnson's vow to overthrow the status quo, its education.

Taxpayers continue to walk down the insane path of doing the same thing over and over again, except that we don't get the same results – we get worse.

Jeff Johnson should hammer this point home.

Goodness knows, Tim Walz will do nothing to reform education.

He's already sworn his blood oath to the teachers' union, which means a promise to do nothing to reform the system and a promise to shovel lots of money into that broken system.

Thank God the Supreme Court has stepped in to break the nasty cycle of coerced union dues funding the DFL, which in turns funds the union that extorts the dues.

That's about the only good news.

It's truly sad commentary that this publication writes this piece every single year.

We only adjust the numbers downward.

Then cut and paste.

SHAMELESS FAKERY

While we've all come to expect shameless behavior on the part of the Left, they scaled new lows this past week with their feigned, bogus tears regarding the passing of Senator John McCain.

This week, McCain has been the epitome of Republican virtue and the embodiment of American patriotism.

Uh huh.

The Left would love for you to forget that not only did they collectively spit on Americans like McCain who served in the Vietnam conflict, they set out to destroy McCain in 2008 with the vilest attacks levied on a political candidate in perhaps all of American history.

Has anyone forgotten Hanoi Jane sitting on the anti-aircraft battery?

The vicious attacks on returning heroes, calling them baby killers?

The high-tailing to Canada and the burning of draft cards?

What McCain endured as a presidential candidate was just as vile and appalling.

The very democrats who rushed to salute McCain this week just ten years ago were raising both subtle and explicit questions about his physical and mental fitness to be president, with whispers about what his military service, and time as a POW, did to him.

Here's a sampling of what Leftists and Democrats had to say about McCain back in 2008:

"Getting shot down, tortured and then doing propaganda for the enemy is not command experience."

On Sunday, McCain's campaign issued a pair of outraged statements after retired general and Barack Obama supporter Wesley Clark said he didn't think that McCain's service as a fighter pilot and prisoner of war was relevant to running the country.

Critics have accused McCain of war crimes for bombing targets in Hanoi in the 1960s. A widely read liberal blog on Sunday accused McCain of "disloyalty" during his captivity in Vietnam for his coerced participation in propaganda films and interviews after he had been tortured.

"The ultimate sadness is that, here, in the 21st century, running for re-election, he shows more fear of J.D. Hayworth than he showed toward his captors in North Vietnam."

*The media also attacked him personally. A book about the senator claimed he called his wife Cindy "you c*nt" and told her she wore "makeup like a trollop." It was also rumored that he joked Chelsea Clinton was so ugly because her father was former Attorney General Janet Reno. He was also said to have bragged about his sexual conquests and sexist double standards.*

McCain – Mentally Unstable and Out of Control, says liberal Daily

Kos and Huffington Post, when referring to McCain while challenging Obama.

McCain – Questionable temperament and unstable judgment says The Washington Post in 2008 when challenging Obama.

McCain – Speculation by liberal media that he could go insane if elected President in 2008, by liberal Slate. You did read that right. Insane!

McCain – “Too damned crazy to be trusted with the Presidency” Thomas Ricks in Foreign Policy, a quotation from 2008 published in 2010 when McCain was critical of Obama’s defense policy. Or lack thereof.

This publication considers John S. McCain to be a true hero and patriot.

His service to the country can’t be denied.

Rest in Peace.

September 7th, 2018

Quote of the Week: "I would've liked to see 60 votes, no matter what the judge is. I don't think we should've made that change, when we look back at it."

Senator Amy Klobuchar, expressing senate Democrats' buyer's remorse regarding the elimination of the filibuster for judicial nominees

Editor's Note: Another liberal idea that seemed good at the time. A weapon that looked great when pointed at others, but not so great when pointed at them.

In This Issue:

1. Those Nasty, Feckless Democrats.

THOSE NASTY, FECKLESS DEMOCRATS

The viciousness, fecklessness, and nihilism of Democrats was on full display this week across our Great Nation.

From the Swamp to the liberal bastions on the West Coast, where homeless camps and dirty needles litter the landscape, the ends-justify-the-means mantra of the Left has been front and center.

Let's start with the food fight known as the Senate confirmation hearings for a Supreme Court justice.

The hearings for Judge Brett Kavanaugh opened with an intentional, choreographed circus designed to disrupt the hearing and promote an atmosphere of chaos and doubt.

In short, the Democrats sought to take the focus off a thoughtful discussion of Kavanaugh's qualifications and instead turn the hearings into the kind of emotional, dog whistle kind of food fight that motivates much of the liberal base.

If the debate was about his intelligence, temperament, or character, there would be no debate.

Brett Kavanaugh has earned a "well-qualified" rating from the American Bar Association and no evidence has been presented that he lacks the qualities or talents required of a Supreme Court Justice.

Instead, the liberals have engaged in distractions like complaining about the lack of documents presented to the committee, even though the number produced is exponentially higher than what was produced for recent nominees like Justice Kagan or Justice Sotomayor.

Then there is the spectacle of Sen. Cory Booker threatening to intentionally release privileged documents to the public.

It would be a slimy move, an egregious violation of Senate rules, a slap in the face to the institution, all done in the name of placing ideology and partisanship above senatorial duties and his oath of office.

Of course, this charade is really about abortion.

Liberals are freaking out that Kavanaugh will provide a critical majority to overturn the judge-made law that created a federal right to abortion out of whole cloth.

Whether one supports or opposes abortion, it is an undeniable example of bad law and should be overturned.

Essentially, *Roe v. Wade* is premised on a legal fiction.

The court in *Roe* “discovered” what it termed a “penumbra” of privacy “rights” that included the right to an abortion.

Nowhere in the text of our federal Constitution can one find the word “penumbra” or any reference to a penumbra, or any reference to abortion.

Moreover, there is no history whatsoever of the Founding Fathers speaking to the issue of abortion during their deliberations.

Not surprisingly, Publius didn’t refer to abortion or a penumbra of privacy issues in any of the *Federalist Papers*.

Judge-made law.

It is another sad manifestation of the state of our political institutions that the Democrats made up their minds a long time ago that they would oppose the nomination of Judge Kavanaugh on naked political grounds instead of considering his qualifications.

The Harry Reid chicken has once again come home to roost.

Also this week we saw the spectacle of the left-leaning New York Times publishing an anonymous op-ed from a self-described “senior” White House official who wrote of intentionally working against President Trump.

First, it’s appalling that the Times would publish an anonymous piece unvetted for veracity or credibility.

Readers are deprived of the ability to judge the credibility of the author since we don’t know who it is.

What we do know is that the person who wrote the piece (if he/she is real, if the piece is true) is utterly lacking in character and integrity.

Any employee of an organization owes a duty of loyalty to the organization.

They have a duty to do their best to support the organization and further the mission.

That this person would work to undermine the White House and collect a pay check makes that person a disloyal clown utterly lacking in character and integrity.

If one doesn’t agree with the mission and agenda of the White House, the proper response is to resign and move on.

If you want to “resist” the Trump agenda, go work for one of the countless leftist organizations out there.

George Soros and Tom Steyer are writing checks. Go collect one.

Right here in Minnesota, we have our own feckless Democrats behaving badly.

Exhibit “A” is a trio of outright lies the DFL has perpetrated on voters via misleading, untrue attack mailers.

Authorized by House DFL leader Melissa Hortman, the ads have been roundly debunked by neutral analysts as untrue. Or, put another way, lies.

One of those attack ads said Republicans gave themselves a huge pay raise.

Not true. Legislative pay is now essentially set by an independent board that was set up through a voter-approved amendment to the state constitution.

Even the Star Tribune said of the ads, “That charge is not only false: It flies in the face of a constitutional change that DFLers engineered.”

Another hit piece claimed that Republicans “voted to give big businesses a \$1.3 billion tax break.”

KSTP news gave this hit piece an “F” rating on their political “truth test.”

The ends justify the means for the Left.

And how about Dean Phillips, the booze magnate running for Congress.

He is out on the campaign trail talking about the importance of universal health care.

Too bad he didn’t offer the same to his employees.

Profits over people?

And Angie Craig? She’s the former corporate fat cat who raked in big dollars while her medical device employer was laying off people.

We thought that only happened at Bain Capital.

And where is Keith Ellison these days?

We surmise that “believe her” is merely another example of situational ethics.

Believe her, but only when she accuses a Republican.

And some people wonder how Donald Trump got elected.

September 14th, 2018

Factoid of the Week: California has the highest poverty rate, 19%, of any state in the nation.

Quote of the Week: "There's a difference in how some of our leadership talk about how we should handle all of this. They say, 'Maxine, please don't say impeachment anymore.' And when they say that, I say 'impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment.' All I can think about is I'm going to get him."

- Rep. Maxine Waters (D - CA 43)

Quote of the Week: "Joe Radinovich wants to go to Congress to make laws, but he's spent his life running from the law."

- Michael Byerly, Congressional Leadership Fund

In This Issue:

1. Those Tricky, Mean Liberals;
2. Free Stuff!*

THOSE TRICKY, MEAN LIBERALS

It just never ends. Each week, the Watchdog could write a column devoted to the ways liberals embarrass themselves with behavior that is boorish, sometimes criminal, and always hypocritical as compared to their high-minded rhetoric.

Let's start over in Minnesota's Third Congressional District, where booze magnate Dean Phillips, running against incumbent Erik Paulsen, is working hard to portray himself as a moderate, centrist, regular guy who only wants to drink coffee with America, optimistic that our sprint towards ruin will be arrested if only we can find some good arabica beans and a quiet table.

The focus groups and finger-in-the-wind polling must be telling him that healthcare is an important chanting point, as Phillips is piously telling us unwashed masses that healthcare is a right, probably falling under that same "penumbra" in the constitution that finds a constitutional right to an abortion and gay marriage.

There's only problem.

Tricky Dean didn't provide healthcare to his own employees.

Oops.

Phillips opened a coffee shop that apparently couldn't be troubled to offer health insurance to employees.

In an interview, Forbes magazine asked, "Does the coffee shop you've started offer health insurance?"

Phillips answered, "No, we don't. We are contemplating a pretty significant expansion, which would necessitate a reinvestigation of that, but right now, we're just a single coffee shop with a handful of employees, and that's something we'll assess moving forward."

We guess those millions in inherited wealth he enjoys just couldn't be shared with employees to provide them with health care.

Can you imagine the outcry if Phillips was Republican?

Mark Dayton, Angie Craig, and Dean Phillips. Filth rich millionaires who all get a free pass from the liberal media.

Let's next ravel north, to the state's Eighth Congressional District, where the DFL is running a straight out criminal as their candidate.

A new ad running in the district, from the Congressional Leadership Fund (CLF), shows that Radinovich has had 18 run ins with the criminal justice system, including 5 suspensions of his driver's license (maybe he couldn't get it renewed, thanks to Mark Dayton's broken system?), unpaid fines, 30 traffic tickets, and even a bust for drug paraphernalia.

Far from being Congressman Radinovich, it looks like Old Joe is more like Stoner Joe.

His loser criminal record stands in stark contrast to Pete Stauber's sterling record as a career police officer.

One man runs from the law, the other spent a career risking his life to enforce it.

The other good laugh here is how the Democrats missed Stoner Joe's record.

Uncovering his lengthy criminal record didn't require the Hardy Boys or even Scooby Doo.

A basic Internet search in the right places would have revealed Stoner Joe's water bong conviction and the other instances of lawlessness.

The same professionalism that has caused the MNLARS license fiasco is present in the DFL party structure as well.

The Republicans will enjoy this district as a pick-up opportunity this November.

And finally, our Liberal friends disgraced themselves this week by shutting down a public meeting of the state's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) by shouting down, intimidating, and menacing the PUC board members as they attempted to conduct the taxpayer's business, specifically the permitting process for the replacement of the Line 3 pipeline.

The shutdown of the PUC, unfortunately, is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to violence and intimidation regarding Line 3.

The same hooligans who shut down the meeting have pledged to make the Line 3 job site just as violent and bloody as the Dakota Access Pipeline site.

Hopefully, law enforcement makes this the last time the PUC is prevented from doing its job.

More importantly, let's hope law enforcement is prepared to shut down the threatened violence before it starts.

