

January 6, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Time to Get Serious.**
- 2. Perfect.**
- 3. Acting the Dictator.**

TIME TO GET SERIOUS

The 2012 legislative session will start in less than three weeks.

This is the time when legislative Republicans should be firing up the press machine to tout their goals and objectives for the session, which will in turn frame the debate for the critical elections coming this November.

So far, the Watchdog hasn't seen a damn thing out of Republicans in this regard.

All we've seen in the past three months is a slavish devotion to getting a football stadium built and finding a way to expand gambling.

We're not at all impressed.

It's time to get off the whole football thing.

Taxpayer subsidized stadiums are something conservatives don't believe in.

Taxpayer subsidized football stadiums don't produce the promised economic benefit and, more importantly, football stadiums just aren't a proper function of government - period.

Now, we know that some GOP leaders have been doing their best to undermine the [Party Platform](#) instead of protecting it, but let us be the first to show our uncool side by pointing out that the one document that unites our collective GOP principles and values says the following about subsidized stadiums:

Programs, such as public broadcasting, sports stadiums, and the arts, should be funded by its users and voluntary donors, and not subsidized by the use of taxpayer money.

The same goes for all this gambling nonsense.

Again, we know that we have a party leader like Pat Anderson who is a paid lobbyist for gambling interests but we still believe the party platform has merit. (Remember when Pat [dissed](#) lobbyists?).

And before anyone jumps on the Watchdog for allegedly supporting the Indian tribes' monopoly, recall our position on the issue.

The Watchdog has no opposition to expanding gambling as long as the expansion isn't done only for a small, politically connected organization (Canterbury Racetrack) and doesn't expand the amount of money government rakes in.

Put another way, if gambling expansion is made a truly free market proposition and is done in a revenue-neutral way, then have at it.

The tribes have a monopoly and all monopolies need competition.

But the Watchdog has yet to see a single gambling bill that accomplishes either of these goals.

Minnesota government doesn't need any more revenue and the our economy doesn't need a monopoly expanded to one or two other entities.

Unless Republicans are intending to run on a platform of building a football stadium and giving gambling addicts another venue in which to be exploited, it's time to get to the real agenda.

For example, whatever happened to the much-vaunted "Reform 2.0?" We haven't heard about it for months.

Will there be an interim hearing on this issue, just like the hearings held for the Vikings stadium?

When will GOP leadership hold multiple meetings with Governor Dayton to express the urgency surrounding tax reform and education reform?

It's time for the GOP to wake up and smell the coffee.

The 2012 elections are going to be hand-to-hand combat. The big wins in 2010 were somewhat illusory in that many candidates won by the smallest of margins in a non-presidential election year.

Just because President Obama is a miserable failure doesn't mean that re-election will be a cake walk.

The budget remains out of structural balance, the state party is millions in debt, the Koch scandal isn't over, and the Marriage Amendment may turn out to be a millstone around the necks of GOP candidates running in swing suburban districts.

The narrative needs to pivot to tax reform, regulatory reform, education reform, and a focus on making Minnesota competitive in a hyper-competitive global economy.

Football stadiums, slot machines, and the dating habits of gay people are nothing more than a distraction.

Jobs, jobs, jobs people!

PERFECT

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

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

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

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

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

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

How very sad.

ACTING THE DICTATOR

Barack Obama may not be a dictator, but he's been playing one on television lately.

The latest incarnation of our kingly president is his most recent move to make 4, count em' 4, "recess appointments" to the National Labor Relations Board and the new Consumer Protection czar job created by the Dodd-Frank monstrosity.

The problem is that the U.S. Senate isn't in recess.

The president simply made the appointments, which would have been constitutional and all had the Senate actually been in recess.

This is similar to the problem a burglar has. Taking that television would be just fine - if it didn't belong to someone else.

In all seriousness, this is an unprecedented power grab that clearly violates the separation of powers and is therefore unconstitutional.

We pray the judicial branch steps in quickly to quash this rule-by-fiat scam and restore the proper constitutional balance.

It's too bad we can't count on the meek and sleazy Harry Reid to stand up for the prerogative of the United States Senate.

And as long as they're at it, the judiciary can strike down Obamacare, too. Forcing citizens to participate in economic activity is another blatant violation of our constitutional rights.

Barack Obama: FDR without the talent.

January 13, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

Editor's Note: Quote of the Week.

"The whole reason we're doing this is so the team can make money."

- Ted Mondale, Governor Dayton's point man on the stadium

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

PANDERING OF THE WORST KIND

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

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

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

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

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

Our guess is that Gingrich knows the virtue of capitalism but says these spurious things anyway to pander to South Carolina voters. Our further guess is that Perry failed economics 101 or took basket weaving in its place. Harold Hamilton has already rushed a copy of Henry Hazlitt's classic "Economics in One Lesson" overnight FedEx to Rick Perry. No word on whether Rick Perry can actually read, however.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DAYTON'S "JOBS" PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The answer is that he doesn't know.

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

IT'S THE STADIUM DEADLINE!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A POLL WE CAN LOVE

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

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

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

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

January 20, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

In This Issue:

- 1. More GOP Vindication.**
- 2. Stimulus-Lite.**
- 3. Reform is Finally Here!**
- 4. The Session Begins.**

MORE GOP VINDICATION

The GOP legislative majority experienced further validation of its fiscal stewardship on Thursday as the state announced a December unemployment rate of 5.7%, the lowest rate since the financial collapse of 2008.

The state's unemployment rate has fallen 1.5% since August, the fastest four month drop since 1976.

Guess we don't need massive tax hikes and a big expansion of government to get the economy going. A little governmental restraint is all that's needed.

STIMULUS-LITE

Here they go again. Governor Dayton unveiled a whopping \$775 million stimulus bill this week that was chock full of all the DFL economic canards about the ability of government to work some kind of black magic on the economy.

Otherwise known as a bonding bill, the stimulus bill is debt-financed government spending that is paid back, with interest, over time.

While the state may be in a better fiscal position than in the recent past, the legislature should be very cautious when putting more spending on the state's credit card.

Debt service is the fastest growing area of the state budget and something that needs to be watched closely.

Moreover, conservatives well know that government doesn't create jobs, wealth, or prosperity. Government should spent money to provide core functions, not to "stimulate" the economy.

Finally, as one would predict, Dayton just couldn't help himself when it came to recommending pork projects.

Among the more dubious:

- Civic Centers for Rochester, Mankato, and Saint Cloud;
- A baseball park for the Saint Paul Saints;
- A "wellness center" for Wadena;
- Light rail for the Southwest Metro;
- A new dolphin tank at the zoo;
- A renovated sculpture garden for Minneapolis.

Yuck.

Having said that, there is a place for a modest bonding bill that is truly focused on repairing and maintaining the state's core capital assets.

For example, replacing structurally deficient bridges is a proper expenditure of bonding dollars. So is the upgrade of security systems at state prisons.

As long as spending is kept reasonable and focused on core infrastructure, a bonding bill is fine.

This is especially true when one considers what happened to Republicans in 2004 when they failed to pass a bonding bill (more on that in our "session predictions" piece below).

REFORM IS FINALLY HERE!

And not a moment too soon. Republicans finally got back on message this week as they unveiled "Reform 2.0," the centerpiece of their re-election efforts and a welcome change of pace from the constant diet of football stadiums, slot machines, party debt, and marital infidelity.

Reform 2.0 is a series of legislative initiatives centered on key issue areas including:

- Reduce business property tax and encourage economic growth;
- Reduce regulation, create opportunity;
- Provide a highly skilled workforce;
- Fight nationalized health care;
- Modernize the bureaucracy.

Let's hope the GOP stays focused like a laser on this package of reform ideas, passes them timely, and adjourns the session.

Between today and election day, the GOP needs to hammer home these themes. Absolutely hammer them home.

THE SESSION BEGINS

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

Here are the Watchdogs predictions for the 2012 session.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOP leadership will recall the whipping Republicans took at the polls in 2004 after they failed to pass a bonding bill and they were successfully tagged with a "do nothing" label

that cost majority Republicans 13 seats in the Minnesota House, leaving them with a slim 68-66 majority that certainly was no majority on a large number of issues.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

January 27, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- 1. Down Goes the Commissioner.**
- 2. Where Eagles Dare.**
- 3. Amendment Mania.**
- 4. Bill of the Week.**

DOWN GOES THE COMMISSIONER

Assistant Senate majority Leader [Julianne Ortman](#) confirmed in a press conference today an item the Watchdog reported weeks ago regarding the confirmation of Public Utilities Commissioner [Ellen Anderson](#).

This publication reported at that time that Capitol sources were reporting that Anderson wouldn't be confirmed by the Senate and would be the first confirmation denial for the Dayton administration.

Ortman noted this morning simply that Anderson's confirmation, to be considered next week, would end in failure.

Ortman said Anderson is headed for defeat because of an record of environmental extremism when Anderson served in the state senate.

No doubt. During her tenure as chair of the energy committee in the senate, Anderson never found a "green" energy program she didn't like and never saw a fossil fuel she could tolerate.

Anderson was an environmental extremist to be sure. For example, Anderson earned a perfect 100% score in 2010 from the radical Sierra Club.

While the Senate should use a light hand in defeating the governor's cabinet and staff appointments, it is clear in this case that Anderson's record is one that is clearly outside the mainstream of Minnesota voters and is ideologically driven.

A negative confirmation vote is called for in this case.

And don't cry for Anderson. The Watchdog predicts Anderson will show up at the Capitol as a lobbyist within days of rejection.

WHERE EAGLES DARE

Speaking of environmental nincompoopery, did readers see this week that a windmill project in Goodhue County is seeking permission to [kill bald eagles](#)?

A company called National Wind, is seeking a waiver to avoid prosecution if their wind project kills bald eagles, which are federally protected and deservedly so.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will undertake a review of the application.

So where is Ellen Anderson and environmentalists on this issue?

A greedy corporation is seeking preemptive vindication to kill our national symbol and avoid prosecution.

Where is the outrage?

Oh, yeah. They believe that extremism in the name of environmentalism is no vice.

If Exxon had sought permission to kill bald eagles in the name of fracking, there would have been riots in the streets.

But since the corporation in question is practicing the religion of "renewable" energy, all sins can be forgiven.

Shame of National Wind and shame on those who would condone the killing of our endangered national symbol.

The legislature ought to stop this project cold (for other reasons as well) and the federal government ought to tell these corporate rent seekers that the killing of any bald eagles will result in prosecution.

Then again, these folks might be tight with Barack just like his cronies at Solyndra.

Wind power is a joke and is in a tailspin now that subsidies are running out.

What a travesty.

AMENDMENT MANIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just how many campaigns can be properly waged this year?

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a very real sense, constitutional amendments short circuit the democratic process by cutting out the governor in the near term (no gubernatorial action is needed to pass legislation on to the ballot) and cuts out the legislature, and by extension the people of Minnesota, in the long run because that issue is now in the constitution and can only be repealed or amended by another amendment.

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

But these instances should be rare.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How about one to guarantee early childhood learning?

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

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

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

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

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

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

BILL OF THE WEEK

This week's honors belong to state Senator [Ted Daley](#), a shining freshman star from Eagan.

Senate File [1493](#), authored by Daley, requires teachers to pass a basic skills test in reading, writing, and math before being granted a license to teach our kids.

Yes, it's true. In Minnesota right now, a teacher can hit the classroom with full licensure without proving that they have a fundamental knowledge of the Three Rs.

Congrats to Daley on his common sense bill.

Kudos are also in order for his Senate co-authors (Nienow, Wiger, DeKruif, Nelson) as well as the House companion authors (Kieffer, Kath, Erickson, Downey, Gruenhagen, Franson, and Myhra).

February 3, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

1. Capitol Update.

CAPITOL UPDATE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Said Pawlenty:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Whatever that mumbo jumbo means.

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

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

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

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

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

DISMISSED!

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

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

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

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

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

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

What a joke.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nice try, DFL.

BILL OF THE WEEK

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

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

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

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

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

What a novel concept!

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

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

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

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

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

After all, no engineering or accounting firm uses a LIFO system to address layoffs. This old, Soviet-style pay grid for teachers is coming to an end.

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

Let's make it 10.

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

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

Contact Rep. Petersen [here](#).

Contact Sen. Wolf [here](#).

NEWS AND NOTES

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

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

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

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

February 10, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

CAUCUS NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GIVING CREDIT WHERE DUE

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

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

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

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

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

Education isn't a federal issue and the federal Department of Education should be abolished.

This is one case where we can agree with Dayton.

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

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

YES, IT'S A TAX INCREASE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wrote Krinkie:

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

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

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

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

1) The legislation enacts a NEW TAX.

Some legislators are trying to evade this reality by calling it a 'fee', but Minnesota State Statute 645.44 subd.19 defines "tax" as "any fee, charge, exaction, or assessment imposed by a governmental entity on an individual, person, entity, transaction, good, service, or other thing. It excludes a price that an individual or entity chooses voluntarily to pay in return for receipt of goods or services provided by the governmental entity." The state imposing a charge on any new gaming operations is a tax. In the case of Racino; the proposed new tax is up to forty percent on gross receipts. This means the state government could receive up to forty percent of every dollar put into a slot machine at Canterbury Park in Shakopee and Running Aces in Columbus.

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

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

3) The legislation grows government.

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

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

A HOUSE DIVIDED

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

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

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

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

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

February 17, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

EVENT OF THE WEEK

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

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

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

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

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

Click here to [RSVP](#).

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

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

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

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

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

IRRESPONSIBLE IN WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STATE OF CONFUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What gives?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NON-NEWS FROM THE VIKINGS

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

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

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

We knew all along the threat to move was empty.

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

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

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

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

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

February 24, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

LETTER OF THE WEEK

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

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

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

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

STEVEN MINN, MINNEAPOLIS
Star Tribune 2-1-12

BIG MAP ATTACK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But here's where things get curious.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that so?

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

Both are well-respected veteran legislators.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BILL OF THE WEEK

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

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

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

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

The Watchdog congratulates Daley for getting this bill passed AND signed into law. Daley is another one of the those freshman GOP stars who forms the foundation for a lasting center-right coalition here in Minnesota.

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

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

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

THE DEPENDENCY CLASS

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

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

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

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

Both tend to empower Democrats at the polls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EAGLES WIN!

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

It's the real thing that won this week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

March 2, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

BUDGET POLITICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What a bunch of bunk.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then you yourself run into a financial rough patch.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The state budget is doing just fine.

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

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

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

Talk about playing politics and election year ploys!

BILLS OF THE WEEK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

March 9, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. That Backfired!**
- 2. The Higher Education Scam.**
- 3. Bills of the Week.**
- 4. Chevy Volt = Chevy Dolt.**

Editor's Note: The Minnesota Watchdog notes the passing of state Senator Gary Kubly this week after a long and courageous battle with ALS. Senator Kubly was widely known as a thoughtful legislator and kind colleague. May he rest in peace.

THAT BACKFIRED!

There's an old saying that states "Discretion is the better part of valor." In other words, "Don't act like Mr. Big Balls unless you're sure you can back it up."

The Minnesota chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (MNACLU), a special interest group famous for working to protect the rights of folks like flag burners and illegal aliens, learned that hard lesson this week.

Just last month, the ACLU held a cocky, haughty press conference in which they declared a \$1,000 "bounty" (they must have the same press guy as the New Orleans Saints) for anyone who could prove a case of voter fraud in Minnesota that the proposed Photo ID constitutional amendment would have prevented.

Here's a couple of excerpts from the [press release](#):

Allegedly in the name of fraud, the Minnesota Legislature is considering a constitutional amendment that would limit the right to vote by requiring registered voter to show a valid photo ID with a current address in order to vote. As written, the only fraud this requirement would prevent is voter impersonation...

"There is no voter impersonation fraud in Minnesota," said ACLU-MN Executive Director Charles Samuelson, "and we are willing to bet on it."

"We don't want hearsay, we want facts," continued Samuelson. "If you can bring evidence of a voter impersonation conviction that would have been prevented by this new law in the past ten years, we will give you \$1,000. We believe this amendment push is being fueled by rumor and fear, but not facts."

Oops.

This week, Minnesota Majority, a conservative group that is part of the coalition supporting Photo ID, stepped forward to claim the \$1,000 "bounty."

The group simply did a bit of legal research and uncovered a case of voter fraud in Anoka County from 2010 in which one person forged the signature of another on an absentee ballot. The person whose signature was forged also voted in person in Blue Earth County in that same election.

Now the MNACLU is singing a different tune.

The ACLU's Chuck Samuelson said he would review the Nyhammer case, to see if it qualified as a bonafide example of voter impersonation.

"We'll take a look at it and if Dan's right we'll be happy to give him \$1,000 on April 5th," Samuelson told reporters.

The MNACLU and all who oppose Photo ID are looking pretty stupid. They threw a bet on the table and lost it.

The Watchdog is fully supportive of Photo ID and the need to protect election integrity. If it takes a constitutional amendment to do so, so be it.

If Governor Dayton is unwilling to sign into law a bill that vigorously and robustly protects the voting process, then off to the ballot we go.

Frankly, this vapid argument that no voter fraud exists is getting old.

Minnesota Majority has clearly demonstrated that such fraud does indeed exist.

Moreover, there is very likely voter fraud that goes undetected, thanks to Minnesota's lax voting laws, such as same day registration and the ability of one person to vouch for another voter's identity.

Even isolated cases of voter fraud are reason enough for Photo ID.

Our democratic institutions rely on the good faith and support of the citizens. If citizens don't have faith in our electoral process, if they don't have faith that their vote will be protected, it has a corrosive effect not only on the voting process but on government as well.

These days, government doesn't need any more reasons for citizens to have little faith.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SCAM

Must be nice to work in academia. High salary, high payouts, Cadillac benefits, a short work week, and a snotty superiority complex to go with it.

That's especially the case with former U of MN president Bob "Big Bucks" Bruininks, who was busted this week by the Star Tribune laundering money. At least as the tea-drinking-pinky-in-the-air academic types understand money laundering.

It was discovered that Big Bucks was steering university funds into some joint called the Center for Integrative Leadership while he was in the final phase of his university presidency.

All told, he steered \$355,000 into this tiny think tank.

The problem?

Big Bucks is now working for this same think tank.

This action may not be illegal and may not even be unethical, but it stinks like a dead gopher hidden in the shed on a hot August day.

"You put it all together in a weird way and it may look like I'm feathering a nest," he told the newspaper.

Yes, it certainly does.

Colleges and universities have been jacking up tuition way beyond inflation for years, putting a big strain on families and kids who are doing everything they can to climb the ladder of upward mobility.

The salaries and benefits in the ivory tower are really out of hand and this is just one more example of the way higher education is a money scam.

Just take a look at the [salaries](#) of U of MN employees. Can you count the number who make more than \$100,000 per year?

Must be nice.

BILLS OF THE WEEK

Best Bill of the Week. [HF 2651](#) (Rep. Jennifer Loon of Eden Prairie).

This bill would allow a school district to put a teacher charged with a felony on unpaid suspension.

Right now, any suspension for a felony charge comes with full pay and benefits.

So when they find all that child porn on a computer at school, the teacher gets to sit in jail with full pay and benefits until conviction.

Hopefully this bill will become law and inject some common sense into such situations.

Worst Bill of the Week. SF [2254](#) (Sen. Olson of Minnetrista).

This bill would designate Lester as the official state soil.

Really? This is the type of legislation that gets Republicans in trouble. The DFL sends out literature pieces against Republicans saying that this is what we do instead of working on real issues.

No Republican should be sponsoring irrelevant legislation like this.

And, yes, we feel bad calling out Sen. Olson, who will retire after this session.

We wouldn't want to "soil" the good senator's reputation.

Sen. Olson has done some excellent work for the cause, especially in the area of education.

Nonetheless, the Dog doesn't issue free passes. This is the worst bill of the week and that's the "dirty" truth.

CHEVY VOLT = CHEVY DOLT

Finding some story to demonstrate how President Obama is ruining the country is like finding a date in a brothel. Not real difficult.

Among the many stories this week (working to kill the Keystone pipeline, \$885 million in stimulus money that can't be tracked, "green" energy corporate welfare) we decided to examine General Motor's planned suspension of Chevy Volt production.

The Dolt is a twofer, as GM was bailed out with taxpayer money and the production and purchase of Dolts are further subsidized by the government.

GM announced that the Dolt assembly line would shut down for five weeks starting March 19 to "align production with demand."

In other words demand for the Dolt, which is known to incinerate its owners, is far lower than GM's rose projections.

Once again, an attempt by the president to defy the iron law of the free market has spectacularly failed (how ironic that GM sales are being driven by trucks and SUVs).

In addition to the drawback of being attractive to only enviro-weenies and pyromaniacs, the Dolt is also ultra-expensive at roughly \$41,000 a copy.

Want to see the free market at work?

Consider that auto industry experts have calculated that even if an owner never used gasoline to power the engine (the Dolt has that capability), it would take 12 years for the average owner to make up for the Dolt's price premium over a similar gasoline powered car.

They say that the car you drive says something about you.

If you drive this car, it tells the world you're a true Dolt and the kind of guy who probably also buys the rust protection package as well.

March 16, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Get Off Kurt.**
- 2. Right to Work.**
- 3. Bill of the Week.**

GET OFF KURT

One of the sorriest aspects of the Vikings stadium fiasco is the way the DFL and others have used the lack of progress on the stadium to bash Speaker Kurt Zellers and portray him as the obstacle to a stadium happening, attempting to undermine his leadership and divide the house Republican caucus.

What the Speaker of the House has offered, according to media reports, is a fair proposition.

He is not going to be an advocate nor is he going to be an obstacle.

Fair enough.

Never mind that the Minneapolis City Council doesn't have the votes to approve the stadium bill.

Never mind the fact that the stadium is stalled in a SENATE committee.

Never mind that the advocates brought up the bill to a Senate committee and then didn't have the votes to pass it along.

Never mind that the primary financing mechanism is the subject of continued debate.

Never mind that many thoughtful and principled GOP legislators oppose the idea of a subsidized football stadium - period.

Never mind that the bill is dead for this session.

Never mind that the Vikings are a bunch of nincompoops who can't make things happen, despite oodles of cash and an army of lobbyists.

Speakers Zellers has stated clearly he won't be rounding up votes or twisting arms to get a stadium.

The last Republican Speaker to round up votes for a taxpayer subsidized stadium was Steve Sviggum. The GOP soon thereafter found itself in the minority.

Zellers, as usual, is standing with taxpayers.

Watchdogs need to send the Speaker a note of thanks [here](#).

RIGHT TO WORK

Some of the Watchdog faithful have contacted us this week wondering why the right to work amendment is struggling in the legislature.

Some are wondering why Republican legislators would oppose the amendment.

While the Watchdog doesn't know the precise motives of legislators regarding concerns about the amendment, we have spoken with a few of them and can offer their perspective.

Some support the view of Milton Friedman, the revered libertarian thinker and Nobel Prize Laureate who viewed right to work laws as contrary to the fundamental right to contract freely, as discussed in "Capitalism and Freedom," which is required reading for any person interested in limited government and the protection of personal liberties.

This philosophical opposition to right to work laws has practical application.

Some legislators told the Watchdog that the Senate Judiciary committee testimony of contractors in the construction industry was compelling.

In the construction industry, most employers are non-union, meaning that skilled trades people have the choice to work for a union or non-union company.

More importantly, contractors can freely choose to hire or not hire union labor.

For some employers, choosing to contract with union labor is preferred.

Why?

Unlike the public sector, there is a true partnership between unions and management in this field.

Training programs, for example, are the product of joint labor-management agreement.

Therefore, an employer can hire union carpenters, for example, who have all been certified and trained through a program pre-approved by the contractor. In other words, the employer is hiring employees who are a known and trusted quantity in terms of skill and safety certification.

This certainty makes it very easy for contractors to "scale up" on jobs quickly by hiring employees who come from an employer-approved certification program.

This is important to contractors who deal with very expensive projects and very thin profit margins. One incompetent carpenter or crane operator can turn a project into a money loser for the contractor.

In the private sector, unlike the public sector, there is also a great deal more cooperation because of the free market. If the employer doesn't make money, the union guys don't work and don't earn money. There is no taxpayer money tree backing things up.

This is also why the private sector skilled trade unions don't have features like tenure or seniority. If you show up on the job site and screw up, you get sent packing. The union isn't there to make excuses for you. Everyone on the job site is there to make money.

Again, both employees and management are free to be or not be part of the union.

The only restriction is that if you're going to join a skilled trade union, you can't enjoy benefits like training programs and a self-funded health care fund and not pay for it. That's a bit like being on welfare.

Construction contractors, some of our most important job creators, have been visiting regularly with legislators on both sides of the aisle to convey their concerns. They view the current right to work amendment exactly as Milton Friedman does - as an impairment of their right to freely contract with union labor.

One contractor has said this about the current proposed amendment: "It would hurt my business and drive construction jobs out of Minnesota."

These are the reasons given by the GOP legislators and contractors with whom we have spoken.

This may also be one of the reasons Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker [isn't interested](#) in pushing right to work.

It may also be the reason why business advocates like the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and the Minnesota Business Partnership have not taken a position in support of right to work.

This is not to say that Senator Thompson isn't on the right track.

He is an unquestioned champion of liberty and accountable government. He is a voice of principled reason and integrity in a business filled with pretenders and phonies.

There are simply some unintended consequences to this legislation.

Conversely, Public sector unions, especially the teachers' union, are out of control and in need of serious reform.

And while the Watchdog has heard concerns about right to work applying to private unions, we have no such concerns regarding the public sector.

Public sector unions aren't guided by profit motive concerns.

Moreover, those negotiating for the taxpayer are often beholden to the union more than anything else.

AFSCME or Education Minnesota has often endorsed the school board member or city councilman sitting on the other side of the table allegedly negotiating against the union.

The misguided attempt of Governor Dayton to unionize day care providers is in a similar vein. We couldn't disagree more with Governor Dayton on this issue.

In the private sector, unlike the public sector, management is there negotiating on behalf of the share holders or other owners of the company and has a sole fiduciary duty to them and none to the union.

These distinctions are key to crafting a right to work amendment that targets the real problem without creating collateral damage to some private sector economic arrangements that are voluntarily entered into and work to the mutual benefit of all the parties to the contract.

BILL OF THE WEEK

Speaking of Senator Thompson, he and Rep. Kurt Bills have earned this week's honors for the Bill of the Week.

The two have respectively [authored](#) SF 577 and HF 329, a bill that would stop the practice of teachers and their unions from using taxpayer resources to advocate for their political agenda.

Specifically, the bill would prohibit taxpayer resources from being used to:

advocate the election or defeat of any candidate for elective office; (2) advocate the passage or defeat of any referendum question; or(3) solicit funds for political purposes.

There is a critical need to get unions like Education Minnesota under control.

Any GOP legislator down at the Capitol can tell you that they have received email from public school teachers using taxpayer time and resources to lobby for more pay and benefits or to otherwise advocate for Education Minnesota's agenda.

There isn't a GOP legislator who hasn't had this happen that we know of.

This bill is a no brainer.

March 23, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

1. Capitol Update.

CAPITOL UPDATE

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

EXIT STRATEGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The rest is gravy.

LEFT AT THE STATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SENATOR MICHEL ETHICS HEARING

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

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

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

THE ECONOMICS OF COORPORATE TAXES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POLLING MANIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

March 30, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Capitol Update.**
- 2. Cynical in the Extreme.**
- 3. Photo ID - Again.**
- 4. ObamaCare Going Down.**

CAPITOL UPDATE

Greetings from Saint Paul, Watchdogs. The big news this week is that just days after adjournment fever swept the Capitol, it seems that expectations have come back to reality.

Discussions this week with our sources indicate that the legislature is highly unlikely to adjourn prior to the Easter/Passover break. The view of our sources is that major obstacles exist to reaching quick agreement in conference committee on differences between House and Senate versions of major bills like the omnibus tax bill, the photo ID amendment, and getting to agreement on a bonding bill.

For example, major differences in both the size and the composition of bonding bills exist. The Senate this week unveiled a \$496 million bill while the House came in with a more modest \$280 million bill. Those two bills compare with the governor's recommendation of a \$775 million bill.

The political and policy implications of this one bill demonstrate the currents that swirl around issues in an election year.

To begin, a bonding bill needs a 3/5ths super majority to pass in each body, as required by the constitution.

Philosophically, many DFLers want a bonding bill because they believe such spending stimulates the economy and provides jobs.

Conversely, many Republicans are skeptical that such government spending benefits the economy. Moreover, these conservatives are concerned about the government engaging in debt-financed spending.

Practically speaking, many Republicans want a bonding bill because the bill contains projects they deem important to their district and their re-election prospects.

In addition, many Republicans want to pass a bonding bill lest they get tagged with a "do nothing" label. These Republicans point to 2004, a year in which a bonding bill wasn't passed. The GOP held the majority in the House, while the DFL-led Senate wasn't on the ballot.

DFLers cheerfully spun the narrative that the GOP "didn't do its work" and deserved to be "fired."

The GOP lost 13 seats that election, with many observers agreeing that the "do nothing" narrative played a big part in GOP defeats.

Other GOP legislators will point to the fact that a sizable bonding bill was passed last year and that now, unlike in 2004, voters are much more in tune with the impending crisis of government debt, meaning voters are likely to be much more sympathetic to an argument that government doesn't need to put more debt on the government credit card.

Yet other DFLers, despite unquestioned faith in government spending and an inveterate attraction to pork, are tempted to oppose a bonding bill to hearken back to the 2004 strategy, believing that a "do nothing" narrative can work once again.

Bonding bills, an omnibus tax bill, the photo ID amendment, the school shift payback, environmental permitting streamlining, piece of cake.

Despite all that, the Watchdog thinks the legislature can get out at any time. Republicans turned a \$5 billion deficit into a surplus - without tax increases. Enough said. Claim victory and go home.

CYNICAL IN THE EXTREME

The Watchdog has been an unapologetic opponent of public funding for a Vikings stadium.

The reasons for this opposition to Welfare has been explained time and again over the past months and years.

But this past week wrote another sordid chapter in this pitiful saga.

Thanks to a data practices act filed by the [Star Tribune](#), it was revealed that cynical politics has been at play in the stadium issue, further increasing opposition to public stadium funding and feeding the disgust many of us feel about politicians who claim to represent the people who elected them but really have a different agenda in mind.

The latest example, is Minneapolis councilmember Sandra Colvin Roy, one of 7 members of the city council who came out this week in support of the Vikings stadium plan.

Email obtained by the Star Tribune shows Colvin Roy earlier opposed to the stadium plan, even to the extent that she wrote an opinion piece that was never submitted for publication.

In particular, Colvin Roy was passionate in her demand that the citizens be allowed to vote in a referendum before any city dollars are spent on a stadium.

"If it's silly to respect the clear wishes of the citizens; if its silly to think that integrity in governance is important, then I aspire to be the silliest representative of the people that I can be," Colvin Roy intoned in her never-sent missive.

Yet, just last week, she came out in favor of a stadium plan with no referendum.

So what changed?

It looks like big business, particularly Target Corporation, got to her.

We also learn from these emails that a particular Target executive was essentially put in charge of putting together the city's end of the stadium deal, a job that should have clearly been kept inside city hall, where elected and thus accountable officials would be in charge.

