

January 1, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Editor's Note: We at the Watchdog wish you and yours a happy, prosperous, and joyous 2016!

PERSON OF THE YEAR

This publication has never named a "Person of the Year" in our ten years of publishing.

But sometimes a person is deserving of such recognition, given their words and actions.

Such a person has presented themselves to Harold Hamilton this year.

A person who simply demands to be recognized for all they have done in 2015.

That man is Mark Dayton.

He deserves special recognition for both his words and actions as governor this past year.

His words have demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt he lacks the temperament to govern. Heck, he lacks the temperament to supervise a grade school playground. After all, you need to be more mature than the children if you are going to be in charge of them.

No matter who opposed the governor, Republican or Democrat, he just couldn't bring himself to disagree in an adult manner.

Here's a just a couple of low-lights from our 2015 archives:

What is perhaps more troubling is the governor's temperament. His inability to control his emotions. His surrender to anger, lashing out, and name calling political opponents. The subordination of emotion to reason. Hyper-partisanship instead of leadership.

Dayton's outright fitness for office is a legitimate question. He doesn't look up to the job, even though a majority of his fellow citizens saw fit to make him chief executive - twice.

The latest examples of his juvenile petulance (yes, "examples" in plural) were on display this week regarding two issues that attracted bi-partisan concern from legislators.

The first concerned large-scale pay raises for Dayton's cabinet heads, all of whom already earn high salaries and most of whom are nothing more than political appointees who are where they are thanks to their connection to the Dayton for Governor campaign and not their experience or expertise for the job at hand.

When a political appointee bureaucrat who already earns more than \$100,000 per year gets a 35% pay raise, any reasonable person would be right to question the raise.

Not according to Mark Dayton, who demonstrated the aforementioned lack of judgment in grating the fat raises in the first place.

When Republican legislators panned the raises, Dayton didn't respond by acknowledging their concerns or offering a detailed reasoning for the move. He didn't rise above the fray and provide the leadership called for in such a situation (early in the legislative session, a new House GOP majority).

Instead, in his typical modus operandi, he lashed out at his GOP critics, taunting them.

"If this is their revenge for my getting re-elected over their candidate by 100,000 votes, they'll keep bashing," Dayton exclaimed to reporters this week.

How this issue is even remotely connected to Dayton's re-election was never explained by him.

And Dayton's juvenile petulance wasn't confined to Republicans: "Conniving." "Backstabbing." "Can't be trusted." Harsh words indeed. And that's only one high-powered Democrat talking to another.

That kind of language hasn't been seen since John Bender's dad went on a tirade against his only son.

Yes, the legislature is back in session and the entertainment, and threats to our liberties, has begun.

The issue over Governor Dayton handing out fat pay raises to his political appointees literally exploded this past week, offering a bunch of fascinating subtexts to the 2015 legislative session.

And it's only February.

The first subtext ties in directly to a piece we published last week, exploring the governor's difficulty in controlling himself and his emotions, leading him to frequently lash out against those who disagree with him.

What's ironic is that the piece was written prior to the governor losing his marbles on Senator Bakk over the Senate's handling of the pay raise issue.

The governor's wild tirade was classic Dayton and showed that Dayton hasn't become "unleashed" because he's run his last election. The dude has become positively unhinged.

In addition to the whole spoiled-rich-kid-lashing-out-because-people-won't-do-what-he-says routine, the governor has amply demonstrated that he doesn't do know what he's doing.

This guy has crapped the bed more than all the modern Minnesota governors combined.

Check out this list, the biggest Mark Dayton Fails:

Mark Dayton's face plant on the pay raise issue caused a bit of a debate in conservative circles this week. Essentially, the debate centered on what people considered to be Mark Dayton's most epic fail.

Here are the Watchdog's ten favorite Dayton Epic Fails of his governorship (if we included the Senate days, it would be a top 25):

E-Pull Tab Failure: According to numbers released yesterday by the Minnesota Gambling Control Board, e-pulltabs actually contributed \$0 to the stadium cause after expenses were accounted for. Gamers spent \$15 million playing e-pulltabs, but \$13 million of that was gobbled up as prizes, with the remaining \$2 million covering various charity expenses and taxes.

- City Pages 9/13/13

Dayton Unaware of PSLs: "They are relatively minor in the scheme of the entire project things, like the personal seat licenses, that as far as I'm concerned snuck in there. There were others who were negotiating in more detail that were more aware of it."

- MN Public Radio 8/9/13

Dayton Tells Moms to Buy Pot on the Street: "So I explained to [the governor] how my son and others like him would benefit from safe and legal access to medical marijuana. I told him in great detail our story and our struggles. My optimism quickly turned to dismay when, after hearing my son's story, the governor actually suggested I should just find medical marijuana for my son off the street."

- Jessica Hauser, medical marijuana mom, 3/26/14

Dayton Seeks to Release Violent Sex Offender: Two psychologists who reviewed his case last year said he was highly likely to re-offend, that he had a "homicidal rage towards women," and may actually have anywhere from 60 to 200 victims. Duvall's rap sheet goes back to 35 years, when he raped a 17-year-old girl he met at the State Fair. His convictions include raping a 17 year-old girl and beating her with a hammer.

Unaware of Farm Equipment Tax He Signed into Law: Once the public notices the new tax on farmers, Dayton first blames Legislative staff for a drafting error for its inclusion. Then he blamed House and Senate Democrat leaders, saying the provision was "snuck" into the bill and that most legislators did not know about it. Finally Dayton blamed an "imperfect process", even though the legislature had four months to write the tax bill and he had three days before signing it to read it.

- Media Reports July-August 2013

MnSure Failure: In a detailed report to the Minnesota state Legislature, auditors said the state's health insurance exchange, known as MNSure, was riddled with mistakes and failures during its rollout. Some of the key issues uncovered by the auditor included keeping information from elected officials and the public, promoting publicly enrollment goals known internally to be inaccurate, and a general lack of accountability.

- Heartland News Service 2/24/15

Despite Failure, MSure Bonuses Issued: As the state rolled out its troubled

health insurance exchange, MNsure managers received bonus pay totaling \$26,354 for work done in the three months leading up to the Oct. 1 launch. Gov. Mark Dayton said Friday that he first learned at least six months later of controversial contract changes made by the state's health exchange. He said he also didn't know about the serious technical issues plaguing MNsure until after the exchange's Oct. 1 launch.

- Media Reports January 2014

Massive Pay Increases for Highly Compensated Political Appointees: With no more elections to worry about, Gov. Dayton decided to hand out five-figure raises to each of the 26 state commissioners and agency heads last month. The pay increases total more than \$800,000 for a group of public servants who were already all making more than \$88,000 annually. The sole exception was the Met Council Chair, who made \$58,000, but Dayton shifted that job to full-time and increased the salary to \$145,000.

- City Pages 2/6/15

Generous as Hell - With Other's Money: Gov. Mark Dayton acknowledged Wednesday that he was embarrassed by the tax return he released Tuesday that showed he had given only \$1,000 to charity despite total earnings of \$343,234 last year, according to his tax returns released this week.

- Star Tribune 11/13/13

Dayton Taxes the Poor After He Said He Wouldn't: During the 2010 campaign, Dayton said he would oppose increasing taxes on cigarettes, because such a tax would be regressive. In 2013, he changed his position and supported a whopping \$1.60 per pack tax increase on cigarettes.

MinnPost 10/17/14

January 8, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

SENATE DISTRICT 35 - THE PREDICTION

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

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

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

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

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

In short, they see Abeler as DFL-lite.

(Editor's Note: The Watchdog strongly condemns Abeler's exploitation of the 35W bridge collapse to justify his veto override of a \$6 billion transportation funding bill. It is an established scientific fact that the bridge collapsed because of a faulty engineering design of the gusset plates, which had nothing to do with funding. Exploiting a deadly tragedy for political gain is nothing short of disgusting).

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

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

Leslie Davis to George Washington in one fell swoop.

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

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

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

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

Here's why.

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

It's therefore an intensity election.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Like or not, that's the dynamic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That doesn't mean they should.

January 15, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

SENATE DISTRICT 35 - THE AFTERMATH

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

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

So what contributed to Jim Abeler's win?

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

So what the heck happened?

Three things tilted this race to Abeler.

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

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

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

Since Abeler was well known and not well liked among the universe of GOP primary voters, he had to rely on strategy to turn out people who don't normally show up to vote in a GOP primary election.

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

But it happened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS

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

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

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

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

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

Heck, he's registered lobbyist himself.

So what.

Getting clobbered that badly in the money race is inexcusable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Which leads to the third observation.

CANDIDATE QUALITY MATTERS

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

That turned out to be wrong.

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

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

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

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

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

Aplikowski was a first-time candidate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So who are the winners and losers here?

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

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

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

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

And the losers?

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

The state Party takes yet another step into irrelevancy.

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

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

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

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

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

Stay tuned!

January 22, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Barack Obama (2008)

1. Iron Range Unemployment;
2. Bonding Buffoonery;
3. Cuba and Capitalism.

IRON RANGE UNEMPLOYMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That's all true.

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

economy.

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

We observe that government never, ever, does a better job allocating resources than the market place.

No one knows when the Iron Range will recover or even what job skills will be needed on which amounts in the future.

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

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

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

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

BONDING BUFFOONERY

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

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

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

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

Here's a flavor:

\$2.135 million for a snow making machine in Battle Creek park to support

tubing and sledding activities.

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

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

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

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

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

So many questions are begged by all of this madness.

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

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

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

According to the Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), there is over \$136 million in authorized bonding that is sitting on the books unencumbered, some of it going back to 1995. Why not cancel these authorizations and either

re-purpose them or return the money to the treasury?

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

CUBA AND CAPITALISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capitalism: It's great thing.

January 29, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

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

- Legislative Auditor James Nobles

1. Let's All Enjoy Some More Government;
2. Peak Oil - Again!

LET'S ALL ENJOY SOME MORE GOVERNMENT

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

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

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

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

59 of those enrollees were ineligible for the program in which they were enrolled, an error rate of 38%.
What's worse, that's an error rate double the previous year's error rate of 19%.

What's even worse than that, of the 59 enrollees in the wrong program, 44 of those 59 weren't eligible for ANY public health care program. In other words, they were collecting public benefits for which they weren't eligible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Department of Human Services did not resolve discrepancies with social security numbers, citizenship or immigration status, or household income that MNsure identified for further verification. This is a repeat finding.

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

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

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

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

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

Let's all enjoy some more government. Indeed.

PEAK OIL - AGAIN!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That's rich.

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

February 6, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Governor Mark Dayton

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

- Article III, Section 12 of the Minnesota Constitution

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

1. A Country Without a Man;
2. Oh, the Inequality.

A COUNTRY WITHOUT A MAN

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

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

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

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

So what's a conservative to do next Tuesday?

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

There are five choices available to conservatives.

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

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

Indeed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, if Johnson were to win, it would only be for one short legislative

session. With the DFL firmly in the majority in the Senate, it's not as if Johnson could do much damage beyond which the DFL Senate would already inflict on the state.

Despite being an incumbent, Johnson would almost assuredly lose to a solid Republican candidate in November in 2016, given his hard core liberalism and conceited demeanor, both of which are a real turn off in this Anoka County district.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OH, THE INEQUALITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beam us up, Scotty.

February 12, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Washington Post

1. Your Tax Dollars at Work (Or Not);
2. Special Election Update.

YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK (OR NOT)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Holiday Pay: 88 hours per year;
Vacation Pay: 234 hours per year;
Sick Leave: 104 hours per year.

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

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

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

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

An additional six weeks equates to 240 hours.

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

666 hours equates to 32% of the work year.

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

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

That's outrageous, plain and simple.

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

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

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

Think about it.

SPECIAL ELECTION UPDATE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Good luck with all that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Republican Chad Anderson won over DFLer Andrew Carlson in a Democrat leaning district (Obama carried the district by 15 points in 2012) that had been

held by DFLer Ann Lenczewski, who had held the seat since 1998 but decided earlier this year to not walk but sprint through the revolving door to become a lobbyist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[HRCC Bloomington ad.](#)

February 19, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Ayn Rand

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

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

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

- Senator Obama (2006)

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

1. Enslavement by Vote;
2. Assisting the Poor;
3. Northstar Rail - Again.

ENSLAVEMENT BY VOTE

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

Kennedy Hubert Humphrey, is dead.
Deader than a door nail.

The party, once led by men who no doubt believed in the role of government, was also a party that on the whole supported free enterprise, tax cuts, a vigorous national defense, and a love of country.
In short, the party at its core had a respect for the American ideals of liberty, individualism, and patriotism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capitalism breeds freedom. Socialism breeds state control.

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

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

It has been 27 years since communism collapsed under its own weight, and totalitarian government has been relegated to remote corners of the world like North Korea, while European-style socialism is an ocean away.

Having said all that, there is a stark reminder for all of us regarding exactly

what socialism means to our collective freedom and prosperity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ASSISTING THE POOR

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

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

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

The call is ironic because the Pope has demonstrated his rhetorical penchant

for simultaneously calling for charity while harshly criticizing capitalism.

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

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

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

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

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

NORTHSTAR RAIL - AGAIN

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

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

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

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

In 2010, the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA), the joint powers board that oversees the line, also concluded that the feds were unlikely to say that the metrics supported the extension.

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

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

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

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

the tax payers.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, please do the same regarding Northstar.

February 26, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Larry Womack

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

1. Farewell, Rep. Sanders;
2. Poll Results;
3. Better Call Saul;
4. No Bailout!

FAREWELL, REP. SANDERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POLL RESULTS

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

Drumroll, please.

The overwhelming winner is Ted Cruz.

Cruz: 43%

Trump: 24%

Rubio: 24%

Kasich: 6%

Undecided: 3%

Carson: 0%

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

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

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

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

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

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

BETTER CALL SAUL

Saul Alinski, that is. It is with no small amount of smug satisfaction that we at the Watchdog have watched socialist Bernie Sanders use Alinski's "[Rules for Radicals](#)" against Hillary Clinton.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

###

Aw, poor Hillary.

NO BAILOUT!

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

No way.

Those pension promises are a private contract between the Teamster's

employer "partners" and the union.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Take it to court, not Washington.

March 4, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

1. Broadband Bloat;
2. Government Union's Epic Fail;
3. Trump Rolls On.

BROADBAND BLOAT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When XYZ Telecom uses the program to hook up Joe Farmer, Joe Famer is

now a customer of XYZ, using XYZ's network.

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

Of course, there may be situations where government has decided to be in the communications business, but the point remains that this is often a subsidy and a sop to for-profit telecoms

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

Not true for private telecommunications infrastructure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And that's not all. The remaining 60% of the project's cost will be covered by

taxpayers in the form of a loan from Swift County to Federated Telephone. Terms of the loan were not disclosed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT UNION'S EPIC FAIL

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

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

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

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

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

union.

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

The fig leaf the government used to deem these business owners "government employees" was the fact that they receive government payments, called Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) payments, to subsidize the cost of certain children in their care.

Oh, it gets worse.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRUMP ROLLS ON

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

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

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

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

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

We don't see it happening.

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

It very likely won't happen.

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

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

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

Not likely.

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

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

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

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

March 11, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

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

1. Protectionist Pablum;
2. Dayton vs. Dayton;
3. The Zombie Train.

PROTECTIONIST PABLUM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The decline of Detroit predates NAFTA.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Free trade creates jobs for Americans and thousands of them. Take

agriculture, for example. We grow far more commodities than we can eat. Where do you suppose farmers send the rest?

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

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

DAYTON VS. DAYTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stay with us.

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

Hold on.

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

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

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

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

THE ZOMBIE TRAIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Between those years, ridership numbers have barely crept up.

During that same time, ridership subsidies have remained fairly constant, at

roughly \$22 per rider, per trip. That \$44 per rider per round trip. So, for example, a person living in Coon Rapids but working in downtown Minneapolis costs taxpayers \$44 to ride Northstar.