FREE STUFF!*

A wolf in sheep's clothing. Democrats have become adept over the generations at finding skilled candidates who appear to be one thing but underneath are the real thing – for them.

Tim Walz is just such a candidate. The rural guy. The paunchy, avuncular middle-aged white dude who would be at home drinking a Schmidt on your front porch. The dog-faced grunt. The school teacher with the dated clothes.

He's also just another liberal. Another tax and spender. Another culture warrior.

Walz has already compiled an impressively expensive list of spending promises made to secure the votes of various DFL constituencies that demand, and often get, government succor.

Take the recent promise of "free college" for all.

This kind of pandering flies in the face of popular opinion and a lot of common sense.

Our society is finally re-discovering the value of vocations like the skilled trades and other career paths that don't require a college degree.

Our society is finally waking up to the bad public policy that pushes every young person into taking on mountains of debt, often in the name of degrees that have no real value to our society and especially our economy.

So Walz promises "free" college, to the tune of \$265 million per year.

Why? Probably because the faculty union at the state colleges and universities is backing Walz and nothing guarantees their jobs more than an endless funding stream, paid for by someone else.

Think about the lack of accountability inherent in having junior at college at someone else's expense.

If junior fails out, no big deal.

If the professor is a dud, not big deal. But then again, tenure has already solved that "problem."

Then you throw on universal pre-kindergarten at a half-billion per year.

And then reducing class sizes, which demands more teachers and more school buildings. Cha-ching.

How about \$300 million to wire up a few rural homes with broadband?

Goodness knows folks in Rock County deserve access to Pornhub.

How about state healthcare programs for all? That requires continuing the \$1.3 billion sick tax to help subsidize the costs.

On top of all that is that inconvenient truth that Minnesota is already a high-tax state.

Tim Walz seems to be quite interested in turning Minnesota into New York or California.

The only problem is that we're landlocked, don't have Broadway, and the winter is Arctic.

If there was any honesty in campaigning, Walz would host an event with Bernie Sanders.

True bros.

September 21st, 2018

Quote of the Week: "It's just absolutely nuts. I never saw Brett act that way."

- Mark Judge, the only named eyewitness to the alleged Brett Kavanaugh assault

Quote of the Week: "I have no memory of this alleged incident. Brett Kavanaugh and I were friends in high school but I do not recall the party described in Dr. Ford's letter. More to the point, I never saw Brett act in the manner Dr. Ford describes."

- Mark Judge

Quote of the Week: "I Can't spare this man. He fights!"

- Abraham Lincoln on General Grant

In This Issue:

1. The Fight;
2. Gallows Polls;
3. AFL-CIO-DUM

THE FIGHT

The Brett Kavanaugh confirmation has, without any shadow of a doubt, demonstrated what the Democrats are all about.

The process has laid bare their nihilistic, collectivist, raw power dogma.

We all know that the decades-old allegation against Judge Kavanaugh aren't about what is alleged to have happened.

It's all about destroying Brett Kavanaugh.

It's about de-legitimizing the man and the Supreme Court.

It's about sullyng the man and the institution.

We know all about the dubious nature of the allegation.

Decades old, uncorroborated, undiscovered through previous vettings of Judge Kavanaugh, gathered dust for months on Senator Feinstein's desk, the FBI claiming that such an allegation falls outside their investigative purview.

If you thought our modern politics was something less than blood sport, think again.

We have the spectacle of Minnesota's own Senator Tina Smith declaring her opposition to Kavanaugh while declaring her unwavering support for Keith Ellison, a man credibly accused of both misogyny and anti-Semitism.

We have the spectacle of other Democrat senators claiming that Kavanaugh should withdraw, "based on what we know," which is next to nothing.

We have the spectacle of these senators calling on the FBI to conduct an "investigation" even though there is no allegation of a federal crime and is it well-settled that the FBI has nothing to do with confirmations other than conducting basic background checks.

We have the spectacle of an allegation unleashed months after Democrats became aware of it.

Put another way, there is no longer even a pretense of acting in the public interest.

It's only about delaying, obstructing, sullyng, staining, destroying.

This confirmation fight proves, yet again, why Donald Trump is so enormously popular with Republicans, despite policy differences and the desire of many of his party that he lay off the Twitter a bit.

In short, he fights. Party faithful understand that we are locked in a battle over the very soul of our country.

They are sick and tired of their elected officials bringing a plastic spork to this gun fight.

Trump fights. Trump gets it. Trump, despite the mainstream media protestations, wins far more than he loses.

At this time in our politics, Republicans want fighters who match the Democrats blow for blow.

Brett Kavanaugh's persecution proves the point.

Republicans can't spare Donald Trump. He fights.

GALLOWS POLLS

Polls run rampant in our society and become less reliable by the day.

Having said that, they are nonetheless interesting and provide a window into our thinking, at least at some level.

That window into our thinking generally stands for the proposition that we are really unsuited for self-governance.

Take the recent Star Tribune poll dealing with President Trump, his favorability and standing regarding the issues of the day.

In the poll, 40% of respondents disapproved of the president's handling of jobs and the economy.

Are you kidding us?

Like or dislike Trump, the economy is firing on all cylinders. Jobs are in great supply, the GDP is way up, and inflation is low.

If you're unhappy about the economy, you are either blinded by Trump Derangement Syndrome or a low-functioning person with less than a rudimentary understanding of economics.

In fact, a recent Gallup poll showed that economy, as an issue of voter concern, had dropped to its lowest level ever.

Only 12% of respondents listed "jobs and the economy" as an issue of concern.

Finally, the Watchdog would be remiss if we didn't include at least one question from the famous (infamous?) State Fair Poll from the recently concluded Great Minnesota Get Together.

Question: Should adults between the ages of 18 and 60 – who do not have a

disability and are not the sole caregivers of a child or incapacitated family member – be required to work at least 80 hours per month in order to receive Medicaid benefits?

Astoundingly, a plurality of 46.5% of respondents said “no.”

Really? We have thousands of Minnesotans who think it’s okay to be on welfare as an able-bodied adult with no caregiver responsibilities and not work?

Beam us up, Scotty. There’s no intelligent life down here.

AFL-CIO-DUM

As readers know, some unions are way out there, acting as little more than mouthpieces for the Democrats and pursuing whacky issues that have nothing to do with the terms and conditions of employment for their membership.

The AFL-CIO is one of those organizations.

The Minnesota chapter recently released their 2018 legislative report.

Among the votes “scored” by them was the “freeway protest bill” that raised penalties for those who block freeways, airports and other critical transportation corridors in the name of some pet political cause.

One can’t help but wonder what shutting down freeways has to do with wages or working conditions for their members.

Oh, yeah. It doesn’t, much like many of the other issues they push down at the Capitol.

This is one reason why groups like this have become a joke, a joke that will soon be on them as public employees vote with their paychecks and leave the union, courtesy of their liberation under the recent *Janus* Supreme Court decision.

Perhaps union dues being spent on irrelevant issues like freeway shutdown bills is a reason why some of those thousands will soon leave.

And speaking of their hardcore partisanship, it probably won’t surprise readers to learn that the AFL-CIO of Minnesota didn’t endorse a single Republican this year at the state or federal level.

Not a single one.

But they saw fit to endorse Keith Ellison. In fact, their web site proudly proclaims the fact.

They claim to be the “voice of working people.”

No, they at best are the voice of working liberal people, who probably aren't working.

They likely those able-bodied adults who don't have any work requirements.

Anyone out there still wondering how Donald Trump got elected?

September 28th, 2018

Quote of the Week: “We look upon the importation of communistic and like European notions as abominations. Their notions and theories that the government should be paternal and take care of the welfare of its subjects and provide them with labor, is un-American. It is the form in which oppression has had its most disastrous scope in the world. The American doctrine is that it is the duty of the government merely to protect the people while they are taking care of themselves – nothing more than that. ‘Hands off,’ we say to the government. ‘See to it that we are protected in our rights and our individuality. No more than that.’”

- Henry Ward Beecher, 1874

Quote of the Week: “Forty-five percent of Americans now have a favorable view of the Republican Party, a nine-point gain from last September's 36%. It is the party's most positive image since it registered 47% in January 2011, shortly after taking control of the House in the 2010 midterm elections. Forty-four percent give the Democratic Party a favorable rating.”

- Gallup, 9/24/18

Quote of the Week: “I’ve spent 40-plus years up here doing every goddamn thing I could to bring jobs to the Iron Range with one exception: Twin Metals. Everything else I’ve supported.”

- Governor Mark Dayton

Editor’s Note: Stay classy, governor. And, no, you didn’t support everything. If you did, we would be building both the Sandpiper and the Line 3 pipelines today.

Factoid of the Week: Denise Specht, President of Education Minnesota makes over \$206,000 a year. Specht's gross salary increased \$5,794 in 2016. Almost 70 executives and other staff at Education Minnesota make over \$100,000 in salary. The union has 26 lobbyists registered with the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board.

In This Issue:

1. Opting Out;
2. Dayton Fails Again;
3. The Accuser.

OPTING OUT

Attention public school teachers. In the wake of the seminal *Janus* Supreme Court

decision (which declared that public employees can no longer be compelled to belong to a union), there have been various roadblocks thrown in the way of teachers who want to exercise their constitutional right to be free from coerced union dues and membership.

Education Minnesota, the teachers' union, will only allow teachers to opt out the union during a very narrow window, September 24-30. In short, you are running out of time to exercise your First Amendment rights.

Moreover, it is being reported that some teachers attempting to opt out are being told that they first need to meet with a union representative before opting out.

It isn't clear if this is an official policy position of Education Minnesota or if this misinformation is coming from other quarters. In any case, it is untrue. No meeting is required prior to opting out.

Of course, this narrow window (of dubious constitutionality) is designed to make it difficult for teachers to opt out of the union and is emblematic of the arrogance and unresponsiveness that will cause so many teachers to stop paying union dues that they feel offer zero return.

It will be interesting to see how Education Minnesota adapts to the new reality of no longer possessing the tool of coerced membership to keep numbers high and coffers filled.

Will the union learn to be a value-added proposition to members, or will it simply become a small band of hard-core believers who blame a vast, right-wing conspiracy for their problems?

We bet on the latter.

Teachers and interested persons can read more about all of this at www.educatedteachersmn.com to learn more.

This web site, chock full of great information, is a product of our friends over at the Center of the American Experiment (CAE), Minnesota's premier conservative think tank.

Kudos to CAE for having the foresight – and compassion – to assist educators who are being bombarded with false and misleading information regarding their sacred

First Amendment rights as well as their sacred right to offer their labor in an environment free from coercion and intimidation.

And speaking of *Janus*, it will also be interesting to see how the exodus of dues paying members will affect the massive political spending in which these unions engage every election cycle.

That amount shouldn't be underestimated.

Between 2014 and 2017, public sector unions in Minnesota shelled out \$73 million in donations to state level candidates and committees, a sum that excludes federal giving and independent expenditures.

That amount comprised 7.5% of all political donations of that type in Minnesota during that time frame, which was the highest percentage in any state in the nation, surpassing other high-density union states like California (6.5%), New York (5%), and Illinois (4%).

Make no mistake, the Supreme Court's liberation of public employees from the yoke of public unions will hurt the partisan political operations of these unions and their DFL beneficiaries.

DAYTON FAILS AGAIN

It's just mind-blowing to consider that Republicans in Minnesota are fighting so hard to retain legislative majorities and hold congressional seats in the Second and Third districts.

Faith in the competency of government is at an all-time low, and Democrats are offering what they always offer – more government.

The epitome of failed government is none other than Mark B. Dayton, who is still the state's chief executive until the next guy (go Jeff Johnson) can be sworn in.

While the list of Dayton's failures is long and ignoble, the MNLARS fiasco continues to stand out as a particularly epic failure.

The system's problems have been so pronounced and ongoing, the legislature prevailed upon the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA), a non-partisan investigative agency, to examine the system to identify issues and suggest solutions.

The OLA this week released their long-awaited report, finding, among other problems, that the system has been overcharging citizens for the taxes they pay to register a vehicle.

What is MNLARS? The Minnesota Licensing and Registration System (MNLARS) is Minnesota's system to process a wide variety and large number of motor vehicle transactions, such as vehicle registrations and license plate purchases. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Driver and Vehicle Services Division administers motor vehicle services statewide for residents.