In comparing Colvin Roy's early pro-referendum position to her later no-referendum position, it is easy for any reasonable person to conclude that she cynically sold out her constituents in favor of corporate interests.

And that's why we're so distrustful of government.

PHOTO ID - AGAIN

A major cheating [scandal](#) involving college entrance exams was uncovered recently in New York.

In order to enhance security and protect the integrity of these high-stakes college entrance exams, what do you think the providers of the test did?

C'mon, think hard.

Take a guess.

THEY WILL NOW REQUIRE A PHOTO IDENTIFICATION TO VERIFY THAT TEST TAKERS ARE WHO THEY SAY THEY ARE.

Yes, sir. You now need a photo ID to board an airplane, cash a check, work out at the gym, and now to take a college entrance exam.

And the DFL still rabidly fights the effort to implement a photo ID requirement to protect the integrity of our elections.

Go figure.

OBAMACARE GOING DOWN

The U.S. Supreme Court this week engaged in an unprecedented six hours of hearing oral arguments with respect to the constitutionality of ObamaCare.

Not surprisingly, the majority of justices appear poised to strike down the law, if their pointed questioning of White House lawyers is any indication.

The heart of the argument against ObamaCare centers on the "individual mandate," the requirement that every American buy health insurance or face government sanction.

The administration argues that the Commerce Clause of the constitution provides the authority for this mandate.

While much has been written about the multiple lawsuits regarding ObamaCare, this argument bears the most consideration for Watchdogs.

Never before in the history of this country has government claimed that the authority to regulate commerce includes the authority to FORCE Americans to participate in commerce.

This unprecedented view of the Commerce Clause would render the concept of a government of enumerated powers meaningless and allow give the federal government new powers to force citizens to do all sorts of things government deemed to be in their best interests.

The Commerce Clause was never contemplated to confer this kind of power on the central government.

The Supreme Court would be doing nothing more than fulfilling their duty to interpret the constitution by striking down the individual mandate.

If the Supreme Court takes this route, watch for liberals to have a fit and, among other things, claim that the Court turned "activist" and "substituted" their judgment for that of the Congress.

That's a bunch of bunk.

The primary job of the court is to interpret the constitution and apply the law under consideration against the constitution.

To find ObamaCare in violation of the constitution is not activist or judicial overreach.

It is simply the court doing its job.

April 6, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

1. Capitol Update.

CAPITOL UPDATE

Dayton Exceeds Authority

In breaking news, a district court judge has invalidated Governor Dayton's unilateral authority to order a daycare provider union vote.

Readers will recall that Governor Dayton had issued an executive order calling for an election to be held to determine if daycare providers should be unionized.

The real force behind the executive order was two powerful, partisan thug labor unions, AFSCME and SEIU. Both unions stood to gain membership by representing daycare providers if the unionization vote went that way.

Editor's Note: AFSCME, which represents government workers, was an early supporter of Mark Dayton's campaign for governor. But we're not calling this a payoff. You can.

A lawsuit was filed, arguing that Dayton's executive order amounted to an unconstitutional power grab. The plaintiffs argued that only the legislature has the power to order such an election via the law making process.

The court [wrote](#):

By issuing Executive Order 11-31, the Governor is attempting to circumvent the legislative process and unionize childcare providers by executive order, rather than by adhering to a valid legislative process. In doing so, the

Governor has improperly superseded the Legislature's authority and violated the separation of powers clause as set forth in the Minnesota Constitution.

Better luck next time, governor.

Dayton's Bad Week (continued)

The governor is caught between a rock and a hard place on the teacher seniority reform bill, otherwise known as "LIFO."

LIFO is an acronym for "Last in First Out," the process whereby teacher layoffs are made solely on the basis of seniority, meaning that the newest teachers get the pink slip while the senior ones ride on, regardless of effectiveness, talent, or value added to the school and its students.

Rep. Branden Petersen and Sen. Pam Wolf are on the verge of passing a bill that would end this strict "LIFO" system and allow districts to get crazy and actually base layoffs on factors other than tenure, while retaining tenure as one factor in the layoff consideration.

The only constituency opposed to this reform is - gasp! - Education Minnesota, the big, bad teachers' union.

Republicans support the reform. The public wants the reform.

And - gasp! - so does the Star Tribune, which penned an editorial today supporting LIFO reform.

Even the liberal Star Tribune can't find a reason to support this common sense legislation.

Dayton has given indications he will veto the bill when it reaches his desk.

If so, Dayton would be showing his true partisan colors by pandering to Education Minnesota, just like he was caught pandering to AFSCME and SEIU with the daycare provider executive order.

The governor is fond of claiming Republicans in the legislature are acting solely in the interest of politics and not good policy.

Hello pot! This is kettle calling!

Dayton's Bad Week (continued, continued)

Uh boy. The governor pitched another fit this week in vetoing a bill that would have accelerated the repayment of the school funding shift that was used to balance the state budget.

In light of better-than-expected state budget forecasts, Republicans used the surplus monies to repay the shift.

DFLers, including the governor, said this was impermissible because the monies used for the payback would be better used to increase the state's budget reserves.

Yeah, right.

First, it doesn't make sense to leave debt on the books and force school districts to engage in short-term borrowing when the money is available to retire the debt, or at least expedite the repayment.

Second, even after the shift repayment, the budget reserves would hold more money than the 2010 special session budget agreement.

That agreement was negotiated between Governor Pawlenty and A DFL-MAJORITY LEGISLATURE.

Yep, the same DFLers complaining that this deal leaves too little in state coffers negotiated a budget just two years ago the left even less in the coffers.

Stunning hypocrisy, even by political standards.

But that's not all.

The governor unleashed another petty, vitriolic veto message unbecoming a chief executive.

- "a desire to avoid public accountability"
- "a ploy"
- "rescuing those who voted for the school shift from public wrath"
- "the legislative majority decided that protecting corporations was more important than paying back the school shift responsibly"

C'mon, governor. You don't have to act the partisan cheerleader every day. Feel free to act as the governor to ALL Minnesotans on occasion.

November is a long ways away. There's plenty of time for politics later.

You could even spend some time brushing up on that whole separation of powers thingy you ignored with the daycare union debacle.

Dayton's Bad Week (continued, continued, continued)

The legislature this week voted to send a constitutional amendment to the people this November that will ask them to amend the constitution to require that a person show a photo ID in order to cast a vote in elections.

While the Watchdog wholeheartedly supports a photo ID requirement, we do share the reservations of some conservatives who question the efficacy of using the constitution as the vehicle for such a protection.

And here's where the governor has a bad week.

He had an opportunity, no, he had an obligation to work out compromise legislation that would have satisfied Republican concerns, met certain DFL concerns, and walked both parties back from the brink of a legislation-by-constitution arms race.

Instead, Dayton copped a partisan attitude and vetoed the legislation.

Republicans had little choice regarding this important issue.

There is no better way to protect the integrity of elections than a photo ID. In fact, it's the best way to protect the integrity of many important societal functions. Which is why a photo ID is used daily to cash checks, gain entrance to places of employment, board an airplane, or take a college entrance exam.

Dayton missed an opportunity to be a statesman and rise above the politics by working hard to achieve compromise.

He refused.

Now he and the DFL get to chew on the bitter harvest of an amendment that will surely pass (yes, a lawsuit could stop things) and enshrine photo ID in the constitution, well beyond the reach of future DFL legislators and governors.

Governor Dayton is still mired in the governor-as-partisan-in-chief model.

The Watchdog staff will now happily go to the polls this November to support photo ID, ensuring that our future votes won't be cancelled by some ineligible voter.

April 13, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

A LOST GOVERNORSHIP

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

Governor Dayton didn't make the cut.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nope.

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

What a spectacular failure of leadership.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THIS IS THE AGENDA?

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

To say we're unimpressed is an understatement.

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

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

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

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

Governor, you have to be a leader.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's time to move beyond pandering to your base. You can start by signing the teacher tenure reform bill (LIFO) when it reaches your desk. The current status quo is supported only by the teachers' union and universally recognized by Minnesotans as antithetical to a quality education.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

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

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

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

In fact, your activism is limited to showing up at the monthly BPOU meeting to air your grievances about how your local GOP legislator is a RINO (regardless of the voting record) and then segue into a frothing monologue regarding Obama's birth certificate,

9/11, and Area 51 when everyone else is ready to discuss the plan of action to take the fight to the liberals.

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

Just because you showed up to vote in 2010 after staying home to hand Obama victory in 2008, you think the GOP legislature owes you and should prostrate themselves at your feet, passing every agenda item you want.

Get over it. Senjem and Zellers are focused on a sustainable, long-term governing majority, which, yes, includes reaching out to the same independents who were critical to electing the GOP majority. Yes, their thoughts matter. Get out your calculator and see that appealing to 25% of the electorate doesn't get us to the majority, the one and only place where we can get things done like photo ID, LIFO, and a more responsible state budget.

Moreover, it's time to get behind and support GOP legislators, not kick the crap out of them for not passing your purity test. Just because they're not with you on one issue, it's not a license to brand them RINOs or claim that you're going to back some loony tune third party guy who couldn't get 10% of the voter in your district.

It's a laugh to see wanna be's challenge or threaten to challenge incumbent legislators who have lifetime Taxpayer League scores in the 90s.

You can stop with the all the attacks and "outings" on your lame blogs and Twitter accounts with 10 followers.

We have people who do that. They're called Democrats, backed by their well-funded PACs, which are in turn funded by trust fund millionaires who are the real Big Money in this state.

You've never won an election, you've never raised a penny for the cause, and you only show up to dominate BPOU meetings by complaining. Win an election? You can't win a date.

It's high time to get with the program and start helping the cause.

Or stay home. We don't need you that much. Some folks are more trouble than their value to the organization.

April 20, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. We Told You So.**
- 2. Southwest and Going South.**
- 3. The Narrative.**

WE TOLD YOU SO

Actually, this was an easy call. We told you, the loyal reader, a long time ago that the stadium subsidy game boils down to a very simple proposition.

And that proposition is this: Build us a stadium or else we move the franchise.

It's that simple.

We always knew that the stadium game would come down to this.

It was only a matter of time.

Today is the day that the NFL henchmen flew into town on their private jets and arrived in their limos to tell all those hayseed leaders here in flyover country just how things are going to be when it comes to ponying up subsidies to a highly profitable multi-billion industry.

Build it or we move the team to LA.

BS. Plain and simple.

The NFL will not take a franchise out of the one of the most lucrative markets in the league and leave nothing to backfill it.

There are many more franchises in need of relocation ahead of the Vikings.

Look, we've gone over the stadium thing many times and you all know the arguments.

It's the simple fact that we always knew the NFL would play this card.

The only real question is whether our elected officials are gullible enough to believe it.

Apparently governor Dayton is.

It would be really sweet to see a city finally stand up to the stadium game and call the NFL's bluff.

This action would be a game changer as the stadium threat has been the linchpin of taxpayer extortion for decades.

The team isn't moving. Don't believe the hype.

SOUTHWEST AND GOING SOUTH

Ugh. The same old game plan for those ultra-expensive light rail and commuter trains is at play in the Southwest Metro as the business community has now jumped into full-throated advocacy for the \$1 billion trolley.

We are hearing the same old canards regarding all the jobs and economic development that will attend the building and operation of yet another light rail line.

As readers know, the Minnesota Watchdog is headquartered in the northern Minneapolis suburbs, home of Northstar commuter rail.

We lived through the entire drama and strong-arm tactics used to ram through the Northstar project.

With Northstar rail in full operation, we have yet to see the jobs and economic development promised.

Heck, we have yet to see any promises delivered. Ridership hasn't met projections and isn't even close, for example.

Legislators from that area are correct to ask hard questions regarding the project and remain firm in their skepticism regarding promises made and rhetoric offered.

Based upon the experience of Northstar, here's some advice for policy makers down south, who will be constantly badgered and harassed about this project until they become either fervent supporters of the project or are branded no-nothing miscreants who have betrayed their districts.

First, demand the empirical data and thoroughly and carefully evaluate it. The hucksters will all claim that "the studies" validate the project.

For Northstar, it was claimed that "the studies" all demonstrated that commuter rail was the most cost-effective transit improvement option for the area.

When asked for the studies, we were told they would be forthcoming.

It's 2012 and we're still waiting.

Don't take anyone's word for anything. Lay your own eyes on the data.

Second, demand verifiable success metrics moving forward. If the claim is that light rail will bring jobs, demand not only data to support the contention, but metrics to verify after the fact.

Funny, no one talks about or produces any data to back up claims that Northstar rail would bring jobs.

Our guess is that the answer is zero. Our guess is that not one job was brought out this way because there is a commuter train available.

Third, carefully evaluate those claims of economic development.

Legislators should take the time either as a group or individually to visit the Northstar stations in Fridley, Coon Rapids, Anoka, Elk River and Big Lake.

What you will see is not any real economic development. The businesses near the station were there prior to the train.

Again, verify the data and demand accountability through objective metrics to measure the claims.

We on this side of town were sold a false bill of goods on Northstar rail.

Instead of the free exchange ideas and the pursuit of good public policy, what we got was a cult-like atmosphere of intimidation where those who offered reasoned and good faith skepticism of the project were shouted down and branded fools who just weren't with all the cool kids loving on Northstar rail.

It wasn't a public relations campaign. It was a propaganda campaign worthy of any totalitarian regime.

Don't let this happen to you.

Trust us. They will try it.

THE NARRATIVE

Boy, the DFL is really doubling down on their strategy to brand the GOP majority as a "do nothing" legislature. In fact, it's been quite a week.

First, only one DFLer on the House Government Operations Committee voted "yes" on the Vikings stadium, killing the bill even though a majority of Republicans voted for it (boo, hiss).

The stadium has been identified as a top priority not only for Governor Dayton, but also for the construction trades, a traditional constituency for the DFL.

That's quite a price to pay to spite the GOP.

In any case, the Watchdog is okay with that because we don't like taxpayer-financed stadiums anyway.

Then there is the Capitol improvement project.

The House yesterday took up a \$221 million bonding project to restore the Capitol, which has fallen into a serious state of disrepair.

This was another project supported by the governor and the construction trades.

Needing a 3/5ths majority to pass (pursuant to the constitution), the bill got 80 of 81 needed green votes and failed.

The entire GOP caucus supported the bill minus three members, two of whom were excused from session.

The DFL instructed the vast majority of their members to vote no, trying to embarrass the GOP and give life to the narrative.

In the words of Speaker Zellers, the construction trades should be pi\$\$ed.

Moreover, this strategy runs the danger of backfiring on the DFL, as the public sees that they are engaged in obstructionism and game playing, gumming up the works solely for political advantage.

Again, we're okay with government not doing anything.

What we're concerned about is a short-term do nothing strategy to gain the majority and then really start doing "things" with Governor Dayton at the helm.

Do nothing legislature? More like a do nothing DFL.

For people who constantly espouse faith in government and our governmental institutions, this is a supremely cynical strategy that pays homage to the one things DFLers enjoy more than Big Government - their own sense of self-entitlement and power.

April 27, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

1. Rally Time!
2. Capitol Update.
3. Socialism Fails.

RALLY TIME!

Hey, Watchdogs! We look forward to seeing all of you at the Capitol tomorrow morning for annual Tax Cut rally (10 AM sharp). Come and enjoy the fellowship of like-minded lovers of liberty and limited government and be sure to visit Harold Hamilton at the Watchdog tent, where we will have tons of Watchdog swag to commemorate your visit.

The legislature will also be in session tomorrow, perhaps voting on taxpayer subsidies for a professional football franchise. You will have the opportunity to have your voice heard in a very personal and direct way regarding this and other issues that remain outstanding.

Government belongs to those who show up. The liberals and their special interests have been showing up all session looking for a spiff or two financed with your hard-earned money. Tomorrow is your turn. Make something of it and let legislators know that the same people who swept them into office in 2010 are counting on the legislature to one very simple yet powerful thing - make good on a campaign promise to make government smaller, more efficient, and accountable to the citizens of the state.

CAPITOL UPDATE

It's crunch time at the Capitol. With a self-imposed deadline of Monday, the legislature is working overtime to craft a potential global agreement involving a tax bill, a bonding bill, and a stadium bill.

Despite a decided lack of media attention, Watchdogs should also note the House last night passed and sent to the governor a conference committee report reforming school teacher tenure.

The bill would give local school boards the power to decide teacher layoffs by criteria other than seniority. For example, a school board could use teacher effectiveness as a criterion in determining layoffs.

This bill is a milestone in education reform. Under the bill, no longer would teachers be treated like unskilled labor, with a "last in, first out" mentality.

Finally, teachers would be treated like the professionals they are, with their talents and work product part of the evaluation regarding who stays and who goes.

Not surprisingly, the bill was opposed by the teacher union, which came up with a number of excuses to protect the status quo, which has miserably failed our society and which has no place in our modern, global, hypercompetitive economy, where innovation and scientific inquiry will determine winners and losers. Unfortunately, the global economy doesn't dole out prosperity on a seniority basis.

Democrats on the House floor bragged about the governor's impending veto of the bill, which will very likely happen.

Rare is the DFLer who is willing to risk the wrath of the teacher union, which has made the DFL a wholly owned subsidiary of the union.

When it comes to innovation and reform, this has been a do-nothing DFL governor and legislature. Just as it's been for the past 50 years.

In any case, sources close to legislative leadership tell the Watchdog that there is a near agreement on a tax bill, which could provide needed tax relief to job creators and remove some barriers to creating jobs in this state.

Depending upon the outcome, this is a bill the Watchdog can get behind.

Regarding bonding, sources indicate that there has been a great deal of negotiating regarding the overall bonding number, which has been jacked fairly high (\$685 million) by the DFL.

A bonding bill isn't needed this session and should not be an obstacle to adjournment.

A \$500 million bonding bill was passed last year, which means that the GOP legislature actually already passed a bonding bill a year early.

Moreover, there are many projects still in the pipeline, meaning that folks who claim that we need to put people to work through a bonding bill have that option already in place. Simply get moving on projects already authorized.

Finally, the Watchdog can support a bonding bill only if it's limited in size and free of pork. The bill ought to be strictly focused on core infrastructure improvement like roads, bridges, public safety, and asset preservation.

If the price is too high, walk away from the table. It's the DFL that wants this stuff anyway.

And then there is the Vikings stadium. Ugh. Sources tell us the votes aren't there to pass a stadium and that most of the action is simply posturing and a race to place blame on someone else's head when the stadium doesn't pass.

Good. A stadium isn't a core governmental function. All the arguments against a stadium have been thoroughly examined and haven't changed.

Do a tax bill, a reasonable bonding bill and go home.

SOCIALISM FAILS

It's funny how the analysis of the current European economic crisis has missed a fundamental point.

Namely, that socialism has once again failed.

European countries that for years practiced welfare state socialism are now in midst of some very painful and dangerous choices regarding a path to solvency and fiscal stability.

The simple fact is that creditors are threatening not finance the party any longer.

These governments must implement austerity measures and tax increases that are critical to long-term stability but harmful to short term growth.

These measures have already engendered social upheaval and threaten to turn into outright civil strife.

The rise of political extremism could very well empower political forces that will turn away from reform - which does little more than forestall the day of reckoning.

The simple point is that capitalism has been proven once again to be the only economic system that offers both political stability and economic prosperity.

And once again, socialism has demonstrated that it guarantees little beyond an equal sharing of the misery.

May 4, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Rally for the Hardcore.**
- 2. So Who's Dateless and Jobless?**
- 3. Monday.**
- 4. Veto Madness.**

RALLY FOR THE HARDCORE

Last Saturday's Tax Cut Rally was for the hardcore, so says Mother Nature. Watchdogs defied a cold, driving rain to have their collective voice heard regarding limited government and individual liberty.

A number of passionate and inspiring speakers, including former Minnesota resident Herman Cain, fired up the crowd and emphasized the importance of being active and engaged in the upcoming election.

Harold Hamilton hosted visitors in the Watchdog tent, where visitors picked up some great swag, enjoyed conservative fellowship and marveled at the iconic, massive inflatable [Watchdog](#), which has become an ubiquitous symbol of taxpayer rights across Minnesota.

The Watchdog staff and Harold Hamilton thank all who stopped by to offer their thanks and praise for the Watchdog's work to promote transparency and accountability across all levels of government.

We also thank all the new readers who signed up to receive our weekly Email Update, Friday commentary, and daily Morning Blotter.

Welcome to the brotherhood of the Dog!

SO WHO'S DATELESS AND JOBLESS?

Legislators in Saint Paul have been telling the Watchdog that Vikings fans frothing at the mouth over a new stadium are some of the rudest, most disrespectful, uncivil Minnesotans they've encountered in their time at the Capitol, however long that may have been.

It's even gotten to the point where legislators who support the stadium are openly fretting that all the venom and mouth-breathing hatred is hurting the prospects of a successful raiding of the treasury for Zygmunt and company.

Take this quote from state Rep. Terry Morrow, a stadium supporter: [timnelson_mpr](#)
MNREP Terry Morrow says that some emails, calls, re #[Vikings](#) stadium, "have crossed
the line," urges civility in run up to vote.

Really? He urges civility in the run up to the vote? Vikings fans have been nothing but
arrogant and dismissive since the start.

Read the following quote from Cory Merrifield, who fronts a faux grassroots organization
called "Save the Vikes." Here's what Merrifield had to say about stadium supporters just
before the first legislative hearing months ago:

*As with any public hearing we do expect to hear from opposition on a Vikings
stadium and given the time slot, the advantage goes to opponents. We typically see
those who are unemployed or on a fixed income advocating against a new stadium
because the government isn't giving them enough. All while the majority of the
Vikings 2.5 million fans are working.*

That's funny, the Watchdog and our multiple sources at the Capitol have seen a daily
presence these past two weeks of paunchy, doughy, middle aged men haunting the
halls of the Capitol wearing purple leotards, face paint, "69" jerseys, while brandishing
toy shields and swords of the variety that can be purchased at any Toys 'R Us. No word
on whether any of the assembled fans was [Uncle Rico](#).

Are these clowns similarly unemployed or on a fixed income? It's highly unlikely that
some hospital is missing a neurosurgeon or that 3M is missing a molecular biologist
while these guys are sucking down processed meat and Schlitz in front of the Capitol
while complaining about other people who want a freebie from government.

Take a look at these guys and tell us you would be proud to call them "dad," "husband,"
or "boss."

[Photo 1.](#)

[Photo 2.](#)

[Photo 3.](#)

And, of course, [Larry Spooner](#), AKA [Kraze-Eyes Killah](#). "Are you my Viking? Are you
my Viking?"

MONDAY

The task for Monday is simple, legislators. Vote down the stadium.

The answer here is simple. It's the red button.

That's all that needs to be said.

VETO MADNESS

This governor has really gone off into La La Land. He calls the GOP majority "unfit to govern," yet still hasn't appeared to master anything other than the route from his broom closet office over to the gubernatorial urinal on the other side of the room.

Of late, the governor has really demonstrated his ineptitude with a number of bizarre vetoes as well as his inability to pass his signature issue, a Vikings stadium.

Take his veto of a simple bill to correct two obvious errors the court committed in drawing new legislative districts.

One area in Edina saw an apartment building drawn into two different legislative districts.

Literally, the folks on one side of the hallway are in a district while the folks living on the other side are in another district.

Check out this photo of this house divided - [literally](#).

Huh?

And there's the veto of a bill to make fireworks legal.

Since 1776, Americans have been blowing off fireworks to celebrate the nation's birthday.

Every neighborhood in Minnesota, with exception of the hoity-toity ones in Uptown, each July 4 gathers to grill, drink beer, and shoot off some sweet roman candles, firecrackers, and M80s.

The law is unenforceable and a joke.

The only thing the law does is prevent Minnesota from getting a piece of the fireworks business and tax revenue that comes with it.

What kind of man would veto fireworks? Hardly the kind of governance that would earn praise at any VFW or American Legion in this state.

And there are the blatantly partisan vetoes.

As expected, the governor vetoed the teacher layoff reform bill. This radical piece of legislation would have given school boards the OPTION of considering factors other than seniority alone in making layoffs.

You know, factors like productivity, effectiveness, work ethic,

Funny, the teachers' union claims that they want teachers to be treated like other professionals.

We're not aware of any other profession that makes layoffs strictly on seniority. If readers know of some accounting firm or law firm or engineering firm that lays off accountants, lawyers, or engineers by seniority alone, let us know.

Hey, governor. Nice pandering to the teachers' union, the only organization in Minnesota opposed to this bill.

The governor claimed that legislation needed bi-partisan support to earn his signature.

Over 85% of the bills he's vetoed passed with bi-partisan support.

May 11, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Be sure to read our analysis of the Vikings stadium and see how it requires a photo ID! The bill should have warned the DFL, "Photo ID Inside!"

- 1. The End? No, the Beginning.**
- 2. A Purple Primer.**

THE END? NO, THE BEGINNING.

The legislature went home yesterday afternoon, not to return until January of 2013. The end of every legislative session marks a new beginning of freedom for Minnesota taxpayers.

The Watchdog will have a complete analysis and retrospective on the entire biennium next week.

For now, let us collectively rejoice in the adjournment and turn our attention towards the 2012 campaign cycle, which begins today and demands your attention and best efforts.

A PURPLE PRIMER

Hands down, the biggest issues of this session was the Vikings stadium, which is unfortunate since there were so many other thousands of issues more important than a public subsidy for a private enterprise.

We've broken down the biggest takeaways from this bad stadium deal, which violates the fundamental principle that government has no business subsidizing private enterprise.

The Financing.

The state will finance the taxpayer share with appropriation bonds, which are debt instruments to be repaid over time with interest.

Appropriation bonds are paid with an annual appropriation from the state's general fund. Yes, the state's general fund is at risk with appropriation bonds, unlike revenue bonds.

Revenue bonds are bonds that are repaid with revenue from the particular capital project that is built with the bonds. For example, a community center can be built with revenue bonds and then be repaid with revenues from the enterprise.

Appropriation bonds indeed put the state's general fund at risk yet do not pledge the full faith and credit of the state to repay the bonds. General obligation bonds do that.

Thus, some folks will argue that appropriation bonds are less risky for taxpayers precisely because they do not pledge the full faith and credit of the state.

This is really a distinction without a difference. If the financing mechanism for the stadium deal, electronic gambling, fails to produce revenues sufficient to repay the bonds, it is highly unlikely the state would allow the bonds to go into default, even though there would be no legal argument to prevent such an outcome.

More likely, the state would simply rob other programs or raise taxes to fund the gap.

So yes, the taxpayers are at big risk regarding these bonds.

Which leads us to the next financing issue: gambling revenue.

The deal finances the bonds by allowing the state's charities to implement two new kinds of gambling, electronic pull tabs and electronic bingo that links players in one location to players in other locations.

This gambling would be taxed with the revenues going into the general fund and then laundered back out to repay the bonds.

First, gambling revenues are incredibly volatile. To base 30 year bonds on a volatile revenue stream is risky, even reckless.

Second, this kind of gambling is new and unproven, adding to the risk. There is really no track record of this kind of gambling to offer any kind of reliable projections upon which to base revenues.

And no, the answer to this problem wasn't more gambling in the form of the so-called "racino," as some Republicans proposed.

The state is going to come to regret turning to gambling to finance programs.

Gambling is a regressive tax visited upon those who can least afford it. Normally, our libertarian tendencies wouldn't care, but the fact is that these addicts blow their small earnings on gambling and then turn to the welfare system to pick up the pieces.

The state has no business preying on dopes who don't know any better because the taxpayers end up footing a bigger bill in the long run.

It's the coward's way out. If Republicans want more government and more government spending, they ought to be big enough and honest to support honest tax increases to pay for it.

Really, it's been appalling to watch Republicans bray on and on about more gambling while attempting to claim the mantle of conservatism.

There's nothing conservative about advocating for more governmental revenue to support more governmental programs, especially when those programs have nothing to do with core functions of government (like building a stadium or bailing out the horse racing industry).

With the session over, maybe Republican leaders like RNC Committeewoman Pat Anderson can back to her job of rebuilding a broken, bankrupt state party instead of hanging out at the Capitol as a paid lobbyist for the gambling industry.

The Referendum.

As expected, Minneapolis residents will get jobbed out of their right, pursuant to the city charter, to vote on the expenditure of city funds to build sports facilities that require more than \$10 million city funds.

The sophistry here is that the \$150 million local share isn't really Minneapolis money since it's financed with a local tax that is state imposed.

If that's true, is it really a local share? Shouldn't that \$150 million count towards the state share?

The 1%.

Despite being the legislative minority, Democrats in both the House and Senate provided the majority of votes for the stadium.

Yes, the DFL was responsible for a \$350 million public subsidy for a Delaware based private corporation owned by a billionaire New Jersey real estate mogul.

Let the DFL never, ever be heard to complain of corporate greed, corporate welfare, or any BS about paying one's "fair share."

Every DFLer who voted for this bill put the lie to the "party of the workin' man" narrative.

You offered up a subsidy to a member of the 1%, financed by gambling, which preys heavily on the bottom 1%.

And that includes a DFL governor who did little this session but advocate for this stadium, his clear number one priority.

The DFL wanted a stadium this session. Will they campaign on it? Don't hold your breath.

How cynical and how very crass.

Photo I.D. Required!

Did you know the Vikings bill requires the presentation of a photo identification. It's true! Check out [HF 2958](#), the stadium bill. Article 4, section 52, subdivision 9(d) states: Before participating in the play of a linked bingo game, a player must present and register a valid picture identification card that includes the player's address and date of birth.

It's right there on page 71, lines 13-15.

So Democrats are opposed to a photo ID to vote but support photo ID to play bingo?

How cynical and how very crass.

The Process.

Putting aside the merits of the stadium issue, every citizen should be appalled by the lack of transparency and secrecy surrounding the conference committee that assembled the stadium bill behind closed doors.

Joint Rule 2.06 mandates: All Conference Committees shall be open to the public. As much as practical, meetings of Conference Committees shall be announced as far in advance as possible, with the intent to provide a 24-hour notice, and actions taken shall be agreed upon in an open meeting.

This didn't happen. Instead, the conference report was crafted behind closed doors, out of sight from the taxpaying public.

The conference committee played games by having different parties in separate rooms to avoid triggering a quorum of the conference committee which would then trigger an open meeting.

Citizens were treated to the spectacle of the conference committee posting their bill before the committee even officially met. Just how in the he\$\$ does a conference committee assemble and agree upon a conference report before they have even met?

They hid behind closed doors and cut a deal with the Vikings in a smoke-filled back room.

What disservice to the people of this great state.

Another stadium?

The Vikings bill didn't just build a new home for the Vikings. It also will likely build one for the Saint Paul Saints.

Sources tell the Watchdog that the Saint Paul legislative delegation was persuaded to support the Vikings stadium with a wink and a nod that the Saints would get a stadium as well.

How?

Well, just take a look at the [bonding bill](#) that passed just days before the stadium bill.

Contained within is a provision that appropriates \$47.5 million for capital project grants. Our sources say that a chunk of this money is set aside for a Saints stadium.

Anyone else out there who wants a stadium? Anyone the state has missed? How about that lingerie women's football team?

The fallout.

Many conservatives are rightly ticked off about this bill and have expressed interest in stripping GOP legislators who supported the bill of endorsement.

The Watchdog encourages folks to take a different, more positive course of action.