If that person works a normal schedule of 260 days in a year, the taxpayer subsidy is a whopping \$11,440.

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

March 18, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

1. The Governor's Very Bad Week;
2. Gas Tax Calculator.

THE GOVERNOR'S VERY BAD START

Well, Watchdogs, the 2016 legislative session has gotten off to a very bad start for Governor Dayton, which means that its "situation normal" for our intrepid chief executive.

It appears that the center of his troubles these days are centered on the Iron Range.

This is really no surprise, as the Range is ground zero for the crack up taking place in the DFL.

While the DFL and their liberal allies in the media laugh about the splinter in the GOP eye (e.g. Trump), they ignore the log jammed in the DFL eye.

For some time, a fight has been brewing between rural and Metro Democrats. This schism is most pronounced regarding environmental issues.

The limousine liberals from Lake of the Isles want to preserve that area like some sort of stuffed animal, frozen in time for them to enjoy as they "summer" (used a verb) in the area.

On the other side, locals treasure the quality jobs and economic prosperity delivered by mining and construction jobs.

This divide is growing and may sometime in the not too distant future result in Iron Range voters finally giving the DFL the boot.

(Editor's Note: The Watchdog has seen polling data that show Donald Trump

doing very well in the 8th Congressional District.)

The divide has been put on full display this legislative session thanks to two issues: The collapse of iron ore prices and the decision of Dayton to throw up a road block to the Twin Metals mining project.

With the collapse of iron ore and taconite prices, unemployment has skyrocketed on the Iron Range, resulting in long-term unemployment that has led some citizens to exhaust their benefits.

As readers know, there has been a battle in the legislature over these benefits, specifically whether or not an extension of the benefits should include a tax rebate back to employers of the money they put into the unemployment trust fund. The fund balance stands at a record amount and holds more money than what is called for in law.

This disagreement between Republicans and DFLers over whether the tax refund should be included in the bill has led to a stalemate.

This week, Governor Dayton weighed in and remarked that he would sign a bill that contained the tax rebate, a clear sign that he supported or at least would not oppose the Republican position.

Many news outlets carried the news and his support was clear. Or at least the words were clear.

But much like so many other major pronouncements from this governor, he later issues a "clarification."

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

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

"In response to press questions yesterday, I said that, hypothetically, I would

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

It didn't get much better for the Governor when he took action to block the Twin Metals project and declared the project a threat to the environment.

For those who don't know, the Twin Metals project is a mining project located near Ely that proposes to mine copper, nickel, platinum, palladium, silver, and gold.

The project will offer 850 full-time jobs when complete, with an additional 1,900 jobs in supporting industries.

The three-year construction phase will entail 12 million construction labor hours for construction workers.

Dayton's opposition drew swift condemnation from DFL quarters on the Iron Range.

A letter criticizing the decision was sent to the governor, which was signed by Senators Bakk, Saxhaug and Tomassoni and Reps. Anzelc, Melin, and Metsa.

The lone Republican in the Iron Range delegation, Dale Lueck, also signed on.

The letter noted how vital the project was to the Range's economic future and practically begged the governor to allow it to move forward.

The sense of betrayal felt by loyal Range Democrats was best expressed by Joe Begich, a former state representative and lifelong DFL activist.

Begich wrote an open letter to the governor, carried in the Star Tribune in which he noted his "heavy heart" regarding Dayton's anti-mining stance.

He also noted the number of people he knew on the Range who were going to vote Republican because of this action - and others.

Begich went on to wonder if Dayton's actions regarding another mining project, "Polymet," were a "smoke screen" to hide an effort to kill the project

without appearing to do so.

The letter was signed, "Your Friend (?)."

Ouch.

The Iron Range is turning into a real hornet's nest for the governor.

On the other hand, maybe the DFL no longer cares about the Range. After all, these are people who cling to their guns and religion.

Why is it that Democrats seem to be so concerned that rural America get a lot of welfare but so little in the way of good jobs?

These are proud people who want to work.

They want a hand up, not a hand out.

GAS TAX CALCULATOR

Check out this neat [calculator](#) that allows you to calculate how much the DFL's proposed gas tax would cost you.

This is the gas tax that the Senator Bakk, the DFL Senate leader, has called his "number one priority."

No word on where mining ranks on his priority list.

Funny, it wasn't a priority when the DFL controlled the House, Senate and governor's office, when they could have easily passed it.

This is yet another broken promise and another tax on people who certainly aren't rich, despite all those promises to protect the middle class.

March 25, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Office of the Minnesota Legislative Auditor

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

- The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States

1. Mark Dayton - What Went Wrong;
2. Trump's Rights.

MARK DAYTON - WHAT WENT WRONG

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

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

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

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

Here's what we found.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lieutenant Governor Tina Smith is a former Planned Parenthood executive.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And it's not much better for Democrats.

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

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

Dayton claimed Bakk "stabbed me in the back."

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

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

As a fellow DFLer and Senate Majority Leader, Tom Bakk should have been Dayton's biggest ally.

Instead, Dayton didn't burn the bridge. He dropped a tactical nuke on it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The aforementioned "number one priorities" that come and go like a dog fart on a breezy porch.

The constant clarifications and backtracking.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRUMP'S RIGHTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

April 1, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. The Abeler Unit Re-Established;
2. IRRRB Madness.

THE ABELER UNIT RE-ESTABLISHED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regardless, this publication will be watching.

IRRRB MADNESS

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

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

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

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

What could go wrong with such a scheme?

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

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

And it ain't pretty.

Here's how the IRRRB works:

A large part of IRRRB's economic development work is awarding loans and grants. Businesses are the primary recipients of loans; municipalities and nonprofit organizations primarily receive the grants. IRRRB owns the Giants Ridge Recreation Area in Biwabik, which is a public resort that offers golf and

skiing, among other activities. In addition, it owns the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm, a museum highlighting the region's history.

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

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

Here are some of those OLA program review findings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every citizen has a right to good government.

These citizens are in desperate need of it.

What a shame.

April 8, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Ben Stein on Donald Trump's economic views

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

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

1. Legislative Update;

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is a harsh reality at play here, readers.

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

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

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

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

Check the bill introductions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It will be interesting to see how it plays out.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the other hand, neither Speaker Daudt nor Majority Leader Bakk will take a bad deal, in our opinion. They would likely walk away rather than take a bad deal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

April 15, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

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

- Star Tribune 4/13/16

1. Tax Day;
2. Endorsement Updates;
3. More Chickens Coming Home to Roost;
4. Liberation Litigation;
5. Euro-DFL.

TAX DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Congratulations.

ENDORSEMENT UPDATES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The DFL has also experienced their own twists and turns.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both of Kahn's opponents are non-white.

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

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

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

Now those chickens are coming home to roost.

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

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

MORE CHICKENS COMING HOME TO ROOST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now that the guns have turned inward, cheers have turned to whining and complaining.

It's been amusing to watch the liberal crack up, as the faithful are learning that group identity politics and political dirty tricks are blunt force weapons that difficult to control and often result on collateral damage.

LIBERATION LITIGATION

Okay, let's take a poll. Raise your hand if you think it's easy to get rid of bad teachers in the public schools.

Raise your hand if you think it's nearly impossible to fire bad teachers because of rules put in place by the teachers' union and their DFL political allies (and Jim Abeler).

That's what we thought.

It was announced this week that two education groups plan to file a lawsuit in Minnesota to overturn these onerous laws and liberate kids trapped in bad schools.

While the lawsuit will likely take issue with many state laws regarding teachers, one in particular stands out.

That law dictates what is called the "LIFO" policy (last-in-first-out). This means that when it comes to layoffs, a school district must lay off teachers by seniority, with merit playing little or no role in the decision.

Really? Raise your hand if your job requires layoffs by seniority, with no room for merit to be taken into account.

Unless you work for the post office or a North Korean state-owned enterprise, odds are layoffs don't happen by seniority.

What a scam.

From school boards up to the White House, the teachers' union has set up a cushy regime to escape accountability by using mandatory union dues to buy influence.

Not only should these unreasonable tenure rules be abolished, the mandatory collection of union dues from public school teachers should similarly be nixed.

EURO-DFL

To end the week, we leave with this little number, courtesy of DFL state Senator John Marty, who chairs the Environment committee.

This language regards electronic video displays and is contained in an omnibus bill he is assembling right now in committee.

Thank goodness the GOP controls the House.

If you doubted that the Democrats look to socialist states of Old Europe, read on:

(b) By September 1, 2008, and each year thereafter, A manufacturer of video display devices sold or offered for sale to a household must include in the registration submitted under paragraph (a), a statement disclosing whether:

(1) any video display devices sold to households exceed the maximum concentration values established for lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, polybrominated biphenyls (PBB's), and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE's) under the RoHS (restricting the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment) Directive 2002/95/EC of the European Parliament and Council and any amendments thereto; or

(2) the manufacturer has received an exemption from one or more of those maximum concentration values under the RoHS Directive that has been approved and published by the European Commission.

So what's the response from Democrats?

More of the same ineffective programs, except more of it.

Since the start of the current legislative session, the DFL has listed "addressing racial disparities" as a high priority, going so far as to include the subject in the list of possible items to address in a hoped-for special session before the regular session convened on March 8th.

When a special session didn't happen, the DFL-majority then constituted a "sub-committee on equity," chaired by Senators Jeff Hayden and Bobby Joe Champion of Minneapolis.

Thus far, the sub-committee has considered a number of bills, all purported to "address" (not "solve") racial disparities.

Of course, all of these bills entail spending millions of dollars.

The agenda from April 11th, 2016 is instructive.

That day, 19 bills were considered, all of them having the word "appropriation" in the bill title.

And those appropriations are all in the form of grants, which require no repayment and are accompanied by no meaningful metrics to track outcomes.

But outcomes aren't an objective.

If outcomes were an objective, other means of providing a hand up would be considered.

As opposed to outcomes, the real object is simply to pay off constituencies.

First, let's dispense with the myth regarding outcomes. These grants and appropriations have been expended at the local, state, and federal level or generations, with no meaningful positive outcomes.

Now take a look at the way this system works, as was put on full display recently regarding the controversy surrounding the Community Action of Minneapolis (CAM) scandal.

Readers will recall that CAM is one of the many non-profits in the urban core that acts as a sort of fiscal agent to accept and then distribute government grants for a variety of social programs.

CAM has been under criminal investigation for an alleged misappropriation of taxpayer dollars.

Those allegations include CAM's employees and board members converting funds to personal use, such as junkets, spa retreats, and personal home improvements.

Moreover, Sen. Jeff Hayden has been under fire for his role in CAM, sitting on the group's board of directors.

Note that this same Sen. Jeff Hayden is the co-chair of this sub-committee in charge of handing out the grants.

Connecting the dots yet?

It's also no coincidence that higher level candidates like Hillary Clinton are working hard to court the African-American vote this year.

Now we see a sub-committee dedicated to pandering to this demographic.

This strategy is similar to the raft of bills introduced by the DFL this year targeted to women, thereby building the "war on women" narrative the DFL would like to prosecute against republicans.

What a cynical and tragic state of affairs. Millions of Americans sentenced to poor schools and little chance for the opportunity to succeed.

This country sees the tragedy of millions of our citizens relegated to the economic sidelines year after year, generation after generation.

Of course, individuals are primarily responsible for their own opportunities and success.

But government is responsible for core functions that promote the general welfare and common good of the people.

Clearly, government is failing in this regard and doesn't much care.

For the DFL, that isn't the object of this particular exercise.

HURRY, HURRAY, HUUUURRRRAAAAYYYYYY

We've all heard the carnival barkers, urging the masses to "step right up!" and spend their hard earned cash on paper thin promises, be they a tonic to increase virility, see the bearded lady, or buy that "rare" Chevy sedan that GM only produced about 6 million of before someone else does.

"I had three guys in here this morning looking at the car! It won't last!"

The age-old art of carnival barking has now moved into the world of government, an unholy confluence of nihilism and cynicism sure to accelerate the decline of Western Civilization.

The government's newest barker extraordinaire is none other than Senator Al Franken, a man uniquely qualified to take the public stage and spew so much BS from his yap.

Sen. Franken brought his megaphone to the Southwest Metro this week to urge taxpayers and legislators to step right up and fund the Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) project.

You see, legislators have to hurry, hurry, huuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrrrrrrraaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaayyyyyyyy because if the state doesn't step up with its share of the funding this year, then the federal government's share will be withdrawn and given to some other city.

Yeah, right.

This is an old schtick that's been around for years. Threaten the withdrawal of federal funds unless the state steps up right away.

This trick was used for Northstar rail. Not surprisingly, the federal money was available year after year, even as critics begged and pleaded with the federal government to withhold the money and kill the project.

Unfortunately, that won't happen. The feds will indeed hold out the \$895 million matching money for years to come, even though the money isn't real because the federal government is insolvent and trillions in debt.

The old carnival barker trick here is to induce a sense of urgency and scarcity in the "mark."

Buy this car because someone was here this morning and is at the bank right now securing financing.

Buy this train right now because if you don't seize the opportunity, Portland will.

And, of course, owning a shiny new light rail line also confers upon its owners a measure of hipness and coolness.

All the cool cities have trains. And all the cool millennials who populate the cities think they're cool.

You don't want to be a city without trains. Without a train line or three, you'll be eating lunch alone and won't have a date to the prom.

In addition to all this feel good salesmanship devoid of empirical support, it has been deeply concerning to watch the narrative slowly pivot from the transportation aspects of this mass transit project to the economic development aspects of this mass transit project.

It's as if apologists for the train have lost the transit argument (yes, busses will get you from Eden Prairie to downtown Minneapolis faster) and are now claiming that SWLRT is needed for "economic development."

If that's the case, then why not just admit it and put the \$1.7 billion into direct economic development subsidies?

Why not give a \$2 billion property tax break to businesses in the corridor, for example?

Minnesota has been fooled time and again into building these boondoggles.

Thankfully, many legislators won't be fooled on this project and are resisting the shrill siren song of an intemperate, surly Hollywood carnival barker posing as a U.S. Senator.

April 29, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: While I can't promise a whole lot when dealing with Governor Dayton, I can promise you two things: one, there will be no increase in the gas tax and two, there will be no funding for the Southwest Light Rail project."

- Speaker of the Minnesota House, Kurt Daudt

1. Northstar Redux;
2. Northstar Déjà vu All Over Again;
3. Economic Development?;
4. The Liberal World View.

NORTHSTAR REDUX

Northstar rail, the failed commuter rail project, has gained a higher profile of late as elected officials across the state highlight this white elephant as they counsel against funding more rail, including the Southwest Light Rail Line.

A recent Facebook post from state Representative Marion O'Neill is typical of those strong reminders. On April 24th, O'Neill posted: "What costs you \$900/month? The public subsidy for one person to ride Northstar to and from work for one month. We could lease each one a Mercedes and pay for the gas, and spend less. Thank you, idiots who voted for this."

That's a good question. So, who did vote for this boondoggle that was thrust upon the taxpayers?

Recall just a bit of legislative history. After opposing Northstar as a gubernatorial candidate, Tim Pawlenty became a supporter of the project.

In 2004, the legislature elected not pass a bonding bill, and Northstar was left stranded, along with all the other pork that normally accompanies debt-leveraged bonding projects.

In 2005, the legislature passed a bonding bill, which was a "make up" bill for the failure to pass one in 2004.

That bill arrived on both the floor of both the House and Senate with an appropriation for Northstar, which was needed to leverage federal funds.

The best vote to "score" regarding Northstar was the amendment offered in both bodies to strip out funding for the project.

Here's how the vote on the amendment went down. (A "yes" vote was to defund Northstar; a "no" vote was to keep funding for Northstar in the bill.)