In July of 2017, the Dayton Administration implemented MNLARS, which has been a total disaster ever since.

Over \$90 million has been spent on the failed program, enough to buy another Senate Office Building for DFL senators.

And while the \$90 million number is shocking, it's not the end, with Dayton having been rebuffed in the legislative session regarding his request for tens of millions more.

More troubling, no one even knows what is needed to fix the system or how much the fix will cost.

Back to the OLA report. As mentioned above, the report uncovered problems with taxpayers being charged inaccurate registration taxes when they register a recently purchased vehicle, often times being over-charged.

Said the report, "MNLARS appears to have generally calculated certain types of transactions correctly, such as wheelage tax, sales tax, and most license plate transactions. However, we found significant inaccuracies in other transactions, such as vehicle registration transactions for newly registered passenger vehicles and heavy non-passenger vehicles."

Those "significant inaccuracies" have produced an error rate that for some categories of vehicles runs upwards of a whopping 46% of transactions.

This is yet another black eye for Dayton, the bureaucracy, and the belief of some that Minnesota government is some sort of exception to inefficiency and inertia that plagues government in general.

THE ACCUSER

As this issue goes to press, the Senate Judiciary Committee has yet to hear from Judge Kavanaugh and his accuser regarding allegations that he groped her at a high school gathering 36 years ago.

As you read this issue, the Committee should have conducted that hearing.

Here are some of the issues that we would like to see the committee address regarding those accusations.

First, his accuser can't remember the house where the alleged assault took place, who owned the house, the address, or even the neighborhood.

Second, she can't remember the even the year the alleged assault took place.

Third, every witness named by the accuser as having been present at the party has no recollection of such a gathering, including one witness the accuser describes as a "lifelong friend."

In fact, that friend, Lleland Keyser through her attorney has stated, "Simply put, Ms. Keyser does not know Mr. Kavanaugh and she has no recollection of ever being at a party or gathering where he was present, with or without Dr. Ford."

Moreover, two of the named witnesses have denied any recollection of such a gathering in interviews with committee investigators, denying having any recollections under penalty of perjury.

Fourth, the accuser brought forward the allegations in a peculiar manner, having contacted the Washington Post "tip line" and certain Judiciary Committee Democrats. Never before had the allegations been made over the course of 36 years and despite the fact that Brett Kavanaugh had been in the public spotlight before, having served in a White House and been appointed a federal judge.

Fifth, the accuser's political affiliations make the point immediately above more suspicious. The accuser is a democrat who has marched against President Trump and has hired a well-known democrat activist attorney.

With all the talk of "fairness" among liberals, it's important to remember that Judge Kavanaugh is also entitled to fairness and due process.

Already, this thin allegation wouldn't be taken up by any respectable prosecutor in the country.

At this point, it is hard for any objective person to see these allegations as anything other than a smear campaign designed to wound Judge Kavanaugh, diminish the credibility of a conservative Supreme Court majority, and hurt Republicans at the polls in November.

October 5th, 2018

Quote of the Week: “Democrats may be trying to move the goalposts every five minutes, but their goal has not moved an inch. They will not be satisfied unless they bring down Judge Kavanaugh’s nomination.”

- Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)

Quote of the Week: “This change was made unilaterally by Democrats in the Dayton administration, without legislative approval, and I have questions about its legality. More importantly, I’m concerned that law enforcement may not have been consulted. Will this change hamper law enforcement’s ability to properly identify suspects, or hinder the investigative process in any way? The public deserves answers to these questions, or at least a dialogue about the potential repercussions.”

- Sen. Scott Newman (R-Hutchinson), Chairman of the MN Senate Transportation Committee, on the decision to allow Minnesotans to check “X” on a driver’s license, as opposed to “M” or “F”

Factoid of the Week: In the most recent reporting period, the Minnesota House DFL Caucus reported \$2.7 million in cash contributions. Of those contributions, nearly \$1 million came from public sector unions.

Editor’s Note: The Watchdog will not publish next week, October 12th, as the staff will be on the annual Fall Retreat, debating topics such as Keith Ellison’s free pass from the DFL, when Governor Dayton will fix MNLARS, and exactly how many genders can be discovered.

In This Issue:

1. Dark Ages.

DARK AGES

Readers are well-ware of the titanic political struggle over the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation.

Readers know that the fight has nothing to do with allegations against him, but rather has everything to do with simply working to keep him off the High Court, regardless of the significant collateral damage to Kavanaugh’s reputation, the Senate, and the Supreme Court itself.

Democrats couldn’t care less about destroying a man’s reputation or undermining

faith in our governing institutions.

First, liberals have never cared about individual rights. The rule of the collective has always been far more important. After all, liberalism-socialism-communism-totalitarianism is simply a continuum premised upon collectivist rule and enslavement of people.

Think that's a bit extreme? Name the liberal policy initiative not underpinned by coercion, by the threat of negative government sanction if one doesn't want to participate.

Second, liberals don't care about undermining faith in political institutions because citizen support of those institutions is a concept for believers in individual liberties.

Liberals would force citizens to live under the yoke of collectivism, so it doesn't matter if citizens support those institutions. Masters don't care what the enslaved think or feel.

Just like forced unionization. Public employee unions hemorrhage membership when given their freedom just like totalitarian regimes hemorrhage citizens when escape becomes possible.

Individuals don't matter to them, so individuals leave when offered a choice.

Take a look at Wisconsin's teacher union membership numbers after Governor Walker liberated most public employees from the yoke of compulsory union membership.

The same thing will surely happen here in Minnesota and around the country, thanks to the Supreme Court liberating every public employee, regardless of the state where they work.

But we won't know Minnesota's numbers, at least for public school teachers, for a long time.

Education Minnesota has already declared that they won't reveal membership numbers and the federal reporting that requires it won't provide a full picture until about 2020, thanks to the timing of the reports.

More importantly, the Rule of Law itself is under assault and at risk of becoming

collateral damage in the Kavanaugh hearings.

Putting aside all the rhetoric and emotion, the simple fact remains that all three allegations against him remain just that – raw accusations.

Despite the utter lack of corroborating evidence, the persecution continues.

This, despite the fact that two out of the three allegations have essentially disappeared.

This, despite the fact that the primary accuser, Dr. Ford, can't remember even the slightest essential details of her claim.

There isn't a prosecutor in any county in America who would bring charges under these circumstances.

There isn't a jury in America that would convict.

Yet the accused stands under a cloud of angry threats, his reputation in tatters, his chance to realize a lifetime of hard-work resulting in ascension to the nation's highest court in doubt.

Day after day, the assault continues, the liberals maximizing their opportunity to goon it up, and sully the entire process in a stark display of the pursuit of power.

While Republicans in the Senate are doing their best to manage the process while dealing with Democrat stool pigeons like Flake, Collins, and Murkowski, the delay has only helped their foes.

It's not as if some development during this delay will cause any Democrat senator to change his mind.

Those minds have been made up.

The only calculation left is for some of those Democrats to decide if opposing Kavanaugh helps or hurts re-election. We're looking at you, Sen. Manchin and Sen. Heitkamp.

The Rule of Law isn't the only bedrock American value under a full-frontal assault these days.

Among the most egregious attacks are those on the First Amendment.

Free speech is under assault on all fronts, but especially in academia.

It's ironic that the institutions that have traditionally been the bedrock of the free exchange of ideas have now become the scene of "speech codes" "trigger words" "safe spaces" and speakers becoming "disinvited" because a mob of Leftists has deemed their speech (and even their safety) unworthy of protection.

The same holds true for many aspects of our society, where people can be punished in various ways for simply engaging in their right to Free Speech.

Don't want to bake a cake for a gay couple? Too bad.

Want to express your religion at work? No way, unless it's a certain religion.

The suppression of certain points of view is a very intentional strategy of the Left in their quest to destroy the principles and values underpinning our society.

Another active front in this war is the battle over gender roles and gender identity.

Gay marriage is now on the same legal plane as traditional marriage.

Gender identity, which used to be a pretty simple and straightforward exercise, has become a virtual Tower of Babel, with more and more sub-groups stepping forward to claim a gender label.

We must now wade through a cacophony of ever-expanding and ever-vague gender labels, such as "non-binary", "queer", "transgender", "agender", "bi-gender", "cisgender", "demisexual", "genderqueer", "intersex", "pansexual", "skoliosexual", "third gender", "transman", "transwoman", "bigender", "BlaQueer", "furry", "gender fluid", "Non-monosexual", and "omnigender".

Again, this strategy isn't by happenstance.

You can also add the Second Amendment to that list, where the Left wants to blame guns for violence, instead of the lawlessness they have created with social policies that have destroyed families, drugged up our youth, and destroyed life-affirming values.

History shows that confiscating guns is a condition precedent to totalitarian rule.

For our gun-grabbing DFL friends, they would be well-served to remember this statistic about kids and guns.

In Minnesota last year, 349 high school sent 11,200 students to the state trap shooting tournament in Alexandria.

There wasn't a single gun-safety incident, much less outright violence.

Far from a "gun free" zone, this zone had hundreds of guns, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and all of it was wielded by young men and women – without incident.

In sum, our country is moving beyond culture wars and into a true Dark Age, where conservatives must come together and fight for the principles and values that we once took for granted, the principles and values that built a great nation.

Those principles and values aren't just under heavy assault. We're losing the battle.

Having said that, there must be faith that truth will prevail and we will once again as a nation cherish and celebrate values that include individual liberties, limited government, the First Amendment, the Second Amendment, and the affirmation of life.

Today, skies are darkening and many tough battles lay ahead.

October 19th, 2018

Quote of the Week: “When they go low, we kick them.”

- Obama Attorney General Eric Holder

Quote of the Week: “You cannot be civil with a political party that wants to destroy what you stand for, what you care about.”

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

In This Issue;

1. We’re Number 1 – or Number 50;
2. Worker Friendly – Not;
3. Jobs vs. Mobs.

WE’RE NUMBER 1 – OR NUMBER 50

It all depends upon one’s perspective. For the liberal, Minnesota is yet again number 1. For the correct thinking person, Minnesota is number 50, or dead last.

The metric of which we speak concerns the state that has earned the dubious distinction for 2018 as the “least tax friendly state.”

Liberals are no doubt ecstatic that Mark Dayton and the erstwhile DFL legislative majorities moved Minnesota to the top of the tax heap, proving progressive credentials and showing that the North Star state can out-fair-share even Vermont, California, New York, and Illinois.

This, according to Kiplinger’s annual analysis and ranking of state tax burdens.

Happy to make someone else pay for a better Minnesota, as they say.

Here’s what Kiplinger’s had to say about Minnesota’s nasty, skanky rating:

The North Star State’s top tax rate of 9.85% is one of the highest in the U.S. But what makes Minnesota really stand out—and not in a good way—is its income tax rate of 5.35% even for the state’s lowest earners.

And thanks to the federal tax overhaul, it could get worse. Minnesota uses federal

taxable income as the starting point for calculating state taxes. An estimated 300,000 Minnesotans will pay higher state taxes due to the loss of personal and dependent exemptions on their federal tax returns. Minnesota lawmakers and Gov. Mark Dayton were unable to agree on a fix during the 2018 legislative session, which ended in May. For that reason, Minnesota moves to the top of our least-friendly list.

The median property tax on Minnesota's median home value of \$191,500 is \$2,234, slightly above the average for the U.S.

Food, clothing, and prescription and nonprescription drugs are exempt from the state sales tax of 6.9%. A few cities and counties add their own local sales tax, bringing the average combined state and local sales tax rate to 7.42%. The sales tax for vehicles is 6.5%, slightly lower than the overall state sales tax, and vehicles are not subject to local sales taxes. Gas taxes are below the national average of 34 cents per gallon.

Minnesota offers some property-tax relief for qualified homeowners. Homeowners whose property taxes are high relative to their incomes are eligible for a property tax refund.

Note that Kiplinger's in particular calls out Minnesota for its bottom income tax bracket of 5.35%. which is higher than the top income tax bracket in a whopping 24 states (six states do not have an income tax).

What a total lie the DFL utters when it speaks of being the party of working people.

High bottom tax brackets, taxes on regressive items like gasoline and tobacco, proposed taxes on pain medications.