Namely, go out and work to support legislators who had the courage to oppose the bill in the face of angry, hostile, venomous, mouth-breathing supporters who harassed legislators with profanity and threats throughout.

No matter where you live, there is a GOP legislator nearby who stood on principle. Even if it isn't your legislator, support that person with your time, money, and talents.

[House](#) roll call vote.

[Senate](#) roll call vote.

Be positive. Be proactive.

Spending time hammering at a fellow Republican is counterproductive and only cheers the DFL.

Work FOR something, not against.

May 18, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Dayton's Facebook Follies.**
- 2. The Real Student Loan Issue.**
- 3. No Lobbyists Need Apply.**
- 4. Ortman Deserved the Endorsement.**

DAYTON'S FACEBOOK FOLLIES

Did you know Governor Dayton has a Facebook page? He probably doesn't know either.

In any case, Dayton's allies all took to the Facebook and Twitter universe this week to implore supporters to visit the Facebook page and say nice things about the governor signing the stadium bill.

It seems the critics far outweighed the supporters and the guv was starting to look bad.

Feel free to visit [this page](#) and leave your own comments regarding the stadium.

THE REAL STUDENT LOAN ISSUE

So the media and politicians have finally become interested in the crushing debt load carried by many college students seeking a degree and the upward financial mobility that degree can confer on those who get good grades and earn a degree in a legitimate field (e.g. hard sciences, not women's studies).

As you would expect, the media and politicians refuse to acknowledge the true cause and instead deflect the issue and prescribe more of the same poison as a remedy.

The simple fact is that costs continue to spiral out of control because normal market restraints have been short circuited.

Each year, the cost of a college education rises far above normal inflationary factors, sometimes exponentially more.

In a normal market, these rising costs would drive down demand, forcing colleges and universities to get costs under control and establish a normal supply/demand equilibrium.

This process is short-circuited by the presence of easy credit in the form of student aid, both loans and grants.

This easy credit allows higher education to get away with higher costs because those higher costs are more easily absorbed by the availability of easy money.

Just like the housing bubble, government has inserted itself into the process by offering easy credit at low interest rates (see the current debate over student loans).

This easy credit skews consumer decisions and preys upon the desire of parents of modest means to see their child get a college education, even if that education means virtual indentured servitude for years afterward.

Like it or not, it's human nature to be lured into the siren song of get-it-now-pay-for-it-later schemes.

Moreover, just like the housing bubble, easy government credit makes college attractive to people who otherwise might not attend.

The emotions of the "American Dream" are equally powerful in both the home ownership and college degree realms, even though there are millions who shouldn't own a home and millions who aren't best suited for a college education.

Thus, demand is kept artificially high, allowing higher education to keep prices up.

And just like in the housing market, "values" keep skyrocketing upwards, with salaries taking the place of housing values in this equation.

Just check out the [salaries](#) at the University of Minnesota, a land grant institution charged with the mission of educating the unwashed masses here in Minnesota, including alumni like Harold Hamilton and other Watchdog staff.

These salaries are out of hand and represent nothing more than a wealth transfer from young kids over to the academic elites who populate any college campus.

Instead of playing to emotions about higher education, politicians need to get on the right side of this issue, meaning they need to side with students by tightening access to credit and forcing colleges and universities to get costs under control and make college a more affordable proposition and not a form of indentured servitude.

NO LOBBYISTS NEED APPLY

When GOP activists gather in convention this weekend, one change to the party constitution is in order.

No registered lobbyists shall serve in party leadership positions.

For one, this situation creates divided loyalties, especially when the needs of the client are at odds with the needs of the party.

What happens when the client lobbies government for a law change at odds with the party platform or GOP philosophy?

The lobbyist has a duty of loyalty to both the client and the party. When the goals of the two conflict, the person is put in an impossible situation.

The best way to deal with such a hypothetical situation is ensure that it never happens in the first place.

Suppose chairman Pat Shortridge had been a lobbyist for the Minnesota Vikings? His duties of loyalty would have been hopelessly conflicted.

Second, such a situation undermines faith in party leadership. Delegates and activists want leaders who are in a position where even an appearance of a conflict of interest are absent.

The party is reeling from scandal and financial incompetence.

All who call themselves Republicans deserve to have leaders who hold personal and professional credentials that avoid even the appearance of anything less than absolute loyalty to the party and the platform.

We just don't see how having a registered lobbyist in a leadership position inspires confidence and trust in leadership.

Let's face it, lobbyists aren't real popular with the GOP faithful.

It seems to be a reasonable change. No lobbyists need apply, no matter who they are or who the client may be - PERIOD.

Good luck, delegates!

ORTMAN DESERVED THE ENDORSEMENT

We're shaking our heads over here at the Watchdog over the decision of delegates this week to deny the GOP endorsement to Senator Julianne Ortman of Chanhassen.

Ortman has a very respectable lifetime rating of 88% from the Taxpayer's League of Minnesota.

She also earned a respectable 75% 2011 rating from the ever-tough graders over at the Legislative Evaluation Assembly (LEA).

This past session, she led the charge for a better business climate as chairwoman of the Taxes Committee in the Senate.

She may not be perfect, but not worthy of re-endorsement?

Give us a break.

In addition, she is popular in her district, having been elected and re-elected by wide margins.

With no endorsement, the race moves to an August primary, where Ortman will win after expending resources that could have gone to other candidates or been focused on the general election.

With the party in financial disarray and in many places controlled by those consumed with narrow agendas, this may be the election cycle where things change.

The Watchdog predicts that the near future will see quality candidates ignore or bypass altogether the endorsement process, taking their case to a wider, more representative GOP electorate in the primary.

In a post *Citizens United* environment, super PACs have the means to be as influential as parties once were.

Republican delegates may soon discover that donors aren't interested in turning over their hard-earned resource to people who don't even identify themselves as Republicans yet control the levers of the party.

Bold prediction: The U.S. Senate race will be the first major race to since Arne Carlson and Allen Quist to see a legitimate struggle between the endorsed candidate and a primary contender with the credentials and resources to effectively challenge the endorsement.

May 25, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Attack of the Killer Heat!**
- 2. What's Worse than Pork?**
- 3. Restoring Faith in the Party.**
- 4. Maybe You Should Have Been More Conservative.**
- 5. Obama's Latest Embarrassment.**

ATTACK OF THE KILLER HEAT!

Beware, earthlings! Killer heat is coming! Killer heat is coming! At the end of the century, if at all.

In one of the most ridiculous news items this year in one of the most ridiculous newspapers of this era, the Star Tribune [reported](#) this week that some group called the Natural Resources Defense Council ([NRDC](#)) has alerted us to the highly speculative and likely very bullshit prognostication that many of us will cook like bacon 88 years from now, killing thousands while giving hope to the New Jersey "[tan mom](#)" that history will vindicate her proactive attempt to protect herself and her daughter from the ravages of excessive heat.

The Watchdog is grateful to the NRDC for giving us something to worry about, since there are no real problems to worry about in the here and now, like Iran having the bomb, Obama leveraging the country like a banana republic, or whether [Elin](#) will ever be able to love again after Tiger's indiscretions.

But don't fear Minnesotans, your government is on the case.

Apparently, the state is in good enough financial shape to employ something called a "climate change project director," who is hard at work staying one step ahead of this fast-moving menace that will soon be at our doors, or at least at the doors of our great-great-grandchildren.

The climate change project director tells us, "We have been seeing trends of increased heat and increased humidity. Our role really is to help get the prevention message out."

That was profound and helpful - not.

Seriously, if Republicans don't eliminate this make-work job on the first day of the 2013 session, it's time for all of us to march on the Capitol.

But fear not, taxpayer. Already, massive projects to rival the Space Race have emerged to prepare us for the Super Massive Kill Wave.

Ideas include really big a\$\$ air conditioners, teaching humans Superman's frost breath trick, and calling every month "January" in order to fool the heat into thinking it's really winter.

Governor Dayton is reportedly considering cutting back the heat by taxing the crap out of it, framing the debate as one of "fairness" to the cold.

Obama is reportedly considering a multi-billion program to stimulate innovative, new solutions like solid-state H2O, a compressor-condenser-evaporator contraption, and strange new chemicals that somehow protect the epidermis from burning.

Instead of NASA leading the charge, Obama has given the project lead to two government agencies that have proven themselves to the president and have acted consistently with the seriousness with which he has taken his presidency.

Yes, the Secret Service and the [GSA](#) will head up the project.

Given the nature of the Secret Service's work, former President [Bill Clinton](#) will be named "Party Dude Emeritus" of the project, which will be done, of course, in fabulous Las Vegas.

WHAT'S WORSE THAN PORK?

What's worse than pork? That's easy. The only thing worse than pork is secret pork.

Secret pork is pork that isn't your garden-variety transparent pork.

In Minnesota, we pride ourselves on open pork, the kind that satisfies our fastidious, uptight notions of clean government while giving liberal types something to crow about and the Star Tribune something to editorialize and moralize about (Wasn't that unneeded and wasteful gorilla cage cool? And how about those square conservatives, all concerned about debt and the proper role of government. What a bunch of luddites!).

But a strange thing happened on the way to approving over \$1 billion in new debt on the Republican's legislative watch.

They earmarked without really earmarking.

They set aside money for unpopular stuff without telling the taxpayers about it.

Yes, they dodged transparency and accountability.

You see, the bonding bill they just passed contained a \$47.5 million slush fund for "economic development."

Economic development you say?

What could that be?

Oh, perhaps a baseball stadium or even a civic center - or three.

Capitol insiders are all laughing about this fund for certain projects that aren't named.

We all know what's happening here and frankly it's an insult to all of us who value transparency.

And why be embarrassed over \$47.5 million in pork?

Why hide it?

After all, you just handed over a half-billion in subsidies to a New Jersey billionaire and his Delaware-incorporated team.

That's embarrassing enough.

RESTORING FAITH IN THE PARTY

The state Republicans took a step towards restoring faith in the party this past weekend when Pat Anderson was defeated in her bid to be re-elected as RNC Committeewoman.

Over the course of the past many months, party faithful were exposed to the humiliation of a party leader serving as a paid lobbyist, roaming around the halls of the Capitol twisting arms of Republican legislators in an attempt to get them to support growing government revenues and a horse industry bailout by expanding gambling.

Oh, Pat, are you here to discuss uniting the party and helping me communicate my message of conservative principles and values to my constituents?

Uh, not exactly. I'm here to get you to vote for more gambling and bigger government.

Oh.

The spectacle of having a senior party leader also make money as a paid lobbyist was frankly an embarrassment.

The state central committee did the right thing in helping Anderson narrow her career choices.

After all, this was the woman who once said that the problem with lobbyists is "they exist."

At least now Anderson's hypocrisy won't wash on to the party.

May no lobbyist every again simultaneously represent us and their clients.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CONSERVATIVE

And what was up with Senator Claire Robling's whiny tale of woe regarding her departure from the Capitol?

The atmosphere "too polarized?"

Please.

Our sources tell us Robling had Stockholm Syndrome and had become all too comfortable with being in the minority and being little more than an echo of the DFL.

It looks like she squandered her last session in the legislature on the pursuit of more gambling and a bailout of the horse industry while voting for a football stadium.

Wow. Thanks, senator.

Hopefully, the next senator from that district will give us some real conservative leadership.

OBAMA'S LATEST EMBARRASSMENT

And in a preview of what's coming in November:

In West Virginia, a prison inmate won over 40% of the Democratic primary.

The same for Arkansas.

And the same for Kentucky.

Perhaps these folks are just clinging to their guns and religion, eh, Mr. president?

Or maybe they're just tired of the stimulus, Obamacare, Secret Service parties, GSA parties, bailouts, and everything that comes out of the mouth of Joe Biden.

June 1, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Government Workers Prosper, Private Workers Suffer.**
- 2. Scott Walker is the Beacon.**
- 3. Education Minnesota Remains a Front Group.**

GOVERNMENT WORKERS PROSPER, PRIVATE WORKERS SUFFER

How ironic it is that on the very day that the nation receives yet more disappointing news regarding unemployment numbers that we also receive news that Minnesota government workers are getting a pay raise.

It was announced late last night that negotiators for two government unions and the state had reached agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement that would provide, among other things, a pay raise.

This morning, it was announced that only 69,000 jobs were added to the economy last month, the worst monthly number in a year. The unemployment rate jumped to 8.2%? Remember when the "stimulus" was going to keep unemployment below 8%? It hasn't been below that yet in the Obama administration.

Moreover, Obama's European style economic policies have discouraged many millions more from actively seeking employment. Because the unemployment numbers only count those actively seeking employment, the 8.2% number is understated because it doesn't count the millions who want a job but have given up hope and aren't even looking.

Yes, a permanent underclass of chronically unemployed people is a feature of European style economics and one that President Obama supports, unlike every other American president, including Clinton, Carter, and Johnson.

Isn't ironic that President Obama pursues the economic policies of European Social Democrats at the very time in history in which these policies are proving to be abject failures that do nothing but visit misery, learned helplessness, and social unrest on citizens? Obama wants to be Greece and Spain at the very time these countries are becoming convulsed, teetering on the brink of mass civil unrest.

The dichotomy between government workers who continue to thrive financially while their private sector counter-parts experience hardship exposes the fatal conceit of both President Obama and Governor Dayton.

The fatal conceit is that neither understands the difference between jobs and wealth-creating jobs.

To their way of thinking, anyone on a payroll means "jobs" which can only boost the economy, or "stimulate" it.

Not true.

Because government cannot create wealth, government jobs can't create wealth and thus do nothing to boost the economy and put the country on a path to prosperity.

Yes, many government jobs have value in other ways. For example, it's a good thing that prison guards keep bad people locked up.

But prison guards, like all other government jobs, don't manufacture commodities of value, or mine things of value, or grow things of value.

Government only uses money extracted from the private economy to pay government workers, meaning that there has been no net gain, only a recirculation of existing wealth via money payments.

This is best seen in an extreme example, which surprisingly Obama hasn't yet tried.

Government could hire a million unemployed people and pay them to dig holes. Government could then hire a million people to come in behind them and fill the holes.

Better yet, the diggers could be given spoons instead of shovels to really give them some hours of work.

Would any reasonable person conclude that anything of value had been created? Has the labor of these folks enhanced our collective wealth and prosperity?

In fact, government could pay one group of people to go around smashing windows and pay another group to fix them. Think of the jobs and stimulus to the window industry!

In fact, isn't this concept under another name called "cash for clunkers?" Government pays citizens to destroy productive assets and provide an incentive to replace those productive assets.

Thus, government programs to create "jobs" is really just a distraction. Every citizen should be focused on wealth-creating jobs and wealth-creating policies.

But perhaps there is another more nefarious motive at work here.

Perhaps Dayton and Obama understand the policy implications but ignore them in the name of politics.

After all, creating jobs their way means that government gets control over the private economy in a way that would never happen in a market-driven scenario.

Moreover, these policies favor government workers and the unions who represent them.

And those unions, in turn, put their clout behind these politicians to elect them and keep them in office.

Don't forget that one of the unions that just got a pay raise is AFSCME, one of the first unions to get behind Mark Dayton.

Now in office, Dayton is responsible for bargaining against these unions.

So who is Dayton representing in these negotiations? Is he representing the taxpayers, who want value and accountability? Or is he repping the unions, who want as much pay as possible for as little work as possible?

This is precisely why government workers should be forbidden from unionizing. The unions work hard to elect the very people who oversee their pay and work conditions.

From the highest levels of the federal and state government right down to our school boards, elected officials are charged to bargain against the very people who endorsed and elected them, creating a clear conflict of interest that all too often leaves taxpayers unrepresented and thus ripe for a fleecing.

But citizens do have a way to fight back, at least with respect to the current contract.

These labor contracts, if approved first by the unions, must be approved by the legislature.

Because the legislature isn't in session, these contracts will be up for interim approval by a little-known legislative committee called the [Subcommittee on Employee Relations](#) (SER).

The SER is controlled by Republicans, who can reject this contract.

[Contact the SER](#) members and tell them now is not the time for pay raises for bureaucrats.

We have strong conservatives on this panel who have the principles to reject bad contracts:

Sen. Mike Parry
Sen. Michelle Benson
Sen. Ted Daley

Rep. Steve Drazkowski
Rep. Keith Downey
Rep. Mike Benson

SCOTT WALKER IS THE BEACON

So, how good are we feeling about Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and the recall election next week?

Walker is up in the polls while the Democrats and their union masters are already forming a circular firing squad of blame.

Don't feel bad, Democrats. It isn't so much your incompetence and infighting.

The real reason Scott Walker will win is because his policies are correct and because Walker has demonstrated the courage to actually implement them.

No Watchdog should underestimate the massive, national implications of Walker's impending victory.

Often times, there are elections that presage and portend larger future elections.

For example, the election of Chris Christie and Scott Brown in 2009 foretold of larger GOP victories nationwide in 2010.

In the same way, a Walker win will presage GOP victories this November.

Moreover, Walker's policies will be adopted with enthusiasm in states across the country in 2013. Republicans will see that taking on the government employee unions, especially the teacher unions, is a fight that they can win and one that puts them on the correct side of history.

In short, Walker's victory next Tuesday is nothing short of historic.

EDUCATION MINNESOTA REMAINS A FRONT GROUP

Education Minnesota, the big teachers' union, has released a list of legislative endorsements.

The union bristles whenever people point out that the union is really just a front for the DFL.

In fact, the [press release](#) tells us of the union's bi-partisan political friendships: "We're excited about this first group of endorsed candidates, which includes both old friends and new voices," said Education Minnesota President Tom Dooher. "We're confident we

can work with this bipartisan group to build the best system of public education in the nation."

So how bi-partisan are these folks?

Out of 85 legislative endorsements, two, TWO, are Republican.

That's 83 DFLers and 2 Republicans.

That's not bi-partisan. That's tokenism.

June 8, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Ron Paul Crowd vs. The Establishment?**
- 2. The Other Big Election This Week.**
- 3. Scott Walker Wrap Up.**

RON PAUL CROWD VS. THE ESTABLISHMENT?

Much has been made over the past few months regarding the tension between the Ron Paul faction of the Minnesota Republican Party and the "Establishment" wing of the party.

Of course, since the mainstream media thrives on exploiting any conflict and controversy, the division has been exaggerated and inflamed.

The Watchdog believes that these divisions, while real, are indeed exaggerated and will pale in comparison to the mutual values the different wings of the party share as well as the burning desire to elect conservatives and defeat Democrats this November.

The Watchdog has spoken recently with sources within the GOP legislative campaign operation who have told us of Exhibit "A" in support of our contention.

House Republicans have fielded a complete slate of GOP candidates in every district covering Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

This is no easy feat. It's tough to put your name out there and be a candidate for office anytime and in any place.

It's especially tough when you're carrying the Republican banner in the belly of the liberal beast.

The odds of winning are low and the hostility level is high, coming from all those "tolerant" libs.

Republican party operatives are giving the credit for this full slate to the Ron Paul camp, noting that they were critical to identifying and helping convince good people to run in these tough districts.

Leaders in the Paul camp worked closely with operatives from the party and the House GOP campaign operation to pull off this noteworthy feat.

The importance of running candidates in tough districts shouldn't be understated.

Yes, it is unlikely these candidates will win in November and join the House GOP caucus at the Capitol in January.

But their work is so critical in other respects.

First, these people will be on the ground in their districts helping to identify and motivate voters who will help Mitt Romney and Kurt Bills in November.

Second, the candidates are working one voter at a time to persuade urban and minority voters that the Republican party can be a home to their hopes and aspirations. Voting patterns will change in Minneapolis and Saint Paul only if we have candidates who are out there offering an alternative and articulating our message.

Third, a Republican candidate offers a rallying point and serves to raise the morale of foot soldiers who have a candidate to call their own.

The lack of a candidate or candidates in a district can bring down morale and cause a downward spiral of resources and energy.

Finally, and practically, these candidates tie down their DFL opponents and make them put in work in their own districts.

The DFL like to use these safe DFL legislators as capos in suburban districts, helping to win in swing districts.

Sources tell us that DFL state Representative Phyllis Kahn was furious that a GOP challenger emerged in her district.

Kahn is well known for her work in helping suburban DFL candidates.

So, Watchdogs, take a moment to thank these candidates for their tough work on our behalf.

And let's not forget to include our friends who running for the state Senate!

Better yet, take a Saturday out to help them or reach in your pocket and send them \$25 or \$50 bucks to give them the resources they need.

Senate District 59: Jim Lilly

House District 59A: Cindy Lilly

House District 59B: Gary Mazzoto

House District 60A: Brent Millsop

Senate District 64: Sharon Anderson

House District 64A: Andrew Ojeda

House District 64B: Brandon Carmack
Senate District 65: Rick Karschnia
House District 65A: Daniel Lipp
House District 65B: Carlos Conway
House District 66A: Mark Fotsch
House District 66B: Ben Blomgren
Senate District 67: Mike Capistrant
House District 67A: Cathy Hennelly
House District 67B: John Quinn

THE OTHER BIG ELECTION THIS WEEK

Yes, Scott Walker's win in Wisconsin was the big political news this week.

But there were two other elections Tuesday that promise to resonate across the country as well that readers should know about.

Voters in the California cities of San Jose and San Diego passed ballot initiatives to limit public employee pensions.

These ballot measures passed in overwhelming fashion and are yet another portent of a conservative wave in a critical public policy arena.

The simple fact is that the looming pension crisis isn't the manufactured political crisis the unions claim it to be.

Unions and their liberal allies have long tried to spin the narrative that public employee pension reforms are little more than an attempt by conservatives to make their members scapegoats while labeling support for reform as nothing more than an attack on humble public servants.

The lie was put to this narrative when two progressive cities in the nation's most liberal state passed these reforms. In fact, the fight in San Jose has been led by a Democrat mayor with solid progressive credentials.

Municipal leaders of the Democratic variety have been at the forefront of reform because they have to be. They are leading major cities that are on the precipice of fiscal calamity.

It has become obvious for these public unions that the smokescreen hasn't worked. The public well understands that reforming pensions isn't an attack on anyone. It's a responsible and rational reaction to unsustainable, unaffordable, unfair pensions that are out of line.

Telling a child that he can't continue to eat frosting for breakfast isn't child abuse, no matter how upset little Johnny may be.

Look for pension reform to spread across the country in a much more pronounced fashion.

Like our spending crisis, the public is waking up to our public employee pension crisis.

And not a moment too soon.

SCOTT WALKER WRAP UP

Unless you were living under a rock or busy occupying a park to protest some else's success in life, you know of Scott Walker's sweet win this week and you've surely read commentary on the subject via our morning blotter report.

The Watchdog thinks there are two issues that haven't received enough attention from the Walker recall win.

One is the development of the liberal narrative the Walker "bought" the recall.

When Republicans win, according to these folks, it wasn't the issues or the candidate.

It was money.

Apparently, when Republicans win and when they raise more money, suddenly money in politics is a problem.

What hypocrisy!

Big money in politics wasn't a problem for these people when Obama raised \$750 million in 2008 and outspent John McCain badly.

It wasn't a problem when Obama flip-flopped and reneged on his promise to abide by public subsidy limits in order to raise this large sum.

But now that Walker outspent his opponent and now that Romney has been out raising Obama money is a problem.

The simple fact is that money is a proxy for support. When you have a winning message, you attract money because in our capitalist society, people support popular things with their hard earned money.

Look for these sour grapes losers to continue to whine about money in politics now that what their selling ain't so popular anymore.

Second, let's remember why unions are so panicked over Walker's reforms.

A key reform is that union dues aren't mandatory under Walker's reforms.

Thus, public employees are free to vote with their feet regarding their union membership.

Union members have been voting with their feet, slicing into the dues take.

This in turn reduces the money unions have to elect lapdog candidates who turn around and give away things like, oh, unsustainable pensions.

In short, this powerful reform short circuits the nefarious symbiotic relationship between unions and Democrats, which makes them nervous as a prostitute in church.

Check out Education Minnesota, the teachers' union. They endorsed 85 legislative candidates last week, 83 of whom are Democrats.

Like pension reform, the hand writing is on the wall here.

June 15, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Erhart's Folly Continues to Falter.**
- 2. Business Should Stay out of (Conservative) Politics.**
- 3. The Vikes - Get to Know Em'!**

ERHART'S FOLLY CONTINUES TO FALTER

"Northstar: It just makes sense!" "It's equivalent to a 1 and ½ lanes of traffic on Highway 10." "It will bring jobs and economic development to Anoka County." "If we don't waste this money, someone else will." "We need something cool and rad up here on this end of town." "Northstar will put Anoka County on the map."

These just a sampling of the completely bunk statements we heard during the collective mania that gripped Anoka County when Dan Erhart and company sold their snake oil to a gullible public that wanted to believe that somehow a commuter train would do all those neat things for taxpayers.

None of it turned out to be true. Well, at least there is a kernel of truth regarding the last claim. Northstar has certainly put Anoka County on the map - as a laughingstock for engaging in the folly of commuter rail.

Erhart's Folly is once again in the news. And once again, the news isn't good, which is par for the course for Northstar. It's about time the media start attaching adjectives to Northstar such as "troubled" and "beleaguered."

The latest for this troubled (so how that works?) rail scam is the continued failure to meet ridership projections.

Since the first choo choo ran down those tracks off Highway 10, the expected riders have failed to show up.

The excuses were legion. "Gas prices are low." "The economy is bad." "The economy is good." "People don't know about commuter rail." "The line needs to go to Saint Cloud."

They could have made t-shirts.

And let's put aside a growing myth and one that is propagated by lazy media types. There is a growing urban legend that the line was cut from Rice (not Saint Cloud) down to Big Lake because there wasn't enough money or because conservative politicians sabotaged the project.

The line was cut simply because it didn't meet the federal government's own weak cost-benefit metrics.

Surprisingly, running commuter rail to a small regional center and then up to a cow hamlet in Jim Oberstar's district lead to a low cost-benefit analysis. Who would have thought?

Yes, Northstar couldn't hurdle the midget's bar and satisfy a government that builds bridges to nowhere that this was a really sweet project if it ran to Rice, population 1,460. Did we mention Rice is in the 8th Congressional District?

The latest trick to "stimulate" Northstar ridership is a fare cut. Never mind that every ride on the line is already subsidized to the hilt.

News reports indicate that the Metropolitan Council will soon consider fare cuts to coax riders to get on Erhart's Folly.

Hell, the riders are already so heavily subsidized, why not go full Monty and just make it all free?

That way we can be honest in admitting that Northstar is a failure and that offering free rides is really what the utopians want in mass transit anyway.

Want proof? The proof is that they never cared about the outrageous cost to build and operate the line and the fact that increasing the massive subsidy is just fine by them.

And if free rides are offered, maybe we can stop throwing money down the rat hole to bail out this white elephant.

We can stop doing things like throwing millions into a station stop in Ramsey, which won't do squat to build riders, even though the government stopped running a popular and inexpensive bus service from the city with the intent to force people on to the train.

With stations in Elk River and Anoka, there was no need to build yet another station in between the two.

Unless, of course, one considers the other reason (real?) for constructing a stop in Ramsey. The other reason is to bail out another government mega-project failure, the Town Center project.

So here we have the spectacle of a boondoggle rail station built in hopes of bailing out a boondoggle commuter rail line and a boondoggle planned downtown concept.

Northstar is officially a joke and so is Dan Erhart.

Okay, so the county board is crowing about saving \$50 grand by withdrawing from the NLX project.

Yes, the Watchdog agrees that rail has yet to prove itself and that roads and bridges are a priority.

But we thinks some doth celebrate too much when there is a ticker tape parade to celebrate a cancelled membership for a rail line that is years from anything.

Again, the NLX pull out is okay by us, but what about Northstar?

We saved a few thousand on NLX.

What about the millions being spent on a Ramsey station?

What about the millions being collected by the county's sales tax increase for transportation?

What about the "wheelage tax" still being collected?

The fact is that the county is still taxing and spending millions on a utopian vision for a mass transit "build out" across the Metro.

If the board is going to get all big balls about transit and crow about things like NLX, then why not get serious and make some meaningful changes, like eliminate the wheelage tax and eliminate the sales tax increase for transit?

It will be interesting over the course of the summer and fall to see where the county commissioner candidates are on these issues.

Poker is the name of the game here. If you raise an NLX membership, you may just get raised a wheelage tax or even a sales tax.

When you get pushed "all in", do you muck your cards or call the "all in" bet?

BUSINESS SHOULD STAY OUT OF (CONSERVATIVE) POLITICS

So General Mills announced this week that it taking a stand in opposition to the marriage amendment on the ballot this fall.

The GLBT crowd went nuts and talked about how great and courageous that stand is and how we should all send a word of thanks to Betty Crocker, especially since she looks pretty uptight and not really the type to be down with the homosexual lifestyle.

As readers well know, the Watchdog doesn't take positions on social issues.

But we will take a position on hypocrisy.

We well remember when this same crowd had a fit when Target Corporation donated money to Minnesota Forward, a pac that supported the GOP candidate for governor.

When Target did it, it was decried as an improper foray into politics by a large, iconic Minnesota business entity.

There were calls for boycotts, sit ins, and all manner of protestation against Target's sin against the body politic.

But when General Mills does it, it's way, way cool.

So the issue isn't really corporate involvement in politics. It's really about getting involved in politics in a way that pleases the hard left.

Which is nothing new. When Republicans like Bob Packwood had problems keeping their hands to themselves, the liberals, especially the feminists were there to call for Bob's head.

And when Bill Clinton ruined that blue dress? Nary a word from the left. Then, it was a private matter for Bill and Hillary.

Never mind that Slick William told a lie and that he frequently dropped his pantaloons in the Oval Office, a sacred room that belongs to US, not HIM.

As long as Minnesota corporations allow themselves to be bullied and co-opted by the left, they will continue to be abused.

Memo to Honeywell: Obama visiting won't stop him. Then again, maybe Honeywell is in line for a stimulus grant for green energy or something.

THE VIKES - GET TO KNOW EM'!

With a news taxpayer-financed Vikings stadium just around the corner, we thought it appropriate to borrow a marketing phrase from the equally inept Twins and encourage taxpayers to get to know the boyz in purple.

Jerome Felton (FB)

Felton, a 5th round of Detroit in 2008, was arrested at an Eden Prairie McDonald's drive through and has been charged with DWI and a DWI test refusal.

Caleb King (RB)

-

King displays all the aggression and propensity for violence crazed football fans expect.

King was arrested in late April for assault after he beat the living daylights out of a man at a birthday party (shall we say birthday "bash?") in uptown Oak Grove, Minnesota.

The victim suffered a skull fracture, facial fractures and cuts that required more than 50 stitches to close. Oh yeah, the guy may also have permanent brain damage.

The trigger? The guy apparently told King he looks like Eddie Murphy.

The real crime is that King does actually resemble Murphy and plays football about as well, as evidenced by his time on the practice squad.

Dwight Smith (FS)

Smith was arrested in 2006 for having sex in a public stairwell in Block E. Smith thought than when Mayor Rybak called for activity on Block E, he was talking about something entirely different than economic activity.

Koren Robinson (WR)

The speedy Robinson showed just how fast he can be when he rang up six counts of DWI and fleeing the police when he went all Dukes of Hazard up Highway 169 during training camp in 2006.

Robinson hit triple digits when his BMW hit 100 mph while fleeing the cops through Saint Peter.