SENATE DFL "NO" VOTES

Ellen Anderson, Tom Bakk, Linda Berglin, Don, Betzold, Satveer Chaudhary, Dick Cohen, Scott Dibble, Leo Foley, Linda Higgins, John Hottinger, Steve Kelly, Gary Kubly, Keith Langseth, Becky Lourey, Sharon Marko, John Marty, Jim Metzen, Mee Moua, Steve Murphy, Sandy Pappas, Larry Pogemiller, Jane Ranum, Ann Rest, Dallas Sams, Tom Saxhaug, Linda Scheid, Rod Skoe, Wes Skoglund, Yvonne Solon, Dan Sparks, LeRoy Stumpf, David Tomasonni, Jim Vickerman, Chuck Wiger

SENATE DFL "YES" VOTES

Ha, ha, ha

SENATE GOP "YES" VOTES

Michele Bachmann, Chris Gerlach, Brian LeClair, Warren Limmer, Sean Nienow, Mady Reiter

SENATE GOP "NO" VOTES

Bill Belanger, Dick Day, Steve Dille, Michelle Fischbach, Dennis Frederickson, David Gaither, Debbie Johnson, Mike Jungbauer, Bob Kierlin, Paul Koering, Cal Larson, Mike McGinn, Geoff Michel, Tom Nueville, Gen Olson, Julianne Ortman, Pat Pariseau, Claire Robling, Julie Rosen, Carrie Ruud, Dave Senjem, Betsy Wergin

HOUSE GOP "YES" VOTES

Laura Brod, Mark Buesgens, Mike Charron, Matt Dean, Chris DeLaForest, Rob Eastlund, Sondra Erickson, Brad Finstad, Rod Hamilton, MaryLiz Holberg, Joe Hoppe, Jeff Johnson, Karen Klinzing, Paul Kohls, Phil Krinkie, Pete Nelson, Bud Nornes, Mark Olson, Erik Paulsen, Joyce Peppin, Duke Powell, Marty Seifert, Ray Vandever, Lynn Wardlow, Torrey Westrom, Tim Wilkin

HOUSE GOP "NO" VOTES

Jim Abler, Ron Abrams, Bruce Anderson, Mike Beard, Greg Blaine, Fran Bradley, Tony Cornish, Ray Cox, Lloyd Cybart, Greg Davids, Randy Demmer, Jerry Dempsey, Dan Dorman, Tom Emmer, Pat Garofalo, Paul Gazelka, Bob Gunther, Tom Hackbarth, Bud Heidgerken, Larry Howes, Jim Knoblach, Morrie Lanning, Doug Magnus, Denny McNamara, Doug Meslow, Scott Newman, Dennis Ozment, Maxine Penas, Neil Peterson, Connie Ruth, Char Samuelson, Dan Severson, Dean Simpson, Steve Smith, Judy Soderstrom, Steve Sviggum, Barb Sykora, Kathy Tingelstad, Dean Urdahl, Andy Westerberg, Kurt Zellers

DFL "YES" VOTES

Paul Marquart

DFL "NO" VOTES

Irv Anderson, Joe Atkins, Connie Bernardy, Lyndon Carlson, Karen Clark, Jim Davnie, David Dill, Denise Dittrich, John Dorn, Kent Eken, Keith Ellison, Matt Entenza, Patti Fritz, Barb Goodwin, Mindy Greiling, Rick Hansen, Alice Hausman, Deb Hillstrom, Bill Hilty, Frank Hornstein, Melissa Hortman, Larry Hosch, Tom Huntley, Mike Jaros, Ruth Johnson, Sheldon Johnson, Al Juhnke, Phyllis Kahn, Margaret Kelliher, Lyle Koenen, Dan Larson, Ron Latz, Ann Lenczewski, John Lesch, Tina Liebling, Bernie Lieder, Leon Lillie, Diane Loeffler, Tim Mahoney, Carlos Mariani, Frank Moe, Joe Mullery, Mary Murphy, Mike Nelson, Joe Opatz, Mary Ellen Otremba, Michael Paymar, Gene Pelowski, Aaron Peterson, Sandra Peterson, Jeanne Poppe, Tom Rukavina, Maria Ruud, Brita Sailer, Bev Scalze, Marty Sertich, Katie Sieben, Steve Simon, Nora Slawik, Loren Solberg, Cy Thao, Paul Thissen, Jean Wagenius, Neva Walker, Andy Welti

NORTHSTAR DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

Recently, U.S. Senator Al Franken took to the microphone at a press event to breathlessly proclaim that the Minnesota legislature had best act this year to appropriate the state match for the \$1.9 billion Southwest Light Rail project, lest the federal match be allocated to another city ready, willing, and able to waste the money.

Warned Franken, "If the state legislature doesn't act this session, that \$895 million would go to New York or California or Washington state, the Seattle area. As a senator from the state of Minnesota, I want to see those resources come here - that money come here to Minnesota."

Oh, really?

In searching our archives, we came across this quote from Northstar commuter rail cheerleader Jim Abeler, before he went job hopping to registered lobbyist to state senator.

After the legislature failed to provide state matching funds for Northstar in 2004, MPR reported the following, "Representative Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, says the House vote isn't a fatal blow to the project, but he says something needs to happen this year or the state will lose federal matching money. 'This is the last chance, I don't think there is next year. The counties have worked very hard, and it still needs to go forward, and I'm sorry the House couldn't provide that help,' he said."

Of course, the money was available a year later and the rest is dark history.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

While the Star Tribune has lately been filled with dubious tales of the economic development that allegedly follows rail, there was very little reported on the news that the Anoka County Regional Rail Authority received ZERO bids on two parcels located along the Northstar commuter rail line.

According to an article in the Anoka County Union, the rail authority didn't receive a single bid for either of two parcels located in the Coon Rapids area in the Evergreen Business Park.

The county is now deciding what to do with property it owns that no one apparently wants.

The market always votes with its wallet.

It looks like rail brings in the same economic development opportunities as taxpayer subsidized sports stadiums.

THE LIBERAL WORLD VIEW

Every now and then, a choice quote encapsulates an entire moment, and entire mood, and entire ideology.

That happened this week when DFL Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk of Cook reacted to a GOP proposal to dedicate a portion of general fund revenues to fund transportation, instead of raising the gas tax.

Said Bakk, "I don't want to put roads and bridges into competition with early childhood programs, and K-12 schools, and nursing homes and health care and everything else that depends on our general fund."

What a naïve, bordering on childish, statement.

It's almost like a spoiled child who is told he can have cake or ice cream, but not both.

Boo hoo.

Making choices and prioritizing resources is what taxpayers, be they families or small businesses, do every day.

Pay raises or capital equipment. A new car or a new roof.

Only government would consider simply demanding both.

Of course, every time the government budget grows in order to accommodate cake AND ice cream, it comes at the expense of the family budget.

When government has another slice of cake, the family budget has fewer carrots and peas to eat.

And they claim to be looking out for the middle class. Bunk. They look out only for themselves.

Had enough?

May 6, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Parents are the best advocates to stand up against a public education system that is failing Minnesota children, especially our children of color."

- Nekima Levy-Pounds, NAACP Minneapolis president

1. Government Lobbies Government - And You Pay;
2. Get Up, Stand Up;
3. Trump Is It.

GOVERNMENT LOBBIES GOVERNMENT - AND YOU PAY

Government work. It's good if you can get it. While the Obama economic recovery continues to limp along, with stagnant wages and a shrinking middle class, the government class continues to prosper.

Each year, the Office of the State Auditor a report that tallies up the total amount of money local units of government spend to lobby other levels of government and each other - and you get to pay for it.

This is taxpayer money that school boards could have spent to lower class sizes. It's money your city could have spent to fill pot holes. It's money your county could have spent hiring another deputy.

It's money your local unit of government could have put back in your pocket.

It's nothing short of appalling that our local units of government spent nearly \$9 million on lobbying last year, an 8.3% increase over 2014.

They don't need lobbyists - period.

Every city council member, school board member, and county commissioner has email and a phone. They know how to call their legislators and ask for pork. They see their local legislators, who live in the area, on a regular basis. They have staff who can do the same.

The statistics from the report's executive summary tell the story:

Local governments spent a total of \$8,926,786 on lobbying activities in 2015. This represents an increase of \$687,746, or 8.3 percent, over the amount spent on lobbying services in 2014.

In 2015, 101 local governments (ten more than in 2014) reported that they directly employed staff or hired contract lobbyists in 2015. These local governments spent a total of \$4,674,403 on staff and contract lobbyists. This was \$398,796, or 9.3 percent, more than in 2014.

In addition to the \$4.7 million paid directly to staff and contract lobbyists, local governments paid dues of \$11,683,827 in 2015 to local government associations that also represented their interests before legislative, administrative, or other governmental bodies.⁴ These associations spent \$4,252,383 on lobbyists and lobbying in 2015, an increase of 7.3 percent over 2014. Of the \$4.3 million spent on lobbyists and lobbying by these associations, \$3,776,740 was funded exclusively through dues. This represents an increase of 8.7 percent over the \$3,474,095 in association dues that were spent on lobbying activities in 2014.

As the Watchdog highlights every year, there is an annual Hall of Shame, which exposes the biggest spenders when it comes to hiring and employing lobbyists.

This year's Hall of Shame (top 10), in order of profligacy:

City of Minneapolis: \$353,718

City of Saint Paul: \$332,068

Hennepin County: \$316,070

Saint Louis County: \$179,449

Ramsey County: \$159,281

Western MN Municipal Power Agency: \$153,182

Metropolitan Airports Commission: \$149,057

Minneapolis Park and Rec. Board: \$143,000

City of Eagan: \$125,403

Southern MN Municipal Power Agency: \$116,070

How much did your local units of government spend last year? Review the report [here](#).

GET UP, STAND UP

You can fool some people sometimes
But you can't fool all the people all the time
So now we see the light (What you gonna do?)
We gonna stand up for our rights!
- Bob Marley

This publication has often lamented the fact that so many people who are directly harmed by liberal policies fail to appreciate the cause of that harm and take action to reverse the policies.

What follows is a feel-good story about standing up and fighting for a better future.

Recently, four mothers of school age children in Minneapolis filed a lawsuit challenging the state's teacher tenure laws, which they argue protect bad teachers (which they do) and deprive children of a quality education (which is also true).

And while the argument can apply to any school, the fact is that these teacher protection laws are especially problematic in the urban core, where test scores and the educational achievement gap are most pronounced.

Nekima Levy-Pounds, who in addition to her duties with the NAACP, is an attorney and law school professor, has signed on as co-counsel to represent the plaintiffs.

Good for her. Readers should recognize her courage in standing up to the liberal status quo and fighting the union fat cats in the teachers' union.

Make no mistake, she will face her own battle in making this stand. The political machine will attack her, most likely branding her as some sort of "traitor" for refusing to join the Liberal-Industrial complex that enjoys the spoils of governmental largesse while ignoring the very people they claim to help.

And let's not forget that many of those same limousine liberals who enjoy the status quo are nowhere to be found when it comes to putting their money where their liberals mouths regarding public schools. The Watchdog is aware of many DFL office holders in Minneapolis and Saint Paul who don't put their own kids in the very schools they claim to be so good.

This publication will not name names because we believe a politician's kids shouldn't be the object of political debate.

But rest assured there are office holders right now whose kids attend elite private prep schools while they proclaim the quality and value of failing public schools in their area.

A quality education is the cornerstone of many people's climb up the ladder of economic opportunity.

Good for these plaintiffs and Levy-Pounds for refusing to accept a system that condemns children to failing public schools and a future of extremely limited opportunities.

It's about time that those harmed by liberal policies get up and stand up.

Inner city kids who can't get a good education.

Skilled construction trades people who can't get jobs in the mines or building pipelines.

Coal miners put out of work in the name of bogus climate change claims.

Jobs driven out of the country by ridiculous tax laws and environmental regulations.

Get up, stand up.

TRUMP IS IT

It's all over but the shouting. Donald Trump will be the Republican Party nominee.

Over. Done. The nominating contest is finished.

There will be no white knight that rides in to replace Trump. The infrastructure for such a campaign doesn't exist.

There will be no machinations regarding convention rule changes to deny Trump the nomination. To do so would trash the Republican brand and leave the party divided and disillusioned for decades to come, along with a serious downdraft that would drag down Republican candidates down to dog catcher and soil/water commissioner.

The realistic presidential menu will be either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton.

Of course, some Republicans will choose to vote third party or not vote at all.

But let's be clear about something: a failure to support Donald Trump is tantamount to aiding and abetting Hillary Clinton.

Donald Trump is the only man standing between Hillary Rodham Clinton and the Oval Office.

The "never Trump" crowd needs to face this reality, especially those party insiders who are tempted to choose a Democrat insider over a Republican outsider.

Trump's candidacy, if anything, has confirmed that there is indeed an "insider" machine in Washington that consists of two branches, one Democrat and the other Republican.

Now that the presidential political dynamic is one of "insiders" vs. "outsiders" as much as it is GOP vs. DFL, some Republicans have chosen to become Democrat insiders and not GOP outsiders.

Whether one likes Trump or not, he is already chasing the money changers from the Congressional temple.

Now they are fleeing to a slimy, corrupt career politician and her equally corrupt and slimy husband.

Good riddance.

May 13, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I think electing Donald Trump would be the second-worst thing we could do this November, better only than electing Hillary Clinton to serve as the third term for the Obama administration's radical policies," Jindal writes. "I am not pretending that Mr. Trump has suddenly become a conservative champion or even a reliable Republican: He is completely unpredictable. The problem is that Hillary is predictably liberal."

- Former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal

Factoid of the Week: Donald Trump is in a statistical dead heat with Hillary Clinton in Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

Quinnipiac Poll, 5/9/16

1. Bailout Nation;
2. Those Wacky Liberals.

BAILOUT NATION

If you're paying any attention, you have no doubt read this week about the Teamsters Union asking for a pension bailout from the already bankrupt federal government.

The issue has certainly raised the emotions of many taxpayers, with sentiment running strongly against a bailout for a variety of reasons.

Those reasons cited by posters on social media include mismanagement of pension funds, organized crime involvement, overly generous retirement terms, limited federal bailout funds, and taxpayers who say they are struggling to fund their own retirement, much less those of others.

Having said all that, there is one reason and one reason only that the federal government should stay out of this issue: It's a private contract dispute.

The collective bargaining agreements that memorialized these pension promises were contained within a legally binding contract that was negotiated between two sophisticated parties in an arms-length agreement free from force and fraud.

The legislative branch of the federal government has no role to play in ameliorating the failure of failure of the contract to meet pension promises.

If the Teamsters believe management has breached the contract and is liable for damages to the pensioners, then their remedy is in a court of law.

Contracts were designed specifically to create a legal remedy in situations where promises were broken in a negligent way.

Of course, the benefit of running to Congress for a bailout is that nothing needs to be proven and the rule of law is irrelevant.

Raiding the treasury is so much easier than proving damages and fault.

Of course, it may also be the fact that even though the pension fund is tapped out, no one is to blame in a legal sense.

In order to prove that a contract was breached, you have to prove someone was at fault, that they were negligent or reckless.

It may be that sound decisions were made with the pension and it simply went south regardless.

Financial arrangement fail on a regular basis and there is no legal claim. All investments come with a measure of risk. Winners and losers are picked in the markets every day.

Just because your surgery didn't save your arm doesn't mean your doctor was at fault.

Just because that rattle came back two months later doesn't mean your mechanic was at fault.

Just because that "can't miss" stock cratered doesn't mean your financial advisor was at fault.

Finally, it's an incredible moral hazard to open the public till to every party who was harmed by a contract that didn't pan out.

If the Teamsters get a bailout, why shouldn't anyone else who suffered in a similar (or not so similar) way get made whole by the federal treasury?

How about people who lost on their 401(K)?

How about people who lost on their gambling bets?

Where does it end?