The DFL only pays lip service to the poor in order to make them dependent on government and then extract votes from them in order to keep the spigot of dependency and governmental largesse open.

There is nothing more fearful to the DFL than citizen empowerment.

That's why they oppose welfare reform, school choice, and the elimination of mandatory union dues.

The common thread is empowerment, primarily the empowerment of lower income

people.

When given choices, people often choose self-reliance and freedom, at the expense of government and those who wield governmental power – Democrats.

WORKER FRIENDLY – NOT

There is a labor dispute brewing in Washington, DC.

In many ways, the issues are rather common and mundane.

The union accuses management of not caring about their employees, as evidenced by management proposing a three-year wage freeze, cuts to sick leave benefits, a reduction in seniority rights, and fewer guaranteed work hours.

In one way, this dispute is really unique.

It's unique in the sense that management is a union. In fact, it's America's largest union, the AFL-CIO.

That's right. The AFL-CIO is accused of being a greedy, uncaring employer.

Those feelings have been expressed by the union that represents employees of the AFL-CIO who work at AFL-CIO headquarters, doing office and administrative work.

The union voted to authorize a strike after AFL-CIO management unilaterally imposed the contract containing the wage freeze and reduction in benefits.

A spokesman for the workers' union said, "It's absolutely hypocritical. How do we expect people to take us seriously when we're not providing employees the benefits we think our union members need?"

How utterly ironic, and rich, to see a union that routinely blasts corporations for unfair worker treatment putting the screws to the janitors, secretaries, and other staff members who toil on behalf of AFL-CIO bigwigs.

Apparently, the AFL-CIO doesn't practice what it preaches.

How shocking.

JOBS VS. MOBS

That's the choice this election – jobs vs. mobs.

With the DFL, it's all about mobs and tomfoolery.

With the GOP, it's all about jobs and so much winning.

Here in Minnesota, we have mobs getting violent with Republican legislative candidates.

We have the spectacle of Senator Elizabeth Warren trying to claim she's Native American by releasing a DNA test that shows she very likely has less of that blood than the average American!

The media ignores the outrageous statements made by Hillary Clinton that Monica Lewinsky wasn't sexually abused by President Bill Clinton, dismissing the charge by saying that Lewinsky "was an adult."

Lewinsky was a 22 year-old White House intern, many years junior the president.

More importantly, the president was in her chain of supervision, creating a massive imbalance of power and authority, making Lewinsky's age totally irrelevant.

Then you have Maxine Waters and Nancy Pelosi leading their own mob in Congress, promising nothing more than partisan investigations and gridlock should they win.

It would be Portland in every corner of America if this crew wins.

Or you can go Republican and win.

A booming stock market.

Higher wages, more take home pay.

More jobs open than people looking to work.

22 federal regulations repealed for every 1 created.

Renegotiated trade deals.

America once again at the top of economic hill.

Economic confidence at an all-time high.

3 million jobs created.

Hostages returned, renewed respect for America on the world stage.

Conservative judges appointed who will interpret law, not make it.

So much winning.

October 26, 2018

Quote of the Week: "Tim Walz loves to talk about One Minnesota. He wants One California folks. Actually, he wants One Venezuela."

- Jeff Johnson

Quote of the Week: "We conducted an outside, independent investigation, and that investigation showed we could not substantiate her claim of domestic abuse. And so I do not believe her, I believe our investigation."

- Ken Martin, DFL State Chairman, on Keith Ellison's accuser

Factoid of the Week: More than half of Americans receive more money in various types of government transfer payments (Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, Social Security) than they pay in federal taxes.

In This Issue:

1. #Metoo = #MetooGOP;
2. Tim Walz and the Triple Lindy;
3. State of the Race.

#METOO = #METOOGOP

That didn't take long. The Democrat's "Believe Her" and "Me Too" movement has been exposed as little more than a cynical, cruel ploy to damage or destroy political opponents.

It is crystal clear that Democrats have fecklessly weaponized the very serious subject of sexual harassment and assault for raw political gain.

With Brett Kavanaugh confirmed, the plaintive cries to "believe her" have gone strangely silent.

With no GOP targets on the front burner, the volume has been turned down, especially since the weapon is now focused on Democrats like Keith Ellison.

In fact, the hypocrisy is shameless and appalling.

The faces of Minnesota's feminist movement, including Amy Klobuchar, Tina Smith, and erstwhile gubernatorial candidate Erin Murphy (she of the corny and childish

“politics of joy” campaign) have all voiced their support for Keith Ellison and his campaign for attorney general.

There is no shortage of photos and video of these leaders happily standing with this credibly accused assaulter and friend of anti-Semites.

You also have the spectacle of a paunchy, bloated DFL chairman Ken Martin telling us he doesn't believe her. Instead, we are implausibly expected to believe the DFL's own “outside” investigation of the matter.

Yes, the fox has definitely concluded that there is no evidence he was in the hen house on the night in question.

Worse, the Watchdog has spoken with multiple DFL activists and opinion leaders who have privately conceded that the importance of winning the attorney general's office outweighs the interests of the accuser and requires overlooking this and other inconvenient matters regarding Keith Ellison.

What a turn of events.

Just weeks ago, we were told that Brett Kavanaugh was unfit to serve on the nation's highest court because he was accused of an incident that occurred 30 years prior, was never reported to law enforcement, couldn't be corroborated in any manner by multiple named witnesses, during a month, season, and year that couldn't be recalled, in a home that the accuser couldn't name in a neighborhood the accuser couldn't name.

The contrast between the way Democrats have treated Kavanaugh versus Ellison is one of the most blatant instances of cynical hypocrisy we've ever seen out of Democrats, and that's saying a lot. A hell of a lot.

Chalk this up to another self-inflicted wound for the DFL this cycle.

The sense of revulsion and disgust Republican and independent voters feel will deliver the first Republican Minnesota attorney general in over 45 years.

Moreover, many other races will be won by Republicans who will win by a margin that can be attributed to energized voters sending a message about the way the DFL has weaponized the issue.

TIM WALZ AND THE TRIPLE LINDY

Memo to the Walz campaign: your candidate is vaporizing his narrative with all the flip-flops on key issues.

There was more verbal gymnastics from Tim Walz this week as he struggled to articulate his position on a \$15 minimum wage.

Walz turned a routine question about the issue into a day-long brush fire after he hemmed and hawed about wage when his own campaign web site clearly states his support for such a public policy.

Unfortunately for Walz, this is turning into a narrative in and of itself.

On issues large and small, Walz has consistently contorted himself into a rhetorical pretzel, trying to appease the disparate and conflicted constituencies of today's DFL.

First it was guns. The long-time NRA champion and A+ rated member of Congress suddenly repudiated the NRA once he discovered that the Urban Liberal Elite had a lot to say about who gets to run for governor on the DFL ticket.

As if the Second Amendment is some sort of nebulous, vague public policy subject that is open to nuanced positions.

You're for the Second Amendment or you aren't.

Then it was pipelines and mining.

Walz himself claims to support mining and pipelines.

Having said that, he chose a running mate who has vocally and passionately protested both, going so far as to testify against pipelines, on the record, at the Public Utilities Commission.

Then there's the small issue of taxes. Walz has promised the never-satisfied spending crowd that he will fund their every Big Government wish.

On the other hand, he recently said he wouldn't raise taxes.

Walz is either lying or he's in over his head.

If he wins, someone is going to be the victim of a big lie.

Either he's going to confiscate guns or he's going to protect the Second Amendment.

Someone is getting lied to.

He's either going to approve pipelines and mining or he's going to obstruct.

Someone is going to be mighty ticked off – either the construction trade unions that backed him to the hilt or the environmental crowd that has joined his running mate in protesting these projects.

He's either going to raise taxes or he's going to backtrack on the orgy of increased spending he's promised.

In the short term, he's damaging the carefully crafted image of the paunchy, balding avuncular middle-aged white dude in flannel who shoots straight and tells it like it is.

Instead, he's more and more like a typical politician telling people what they want to hear. He's looking like a man who isn't ready for prime time, discovering that mollifying the diverse and vocal DFL base state-wide is a lot harder than representing a homogeneous congressional district united by ag issues and common mores and folkways.

Walz has provided Jeff Johnson with a great closing argument to hammer Walz as a typical politician. He's a flip-flopper who will say anything to anyone.

And what will he do as governor? Who knows. All we know is that we can't trust him because he hasn't been upfront about what he will do on critical issues like taxes, spending, pipelines, mining, healthcare, and the Second Amendment.

The good news is that years ago, a willing media would have shielded him from these equivocations by saying nothing.

In the digital age, Johnson has alternative platforms to call him out.

STATE OF THE RACE

The Watchdog has spoken to both GOP and DFL contacts this week regarding

Minnesota House races.

What's most interesting is that it appears that the GOP continues to benefit from a political re-alignment in rural Minnesota.

Seats that were held by the DFL for generations but have gone GOP in recent cycles are being cemented as Republican.

Said one GOP operative, "There isn't a single rural seat we're concerned about keeping."*

*This statement doesn't include 14B in Saint Cloud, where incumbent Jim Knoblach has withdrawn from the race.

This confidence extends to District 5B, a Grand Rapids-based seat that has been in DFL hands for most of the past 50 years.

The DFL had high hopes for retaking the seat, especially since their candidate is highly regarded and well-known.

The race has definitely shifted to the suburbs, where the fight has focused on GOP-held seats that Hillary Clinton carried in 2016.

This publication is told that polling shows many of the seats within the margin or error, although a handful of those seats are likely gone at this point and will become DFL pick-ups.

Having said that, Republicans are confident that the path to a DFL takeover of the House is becoming narrower by the week.

While it's difficult to predict House races because of the large number often decided by razor-thin margins, it appears that there may be an abnormally large amount decided by less than 1%.

For now, it looks like the fight for the House has narrowed to districts 33B,36A,38B, 42A,44A,49A,52B,53B,54A,54B,55A,56B,and 57A.

November 2nd, 2018

Quote of the Week: "Well, I'd like to be president."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

Quote of the Week: "This ad is despicable, based on a flat-out lie and is everything people complain about in negative campaigning - it makes me sick to my stomach. To portray this young man in a political ad this way does a disservice to disabled people across the state who really do need our support. There's a special place in hell for the people who designed this ad."

- Jeff Johnson, GOP candidate for governor, referring to a special interest group ad targeting his position on health care

In This Issue:

1. Around the Horn.

AROUND THE HORN

With this being the last Watchdog edition before the election, we'll spend this week traveling around the state, digesting the latest news and gossip from key races.

BARRY'S BIG EGO

Before we get to the state level, erstwhile chief executive (and pot head) Barak "Barry" Obama should be recognized for his remarkably crass and unpresidential comments late last week.

Campaigning in Wisconsin, Obama called out Republicans and President Trump for "blatantly, repeatedly, baldly, shamelessly, lying."

That's pretty rich, coming from a guy who told us that if we liked our doctor, we could keep our doctor.

Or the guy who said that if we like our health plan, we can keep it.

Or the guy who said he wouldn't run up the federal deficit, because doing so would be "unpatriotic."

More importantly, it was a serious breach of an important protocol, that of former presidents respecting and supporting the current president, regardless of political,

policy, or stylistic differences.

Of course, Obama had to also engage his narcissism by reminding the assembled sheep that he, not Trump, is to thank for our current economic fortune.

Never mind that our economy has been pulled out of malaise because Trump reversed Obama's regulatory state and cut taxes, two things anathema to Obama.

This shameless hyper-partisanship on the part of a former president is more confirmation that Democrats have abandoned any pretense of concern for the country.

For them, it's simply about who gets to wield power.

Just like the Brett Kavanaugh affair, it shows nothing more than a zealous pursuit of power.

AG RACE

And speaking of the Brett Kavanaugh playbook, the DFL has borrowed a few pages from it in their desperate bid to elect the ultra-flawed, ultra-hateful Keith Ellison attorney general.

Doug Wardlow, Ellison's opponent, has now been accused of bullying a gay classmate back in high school – 26 years ago.

Yes, Wardlow is now being accused of bad behavior back when didn't even have a driver's license.

Sound familiar?

These allegations have never before been aired, including back in 2009, when Wardlow was a candidate for the Minnesota House (a race he won).