Robinson hit double digits when he blew .11 into the breathalyzer.

The Love Boat Crew

And not Captain Stuebing's Love Boat. Gopher and Isaac weren't on this cruise. Back in 2005, a number of Vikings brought a group of prostitutes up to Minneapolis for a cruise around Lake Minnetonka and a little debauchery.

Fred Smoot, Daunte Culpepper, Bryant McKinnie and many others showed themselves to be exactly the kind of role models and good citizens we demand when we talk of saving the Vikings.

Randy Moss (WR)

Hey, who wouldn't want a foul-mouthed, pot smoking, fan abusing, above-the-law clown out there playing when he wants to play?

Moss was another classic Viking who made sure a portion of his income taxes supported the criminal justice system used to restrain his arrogant, boorish behavior.

With the Vikings in Minnesota for another 30 years, we can all look forward to more of this corporate citizenship.

The Vikings - Get to Know Em!

June 22, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Worst Statistic of Them All.**
- 2. Jim Oberstar - Frog Lover.**
- 3. Golden Valley Smacks Light Rail.**
- 4. Correction.**

WORST STATISTIC OF THEM ALL

Our failed president faces a raft of damning economic policy indictments this fall. The national debt is up by trillions, millions of jobs are gone and stimulus hasn't brought them back. Promised unemployment rates below 8% have never materialized. The long-term unemployed are beginning to resemble a European-style permanent underclass, dependent upon government and trapped by the learned helplessness of Welfare State social policies, all accelerated under Obama.

But perhaps the most damning statistic regarding Obama's failed policies is the stunning drop in the net worth of American families.

The Federal Reserve estimates that since the recession started, the net worth of American households (assets minus debt) fell a whopping 40%, wiping out two decades of wealth creation and putting families back to where they were in 1992.

In short, a generation of wealth was vaporized in three short years.

To be fair, it isn't just about Barack Obama and his vapid, intellectually bankrupt policies.

There were lots of greedy folks who stoked the housing bubble with predatory lending practices, selling dumb people bad loans.

And there were plenty of greedy homeowners who bought houses they couldn't afford and knew it, walking away when things went south.

There were plenty of greedy Americans who accumulated massive debt in the shameless pursuit of consumption, owning cabins, boats, SUVs, and pools financed with easy credit and not a care to saving for a rainy day.

That's all true.

But Obama hasn't made anything better. Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac still kick out loans to unqualified people who have no business owning a home. Obama continues to worship at the altar of the home ownership myth.

The federal government, which already carried obscene levels of debt, now carries trillions more, most of which was used to finance pet programs under the guise of economic recovery. No, spending more money to hire teachers and fire fighters doesn't create the wealth needed to lift us out of the recession.

The value of the dollar has been destroyed and money is printed as if Parker Brothers ran the mint and not serious, responsible adults.

In short, the Obama recovery template has been to finance the printing of money through loans from foreign creditors and then spend the booty on favored constituencies.

The next act in the play is then to blame the unsurprising results on George Bush, Europe, Wall Street, the Octomom, you name it. Just label it under "headwinds."

There isn't a policy Obama has pursued that will help private sector job creators create those jobs and in turn create wealth.

So long as capital is on strike and true job creators face the uncertainty of a feckless and arbitrary federal government, there will be no true recovery.

The federal government just needs to get the hell out of the way.

And that just isn't in this president's DNA.

If Obama is not defeated in November, we will continue to get the government we deserve.

JIM OBERSTAR - FROG LOVER

It's so obvious that Jim Oberstar was long overdue to get the boot from Congress, as he continues to embarrass himself at a remarkable pace.

The latest fart in church for our bike riding, erstwhile plunderer of the Treasury is his grinning, breathless acceptance of the French National Order of Merit.

Yay.

Oberstar has an apparent long-running crush on our lazy, soap-averse, surrender loving cousins across the pond.

An article on the award tells us that Oberstar led the fight against renaming French fries "freedom fries" during that whole brouhaha over war fighting policy.

Opposing the idea because it was dumb is fine. Opposing it because you think the French are cool is another thing.

The press release regarding the award states that the French wanted to recognize Oberstar's "distinguished" career.

Yep, Oberstar ran up the debt, favored bikes over cars, and acted like an arrogant jerk towards the people he was supposed to represent.

No wonder the French love him. He must be to France what David Hasselhoff is to Germany.

Finally, we are told that the Congress is down to one French speaking member.

Can you guess who it is? No, it's not Nancy Pelosi.

None other than Sen. John Kerry, another arrogant, aloof jerk.

You just can't make this stuff up.

Au-revoir, connard!

GOLDEN VALLEY SMACKS LIGHT RAIL

Kudos to Golden Valley! The city council voted to reject routing the proposed Bottineau light rail through the city.

The vote is rather historic, given that most local units of government just roll over and act like sheeple instead of leaders whenever railmania strikes.

Now, the reasons for the rejection weren't made clear, other than concerns that the line would encroach on open space in the city.

It doesn't matter. It appears that citizens are finally waking up to the reality of rail, especially the Southwest Corridor, another white elephant on par with Central Corridor.

If you want rail instead of cars, Jim Oberstar probably has a bike seat or two for your transportation pleasure over there in Europe. The they're going, no one will be able to afford a car anyway.

They've run out of other people's money.

And the same can be said for the always-troubled Northstar commuter rail line.

This week's bad news regarding the line featured a story about two brave entrepreneurs who are trying to make a coffee shop work near the Anoka station.

Apparently, the commuters aren't flocking to the shop to grab a cup of joe or a doughnut for some reason.

And here we were told Northstar would bring jobs and economic development to the area.

Once again, even the mainstream media puts the lie to the whopper that rail spurs development.

Heck, rail can't even sell coffee on a cold Minnesota morning.

If the folks at the Anoka station aren't buying coffee, maybe rail riders from the Ramsey or Coon Rapids stations could walk over and try a cup. After all the three stations are a short walk from one another.

CORRECTION

Last week's edition wrongly placed Rice, MN in the Eighth Congressional District. Indeed, the hamlet is in the Sixth District.

June 29, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. They Won and Issue, We Have a Cause.**
- 2. The Local Trough.**

THEY WON AND ISSUE, WE HAVE A CAUSE

So, unless you are living under a rock or in North Korea, you have heard and have read much already about the Supreme Court's ruling with respect to Obamacare.

Here are the main points:

First, the court upheld the law on a 5-4 vote.

Second, the majority upheld the individual mandate through a bit of creative judicial reasoning by Chief Justice Roberts, who no doubt had ulterior motives, such as avoiding having the president beat him up and steal his lunch money. Many speculate the Chief Justice was intimidated by Obama's railing on the court soon after oral arguments.

The individual mandate was not upheld as a valid exercise of the Commerce Clause but rather upheld under the federal power to levy taxes.

Third, states will not be required to participate in the law's massive expansion of Medicaid.

Regarding the individual mandate, CJ Roberts clearly labeled it a "tax," something the president long claimed it wasn't.

At best, it's a tax, although the well reasoned dissent from Justice Kennedy, joined by Scalia, Thomas and Alito, blasted Robert's creative reasoning.

Wrote Kennedy (truncated, of course):

[T]o say that the Individual Mandate merely imposes a tax is not to interpret the statute but to rewrite it. Judicial tax-writing is particularly troubling. Taxes have never been popular, see, e.g., Stamp Act of 1765, and in part for that reason, the Constitution requires tax increases to originate in the House of Representatives. See Art. I, §7, cl. 1. That is to say, they must originate in the legislative body most accountable to the people, where legislators must weigh the need for the tax against the terrible price they might pay at their next election, which is never more than two years off...

The Government's opening brief did not even address the question-perhaps because, until today, no federal court has accepted the implausible argument that §5000A is an exercise of the tax power. And once respondents raised the issue, the Government devoted a mere 21 lines of its reply brief to the issue. Petitioners' Minimum Coverage Reply Brief 25. At oral argument, the most prolonged statement about the issue was just over 50 words. Tr. of Oral Arg. 79 (Mar. 27, 2012). One would expect this Court to demand more than fly-by-night briefing and argument before deciding a difficult constitutional question of first impression...

The Court today decides to save a statute Congress did not write. It rules that what the statute declares to be a requirement with a penalty is instead an option subject to a tax. And it changes the intentionally coercive sanction of a total cut-off of Medicaid funds to a supposedly noncoercive cut-off of only the incremental funds that the Act makes available.

The Court regards its strained statutory interpretation as judicial modesty. It is not. It amounts instead to a vast judicial overreaching. It creates a debilitated, inoperable version of health-care regulation that Congress did not enact and the public does not expect. It makes enactment of sensible health-care regulation more difficult, since Congress cannot start afresh but must take as its point of departure a jumble of now senseless provisions, provisions that certain interests favored under the Court's new design will struggle to retain. And it leaves the public and the States to expend vast sums of money on requirements that may or may not survive the necessary congressional revision.

More importantly, the Court ruled that the law was not valid under the Commerce Clause, finally setting some limits to what had appeared for years to be an elastic constitutional excuse for Congress to interfere with nearly every aspect of our lives under the banner of "affecting interstate commerce."

Readers shouldn't underestimate the value of the consolation prize.

CJ Roberts wrote of the Commerce Clause argument:

"The power to *regulate* commerce presupposes the existence of commercial activity to be regulated... The individual mandate, however, does not regulate existing commercial activity. It instead compels individuals to *become* active in commerce by purchasing a product, on the ground that their failure to do so affects interstate commerce. Construing the Commerce Clause to permit Congress to regulate individuals precisely *because* they are doing nothing would open a new and potentially vast domain to congressional authority... Allowing Congress to justify federal regulation by pointing to the effect of inaction on commerce would bring countless decisions an individual could *potentially* make within the scope of federal regulation, and - under the government's theory - empower Congress to make those decisions for him."

Read the above paragraph carefully. Adopting the White House's reasoning would have greatly expanded federal power and would have subjected individual inaction and potential actions to federal regulation.

This holding of the court is of great importance and shouldn't be disregarded by conservatives.

So what should lovers of liberty do about all of this?

First, don't despair or walk away.

Listen to Mitt Romney. Now is the time to repeal Obamacare by replacing the president.

Now is the time to work hard to elect to Congress thoughtful men and women who understand what free markets mean to any sector of the economy.

And don't forget that the states will have a great say in the expansion of Medicaid. Electing conservative legislators this fall will be extremely important.

This is a defining issue for this generation. If you're concerned (like us), grab your shoes and get to work for candidates who stand against this power grab at the expense of your freedom.

Obamacare will fail politically at some point because it is bound to fail as policy.

Remember the first rule of economics: ALL RESOURCES ARE LIMITED.

Our economy could never produce all the health care we could consume.

It's not like there is some treasure trove of health care locked away in insurance company coffers that Obama is magically unlocking with his nationalization of health care.

In any market, including healthcare, price acts as a signal to efficiently regulate the allocation of scarce resources.

In essence, Obamacare seeks to short circuit price mechanisms that tend to limit the consumption of health care and force consumers to make intelligent decisions (e.g. eliminating co-pays for certain procedures).

By creating an artificial ceiling regarding health care prices, Obama is creating a shortage in health care because there is unmet demand that price cannot contain.

When a service is cheaper, there tends to be more demand. When demand isn't tempered by price increases, shortages are the inevitable result.

See price controls on apartment rentals (New York) and gasoline for historic examples.

And because there is no magic pixie dust to create a limitless supply of health care, it doesn't mean that this inevitable shortage will go away.

Government deals with supply shortages by RATIONING the product or service.

Ask folks in England or Canada if they get all the healthcare they care to consume.

Ask how "universal" health care really is. It appears that the only universal concept is the universal and equal sharing of the misery inherent in health care shortages.

Of course they don't. Rationing has the same effect as free market pricing mechanisms: it allocates a scarce resource.

The big difference here, however, is that government rationing is grossly inefficient while free markets are inherently efficient, due to the that whole evil "profit motive" thing.

In a free market, an invisible hand allocates resources in a manner that is color blind, without regard to religious belief, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

Under government rationing, resources are allocated by arrogant, unresponsive government overlords who are influenced by political power, allocating resources in a manner that pleases them and whatever favored constituencies happen to be in power at the time.

Want some proof? Check out the list of organizations that have been exempted from Obamacare's insurance mandates.

The list includes a number of favored constituencies, including large numbers of labor unions, the same folks who purportedly care about the Workin' Man.

Look folks, there is no such thing as universal all-you-can-eat health care.

Health care resources will be allocated. The only policy decision is whether health care will be allocated by the objective, blind hand of the free market or allocated by naked, raw political force.

Which path sounds moral and just to you?

THE LOCAL TROUGH

And we're not about to forget about the State Auditor's report on how much local government spent on lobbying in 2011, another recession year.

In these tough economic times, how did our local elected officials deal with their lobbyists, a rather unnecessary luxury in these times - or any for that matter.

In total, local units of government spent over \$8.3 million in 2011 lobbying other units of government to spend more money on them.

And the four biggest pigs?

1. City of Minneapolis \$467,139
2. Hennepin County \$246,214.
3. Metropolitan Airports Commission \$172,105
4. Anoka County \$170,320.
5. City of Saint Paul \$161,098.

Funny, aren't Minneapolis and Saint Paul constantly whining about budget cuts and state aid cuts?

You could hire a few cops for a half-million bucks.

What cruel joke on the taxpayers.

Perhaps Hizzoners Rybak and Coleman could take a cue from Anoka County, which is working hard to dig out of years and years of Big Government programs instituted under the Good Ol' Boys regime.

The county has been working slowly but surely to put the program on the correct path.

For example, when uber-bureaucrat Steve Novak departs later this year, the lobbying budget will drop dramatically.

Congratulations to the current board up in Anoka County for pruning back the lobbying budget, just like they pruned back the property tax levy.

July 13, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Dayton Picks Pork.**
- 2. Chip Rising.**
- 3. Tax Stats for the Week.**

DAYTON PICKS PORK

There's nothing like free food to attract a crowd. A free lunch will send people running to the trough. Millions in pork barrel spending dangled in front of politicians will cause a stampede to rival the running of the bulls in Pamplona. It's the running of the pigs in Saint Paul and it's just as chaotic and dangerous. Taxpayers will surely be gored and trampled.

You see, when the legislature passed yet another debt-financed bonding bill last year, they designated some \$47.5 million of the spending as "undesignated," meaning that the money wasn't attached to an identified state or regional capital improvement project. The money was simply to be spent on "economic development."

The ones to choose the lucky winners of this \$47.5 million in Free Parking loot were the bureaucrats in the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Think about it. The legislative process was entirely short-circuited here.

Normally, a project that earns a bonding appropriation goes through a thorough process that runs many months in length.

It begins with an initial application to the legislature in the summer.

Then, the capital investment committee of both houses takes tours of the state in the fall to examine the projects first-hand and get a briefing from local officials.

Once the legislative session starts, committee hearings are held to allow both the legislature and the public to vet the requests and hear public input.

The projects are then identified and put into a bill that has to pass both houses with a 3/5ths super-majority and then be signed into law by the governor.

The Framers of the Minnesota Constitution wanted a super-majority because they foresaw the problems inherent in government debt as well as the attraction of pork to politicians.

While the process isn't perfect and isn't always followed, the Watchdog can't remember a time where the legislature simply punted on its constitutional obligations and allowed

the bureaucracy to simply divvy out the booty based on some vague notion of "economic development."

What a bad way to do business, especially under Republican governance.

It seems to the Watchdog that many of the applicants are likely to be projects that didn't have popular support at the legislature (ahem, Southwest Light Rail) and are looking for a payday at the backdoor.

And what a Running of the Pigs it has been. Now that the application window is closed, we see that 90 application totaling \$288 million were received. SUHEY!

And what did those applications look like? What kind of capital improvement projects were listed that will create jobs and improve the economy?

Drum roll please:

Dakota County	Trails and Visitor's Centers	\$3,000,000
Duluth	Wade Stadium Upgrades	\$5,800,000
Edina	Promenade Greenway Expansion	\$1,500,000
Hibbing	Curling Club Upgrades	\$1,190,000
Iron Range Resources Bd.	Giants Ridge Events Center	\$4,995,000
Mankato	Mankato Civic Center	\$14,500,000
Marshall	Regional Amateur Sports Center	\$4,000,000
***Met Council	Southwest Light Rail	\$14,000,000
Minneapolis Parks and Rec	Sculpture Garden	\$750,000
Perham	Community Center Upgrades	\$631,000
Rochester	Mayo Civic Center	\$25,000,000
Saint Cloud	Civic Center	\$9,600,000
Saint Paul	Saints Baseball Stadium	\$26,000,000
Three Rivers Park Dist.	Cross-country Trail	\$3,700,000
West Saint Paul	Sports Dome Construction	\$3,500,000
Woodbury	Expand Sports Center	\$1,500,000

That should give you a flavor of the applications.

Man, it looks to us like a lot of the ugly ones who didn't get asked to the bonding bill prom are showing up here. Southwest light rail, the Saints stadium, etc.

Let us hope this lack of legislative oversight never happens again.

You control the purse strings, legislature!

CHIP RISING

Watchdogs, you witnessed history yesterday. On July 12, 2012, a prominent labor union endorsed Congressman Chip Cravaack for re-election.

Yes, a labor union endorsed a Republican for re-election in Minnesota's Eighth District, a labor-heavy district that covers the Iron Range.

This was nothing short of astonishing and set the political world on its ear. As Jesse the Body would say, "shock the world!"

A great deal of credit for this endorsement goes both to Cravaack and to the International Union of Operating Engineers (Local 49), the union that offered the endorsement.

Cravaack gets credit for reaching out to organized labor and working with them on issues like mining jobs and the Keystone pipeline.

But he gets even more credit for standing with Labor on issues that many conservatives don't like, such as prevailing wage laws, project labor agreements and laws that ensure higher wages for the skilled trades when they work on federal projects.

Credit goes to the 49ers for bucking the conventional wisdom that Labor unions are nothing more than a front group for the DFL and must support the DFL, especially on the Iron Range.

The union gets credit for having the courage to look at the voting record and not the partisan affiliation.

There is also a larger lesson here, especially for conservatives.

All unions aren't created equal. All unions don't think the same and act the same.

Conservatives must resist the intellectually lazy path of simply labeling "Big Labor" as a monolithic entity at odds with what we believe about the economy and jobs.

This is especially true when we separate the government unions from the private-sector unions.

It is becoming apparent that private-sector skilled trades unions are becoming more bipartisan while the government unions become all the more vitriolic and all the more suck-ups to the DFL.

It's no coincidence that the Local 49ers are a private-sector union, with a small part of their membership working for government.

The privates recognize that their fate is tied to that of the employer and that the iron laws of the marketplace will impose discipline at the bargaining table.

In short, their fates are tied together, which tends to produce reasonable agreements and a large amount of cooperation.

Strike a bad deal? Union members get unemployed while the employer gets bankrupt, unless Obama is there with a bailout.

Such a situation isn't present with the government unions. Overly generous contracts? No problem. Just raise taxes or dial up China for another loan.

Sharp-eyed management that will drive a hard bargain? Hell no! We endorsed these guys and got them elected. We're all on the same side of the bargaining table! Profit motive? What's that?

Put another way, many rank and file private sector union members are starting to realize that fat contracts, outrageous pay and benefits and the lack of accountability in government unions is coming out of their pockets.

This perhaps why the skilled trade unions are more pragmatic than the government unions.

Take a look at the 2012 endorsement lists.

Government unions:

[Education MN](#): 83 DFL, 2 GOP endorsed.

[AFSCME](#): 57 DFL endorsed, ONE Republican.

[MAPE](#): 92 DFL endorsed, ZERO Republicans.

Private sector unions:

[Local 49ers](#): 26 DFL, 16 GOP.

[MN Carpenters](#): 58 DFL, 23 GOP.

While the reality remains that Labor tilts towards the DFL and the GOP away from unions, stronger relationships are being forged that may presage a realignment in politics.

Or perhaps it's simply the reality that some unions back candidates that support their issues, regardless of party affiliation while others are content to be nothing more than a mouthpiece for partisan politics.

TAX STATS FOR THE WEEK

The Wall Street Journal has posted some excellent stats regarding who pays taxes. Keep this in mind the next time President Obama or the ignorant jerk at the water cooler wants to rant about "tax fairness."

According to the Congressional Budget Office:

- The top quintile of earners paid 68% of all federal taxes;
- The middle quintile paid 9.4% of all federal taxes;
- The bottom quintile paid just .3% of all federal taxes. That's POINT 3 percent.

We find it hard to believe that the bottom quintile consumes just .3% of federal services or benefits.

So who's not paying their fair share?

July 20, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. One Simple Request.**
- 2. He Doesn't Believe in America.**
- 3. Dayton Still Stuck.**
- 4. The Rick Nolan Agenda.**

ONE SIMPLE REQUEST

As we acknowledge in our thoughts and prayers the victims of the Colorado shooting, the Watchdog has one very simple request.

Would it be too much for the mainstream media to demonstrate some professionalism and refrain from speculating on the shooter's motives until authorities have conducted a thorough investigation?

Could we ask that the media go back to reporting the facts instead of guessing?

In other words, the shooter's motives will undoubtedly be determined at some point.

Perhaps the media could be big enough to wait for the facts, instead of fanning ideological flames, such as what happened with Congresswoman Giffords.

We all know some quarters of the media want desperately to pin the blame on those who believe in the Second Amendment and limited government.

It's just one simple request.

HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN AMERICA

The Watchdog has carefully avoided using some of the strong language other publications have used to describe President Obama.

Having said that, we can only conclude after his comments this week that he truly doesn't believe in America.

It's all we can conclude.

At least, he doesn't believe in the definition of "America" held by many millions of the citizens he is charged to represent.

We all know by now that the president said, "If you've got a business, you didn't build that."

While the president's liberal apologists have attempted to parse the president's words in a grand attempt to get us to wonder what the meaning of "is" "is," we all know that the quote is a window into the heart of the president of the United States.

A bedrock tenet of the American Dream is that any person, regardless of their station in life, can be successful through the sweat of their own brow.

Any person, with enough hard work and perseverance, can make a better life for themselves and their family.

This belief stems from our belief in the twin values of self-reliance and rugged individualism.

In fact, it forms the very foundation of our constitution and legal system. That is, the idea that all rights flow from the individual. It is the rights of each of us as individuals that gives authority to government and other institutions.

In other words, the rights of individual are primary, and the rights of government are secondary, only existing through the consent of the governed to have some of their inherent rights temporarily loaned to the government.

Obama apparently doesn't believe that individuals are capable of succeeding alone. In his world, no one makes alone or without the help of government.

Obama's view is distinctly at odds with the American story.

The Watchdog would love to hear about all the government help Henry Ford and Thomas Edison received.

We would love to hear how Bill Gates and Alexander Bell would have been failures without government.

Obama's words also undercut a distinctly American trait.

Many political economists believe that America has succeeded economically on a scale far greater than other capitalist nations precisely because entrepreneurship is uniquely prized and honored in America.

The regular Joe or Jane who starts up their own business is lauded in America like no other country.

Whereas other countries prize a plumb job working for someone else, we here in America admire people who have the courage and vision to put their own name on the door of a bakery, accounting firm, or manufacturing company.

Combined with other statements, it's obvious that the president of the United States has view of the role of government in our lives this is distinctly un-American. It's more in the mold of a European Social Democrat, one who believes in cradle-to-grave statism. Given our debt, unemployment levels, and weak economic growth, the president has been quite successful in implementing his world view.

DAYTON STILL STUCK

Still stuck pulling his foot out of his mouth that is.

This week Dayton uttered one of the most profoundly stupid comments any Minnesota elected official has ever, ever, offered.

When asked why so many Vikings get busted for crime, Dayton offered this bizarre explanation to the Pioneer Press:

"Idle time is the devil's play," said Dayton, describing the NFL's six-month offseason. "It means that young males who are heavily armored and heavily psyched as necessary to carry out their job are probably more susceptible to being in bars at 2 o'clock (in the morning) and having problems. It doesn't excuse it. It just says this probably comes with it."

Dayton linked the wayward behavior of players to post-traumatic stress disorder soldiers suffer after returning home from combat, describing professional football as "civilized war."

"Shake one of their hands and you know that this (football player) is someone who is not your ordinary citizen. They're heavily armored, heavily psyched to do what they have to do and go out there. It's, basically, slightly civilized war," Dayton said.

"Then they take that into society. Much as soldiers come back, they've been in combat or the edge of it and suddenly that adjustment back to civilian life is a real challenge. And that's part of the reality. That's not to say it's good and it shouldn't be improved. It should."

Uh, no. Football players aren't thugs because they have jobs similar to combat.

Soldiers are low-paid, non-celebrity heroes who deploy for months on end and willingly face the prospect of death or serious injury in order to serve our Nation and their buddies in the foxhole next to them.

Most football players, on the other hand, are arrogant and ultra-rich jerks who hold an entitlement mentality that makes them above the law and unaccountable to anyone.

There is no comparison or analogy. None. It's not even close. Selfless service to country isn't anything like the crash-my-Ferrari-smack-my-girlfriend-smoke-some-dope-party-at-the-strip-club lifestyle lived by many professional footballers, including many members of the Vikings.

To be fair, Governor Dayton has apologized for his remarks and should be given credit for being big enough to admit his mistake.

The Watchdog, however, does agree that "idle time is the devil's play." Such as the idle time of a silver spoon trust fund kid who has no real vocation in life other than being a serial candidate for offices like U.S. Senator and Governor of Minnesota.

Vetoing fireworks and pro-life legislation while pushing for big tax increases and a Vikings stadium is devilish indeed, governor!

THE RICK NOLAN AGENDA

Our DFL friends up on the Iron Range seem to think that Rick Nolan is the guy who can beat Chip Cravaack.

They think he's better than the other two DFLers vying for the endorsement in the August primary.

We can't help but chuckle.

Nolan served in the Congress once before, back in the 1970s.

We understand that his agenda, if elected, is as follows:

Get us out of Vietnam

Find an alternative to Met Stadium, maybe a new "domed" venue

Enhance government research into a promising new technology called the Internet

Close Studio 54, a den of iniquity.

July 27, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Campaign Update.**
- 2. The Ugly Stuff.**
- 3. Hennepin County Foolishness.**

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The race for control of the legislature is in full swing and the Watchdog has been receiving reports from across Minnesota regarding the races.

Overall, Republicans as a whole are feeling good about their prospects for keeping the majority in both houses. The reception at the door and at parades is reported to be excellent.

Candidates who are working in districts that have pockets of conservative "Reagan" Democrats are reporting that there is an attitude of disgust with overreach regarding Obamacare and the opposition to the marriage amendment.

These populist Democrats don't want government to pick their doctor or tell them that their values regarding marriage are outdated and bigoted.

Perhaps these folks are just "clinging to the guns and religion" are the Democrat-in-Chief once famously opined.

If trends hold true, there could be some surprises on election night, as the GOP could capture some seats in the Metro first ring suburbs and "blue" areas of rural Minnesota, especially in the 8th Congressional District.

Here are 5 races to watch:

1. Breanna Bly(R) vs. Tina Liebling (DFL)

This is a race for MN House district 26A in the Rochester area. While the district isn't great for the GOP, Bly is well known in the district and sources report she is working hard to meet voters, many of whom know her.

Moreover, it's good for Bly that voters are familiar with her opponent, incumbent Tina Liebling, perhaps the most liberal member of the House and, frankly, a big mouth who is disliked by Republicans and Democrats alike.

There is a lot of buzz around Bly. Check it [out](#).

2. [Phil Hansen](#) (R) vs. Kent Eken (DFL)

This an open Senate seat in the Red River Valley area of Northwest MN.

Phil Hansen is simply a rock star celebrity candidate. A local guy, Hansen made it big with a stellar NFL career with the Buffalo Bills, where he served as team captain and was inducted into the Bills Wall of Fame, an honor bestowed on only 27 players in all of the team's history.

Watchdogs in the area tell us that people rush to Hansen at public events to ask for his autograph.

Hansen also has serious business credentials, operating a number of successful business enterprises after he retired from football.

He also hold a degree in agricultural economics.

Hansen's opponent is a current politician who has been at the legislature for over a decade.

3. [Roz Peterson](#) (R) vs. Will Morgan (DFL)

This is an open House seat South of the River in the Burnsville area.

Roz Peterson is the epitome of community involvement. Whether it's the local public schools or the chamber of commerce, Roz Peterson is known for her good work and good cheer.

Like our other "races to watch," there is great GOP candidate who not only has a legitimate resume, there is a hard working candidate who is doing everything right.

Check out Roz Peterson, one of the prize recruits for Kurt Zellers and company.

4. [Benjamin Kruse](#) (R) vs. John Hoffman (DFL)

This race pits an incumbent Republican against a DFL school board member in a senate district centered on Brooklyn Park in Hennepin County.

Ben Kruse is a great success story. First elected in 2010, few gave him a chance. The word was that he was a mediocre candidate in a tough district.

But Republicans in the area quickly learned that Kruse was getting a bum rap.

A dogged campaigner and likable guy, Kruse defied the odds and won.

In the legislature, he soon gained a reputation as a thoughtful legislator and an emerging leader.

Kruse's opponent is a school board member in the Anoka-Hennepin district, where test scores are still unacceptably low and the school board failed to fire a high ranking administrator who was implicated in a [shocking and appalling scandal](#) involving an underage female student.

5. Carolyn McElfatrick (R) vs. Tom Anzelc (DFL)

This race features two incumbent legislators facing off for the right to come back to the MN House in January.

The district (3B) is anchored on the south in Grand Rapids and runs north, having lost chunks of the Iron Range to a district to east.

McElfatrick is a hard working and diligent legislator running in an area that is new to Republicanism but definitely warming up to the message as McElfatrick was joined in 2010 by state Senator [John Carlson](#) and Congressman [Chip Cravaack](#) in representing the area.

Anzelc, on the other hand, lost his traditional base on the Iron Range, including his redoubt of strength in the hamlet of Calumet.

If this trio of Republican heroes can win re-election, we will very likely be witnessing a true political realignment in northern Minnesota.

THE UGLY STUFF

Because the Watchdog is based on principle and not party, we aren't afraid to call out bad GOP behavior when we see it.

The bomb throwing fiasco down in the First Congressional district is a textbook example of bad behavior.

Mike Parry and Allen Quist are engaging in a scorched earth campaign to gain victory in the August 14th primary to take on formidable incumbent Tim Walz and the right to represent the district in the U.S. House.

Both candidates have gone as negative as you possibly can on each other and there's still over two weeks to go until the polls open and the bloodletting will thankfully come to an end.

Parry has pointed out Quist's past actions and comments to brand him "unelectable." Yeah, if you say that men have a genetic predisposition to wear the big boy pants around the house, that will hurt you. By the way, have our friends over at the Voices of Conservative Women weighed in on this comment? Do they feel genetically predisposed to walk six steps behind their husbands?

And there's Quist's infamous incognito visit to a Mankato adult bookstore, where rumor had it that folks were doing the nasty in the back rooms, all in violation of local health codes.

Quist in turn, is pointing to Parry's Tweets, including one that labels the president as a power hungry black man.

What a disaster. And we're not alone.

We're just the only ones that will say publically what many GOP operatives and donors are saying.