THOSE WACKY LIBERALS

This could be a headline every week, but this week has been particularly painful for logical thinking people across Minnesota.

It all started with a ridiculous "news" article in the Star Tribune purporting to demonstrate the high taxes haven't led productive people to leave the state.

Never mind that that the opposite point of view was run by the same newspaper as an opinion piece.

High taxes are fine? News.

High taxes are harmful? Opinion.

That's an interesting point of view for liberals.

Recall that liberals, more than anything, view the tax code as a vehicle to encourage certain behavior and discourage other behaviors.

They cut taxes or offer tax credits to encourage behaviors while raising taxes to discourage other behaviors.

Recall the debate over raising tobacco taxes. The DFL narrative was that the tax increases were needed to discourage smoking.

Tax smoking more, get less smoking.

So how come the same logic doesn't apply to higher income taxes.

Tax productivity and more, get less productivity.

Never let it be said that "logic" is a word commonly found in the liberal vocabulary.

Next, the DFL proposed a 13 cent per gallon gas tax increase.

This, despite a \$900 million state budget surplus.

That's right, only the DFL would propose a massive gas tax increase while sitting on an extra \$900 million of your money.

The proposed increase would be a whopping 46% increase in the state gas tax.

The increase, if passed, would make Minnesota's gas tax the third highest in the country, behind California and Pennsylvania.

Moreover, as loyal readers know, the gas tax is highly regressive, hitting the poor and middle class harder than the wealthy.

Funny, the tobacco tax is also highly regressive. The party of the "working man" is only an empty slogan and representative of a long-gone era.

The party is now firmly in the hands of wealthy, educated, urban elites. These elites have no care for the needs or desires of regular people.

Those people cling to guns and religion. They work in "dirty" industries like mining and pipelines. They live in rural areas, and (gasp!) don't have baccalaureate degrees or a curriculum vitae.

These urban elites also don't really care about poverty in the urban core. They merely feign interest in order to garner votes in poor urban areas to keep themselves enriched and in power.

News reports this week highlighted a Met Council Section 8 voucher program that works to get poor people out to the suburbs, where, according to research, there are good schools and good neighborhoods. That research further shows that when kids live in these good neighborhoods and attend these good schools, they tend to have a better chance to succeed.

DUH.

Let's put aside for a moment the question regarding the "right" of people to live in neighborhoods they can't afford.

The larger point is the acknowledgement by liberals that good neighborhoods and good schools foster success.

So why aren't liberals working to make inner city neighborhoods of better quality?

Why is it that only a select few, chosen by government, get a life boat out of the bad neighborhoods, created in part by failed liberal policies?

Instead of shipping a select few to a better school, why not give that choice to all by offering vouchers, tax credits and other products that empower parents to choose the best school for their kids?

Oh, yeah. Those urban elites are interested in maintaining their unholy alliance with the teachers' union, which needs a captive "head count" to keep their schools "adequately" funded, which, of course, is never adequate.

This is especially true when your school district can't keep track of \$17 million, right Minneapolis?

Maybe Johnny can't count in Minneapolis because the highly paid bureaucrats can't count, either.

Beam us up, Scotty!

May 20, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I'm not the one who's going to have a tough time in the election cycle, because I'm very easily and very deeply on the side of the public, and the public is very much backing my position."

- Speaker of the Minnesota House Kurt Daudt

2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SPECIAL EDITION!

1. The Bitter End.

THE BITTER END

Well, we knew it would come down to this. After weeks and weeks of legislative activity, there is still no agreement on major fiscal issues in Saint Paul and negotiations have gone behind closed doors.

The bad news is that these negotiations have gone behind closed doors, out of sight of taxpayers.

This publication has been on record numerous times decrying the opaque nature of these important deliberations. There has to be a better way. Both DFLers and Republicans have for many years been a part of this end-of-session ritual. Add our voice to the chorus calling for reform in this area.

Now the very good news. You can be thankful that there is a House Republican majority that has been fighting, and continues to fight, to protect your wallet down at the Capitol.

Without that majority, another parade of horror would have ensued, much like the previous bi-ennium, when the DFL went on a taxing and spending binge.

Without Speaker Daudt and company, your gas tax would have been increased 45%, your tab fees would have spiked the \$900 million budget surplus would have been blown like it was controlled by a drunkard at a Vegas craps table. And don't forget about that \$1.5 billion "bonding" bill that would have loaded up the state's credit card to fund governmental "priorities" like snow making machines and roof top gardens.

Every conservative should be happy things aren't happening in Saint Paul. There was a great deal of expediency and cooperation and good feelings at the Capitol back in 2013 and 2014. Those years, the DFL controlled everything and we paid for it.

Strategically, Speaker Daudt has to walk a fine line in these negotiations.

On the one hand, the state's budget was set last year and the state is fully funded until July 1 of 2017.

If there is no deal, state government will move on, status quo.

But that's also the problem.

With a \$900 million surplus, tax cuts are in order and this money should be returned to the private economy, where it can be invested and otherwise deployed to enhance wealth creation.

With no deal, this money remains sequestered and unproductive.

Moreover, there are core governmental functions that should be beefed up, most notably roads and bridges.

No reasonable person can deny that our crumbling infrastructure is in need of repair and expansion, for example.

More importantly, there is a big political problem if agreement isn't reached on at least a couple of these big issues.

The year 2004 is a prime example.

That year, the House of Representatives passed a bonding bill but the State Senate failed to do so.

Because a bonding bill is the marquee item on the legislative agenda in even number years, the failure of that bill to pass made headlines.

The narrative that took hold across the state (thanks to the liberal media) was that legislators went to the Capitol and "didn't do their job."

It was portrayed that legislators sat around, collected their money, did nothing. All because a bonding bill didn't pass. Even though hundreds of other pieces of legislation were signed into law.

The public bought the narrative, as Republicans running for re-election reported hearing from irritated constituents that "You didn't do your job. If I didn't do my job, I would be fired!"

That November, the Republican majority in the House dropped from 81 to 68, a stinging loss of 13 seats, which created a bare majority of 68-66 in the Minnesota House.

This new parity was a GOP majority in name only, as RINOs like Rep. Jim Abeler (now Sen. Abeler) held the balance of power, jerking the caucus to the left.

Thus, a failure to strike a deal and bring some of the major issues to resolution holds real risk.

Make no mistake, the GOP will be blamed and the media will amplify that message, framing the narrative. That's a fact. An ugly and lamentable fact, but a fact nonetheless.

There's recent history to prove it. Google it.

Thus, burning down the place isn't a realistic strategy. It may sound good to conservatives. It certainly feels good to talk about it.

But the bottom line is that such a strategy is penny wise and pound foolish. That result would assuredly place the House majority in jeopardy.

Here's the bottom line: Speaker Daudt is looking to thread the needle by getting the best agreements he can with a DFL Senate Majority Leader and a DFL governor. He's doing this to best position Republicans to retain the House majority while helping the GOP try to take the Senate majority.

We hear many conservative groups rip on the speaker and GOP legislators, criticizing them for not being conservative enough.

In this governing environment, that's difficult because of the dynamics.

We all want more conservative government. The way to get that isn't to blast the Republicans who are there. Instead, the way to get there is to elect the Republicans who aren't there to join them in a sustainable center-right governing coalition.

If you want more conservative leadership in the legislature, give that leadership more Republican votes.

Reducing the majority through a circular firing squad is surely a recipe disaster.

Guns pointed outward is the path to less government and more freedom.

So where do things stand as this issue goes to press?

Speaker Daudt, Majority Leader Tom Bakk and Governor Dayton are all negotiating spending targets for the major spending targets.

If an agreement is reached, it is likely that there will be a tax bill, a bonding bill, and supplemental appropriations bill to boost spending in some areas.

A transportation deal looks elusive at this point, although sources tell the Watchdog that there is still a chance to reach agreement, despite pessimistic public comments from leaders.

Per the state constitution, the legislature has until midnight Sunday to pass legislation.

Stay tuned.

May 27, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "No light rail funding, no bonding bill. When will the House figure this out?"

- State Sen. Ron Latz (DFL - Saint Louis Park)

Editor's Note: Next Monday, is Memorial Day. Memorial Day is a national holiday to honor those men and women who have died serving in the national defense. This is a friendly reminder that it's not a day to thank veterans, cops, or the guy who walks your dogs. Social media will be filled with chowder heads doing this. Don't be one of them. It's a day to remember our war dead - period.

1. Session Wrap Up - Our Take.

SESSION WRAP UP - OUR TAKE

Well, that was interesting, to say the least. The 2016 legislative session, much like the 2015 session, ended in chaotic fashion.

And that's okay. Only the mainstream media and Big Government sheeple are concerned with a smooth and non-confrontational process in our democratic institutions.

The clashing of political interests is normal in a democracy (or a representative republic for you purists).

Back in 2013 and 2014, the process in Minnesota ran very smoothly because the DFL had majorities in the House and Senate and a liberal governor. They all agreed with each other to tax the snot out of taxpayers and jack up spending. Our state was very efficiently driven off the cliff.

Much of the inefficiency and "gridlock" of the past two years can be attributed to the House Republican majority putting the brakes on the typical DFL overreach regarding taxes, spending, and social issues, such as putting gay marriage on the same moral and legal plane as traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

Moreover, the House GOP did more than simply slow down the DFL Big Government Express.

They also outmaneuvered the DFL Senate and Governor Dayton to implement some good ideas.

How thankful we can be that the House GOP limited the current state budget to the second lowest level of growth in the past 50 years!

So what are the takeaways from the 2016 session?

TAKEAWAY: It wasn't a "do nothing" session.

With Republicans controlling one leg of the three-legged stool of governance, the mainstream media just couldn't help themselves in blaming Republicans in the bogus "do nothing" narrative.

No matter what Republicans do in Saint Paul, the media can be counted upon to criticize their actions, all in the name of supporting the DFL and the liberal world view, to which most of them subscribe.

The reality is that many things were accomplished this session, while the things that weren't done were the result of DFL intransigence, particularly the single-minded obsession with the \$2 billion light rail line known as "Southwest LRT."

Let's put aside for a moment the merits of the bills passed by the Republican House and simply focus on the idea that House Republicans "didn't do their job" at the Capitol this year.

According to the Governor's official legislative tracker, 61 bills have been signed into law so far during this 10 week legislative session. Moreover, there are scores of bills awaiting gubernatorial action that were passed in the last three days of the legislative session.

Recall that our constitution gives the governor 14 days to act on bills that are passed in the last three days of the legislative session. If not signed or vetoed during that period, the bills do not become law, the victim of a "pocket veto."

Many of those bills were of significance, including a tax cut for businesses in the form of a reduction in the unemployment insurance tax, drug sentencing reform, a presidential primary, and enhancements against patent infringements for companies like Medtronic and 3M.

There are other bills awaiting action, like the omnibus tax bill, that cut taxes \$279 million this year and will grow those cuts to over \$500 million next year.

All those bills were passed with significant bi-partisan support.

And the same holds true for the media's Holy Grail bill of the 2016 session, the bonding bill.

The media has created a false and misleading narrative that because a bonding bill didn't pass, the legislature (read "Republicans") didn't get anything done this legislative session,

BS. The House Republicans indeed passed a bonding bill. That bonding bill passed with significant support, with 60 Republicans and 31 Democrats voting "aye" and sending the bill to the DFL-controlled Senate.

Over in the Senate, the DFL dithered and dallied while working to get funding language for the Southwest Light Rail line inserted. By the time it was all done, it was too late to send the amended bill back to the House for consideration.

Agree or disagree with the contents and merits of the four major bills, the House passed a tax bill, passed a supplemental spending bill and passed a bonding bill, all with significant bi-partisan support.

Only the most partisan and biased observer could attempt to claim that the House GOP didn't take care of business this session.

Even on a transportation bill, the House put together a pretty good offer that the DFL rejected.

The bottom line is that the House GOP cannot be blamed for not getting things done this session.

To the extent that things didn't happen, they stemmed primarily from the DFL's insistence on funding a boondoggle train that won't move people faster than busses or cars and will be financed primarily with yet another big IOU to the federal treasury, which is now \$18 trillion in debt and counting.

TAKEAWAY: The Republican "Big Four" bills were pretty darn good. Well, three of them.

Start with taxes. Cutting taxes is always a good thing. The omnibus tax bill cut taxes nearly \$280 million this year and over \$500 million in the out years.

Perhaps most significant was a tax cut businesses hammered by the statewide business property tax.

There was also a welcome tax cut for Big Tobacco. Back in 2013, when the DFL ran the show, they jacked up the taxes on cigarettes to pay for the Vikings stadium after Mark Dayton's idea to fund the stadium with electronic pull tabs failed in an epic way.

One of the tricks the DFL pulled was to "index" the cigarette tax, which provided for regular and automatic tax increases.

Tax increases on auto pilot are horrible public policy and the indexing of cigarette taxes was unique to Minnesota.

Moreover, it is also dubious public policy to use the tax code to make people act a certain way. The tax code is a tool to raise revenue, it isn't a behavior modification tool like a shock collar.

So Democrats and Republicans took the cigarette tax of the index and made some other changes, which provided yet another opportunity for Governor Dayton to drop his pants and look stupid.

He now running around claiming he didn't know this change to the cigarette tax was in this major tax bill.

Gee, where have we heard this before? Personal seat licenses, farm equipment repair tax...

Here we go again. Either Governor Dayton isn't telling the truth or he and his staff are utterly incompetent. Both, perhaps? What an embarrassment.

On top of that, don't forget that candidate Mark Dayton was OPPOSED to raising tobacco taxes, saying those taxes were regressive and hit the poor harder than others, which is all true.

Don't hold your breath waiting for the media to call him out on that.

The transportation bill the GOP offered was also a nice one. No gas tax was a good start.

The bill contained \$255 million in repurposed funds out of the general fund that involved taxes from auto-related sales and services like the sale of auto parts and the car rental tax.

There were also funds from bonding, a leveraging of federal funds, and other revenues totaling \$730 million in the next fiscal year.

Now there was some consternation over authorizing both the Met Council and the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) authority to levy a 0.25% sales tax.

While we agree that this authority should come with reforms, this provision has taken a bit of a bad rap in our opinion.

First, this is about local control. Yes, the Met Council needs to be more accountable and that should happen. In this case of CTIB, it is made up of county commissioners from the 5 counties who comprise it. Don't like CTIB, vote out your county commissioner.

Now check out these additional features. For CTIB, in exchange for this authority, the board would be required to pay for 100% of the capital and operating costs of light rail after July 1, 2016. In other words, the state would be out of the light rail game.

For the Met Council, the plan would limit the Met Council to paying only for busses, except for the ongoing Blue and Green line operating subsidy, which would move from the state general fund to the Met Council. Again, the state would be out of the rail game.

This publication would like to see more accountability out of the Met Council than staggered terms.

Putting elected officials on the board, like the CTIB, would be one way to go. The Met Council has to be more directly accountable to voters or at least local elected officials should have some sort of veto power. The power of taxation demands representation. Met Council members currently represent the governor who appointed them, not the voters who have to live under the mandates of the Council.

Next is the bonding bill. While clocking in at a hefty \$1.4 billion (cash and bonding), the contents of the bill were best we've ever seen, with a heavy emphasis on roads and bridges and the maintenance of existing capital assets like college buildings and prison security upgrades.

For example, the transportation portion invested over \$700 million in roads and bridges:

- \$149 million for local bridge repair/replacement
- \$137 million for local road improvements
- \$27 million for railroad crossing grade separations
- \$200 million for roads and bridges and key corridors of commerce
- \$101 million for state/local roads
- \$100 million for state roads
- \$62 million for state trunk highways

Overall, the bill was surprisingly devoid of the typical crap in bonding bills like civic centers, snow making machines, ski jumps, and roof top gardens.

The fourth big bill was supplemental spending. We get that that is part of the deal when dealing with Democrats, but state government agencies are fully funded for the upcoming fiscal year and there is no need to boost their spending. We can't support that.