Suddenly, days before an election Wardlow is projected to win, allegations suddenly surface from behavior that would have happened back in his adolescence – if it happened at all.

Of course, this is a convenient distraction from Ellison's more contemporary allegations of violence against women (he has already admitted calling one woman a "bitch.") and his association with merchants of hate like Louis Farrakhan.

Wardlow's response to this Kavanaugh-like attack is worth reading:

"I categorically deny these allegations about me when I was 14 years old. I never did or said anything remotely like the things alleged—not 26 years ago when I was 14, not ever. Voters are tired of these 11th hour dirty tricks by career politicians like Keith Ellison. Clearly, Ryan Durant is politically motivated. In late 2009, before I held any political office and just after I announced my candidacy for State House, Durant posted on Facebook that he would consider voting for me, wished me luck, complimented me, and congratulated me on my engagement. Now, Durant frequently compares Republicans to Nazis on his Facebook page, and he recently "liked" Ellison attack dog William Davis's Facebook comment that Republicans should be sent to the guillotines. The change demonstrates that the allegations are politically motivated lies. Ellison has shopped this story to multiple media outlets as a last-minute "Hail Mary" to save his failing campaign. It will not succeed. This is a new low for Keith Ellison and Minnesota politics, and Ellison should be ashamed. As a father of three young children, I absolutely condemn all forms of bullying."

HEY JOE

The Minnesota Senate isn't on the ballot this year, except for one very important race.

Because of the resignation of Michelle Fischbach (R – Paynesville), there will be a special election on November 6th to determine control of the senate, as that body now stands tied at 33-33.

In this Republican-leaning district, Democrat Joe Perske has done his best Republican impersonation, touting his support for the Second Amendment, opposition to abortion, and sacred duty to stand up to the DFL.

Besides wondering why one would vote for a fake Republican when one can vote for a real one (Jeff Howe), voters in this district would be well served to remember that electing Joe Perske would enable his fellow Democrats to be a barrier to the things he professes to embrace.

He would no doubt vote for a Senate majority leader who favored abortion rights and gay rights.

He would then likely empower Sen. Ron Latz (DFL – Saint Louis Park) to chair the

Judiciary Committee, where he would push radical gun control measures.

Sen. Tony Lourey (DFL – Kerrick) would likely chair Health and Human Services, where abortion would be honored.

You get the picture.

In short, a vote for Perske is a vote for an agenda at odds with what that conservative district wants in a legislator.

It isn't enough for Perske to claim he's personally for those things.

If he's serious about his professed agenda, he needs to commit to voting for DFL leadership that share his view on these issues.

We're waiting.

TINA'S HYPOCRISY

In a little noticed news item this week, Karin Housley rightly pointed out that her opponent's husband, owns stock (and therefore profits) in a company that produces and sells opioids.

Some news outlets have panned the claim, stating that her husband's ownership of the stock (Johnson and Johnson), doesn't provide enough of a connection to make political hay.

BS.

Tina Smith has been front and center in the Dayton administration's vilification of opioid companies.

She has decried their role in the opioid crisis time and again.

For her husband (and therefore her) to profit from the very situation she's decrying is the height of hypocrisy.

Housley is right to call out what has become an all-too-familiar pattern from the DFL: Do as I say, not as I do.

LUCKY 7

The noted political web site Real Clear Politics this week moved the 7th Congressional District race from “lean Dem” to “Tossup.”

This is a significant move, especially since incumbent DFLer Collin Peterson has represented the district since just after state-hood in 1858.

Trump carried the district by a wide margin and the partisan index is a whopping R + 34.

While it would be a huge upset, don't be surprised to see the GOP finally take this district on election night.

You heard it here first.

November 9th, 2018

Quote of the Week: “The biggest problem, for me, is not as much gender as it is that in politics today, it’s really a mark against you if you know what you’re doing.”

Claire McCaskill (D-MO), soon to be a former senator from Missouri

Editor’s Note: This, of course, is the election wrap-up issue. It was a fascinating election, to say the least.

In This Issue:

1. Facts and Figures;
2. Thoughts and Analysis;
3. Rumors.

FACTS AND FIGURES

For the first time since 1914, only one legislature has split control, that being Minnesota.

For the first time since 1875, Florida has two Republican senators.

Republicans experienced the following losses Tuesday night:

Around 35 House seats

7 governorships

330 state legislators

A GAIN of 3 U.S. Senate seats

For comparison, here’s what Barack Obama lost in 2010, his first mid-term election:

63 House seats

6 U.S. Senate seats

700 legislative seats

Since 1862, the president’s party has lost an average of 32 House seats and two Senate seats in mid-term elections.

All told, Democrats and allied special interest groups are estimated to have spent in excess of \$2.5 billion on the federal mid-term races.

With all precincts reporting, turnout in Minnesota reached 63.66%, nearly 2.6 million total votes.

Keith Ellison won only 14 of 87 counties, yet still won the office.

On average, the party opposite the president's picks up 17 seats in the Minnesota House in mid-term elections.

The GOP lost 18 seats Tuesday night, with one recount pending.

THOUGHTS AND ANALYSIS

After this election, there are two things we never again want to hear from Democrat politicians.

The first is, "We need to get money out of politics."

Democrats raked in piles of special interest cash both in Minnesota and across the nation.

They hypocritically spoke in worried tones about "money" in politics, while their hands couldn't move fast enough to grab the cash from billionaires like Bloomberg, Steyer, and Soros.

We will be watching to see what measures Minnesota's DFL federal delegation introduce to reduce money in politics.

We're especially watching Angie Craig, who made the most of this issue.

The second issue is the "Me Too" movement and the associated faux sympathy and outrage associated with it.

After the Brett Kavanaugh character assassination and the support for Keith Ellison, it's clear that "Me Too" is nothing more than a cheap political prop for DFLers.

It's nothing more than a false narrative to generate voter sympathy.

The Kavanaugh attack will go down as one of the most shameful chapters in American political history.

At the end of the day, the allegations against a man deemed "well qualified" by the

American Bar Association were at best uncorroborated and at worst outright fabricated.

How interesting that Democrats in Washington haven't lifted a finger after the nomination to "get justice" for the Kavanaugh accusers.

What is the bigger crock of horse manure? Dems continuing to investigate the claims against Kavanaugh or OJ continuing to look for the real killers?

The election of Keith Ellison is one of the most shameful chapters in Minnesota political history.

Ellison has a long and proven history of associating with virulent Jew haters.

Ellison stands today as a credibly accused abuser of women.

We now have as our chief law enforcement officer in the state a man who has admitted to calling a woman "bitch."

We're so proud.

It will be interesting to see how candidates who won congressional seats in the suburbs navigate the inherent conflict between their campaign promises to find compromise solutions and the natural inclination of the leaders they will empower to do little more than attack the president they hate.

In other words, how will Angie Craig and Dean Phillips handle the impending clash between legislating and investigating?

Despite all sorts of campaign promises about repudiating Nancy Pelosi, the first betrayal for many new members of Congress will be their vote make Pelosi Speaker of the House.

In short order, the U.S. House of Representatives will be led by radical liberals like Pelosi (CA), Maxine Waters (CA), Adam Schiff (CA) and Jerry Nadler (NY).

This Insane Clown Posse (ICP) of politics couldn't care less about the high-minded, idealistic campaign promises of no-rank freshman colleagues representing Flyover Country.

They are on a mission to seek and destroy.

Their coastal districts reward ideological excess and insist upon dogmatic victory over the conservatives they deem enemies.

It is quite likely that many of the 35 or so newbies who won purplish, suburban swing districts will come home empty handed in 2020, forced to abandon the ramparts of pragmatic compromise and dive head-long into the gutter of partisan blame.

The ICP would have it no other way.

At the state level, the big take away from the night is that Minnesota has undergone a political re-alignment.

The Metro area continues to trend blue while Greater Minnesota is now firmly in the GOP orbit.

That trend was confirmed across the board Tuesday night.

The Metro-based Second and Third districts flipped blue while the First and Eighth flipped red.

In the state Senate, a rural red district stayed red in a special election, giving the GOP a whopping 15-point victory and keeping that body at a 34-33 split in favor of the GOP.

By the way, the Senate DFL should consider firing their pollsters. Sources insisted to the Watchdog throughout the campaign that DFL candidate Joe Perske was within or close to the margin of error in polling.

To the contrary, the GOP was privately adamant that their candidate, Jeff Howe, was ahead and would stay there.

In the House, 16 of 18 flipped seats were in the Metro.

Of the two rural seats, one wasn't contested as the GOP candidate suspended his campaign to deal with a family issue.

The other seat, centered on Bemidji, saw the Republican incumbent lose by 4

votes. A recount is pending.

For sure, the GOP is going to have to find a way to regain footing in the suburbs, where women with college degrees have drifted into the DFL camp.

The GOP must also find a way to move the needle in the urban core, if that's at all possible, given the radical insanity that prevails under our skyscrapers.

On election night, some Minneapolis House districts saw the DFL legislator win with over 90% of the vote.

The GOP will have to find a way to at least move the needle, primarily to give state-wide candidates a fighting chance.

It's a real black eye that the GOP hasn't won a single state-wide race in this state since 2006.

Conversely, the DFL has a big rural problem.

For all his ballyhooed "One Minnesota" message, Walz lost 66 of 87 counties. This for a guy who hails from rural Minnesota.

Keith Ellison fared worse, losing 73 of 87 counties.

Of their incoming caucus of 75, only 15 House DFLers represent a district outside of the Metro.

Of those 15, seven represent a regional center like Duluth, Rochester, Saint Cloud, and Mankato.

While the media would never focus on the story, there are scores of legislative districts across the state that are firmly in GOP hands that the DFL used to outright own for generations.

RUMORS

A great album, but even better as political fodder.

There's a lot of speculation that state Senator Tony Lourey will be named Health and Human Services commissioner.

There's credence to this rumor as Lourey is a universally acknowledged expert on HHS issues and has long political experience.

Plus, there's the boost in pay.

If Lourey left, it would trigger a special election, forcing the DFL to defend the seat and giving the GOP a chance to pad their thin majority.

Lourey's rural district is a classic swing district, with the "A" side more DFL and the "B" side more Republican.

If that happens, current state Rep. Jason Rarick is the dream candidate for the GOP.

House Republicans meet today to pick their minority leader. Look for Kurt Daudt to continue leading the caucus.

Not a rumor but fact that Paul Gazelka has been re-elected Senate Majority Leader and Jeremy Miller the President of the Senate.

Congratulations to those two!

Republicans are cautiously optimistic they can work with Walz.

At least in style, Walz will be a far cry better than Dayton.

Frankly, Dayton lacked the skills required to be a successful governor and simply resorted to juvenile attacks and incessant flip-flopping regarding critical compromises.

Sources tell this publication that Walz is interested in achieving results and knows that he needs to work with Republicans to make it happen.

The first test will come with staff and cabinet choices. If Walz chooses people known more for partisanship than policy, it will be a bad start.

On the other hand, choosing well-qualified and respected people will auger well for getting things done.

It also doesn't hurt that Walz feels no allegiance to the radical left. They denied him

the endorsement and forced him into a primary.

The rumors of various Lefties like Erin Murphy assuming cabinet positions seems more aspirational on their part than actual consideration on the part of Walz.

We will see.

November 16, 2018

Quote of the Week: “Last Tuesday night, despite offering no vision for the future of this great country, they won, but time is ticking on their short-term tactics. To drown out the cries of ‘Resist!’ our side needs to have a clear and unified message.”

- Congressman Tom Emmer (R-MN 6), who has been elected chairman of the National Republican Congressional Campaign (NRCC), and will head up efforts to return his conference to the majority in 2020

In This Issue:

1. Gas Pains;
2. The Leviathan;

GAS PAINS

Governor-elect Tim Walz is already feeling the bloated, painful feeling in his gut from proposing a yet-to-be-defined gas tax increase for the already over-taxed subjects of the People’s Republic of Minnesota.

He won’t even take the oath of office for many weeks and he’s already throwing down the tax increase gauntlet.

How confidence inspiring.

Unfortunately, this pronouncement points to two troubling developments concerning our soon-to-be official governor.

One, despite years spent in Washington, he’s going to face a steep learning curve in mastering the job of chief executive.

Two, he may not be the pragmatic, solutions-oriented moderate he claims to be.