The winner here will likely earn nothing more than a Pyrrhic victory, the equivalent of a political Battle of Hue.

Perhaps Quist, Parry, and even Michele Bachmann could quit with the antics and refocus the debate on the failure in the White House. You know, the "you didn't build that" guy, the "spread the wealth around" guy, the "cling to guns and religion" guy. You know, the one who doesn't believe in American exceptionalism.

And oh by the way, Republicans have a good story to tell regarding our ideas and values.

Let's get it together folks.

HENNEPIN COUNTY FOOLISHNESS

Have you read about Hennepin County adopting a workplace "bullying" policy? What a laugh.

This policy is based upon ill-defined terms and vague prohibitions that will act as little more than a speech code and grist for the union grievance mill.

While the policy was amended to strike rather ridiculous examples of workplace "bullying," the policy nonetheless is based upon subjective terms such as "persistent" behavior that is "threatening," "humiliating," or "intimidating."

What do those terms mean, exactly? We will find out through a series of union grievances that will in many cases go to arbitration, where an arbitrator will decide.

Mark our words. This policy will foster a grievance mill and act as device for workers to get at each other. He intimidated me! She persistently humiliated me!

Look, a workplace violence policy is one thing. A bullying policy is another. At some point, you have to grow up and realize not everyone is going to be nice and validate you.

August 3, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Show Me the Money.**
- 2. Photo ID Mania.**
- 3. Test Scores Still Poor.**

SHOW ME THE MONEY

The big news this week in Saint Paul was the filing of "pre-primary" campaign finance reports. The Watchdog culled through the reports to find some tidbits that haven't yet been highlighted by the lamestream media.

Edina indeed has money.

There's some serious buckage over there in Edina, even in politics.

In Senate District 49, the retirement of Geoff Michel has created a competitive open seat, as there are many people in Edina who are rich enough to be Democrats, those of the limousine liberal persuasion.

State Representative [Keith Downey](#), a Republican and conservative stalwart, is facing Melisa Franzen, who is no doubt casting herself as a "moderate" and "consensus builder" in order to appear palatable to a suburban audience.

In any case, this race has drawn some big donations, and that's just counting the money flowing directly to the candidates, excluding the mountain of third party spending that will occur.

Downey reported raising over \$65,000 so far this year, a whopping sum.

Franzen also reported an eye-brow raising total of \$51,525.

Some candidates don't have a pot to pee in.

There are a couple of candidates out there who ought to be downright embarrassed by their fundraising - or lack thereof.

Tim Henderson, a Democrat running against Roger Chamberlain for the Senate seat representing the Lino Lakes area, reported raising a grand total of ZERO.

Funny, if he raised no money, how did he afford a campaign web site.

Well, he is a public employee union representative, so we know they have ways of getting things done, if you will.

And don't forget Andy Hillebregt, a DFLer running against state Rep. Jim Abeler in the Northwest corner of Anoka County.

Hillebregt raised a mere \$100 this year.

Geez, do you guys have any family?

That's just pathetic.

Send a note to Harold Hamilton. He may be moved to send in a pity donation.

Democrat on Democrat violence.

Man, there are a lot of DFL primary races this year. Yes, the GOP has a couple but Democrats are really after each other. We count 21 DFL primaries for either the House or Senate. Fight, fight, fight!

Sins of the GOP.

- And yes, we need to call out some Republicans, especially some running for the Senate.

Raising between \$6-\$10 thousand bucks is simply unacceptable.

And there are a number of you in this boat. You shouldn't be outraised by the House candidates in your area.

Why not just send a post card to Alida Messinger and state "Target me!"

Like it or not, raising money is part of the deal.

Go out and do your part - NOW.

PHOTO ID MANIA

The liberal-fomented mania swirling around the photo ID issue is nothing new.

When they're on the losing side of a policy debate (where they are with frequency), liberals seek to substitute calmness with panic and logic with frenetic emotion.

Remember the fight at the legislature over conceal/carry gun permits? OH NO! People will bring guns to church! Gun fights will erupt in the Target parking lot over disputed parking spaces! Guns will replace the rule of law!

Nope. Didn't happen.

The same can be said for showing a photo ID when voting.

You know, the same photo ID you show to cash a check, board an airplane, or attend an Obama campaign event.

Notice how the liberals are even stooping to using racially charged rhetoric, labeling photo ID as a "poll tax," a discriminatory device used in the Old South to suppress minority voting rights.

This kind of cheap, emotional rhetoric cheapens the debate and distracts from the rational, free exchange of ideas.

Many liberals, including the Obama Justice Department, have argued that photo ID is merely a ploy to dilute minority voting rights, using the soft bigotry of low expectations to insinuate the blacks can't afford to a photo ID or can't navigate the process to obtain one.

Former Congressman Artur Davis is black and a Democrat. He represented Alabama in the U.S. House from 2003 - 2011, including the cities of Selma and Birmingham, home to some of the most violent battles of the Civil Rights era.

Speaking to the Heritage Foundation recently, Davis held up his driver's license and proclaimed, "This is not a billy club. This is not a fire hose. I used to represent Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, and I know something about fire hoses."

And what do the facts tell us about photo ID? Are minorities disenfranchised, as the critics claim?

Kansas has photo ID. As of May 2012, only 32 voters out of 1.73 million registered voters had requested a free photo ID, representing 0.002 percent of all eligible voters.

Of the 32 who requested a government-issued ID, 80% were white. The other 10% were black and remaining 10% were unknown with respect to race and ethnicity.

Georgia has had photo ID since 2007 and recognizes six different forms of photo ID as acceptable at the polls.

The number of people requesting a free government ID to vote averages about 0.05% of those who vote in any given year in the state.

And what about minority voting rates before and after photo ID?

In the 2008 election in Georgia, Hispanic voting was 140% higher than the previous presidential election in 2004.

And oh by the way. Obama's own Justice Department requires a photo ID to get into their building, the very same building that is ground zero for fighting photo ID.

Enough already.

TEST SCORES STILL POOR

The latest statewide comprehensive math and reading scores were released this week, continuing to show a meaningful lack of progress and a persistent achievement gap in our state's students.

So expect to hear a chorus of Democrats decry the situation, to "feel our pain," and then go right back to maintaining the status quo on behalf of their primary constituency, the teacher's union.

Education reform is undoubtedly the single largest batch of cynical crap the DFL perpetrates on the taxpaying public.

No other issues gets more lip service and less action than education.

It's a nice little protection racket the DFL and teachers' union has between them. Money flows to DFL candidates and politicians while protection and influence flow back at the teachers.

And the kids suffer.

In the latest round of scores, only 62% of students were proficient in math. For black children, the proficiency rate was a depressing, demoralizing 33%. Fully 2/3rds of black children aren't proficient in math.

And yet we have essentially the same public school system we had back in the 1960s. We just spend more. A lot more.

Only 76% of students are proficient in reading, leaving about 1 in 4 lacking proficiency.

For black students, 53% are proficient. In other words, about half of black children aren't proficient in reading.

And we wonder why so many people end up dependent on government to grind out a meager existence devoid of the pride and strength one finds in a good job.

Even in this economy, the want ads are filled with good, secure jobs just waiting to be filled.

They go unfilled because most applicants lack the basic math and reading skills needed to operate the sophisticated machines that populate the factory floor in 21st Century America.

And yet we have an education system devoid of competition and accountability.

We pay teachers by seniority, not by effectiveness.

Tenure protects apathetic slackers who snuck through the system past probation and now sit back and thumb their noses at the parents and taxpayer appalled by the lack of results.

And nothing changes. The nefarious cabal of Democrats and teacher union fat cats conspire to protect each other while America loses its place in the world.

Tax money spent spirals upwards while test scores spiral inversely.

Education is in crisis and the status of minority children in this government-run system is the civil rights issue of our time.

Do you have the guts to fight for change? You're the only one who can do it.

August 10, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Editor's Note: Greetings, Watchdogs! We're coming to you this week from deep inside Watchdog election headquarters at an undisclosed, secure facility somewhere in Anoka County.

Next Tuesday is primary election day. There are a number of important races on the ballot. Make sure you get to the polls and exercise your sacred right to vote. The world belongs to those who show up. Next Tuesday, show up.

Find out where to vote right [here](#).

See you at the polls!

- 1. The Scorecard has Landed.**
- 2. Who's Paying their "Fair Share?"**

THE SCORECARD HAS LANDED

It's always a big deal at the Watchdog when the Taxpayer's League of Minnesota (TLM) publishes the annual Legislative [Scorecard](#).

Editor's Note: Harold Hamilton proudly serves as the chairman of the board for the TLM.

The TLM scorecard is the gold standard for measuring fiscal conservatism and the deeds of our legislators, not just their words. All can talk a conservative game, not all can or will walk a conservative walk.

Watchdogs should be sure to examine the scorecard closely and let your legislator know that you've reviewed the scorecard and are aware of their score.

The League scored 7 votes, including votes for the Vikings stadium palace and tax bills that created a more friendly environment for job creators, otherwise known as the "folks who didn't build that."

Overall 16 legislators earned "Best Friend of the Taxpayer" awards. Shockingly, no DFLer was among the best friends.

Thus, the Watchdog is reduced to finding the least odious voting records among the DFL caucuses and giving some measure of credit to the tallest fiscal midget among the DFL crowd.

Hence, the Watchdog announces the first-ever Tallest Fiscal Midget award.

Your 2012 winners:

Senate Midget: 43%, shared among Terri Bonoff, Scott Dibble, and Tony Lourey.

And before you rag the DFL too hard, let us also recognize that there were 15 Senate Republicans with the same score.

Not good.

House Midget: 57%, shared by Ramsey county legislators Mindy Greiling and Bev Scalze.

What's worse, there were a whopping 26 Republicans who got a LOWER score than Greiling and Scalze.

Disgusting.

This is how we feel.

Is this what we voted for in 2010?

No wonder the Tea Party is ticked off.

But since we're optimists, let's take a look at the golden 16 who took top honors.

Senator David Hann (3rd award)
Senator Chris Gerlach (3rd award)
Rep. Bruce Anderson (12th award)
*Rep. Mike Benson (1st award)
*Rep. Kurt Daudt (1st award)
Rep. Bob Dettmer (1st award)
Rep. Steve Drakowski (3rd award)
Rep. Sondra Erickson (1st award)
*Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen (1st award)
*Rep. Andrea Kieffer (1st award)
Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer (1st award)
*Rep. Branden Petersen (1st award)
*Rep. Duane Quam (2nd award)
Rep. Peggy Scott (1st award)
Rep. Linda Runbeck (4th award)
*Rep. Doug Wardlow (1st award)

* = Freshman

Whether you live in their district or not, thank these legislators by dropping them a note of encouragement. Better yet, mail them a check. They saved you billions, give back \$50 or \$100 to them.

WHO'S PAYING THEIR "FAIR SHARE?"

Like any good European social democrat, President Obama is doing his best to play the class warfare card and claim that the successful aren't paying their fair share. Hence, the need to "spread the wealth around."

And for just about every claim Obama makes on the campaign trail, the facts just don't support the rhetoric.

The Wall Street Journal this week cut through the crap to present some sobering numbers.

The top 5% are paying a bigger share of the federal tax pie than ever.

In 1980, these folks had about 20% of the income in the country and paid about 28% of all federal taxes.

in 1990, they had about 25% of the income and paid about 33% of all federal taxes.

Today, they have about 27% of the income and pay 40% of all federal taxes.

The top 5% pay 40% of all federal taxes.

And yet, 46% of "taxpayers" pay no federal income tax at all.

Now check out the bottom 40%.

They have 15% of the income but pay only 4% of the federal taxes.

5% pay 40% while 40% pay 4%. The inverse symmetry is downright frightening.

When so many Americans pay little or no taxes, it creates a moral hazard. These folks have no stake in government accountability since they have no skin in the game. Worse, they are led to believe that they are entitled to a redistribution of wealth provided by a government that takes it from a small, faceless minority and gives it to them at no cost whatsoever.

This is the intentional policy of this president, who is enamored of European Welfare Statism. High unemployment, a permanent underclass dependent upon government, stagnant economic growth, and confiscatory taxation policies are all hallmarks of such a

State. Obama has this in spades, minus the one thing in which he needs the cooperation of the Congress - jacking up taxes.

With Obama, it's probably only a matter of time until he simply raises taxes via executive order, anyway.

See you next Tuesday at the polls.

August 17, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Post-Primary Landscape.**
- 2. Gotta Keep Your Pants Up.**
- 3. Ridiculous Statement of the Month.**
- 4. Note From Keith Downey.**
- 5. Obama the Capitalist.**

POST-PRIMARY LANDSCAPE

If you're a Watchdog, you're well aware of what happened in the primary elections this past Tuesday. Here are the thoughts that are sticking in our head:

Senator Julianne Ortman deserved to win her primary. With a very solid voting record, it always struck us a bit dubious that the primary was about Ortman's alleged lack of fidelity to conservative principles.

Based on the communications we received from both camps, we got the distinct impression that personality conflicts were at play, despite the protestations to the contrary from Ortman's critics (names protected).

Ortman will win this November and go back to Saint Paul to chair the Taxes Committee in conservative fashion.

Is Ortman perfect? Nope. And perfection isn't the standard. She's a stalwart for the Cause and will continue to be a champion for Watchdogs.

In the Cindy Pugh versus Steve Smith race, the lamestream media wanted to portray Smith's overwhelming loss as Tea Party extremism rejecting a solid, mainstream Republican.

The truth is that Smith's constituents were well aware of his problems and many decided that they no longer felt he was in a position to serve them in Saint Paul.

Moreover, Cindy Pugh ran a great campaign and has the principles and values Republicans want to see at the Capitol.

Nice try on the extremism angle, guys.

In the Senate race in that same district, the race between Connie Doepke and Dave Osmek got way, way too nasty, thanks in part to third party independent expenditures.

The Watchdog believes in Reagan's 11th Commandment. That commandment was not on display here.

Keeping the guns pointed outward is good idea for the guys in the red jerseys.

GOTTA KEEP YOUR PANTS UP

The news was filled this week with news that a state Representative from the Duluth area apparently was caught engaging in conduct that would definitely fall into the "[scandalous](#)" category.

The Watchdog doesn't raise this issue in order to pound the DFL over it. The simple fact is that stupid, scandalous behavior is a bi-partisan affair.

So, perhaps, the DFL will dial back the glee meter just a little bit regarding Senator Amy Koch's stupid decision to fail to keep her pantaloons secured.

As far as the Watchdog is concerned, all these politicians who do crap like this should be held accountable. You don't have to be an angel, but you do need to keep it out of the gutter. The public already has a low enough opinion of politicians without the likes of John Edwards, Amy Koch, Kerry Gauthier, and a certain "wide stance" senator.

Enough already.

RIDICULOUS STATEMENT OF THE MONTH

Liberal Minneapolis state Senator Scot Dibble had the following to say about Senator Al Franken:

"I think Al Franken has always been very intelligent, policy oriented, well-researched, well-spoken. So I think what was appealing about him then and now is the fact that sure he's a progressive, left-of-center, but the positions he takes are always extremely sensible, and he articulates them very, very well."

Oh, really? Like these statements and actions?

- At that point, Franken reportedly began peppering Fritz with questions about supporting President George W. Bush and former President Ronald Reagan's tax hikes. Fritz told me he got tense and, as he does in those situations, started chewing the inside of his mouth, a gesture he said was mimicked by Franken; Fritz also thought his style of speech was mocked by Franken.
- Al Franken statements as "You cannot have too many 'Rush is fat' jokes," and of course the classic idiocy about the Republican Party being racist (*Lies...pg. 256-*

57), "stupid bastards" (pg. 354), and "in the thrall of Lucifer" (*Rush...*pg. 254).

- Franken was presiding over the Senate during McConnell's approximately 10-minute speech. During the speech Franken was making faces, rolling his eyes, laughing to himself, throwing his head back and shaking his head, shifting his chair from one side to another, and making obvious theatrical movements displaying his disagreement with the speech.
- The meeting quickly deteriorated when Franken began berating one of Corker's aides, according to GOP aides familiar with the incident. Franken's sally was so harsh that Corker told Franken to lay off his aide and direct the comments at him instead.
- After the conversation began ordinarily, Franken started to grill the aide about what he sees as the failings of the GOP. Franken demanded to know why it had become the "Party of No" and had exaggerated facts in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, according to another GOP leadership aide.
- Republicans fumed last week when Sen. [Al Franken](#) (D-Minn.) revealed the contents of a private conversation with Sen. [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) in a fiercely critical speech on the floor.

Or just go to You Tube and type in "Al Franken rage."

Yeah, Senator Dibble, Al Franken is just a paragon of civil, genteel logic. Franken is just so damn sensible.

NOTE FROM KEITH DOWNEY

A couple of weeks ago, the Watchdog noted that state Rep. Keith Downey (R-Edina), who is running for an open state Senate seat, is engaged in perhaps the most expensive legislative campaign in the state this year.

Downey passed a note to the Watchdog pointing out a few details regarding what he is facing this November:

Harold - an important story in the finance reports for the Edina campaigns is the outside influence of the unions on the DFL candidates. Franzen (Downey's opponent) received contributions from 14 labor union groups, Erhardt 12, and Rosenthal 12.

ABM (a liberal special interest group) also spent \$12,800 against me already this year.

Plus check out the amount of out of state and out of district individual contributions for Franzen and Rosenthal.

Classic case of outside groups coming in to win local elections. Not illegal or even unethical - just part of the competitive landscape these days - but it's important for District 49 voters to know what the unions and DFL outside groups are doing in their "local" races.

You can check out Downey's campaign [here](#).

OBAMA THE CAPITALIST

The crony capitalist, that is.

So what's happening with those bailout ventures these days? We know Solyndra went bust, but what about that whole "saving Detroit" thing?

Obama, and by extension, every taxpayer, today holds a 26% equity stake in Government Motors.

Given today's GM share price, we are holding an unrealized (on paper) loss in the neighborhood of \$16.4 billion.

To break even, the GM share price would need to hit \$53. The current share price? \$20.21 and skidding fast.

Put another way, the GM share price is about 40% less than when the company emerged from the bailout and went public again in November of 2010.

During that time, the broader market has risen approximately 20%.

Barack Obama, your financial advisor and guru.

August 24, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Al the Clown Revisited.**
- 2. State Employees Don't Get the Free Ride.**

AL THE CLOWN REVISITED

Include the Watchdog among the groups disgusted by Rep. Todd Akin's "legitimate rape" comment.

We join other conservatives in calling on him to abandon his bid for the U.S. Senate in Missouri and step aside.

But let's also recall that our junior U.S. Senator from right here in Minnesota has had his own problems with making fun of rape and treating rape as an object of comedy.

The Weekly Standard reminds us of this not so funny moment in a long history of not so funny crap from Angry Al:

But before Franken was a senator he was a writer on the TV show *Saturday Night Live*. Then, he famously joked about raping CBS reporter Lesley Stahl.

As [New York](#) magazine reported in 1995, from a writing session that the reporter sat in on:

Franken: "And, 'I give the pills to Lesley Stahl. **Then, when Lesley's passed out, I take her to the closet and rape her.**' Or, 'That's why you never see Lesley until February.' Or, 'When she passes out, I put her in various positions and take pictures of her.'"

Funny - not.

So when will all the outraged Democrats condemn this kind of thing?

Or does the outrage only apply to situations that might rescue an imperiled incumbent Democrat against a rising Republican tide?

Kind of like when Senator Bob Packwood was run out of Washington but Bill Clinton got a free pass for sleeping with a subordinate and defiling the Oval Office?

We hope not.

A fair point to be made is that the DFL stepped forward to demand the resignation of Rep. Kerry Gauthier after he was caught emerging from the bushes behind a Duluth-area rest stop while hitching up his trousers with a 17 year-old boy in tow.

When you embarrass yourself, your family and the constituents you serve with tawdry behavior, a resignation is in order, to say the least.

STATE EMPLOYEES DON'T GET THE FREE RIDE

Next week, a little known and low-profile legislative subcommittee will very likely reject approval of Governor Dayton's proposed agreements with Minnesota's two biggest unions. Unions, by the way, that endorsed him for governor. One (AFSCME), in fact, offered a key early endorsement of Dayton when he was competing for the DFL endorsement in the primary season.

So who exactly is on the side of the bargaining table that represents the taxpayer?

In any case, this group, called the Subcommittee on Employee Relations (SER), will very likely reject the contracts. This would be a rare rejection, setting the stage for a larger fight before the entire legislature when it convenes in January.

Despite the bullying and intimidation, brave Republicans on the panel are pushing an important policy objective. Namely, putting the brakes on runaway pay and benefits.

The culprit here is a system that first allows public employees to organize in the first place. There is no need for a government union, just as FDR said there was no need for one.

Second, the current system allows these same unions to influence the election process, leading to an inherent conflict of interest for any politician who is elected with union help and then is tasked to bargain against that very same union, sometimes just weeks after working with the union to get elected.

In short, there is only side represented at the government bargaining table - the union side.

State Representatives Keith Downey, Mike Benson, and Steve Drakowski penned an [editorial](#) for the Star Tribune that frames this broken process and explains why things have to change.

Here are some of the relevant excerpts from that editorial:

Members of AFSCME and MAPE have been working for the past year and a half without a new contract. That wasn't a problem for their members. The current contract, which includes a \$43 million increase for built-in autopilot pay increases and free health insurance for state employees, remains in place until a new deal is approved.

In other words, the unions have all the leverage. They can continue working until Dayton offers them a contract even better than the ever-increasing pay and benefits they currently receive.

And that is exactly what happened. The governor agreed to a new tentative contract that provides a \$59 million increase -- \$13 million more than the previous contract. It includes a 2 percent across-the-board increase beginning in January, as well as seniority-based step increases to eligible employees.

For AFSCME, this represents a 2.75 percent increase in fiscal year 2012 and a 4.75 percent biennial increase over the base in fiscal year 2013. For MAPE, it totals a 3.5 percent increase in fiscal year 2012 and a 5.5 percent biennial increase over the base in fiscal year 2013.

And it gets worse. Along with the salary increase, the unions and Dayton also maintain what can only be described as free taxpayer-paid health insurance for their members.

Some 50,000 state employees do not pay a dime for the premium on their generous state health insurance policy.

While private-sector workers, if their employers even offer health insurance benefits, on average pay 25 percent to 50 percent of their monthly insurance premiums in addition to the usual copays and deductibles, state employees contribute nothing for their premiums.

SEGIP, the state insurance plan, forecasts a premium cost increase of 9 percent in 2013. By agreeing to this contract, Dayton has said taxpayers will entirely cover that increase rather than asking state employees to pay a share.

After a year and a half of negotiations, we expected something more from the governor's office. Having state employees pay some of their health insurance premiums like everyone else is far from unreasonable. So is asking for pay increases to be based on performance. Yet when the deal was done, all we found in the negotiation was the status quo of salary increases, seniority-based pay and continued free health insurance. This is a huge lost opportunity.

These legislators ably point out that here again, government is way out of step with the private sector.

There is no such thing as "free" healthcare in the private sector that requires an employee to pay nothing towards premiums for health care coverage.

There is no such thing as the employer picking up 100% of the increase in health insurance costs.

There is no such thing as moving up the pay and seniority ladder simply because you manage to avoid being fired for a year.

Downey, Draz, and Benson are right.

Dayton did nothing more than negotiate the status quo, with a few more million larded on top.

Then again, what did you expect? Did you endorse Dayton for governor?

REJECT THAT CONTRACT.

August 31, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Supreme Court Suplex.**
- 2. State Contracts Rejected.**

SUPREME COURT SUPLEX

Editor's Note: Think to yourself as you read this item just how important it is to elect and re-elect conservative Supreme Court justices here in Minnesota. Remember these important decisions when you go to the polls in November. Are judicial elections important? YES.

The Minnesota Supreme Court made headlines this week by clearing the way for two constitutional ballot questions to be considered by voters in November.

The ballot measures, one defining marriage in the good old fashioned way (you know, like since the beginning of recorded time) and one requiring a photo ID to vote (you know, like when you cash a check or vote in a union election).

There were two major arguments at stake regarding the questions.

First, the photo ID question alone was challenged as being misleading and confusing to voters because the title didn't precisely match the mechanics or accurately describe the outcomes articulated in the body of the proposed amendment.

Second, both questions were challenged by GOP legislators with respect to their titles. Secretary of State Mark Ritchie had changed the titles that were duly agreed upon and passed by the legislature. In short, this question was about who has the right to title the questions and didn't delve into the substance of the proposed amendments.

The groups challenging the photo ID had asked for the unprecedented relief that the court prevent the question from appearing on the ballot should they prevail. The stakes were incredibly high here.

Thankfully, the court recognized the fundamental principle of the separation of powers and adopted a standard of review that defers to the power of the legislature to determine constitutional ballot questions.

The court said it would defer to the legislature unless the amendment language was "*so unreasonable and misleading as to be a palpable evasion of the constitutional requirement to submit the law to a popular vote.*"

In other words, the court will stay out of these fights unless there is a serious problem with the language of the question.

Here's what the majority said with respect to meeting this high standard:

We acknowledge that the ballot question, as framed by the Legislature, does not use the same words used in the amendment itself nor does it list all of the potential effects of implementation of the identification system contemplated in the proposed amendment. These failures may be criticized, and it may indeed have been wiser for the Legislature to include the entire amendment on the ballot.

The proper role for the judiciary, however, is not to second-guess the wisdom of policy decisions that the constitution commits to one of the political branches. The people are the sole judge of the wisdom of such matters. The failures about which petitioners complain do not meet the "high standard" required for the judiciary to intercede into a matter that is constitutionally committed to the legislative branch.

Conservatives believe the core principle underpinning the legitimacy of the Judicial Branch is judicial restraint, meaning that courts must limit themselves to interpreting the law and not making law. Courts should not sit as a super-legislature, rewriting or vetoing legislation that meets constitutional muster.

That is precisely what happened here and the Minnesota Supreme Court is to be commended for it.

The second case at stake here concerned the constitutional power to write constitutional ballot titles.

Readers will recall that the Secretary of State changed the ballot titles from the ones passed by the legislature.

This issue was important not only because of separation of powers issue. It was also critical because political scientists will tell you that the titles affect voter behavior.

Framed one way, the question will lead to more "no" votes. Framed another way, it will lead to more "yes" votes.

Secretary Ritchie was an acknowledged opponent of the ballot questions and thus it was clear that his ballot title changes were designed to encourage more negative votes in hopes of defeating the questions.

So much for the chief election officer of the state representing ALL Minnesota voters.

While human beings crave bright line and definitive solutions, the law often times doesn't comply.

Such was the case here.

Some fellow conservatives have declared that we won a big case here, which isn't necessarily true.

It is true that the titles chosen by the legislature are the ones that will appear on the ballot and in that sense, a big win was scored.

But these people are wrong to conclude that the Court committed the titling of ballot questions solely to the legislature. The decision wasn't that clear cut.

The Court essentially punted on the question of who has exclusive authority, if any, to title the questions.

Instead, the court decided that IF the legislature provides a title to a ballot question, it is important that the legislature's titling not be trumped by the Secretary of State.

Why? Because the legislature is the branch of government that has authority over the language of the amendment and the subsequent enabling legislation, not the Secretary of State.

In other words, the legislature has control over the vast majority of constitutional ballot issues and the Secretary of State cannot ride roughshod over the titling process if the legislature has seen fit to provide its own title.

And what if no title is provided? Can the Secretary provide one? That's an open question.

The bottom line is that these questions will appear with the titles the legislature desired, and that's a big victory for conservatives, both for the passage of the amendments (we acknowledge that some conservatives do not support the marriage amendment) and for the concept that the legislature should be paid deference because it is the branch most accountable to the citizens.

STATE CONTRACTS REJECTED

It was a good, good week for Watchdogs. In addition to the wins described above, a joint subcommittee of the legislature made history this week by rejecting approval of a state employee union contract that did nothing to introduce accountability to state government or do anything meaningful regarding costs, especially health care costs.

The Subcommittee on Employee Relations (SER) rejected approval on a party-line 6-4 vote.

(Editor's Note: these union members will continue to operate under the old contract. The rejected contract will be up for consideration by the full legislature in January, where it can be approved or rejected.)

Contact the "GOP 6" (Benson, Parry, Daley, Drazkowski, Downey, Benson) and thank them for their courageous vote [here](#).

Legislators like Rep. Keith Downey and Rep. Steve Drazkowski have described many of the problems inherent in the contracts, such as 50,000 unionized state employees paying no premiums for health insurance.

The Watchdog on many occasions has described the overly-generous deal state employees get on the backs of the taxpayer.

Here's what the Watchdog wrote in December of 2011 about the vacation and sick leave benefits enjoyed by unionized state employees:

Let's take a look at a janitor at a local public community college. The janitor, the kind of downtrodden Workin' Man lionized by the Left, is represented by the AFSCME public employee union.

Here's what the contract says about holidays, vacation, and sick leave for a janitor with seniority:

Holidays:

- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day

Vacation: 234 hours (29.25 days) of vacation each year.

Sick leave: 104 hours (13 days) of sick leave each year.

That's 418 hours (52.25 days) of paid time off each year. **That's about 20% of a normal work year!**

The Watchdog is unaware of any private sector company that offers this kind of paid time off.

The Watchdog is also unaware of any private sector company that offers unused sick and vacation payouts.

September 7, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. More Anti-American Screed.**
- 2. Speaking of Fat Cats.**
- 3. Photo ID Hypocrisy.**
- 4. The Purple Taxpayer Plunder.**
- 5. More Bad Numbers.**

MORE ANTI-AMERICAN SCREED

Here they go again. Just when Democrats thought they had put the "you didn't build that" problem behind them, along comes Massachusetts Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren to remind voters that her party isn't doing such a good job hiding their traditional American values hating ways.

Warren, who [masquerades](#) as an American Indian when she isn't busy masquerading as a patriotic citizen, had the audacity to claim in a speech before the Democratic National Convention that America is a "rigged" country.

Here's the quote:

"People feel like the system is rigged against them. And here's the painful part: They're right. The system is rigged."

The Watchdog is surprised this screed hasn't received the scrutiny the president's similar slip of the America-hating tongue got.

Think about it.

A leader of the Democrat party believes that America isn't a land of opportunity. She believes that America acts as a barrier to success and achievement. She believes this country oppresses its citizens and actively prevents them from upward mobility.

In other words, she believes that America is fundamentally a bad country.

Any country that would rig the system is, by its very nature, one that is unjust, unfair and thus a bad, bad country.

So let's update the tote sheet for Democrats this summer. Free enterprise? Bad. Our whole system? Bad. That about sums it up.

Democrats have really started to get desperate in their quest to justify the massive power of the federal government.

Because, of course, the remedy to all this rigged system stuff is a massive and powerful federal government that will unrig the system and dispense copious quantities of egalitarianism and equality while kicking tail on all those greedy Wall Street types (suspend disbelief here and forget about all the Obama Wall Street bailouts and all the campaign contributions from the [Masters of the Universe](#)).

So let's continue to suspend disbelief for a moment longer and suppose that the system is rigged against us all.

How will the federal government level the playing field?

The way we see it, the federal government is really the prime mover in rigging the system.

How else to explain Solyndra, where an Obama money man got our tax dollars and dumped them down a rat hole?

How else to explain the bailouts of "too big to fail" dinosaurs like AIG?