So what happens next? Here's our prediction: Dayton signs the tax bill into law, he signs the supplemental spending bill into law, there is a one day special session to pass a bonding bill (without funding or authorization for Southwest light rail), and the transportation bill falls by the wayside over insurmountable differences over Met Council and CTIB reform.

If Governor Dayton and the Democrats want to kill a bonding bill over Southwest light rail, let them. There are critical infrastructure projects in every corner of the state from transportation to prison safety upgrades to flood mitigation needs. Let the Democrats campaign this fall on the message of not doing THEIR job on a bonding bill, all because of light rail.

Speaker Daudt has the upper hand here. His bonding bill attracted 60 GOP and 31 DFL votes in the House, all without light rail funding.

The House has a well-established position on bonding. He should stick to it.

June 3, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I'm not going to sign the tax bill if we don't have a special session by Monday."

- Governor Mark Dayton

PLAYING CHECKERS

When everyone else is playing chess. Governor Dayton's infamous bumbling was on display this week as he presumed to issue his "demands" for calling a special session of the legislature.

In addition to his demands, Dayton also tried his hand at playing terrorist by taking the tax omnibus bill hostage, threatening to let it die on Monday if he demands aren't met.

Just watched Die Hard for the first time, eh governor?

The demands essentially call for about \$423 million in additional spending, on top of the \$183 million in additional spending this session, on top of the additional spending added last year when the state crafted its new two-year budget.

Speaker Daudt should look Dayton in the eye on this one and let the governor blink first.

The governor doesn't have nearly the leverage he thinks he has here.

Moreover, the guy has a well-established history of dropping his un-droppable demands.

Let the tax bill die.

Let there be no bonding bill.

Let there be no transportation bill.

Dayton may not be on the ballot, but he will bear the blame, and so will DFL legislators.

Let's start with the tax bill, which Dayton will solely own if it dies.

This is because a bi-partisan tax cutting bill will have died because the governor killed it.

Voters want politicians to come together find ways to get things done. That's exactly what happened here.

The bill passed the House 123-10 and the Senate 55-12, signaling a rare and overwhelming bi-partisan victory.

If Dayton wants to vaporize that popular symbol of bi-partisan compromise, let him.

If Dayton wants to deny over \$259 million in tax relief to job creators, college students struggling with debt, and rural property owners seeking relief to better fund local schools, let him.

Dayton's lame excuse that the tax bill contains an error that inserted an "or" instead of an "and" that will cost the state money is bunk. Such a ministerial error can be corrected outside of the legislative process.

Go ahead, governor. Let it die. Then promise to meet Speaker Daudt on a fly-around tour of the state to explain to thousands of hard-working Minnesotans why you killed their tax relief because you wanted to lard another \$423 million in state spending on the budget and refused to compromise or even negotiate.

And about that bonding bill.

That narrative is easy.

The GOP-led House passed a significant and highly targeted bonding bill with broad bi-partisan support, only to see it killed in the DFL-led Senate because of a demand for light rail in Hennepin County.

The bill passed the House 91-39, with strong vote totals from both sides of the aisle.

The bill contained over \$700 million in spending for roads and bridges and other core governmental functions.

The House has done its job and passed a solid bill. Dayton and the Senate DFL should get on board and pass that bill, minus the unpopular light rail poison pill, and get on with the people's business.

If not, here's a sample of what the DFL and Governor Dayton killed:

- \$9 million for dam repair and removal
- \$21 million in pollution clean-up
- \$150 million for local road and bridge repair
- \$137 million in local road improvements
- \$28 million for rail crossing safety
- \$58 million for safety upgrades at the state mental hospital
- \$41 million in safety upgrades at state prisons
- \$154 million for public water treatment infrastructure
- \$300 million in additional cash spending for roads and bridges

Again, the House did its job. Let Dayton and Senate Majority Leader Bakk explain why they killed those projects over an insistence on a \$2 billion rail project that is mired in controversy and lawsuits.

The same holds true for a long-term transportation funding agreement.

That bill died because of DFL insistence on a big tax increase to fund trains.

Why can't we have safe roads in rural Minnesota? Why do we sit in traffic in the suburbs?

We can't have these things because of an obsession with building ultra-expensive, inefficient trains.

Have at it, governor.

PAUL THISSEN - JERK

There's little more in life more irritating than a hypocrite - a person who portrays themselves in a manner totally at odds with their true nature.

When you add a strong dose of upper-crust contempt for regular people, the person earns title of "jerk."

Such a person is State Rep. Paul Thissen, a white, middle-aged, urbane (and profane) limousine liberal, hailing from the patrician quarters of south Minneapolis.

He's man who preaches the virtue of DFL egalitarianism, socialism, and fraternity.

Yet he hides away in a rich urban enclave and sends his kids to elite private schools while sentencing other people's kids to the failing public schools in the same city.

He was the first to criticize Speaker Kurt Daudt (from Isanti County, no college degree) over Daudt's modest credit card debt and small property tax delinquency.

This coming from a guy who lives in a \$1.1 million mansion and pays property taxes of nearly \$20,000 per year.

The guy who can't say enough about public schools but sends his kids elsewhere.

And why not? When you went to Holy Angels, Harvard, and the University of Chicago Law School, why would you deign to send your kids to learn with the hoi polio? Pish posh!

It has been said that a man's character can be judged by how he treats those people who cannot do anything for him.

Guess how Paul Thissen treats those people?

In a [letter](#) authored by seven Republican members of the Minnesota House, Thissen was called to task for name calling, using profanity, and otherwise abusing House staff members on a regular and ongoing basis.

Your parents must be proud, Rep. Thissen.

Once called out, Thissen did apologize, but that's a case of too little too late.

A pattern of hurling profanity at staff, calling them out by name in committee and on the House floor, and raising his voice to them bespeaks an arrogance of a man who thinks himself better than everyone else.

You're a small man, Mr. Thissen.

And where was the media on this? If Speaker Daudt had done this, it would have been front page news.

Protecting the DFL House Minority Leader, as they are won't to do.

Rule 6.10 of the Permanent Rules of the House state, in part:

A complaint may be brought about conduct by a member that violates a rule or administrative policy of the House, that violates accepted norms of House behavior, that betrays the public trust, or that tends to bring the House into dishonor or disrepute.

An ethics complaint is in order for Mr. Thissen.

June 10, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

- Sun Tzu

KNOW THY OPPONENT

Our loyal readers should understand the importance and broader implications of the current standoff between House Republicans and Governor Dayton over a potential special session. To understand those implications, readers should either refresh their memory or learn the following "rules for radicals" from Saul Alinsky, the father of modern liberal political guerilla tactics:

RULE 1: "Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have." Power is derived from 2 main sources - money and people. "Have-Nots" must build power from flesh and blood.

RULE 2: "Never go outside the expertise of your people." It results in confusion, fear and retreat. Feeling secure adds to the backbone of anyone.

RULE 3: "Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy." Look for ways to increase insecurity, anxiety and uncertainty.

RULE 4: "Make the enemy live up to its own book of rules." If the rule is that every letter gets a reply, send 30,000 letters. You can kill them with this because no one can possibly obey all of their own rules.

RULE 5: "Ridicule is man's most potent weapon." There is no defense. It's irrational. It's infuriating. It also works as a key pressure point to force the enemy into concessions.

RULE 6: "A good tactic is one your people enjoy." They'll keep doing it without urging and come back to do more. They're doing their thing, and will even suggest better ones.

RULE 7: "A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag." Don't become old news.

RULE 8: "Keep the pressure on. Never let up." Keep trying new things to keep the opposition off balance. As the opposition masters one approach, hit them from the flank with something new.

RULE 9: "The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself." Imagination and ego can dream up many more consequences than any activist.

RULE 10: "If you push a negative hard enough, it will push through and become a positive." Violence from the other side can win the public to your side because the public sympathizes with the underdog.

RULE 11: "The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative." Never let the enemy score points because you're caught without a solution to the problem.

RULE 12: Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." Cut off the support network and isolate the target from sympathy. Go after people and not institutions; people hurt faster than institutions.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S AT STAKE

After reading and understanding Alinsky's rules, it's easier to understand what's at stake here.

This isn't about some bonding project in some far-flung corner of the state. It isn't about some bus line in the urban core. Nor is it about some tax break for some group of citizens.

This is all about political power, especially as that power and the allocation of it are at stake in November, when all 201 legislative seats are up for grabs.

In short, the composition of the both the Minnesota House and Senate are at stake, with the DFL hoping that they can hold the Senate and win the House, leading to the DFL once again controlling the entire legislature and the governor's office.

It's not about some project. It's not even about more spending in some budget bill. It's about who controls the levers of governmental power in this state.

When you understand the play, the messaging of the DFL, as amplified by the media, becomes clear and understandable.

Consider rules 5 and 12. Speaker Daudt has been held up to scorn and ridicule. "He should do his job." "He should compromise." "It's his fault things didn't get done." "His radical world view has caused the stalemate."

That ridicule is then expanded to the House GOP in general.

Consider rule 8. Governor Dayton vetoed a tax bill that passed in a broad bi-partisan fashion. That veto contributed to the pressure to agree to a broad-reaching special session to include a host of other issues. Negating every aspect of bi-partisan compromise contributes to pressure on the GOP when it's amplified by the media. If one has watched the recent press conferences and scrums, Speaker Daudt is often asked if he's meeting soon with Governor Dayton or when he plans to do so. Funny, that same question isn't posed to Sen. Bakk, the DFL Senate Majority Leader.

Consider rule 2. The message to the DFL masses is simple. Help your team fight for more government. More transit, more spending, more government. It's what the DFL coalition and its constituent organizations do - they fight for more government largesse.

Now consider rule 3. It may not be apparent at first glance, but this rule is what underpins the governor's obsession with the "\$100 million error" in the tax bill. Part of increasing the anxiety and uncertainty of the opponent is to raise irrelevant arguments and make them a headline.

This is exactly what is in play here. The error was a simple mistake between two conjunctions, "and" and "or."

These drafting errors happen on a regular basis. In fact, there are bills every year that make these corrections, called "Revisor's Bills" and "Corrections Bills."

Whether the tax bill was assembled the first day of session or the last, this drafting error may have happened. There isn't one once of proof that the date

on the calendar or the time on the clock that day caused this administrative error.

More importantly, a special session isn't needed to give the proper words in this regard their intended effect.

It has long been the practice at the Capitol, whether under DFL or GOP control, that the chairs of committees have jointly penned letters explaining these administrative errors and making clear the true intent of the language.

Now, this minor drafting error has become the headline and the rationale for killing a major, bi-partisan tax cut bill, while blaming the GOP.

"Their last minute management led to this (Dr. Evil voice) \$100 MILLION tax error!"

Irrelevant and a non-issue. Unless, of course, you're viewing the issue through the lens of rule #2.

In many respects, we are not fighting a battle here over a couple of outstanding issues. We are very much fighting a war.

Thus it is vital that the conservative team be united in pushing back against this false narrative and give full-throated support to the true narrative, which bears repeating.

Tell your friends, neighbors, family and co-workers the truth about the tax bill that was vetoed.

That bill was a conference report, jointly authored and unanimously passed by a House-Senate conference committee.

That bi-cameral conference committee was comprised of the following legislators:

Sen. Rod Skoe (DFL - Clearbrook) - Senate Tax Committee Chairman

Sen. Paul Gazelka (R - Niswaga)

Sen. Ann Rest (DFL - New Hope)

Sen. Lyle Koenen (DFL - Clara City)

Sen. Kari Dziedzic (DFL - Minneapolis)

Rep. Greg Davids (R - Preston) - House Tax Committee Chairman

Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R - Mazeppa)

Rep. Bob Barrett (R - Lindstrom)

Rep. Chris Swedzinski (R - Ghent)

Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL - Winona)

The conferees assembled a bill that passed the full House by a vote of 123-10.

House Minority Leader Paul Thissen has been leading the chorus against the bill, now that it has been vetoed.

Let the record reflect that the following DFL members of the House voted for the conference report: Allen, Anzelc, Applebaum, Atkins, Bernardy, Bly, Carlson, Clark, Considine, Davnie, Dehn, Ecklund, Erhardt, Fischer, Flanagan, Halverson, Hausman, Hilstrom, Hortman, Isaacson, Johnson C., Kahn, Laine, Lein, Lillie, Loeffler, Mahoney, Mariani, Marquart, Masin, Melin, Metsa, Moran, Mullery, Murphy M., Nelson, Newton, Norton, Pelowski, Persell, Poppe, Rosenthal, Schoen, Schultz, Wagenius, Ward, Yarusso, Yuakim.

In fact, only 9 House Democrats voted "no."

Now let's check the Senate DFL who voted in favor of this bill:
Eaton, Jensen, Sheran, Bakk, Eken, Johnson, Pappas, Sieben, Bonoff, Kent, Skoe, Carlson, Franzen, Koenen, Reinert, Sparks, Champion, Latz, Rest, Stumpf, Clausen, Goodwin, Tomassoni, Cohen, Hawj, Lourey, Torres Ray, Dahle, Hayden, Marty, Saxhaug, Hoffman, Metzen, Scalze, Dibble, Schmit, Wieger, Dziedzic, Wiklund.

ZERO Senate Democrats voted against this bill. ZERO.

In the entire legislature, only 9 DFLers voted against this bill the governor vetoed.

And the liberal narrative is that the Speaker Daudt needs to get off his high horse and compromise?

This what compromise looks like.

For one more example, let's look at the bonding bill that Speaker Daudt and the House GOP passed out of the House and the Senate killed.

Democrats who voted in favor of the bill:

Anzelc, Bly, Carlson, Clark, Dehn, Ecklund, Erhardt, Fischer, Frieberg, Hausman, Isaacson, Johnson C., Johnson S., Kahn, Lien, Lillie, Mahoney,

Mariani, Marquart, Masin, Melin, Metsa, Moran, Murphy M., Newton, Pelowski, Pinto, Poppe, Rosenthal, Sundin, Yarusso.

These votes put the lie to the bogus liberal Alinsky-inspired narrative.

All Republicans and allied organizations need to push back with vigor against this Big Lie.

Compromise has happened.

If the governor wants compromise, he should agree to sign the tax bill he vetoed and agree to sign the bonding bill passed by the House.

June 17, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

- The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

"There seems to us no doubt, on the basis of both text and history, that the Second Amendment conferred an individual right to keep and bear arms."

- District of Columbia vs. Heller, Justice Scalia

"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

- The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

"The makers of the Constitution conferred, as against the government, the right to be let alone -- the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men."

- Justice Louis D. Brandeis

1. Sheriff Stanek's Surreptitious Surveillance State;
2. Liberals on Full-Tilt.

SHERIFF STANEK'S SURREPTITIOUS SURVEILLANCE STATE

Here he goes again. Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek continues to find new and innovative ways to secretly spy upon the citizens of Hennepin County, all without disclosure to the citizens he represents nor the policy makers at the state level, who are charged with Article I, Section 10 of the Minnesota Constitution, which states:

Sec. 10. Unreasonable searches and seizures prohibited. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated; and no warrant

shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched and the person or things to be seized.

The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is the only law enforcement agency in the state, as far as we know, to employ facial recognition technology.

Formally known as Image Identification Technology, the technique uses software to analyze thousands of points on a person's face, found in a picture, to create a profile that is used to search for a match against a known name and photo.

Although it's unclear exactly how the use of this technology came to light, a private citizen in Hennepin County became aware of its use and filed requests for disclosure under the state's Data Practices Law, which revealed that the Sheriff's Office has been using the technology since August of 2013.

After a court finally compelled Stanek to release the data pursuant to state law, citizens and legislators learned of this situation through a newspaper article.

This isn't the first time Sheriff Stanek's office has been called out for utilizing far-reaching invasive surveillance technology.