His statement on the gas tax, lacking any definition or context, was clearly an unforced error that immediately set up a confrontation with both Republicans and those DFLers who understand that if you’re going to be re-elected, there are some taxes that simply can’t be done.

The political and public policy obstacles to a gas tax increase are numerous. Someone should pull the governor-elect aside and educate him.

In case either Walz or staffers are reading this excellent publication, here you go.

One, for the reasons explained below, a gas tax increase is a nearly impossible lift. The only time it was raised in modern Minnesota times was over a decade ago, when it was increased over Governor Pawlenty's veto by strong DFL majorities and six wayward House Republicans, two of whom remain (Rep. Rod Hamilton and now Sen. Jim Abeler).

Recall that even Democrats seem to support a gas tax increase only when they're in a position to do nothing about it.

When the DFL controlled all of state government recently, they declined to institute a gas tax increase, knowing the political consequences.

That justified trepidation on both sides of the aisle remains.

This is especially true in divided government. The fundamental rule of tax increases is that you never vote for a tax increase unless you know it will happen.

Voting for a tax increase that doesn't happen is the worst of both political worlds.

Thus, it is quite likely Speaker-elect Hortman will kindly defer any vote on a gas tax unless and until Majority Leader Gazelka pushes one through the Senate. For the record, Gazelka is quite unlikely to do that, although the DFL if unified only needs one wayward Republican (Paging Jim Abeler) to make it happen.

It will also be hard to sell a gas tax increase in a time of surplus. The state may have a budget surplus that exceeds \$1 billion in the next forecast.

A gas tax is always a hard sell. It will be an even harder sell when the state has over-collected a cool billion from the tax payers.

Moreover, the gas tax is a declining source of revenue. Fuel efficiency gains, coupled with the rise of alternative fuels, has resulted in a decline in revenues that is likely to only accelerate.

Why have a political brawl over a tax that is dying?

Of course, the gas tax is also highly regressive, hitting the poor much harder than

the wealthy.

A rich person can easily absorb a few hundred bucks more in gas expenses.

Not so much for a poor person or someone on a fixed income.

Walz is hardly burnishing his “working man” flannel image with this tax.

The gas tax is also unfair, hitting rural Minnesotans harder than their Metro brethren.

Rural residents often times have long drives to necessary destinations like the grocery store, the school, the doctor, or the job site.

A gas tax increase is a tone-deaf proposal, especially coming from the man who campaigned on a “One Minnesota” slogan.

Polling in Minnesota, including a very recent poll, has consistently shown opposition to a gas tax.

Walz is misreading his victory to divine a mandate to jack up the gas tax.

Thus, the governor-elect has already handed the GOP an issue.

It will be interesting to watch Speaker Hortman put up 68 votes to increase the gas tax.

Go for it.

THE LEVIATHAN

Here's example #999 of stupid Big Government “fixing” what was never broken.

Down in Saint Paul, city leaders apparently think the city is working so well that the time and resources were available for the city to take over trash collection, under the euphemistically named enabling law called “organized collection.”

Under organized collection, the haulers in a city are forced into a cartel and assigned a portion of the city and the same number of customers as what they had prior to the government takeover.

Importantly, government takes over trash collection by forcing the cartel to have a hauling contract with the city, and not with each individual customer.

This contract spells out (or attempts to spell out) all the many complex aspects of the trash business.

That contract, of course, replaces the individual customer, making trash service a utility.

And like any utility, there is no longer any choice for the customer.

The government picks your hauler, picks the prices, picks the day of service, and picks every other aspect of trash service.

And wouldn't you know it? Some haulers have apparently taken advantage of captive customers to leverage them in a way they likely wouldn't have in the free market system, where service providers get fired when they screw up.

While examples of this mistreatment are legion in organized collection cities, Saint Paul provides two examples.

According to news reports, when residents were assigned a particular hauler, that hauler immediately sent out payment notices demanding payment within days.

When payment wasn't made timely, the hauler sacked late payers with late fees.

The uproar has caused the city, the contract holder, to establish a web site where citizens can go complain about the fees.

No word on what recourse the city has, since it appears that the contract is silent on billing issues like this.

Second, a major uproar was caused when that same hauler demanded all sorts of proof that a person was indeed going to be out of town when they requested a stop in service.

For example, if the customer begged a stop of medical reasons, a note from the attending physician is required.

If travel is the reason, proof travel is required, including flight numbers, if flying.

Submission of a request, of course, is no guarantee that the service stop will be provided.

Appeal rights for a denial? Ha Ha!!!!!!

Readers should know that these organized collection schemes encourage these kinds of fees and game playing.

You see, cities will brag that their take over of trash will result in lower rates.

The game is that haulers agree to these lower “headline” rates and then seek to make up the money elsewhere.

If a citizen has service stopped for six months because they are a snowbird in Florida, that’s six months of revenue lost to the hauler.

Thus, the incentive to chisel service stop requests.

Another scam is “lid fees”, whereby any can that can’t fully close is charged an up fee.

Another scam is forcing every address to have service.

Many addresses don’t have service because they share a can with a neighbor, bring trash to work and toss it in a dumpster, or have kids come by and take the trash to their can.

These options are especially popular amongst seniors and those who take great pride in reducing their waste footprint.

Now, regardless of need for service, they must take it – and pay for it.

If you believe that government can take over trash and do it better than the free market, you probably also believe that if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor, and you believe that OJ is still looking for the real killers.

If you catch wind that your city is considering taking over trash hauling, run (very fast) down to city hall and bring your pitch fork.

You're about to get screwed.

November 22, 2018

SPECIAL THANKSGIVING EDITION

Editor's Note: Thanksgiving is a wonderful holiday, giving us an opportunity to reflect upon our collective good fortune as Americans. It is also an invitation for personal reflection, embracing the increasingly rare concept of gratitude. Our appalling culture of complaint, group identity grievances, and juvenile entitlement mentality makes it all the more imperative that all who read this note give thanks for what they have, which is likely more than 99% of the rest of the world.

In other words, buck up snowflake. It's not that bad. Actually, it's all pretty damn good.

Today's special edition is dedicated to the men and women who deployed around the world in the Armed Forces, protecting our freedoms.

Below are Thanksgiving stories as told by these men and women, culled from a variety of public sources.

"I spent two Thanksgivings in Fallujah and they weren't bad at all. You had your brothers to the left and right which might as well be family. And the leadership did everything they could to give us a proper Thanksgiving meal with all the fixings. I'm grateful."

"The Navy cooks made sure Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners were extra special back in the 60s, and we did have our buddies that were just as homesick to share that, too! I SURVIVED!"

"I spent many Thanksgivings away from home, either state side or overseas. Sure, it wasn't like home, but you make the best of the situation and enjoy it with others in the same situation as you are. I always enjoyed spending them with my military family!"

"It sucks, horrible food, you miss your family, and although you're proud to be there, the conditions you're under usually suck too. Overseas a holiday is just like any other day."

"I spent two in Iraq. The guys next to me are more family than my family. The chain of command did everything to give us a great meal. It was probably some of the

best Holiday memories I have. Good times.”

“1952 in Korea. After getting off the truck, It was a cold snowy trek to the corrugated hut where they served it. One piece of turkey, one large spoon of lumpy mashed potatoes, one spoon of thick gravy with gizzard bits and one of corn. One slice of bread. It was lukewarm, but it was good. And hot coffee. And I was thankful for it. As I ate it, my memories of home at my mother’s table gave me a greater appreciation for everything we had at home and what the poor South Koreans did not. But they have it now. That year molded my character.”

“I remember Thanksgiving Day, 1971. Our unit, 1/327th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, was waiting on the helipad in Da Nang for Chinook helicopters to take our unit back to Camp Eagle, about 60 miles north. One Sergeant was lying on the ground. He was shivering and the whites of his eyes were yellow. I told someone in his squad they had better get a medic. The guy was really sick. Then then rain came. Severe downpour for about an hour. I sat on my rucksack with my feet off the flooded ground. The rain stopped and the sun came out. Someone came around and said the guy had hepatitis. There was only enough hepatitis vaccine to do the guys that slept in the same bunker with the guy. They had talked about hepatitis shots for the whole unit. The first Chinook finally took off filled with soldiers. Ten minutes later, I heard on the radio. ‘Lost contact, lost contact.’ The helicopter had been shot down with 23 on board. About an hour later, I was riding on another Chinook helicopter back to Camp Eagle near Hue, Vietnam. Just stare out the window and tell yourself, ‘No, a bullet is not going to rip through the floor.’ That is what I did on Thanksgiving Day, 1971.”

“Korea 1967; Vietnam 1969. All I remember is that the mess halls both times tried their best to give us the nicest, old fashioned Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings that they could. Wasn’t the same as my Mom but I was still thankful ... and wishing I was back home.”

“Ya buddy! Nothing like birthdays, Thanksgiving and other holidays with a nice c-rat meal (yum yum) beef and rocks. All ya old timers know what I mean. Enjoy them dinners boys. I hear MREs are a lot worse than c-rats ever were. SEMPER FI. People should know its not home cooking for ya guys every day.”

“Spent several holidays overseas. In 1966, my mother sent me a plastic Christmas tree that was hung in our DiAn Vietnam barracks. Returned home 46 years ago next Sunday in time for Thanksgiving Day, 1968.”

OIF 2004 - on a small team north of Mosul living among the Kurds, spending a lot of time in villages tucked away in the mountains. Leading up to Thursday, it's not likely that we're going to convoy w our Pesh down to Mosul for a turkey meal, so we just figure we're missing out this year. Family had sent packs of stuffing mix and canned cranberries, but it would be useless replacing turkey with goat. Then we notice two actual turkeys in one of the villages (near Turkish border..ha!), and remark to our terp "oh wow, we didn't realize there were turkeys in Iraq?" This leads to an explanation about Thanksgiving. Within minutes one of our Pesh bodyguards walks over, shoots both turkeys, and loads them in a truck.

On Thanksgiving day we throw a huge feast at our safe house, feed all the Pesh guards, give scraps to the local kids who think cranberries are weird. We taught them how to play American football in the gravel that day.

Late that afternoon, while sitting around I'm a food coma, the radios come alive with word that a general is flying into our AO to deliver a turkey meal. We live in a city block and don't have an HLZ for anything bigger than a Littlebird. So we load up and roll over to meet the,at a big Pesh compound across town. We load him, his detail, and a shit ton of mermites into vehicles and take him back to our neighborhood. He's kind of amazed we aren't all that jazzed about the visit until he sees the wreckage of our turkey meal, complete with bags full of turkey feathers and innards. "Looks like you boys had a real thanksgiving."

For Thanksgiving 2003 I was on deployment in Kuwait at Camp Udairi as part of the second wave (May '03) of deployments after the invasion of Iraq.

As a thank you to America, there was a family in Kuwait City that had started a tradition of inviting US Troops over to their house for thanksgiving. There was a sign-up roster going around and I managed to get on it (they could only take about 60 or so). We almost didn't make it because some dumbasses lost a 50 cal in another unit and the base was going into lockdown but one of my unit's pilots made a successful roll to intimidate the privates at the gate so we got out. So we get there and this place is huge. Oil money, apparently. The house takes up a block and it's 4 stories high, and the couple just lets us wander around in it. Everything inside is marble or gold. It's got 3 kitchens (2 fully staffed and one for the wife), multiple elevators, the first plasma screen TV I'd ever seen, a massive garage that looks like something from Grand Theft Auto (a BMW, a Porsche, a Ferrari, etc). Out back in the yard there's two giant circus type tents set up with every food you could ask for, including shrimp the size of bananas, and servant dudes fresh squeezing 30 types of fruits to make fresh juice for us.

My birthday is just before thanksgiving and I had just turned 21 but Kuwait is a nominally dry country so some dudes in the unit gave me shitty non-alcoholic beer which I remember I poured the majority down a sink in a unused bedroom of the house.

Korea 1982 - Thanksgiving Day did company change of command at 0600 the went on 12 mile road march - should have been back in time to eat lunch at the messhall but some smartass officers decided to give new company cdr a bad map so instead of 6 out and 6 back on the hardball we went about 3 miles then took a left turn up a mountain trail - new cdr wasn't listening to no one who was telling him we were going the wrong direction so we went up over and down the mountain at arrive at the normal 6 mile turn around point at noon - the the new cdr sent the 2 1/2 ton back to bring us chow - we got lukewarm spaghetti after freezing on the side of the road for an hour for our thanksgiving dinner - got back to the company area about 1600 - was hoping for leftover turkey for supper- only got cheeseburgers- 5 months later cdr got relieved as this was only day one of how screwed he was.