How else to explain the bailout of GM and the UAW while ripping off GM bond holders, who had a legal contract regarding their investments?

And how else to explain the 1,372 Obamacare waivers, many of them granted to [labor unions](#) that endorsed and supported this president.

And you say society is rigged, Ms. Warren. We suggest you head to the mirror and invite the president to stand next to you the next time you point a finger and yell, "rigged!"

SPEAKING OF FAT CATS

No, we're not speaking of Wall Street Masters of the Universe or even the president's big buck friends like George Soros.

We're talking about the executives at Education Minnesota, the teachers' union.

We publish these salaries because every public school teacher is obligated, against their will, to pay union dues to the union.

Moreover, these dollars are tax dollars, paid by every citizen.

Our good friends over at the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota uncovered the [documents](#) highlighting the oh-so-generous salaries at the union.

We'll not publish the names of the employees involved, but some 49 of them made over \$100,000 in salary in 2011.

Wanna bet that many of those 49 were in Charlotte this week to cheer for those who claim our society is rigged?

Ugh. Are these folks part of the system that's rigged against us?

In this case, Elizabeth Warren may have a case.

Oh, our downtrodden public schools and their courageous advocates.

PHOTO ID HYPOCRISY

Just days after winning a huge victory at the state Supreme Court regarding the photo ID constitutional amendment, we learned this week that photo ID was required at the Democratic National Convention.

So we need a photo ID to vote in union elections, a photo ID to attend an Obama campaign rally, and now a photo ID to enter the DNC.

But not a photo ID to vote.

Rigged!!!!

Suppression!!!

Here's what the convention rules stated:

Please complete the following form regarding your organization's primary contact information and the authorized designee(s) to whom your 2012 Democratic National Convention credentials can be issued.

Authorized Pickup

All pickup persons must have a state-issued ID that matches the name submitted below.

THE PURPLE TAXPAYER PLUNDER

Well, this is one way for government to stimulate the economic fortunes of the citizens. Well, at least one citizen. Well, maybe not a Minnesota citizen but at least a U.S. citizen.

Forbes magazine just released its [annual valuation](#) of NFL franchises, including Zygmunt Wilf and merry band of purple felons.

And wouldn't you know it? Zyg's Big Purple Asset is now worth a cool \$975 million.

The best part (for Zygi) is that the \$975 million figure represents a whopping 22% increase from the team's 2011 value.

(Just for historical reference, Zyg paid a mere \$600 million for the team way back in the Dark Ages of 2005).

The 22% jump in value represents the largest increase of any NFL team.

How did that happen? Perhaps the commitment of a taxpayer-financed stadium had something to do with it? You know it.

And what of other NFL franchises?

Chumps like the defending Super Bowl champs only saw a 13% increase.

And those cheese heads across the river? They may have Aaron Rodgers but they only saw a 7% increase in value.

And how about those division rivals in Detroit? The Lions suck on the field and they suck on the balance sheet. Only a measly 1% increase in value. 1%???? That's the kind of return on investment regular people get! You know, the kind of people who will fund the new stadium.

Invest in the stock market? Nope. Invest in precious metals? Nope. Hold up the taxpayers and demand their money? YOU BET.

MORE BAD NUMBERS

So you thought it was depressing news that Obama had pushed the national debt past \$16 TRILLION this week?

How about the Wall Street Journal's analysis of entitlement spending in America?

According to the WSJ, federal entitlement spending has grown a whopping 727% over the past 50 years, even after accounting for inflation and population growth.

In 2010, federal government outlays for entitlements exceeded \$2 trillion dollars.

During the Reagan administration, about 30% of American households contained at least one person receiving an entitlement.

Under Obama, it's 50%.

These entitlements undermine our national character, diminishing the value of hard work and the critical notion of self-reliance.

Is it November yet?

September 14, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

The "Government is Still Out of Control" Edition.

- 1. Not Enough Taxes, Says Governor.**
- 2. Speaking of "Infrastructure."**
- 3. Where Did the Money Go?**

NOT ENOUGH TAXES, SAYS GOVERNOR.

There he goes again, again. Governor Dayton, sporting a not-so-awesome 48% approval rating emerged from his broom closet this week to head over to the University of Minnesota to wow us all with his innovative, visionary prescription for Minnesota.

According to the governor, we can move Minnesota forward by raising taxes and spending money through government on public works projects, presumably things like sports stadia.

Echoing other political troglodytes from yesteryear like California Governor Jerry Brown, Dayton offered the stale, tired, yet-always-terrifying observation that, "This unwillingness to pay taxes ... it's going to be the death of this country, if it is not corrected."

No, really. He said it. No, we're not joking.

Not true, governor. We are willing to pay taxes. We're not anarchists here.

We are, however, unwilling to pay more and more and more and more taxes to get the same old bloated, unresponsive government, especially when half of Americans don't even pay income taxes.

Of course, it's not about taxes. It's about government spending, which will indeed be the death of the country.

Governor Dayton's ally in the White House has spent us to \$16 trillion in debt, a mountain our great-great-great grandchildren won't be able to take down.

So where are getting \$16 trillion in new taxes, governor? There isn't that kind of wealth available to tax, pal.

And, for the record, more government spending won't get us out of the hole.

Anyone who pays any attention at all to this publication knows all too well that what we need is more wealth. And wealth is only created in the private economy, not the public. No amount of new government, no amount of new bike trails or sidewalks will get the job done.

It's all about the private economy and it assuredly isn't about government.

And this guy is our governor.

SPEAKING OF "INFRASTRUCTURE."

How ironic that the same week that the governor is touting government capital project spending as a tonic for the economy, we see the "finalists" for a \$47 million spending bonanza that comes with no strings attached, at least from the legislature.

Recall that last legislative session, the legislature passed a bonding bill that contained the novel and dangerous idea that a tranche of money would be turned over to the Dayton administration to spend as they saw fit, with no legislative approval or oversight.

This week, the Dayton administration released a ranking of the 90 odd applications, totaling \$288 million in requested funding.

And guess which project topped the list? A bridge? A wastewater treatment facility? A highway upgrade?

No, no, and no.

Instead, the project deemed most worthy of public money is a new stadium in Saint Paul for the Saints baseball team.

What a total joke.

First, didn't we just build a baseball stadium? And a football stadium?

Second, is this really a proper function of government?

Third, the Saints are nothing more than a Podunk semi-pro team, one cut above your beer league softball team.

They aren't even minor league. They aren't affiliated with any major league team.

You're better off walking down to the local high school to watch some baseball.

Again, we're not joking. This really happened. The same week the governor put his foot in his mouth regarding our unwillingness to fork over more money so government can

have more while our families get less, he sticks the other foot in his behind over a slush fund baseball stadium.'

Really, who are the 48% of Minnesotans who think this is good government?

Remember when liberals actually cared about government spending correctly? Yes, they wanted lots of it, but it was to alleviate poverty, to lift people up. It wasn't about Solyndra or the Minnesota Vikings back then. Instead, it was about Baby Boomers acting like self-righteous snots, rebelling against the wealth their parents worked to create in the aftermath of the Great Depression and World War II. It was about using government to expropriate this wealth for noble Great Society programs that, while ineffective, at least weren't pools of graft for buddies of which ever regime was in power.

You've fallen a long way, baby.

WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

So where did the money go? That's essentially the question asked by a recent guest columnist in the Star Tribune who lamented the crumbling waste water and sewer infrastructure in the state.

Ironically, the writer belongs to Minnesota 20/20 a liberal think tank that falls into the category of folks mentioned above. Namely, people who used to howl when government blew money on stuff that didn't promote the common good.

Government spending, even bonding money, should be spent on waste water infrastructure.

And without doing a lick of research, the Watchdog can rattle off billions of government bonding monies wasted on pork projects instead of sewers:

- Northstar commuter rail;
- Central Corridor light rail;
- Target Field;
- The Vikings stadium;
- A gorilla exhibit at the Como Zoo;
- The Ordway;
- Target Center;
- Interpretive centers.

For the billions wasted here, the state could have replaced every sewer in the state and bought every citizen a gold-plated crapper to boot.

Remember in November!

September 21, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. A New Media Low.**
- 2. When You Lie With Dogs.**

A NEW MEDIA LOW

Yes, it's not news that the mainstream media is biased. But the lengths to which the media has gone to mute coverage of the many, many failings of the Obama administration is a new low and as low as the media can get. Just when you thought these guys were in the gutter of media integrity, they got out the jackhammer, blasted through the concrete curbing and crawled into the subsurface muck.

What have you been hearing lately about the following issues (compare to the constant drumbeat on some of these issues when there was a Republican occupying the White House):

UNEMPLOYMENT

We live with such a bad economy that the unemployment number has become meaningless. Instead, we are all becoming familiar with terms like "workforce participation." This is because unemployment numbers only count people who are actively seeking employment. Those who quit looking out of frustration and despair are dropped from the count. That's why the unemployment numbers look much better than the reality. Thus, economists, but not the media, have started looking at the percentage of adults participating in the workforce, which is a way of counting those who have dropped out.

The most recent federal report revealed the sobering news that the workforce participation rate has fallen to 63.5%, the lowest level since 1981. Obama is such a failure on the jobs front that he has rendered the unemployment rate moot.

But this is consistent with his European Social Democrat world view. Europe's demographics and workforce make up consists, in part, of persistent high unemployment and a permanent underclass that depends solely on government for a living. These are people who don't work and aren't expected to work. It's a culture of dependency that liberals love because it empowers government and it's a culture the underclass likes because it relieves them of the burden and responsibility of working for a living.

Of course, the effects of such a culture change are corrosive from a moral and economic perspective.

It's not hyperbole to say that our economic future under Obama looks very much like Britain, France, or Spain.

GAS PRICES

When gas prices spiked during the presidency of George W. Bush, the media couldn't get enough of the "man on the street" stories of ticked off motorists venting at the pump over high gas prices and the insinuation that somehow Bush was conspiring with Big Oil to bilk Joe Public. Remember all those news stories about how lower gas prices by properly inflating your tires? We even had Congressional hearings on the subject. High gas prices were killing the economy and choking the economic prospects of hard working Americans.

Today? nary a peep as gas prices near \$4 per gallon. Where are the news stories?

And here are the facts regarding the increase in gas prices under recent presidents over the course of their administration:

Jimmy Carter: 103.77%
Ronald Reagan: -66%. Yes, MINUS 66%
George Bush: 20%
Bill Clinton: 30%
George W. Bush: 20%
Barack Obama: **103.79%**

Source: Lauren Fox, for U.S. News and World Report

That's right, Obama has the distinction of being the president who has seen gas prices rise the most on his watch. Also, compare the increase to that of George W. Bush, the object of so much media criticism for gas price increases.

Yet one more data point where the failed presidencies of Obama and Carter intersect.

CODE PINK

So where is Code Pink and all the groups protesting our military actions overseas? Where is the constant drumbeat of photos of flag-draped caskets arriving at Dover Air Force Base?

This item isn't intended to explore the wisdom of these military actions but to make the point that the media has treated Obama far different than Bush on this subject.

The wars were a central campaign issue in both 2004 and 2006. But now, war casualties appear to be a non-factor for the media.

LIBYA

The title of this section could also be "Arab Spring." An American diplomat is murdered in a well-coordinated military assault on the American Consulate in Libya and the Obama administration seems utterly befuddled by the tactics and motivations of the terrorists as well as our underwhelming response. Yet, the media seems content to slow play this issue and focus on crap like Obama's appearance on Letterman or the president's alleged basketball prowess.

More importantly, the media gave the administration a pass on our support of the "Arab Spring," despite the fact that many foreign policy experts were ringing alarm bells over the infiltration and influence of terrorist groups filling the power vacuum across the Middle East.

Facts, apparently, would have mucked up the narrative that Obama had honored his promise to restore America's standing in the Arab World while supporting the blooming of democracy in the desert sands of lands far away and of little value beyond our interest in their oil (ahem, domestic production Mr. President!).

LAWBREAKERS

Have you even heard that HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius broke the law, violating the federal Hatch Act?

The Office of Special Counsel determined that Sebelius broke the law when she campaigned for Obama's re-election while on a taxpayer-funded trip to tout ObamaCare (a liberal twofer at your expense).

Have you seen any media coverage of this episode? Any acknowledgement whatsoever?

And how about Operation Fast and Furious, the patently stupid law enforcement program that allowed illegal guns to move freely on the naive theory that it would allow law enforcement to track the bad guys. Instead, many of these guns ended up at crime scenes in the U.S. and Mexico, including the death of a U.S. federal agent.

An internal investigation essentially found that it was a screwed up operation marked by management failures and errors in judgment.

Heard about this one lately? Any editorials?

Hey, we get that the media hates conservatives and supports the liberals. We just thought they would be smart enough to at least put on the appearance of objectivity.

We guess that's out the window when the ideal liberal president exposes himself as a total, utter failure.

WHEN YOU LIE WITH DOGS

Ben Franklin noted many, many years ago that "He who lies with dogs awakes with fleas."

Somehow, we think that "dogs" and "fleas" were really a metaphor for another activity in the realm of human relationships but that's not the point.

The point is that you should be careful of the relationships you make because they could come back to haunt you.

Such is the case with General Motors, which received a massive taxpayer bailout and has led our failed president to claim that he "saved" General Motors.

The leadership of GM is discovering what it means when you take on Barack Obama as a business partner. When you lie down with Barack in a business sense, you awake with fleas, in a business sense.

The Wall Street Journal reported this week that Government Motors has attempted to persuade Barack to sell his 26% stake in GM and return the troubled car maker to complete private ownership.

You see, GM leadership has come to the realization that bedding down with Obama has given GM a reputation and stigma. "Government Motors" is an image problem that Ford and others have exposed.

Moreover, GM is having trouble recruiting executives because of pay and fringe benefit restrictions that come along with having Barack and Co. as business partners.

What's worse for GM, they are coming to the belated realization that the government isn't a rational business partner in the sense that the government doesn't have the traditional incentives or disincentives to act in a particular way.

For the government, business decisions regarding GM are viewed through the lens of politics and not profit.

From the start, the GM investment for Barack was a political and not a financial proposition.

What this means for GM is that Barack ain't selling his stake anytime soon, regardless of how that decision may harm GM's reputation and ability to recruit, which has a negative impact on the bottom line.:

With GM share prices way below what's needed for the taxpayers to break even, any sale would mean a loss of billions to the taxpayer, something that would undermine Barack's political claim that he "saved" the auto industry.

You laid down with the government GM, and you get what you deserve.

The Watchdog has no sympathy whatsoever for GM.

In fact, we hope the company suffers just a bit more to serve as a warning to other crony capitalist companies out there who hope to make a buck simply by being pals with those in power and not by providing a product or service the market place desires.

Simply put, we say to GM, "suck on that."

You deserve it.

September 28, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Hey, Watchdogs. Have you received your free [Obama Phone?](#) Check it out.

- 1. How Much Did You Give?**
- 2. Re-Arranging the Deck Chairs.**
- 3. Why the Polls are BS.**

HOW MUCH DID YOU GIVE?

The Watchdog has many liberal friends among our readership. We're proud to have their critical eyes (and email!) acknowledge the Watchdog as the premier voice of conservative Minnesota.

So we have a question for our liberal readership.

How much did you give to charity last year? How about the year before?

We say this because the man you love to hate, Mitt Romney, gave \$7 million to charity over the past two years.

And we know you hate it.

You hate it because charity of this magnitude destroys multiple liberal narratives.

First, it refutes the allegation that wealthy Republicans, especially this Republican, are greedy, heartless bastards who only care about themselves.

Second, it refutes the narrative that capitalism is a greedy, heartless, economic system that coldly and dispassionately rewards the elite and casts away the others.

In fact, true capitalism is the most compassionate and humane economic system ever devised. In short, it allocates resources via a voluntary system of exchange that is color-blind, egalitarian, merit-based, and free from governmental influence peddling (crony capitalism and other mutated variations of laissez faire capitalism don't count).

A healthy and vibrant capitalist society produces wealth that is in turn shared with the less fortunate and those organizations that help them.

Even government cannot spend without first expropriating wealth first produced by a private economy.

Want a contrary example? How is the fiscal health of North Korean government and the non-profit sector?

The correlation between economic freedom and societal wealth is strong and undeniable.

In fact, economic freedom compliments and mutually supports individual freedom.

The two are intertwined and track together.

If there is little economic freedom, rest assured this is little individual freedom.

This undercuts the liberal belief in government "charity," which is really just an immoral redistribution of wealth to favored special interest groups at the point of a gun.

It is little more than a tyrannical exercise in taking the property of others for purposes with which they may strongly disagree.

True charity is voluntary and delivered at the choosing of the donor.

What government practices is nothing of the kind.

Finally, "government" charity undermines the meaning of community, where neighbors band together to help each other through non-governmental institutions like churches.

Instead, helping your neighbor becomes a bureaucratic exercise in which forms are filled out in triplicate and processed by faceless government workers who become an industry in and of themselves, making a living as the middle man between wealth producers and the dependent class.

No longer do neighbors share their good fortune with other less fortunate neighbors.

Now, it's a matter of government expropriating wealth and sharing the loot with special interests who now have a vested interest in keeping their constituency dependent upon the both the special interest and the government that bestows the benefit.

Mitt gave \$7 million of his own free will.

Mitt did that. Capitalism did that.

How much did you give?

RE-ARRANGING THE DECK CHAIRS

Our friends over the [Freedom Foundation of Minnesota](#) (FFM) continue to do great work on behalf of Minnesota taxpayers.

FFM has been a great tag-team partner in exposing the fraud that is Northstar commuter rail.

Many politicians here in Anoka County are running away from Northstar like it's the plague.

No wonder. It's a project that has already proven to be an utter failure and waste of taxpayer dollars.

County Commissioner Dan Erhart seems to be the only politician who is either brave enough or stupid enough to continue to claim paternity of this [ugly baby](#).

Northstar rail isn't really a train. It's more like an ocean liner. It's a fiscal Titanic, to be precise.

The latest chapter in re-arranging the deck chairs on the Northstar/Titanic is a fare cut, resulting in an even higher taxpayer subsidy.

Pop quiz: Has the fare cut resulted in higher ridership?

If you guessed "no," you would be winner.

Here's what FFM had to say about moving the deck chairs:

Metro Transit figures obtained by the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota (FFM) for the first month of the experimental fares indicate that monthly Northstar ridership plunged by more than eight percent , some 12,300 passengers. Northstar train ridership in August 2012 totaled 66,543 passengers compared to 78,898 passengers in August 2011. In both 2010 and 2011, ridership on the commuter line increased from month to month July to August. The August 2012 decline was registered across the board at all Northstar stations with the greatest falloff at the station at the end of the 40 mile line, Big Lake.

That's correct. Ridership went the other way.

Right now, taxpayers foot the bill for 80% of each Northstar ride.

Northstar rail has failed to deliver on every promise the politicians made when they foisted this \$317 million boondoggle on us.

Let this white elephant be a warning to all legislative candidates who are being sold on other rail projects.

You'll all sorts of promises regarding the jobs, economic development, and other benefits rail can deliver.

Once built, these same charlatans will spend years making pre-packaged excuses for those failed promises.

Oh, the economy went south.

Oh, gas prices went down.

Oh, the line isn't long enough.

Oh, riders don't like the fare structure.

Oh, riders want more trains.

Oh, give it time. It's a long-term deal.

Watch Northstar, folks.

It's the canary in the coal mine.

WHY THE POLLS ARE BS

Yes, we've all seen the polls out there talking about how Romney is tanking and the public loves Barack, he of the slow economy and \$4 gasoline.

There are many reasons why these polls are BS, and just the product of a true conspiracy concocted by a biased media intent on re-electing the worst president of the last century. Yes, the last century.

One of the primary ways in which the media is skewing the polls in order to depress Republican enthusiasm is to assume utterly unrealistic turnout models, especially among Democrat voters.

Did you know that many of these biased polls showing Obama in the lead presume record-breaking Democrat turnout, even higher than in 2008 and far, far higher than in 2004.

Here's what we're talking about, courtesy of a [Breitbart](#) analysis:

Florida:

In 2004 the vote was R+4.

In 2008 the vote was D+3

CBS/NYTs is reporting that in 2012 we will see D+9.

Ohio:

In 2004 the vote was R+5

In 2008 the vote was D+8
CBS/NYTs is reporting that in 2012 we will see D+9

Pennsylvania:

In 2010 the vote was D+3
In 2008 the vote was D+7
CBS/NYTs is reporting that in 2012 we will see D+9.

This is why you're seeing a president with approval numbers below 50% winning in the polls.

Do you really believe the mainstream media?

October 5, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "The president doesn't pick winners and losers. He just picks the losers."

- Mitt Romney

- 1. Three Reasons Mitt Won.**
- 2. Capital is on Strike.**
- 3. Bandemonium.**
- 4. Rail Mania.**

THREE REASONS MITT WON

Holy smokes, what a debate. More than 70 million citizens tuned in, the most since Reagan and Carter debated in 1980.

And they saw a heck of a performance.

From one guy, at least.

Here are three reasons why Romney won, in the humble opinion of the Minnesota Watchdog.

First, Romney isn't a strong conservative. While this fact gives heartburn to some Republicans, it's a point of strength against Obama and an attractive quality for independents, who tend to eschew ideologues.

It was hard for Obama to attack Romney as a hard right conservative and it clearly frustrated the president.

Romney was able to portray his chief executive tenure in Massachusetts as one of compromise and common ground, with the vast majority of the legislature in Democrat hands at that time.

That is contrasted with the president's inability to find common ground in Washington, which is not only the president's job, it is also clearly Obama's fault.

It is documented fact that the president has done little to foster cooperation with Republicans.

Moreover, the president looks small and petty when he whines that Republicans won't work with him.

Americans expect the chief executive to be the uniter. They expect him to be the adult in the room. They expect him to be the one to get things done.

Obama thought he could get away with blaming the Congress but he'll find out that he's the one who will be held accountable for gridlock.

Overall, on this issue, Romney looked the statesman, the finder of solutions.

Obama looked like a petulant whiner mired in self-pity and adolescent angst over the inability of Congress to just shut up and do what they're told.

This will show up in a boost for Romney among independents, who especially prize the ability to find common ground and move away from rigid positions.

Second, and related to the first, Obama is simply arrogant, smug, self-righteous, and surly.

He's the guy who said his election would change the course of ocean tides and global climate.

He's said of himself that he's "got game."

He walked into the debate with the same attitude he's had regarding his presidency.

In short, people just need to relate to BHO's genius and all will be cool.

After three plus years of living in the Washington bubble where the assembled yes men have been telling the president how great his policies are working, he was unprepared to get hit between the eyes with the facts.

Finally, the president is boxed in by his claim to be the agent of hope and change now that he has proven otherwise.

In other words, the president pawned himself off in 2008 as the first post-partisan president, the one who would truly unite the country in a way no other human being ever could.

Attacking Romney will undermine this narrative which, once again, is an especially big turnoff to independents.

Every time Obama gets in the gutter on Romney, the liberals will cheer but the independents will be turned off.

He's boxed in.

The liberals are now demanding that Obama goon it up in the next debate to slake their thirst for political blood (they're so tolerant, aren't they?).

To shore up his base, we predict he will oblige.

Then watch the independents move more towards Romney.

CAPITAL IS ON STRIKE

Speaking of our failed president, his latest round of printing money, known as quantitative easing, won't work and here's why.

Quantitative easing, flooding markets with liquidity, is designed to make credit available and lubricate the credit markets, so to speak.

The downside is that this policy drives down the value of the dollar, makes for devastating inflation down the road, and crushes the rate of return on many investments, including those relied upon by retirees.

But here's the problem. Businesses aren't investing or hiring more people because of a lack of access to credit. Credit markets aren't the problem.

Many, many corporations have very healthy balance sheets right now. In other words, they're flush with cash.

Giving them access to more of it at low rates isn't the problem.

The real problem is that capital is on strike.

Job creators are sitting on money because the president has created too much uncertainty.

Job creators despise uncertainty.

Capital investments and hiring decisions are made for the long-term.

No company wants to invest millions in new capital equipment if Obama is going to foist some new expense on the company in the next term.

Want some examples? How about Obamacare? Most of the regulations are still being formulated by the unaccountable, unelected federal Department of Health and Human Services.

How about energy policy? Will energy be more expensive because coal will be virtually banned?

How about tax policy? The president wants to increase individual income tax brackets.

The vast majority of job creators are "pass through" companies that pay income taxes through the individual structure and not the corporate tax structure.

Raise individual rates and you raise rates on most small businesses.

Until there is clarity and hopefully relief, job creators will stay on strike while Obama floods the world with dollars.

At some point, that money will need to be wrung out of the economy.

That is done with high interest rates. Remember 1980?

BANDEMONIUM

This is one of the dumbest [ideas](#) we've seen come down the pike in some time.

And leave to Edina to be the location of this tomfoolery.

Some group of chowderheads called "Take Back the Air" is asking the city to ban outdoor fires because it presents a "barrier" to people with asthma.

We're still trying to decide if this is really a joke.

Would any person really expose themselves as that much of a candy a** and thus heaps of deserved public ridicule?

No, they're [real](#).

In fact, the group wants to move beyond just wood smoke and ban fragrances as well.

Too much perfume? Just have government take care of it.

Julie Mellum, chief sissy of the group, claims that smoke from fires doesn't allow her to enjoy the rarified air at the local polo club, so the city should ban campfires for everyone else.

This crap is a classic symptom of both our victim-centered society and a radical environmentalism.

Julie, go crawl back under your Mercedes. Smoke rises.

Thankfully, the city has no plans to infringe our God-given right to sit around the fire on a crisp fall evening.

Watch for these clowns to stay active and watch for Minneapolis to be the first city to lend credence to this "ban" demonium.

RAIL MANIA

Hey, before you folks down in the Southwest Metro jump on the rail bandwagon, be aware of all the problems confronting Northstar rail.

It seems that all the promises made have yet to materialize.

Now, the folks who rammed Northstar down the taxpayer throat are claiming that it will be decades before we know if the promises will materialize. If the jobs and economic development will happen.

Until that time, we all will be paying off the capital bonds and providing fat operating subsidies for this white elephant.

You good Republicans down that way need to beware the glad tidings of rail advocates who promise jobs and economic development that will follow rail.

Just take a look at Anoka County.

October 12, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note:

The Watchdog pauses this week to note the passing of KJ McDonald, a true public servant who passed away recently.

His public service credentials included time in the Air Force, seven terms in the Minnesota House, and multiple terms as the mayor of Watertown.

May he rest in peace.

Editor's Note:

All we have to say about the vice presidential debate was written a long, long time ago: "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet." - Proverbs 29:9

Editor's Factoid:

Last year, Mitt Romney gave over \$4 million charity. Joe Biden gave \$5,540, just 1.5% of his income. Biden proves the axiom that liberals are quite generous - with someone else's money.

Quote of the Week:

"I've created about 250,000 direct and indirect jobs according to the state of Nevada's measurement. If the number is 250,000, that's exactly 250,000 more than this president, who I'll be damned if I want to have him lecture me about small business and jobs. I'm a job creator. Guys like me are job creators and we don't like having a bulls-eye painted on our back."

"The president is trying to put himself between me and my employees. By class warfare, by deprecating and calling a group that makes money 'billionaires and millionaires who don't pay their share.' I gave 120% of my salary and bonus away last year to charities, as I do most years. I can't stand the idea of being demagogued, that is put down by a president who has never created any jobs and who doesn't even understand how the economy works."

- Steve Wynn, Las Vegas-based job creator (gaming and resorts)

- 1. They're all Moderate in October.**
- 2. Who's Telling the Lies?**
- 3. Check Her Out!**

THEY'RE ALL MODERATE IN OCTOBER

That's what every DFLer outside of the urban core and the Iron Range is these days.

It's utterly amazing to hear them at the local candidate forum or the on the stump.

They all claim they're moderate and give just a small "kissin' your sister" smooch to the DFL agenda.

Photo ID? Well, they like photo ID, just not the one the Republicans like. What version do they like? The one that they'll research later on, once the election is over.

How about taxes? Do they support Governor Dayton's call for a job-killing tax on small business income via a fourth tier to the income tax system?

Well, they just can't say (won't say, rather). You know, we just can't take any options off the table, but we have to leave all the options open, they say.

How about the Marriage Amendment? Again, it's so gosh darn tough. They like traditional marriage and all, but there must be some way to weasel out of it all. Can we talk about something else?

And, of course, jobs. They're all about jobs and the economy but they don't have a single specific idea to create private-sector jobs, other than massive borrowing bills, more "stimulus."

Any thought to cutting taxes and regulations, the proven way to grow the private economy?

Uh, we need to research that. Have to have every option available. Did we mention we're moderate?

Take the recent debate in Senate District 49 (Edina/Bloomington) between Republican Keith Downey and Democrat Melissa Franzen.

Here's Downey's charge against Franzen:

"What I'm not hearing from my opponent, frankly, are concrete answers to whether or not she would support tax increases, the tax increases that Gov. [Mark] Dayton has proposed."

Franzen's response:

"We need to be open minded as to what solutions we need to deal with our budget and revenue issues. I think taxes should be only a last resort. Let's see what we're doing with our current taxes and current revenue coming in."

How utterly disingenuous and how very typical of a suburban DFLer.

Know this.

All of them who are elected will get to Saint Paul and will be anything but moderate.

They will vote for a host of tax increases, they will increase red tape regulations, they will be enemies of capitalism and wealth creation.

Know it.

If the DFL manages to wrest control of the House and Senate, they will team with Governor Dayton to create an agenda hostile and lethal to economic recovery.

This is a crew that honestly believes taxes don't impact jobs and wealth creation.

Many of this crew are outright hostile to capitalism and job creators.

The Watchdog has heard all the "moderate in October" promises, year after year.

They're all moderate in October.

Andy they're all hardcore liberals in January.

Know it.

WHO'S TELLING THE LIES?

Now that the president has proven to every American beyond a reasonable doubt that he has no ideas, no agenda, and no clue, his campaign has shifted from making the election a referendum on Romney to one of outright character assassination on Romney.

Exhibit "A" is the histrionic, mouth-breathing allegation that Mitt lied and distorted the truth throughout the butt kicking he laid on the president in the first debate.

(Hey, is a kicked ass covered under Obamacare?)

That line of gutter politics got us to thinking, who has told the following lies:

I oppose the individual mandate.

I will close Guantanamo Bay.

I will restore America's standing in the world.

I will cut the deficit in half because running up the debt is immoral.

I will reduce the unemployment rate below 8%.

I saved the auto industry.

I will cut taxes on the middle class.

I will have the most transparent administration in modern history.

I will not hire lobbyists to work in my administration.

Nationalizing health care will reduce premiums.

Nationalized health care will allow you to keep your health plan.

So who's the big, fat liar here?

CHECK HER OUT!

The Watchdog is throwing a state-wide plug in this week for Stacey Stout, candidate for House District 43A.

It's a DFL-leaning district that includes the stronghold of Maplewood, but it's certainly winnable and Stout is a grade "A" candidate.

She's got the right stuff and has been working incredibly hard to win votes.

Perhaps the ace in the hole is her opposition to what Maplewood did in taking away people's freedom to choose their trash hauler and moving to a government-run garbage scheme.