Back in 2010, Stanek requested, and finally received, funding to acquire cellphone exploitation technology. This technology, known as "Kingfish" or "Stingray," is used to collect and track cell phone data by ticking phones into believing that the tracking device is a cell phone tower.

The acquisition of the technology created an uproar, and was only approved by the Hennepin County Board after first being tabled twice over policy concerns.

With regard to Kingfish/Stingray, the legislature two years ago passed a law requiring a signed judicial warrant to use the technology against citizens, with the requirement that the warrant be unsealed after 90 days.

According to a recent Fox 9 report, these kinds of warrants routinely remained sealed, and out of the public eye, long after state law requires their unsealing. As one might expect, Hennepin County was one of the jurisdictions cited in the report as violating state law in this regard.

The ongoing and growing surveillance state in Hennepin County is especially troubling for two reasons.

First, it points to the dire need of the legislature to get proactive in crafting meaningful, comprehensive safeguards to guarantee the protection of citizen privacy rights against this technology, as guaranteed by both the federal and state constitutions.

For example, the state has no policy regarding the classification and use of facial recognition technology, despite the fact that it has been in use in Minnesota for three years.

The legislature needs to get in front of the use of this surveillance technology and stop addressing the situation in piecemeal, after-the-fact fashion.

It's clear that a dedicated committee or sub-committee on privacy and technology is desperately needed.

It's disturbing to think that our core constitutional privacy rights are in many respects protected only by internal Hennepin County Sheriff's Office policies or Hennepin County board policy.

Every Minnesotan deserves a uniform and comprehensive protection of their constitutional rights.

And don't think this problem is limited to Hennepin County. According to media reports, other law enforcement agencies are shipping photos over to Sheriff Stanek, asking his office to run images through his software for possible facial recognition matches.

Moreover, there may be now or in the near future other law enforcement agencies using this or other invasive surveillance technology.

This technology is here and is here to stay, likely to get even more invasive.

Of course, there is a role for this technology in maintaining public safety. If it was simply a matter of banishing it from any use, the issue would be an easy one.

Having said that, it is the opinion of this publication that the situation is far, far out of balance, with the right to privacy under assault and eroding with each passing day.

It is a core function of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of state government to support and defend the state constitution.

On the privacy front, they are failing.

Second, Rich Stanek is perhaps the most politically active sheriffs in the state. He is a former Republican legislator and a frequent speaker at Republican functions.

Moreover, he is rumored to be a candidate for governor in 2018, despite some significant baggage (more on that in a future update).

Republican activists and delegates should be asking all the candidates who come before them seeking the GOP endorsement where they stand on issues of privacy and liberty.

This is especially important regarding those who will seek the endorsement for governor in 2018.

The chief executive is, of course, the person charged with seeing that the laws of this state are faithfully executed.

If Stanek seeks the endorsement, an excellent opportunity will present itself for the GOP family to have a robust discussion regarding the balance between safety and privacy.

We look forward to engaging in that debate.

LIBERALS ON FULL-TILT

Tilt is a poker term for a state of mental or emotional confusion or frustration in which a player adopts a less than optimal strategy, usually resulting in the player becoming over-aggressive.

The recent terrorist attack in Orlando has put the Left on full tilt as the attack represents the confluence of multiple issues that put liberal ideology at odds with reality, which in turns prompts them to lose their collective minds and go on "tilt" against conservatives.

The first clash with reality comes in the form of the gun issue.

For the Left, this is a Holy Grail issue. For the self-identified liberal, hating guns and denying the plain text of the Second Amendment is article of faith.

The issue also represents an opportunity for liberals to once again prove that facts are nothing but an inconvenience, to be cast aside much as one would swat away an annoying mosquito.

"We have to stop the sale of automatic weapons," proclaimed comedian Lewis Black.

Sorry, Lew. The long gun used in the attack wasn't an automatic rifle. In fact, automatic rifles have been illegal for the average citizen to possess for a long, long time.

"We need to get the AR-15 'assault' rifle off street by making sales illegal."

Sorry, libs. The long gun used in the attack wasn't an AR-15. Moreover, the AR-15 is a popular hunting rifle and is also commonly used to control varmint populations in rural America, a place liberals know nothing about and care for even less.

"We need an assault weapons ban to make us safe." Sorry, we had an "assault" weapons ban back in the 1990s and the evidence shows it did nothing to make our streets safer.

Sadly, recent events in Europe have proven that even the strictest of gun control measures don't work. This week, a member of the British Parliament was shot dead in a country that has among the strictest gun laws in the world.

Paris wasn't kept safe by that countries strict gun laws. Nor were the people of Brussels.

Moreover, it's somewhat amusing to watch liberals deny both the plain text of the Second Amendment and the Supreme Court's reasonable interpretation of those clear words.

Social media is filled with caustic remarks about the "so-called" Second Amendment while other chowder heads presume to limit or deny the

constitutional rights of their neighbors by proclaiming what types of firearms and for what purpose they may be kept.

Really.

Because abortion on demand is another liberal article of faith, let's apply the same rhetoric to their sacred cow.

Abortion is a "so-called" right. In fact, it's a made up right, discovered in a made-up part of the federal constitution.

The word "abortion" and the phrase "reproductive rights" are nowhere to be found in the constitution.

Instead, the Supreme Court simply decreed that the majority had found something called a "penumbra of privacy" that included the right to have an abortion.

That's what we call judge-made law, not the Second Amendment, which is there in black and white for the whole world to read, complete with a historical record to demonstrate that the Framers of the Bill of Rights knew exactly what they wanted when they guaranteed the right to keep and bear arms.

Remember reading in civics class about the great debate in Philadelphia to protect the right to have your baby's head crushed with a forceps and the brain vacuumed out? Neither did we, because it never happened.

Liberals are also cringing over Orlando because it is forcing them to confront the ugly reality of radical Islam.

Liberals continue to deny the existence and danger posed by radical Islam, refusing to even utter the term, in many cases.

Radical Islam has proven to be an ugly, vile, "twofer" in Orlando.

First, radical Islam is virulently anti-gay. Lutherans and Methodists aren't pitching gay men off roof tops and torturing them to death.

That same virulent hatred was on full display in Orlando, as the Pulse nightclub was no doubt deliberately targeted as a symbol of the gay lifestyle.

Terrorism is, in essence, about attacking symbols. The Twin Towers were a symbol of American capitalism. The Pentagon a symbol of American military might.

The Pulse was similarly a symbol of that which these terrorists despise.

The liberal narrative is always about attacking Western culture and American institutions as oppressive bastions of white male privilege.

That narrative lies in tatters today.

This attack has forced liberals to come to terms with the idea that their response to radical Islam has been weak and ineffective, this time resulting in a horrific attack on a constituency that liberals enjoy bragging about supporting and protecting.

Hence, all the hyperventilating over guns. It also serves as a convenient distraction from the failure to confront radical Islam - the real issue.

The common thread in domestic terrorist attacks isn't guns.

We have seen these attacks carried out with guns, box cutters, pressure cookers, and air planes. Instead, the common thread and the common weapon is the radicalized Muslim.

Like so many other lies, this liberal lie has been tragically exposed.

Guns aren't the threat here. The terrorist who would wield a gun, or any other weapon, to kill innocent Americans is the clear and present danger.

June 24, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week: "If you like your doctor, you're going to be able to keep your doctor."

- Barack Obama

"If you like your insurance plan, you will keep it. No one will be able to take that away from you. It hasn't happened yet. It won't happen in the future."

- Barack Obama

"According to the indictment and documents filed in court, between March 2007 and October 2014, at least \$250,000 in CAM funds intended to be used to provide services to low-income residents of Minneapolis were instead diverted to W. DAVIS' personal use and the use of his family and friends."

- FBI Press Release

"For years people in the nonprofit world questioned the financial dealings of Bill Davis, and every time, his powerful DFL friends stood behind him."

- Jon Tevlin

1. A Big, Big Deal;
2. The Ivory Tower.

A BIG, BIG DEAL

Greetings, loyal readers. Welcome to the "Let's all enjoy some more government" edition of the Watchdog.

This week, we will examine some of the things government is doing to, er, for you, the taxpayer.

Let's start at the federal court house in Minneapolis, where DFL kingpin and putative non-profit CEO William Davis finally decided to acknowledge his fraud and deceit by throwing himself on the mercy of the court (he deserves none) by pleading guilty to all 16 counts of federal law breaking.

For the record, here's what he was charged with doing, as charged by the U.S. Attorney:

- Conspiracy to commit theft concerning programs receiving federal funds, one count
- Mail fraud, 10 counts
- Wire fraud, one count
- Theft concerning programs receiving federal funds, four counts

Recall that Davis was the CEO of a non-profit called Community Action of Minneapolis (CAM), which was responsible for administering federal heating assistance grants as well as other grants to provide job training to people in need of job training skills.

Check out some of the low lights from this low life's tenure at CAM, according to the FBI:

"According to the indictment and documents filed in court, between March 2007 and October 2014, at least \$250,000 in CAM funds intended to be used to provide services to low-income residents of Minneapolis were instead diverted to W. DAVIS' personal use and the use of his family and friends, including JORDAN DAVIS. As part of the scheme, W. DAVIS caused CAM funds to be used for personal expenses, including airline tickets, hotel stays, rental cars and a Caribbean cruise. In total, between January 2009 and October 2014, W. DAVIS caused \$77,000 of CAM funds to be used for personal travel expenses for himself and his friends and family members."

"According to the indictment and documents filed in court, W. DAVIS used intimidation and retaliation to prevent CAM staff from informing anyone, including CAM's Board of Directors, that he was using his position as CAM's CEO to divert CAM funds to his personal use and that of his family and friends."

"From at least March 2007 until January 2011, J. DAVIS (Bill Davis' son) continued to receive his full paycheck, \$1,320 biweekly, for his work at the Ben & Jerry's, even though he was doing no work for the ice cream shop. J. DAVIS endorsed and deposited the paychecks every two weeks. In total, J. DAVIS endorsed and deposited at least 105 paychecks for his no-show job. As a result of W. DAVIS and J. DAVIS's fraud scheme, CAM paid J. DAVIS more than \$140,000 for a job he did not perform."

This isn't some run-of -the-mill fraud case.

This is because Bill Davis is a power broker in the DFL and very politically connected.

As columnist Jon Tevlin pointed out recently (see the quote above), Bill Davis was untouchable for many years because of his DFL political connections.

For example, the CAM board of directors included high power DFL politicians like state Senator Jeff Hayden and Congressman Keith Ellison, both of whom ran off the CAM board like rats off the Titanic when this scandal hit the media.

As far back as 2011, staffers inside the Minnesota Department of Commerce were raising red flags concerning possible, waste, fraud and abuse by CAM.

But Commissioner Mike Rothman, a Mark Dayton appointee, refused to investigate Bill Davis and CAM because of "political ramifications."

Here's what an MPR story had to say about the political connections that insulated Davis from scrutiny:

"Commerce analysts had grown increasingly alarmed that money meant to aid the poor was going to people who were not eligible to receive it. Those staffers, who requested anonymity because they aren't authorized to speak, say the red flags raised in 2011 were the first alerting Rothman that Davis, his DFL political ally, was mismanaging money from the energy assistance fund run by Commerce.

The warnings, they say, were repeated over the years but went nowhere. Rothman would not sever ties with Community Action. Several in the department say they were told the contracts would continue because "the political ramifications are greater than staff would understand," a characterization Rothman does not dispute."

The bottom line is that this is a major, significant political scandal by the DFL, of the DFL, for the DFL.

Much the Senate Office Building debacle back in 2014, the GOP would be well served to make CAM the poster child for DFL graft, corruption, and arrogance this election cycle.

In this respect, the GOP will choose from an embarrassment of riches in deciding which DFL policy failures to highlight.

The CAM fraud?

MnSURE?

The bonding bill that was killed because of light rail?

The vetoed tax cut bill that was supported by 90% of the legislature?

The anti-mining and anti-pipeline attitude?

The push for a gas tax while government sits a \$1 billion surplus?

It's a good problem to have, and we suggest that CAM be part of the narrative.

THE IVORY TOWER

Regular and real people have known for generations that our colleges and universities are populated by professors and leaders who are out of touch with what's happening on the ground on Main Street.

This has been especially true since the 1960s, when the spoiled brat children born of Greatest Generation parents became adults (at least physically) and turned academia into a haven for their special brand of liberalism.

University of Minnesota Professor of political science Larry Jacobs reminded us of this sad truth this week when he authored an opinion [piece](#) in "The Hill" regarding Obamacare.

Jacobs, who earns a salary of over \$200,000 from the taxpayers, chides voters for not appreciating and understanding the genius and success of Obamacare (ACA).

He's puzzled by the low approval numbers of the ACA compared to its success as a matter of public policy.

He's stunned that about 50% of respondents in a long-running tracking poll disapprove of the ACA.

He observes that these negative views "fly in the face of the ACA's accomplishments."

The Professor then goes on to blame the "political environment" and "hyper-partisanship" for the negative view of the ACA.

Really.

This publication could spent the next ten editions laying out in a very factual way the failures of the ACA but we won't. We trust that our readers are well aware of the ACA's massive failure and have likely experienced those failures first hand.

Massive premium increases. Expensive policies that don't offer what consumers want. Losing your doctor. State insurance exchanges failing. Health insurance companies leaving many markets. Unresponsive bureaucrats leaving citizens in endless waits on the phone. Paperwork lost.

Only a university professor could wonder why the great unwashed masses don't support Obamacare.

In addition to living in the Ivory Tower, Jacobs is also out of touch because he enjoys a Cadillac health insurance plan paid for by the taxpayers. If he had to get on the exchange and use Obamacare, his tune would probably change.

But that's a liberal for you. They think Big Government is good - good for other people.

Instead of hanging out in the faculty lounge sipping lattes with equally liberal and out of touch colleagues in their echo chamber of snotty elitism, perhaps Jacobs should spend some time on Main Street and see what liberal policies have done to regular people.

July 1, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Per long-standing Watchdog policy, we pause this week to honor our sacred Independence and give thanks for the blessings of freedom and liberty. This publication will resume next week in our ceaseless quest to protect and maintain that hard-earned freedom and liberty. Happy Independence Day, Watchdogs!

Quote of the Week: As the representatives signed the Constitution, Franklin watched. George Washington's chair was at the front of the hall, and a sun was painted on the back of the chair. Franklin told some of the members near him that it was always difficult for painters to show the difference between the rising sun and the setting sun. He said that during the convention he had often looked at the painted sun and wondered "...whether it was rising or setting. But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."

- From numerous historical resources

1. Benjamin Franklin

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

While Ben Franklin is rightly recognized by all thinking Americans as one of our greatest citizens, many of those folks don't realize or have forgotten the many critical roles he played in founding our great nation.

Among his long list of remarkable achievements, Franklin was the only man to sign all three documents that freed the United States of America from colonial rule: The Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Paris, and the Constitution.

He was perhaps the man most responsible for shepherding the Constitution to passage at the convention in Philadelphia.

When the Constitutional Convention convened 1787, Franklin was 81 years old and in poor health. He was also deeply revered and highly respected by the delegates.

He played a critical role in bridging the significant philosophical differences among the delegates.

He also set the example in bearing personal defeats gracefully in the name of the greater purpose of establishing a constitution for the country.

For example, Franklin wanted a unicameral legislature and wanted a committee of chief executives instead of a single president.

He lost on both counts but history recorded that he bore those defeats with grace and dignity while working to secure compromise and consensus among the delegates.

In particular, Franklin is credited with helping secure passage of the Constitution in two instances.

The first was his role in forging the "Great Compromise."

As our readers know, the convention was deadlocked with respect to the composition of the legislature.

How would power be allocated among the states? Would it be an equal number of votes? Would it be determined by population?