November 30, 2018

Quote of the Week: *"I got to get inside a brand-new Chevy Volt fresh off the line. Even though Secret Service wouldn't let me drive it. But I liked sitting in it. It was nice. I'll bet it drives real good. And five years from now when I'm not president anymore, I'll buy one and drive it myself."*

President Obama, bragging up taxpayer subsidies for the Chevy Volt

Quote of the Week: *"It was some s**t."*

Representative-elect Aisha Gomez (DFL – Minneapolis) artfully describing her childhood

In This Issue:

1. DFL in Control; Grab the Popcorn;
2. You Mean Markets Actually Work?

DFL IN CONTROL; GRAB THE POPCORN

In picking through the wreckage of the 2018 election in the seven county Metro area, it's already looking like many voters will be hitting their dictionary apps to learn more about "caveat emptor."

It's only November, and the mob voters put in charge of the Minnesota House is already providing citizens a three-ring circus.

Long experience and theories of organizational management will tell us that organizations adopt the characteristics of their leaders.

And when that leader is none other than Melissa Hortman, the trust fund liberal feminist of well-known infamy to readers of this publication, you just knew an island of misfit toys was in the offing.

Let's start with the party of Big Government laying a claim as the party of Big Legislature.

In organizing their new majority, the House DFL grew the committee structure by 30%, announcing a whopping 34 committees and sub-committees.

With 75 members, that's a committee gavel for nearly half of their caucus.

Is it a committee gavel or a participation ribbon?

The redundancy of the committee structure is a sea of red tape that resembles the bureaucracy the DFL has built in Minnesota over the past many years to harass the people of this great state (tried to renew your license tabs lately? Tried to get a permit for your business? Tried to get a hold of someone in the government-healthcare office?).

For example, if there is a bill that deals with water permits for farmers, it would likely need to travel through Agriculture, Environment Policy, Environment Finance, Energy/Climate Finance and the subcommittee on water.

There is also a Labor committee, a greater Minnesota Jobs Committee, a Jobs and Economic Development Committee, and a Commerce Committee.

In an ironic twist, this Leviathan will prove to be the undoing of their Big Government agenda, as many bills will struggle to get through this byzantine maze before legislative deadlines.

Get ready for some serious sausage making during “deadline” weeks, as committees rush to churn through bill after bill, with the system choking on the expansive agenda they will surely pursue.

There are also some interesting new legislators, to put it mildly.

This week’s edition of City Pages, Minnesota’s left-wing publication of record, published a fawning profile of four of them, with the obsequious sub-headline “Get ready to fall in love.”

We learn from the piece that Hodan Hassan (DFL – Minneapolis) is concerned with mental health issues, which is a serious and timely public policy issue, to be sure.

That legitimate issue of concern, however, was juxtaposed with the bizarre claim that she knows what people experiencing in these struggles because of her own.

And what, pray tell, is the experience she has with mental health issues?

Apparently, it’s watching television.

As the article explains, “Hassan understands what those people are going through: She works in mental health and social work, and has struggled some herself. In 2017, she stopped watching TV news; what she was seeing every day was simply

too upsetting, and she needed to shield herself from it to protect her psyche.”

Um. Okay.

Next up is Aisha Gomez (DFL – Minneapolis), who is introduced to readers as one who possesses a really neat skill that impresses no one.

“She doesn’t talk like most legislators – be warned old timers, she knows how to use slang!”

City Pages apparently thinks that speaking professionally is now some sort of antiquated skill, like falconing or blacksmithing.

We also learn from the article that “slang” is synonymous with profanity.

In describing her childhood, Gomez insightfully observes, “It was some s**t.”

This “slang”, combined with hair of an interesting seaweed-green hue, will surely put her in the professional, adult company of Jack Considine (DFL – Mankato). Considine treats every day at the legislature as if it were Friday at Innitech, complete with Hawaiian shirts and jeans.

Is Rep. Considine going to the floor of the Minnesota House or down to the bowling alley?

No one can really tell.

Grab the popcorn, folks. This session will be a doozy.

When it’s all over, many taxpayers will surely say of the 2019 session, “It was some s**t.”

YOU MEAN MARKETS ACTUALLY WORK?

Liberals got a double dose of reality recently regarding the difficulty of government to either control free markets or compete with them.

The first slap in the face happened right here in Minneapolis.

Did you know that the city requires some businesses to offer certain kinds of foods?

You heard that right.

Chapter 295.45 of the city code dictates:

All mobile food stores licensed under this chapter must offer for sale at least fifty (50) items total of fresh fruits and vegetables in at least seven (7) varieties, and with no more than fifty (50) percent of the total selection being from a single variety. (2014-Or-022, § 6, 5-23-14).

And yes, city inspectors come around and count out the kiwis and carrots to make sure small business owners are towing the line.

City leaders apparently believe that if you make vendors offer the “right” foods, people will buy them.

If government mandates it, in other words, it will happen.

Like magic.

As any rational person might have guessed, it isn't working out that way.

Vendors are complaining that most of the food is going to waste, causing them to lose money from food not sold, and scarce shelf space being occupied by items that don't sell.

It doesn't take an economist to conclude that if customers wanted at least 50 items total in at least seven varieties with not more than 50% of the total selection being from a single variety, they would have asked for it and the vendor would have provided it.

It's astonishing that the Minneapolis City Council doesn't know that the foundation of commercial markets is the voluntary transaction by which a party sells something that another party wants and is willing to pay for at a mutually agreed upon price.

Moreover, this mandate violates the theory of allocative efficiency, which dictates that goods and services under a free market system will be delivered to a destination of highest and best use.

In other words, all the rotting food that no one wants at these locations would have been sold to a different buyer who wanted them in order to meet true customer demand somewhere else.

It is the height of arrogance to believe that government fiat can suddenly make citizen desire a good they otherwise don't want.

Next, Chevrolet announced this week that they will no longer make the Volt, a much-ballyhooed Obama-era subsidized car that runs primarily on an electric battery.

It was just another in a long line of feel-good policy mandates that emanated from the Obama administration.

The reality is that despite the big subsidies, customers didn't want the Volt and that spelled the end of the car.

Instead, GM and other manufacturers can't keep up with demand for SUVs and other trucks, which must drive the liberals mad, inspiring them to call for making these big vehicles as undesirable as "assault" rifles, sugary drinks, and other high-demand products your liberal neighbors don't want you to have.

December 7th, 2018

Editor's Note: We pause to remember the 77th anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Quote of the Week: "Last Friday, when I was told he had minutes to live, I called him. I said, 'Dad, I love you, and you've been a wonderful father.' And the last words he would ever say on Earth were, 'I love you, too.'"

- President George W. Bush

In This Issue:

1. They Love Them – When They're Gone;
2. Saint Paul, France;
3. Climate Same.

THEY LOVE THEM – WHEN THEY'RE GONE

The cynicism and fecklessness of the Left is a daily lesson, a reminder taught each and every day that the Left's ideology is a dogged pursuit of vapid power. Power for the sake of power.

This week, everyday Americans were treated to chapter 2 of "We love that guy! Now that he's dead."

Just weeks ago, the Left canonized John S. McCain. War hero, statesman, patriot.

Years before that, the Left labeled him a war criminal for bombing North Vietnam and engaged in a whisper campaign questioning his mental fitness. You know, being a prisoner of war for all those years.

Then McCain provided transactional value to the Left for his vitriolic hatred of Donald Trump, including the possibility that it was McCain himself who provided the fake Russian dossier to the FBI.

It was déjà vu all over again this week as the Left rushed to heap nostalgic praise on George H.W. Bush, a man who represented, to them, a time when Republicans could be punched and not punch back.

Bush was a man they never praised as president.

He was "extreme" because he was pro-life.

He was complicit in all things Reagan.

He presided over economic policies that were wrong and could be cured by the man the Left universally supported against Bush – William Jefferson Clinton.

Bush, although not as useful to the Left as McCain as a cudgel to bash Trump, nonetheless served his purpose as a contrast to Trump's sharp elbowed politics and sharper tongue.

Make no mistake. John McCain and George H.W. Bush deserve sincere praise and authentic fond remembrance.

Their service to country was remarkable and model for all Americans to follow.

Excuse us if we're just a little skeptical of the Left's crocodile tears.

SAINT PAUL, FRANCE

It's not often that this publication can run a direct line between socialist France and Saint Paul.

This week is a different story.

Paris has been set ablaze and sacked in spectacular fashion (even by French riot standards) over the implementation of gasoline taxes.

Apparently, the yellow-vested rioters giving new meaning to "City of Lights" were thoroughly unimpressed that the basis for the new taxes was slavish worship at the altar of climate change.

This in a country where high taxes are usually borne with snotty approbation for just about any reason or even no reason at all.

A tax increase? Cest la vie!

When the French have concerns about a tax, you know it's real.

Across the pond in the New World, New Age governor-elect Tim Walz has spent the past few days touting tax increases. Tax increases on gasoline, to be specific.

Steeped in the Northern European culture of stoic endurance, there is really no threat that we will see overturned Blue Line cars or burning Saabs in Uptown.

But we have seen consistent polling that shows gas taxes in Minnesota being as popular as gas taxes in France.

A proposed gas tax in the highest taxed state in the union, in a time a billion-dollar budget surpluses, has already handed the GOP a winning political issue.

Minnesotans continually oppose gas tax increases, as seen in the most recent polling.

But wait! That's not all.

We also learned this week that Xcel Energy, provider of electricity and natural gas to over 3 million customers across eight states (including Minnesota), has promised to be a zero emissions utility by 2050.

What that promise will do to utility bills will make the gas tax look like a puppet show.

Check utility rates in Germany or California for guidance.

It's almost as if the elites have forgotten that 2016 ever existed.

The lesson of politics across the globe over the past few years has been that the masses have grown tired of the elites and their social engineering.

They have grown tired of paying the price for their utopian policies and cynical financial self-dealing in the process.

Any politician looking for trouble in 2020 should continue to talk about making gasoline, electricity and other staples of life more expensive.

CLIMATE SAME

There has been a lot of blame laid on "climate change" for the tragic wildfires that have plagued California in recent years, including the deadly fires this fall.

"Never let a crisis go to waste" says the Left.

The unfortunate reality is that many reputable climate scientists are positing that the droughts (along with poor forest management policies) creating the tinder-dry conditions are a reversion to a more normal climate for the western United States.

Put another way, many of these scientists believe that the 20th Century was a remarkably wet and aberrational century.

During that century, of course, the population exploded and more and more homes and cities were built in heavily forested areas.

If this theory holds true, the western U.S. will revert to a much drier weather pattern over the coming one hundred years, posing real challenges regarding forest management, water resource management, and planning/zoning issues.

While some want to blame every adverse weather event on “climate change”, that’s simply not the case.

Here, it appears that the climate change is simply a reversion to the mean.

Of course, the climate changes. It always has and always will.

The real issues are the causes of climate change and the practical impacts on humans.

Some changes are challenging (e.g. drought) while other are positive (e.g. land becoming arable).

It is height of liberal arrogance to presume that government can simply pass laws that will tame the Earth’s constant climate evolution.

Of course, there needs to be an environmental crisis to manage at any given time. A crisis that, of course, demands government intervention.

Global warming, global cooling, acid rain, the ozone layer, too many hurricanes, too little water, too much water, etc.

In reality, much the ideology underlying these issues is little more than human self-loathing.

December 14th, 2018

Quote of the Week: “The Democrats and President Obama gave Iran 150 Billion Dollars and got nothing, but they can’t give 5 Billion Dollars for National Security and a Wall?”

- President Donald J. Trump

Quote of the Week: “We don’t understand why the Democrats are so wholeheartedly against it. They voted for it in 2006, then-Senator Obama voted for it. Senator Schumer voted for, Senator Clinton voted for it. So, I don’t understand why Democrats apply in politics just because Donald Trump is in office.”