Democrats in Maplewood are angry as heck that government stuck their nose in everyone's trash when the city has so many other problems.

And while it's a city issue, Stout's opponent is a big supporter of the government-managed scheme and is thus on the wrong side of this issue.

And voters in Maplewood are taking notice.

In fact, other Democrats in the city, including councilmember Marv Koppen, are opposed to the scheme.

Stacey Stout has a lot going for her.

Don't at all be surprised to see her in the winner's circle on election night.

It doesn't matter if you don't live in the district. If she wins, she'll be there fighting for policies that will accrue to your benefit as well.

Check her [out](#)!

October 19, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. The DFL's Augean Stables.**
- 2. Big Government Comes to Maplewood - With Typical Results.**

THE DFL'S AUGEAN STABLES

Ugh, it's that time of year. The time of year when the normal level of BS emanating from DFL quarters reaches extreme levels. Kind of like a 1,000 head of cattle drinking from a fountain of laxatives.

So leave it to the Watchdog to pull on the hip boots, grab a shovel, and attempt to dig us all out from under a mountain of BS.

It's especially galling to see the level of crap thrown at honorable and talented public servants like state Senator Benjamin Kruse, who has obviously been targeted by Alida Messinger's millions and the resulting screed disseminated by her minions.

And while we can't quite replicate Hercules' feat of clearing the Augean Stables, we can use the garden hose of truth to wash away some of the political feces thrown about by our bovine-like friends on the other side.

Let's take property taxes, an especially large and attractive cow pie DFLers love to hurl about this time of year.

At the start, let's be very, very clear. Property taxes (with a couple of minor exceptions) are LOCAL taxes. Local units of government control these taxes.

Since property taxes were invented, local elected officials have attempted to blame the state for these taxes, but it isn't true.

Take a look at Anoka County, where Board Chair Rhonda Sivarajah has led the board to cut county property taxes not once, but twice in the past two years. (Note to Dan Erhart: We know you voted against property tax cuts before you voted for them. You flip-flopped like a stranded walleye because Scott Schulte is on the verge of ending your 30 year Reign of Taxpayer Terror.)

The DFL meme this year is that Republicans raised property taxes on 95% of Minnesotans.

Not true.

Claim: 95 percent of homeowners saw a property tax increase in 2011.

Fact: According to the Minnesota Department of Revenue, approximately 32% of homeowners actually saw lower property taxes.

Multiple media outlets have examined this claim and found, by way of Revenue's statistics, that it simply doesn't add up. The defense offered by the Democrats shows either a fundamental misunderstanding or intentional deception regarding property taxes.

Tell the DFL this the next time they bombard you with these bogus claims. And then tell them to call the city council or county board to either thank them or give them heck as the case may be.

Again, property taxes are a local tax. Don't let the tax raisers off the hook with child-like claims that "the state made me do it!"

Another smelly turd taxpayers are finding in the mail box concerns utterly bunk claims the DFL is making that GOP legislators are harming Medicare.

The simple fact right out the gate is that state legislators can't do anything about Medicare. It's a federal program that is controlled by the federal government.

The DFL has managed to concoct a genetically-altered Super Turd that combines classic "Mediscare" tactics with a massive lie about candidates who have nothing to do with the program. In fact, some of the targets aren't even legislators! They are first-time candidates who have never cast a vote as a legislator.

Take the case of Ben Weiner, a rookie GOP candidate for the MN House.

They DFL launched a Super Turd into his district recently.

The ultra-liberal Minnesota Public Radio did a [fact check](#) on the dung and judged it to be outright FALSE.

Here's what they said, in part:

In fact, Wiener hasn't made any public statements about Medicare or federal entitlement programs in general. He says that's because "it's a federal entitlement program and not a state issue."

Aside from using tenuous evidence to support the specifics, **the DFL flier is fundamentally misleading.**

It implies that the state Legislature has control over how Medicare is administered, and Wiener would be involved in efforts to dismantle the program.

But any changes to Medicare must be made at the federal level. For instance, the Legislature couldn't make changes to Medicare Part D even if it wanted to.

The Verdict

The DFL bases its claims on the passage of two bills that have little to do with Medicare, or would require the approval of Congress for the state to act.

But even so, the ad implies that Wiener somehow has a plan to cut Medicare (he does not) and that the Minnesota Legislature has jurisdiction over the program in the first place (it does not).

This mailer jumbles so many misleading and incorrect claims this PoliGraph test judges it false.

Feeling desperate, are they?

BIG GOVERNMENT COMES TO MAPLEWOOD - WITH TYPICAL RESULTS

We've all heard the disclaimer that "past performance does not guarantee future results."

Well, when it comes to Big Government, past performance does indeed guarantee the future result.

Namely, that government more often than not fails to deliver on promises of correcting ills and delivering results in a cost-effective manner.

The latest case in point comes from the quaint suburb of Maplewood.

Last year, for the first time in 20 years, a city took advantage of a little known state law that allows cities to kick out garbage haulers and turn a free-market garbage hauling system into a government-run system, either through having the government pick up the trash itself or by having the government allow just one monopoly hauler in the city.

And, by the way, the haulers that get kicked out have no legal recourse or even compensation for lost business.

In 2011, Maplewood strangled the free market system, stole the customers the haulers had at that time, and turned it all over to one hauler, a transnational hauler not based in Minnesota.

The primary argument the city council made to the citizens is that in exchange for taking away their freedom to choose the hauler of their choice, citizens would reap the benefits of lower prices through the economies of scale and consumer protection benefits of a benevolent Big Government.

Typical of this train of thought is [John Nephew](#), a nerdy geek who led the charge as a member of the council until he lost his bid for re-election by coming in dead last in a field of 4 candidates.

Think the voters may have been mad about the garbage issue?

Guess what happened?

If you guessed that some citizens didn't save money, you would be correct.

If you further guessed that some citizens saw an increase in prices, you would be correct.

In fact, if you guessed that some citizens saw a price increase for a SMALLER garbage can, you would be correct again.

Sources in city hall tell us that the city has taken a number of calls in this regard.

We have also seen some of the higher bills ourselves.

Tennis Sanitation, the one of the companies that had its business in Maplewood nationalized, also has reported hearing the same thing.

Once again, government delivers on its promise to take your freedom, but fails to deliver on the benefits.

Hmmm, take your freedom to negotiate a better price. Where have we heard this before?

Oh, yeah. Obamacare!

Why in the world the legislature allows government-run garbage collection is beyond the Watchdog. Clearly, the free market knows how to haul garbage.

Moreover, why does the state allow the taking of private business without compensation. Kind of like Cuba or Venezuela, isn't it?

We're the government! We're here to help!

Not.

October 26, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. The State of the Races.**
- 2. Cravaack Must Be Winning.**

THE STATE OF THE RACES

With less than two weeks until election day, the great question of the day centers not only on the presidential race, but every other race down ballot, including the legislature.

The Watchdog has spoken with scores of legislators, campaign staff, lobbyists, and other interested parties over the course of the past six months about the state of legislative races around Minnesota, begging the ultimate question: who controls the House and Senate come January?

Here are some of the themes that are emerging, leading to the conclusion...

A. This isn't a wave election. Unlike 2008 and 2010, there is unlikely to be a wave that favors either party. Instead, the races are shaping up to mirror the national picture, where Democrats and Republicans are coming home to support their folks across the ballot, leaving Independents to break as they will late in the race.

B. Many Seats Are Competitive. One of the great untold stories is that redistricting created a large number of competitive swing seats that can go either way depending upon which way the pendulum is swinging in a particular election.

Polling over the summer and fall has shown upwards of better than 20 races where the candidates are within a point or two of each other.

Usually, these races start to break one way or the other as we near election day. This hasn't yet happened, meaning there will likely be a nail-bitter in many seats, far more than needed to win control of the legislature, where the DFL needs 4 seats in the Senate and 6 in the House.

But it's also important to remember that the "wave" elections in 2008 and 2010 really only appeared to be waves because so many seats changed hands.

If you look at both the winning margin in many districts as well as the aggregate number of votes cast for DFL and GOP legislative candidates, you can see that there was really little difference between the parties.

In 2008, the DFL swept nearly every close race. In 2010, it was the same for the GOP.

When the deep blue seats in Minneapolis and Saint Paul and the Iron Range are excluded, the numbers show that most of Minnesota has become purple, supporting the proposition that we are a closely divided nation.

C. Why the DFL is Optimistic.

The DFLers we talk to are optimistic because, well because, they have the money. DFL Old Money interests have poured millions upon millions into the attack machinery of the Left to destroy, impugn, sully, and soil the records and the very character of legislative Republicans.

Like every election, Republicans, the alleged Party of the Wealthy, will be outspent by the DFL and allied special interest groups, like the public employee unions.

The DFL is also optimistic because it's a presidential election year and DFL turn-out is historically higher during a presidential election year.

Ugh. Big deal.

D. Why the GOP is Optimistic.

Both House and Senate GOP camps are optimistic that they will hold their majorities and here's why.

First, quality of candidates. The GOP has for two election cycles in a row managed to field high-quality candidates who have the star power and talent to overcome the torrent of negative ads coming their way.

In 2010, the public got to meet talented Republicans like Jeremy Miller, John Carlson, John Pederson, Ted Daley, Ted Lillie, Dan Fabian, Deb Kiel, Rich Murray, and King Banian, among others.

In 2012, the public has seen the considerable resumes and talents of candidates like Phil Hansen, Mike Dudley, Stacey Stout, Roz Peterson, Dale Lueck, Ben Wiener, and Travis Reimche.

These candidates give the GOP a qualitative edge that will matter in the end.

In fact, many GOP candidates are outperforming the GOP index in their districts by a huge margin.

The Watchdog won't divulge specific numbers in order to protect sources and candidates, but rest assured, our DFL sources are depressed that they haven't been able to gain traction against top GOP targets.

Okay, here's a hint. A state Rep. named "Rich M." from Albert Lea is up big in his race and will win.

And so will "Deb K." from the Red River Valley Up way, way big.

And so is "Jeremy M." from Winona, a state Senator he is.

And so much more.

The 2012 rookie class is also outstanding.

Here's a drill that explains our point. Take GOP candidate [Stacey Stout](#), running a district that leans DFL, 43A.

Look at her photo. Now look at her opponent, [Peter Fischer](#).

Who's the attractive candidate at this door? And yes, Stacy is bright, hard working, and articulate as well.

In fact, we can report that there are at least three races where the DFL appears to be asleep at the switch.

The district looks safe DFL, but polling shows the GOP candidate within close striking distance.

Plans are being drawn up to shoot a massive dose of assistance into these races in the next few days, pushing the GOP candidate over the top to steal an upset victory.

Stay tuned.

The GOP is also optimistic because of the enthusiasm gap evident in polling. The fact is that Republicans are motivated to vote this cycle, and the DFL not so much.

Yes, the presidential election will elevate DFL turnout, but not all districts are created equal.

The growing momentum for the Romney campaign may not mean a victory for Romney in Minnesota, but it may mean a few hundred extra votes for the GOP legislative candidate in a swing district.

This brings us to a third point, the Independents.

The GOP is very confident that Independents, who decide so many elections in Minnesota, will break once again in favor of Republicans, which took this group in 2010, unlike 2008.

Two factors are at work here. First, the DFL's narrative about the GOP government shutdown, school borrowing, and property taxes isn't resonating with voters.

Push polling aside, the message testing hasn't been going so well.

The budget is balanced, schools are teaching the children, and most home owners have seen property taxes go down (see Anoka County).

And no one gave a single rat crap about the shutdown. No one cared. No one. Not one soul.

Second, the presidential race is of course having an impact on legislative races. What happens at the top of the ticket will spill down ballot.

Polling shows Independents supporting Romney by double digits.

This is primarily because Obama has failed to deliver on his promises, most importantly the promise to change Washington and govern in a consensus environment.

Since the president can't run on his record, he has engaged in a slash and burn campaign in an effort to trash his opponent and make Romney unpalatable.

Juvenile antics like referring to "Romnesia" and calling Romney a "bullshitter" might make the DFL faithful feel good, but it does nothing but alienate Independents, who are turned off by partisan bickering and the rancor of gutter politics.

What Obama is doing in Minnesota is ginning up Democrats at the expense of Independents, which will haunt the DFL's efforts to gain a majority.

DFL candidates in Minneapolis might get 80% instead of 75%, but Independents will cast votes for the GOP in the suburbs and exurbs, where those votes are critical.

Finally, People vote, not dollars.

If money was sole determining factor in elections, the DFL would be way ahead year after year.

Money matters, but so many other factors come into play.

We give the edge to the GOP in this battle.

CRAVAACK MUST BE WINNING

As readers well know, the Watchdog can be heavy on satire.

Our liberal friends take these jabs in stride and give a few back.

We have to tell these friends, however, that making Chip Cravaack's kids a campaign issue is despicable.

Chip lives in the 8th District and you know it.

He and his wife made a very deliberate and careful decision to move the children to New Hampshire where she could give the children the care they need while simultaneously meeting her professional obligations.

One of the Cravaack children is autistic, as was revealed recently.

The Cravaacks, like any good parents, made a decision in the best interests of their children.

C'mon, liberal friends. We know winning is important. We know you tell some whoppers to get your side elected.

But, please. Making family an issue is off limits. It's part of the Code.

To make an autistic child an issue goes way, way beyond the pale.

So what's the problem with this decision on where to have the kids reside?

Is the argument that the family didn't make the right decision for their child?

Is the argument that Traci Cravaack should be home and not have a career? How ironic for the bra burning crowd.

The ad is so unseemly, some media outlets won't run it.

Too bad Rick Nolan is still running an ad about Chip not living in the district.

Oh by the way, did Nolan bother to mention that when he was last serving on Congress in the 1970s, he moved his family to Washington? Did he mention his own kids attended schools out in DC?

How truly, truly despicable.

Chip must be winning.

November 2, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: This is it, Watchdogs. The last edition before Election Day 2012. This is perhaps the most important election of the past 50 years. The nation is indeed standing at a crossroads. As some have said, we have already passed the fork in the road and are heading down the wrong path. This election is the last chance to jump over to the correct path or consign ourselves and our posterity to European-style economic misery.

As is our tradition, we will not engage in lengthy commentary this week. The time for talking is over. It's time to vote.

Below are resources to help you get to the polls next Tuesday and cast your vote.

In the interest of space, we are leaving federal offices aside. If you don't know your federal candidates, you may be beyond assistance.

"With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

See you at the polls!

Where Do I Vote?

Check out the Secretary of State's [Pollfinder](#).

Editor's Note: The poll finder will also produce a sample ballot to tell you which candidates and offices are on your particular ballot.

Voter Education Resources.

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

Legislative Evaluation Assembly [scorecards](#).

NFIB 2011-2012 [scorecard](#).

National Rifle Association [Endorsements](#).

MN Chamber of Commerce [Endorsements](#).

Judicial Candidate Resources.

Perhaps no elective office confuses voters so much yet is so important as that of judge, regardless of the level.

What is important for Watchdogs is to know which judges hold a philosophy of interpreting the law, not making it. Activist judges are the unindicted co-conspirators of Big Government.

The following judges are known to the Watchdog as candidates who offer a philosophy of judicial restraint.

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE

Lorie [Gildea](#).

Dan [Griffith](#).

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT ASSOCIATE JUSTICE (seat 1)

Barry [Anderson](#).

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT ASSOCIATE JUSTICE (seat 4)

David [Stras](#).

Tim [Tingelstad](#).

On November 6th, vote!

November 9, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Accident Reconstruction - Part II.**
- 2. Dayton vs. Wilf.**

ACCIDENT RECONSTRUCTION - PART II

This is the second and final chapter in the quest to reconstruct the accident scene that took the political lives of so many on November 6.

DFL Unity.

Another reason the DFL did well is because they were united, motivated, efficient, and innovative.

DFL interest groups united early on in the campaign cycle and agreed to work in unified and coordinated fashion.

Moreover, the clearing house that coordinated the overall campaign was well run, with campaign professionals at the helm who used cutting-edge technology to micro target voters, especially key DFL constituencies.

In addition, they raised the money necessary to fund their operation.

Remember when some Republicans said the constitutional ballot questions would divert money away from DFL candidates?

Nope. Didn't happen. They funded all of it.

We can whine all we want about DFL money advantages and their telling whoppers about our candidates, photo ID, and the Marriage Amendment, but that's really a bunch of crap.

Politics is all about money and everyone in the game knows it. Whining about big spending liberals is a waste of time and a poor excuse.

Just like screaming that the liberals lied about us. Did you think it would be any different?

Did you think they would play fair?

If so, you need to get wise. If you took a paycheck this past cycle, you need to find a new line of work.

The game is what it is. We need to beat the DFL at both fundraising and messaging.

Whiners are losers. Winners find a way to improvise, adapt, and overcome.

Contrast the DFL team to the GOP team.

Were we united? Not at all. In fact, some conservative groups spent money attacking Republicans.

The Watchdog always maintained that there was no need to do that. The Democrats would do that for us.

And how did it work out?

Instead of working at cross-purposes, conservative groups must come together and make peace for the higher purpose of electing a sustainable center-right governing coalition.

Which bring up another point. Some of you large donors out there need some better political advice.

The way you've spent your money in many respects was wasteful and unproductive. What did you people get for your money? Paging the Freedom Club and Bob Cummins...

We will hang together in 2014 or we will hang separately, to borrow a phrase. GOP Brand.

One aspect of the election losses that has escaped scrutiny has been the loss of GOP credibility on fiscal issues.

An essential element of the Republican brand has consisted of persuading the electorate that Republicans are the party of fiscal responsibility.

But Republicans somehow convinced themselves that "fiscal responsibility" only meant the pursuit of tax cuts.

Not true. While tax cuts are an important policy goal, an overall commitment to fiscal prudence is what is needed.

In 2005, Republicans got cute during the state budget showdown and embraced Tim Pawlenty's tobacco tax, which he insisted on calling a "health impact fee." No one bought it and in 2006, the GOP lost control of the House.

In recent times, Republicans have time and again rejected the idea of truly living within government's means.

An all cuts budget seems impossible to legislative Republicans. In short, it seems only lip service is paid to the principle of reducing government's footprint.

While that's regrettable, what's worse is that the party of fiscal responsibility has resorted to accounting devices to cover the overage instead of being honest about tax increases.

School shifts, property tax recognition shifts, accelerated sales tax collections, securitized bonds, and borrowing facilities have all been embraced by Republicans looking to have it both ways on spending and the taxes needed to pay for it.

And we've gotten clobbered for it. Yes, intellectual arguments can be made in favor of these devices, but this is politics and not a graduate course in political science.

A party committed to fiscal responsibility can't resort to these devices and get away with it for long. Especially when that party is also a deadbeat on the rent.

Make no mistake, the Watchdog is a passionate advocate for spending only the available revenues, and perhaps not even that much.

But if the fortitude doesn't exist to govern like that, then a straight-up tax increase is preferable to these devices.

If we're going to brand ourselves as honest and responsible budgeters, we had best deliver.

Republicans got hammered this election cycle over these issues. We lost on the issue of fiscal responsibility.

Finally, some words of wisdom from George Will best frame the challenge facing the GOP. He recently penned an excellent (aren't they all?) column regarding where the GOP needs to go if it is to be a majority party.

Will on immigration:

Most voters already favor less punitive immigration policies than the ones angrily advocated by clenched-fist Republicans unwilling to acknowledge that immigrating - risking uncertainty for personal and family betterment - is an entrepreneurial act.

Will on drug policy:

And it is strange for conservatives to turn a stony face toward any reconsideration of drug policies, particularly concerning marijuana, which confirm conservatism's warnings about government persistence in the teeth of evidence.

And, finally, Will on the 2016 nominee:

Romney was a diligent warrior. Next time, Republicans need a more likable one. And one who tilts toward the libertarian side of the Republican Party's fusion of social and laissez-faire conservatism.

Folks, we need to get our act together on both the fiscal and social issues and start supporting policies that support our core proposition to the electorate:

Republicans are the party that will stay out of your wallet and out of your bedroom.

Failure to live by this simple yet powerful credo will crush the party. True faith and allegiance to it will produce electoral success, especially here in Minnesota.

DAYTON VS. WILF

Well, we know who the better negotiator is between these two. As if it's any kind of surprise.

Mark Dayton needs to knock it off when it comes to his whining and petulance over personal seat licenses (PSLs).

The state and Vikings are two sophisticated entities (allegedly) and need no protections from each other or the courts when it comes to cutting a deal.

The ability of the Vikings to collect PSLs was negotiated and agreed to by both the governor and the legislature.

We know that because the bill says so. In black and white. Right there on the page.

The bill went through 16 committees and the floor of both bodies.

And the governor put his signature on the bill.

Is he claiming he didn't read a bill to which he affixed his signature?

Is he claiming his highly paid staff didn't know what was in the bill?

Is the governor claiming he didn't know what he negotiated?

How stupid does this make the governor look?

Pretty dumb.

The Vikings weren't "forthright?"

Huh?

How about the governor wasn't up to the task of negotiating a good deal. Not that anyone reasonable person wanted government involved in any deal in the first place.

Look, no one has hammered the Vikings and their semi-competent lobbyist, Lester Bagely, more than the Watchdog.

But in no way do we begrudge the Vikings for doing what corporations do: seek to maximize profits.

Dayton apparently doesn't understand this concept. He perhaps believes the Vikings to be a not-for-profit enterprise like the Girl Scouts or perhaps a regulated utility.

Yes, PSLs undermine the mythical Dayton narrative that this is a People's Stadium, but that was never true.

The NFL is big business with a product consumed by people who have the time and disposable income to drop thousands of dollars on season tickets and \$7.50 beer.

The fact is that the suits from New York and the real estate developers from New Jersey flew into Minnesota and grifted our hayseed governor out of \$975 million.

The starry-eyed populist governor got schooled by the steel-eyed capitalists from the NFL and it wasn't a fair fight.

Perhaps someone ought to ask the governor if there are any other pieces of the bill he has discovered he doesn't like.

We need to get back to the fundamentals with this governor.

Step 1: negotiate the deal.

Step 2: Thoroughly understand the deal.

Step 3: Verify that the bill represents in total the deal that was negotiated.

Step 4: Sign the bill.

Somewhere in New Jersey, Zygi Wilf is enjoying a snifter of cognac, a fat Cuban cigar, and a big laugh at our expense.

November 16, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

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Step 3: Verify that the bill represents in total the deal that was negotiated.

Step 4: Sign the bill.

Somewhere in New Jersey, Zygi Wilf is enjoying a snifter of cognac, a fat Cuban cigar, and a big laugh at our expense.

November 23, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Hey, Watchdogs. Happy Thanksgiving! Yes, we're a day late, but that's the publication schedule. Harold Hamilton wishes you and yours the very best as we reflect upon the freedoms and blessings we enjoy. Charity begins at home and doesn't involve government. Please consider supporting the charity of your choice this holiday season. Goodness knows the government over the past four years has made us poorer and less prosperous.

- 1. Those Feckless Democrats.**
- 2. Twinkies Teach Economics.**
- 3. We Need to Stop Complaining.**

THOSE FECKLESS DEMOCRATS

Well, negotiations over the "fiscal cliff" haven't exactly proven to be an exercise in Profiles in Courage for the president and Senate Democrats, led by Harry Reid, who reminds the Watchdog staff of every kid who suffered wedgies and swirlies in grade school. The kind of kid who always mouthed off - when he was far enough away to make a successful escape or close enough to hide under the teacher's skirt.

In any case, it's hard to believe the Democrats could be so feckless and so reckless as to take entitlement programs off the table in negotiations.

Both Reid and Sen. Chuck Schumer have gotten in touch with the Socialist wing of the Democrat party to join Bernie Sanders of Vermont in announcing that they plan to do the irresponsible thing.

First, America is \$16 trillion in debt and nearly bankrupt because of entitlement spending, not because tax rates are too low.

There is no way that this country's fiscal mess can be solved (in an honest fashion) without implementing reforms with respect to every major entitlement program.

If the federal government imposed the highest income tax rate in world on our millionaires, it wouldn't come close to closing the deficit gap or making a meaningful reduction in the staggering national debt.

In short, any meaningful plan to put the country on a path to fiscal solvency includes real entitlement reform.

The Watchdog has every belief that Democrats won't agree to any real reforms and will instead go for the old bait and switch tactic, which means taking tax increases now while pushing entitlement reform off to some future date.

If Republicans agree to such a deal, the party will have lost all credibility with the public.

Second, Democrats have demagogued entitlement programs to the hilt, telling voters that they alone care about protecting, preserving, and expanding these programs.

Yet these programs are either bankrupt or on a path to bankruptcy.

They simply cannot be protected and available for future generations without reforms that limit eligibility and/or benefit sets. It's a fact.

Moreover, the fiscal cliff will produce tax increases and benefit cuts that will hit Democrat constituencies hard.

For example, an analysis by the Wall Street Journal shows that for a family of four making \$30,000 per year, they will see a \$1,400 tax increase because of the cliff.

Federal employees will also see layoffs and reductions.

For a party that claims to be for the workin' man and government employees, the stakes are high.

Republicans need to leverage Democrats on this issue and push them to accept a meaningful agreement.

It's an open question as to whether voters will see this fundamental truth through the smokescreen of rhetoric and obfuscation offered by Democrats and amplified by their co-conspirators in the Legacy Media.

The bottom line is that entitlement programs have to be on the table and the subject of negotiations.

If not, there is no use in sitting down to negotiate.

The Watchdog predicts that Washington, at least in the short run, will do what Washington always does and kick the can down the road.

The parties will agree to some type of deal that delays the implementation of the cliff for 6 months or a year.

Which will then push the House and a third of the Senate into an election-year mentality, meaning that nothing will be done until "after the elections."

We hate to sound cynical, but we've seen this movie before - on too many occasions.

So what's the solution? Pointing out problems isn't enough.

The public policy underpinning any deal will involve three critical aspects:

1. Grow the economy. We can shrink the deficit and debt by growing the economy. The first principle is to do no harm. But beyond that, government policies must encourage growth and not punish wealth creation or productivity.

This is why tax increases are so harmful. Capital gains taxes, death taxes, and income tax increases that hit pass through small businesses hamper wealth creation.

The federal government needs to stop with tax policies that hit productivity and investment.

Liberals need to remember that a healthy, vibrant private economy is what funds government.

2. Reform entitlements. The fact of the matter is that federal spending is out of control. Federal spending as a percentage of GDP has averaged 24% each fiscal year under Obama.

Historically, the post World War II era has seen the federal government spend anywhere from 16 to 20% of GDP.

Reforming entitlements and federal programs in general to put the federal government back on a trajectory to spend less than 20% of GDP on programs is a necessary and critical component.

3. Bring in more revenue. Yes, the Watchdog hates to say this and we don't support it, but this leg of stool is necessary to get any kind of deal. It's time to be honest about there being no willingness in Washington to go with cuts and reforms only. It just isn't going to happen.

Having said that, we're talking about more revenue but not tax increases. Both sides have been willing to talk about eliminating tax deductions and credits in order increase revenue.

The Watchdog agrees with the policy of eliminating many credits and deductions, which produce the harmful effect of distorting markets and really amount to nothing more than government picking winners and losers.

But the Watchdog would cut taxes in revenue neutral manner with the new revenue.

Since that is a pipe dream at this point, it is the least harmful way to give Democrats and even some Republicans what they want.

Still, we're skeptical that Democrats would even accept that kind of deal. In any case, it's time to get serious about governing. Kicking this fiscal time bomb down the road while we borrow trillions from the Chinese is eroding our sovereignty, eroding our collective morale, and eroding our preeminent position in the global economy.

Speaker Boehner should grasp the mantle of leadership and offer a deal within this strategic framework and put the ball squarely in Obama's court. Make him go up against his base and do the work of getting his camp in line.

For once, let's put the onus on the other side to say no. Let them be the unreasonable ones.

The situation is dire. It's time to get down to business on this deficit and the national debt.

TWINKIES TEACH ECONOMICS

There's been no shortage of hand wringing and near panic over the prospect of Hostess Brands liquidating in bankruptcy.

Besides a lesson for labor unions in the hard reality of economics, specifically a lesson on the profit motive and the need for labor deployment flexibility, there is a lesson to be learned here regarding the resiliency and dynamic aspects of capitalism, which will accrue to the collective economic benefit of society, despite claims of "vulture capitalism," and "Bain-style management" from unions who doth protest too much.

Presuming a liquidation occurs, here's what will happen.

The most critical factor here is that this is a liquidation of assets, and not a sale of an ongoing business concern.

This is a legal distinction, but an important one. In a liquidation, assets are purchased but none of the obligations or debts of the former owner transfer to the buyer.

This means that the market can carefully assess what Hostess is selling and buy the productive assets while shedding the unproductive assets.

For example, we know there is demand for Twinkies. Someone will buy the rights to manufacture and sell Twinkies brand snack cakes.

What that buyer will NOT acquire is a labor union with out of market wages and benefits combined with arcane and expensive work rules.

In short, the economy will see the productive assets re-deployed while the unproductive assets will go un-purchased, for either the short or long term.

This is a critical feature of a capitalist economy. All assets are limited. Therefore, it is critical that these assets be put to their highest and best use. It is key that assets efficiently deployed continue while inefficient assets go away or be turned into productive assets.

The factories and brands and employees that are efficient will be put back to work.

This is the way it has to be. If not, we would still employ the makers of the Beta Max, we would all still use Netscape, and we would cook with lard.

The creative destruction of capitalism allows for the dynamic redeployment of scarce assets to facilitate wealth creation and innovation, which makes us all better off.

And let's not fear for the Bakers union that killed Hostess.

The skilled bakers who comprise that union will find their way back into the labor force, either employed in a successor to Hostess (likely without this union, or perhaps any union).

It may be a hard lesson, but that union and the Teamsters had work rules and other terms and conditions of employment that were out of the market. The market wouldn't support their current wages and conditions of employment.

Again, resources are limited. You can't pay a forklift driver \$70 per hour with benefits and get away with it.

The alternative is communism. If you think that's a path to prosperity, ask people in North Korea what they're eating for dinner tonight.

WE NEED TO STOP COMPLAINING

Okay, folks. We need to stop complaining about what happened on November 6th.

Specifically, we're referring to the photo ID folks who are looking to place blame for the spectacular flame out that caused the amendment to go down.

The latest complaint centers on all the money photo ID opponents spent.

Excuse us, but were you surprised? You don't have to be Karl Rove to have anticipated that liberal special interests and labor unions were going to spend millions to defeat the amendment.

To complain about that fact is unproductive and weak.

We all knew big money would flow in against the amendment. To act surprised and outraged by this circumstance is weak.

That this certainty wasn't addressed or part of the campaign plan to pass the amendment speaks volumes about those who prosecuted it.

Patton was prepared to counter Rommel's tactics at El Guettar.

Bill Parcells found a way to defend the West Coast offense.

The modern NHL beat the neutral zone trap.

Anticipating your opponent's plan and devising a way to counter it is mandatory in politics.

The photo ID people didn't do it, even though they had the initiative in deciding when to launch this issue.

Look, we don't want to rag this issue, but it's getting old to read of the all the whining and complaining about the opposition regarding photo ID.

The opposition came at the issue in exactly the manner in which any person who follows politics could have predicted.

Admit defeat and move to a different line of work, folks.