Franklin called for compromise. He said, "When a broad table is to be made, and the edges of the planks do not fit, the artist takes a little from both, and makes a good joint. In like manner here, both sides must part with some of their demands in order that they may join in some accommodating purpose."

Brilliant.

When the proposed constitution was nearing a final vote, many delegates were worried that there were enough disgruntled delegates to scuttle the document.

September 17th, 1787, was the last day of the convention.

Franklin prepared a final speech he planned to give, a plea for unity for the greater good.

Franklin, too weak to deliver the speech, had fellow delegate James Wilson of Pennsylvania deliver it:

Mr. President,

"I confess that there are several parts of this constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgment of others. Most men indeed as well as most sects in Religion, think themselves in possession of all truth, and that wherever others differ from them it is so far error. Steele a Protestant in a Dedication tells the Pope, that the only difference between our Churches in their opinions of the certainty of their doctrines is, the Church of Rome is infallible and the Church of England is never in the wrong. But though many private persons think almost as highly of their own infallibility as of that of their sect, few express it so naturally as a certain french lady, who in a dispute with her sister, said "I don't know how it happens, Sister but I meet with no body but myself, that's always in the right - Il n'y a que moi qui a toujours raison."

In these sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such; because I think a general Government necessary for us, and there is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered, and believe farther that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in Despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other. I doubt too whether any other Convention we can obtain, may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our enemies, who are waiting with confidence to hear that our councils are confounded like those of the Builders of Babel; and that our States are on the point of separation, only to meet hereafter for the purpose of cutting one another's throats. Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they shall die. If every one of us in returning to our Constituents were to report the objections he has had to it, and endeavor to gain partizans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally

received, and thereby lose all the salutary effects & great advantages resulting naturally in our favor among foreign Nations as well as among ourselves, from our real or apparent unanimity. Much of the strength & efficiency of any Government in procuring and securing happiness to the people, depends, on opinion, on the general opinion of the goodness of the Government, as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its Governors. I hope therefore that for our own sakes as a part of the people, and for the sake of posterity, we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution (if approved by Congress & confirmed by the Conventions) wherever our influence may extend, and turn our future thoughts & endeavors to the means of having it well administered.

On the whole, Sir, I can not help expressing a wish that every member of the Convention who may still have objections to it, would with me, on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument."

July 8, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

"I never received nor sent any material that was marked classified."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

"FBI investigators announced July 5 that Hillary Clinton sent or received more than 100 emails over a private server while secretary of state that contained information that was classified when it was sent."

- Multiple news outlets

"But I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time; never. These allegations are false. And I need to go back to work for the American people. Thank you."

- President William Jefferson Clinton

"I did have a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky that wasn't appropriate."

- President William Jefferson Clinton

"We know the attack in Libya had nothing to do with the film. It was a planned attack. Not a protest."

- Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in an email to the Egyptian Foreign Minister

In this Issue:

1. Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them;
2. More "Free" Stuff;
3. Above the law.

LIES AND THE LYING LIARS WHO TELL THEM

Remember that book title? That was written by erstwhile coke head and current doofus and U.S. Senator Al Franken.

He used the title, of course, to denigrate Republicans. If he had any decency or integrity, he would have applied to real lying liars - William Jefferson and Hillary Rodham, the Clinton duo.

We could go over the sordid details of the latest scandal, that being the home brew email server, but the facts of the scandal are well known to our readers and are but supporting documentation to the bigger and more important point.

The American public has, over the past 25 years, seen an extensive and pervasive pattern of disturbing behavior from the Clintons.

Step 1: Get caught in a seedy, tawdry or other type of scandal (Monica Lewinsky, Rose Law Firm, cattle futures, Vince Foster, Benghazi, Whitewater...).

Step 2: Offer an explanation about the scandal ("I did not have sexual relations with that woman...Ms. Lewinsky," "Benghazi was a protest march that got out of hand," etc.).

Step 3: Explanation is subsequently proven to be an outright lie (Over 100 emails WERE classified at the time they were sent and received, Bill admits to having sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky, Hillary Clinton knew Benghazi was a terrorist attack).

Step 4: The Clintons walk away unscathed.

It's quite clear from the extensive evidence and long national experience that Hillary Clinton lacks the character and integrity to be a drug pusher, much less the chief executive of the United States of America.

There are indeed two legal systems in America. One for the political elites like Bill and Hillary, and one for everyone else.

One legal system is increasingly burdensome and powerful, the other isn't really a legal system at all.

MORE "FREE" STUFF

You know campaign season is upon us when the Democrats start offering the electorate free stuff.

Like a gift from Santa Claus, all the promised things are free and without obligation.

And like Santa Claus, the whole thing is fake and based on a feel-good

fantasy.

In this case, the freebie is college.

There must be a secret hideaway somewhere where liberals sit around and ponder the question, "what kind of free stuff would entice voters to overlook all our failed programs, our scandals, and our ineptitude in order to put us in power for another term?"

This month, the liberal carnival barker encourages voters to step right up and grab some free college. Grab some for junior. And some for momma. And some for little Susie and little Johnny. Don't be shy! There's enough for everyone!

Of course, the liberals have identified a very real problem. The costs to attend a college or university have exploded over time, far outstripping inflation.

As the means for most Americans to achieve upward mobility, access to a post-secondary education is important.

Of course, having government give out free college is dumb public policy and, of course, is the worst possible remedy.

To start, the reason that college is so expensive is because government has enabled colleges and universities to jack up costs by masking those costs through subsidies in the name of loans and grants.

The game is an easy one to follow. Colleges and universities jack up tuition by a dollar. Government follows suit by increasing grants and loans by a buck.

Pretty soon, the tuition is going up by thousands, followed by increasing grants and loans to match.

In other words, consumers, at least in the short run, are insulated from the negative impacts of price increases.

In a free market system, price acts as a signal.

Increasing prices discourage consumption.

But when price increases are met with a higher subsidy, the cost to the consumer is masked, encouraging the consumer to operate in a distorted market.

When that \$100,000 car looks like a \$30,000 car in the sale manager's office, it's an easier buy.

When that \$500,000 home is financed with a negative amortization or jumbo loan, it look easier to afford.

How ironic that Democrats decry one form of this chicanery but fully embrace the other.

If consumers were exposed to the full downside pressure of increasing college costs, those costs would be held in check and even fall as demand for college fell.

Now, Hillary Clinton is proposing, at least in some form, to completely untether college from the supply-demand equilibrium.

Decoupling any product or service from a market-driven price ultimately proves disastrous.

This is because while price acts as a signal, it also acts as an enforcement mechanism to visit discipline on the market.

If college is "free," what is to stop the supplier from raising prices well beyond what is rationally justified?

If college is "free," what is to stop the consumer of this product from wasting it?

Junior has no business going to college because he's a horrible student and he's lazy, but it's "free" so what's to lose? Get him out of the house and let Faber College babysit him, goes the thinking of thousands of parents if this becomes law.

And if thousands more are attending college, that means that there should be more professors and more buildings, and more support infrastructure for colleges.

The pricing signal in a capitalist economy helps ensure allocative efficiency,

meaning that resources are dedicated to their highest and best use.

When capital is allocated to a college or university, it means that capital isn't being allocated elsewhere.

Think about human capital and how this proposal would distort the market.

Under normal circumstances, Johnny would become a carpenter and learn his trade through his private employer.

Now Johnny is at Springfield University, getting some "free" college paid for by the taxpayers.

Johnny would have been better served as a carpenter, but market distortion steered him away.

The same goes for Susie, who would have enlisted in the Air Force and spent a career there.

So college is free? Free to whom? Not to the employers who rely on a workforce that doesn't require a college education.

And no, those careers aren't lesser careers. A career in the construction trades or the military, for example, can be rewarding and provide good pay and benefits for a lifetime.

On the other hand, a college degree is no guarantee of prestige or financial security.

It's not free to the taxpayers, who would be on the hook for yet another government program, the costs of which are heaped on to the \$18 trillion pile of debt our feckless national government has racked up.

This shameless pandering is also another step on the road to socialism, as government would have yet one more "right" to ensure - the right to go to college and make your neighbor pay for it.

This publication was reading just the other day of the pablum of liberals who are now declaring access to the Internet to be a "basic human right."

Now the woman who could very well be the next president would have us

believe that attending Animal House is a government-guaranteed right.

Bluto Blutarsky would be proud.

ABOVE THE LAW

No, this piece isn't about Hillary Clinton or other Washington power brokers.

This piece is about our own state government and the bureaucracy defying an act of the legislature.

The Board of Teaching, which is responsible for issuing teaching licenses, was recently found in contempt of court for failing to process applications for alternative licensure.

Alternative licensure is a process whereby skilled professionals can seek a license to teach by taking an alternative route.

An example would be a career chemist from 3M who retires and wishes to teach kids as a second career.

The chemist lacks a degree in education but holds a PhD in chemistry and boasts decades of experience in the field.

This person wishes to teach in a local high school without going back to school to get a degree in education.

Alternative licensure allows this to happen.

Of course, the teachers' union hates alternative licensure, as do colleges and universities.

The union seeks to boost pay and benefits by limiting the number of teachers while colleges want tuition and more of it.

The court found that the Board of Teaching simply failed to process applications and respond to applicants.

Their excuse?

The response was that the law is "muddied and confusing."

Let us all remember that excuse when filing our taxes next year.

July 15, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

1. Free Trade Troglodytes;
2. The Supreme Court's Reputation;
3. Mark Dayton Fumbles Again.

FREE TRADE TROGLODYTES

"Over 6 million American manufacturing jobs are dependent upon free international trade and an export economy."

- United States Chamber of Commerce

"1 of every 3 acres of crops planted in America is planted for foreign markets."

- United States Chamber of Commerce

"Tariffs and other penalties proposed by Donald Trump are estimated to cost a family of 4 approximately \$3,100 per year in increased costs of purchased products."

- United States Chamber of Commerce

It has become fashionable this campaign season to blame free trade for the economic woes of some pockets of the country and some economic sectors.

Not long ago, presidential candidates from both parties recognized the net positive affects of free trade.

In fact, both Clintons used to acknowledge the value of free trade agreements.

Here's what Hillary Clinton USED to say about these agreements, prior to pandering to the Bernie Sanders Bots:

"The United States welcomes Japan's interest in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which we think will connect economies throughout the region, making trade and investment easier, spurring exports, creating jobs." That was in 2012.

Or this one: "This TPP sets the gold standard in trade agreements to open

free, transparent, fair trade, the kind of environment that has the rule of law and a level playing field. And when negotiated, this agreement will cover 40 percent of the world's total trade and build in strong protections for workers and the environment."

Now, both candidates pander to disgruntled voters by feigning sympathy with the bogus narrative that trade agreements caused their jobs to disappear. Even more fantastically, both Trump and Clinton claim they can make these jobs reappear in the very same place they disappeared from, presumably at the same wage and with the same benefits as before. Presto, change-o!

In a very disappointing development, the draft Republican platform has retreated from recognizing the net positive value of free trade. This sort of pandering is expected in a presidential campaign but nonetheless disappointing.

As the statistics above note, millions of American jobs depend upon open, free trade exports.

Moreover, many of the manufacturing jobs lost over the past 20 years didn't go overseas, as the story goes.

Instead, they simply disappeared, displaced by automation or lost to innovation.

In today's modern auto manufacturing plant, one worker does the work of what three did 30 years ago.

The jobs aren't coming back because they disappeared. They didn't go to China or Mexico.

Of course, there is real economic dislocation in any dynamic market place. Some jobs have indeed moved to lower cost areas, be those areas Alabama or India.

But on the whole, the world is richer and more prosperous because of free trade.

Just we can't tax ourselves into prosperity, we can't tariff ourselves into creating or repatriating jobs.

THE SUPREME COURT'S REPUTATION

"I can't imagine what the country would be - with Donald Trump as our president."

- Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg

"He says whatever comes into his head at the moment. He really has an ego."

- Justice Ginsberg, speaking of Donald Trump

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"The judiciary, on the contrary, has no influence over either the sword or the purse; no direction either of the strength or of the wealth of the society; and can take no active resolution whatever. It may truly be said to have neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment."

- Federalist Papers, #78

There is a very good reason why Supreme Court justices don't weigh in on certain subjects, including politics.

While the Supreme Court holds the awesome power to "say what the law is," and invalidate acts of the legislature, the judicial branch is also weak, with no power over the purse and no power over the sword.

In other words, the strength and legitimacy of the Supreme Court lies in the court's reputation as a fair and neutral arbiter of legal interpretation.

Citizens must have faith that the court will be a fair referee and not a participant on the field of play.

When members of the court run off at the mouth like Ginsberg did, it does great harm to the court's reputation and causes far more damage than the indiscretions of either a president or member of Congress in this regard.

If citizens perceive that the Supreme Court is guided by personal political views or other biases, the court will lose its legitimacy and be seen as nothing more than a political, not legal, institution.

When that happens, respect for the rule of law itself will be in danger.

The shocking lack of discretion displayed by Justice Ginsberg therefore demands that she resign from the bench in order to protect the integrity and legitimacy of the Judicial Branch.

MARK DAYTON FUMBLES AGAIN

"Would this have happened if those passengers, the driver and the passengers, were white?" Dayton said. "I don't think it would have. ... I think all of us in Minnesota are forced to confront that this kind of racism exists."
- Governor Mark Dayton

Like Homer Simpson, we have all come to expect buffoonery and inchoate rantings from our governor.

Whether it's screaming that Republicans are unfit to govern, or whether he's blasting special interests for "hiding" things in bills to which he has affixed his signature, The governor displays no hesitancy to combine a curmudgeonly "you kids get off my lawn!" attitude with the vicious and unthinking rhetoric of a hardened political hack.

In most cases, that behavior has caused serious people to merely lament the lack of leadership and lost opportunities inherent in such scorched earth rhetoric.

In the case of the Castile shooting, it was downright tragic and even dangerous.

With virtually no facts at hand, the governor fanned the flames of emotion and fomented anger and frustration.

This at a time when the state needed calm, poised leadership.

At a time when patience was at a premium, Mark Dayton displayed none and rushed to judgment.

At a time when facts were desperately needed, he discarded that need and simply stated a conclusion - and a dangerous one at that. The governor declared in so many words that Castile was shot precisely because of his skin color and nothing else.

This despite utterly no evidence to support such a bold and inflammatory claim.

While this publication won't declare that Dayton's words contributed to any

direct violence against law enforcement, we can say with certainty that his words breed disrespect for law enforcement and contribute towards an attitude of distrust and contempt for the men and women who wear a badge and uphold our laws.

If this publication wasn't so committed to journalistic excellence and propriety, we would declare Mark Dayton the one unfit to govern.

July 22, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "He's still not sure if he'll vote for Trump in November, saying he assumes Clinton will easily win the state and that his vote probably won't matter."

- Star Tribune, writing of Minnesota National Delegate Andy Aplikowski

"You're on fire! You're on fire, stupid!"

- Cleveland police officer to a flag burning protester

1. Observations from Cleveland.

OBSERVATIONS FROM CLEVELAND

As this issue goes to press, the GOP family is wrapping up the national convention and heading home to do battle with Democrats in every state, county, and precinct in the country.

Overall, the convention exceeded expectations, even if only because the bar was set fairly low.

There was no anarchy, whether on the street or in the convention hall, even if some people on both sides of the front door showed that they are of minimal talent and character.

On one side, a couple of America-hating clowns self-nominated for the annual Darwin Award by failing to properly set fire to our National Colors by also setting one their own on fire.

Don't ask these guys to start your grill or fire place. It's apparently a complex task for them.

On the other side of the door, two men, one at the top of the GOP team and the other towards the bottom, displayed poor judgement, a lack of leadership, and a general display of morale-busting defeatism quite ill-suited for both their positions within the party and the situation.