- White House OMB Director Mick Mulvaney on the Border Wall

In This Issue:

1. Don’t Change;
2. Pot Committed;
3. Zombie Politician.

DON’T CHANGE

Don't change for you

Don't change a thing for me

Don't change for you

Don't change a thing for me

- Michael Hutchence

In the aftermath of the GOP’s rather mundane and typical losses (and the history-defying success in the Senate) last month, liberal pundits have delighted in crafting all sorts of click-bait worthy missives regarding the “dying” and “obsolete” GOP and the need for the party to radically change in order to remain relevant.

This tripe is in large part little more than the dog whistle of group-identity politics, inviting yet another round of tired, shop-worn bashing of Old White Males and those who lack a bachelor’s degree in Womyn’s Studies or Psychology.

Since the last major obituaries were written for the Republican Party back in 2008, the party did quite well during the Obama Era.

The U.S. Senate had 60 Democrat senators in 2008. They went to 46.

The House had 257 Democrats, which plummeted to 188.

The news in state legislatures was even worse for Democrats.

During the Reign of Obama, the Dems lost a whopping 910 legislative seats.

Thirty-five states saw Dems lose double-digit seats in their legislatures.

They lost over 50 legislative seats in states like Arkansas, New Hampshire, and West Virginia.

In fact, Obama's losses were far worse and more pronounced than those of other modern-era presidents.

Those losses also include 11 governorships.

According to famed political scientist Larry Sabato, Obama's losses were twice the average of presidents from Harry Truman through George W. Bush.

Yet the media scrutiny of the losses this past November have spawned a frenzy of anti-GOP and anti-Trump rhetoric, crowing over the impending demise of the GOP.

Funny, those same obituaries were conspicuously absent from 2008-2016.

Moreover, the media focuses on the splinter in the GOP eye while conveniently ignoring the log in the DFL eye.

The unruly Democrat mob won't take over the U.S. House until next month.

At that point, Nancy Pelosi will be in charge of that mob and have the responsibility to manage it through their Article I obligations.

Think about it. Pelosi is accused by many of these incoming representatives of being too conservative.

Many Americans will soon get a full dose of what they voted for in November.

This publication suspects that there will be no shortage of voter remorse, especially in the suburbs, when the true agenda of this rabble is revealed.

Many of them are fiercely loyal to group identity politics, don't believe in personal accountability, eschew individual liberty, are hostile to wealth creation and success, and dismissive of free enterprise and capitalism.

Put another way, there were a lot of suburban voters who thought it was cute to flirt with Democrats because of an aversion (well founded) to Donald Trump's boorish and juvenile narcissism.

The downside is that the Democrats they put in charge are a new and very radical breed.

The party of Scoop Jackson, Sam Nunn, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy has been relegated to the deep ash heap of American history.

The coming Democrat civil war isn't limited to Washington.

That day of reckoning is coming to Minnesota in just a few short weeks, in both the legislative and executive branches.

In one corner of the Capitol, Governor Tim Walz will begin his tenure and will face tough choices between his moderate claims of "One Minnesota" and the radicalism of his lieutenant governor, who is fully in the camp of the hard Left.

It was a cute strategy to get elected, but now those opposing and conflicting chickens will come home to roost now that it's time to govern.

A prime example will be mining and pipe lines.

Soon, construction will begin on the Line 3 pipeline replacement project.

As promised by opponents, that project will bring all the violence and vandalism that we all saw at Standing Rock regarding the Dakota Access pipeline.

Throughout the campaign for governor, Tim Walz promised rural Minnesotans and construction trade unions that he would support that and other projects like it.

His lieutenant governor pick, Peggy Flanagan, is enrolled member of a native American tribe and has been a vocal, passionate opponent of Line 3.

So, when the bricks and rocks start flying, where will the Walz administration stand?

Where will Walz stand on a host of issues he will face like sulfate standards in water, buffer strips on farm land, and other environmental issues.

And let's not forget all the social issues, where rural Minnesota feels quite differently than citizens in the urban core.

It's easy to bask in the glory of electoral victory today.

In about three weeks, the harsh reality of governance is going to smack the DFL square in the face.

POT COMMITTED

Perhaps the biggest non-issue of the 2019 has been the media's obsession over the possibility of recreational, adult-use marijuana becoming legal in Minnesota.

We say "non-issue" for two reasons.

One, it's unlikely the issue will become law in 2019.

It's easy to count noses and determine that the state Senate lacks the votes to pass such a law right now and that's unlikely to change.

Two, recreational marijuana is inevitable and will happen at some point in the near future.

The momentum behind such a public policy change is large and irreversible.

A strong majority of Americans favors legal marijuana.

Moreover, millions of Americans live in states where marijuana is legal and the ludicrous claims of opponents have not come to fruition.

While the finer points of legal marijuana can be debated, the fact remains that the buildings are still standing in these states and most people go about their business as they had before.

Finally, our conservative friends would do well to simply step back and recognize that many of their neighbors will make the choice to use marijuana and it's none of

their business.

The choice of what substances we choose to put into our bodies is none of government's business.

Whether it's alcohol, tobacco, red meat, sugar, or marijuana, one can't logically support adult choice with one but not another.

Complaining about taxes on sugary drinks doesn't mesh well with supporting jail time for choosing to use marijuana.

Of course, reasonable laws and regulations around that usage should be crafted, especially to ensure that the rights of others aren't impacted.

The bottom line is that legal marijuana is coming to Minnesota, but 2019 won't be the year.

ZOMBIE POLITICIAN

An unfortunate reality of politics is that some people just can't stay away.

They apparently have no life outside of the fake adulation and insincere back-slapping inherent in the transactional nature of relationships in politics.

When erstwhile Anoka County commissioner Dan Erhart was booted from office over a decade ago after years of taxpayer abuse, we thought we had seen the last of him.

To be honest, we thought he was dead or relegated to playing shuffleboard in south Florida.

We were wrong.

Multiple sources tell the Watchdog that Erhart is pushing to be appointed to the Met Council.

These same sources say that a wealthy DFL donor is behind the push, which gives the application some heft.

The good news is that the GOP-controlled Senate must confirm Met Council appointees.

The Senate GOP would be well served to carefully examine Erhart's record and think long and hard about confirmation.

After all, Erhart proudly supported the failed Northstar rail project.

He pushed for onerous taxes to support a publicly-funded Vikings stadium in Anoka County.

Most concerning, the Senate should review Erhart's expense accounts from his commissioner days.

His junketeering and other expenses should be carefully examined.

For example, his junket to Hawaii for a NaCO conference was an issue in the campaign that led to his defeat.

Tim Walz can surely do better than Dan Erhart.

December 21, 2018

Editor's Note: In recognition of Christmas, the Watchdog will not publish next week.

Merry Christmas!

Quote of the Week: "The House for most of my tenure was controlled by extreme right-wing ideologues who view intransigence as a virtue and any kind of rational compromise as a weakness."

- Governor Mark Dayton

Quote of the Week: "When he (Dayton) drew a line in the sand there was no talking with him, no working with him."

- State Rep. Greg Davids (R – Preston)

Quote of the Week: "Sometimes people do things without my full knowledge."

- Governor Mark Dayton

In This Issue:

1. A Legacy of Failure.

A LEGACY OF FAILURE

As Mark Dayton finishes his term and final year in public office, the retrospectives have begun to appear, putting the coda on his career and attempting to give some sort of letter grade to his gubernatorial tenure.

For this publication, Dayton surely is a failed governor.

He is rated a failure not because of policy differences, but because of missed opportunities and his fundamental failure to understand the true nature of his role in leading the state.

Those missed opportunities, by the way, run both ways. Dayton cannot in good conscience point to "his" legacy in any meaningful way as most of his stated legacy initiatives didn't become law.

Moreover, reflexively pointing to Dayton's purported budgetary skills won't cut it.

When government has unlimited taxing power and a compliant legislature, it doesn't take any particular fiscal acumen to simply take what government is perceived to "need" and throw some extra loot on top for good measure.

Second, regardless of party, chief executives are always given too much credit or blame for economic conditions and the governmental revenues (or lack thereof) they produce.

At core, the cause of Dayton's failure is that he utterly lacked the negotiation skills required of a political leader to reach agreement in a check-and-balance system designed to diffuse power frustrate efficiency.

It also didn't help that he frequently and publicly excoriated his negotiating partners in the harshest terms, at times labeling them "unfit to govern" and "untrustworthy."

Democrats were not immune to this public humiliation.

Readers will recall the very public feud between Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk and Dayton.

At one point, the governor publicly stated that he couldn't trust Bakk to the extent that he would no longer meet individually with him.

In a business underpinned by relationships, torching your negotiating partners in public is a recipe for failure.

A pillar of American political philosophy, as reflected in our political institutions, is the desire to enshrine stability and check tyranny at the price of expediency and efficiency.

In writing this piece, the Watchdog called upon eight years of conversations with both Democrats and Republicans who were in a position to deal with Dayton and observe his relationship with the legislature. The Watchdog also spoke with former Pawlenty staffers who served in his administration.

There is no disagreement among these people that the governor wields tremendous power (and responsibility) vis-à-vis the legislature.

The governor holds the bully pulpit and is seen by citizens as the embodiment of state government.

He also holds a negotiating advantage in that he is essentially a team of one, united in purpose and strategy, unlike legislative leaders who must find common ground among the often fractured and unruly caucuses they lead.

In addition, the chief executive controls the resources of a massive bureaucracy that he can employ in strategic ways to gain leverage over legislative counter-parts.

Said a former Pawlenty staffer, “We had the advantage because we were at the Capitol year-round. The legislature would go home and set aside legislating for months on end. At the same time, we were crafting an agenda and using the resources of the bureaucracy to hone our strategy to a fine point. We had inherent advantages with respect to information, expertise, and team unity.”

Dayton squandered those advantages and confounded those around him by frequently failing to negotiate as expected by both political custom and normal American expectations about the give and take inherent in finding solutions among competing interests.

Both legislative leaders and Dayton’s own staff were frequently exasperated by his unwillingness to negotiate at times and his proclivity to radically change his negotiating stance without notice or explanation.

For example, one source recalls that Dayton would sometimes simply walk away from the negotiating table and it would later be announced that he wouldn’t be returning that day. Another time, this staffer recalls that Dayton left the table and after many minutes, was observed in the backyard of the governor’s residence playing with his dogs.

Another source points to the 2011 state government shutdown, the longest in Minnesota history.

That source opined, “There was an offer on the table for weeks. Dayton steadfastly refused to take it. He then went on a fly-around throughout the state, heard an earful, and came back and essentially agreed to the same offer he refused again and again. Bizarre.”

Perhaps the best window into Dayton’s view of political relationships was offered by a political operative who frequents Washington, DC and has worked Capitol Hill for many years.

This source tells the Watchdog of an anecdote told to him by another person.

That story goes like this: Dayton is a collector of sports memorabilia and would frequent a particular memorabilia shop in DC when he was a U.S. Senator.

The source's friend also frequented this shop and knew the owner.

The owner once observed to the friend that Dayton was very unique in that he would never negotiate over price. He would either buy an item at face value or he would decline and walk away.

This modus operandi is virtually unheard of in this realm, where it is universally acknowledged that the sticker price is nothing more than a starting point for haggling a price, similar to swap meets or garage sales.

The source went on to opine that Dayton views many relationships as all-or-nothing situations.

You either have the power or you don't.

When you have it, you get to dictate the terms.

When you don't, you concede and capitulate.

This anecdote would explain why Dayton sometimes signed bills and agreed to offers that he immediately repudiated in the strongest terms.

Hopefully, historians and biographers will at some point explore this issue in detail, looking for those life experiences that shaped Dayton's view of negotiations and political relationships, which were undoubtedly unique.

In the end, however, the inability to master negotiations and act as a catalyst for compromise and resolution sentenced Minnesota to needless political pain and resulted in possible victories for all parties to go unrealized.

Finally, although the Watchdog takes a decidedly dim view of Dayton's gubernatorial tenure, we wish him the best in retirement.

Mark Dayton dedicated large portions of his life to public service and certainly

governed with good intentions and a desire to make life better for those he served.

Moreover, we wish him a speedy recovery from his recent health issues and pray for his good health to enjoy the fruits of retired life.

Thank you for your service, Mark Dayton.