The Watchdog will be joining other conservatives in adapting and tweaking our strategic plans to prosecute a better strategic plan for tomorrow, 2014, and beyond.

November 30, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. Let Taxapalooza Begin!**
- 2. Market Laws.**

LET TAXAPALOOZA BEGIN!

Well, that didn't last long. 23 days, to be exact.

For the naive and uninitiated out there, your hopes that the DFL would exercise restraint and govern in a responsible manner is already out the window. And the legislative session won't even start until January.

This week, Governor Mark Dayton's task force on transportation funding recommended an eye-popping \$20 billion tax increase for transportation. Rumor has it the recommendations were especially "eye-popping" for a certain legislator from the west Metro.

Gas taxes, license tax increases, a virtual smorgasbord of tax increases are on the menu - just for transportation.

Keep in mind that this is a tax increase plan wholly separate from the impending tax increases for the state's general fund.

And while many pundits and others will speak to the folly of these taxes, the Watchdog wants to focus on one particularly odious aspect of the plan - regressivity.

In order to frame the debate, bear in mind that incoming Senate Taxes Chairman Rod Skoe had made tax "progressivity" the touchstone of Senate DFL tax policy.

Recall that "regressive" taxes hit lower income earners harder and that "progressive" taxes increase the burden as you move up the wealth ladder.

For example, sales taxes are generally regressive, while income taxes are for the most part very progressive (flat tax aside).

Various taxes are measured for their regressivity (or progressivity) by the "[Suits Index](#)," a metric widely accepted, including the State of Minnesota.

A positive Suits Index indicates a progressive tax, while a negative number indicates a regressive tax. The higher the positive number, the more progressive. Conversely, the lower the negative number, the more regressive the tax.

Let's also keep in mind the DFL to stick it to the rich while making the tax system more progressive.

Here is the important thing to remember Watchdogs: THE GAS TAX IS A VERY REGRESSIVE TAX.

And so are license tab "fees" and other registration taxes.

Just think about the gas tax. Rich or poor, we all pay the same for a gallon of gas. And contrary to liberal thought, we all need gasoline to get around and take the kids to the doctor, shop for groceries, or get to work to pay the bills (and the taxes).

So, right off the bat, the DFL is playing the role of hypocrites by heaping new taxes that are contrary to what they are telling the public.

Soak the rich? Guess again.

And don't think this is the end of regressive taxes.

Other regressive taxes include the sales tax.

Tobacco taxes are the most regressive.

Alcohol taxes are also quite regressive.

So just wait until the DFL starts in with taxing Joe Six Pack's six pack. Wait until the health police start in with tobacco taxes. Just wait until all the soccer moms out there start giving a taste to the state coffers whenever they buy underwear or a winter coat for the kids.

And also watch as the DFL start howling about Minnesota's tax structure becoming more regressive.

And they're the ones pushing it.

Call this the political equivalent of [Munchausen by Proxy Syndrome](#).

Check the history. Remember when the DFL led the charge to raise the sales tax under the so-called "Legacy Amendment?"

Remember the increased sales tax to pay for a stadium to enrich the Pohlad family?

Remember the DFL going along with Tim Pawlenty on the tobacco tax they tried to hide by infamously calling it a "health impact fee?"

Of course, the DFL will attempt a grand political twofer by trying to correct the regressive tilt of their policies by jacking up progressive taxes higher and higher.

Just call this a form of political pill popping. The DFL ingests a few downers in the form of regressive taxes and then tries to balance things out by throwing down a handful of progressive tax uppers.

And like a substance abuser, the body politic gets sicker and sicker from the unhealthy roller coaster ride between more and more regressive taxes and more and more progressive taxes.

We just increased a regressive tax by a million? No problem. We'll raise the top income tax rate by two million! No, three million!

Of course, all this activity steals more and more revenue from the private economy and diverts it to the government economy, where the resources are deployed by political and not market forces, which is inherently inefficient and, in some cases, downright wasteful (Solyndra).

So the next time your DFL neighbor or co-worker wants to whip out the DFL talking points about the rich paying their fair share or the DFL being the party of the workin' man, educate their ignorant behinds about the Suits Index and the regressivity of DFL tax policy.

MARKET LAWS

So the laws of the market place are once again proving their inviolability to the liberal unbelievers.

Much like those who doubt the laws of gravity and test them at great peril, those who doubt the laws of the market place can find themselves hitting reality with a gut-busting THUMP! that may or may not convert them to believers.

So is the case with union workers at American Crystal Sugar who, despite many previous rejections, appear to be on the cusp of approving a contract that looks like a near carbon copy of the previous offers.

Apparently, many union members are discovering that a job with ACS is by far and away their best economic option.

That will be determined this weekend by the union member vote.

But the Watchdog is also getting a bit bored listening to union leaders prattle on and on about financial issues that have nothing to do with rank and file pay issues.

For example, it doesn't matter if management got a raise or that the company's balance sheet would support a pay raise.

The simple fact is that pay and benefits are determined by the market place. The value that each worker adds to the product determines the pay and benefits. That's it.

The same holds true for management. Moreover, if you're jealous of management pay, become a damn manager. Also know that managers are at-will, subject to immediate termination for any reason or no reason at all. Higher pay and benefits, again, are determined by the market. Managers often get paid more because of the skill and experience offered as well as the higher expectations regarding results.

The fact that the company could, if it desired, afford more pay and benefits doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter in the same way that it doesn't matter if employees could absorb a pay cut. It won't happen unless the market place dictates it.

Let's remember that companies exist for one reason: to make a profit for those who own the enterprise. Like it or not, that's why the company was formed.

The company wasn't formed to maximize pay and benefits for employees.

Don't like it? Then become a shareholder.

Of course, enhanced profits can form a powerful argument for a pay raise. There is nothing wrong with unions making a case for enhanced wages.

But a healthy balance sheet alone isn't an argument to hand out pay raises.

The bottom line is that the market place will determine what labor is worth in any given market. Those who operate under any other premise are sure to meet their economic demise (Hostess Brands, General Motors).

Arguments about company profits or management pay really has no place in the conversation other than as a convenient distraction from the real issues or to act as an emotional device to inspire those involved to act in a particular way.

What is labor worth? Whatever the market will bear.

Know it.

December 7, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog pauses today to recall the service, courage and sacrifice of those stationed at Pearl Harbor on that Day of Infamy.

- 1. Beware "Tax Reform."**
- 2. Quick Bits.**

BEWARE "TAX REFORM."

Ugh. It looks like one of the top agenda items for the newly-minted DFL Juggernaut will be what is labeled "tax reform."

At the outset, note that the rationale for examining and revamping the tax system is all about the government budget.

The talk is all centered on making the government budget more stable; it's all about making the government budget more predictable; and, of course, it's all about getting more money in the door to make government bigger.

It looks like the Juggernaut is intent on going in exactly the wrong direction on all three legs of the Minnesota tax stool (property taxes, income taxes, and sales taxes).

Let's start with the property tax. The Juggernaut has co-opted friendly and reassuring labels about "buying down" property taxes and making government "less reliant" on property taxes.

What this really means is that the state is looking for ways to ship more money down to local units of government to spend as they see fit. PERHAPS there will be some buy down of property taxes, but there may also be some spending increases (and perhaps big ones at that).

This is because the property tax is a LOCAL tax, levied by independently-elected politicians. In short, these folks decide how the money gets spent. There are a couple of state-imposed property taxes (commercial/industrial and recreational property), but the vast majority of property taxes are local in nature.

Money is filtered down to LUGs (local units of government) through a variety of means, but when it comes to property taxes, the primary means is local government aid (LGA) and other programs like the market value homestead credit (MVHC).

These programs are horrible public policy for a number of reasons.

First, they harm accountability by decoupling the taxing authority from the spending authority. The state taxes the money and then the LUG gets to spend it.

It is human nature to be less responsible with someone else's money than with your own.

Second, these programs lack meaningful transparency. All too often, local elected officials raise property taxes or undertake other unpopular measures and then turn around and blame the state for "cutting" aid programs.

Taxpayers have great difficulty in separating fact from fiction. Property taxes are difficult enough to understand without also getting a graduate degree in LGA MVHC, the Green Acres program, the "circuit breaker," and the myriad other programs that allow LUGs to spew acronyms and evade accountability through a decidedly opaque property tax system.

Third, these programs often don't do what they're supposed to do - reduce property taxes. Again, the decision lies in the hands of local officials. The state can try all sorts of means to control the aid (e.g. levy limits and restrictions on spending). But these measures are ineffective because local governments find loopholes and other ways to raise and spend money.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, LGA and other programs discourage needed reforms and innovations at the local level.

As we all know, organizations often delay or defer needed reforms until a financial crisis hits. The crisis forces the tough decisions.

Think of LGA as a form of welfare for cities.

It's money that is specifically designated to help cities that are deemed unable to help themselves.

Yet, unlike welfare for people, LGA comes with no real strings attached. There is no time limit, no requirement to cut spending or reform the local budget, and no requirement to do anything to reduce reliance on LGA.

In fact, much like the welfare programs of old, there is a perverse incentive, a moral hazard, to do nothing, as reforms jeopardize the amount of LGA coming in.

Cities that take LGA (and lots of it), for example own golf courses, swimming pools, community centers, and there is even a city that owns a green house as well as one that owns a movie theater (Netflix, anyone?).

Isn't that like someone on welfare owning a Porsche or having a membership at a country club?

Where is the similar outrage? Where are the restrictions and requirements?

The simple fact is that many legislators, DFL and GOP, are afraid of local elected officials and their lobbying arms that roam the Capitol.

In short, it's both a form of political self-preservation (I'm afraid mayor so and so will run against me!) and bringing home the bacon (I can't wait to show up for the ribbon cutting for the new drinking fountains at the municipal green house!).

Minnesota has 87 counties and 853 cities. There is really no logical basis for their boundaries, which were often formed many, many years ago in an era far different from what society looks like today.

State aid programs stifle needed reforms, mergers, and yes, dissolutions by staving off tough decisions driven by fiscal woes.

Yes, some LUGs take responsibility and have merged services with adjoining jurisdictions. And, yes, some have lowered property taxes. But this is the exception and not the rule.

If these aid programs had requirements similar to welfare for people, it would do more to drive innovation, reform, and efficiency at the local level.

Regardless, these programs should come with strings attached regarding time limits and budget reforms.

If the Juggernaut jacks up local aid programs, it's a moral imperative.

Now let's undertake an examination of sales tax "reform" proposals.

These reforms have centered on expanding the sales tax and, hopefully, reducing the rate. But rest assured, government will not see any reduction in revenues.

Last week, the Watchdog spilled some ink explaining how sales taxes are regressive and, therefore, contrary to the Juggernaut's stated intent to make taxes more PROgressive and rich soaking.

Think about what happens when the sales tax is expanded.

When a family goes to Wal Mart to buy underwear or a winter coat for the kids, government will get a cut.

When a new mom goes to buy diapers or baby formula, government will tax it.

Food could be taxed as well. A tax on milk and butter? Could be.

And don't forget that the sales tax would very likely be extended to business services.

A haircut for the kids. Taxed.

Need a lawyer because your spouse has abandoned you and a divorce has become necessary? Taxed.

Need to drop a new tranny in your Chevy? The mechanic will have to tax you for his services.

Sound fair? Sound like making the "rich pay their fair share?"

You tell us.

Oh, and don't forget that another aspect of tax reform is "closing loopholes" by taking away tax deductions.

The home mortgage interest deduction could be gone.

How about deductions for charitable contributions to your church or the local homeless shelter? That could be gone.

Even the deduction for helping defray the costs of donating an organ could be gone.

Finally, there is one other aspect of "sales tax reform" that could become law should the Juggernaut wish it to be so.

Sales taxes also apply when a business does business with another business.

For example, if lawyer services are taxed, whenever a business hires a law firm (oh, say to defend against a trumped up personal injury claim), the defending business would pay.

Or whenever a business receives services from an accountant (oh, say to navigate the all the complex and conflicting provisions of the state and federal tax code), that business would pay the sales tax for the service.

And guess who really pays for that? If you said that the cost gets passed on to the consumer, you would be correct.

Such is the magic of sales tax "reform."

The Watchdog will be watching with great interest to see how the DFL manages to construct a sales tax scheme that doesn't hammer the middle class in exactly the way we have described.

Finally, let's take a look at the income tax. To be honest, the income tax is the one tax that can truly be progressive.

Government just simply singles out successful people and smashes them with higher and higher taxes in the name of "fairness."

It can be done. If we all go over the fiscal cliff, it has been calculated that California will have a marginal income tax rate at the top bracket of over 50%, combined state and federal.

The first real question is just who we mean by "rich." Some DFL proposals of the recent past have defined "rich" at \$100,000 household income.

Hell, who are we trying to kid. These proposals always hammer at the upper middle class and the middle class. This is because, again, the real focus is the government budget, not the family budget.

There aren't enough rich people to cover all the money they want to take in.

More importantly, an increased level of income taxation needs to be evaluated in light of jobs - job creation, job re-location, and job retention.

Most small businesses file their taxes as individuals and not as corporations under the corporate tax rate.

Thus, higher individual rates apply to most businesses in Minnesota.

It beats the heck out of us how higher tax rates create jobs and wealth in the private sector.

It beats the heck out of us how higher tax rates make this state more competitive in the hunt to lure jobs to Minnesota.

And what about all this talk of fairness?

Since when is it fair and just to punish those who have risked much, forgone much, and sacrificed much in order to build a business and earn, EARN their success?

Since when did we elevate envy and greed to a value our government should pursue?

Prosperity, wealth, and opportunity are not enhanced by confiscating the wealth of those Americans who create it (far lower than 53%).

Instead, government should celebrate success, encourage others to emulate the successful, and set conditions that allow citizens the opportunity to achieve success.

This what you have to look forward to come January, brave readers.

QUICK BITS

So the electronic pull tabs aren't bringing in the expected revenues. The solution had better be that those who use the stadium pick up the difference. You people wanted a new stadium. Pay for it.

Striking workers (what's left of them) at American Crystal Sugar for a fourth time rejected a contract offer from management. The Watchdog goes out on a limb to predict this strike goes bust.

The Freedom Foundation of Minnesota reports 52 staff members and officers of Education Minnesota, the teachers' union, receive a salary in excess of \$100,000.

A task force appointed by Governor Dayton has recommended that predatory sex offenders be put in less restrictive environments and that the population be redistributed around the state.

On behalf of Anoka County, we say no thanks. Put them up at Gitmo or Gary, Indiana. Or at the Governor's Mansion.

The state is apparently facing a \$1.1 billion deficit in the upcoming budget cycle. Revenues are going up. As you might guess, spending is also projected to rise by a greater amount. In this case it's projected to rise at about 8.5%.

If we merely lived with the increased revenue, we would have no deficit.

We continue to be amazed by the legacy media's bias. What major new outlet reported that the projected deficit is the result of spending that will increase at a far greater rate than inflation and population growth?

How about limiting spending increases to inflation plus population growth or some other formula? The dirty secret is that most states do this. Check Iowa, for example.

December 14, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

- 1. The Season of Irresponsibility.**
- 2. The Seinfeld Senator.**
- 3. Google "Tax Avoidance."**

THE SEASON OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

Blaming Republicans, especially Republicans of years past, is a DFL pastime in and of itself. Heck, it's really an art form for the political savants of the left-sided persuasion.

And why not? Voters tend to believe it and thus reward ridiculous claims about any state of affairs being someone else's fault.

It works.

Problems for Obama? Bush's fault. Reagan's fault. Ike's fault.

Problem's for Dayton? Pawlenty's fault. Budget cuts. All the cuts. Still recovering from the cuts.

It's almost a reflexive, unconscious response to a challenging situation, even if the problem was caused by Democrats themselves.

Take the recent road snarls caused by heavy snow falls.

Governor Dayton just couldn't help himself in turning the clock back to look for a scapegoat.

Said Dayton, You cut back on the budget for highway clearing and repairs, then there's going to be consequences. My understanding is the personnel side of it has been reduced over the last decade ... and maintenance."

Yet Dayton's own MnDOT disagreed, saying that the snowfall was unique and presented a challenge to road crews because of the way the precipitation froze on roadways. Money and "the cuts" weren't to blame.

The Watchdog doesn't blame Governor Dayton or Mayor Coleman for the problem. We understand that Mother nature can be rather harsh, probably as a result of global warming - not.

But the problems runs deeper with irresponsibility.

The Vikings put personal seat licenses in the stadium bill? The governor blames Zygi.

That's tempting target, but Dayton himself negotiated and signed the bill into law.

The school shift is the fault of Republicans, yet he signed that budget bill into law.

He doesn't like the elimination of the market value homestead credit, yet he signed the bill into law.

Of course, the media will never point out this simple yet powerful fact.

And the irresponsibility doesn't end there.

Take our DFL senators, one of whom was just re-elected with overwhelming numbers.

Both of them enthusiastically voted for ObamaCare, including the job-killing medical device tax that is among the bevy of tax increases and new taxes needed to fund the nationalization of health care.

The rake on the medical device tax is expected to be \$28 billion, which will come at the expense of the industry, its employees, and sick Americans who benefit from the life-extending products.

The response from our two senators?

A letter to Harry Reid asking to "delay" the tax.

Too late.

Our two senators obviously don't come from a job creation background.

Business doesn't wait to take a whack in the head before acting. Business acts when government raises the stick.

The stick was raised back when these two passed ObamaCare and the response has been happening for years, with job cuts and a reduction in research and innovation.

The DFL appears to be more of an adolescent phase than a political party.

Too bad the Republican Party has been too inept of late to take advantage (Tom Emmer, Kurt Bills, etc.).

THE SEINFELD SENATOR

Pop quiz: name something meaningful Senator Amy Klobuchar has accomplished since being elected to the U.S. Senate back in 2006.

Yeah, we couldn't come up with anything, either.

One of the most popular television shows of all time, "Seinfeld" was premised on the meaningless, vapid travails of the show's namesake, comedian Jerry Seinfeld.

In fact, the show proudly billed itself as the "show about nothing."

Apparently, Klobuchar is just as proudly billing her "political career about nothing."

It's stunning to watch her sponsor and support meaningless bills as the nation struggles with a \$16 trillion debt burden, entitlement programs on the pathway to bankruptcy, Iran pursuing nukes, China getting assertive on the Pacific Rim, and our education system falling farther and farther behind other First World nations.

But don't worry, Amy doesn't want you to wait a minute more for your bags to clear customs when you return from that golf trip to Bermuda.

Klobuchar has recently been touting her "no hassle flying act" bill that would eliminate a double baggage screening process when international travelers return from certain foreign countries like Canada, Ireland, and Saint Kits.

That's great and all, but what about North Korea? What about Afghanistan? Doing anything about the fiscal cliff, Amy?

Then again, just like the other irresponsible elected officials, why do anything else?

Klobuchar just smoked Kurt Bills like a \$1 cigar this past election.

We can and will pound the DFL over this state of affairs, but let's not forget Republican culpability.

It's hard to send Klobuchar, Franken, and Dayton packing if there is no good alternative.

2014 will be a telling year for the GOP. Can the party find good candidates to represent the party in the Franken and Dayton races?

Can Republicans once again become masters of their political domain?

Time will tell.

In the meantime, we can look forward to more "serious" legislation from Senator Seinfeld.

Perhaps a law against waiting more than 10 minutes for a Big Mac? A law protecting your right to sleep in on cold winter mornings? A law against soggy cereal?

So many discomforts, so little time.

GOOGLE "TAX AVOIDANCE."

Obama buddy Eric Schmidt of Google must be on Joe Biden's naughty list for Christmas 2012.

After all, it was Biden who noted that paying taxes is a "patriotic" duty, meaning that the more you pay in, the more patriotic you are, even if you're dumber than your neighbor.

In any case, it's come to light that Google has been funneling profits into off shore tax shelters to reduce tax exposure, a heinous act indeed in the Book of Liberalism.

How enjoyable to see an icon of liberalism engaging in unfettered capitalism, limiting tax exposure and maximizing shareholder value. Excellent!

The hypocrisy is also rich.

Mr. Schmidt might find himself standing alone at all those Hollywood Kwanzaa parties this season.

Poor capitalist.

December 21, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog pauses this week to remember the innocents and brave who lost their lives at Sandy Hook Elementary last week. Last week's edition had gone to press after the news broke.

1. Reflections on Sandy Hook.

2. Yes, Taxes Matter.

REFLECTIONS ON SANDY HOOK

Like many millions of American citizens, the Watchdog can't help but be affected by the tragedy. It's one of those gut wrenching events that causes one to reflect on our country, our values, our society, and just what it means to confront evil - true evil.

The slaughter of so many children is shocking and disturbing.

And like in so many quarters of American society, the Watchdog has had a week to ponder what happened in that small school last week.

It really was the end of the innocence for our Legacy Media (LM) outlets.

This will be remembered as the event where the LM dropped all pretence of principled journalism and revealed themselves to be little more than purveyors of gore and blood. Exploiters of emotion devoid of a scintilla of logic, reason, or fact.

Devoid of fact. That's depressing.

For the talking heads on television, facts didn't matter. Speed, pictures, music, and all that stimulates the senses and stokes the emotions were the order of the day.

We saw images of reporters stalking and chasing down young children for an exclusive interview. The opportunity to be first to ask a seven year-old child what it's like to hear classmates being gunned down next door.

Can you imagine Walter Cronkite collaring kids at the scene of a mass murder and shoving a microphone in their face?

(And, by the way, what kind of parent allows their shell shocked child to participate in these interviews?)

Frankly, it was appalling to watch the media bypass the facts, shred the facts, plainly not give a damn about the facts.

How many were dead? One? Thirty? Fifty? Who cares. Just get the eye-in-the-sky video up on the screen FIRST. It's not about facts. It's about being first.

The shooter's mother worked at the school. No, she was a volunteer. No, she had no connection to the school.

The shooter used an assault rifle in the killings. No, but he had one in his car.

The biggest sin of all was falsely reporting the name of the shooter. For hours, an innocent man's name was broadcast around the world as a cold-blooded killer of children.

The media's despicable behavior in reporting the shootings was so appalling that some media watchers have called for restrictions on how and what the media reports.

The Watchdog disagrees. Much like other market sectors, the media faces market place competition.

The market will work its magic in deciding which media outlets stay and which ones go.

The LM outlets have been losing viewers and readers by the ton in recent years.

And this is why.

There is no need to restrict the First Amendment rights of these "news" organizations.

They have a constitutional right to broadcast and print the crap they do.

And we have a constitutional right to select our news outlets, casting aside the ones that have abandoned any pretense of professionalism.

After Sandy Hook, they have not a shred of dignity or legitimacy left.

Another crowd that took our respect for them down another notch were all the politicians who just couldn't even wait until the dead were carried away from the murder scene before jumping in front of television cameras and issuing press releases claiming that guns alone were to blame for the tragedy and that it was high time for some good ol' fashioned gun control.

Never mind gathering the facts. Don't bother to allow law enforcement any time to carefully assess what happened.

Issue the verdict and then collect the facts. Or just issue the verdict and screw the facts.

The shameless rush to judgment was vintage Washington. And the reason why so many of us have zero faith in our federal political institutions. Long on rhetoric and short on real solutions.

But don't worry, readers. Vice President Joe Biden is leading a task force that will surely come up with all sorts of solutions.

They're from the government and they're here to help.

It will be more than just a little ironic to watch Obama and Biden lecture us on gun control. The same administration that gave guns to Mexican drug gangs in the Fast and Furious debacle. The same guns that were then used to murder a federal law enforcement agent.

And what of the culpability of popular culture? A culture that has become coarse and indifferent to violence and suffering.

A culture that exposes children to sex and violence at earlier and earlier ages. Video games that allow kids to shoot people in the head. Raps music that says "F**k tha Police" and "Cop Killer" from Ice Cube, who now has his own boring and lame cable tv show.

Guns have always been prevalent in American culture. Mass murders are a newer phenomenon.

There was a time not too long ago (1980s) when most high schools in Minnesota allowed students to bring shot guns to school and store them in lockers so kids could get in a couple of hours of hunting before or after school.

In the end, perhaps society isn't to blame at all for what happened at Sandy Hook.

Perhaps a series of ugly, evil circumstances came together to produce the tragedy that no amount of government could have prevented.

The liberal world view posits that government can make life risk free and pain free.

But conservatives know that just isn't true. Especially in a free society where citizens have a right to freedom, both economic and personal. Those freedoms come with a certain amount of risk.

Maybe this tragedy falls on the shoulders of one person. The one who pulled the trigger that fateful day for reasons that are known only to him.

But whatever the motive, it was evil, pure and simple.

YES, TAXES MATTER

The socialists in France thought they were being so smart in jacking taxes through the chateau roof in order to both repair the government budget and lay a good beat down on those scummy entrepreneurs.

One tax lawyer in France [reports](#) that a 400-500% increase in the number of requests by French citizens to get the heck out.

More importantly, this lawyer notes that in years past, most of his clients were retired and looking to preserve wealth in their golden years.

Today, many of the those looking for exile are young, talented people seeking to make money in another location, taking their talents and enthusiasm elsewhere.

Even the semi-talented actor Gerard Depardieu is fleeing to the comparatively free Belgium.

We continue to watch socialism collapse while watching our own president attempt to emulate this failed model right here at home.

December 28, 2012

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

1. The Top Story of 2012.

THE TOP STORY OF 2012

Hey, Watchdogs! Happy New Year from deep within the fortified Watchdog HQ in Anoka County. Harold Hamilton and the entire Watchdog staff wish you and your the very best in 2013.

As we dangle on the edge of the insanely hyped Fiscal Cliff, the staff has put up our collective feet and contemplated the top stories of 2013.

Sadly, 2013 was a tough year for Watchdogs. Obama re-elected. The U.S. Senate in Democrat hands still, thanks to nitwit No Nothing candidates who were more interested in talking like fools about "legitimate" rape instead of focusing on the economy and the mess Barack has made of it.

Yes, the House remained in GOP hands, but we lost Chip Cravaack, a rising star who deserved a better fate. That voters chose Rick Nolan speaks volumes about the 8th District. Will reviving a 1970s era political career help northern Minnesota? We doubt it, although perhaps polyester suits and naugahyde furniture will return to the Capitol and the Iron Range, if those fashions ever left the Range.

Even worse, Republicans in Minnesota got smoked like a Newport cigarette.

After a victorious 2010 (minus Tom Emmer), 2012 saw Republicans lose both the state House and Senate, an outcome almost no one predicted.

We here at the Watchdog are always optimists. We believe in a better future for America and Minnesota.

But for now, we have to acknowledge that 2012 wasn't a good year for conservatives.

Overall, the loss of the Minnesota legislature is the top story of 2012. For the first time in decades, the DFL will control the legislature and governor's office.

This state of affairs ought to prompt a good deal of soul searching.

Here's what we said about the loss of both houses of the legislature back on November 9th:

STATE ISSUES

At the state level, we got killed on a U.S. Senate race, lost a congressional seat, and lost both houses of the legislature as well as two constitutional ballot questions. Other than that, it wasn't such a bad night.

To start, there is some not-so-bad news about the losses.

First, when you look at the numbers, the legislative losses don't reflect a rejection or even a rebuke of the Republican-led legislature of the last two years.

While the shift in seats was great, the shift in votes wasn't so great.

The Watchdog analyzed the aggregate votes for state Senate candidates, excluding Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and two seats without a GOP candidate (districts 19 and 40), all of which were obviously non-competitive. These were 11 excluded races in total.

In the remaining 56 races, DFL candidates received an aggregate vote of 1,201,872 while GOP candidates received 1,139,719, which isn't significant, especially in a presidential election year where DFL turnout is traditionally higher.

Unfortunately, the news doesn't get better from there.

A second factor in GOP losses was a poor effort on the part of many otherwise attractive candidates.

While Dave Senjem and Kurt Zellers and staff did a great job recruiting excellent candidates, some clearly didn't engage in the difficult and arduous work of raising money, knocking doors, and doing all the unglamorous things that make for victory on election night.

Just take a look at campaign finance reports. To be honest, there are some flat-out embarrassing fundraising numbers in there. You can't win without the proper resources. It's that simple. It's a fact that some candidates lost because they didn't raise enough money and/or didn't door knock hard enough.

And that's not anyone's fault except the candidate's. The candidate alone is responsible for the effort. The result is influenced by many factors but a strong effort on the part of the candidate is often times a necessary ingredient, especially for Republicans, who have no "gimme" seats.

Which brings us to the amendments. Simply put, the amendments backfired, failing to deliver the turnout punch many had hoped for.

In fact, the amendments went the other way, motivating turnout for the crowd opposed to the amendments.

The Watchdog spoke with a political operative who was involved with a liberal organization working to elect DFLers to the legislature.

This operative was of the strong opinion that the amendments, especially the marriage amendment, increased DFL voter enthusiasm, especially in college areas.

He chalked up the defeat of Rep. King Banian (R-Saint Cloud) to the amendment battle, as well as the legislative losses of both Travis Reimche and Phil Hansen in the Moorhead area.

In addition to firing up college crowds, the gay marriage amendment no doubt helped to contribute to the gender gap the GOP experienced.

Moreover, the campaigns for both these amendments were horribly executed. The people responsible for these campaigns were outraised, outspent, outhustled, outworked, and outthought.

Remember, the forces behind these amendments had the initiative. The ballot questions were selected and passed by the legislature at the time of their choosing.

The ball got fumbled in a big way and many people paid a price for it.

To watch the photo ID amendment drop like a rock in the polls made both the Emmer and Bills campaigns look like Karl Rove masterpieces.

Talk about a need to rethink things. We thought the Emmer campaign was the worst major campaign in party history. And then came the Bills campaign. And then came the photo ID campaign. And the marriage amendment campaign.

Four catastrophic campaigns in back to back cycles.

We're making it way, way too easy for the Left. This has got to stop.

May these people never work in politics again. Find another line of work.

Finally, folks shouldn't underestimate the Koch-Brodkorb scandal and its impact on the elections.

This was no garden variety affair. The first female Senate Majority Leader and the first GOP Senate Majority Leader in generations gets caught in a tawdry affair with a senior staffer who is also married.

Sometimes a story line serves as a powerful narrative for a larger argument.

In this case, the story supported a DFL narrative that this new majority couldn't manage the place. They couldn't govern. They were disrespecting the institution and sullyng the Senate.

The same argument Republicans made against Bill Clinton and what he did in and to the Oval Office.

DFLers pounded the narrative in targeted districts, forcing Republicans as a group to answer and apologize for the acts of two individuals not on the ballot.

All of this leads to the lessons learned.

Lesson number one: When you say that your focused on jobs and the economy, don't put gay marriage on the ballot the first year in office. Focus on jobs and economy.

Lesson number two: Republicans win on fiscal issues, especially in Minnesota. But focusing on fiscal issues also means reclaiming the mantle of fiscal responsibility. Years of school shifts, tobacco bonds, accelerated sales taxes, and credit facilities to cover cash flow have done much to tarnish the GOP brand with respect to this issue.

Living within your means isn't just a slogan.

Lesson number three: candidates and the campaigns matter. The GOP has to do a better job selecting candidates and monitoring the campaigns of those same candidates.

2014 will feature Mark Dayton and Al Franken on the ballot. A repeat of the Emmer-Bills debacle won't cut it. We need to get it right.

Time to get to work, conservatives.