The guy at the bottom of whom we speak is Andy Aplikowski, who is well known to our readers as the ill-tempered and ill-mannered author of an unpopular blog, the state Senate candidate who lost a GOP primary to Jim Abeler, and an attention seeker who never misses an opportunity to put a bad face on the GOP.

So let's parse for a moment the above quote:

1. He's not sure he will vote for the Republican-endorsed candidate for president;
2. He assumes Hilary Clinton will "easily" win Minnesota;
3. His vote won't matter.

Some readers may conclude that these statements aren't outrageous as they likely reflect what some Minnesotans, including some Republicans, think about how our state will fare in November.

But that thinking entirely misses the point.

The point is all about leadership and leadership positions.

Aplikowski made the quote in his role as a Minnesota delegate to the Republican national convention.

The delegation is supposed to comprise the "best of the best" of Minnesota Republicans.

The delegation is supposed to represent our most talented, passionate, and visionary leaders.

Ask yourself if those comments reflect the words of a leader.

Leaders are supposed to be the ones who boost morale, set the example in difficult circumstances, and display a "never say die" attitude.

The Navy SEAL creed states in part, "I am never out of the fight!"

Can you imagine Vince Lombardi walking into the locker room and telling his team they will likely lose?

Could you imagine a combat leader in Afghanistan telling his troops that the upcoming mission will likely fail and therefore their efforts on the field of battle won't matter?

Can you imagine the CEO of a young start-up telling his employees that they can't take on the legacy companies in their field?

There was no bigger optimist in American politics than Ronald Reagan. Reagan was a great president in large part precisely because he believed America was always in the fight and he made every American believe it.

How can the thousands of loyal party activists get motivated to make calls, knock on doors, put up lawn signs, and march in parades when our own leaders express doubt and pessimism?

It's July and already one leader has declared defeat.

If this is the attitude and outlook of Minnesota's party leaders, we are doomed.

What an embarrassment.

But Aplikowski shouldn't despair. He's not the only one who displayed a lack of leadership in Cleveland.

Ted Cruz did much to embarrass himself and show his true colors.

As readers know, Cruz pointedly failed to endorse Donald Trump during his speech, thereby undercutting the party, undercutting the party's nominated candidate, and working against the very purpose of the convention itself.

Again, the role of the person at issue is the point.

There are many Republicans in the "never Trump" camp, even some prominent leaders.

The difference is that these leaders had the class and the maturity to stay away from Cleveland and not make a scene that became a distraction.

Not Ted Cruz. He came to Cleveland, took the speaking slot, took the spotlight, and proceeded to torpedo the party's nominee and otherwise make things all about him.

While a big ego is certainly a prerequisite for running for president, Cruz showed that his ego and self-centeredness has totally crowded out any altruistic reasons he may have in running for president.

It's almost unbelievable that a man in his position, a sitting Senator, a strong presidential contender, a party leader supported by millions, would show up and urge the faithful to "vote their conscience," which is a clear slap in the face to the man who beat him for the nomination.

In doing such, Cruz revealed himself to be a venal, small, petty man more interested in self-aggrandizement than the common good.

His prime-time speaking slot was offered for the sole purpose of uniting the party behind the one man who can beat Hillary Clinton in November.

He ignored that obligation in favor of an attempt to boost his own standing with movement conservatives and position himself favorably for the future.

The good news is that Cruz's jackass performance has vaporized any chance he had of being a legitimate presidential candidate in 2020 or any other year.

If you can't support the process and the team, it's hypocritical to expect the team to support you down the road.

Lock her up!

This chant was a familiar refrain throughout the convention as delegates expressed their opinion that Hillary Rodham Clinton be imprisoned for her failure to properly handle classified information as it transited her home-brew email server in the basement of her New York mansion.

It's been amusing to watch liberals freak out as they decry the chants and the attempt to "silence" Hillary. "This is what dictatorships do," they whine.

Of course, this refrain intentionally and artfully confuses the issue.

"Lock her up!" refers to her behavior regarding the email issue and has nothing to do with her right to free speech as a candidate.

Indeed, dictatorships lock up political opponents. But democracies allow average citizens to speak out against the political elites.

It is a sign of a healthy democracy that concerned citizens can speak out against political elites who are above the law and operate under a different set of rules.

Moreover, it's a sign of healthy democracy when citizens demand that the rule of law prevail and that the bedrock principle of "equality under law" be enforced.

Democracies have one set of laws for all citizens, regardless of their station. Banana Republics ignore the rule of law and allow their elites to operate above the law.

Thus, we say to our liberal friends: LOCK HER UP!

July 29, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

"We are not interested in moving forward on the Southwest light rail project. I think we need to get real with our priorities in Minnesota on how we spend our transportation dollars. Our plan is to spend them on roads and bridges."
Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt

"Minnesota House Speaker Kurt Daudt has been unapologetic about his resistance to funding the Southwest Light Rail project. Even when members of his caucus were open to a deal he stood firm."
Saint Cloud Times Editorial

1. The Circular Firing Squad - AGAIN;
2. They Finally Admitted it!
3. We Don't Need Light Rail.

The Circular Firing Squad - AGAIN

In the words of the late, great Ronald Reagan, "There he goes again."

By "he," we mean Bob Cummins, the uber wealthy business man who seems more focused on attacking Republicans than in beating Democrats.

While this has been going on in various, ways, shapes, and forms over the years, the latest skirmish in his quest to stir internecine warfare among Republicans is perhaps his biggest.

In examining the most recent public campaign finance records, it is clear that Cummins and his ilk are spending significant resources to attack the highest ranking Republican in the legislature - Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt.

Speaker Daudt is being challenged in the Republican primary by Alan Duff.

Duff's most recent campaign finance report shows a \$1,000 donation from Bob Cummins.

Moreover, all of Duff's major individual contributions have come from outside the district, including from known associates of Bob Cummins like Cush Minar, who contributed \$1,000 as well.

Campaign finance reports also show that a political action committee (PAC) called the "New Leadership PAC" has spent money ONLY in the Daudt - Duff race, with all expenditures reported for the cycle going either to support Duff or oppose Daudt.

This PAC received all the reported revenues for the cycle from one person.

Bonus points if you can guess the last name of the sole contributor.

If you answered "Cummins," you would be a winner.

In this case, the Cummins in question is Joan Cummins, wife of Bob.

Although listing "homemaker" as her profession, Joan Cummins has donated thousands of dollars to candidates and PACs.

A homemaker has thousands to give to politicians?

Really.

The other curious thing about this PAC is that it is run by Sheila Kihne, another captain of the Tin Foil Hat Club.

Readers may, may, recall that Sheila Kihne went out tilting at windmills in the 2014 election cycle when she tried to "primary" state Rep. Jen Loon in Eden Prairie.

Loon dispatched her with ease.

Bob and Joan Cummins were generous donors to Kihne, each giving \$1,000.

It looks like they all enjoyed that losing campaign so much they decided to take things to the next level have a PAC together.

So here we have a Republican donor funding a PAC, run by a Republican activist, aiding and abetting the Democrats in attacking and harassing the Speaker of the House in his own district.

This means that the leader of the House GOP, the one thing Republicans control in state government, staying home in his district to campaign in a primary.

His time in raising money for the caucus, helping vulnerable Republicans, and appearing before media throughout the state to deliver the GOP message is greatly reduced.

Are Joan and Bob similarly funding a PAC dedicated to attacking Democrats?

If so, we can only hope it is run by someone who has actually won something.

If know nothings like Sheila Kihne and Jack Rogers are pulling the trigger on the circular firing squad, Bob Cummins and his main squeeze are buying the bullets.

Much like the Minnesota Family Council and the Freedom Club, we will give these groups recognition when the successfully take out the liberals who are taxing us to death.

Attacking Republicans, and thankfully failing, isn't something this publication admires.

Our prediction is that come August 10th, Speaker Daudt will have prevailed and he can get back to work preserving the GOP majority in the MN House that has single-handedly saved us from the machinations of Governor Dayton and the DFL majority in the state Senate.

If you want more conservative government, you do it by sending more Republicans to Saint Paul.
And, one more thing for those readers who think so highly of Alan Duff, Daudt's opponent.

We hope you've done your homework on his voting record on the Isanti County Board and the things he's said as a commissioner.

You might want to be fully informed on that front before you cast your vote or declare your support.
A word to the wise.

THEY FINALLY ADMITTED IT!

We hope you didn't miss the big news this week that the Dayton Administration has finally admitted what conservatives have known - and proclaimed - for generations.

Namely, that simply throwing money at our public schools won't increase outcomes, especially for poor kids.

The context of this news is the sobering fact that Minnesota standardized test scores have been flat for three years running, with scores for minority children running far, far behind, bespeaking a large achievement gap.

Overall, only 60% of Minnesota students are proficient in math and reading.

For black students, the proficiency rate is about 33%.

For white students only, the proficiency rate is about 70% in both subjects.

In the face of this news, Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius admitted, "schools alone can't solve the achievement gap. Factors outside the classroom have to be addressed."

Really.

Like the importance of an intact family led by a father and mother?

Like the importance of preventing teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and crime?

Like encouraging the dignity of productive work?

Conservatives have been talking about the importance of an intact family to instill good principles and values for many years while liberals have recommended more of the same poison.

You're right, commissioner. Throwing money at schools won't fix the problem.

Let us remember your words when the legislature considers a new education budget in 2017.

Of course, the liberals will declare that the solution is more government, more "supportive" programs run by unionized bureaucrats with no accountability metrics and no clear outcomes.

More "early childhood" programs, more "nutrition" programs, more "training" programs.
No, no, and no.

The solution is for government to create an environment in distressed neighborhoods in which to allow for residents to give themselves an opportunity to thrive.

Reduce crime, reduce barriers to business location, increase accountability for bureaucrats like teachers in the local public schools.

The rest is up to each individual.

WE DON'T NEED LIGHT RAIL

And finally this week, we have more confirmation that light rail is ultra-expensive and doesn't do anything for economic development.

That isn't the opinion of right-wing think tanks.

It's the opinion of some of the very bureaucrats who are in charge of helping to make it happen.

There was an article in the Star Tribune this week that pensively asked, "What will happen with SWLRT isn't built?"

Here's a couple of opinions:

"I think St. Louis Park obviously has done quite well even without having light rail and will continue to do well without it."

That quote from Kevin Locke, the Saint Louis Park Community Development Director.

"From a planning perspective, most of the work on transit-oriented development is still relevant, even without the line. When I'm really honest about it, I say that Hopkins will be fine."

Kersten Elverum, the Hopkins Director of Economic Development.

And the liberals want to claim Republicans in the area are in jeopardy of losing their seats by opposing the line.

Whatever.

August 5, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "He can't learn what he doesn't know because he doesn't know he doesn't know it."

- Newt Gingrich, on Donald Trump

1. Alan Duff - Conductor, Brakeman, Engineer;
2. Crossing the Line.

ALAN DUFF - CONDUCTOR, BRAKEMAN, ENGINEER

Greetings, Watchdogs. This is your special "Primary Election" edition of the Watchdog, as we go to press just 4 days before the primary next Tuesday.

Make sure you get out to vote next week or vote early, pursuant to Minnesota law. Unless, of course, you're a Democrat. In that case, bring your utility bill or have some paid liberal operative vouch for your identity.

To find your polling place, click [here](#).

While most voters will see rather sleepy primaries or none at all, there are some barn burner primaries out there, perhaps none more than that happening in House District 31A, which encompasses parts of Isanti, Anoka and Sherburne counties.

It also happens to be the district represented by Kurt Daudt, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the highest ranking Republican in Minnesota government.

Daudt is being challenged in the primary by Alan Duff, a former colleague on the Isanti County Board of Commissioners.

While Duff is the ostensible challenger, this primary is really a political proxy war between Daudt and a feckless alliance of wealthy outside special interests and local sore losers who have been unsuccessfully trying to undermine and depose Rep. Daudt for some time.

What unites these forces is an obsession with attacking fellow Republicans for an alleged lack of conservative purity and a desire to focus attention on themselves. Oh, and they also wear matching tin foil hats.

Thus, candidate Duff has been presented as THE personification of principled conservatism. THE embodiment of constitutional originalism and fealty to limited government and personal liberty.

Pop quiz: one candidate in the race opposes taxpayer-financed rail projects. The other one supports them.

Guess which one is which.

If you guessed that Rep. Daudt is the rail supporter, you would be wrong and you would go home with a nice parting gift, like a set of Ginsu knives or a sporty piece of carry-on luggage.

The Watchdog has obtained, courtesy of state Rep. Pat Garofalo, [video](#) of Alan Duff speaking glowingly of the proposed Northern Lights Express passenger rail train between Minneapolis and Duluth.

That's right. Incontrovertible video evidence of the "more conservative" candidate speaking in support of a subsidized rail project that could top \$1 billion in construction costs, before any operating subsidies are even factored in.

And don't forget what the Minnesota GOP Party Platform says about rail, both directly and indirectly:

We believe economic prosperity is driven by individuals, not government. We support lowering the tax burden, exercising spending restraint, and creating and maintaining a fair, honest and competitive business environment to promote economic prosperity.

We support keeping government functions in state, local or private hands, electing honest and responsive legislative bodies, advocating for fair election processes, and generally making government smaller and better.

Gas and motor vehicle taxes should not fund rail transit construction and operation.

Road and bridge safety should take precedence over new light rail construction.

If you think a taxpayer-subsidized train is consistent with the Party platform, raise your flipper, er, hand.

If you think government ought to be in the business of building and operating trains, raise your hand.

While the video, excerpted, is undated, it appears to be from a candidate forum for Isanti County commissioner candidates.

In the video, Duff references Congressman Jim Oberstar, who left office after being defeated in 2010.

According to Duff's biography, he served on the county board from 2009-2012. Thus, the video was likely from the 2008 campaign cycle.

While readers can review the video themselves, the Watchdog has made an effort to provide a transcript of Duff's rail remarks:

The commuter rail option is on the table, being discussed very extensively, does make a lot of sense. I have been working very closely with my friends down in Anoka County, the Northstar coalition on that issue and I hope to see it come here sooner than later. Paying for this, it ain't (sic) going to be cheap. I'm fully aware of that, I looked at the price tags (sic) today on that and it's, uh, millions and millions of dollars and I think what we'd do is work closely with Congressman Oberstar and work with the various legislators who are supporting this on the national and state level and do what we can to get the funds from those sources, because it's going to be an expensive proposition, that's for sure.

So there you have it. The candidate who proudly proclaims his vehement opposition to taxes and government spending embraces one of the most expensive proposed public mega-works projects.

So, Mr. Duff, how exactly does this rail project "make sense?"

You're right, it "ain't" going to be cheap.

So how does government come up with the money to pay for this white elephant? More Chinese-financed debt? A tax increase, which you would oppose, according to your own words.

At the state level, this money is generated through debt in the name of "bonding." Are you saying you would support putting the state's share on the government credit card?

By the way, you no longer have "friends" down in Anoka County.

After Rhonda Sivarajah, Matt Look and others swept out the Dan Erhart crew, one of the first things they did was withdraw Anoka County from membership in the joint powers group pushing this project.

Jim Oberstar and Dan Erhart aren't around anymore, Mr. Duff.

Here we have the self-proclaimed purest of the pure backing a candidate who proudly supports commuter rail.

The Watchdog has been around for over a decade and we thought we had seen it all.

In the words of Mean Gene Okerlund, "What a shocker! What a bombshell!"

CROSSING THE LINE

In the interest of full disclosure, Harold Hamilton and the Watchdog staff in its entirety are unimpressed with Donald Trump.

We're not Trump supporters.

His opposition to free trade concerns us.

His obvious lack of interest in learning important issues like foreign policy is unsettling.

His remarkable lack of discipline and utter inability to deliver a message and stay on message is appalling.

What's even more concerning, unsettling, appalling - and unsurprising - is the complicity of the legacy media is giving Hillary Clinton and her universe of supporters a free pass regarding their appalling behavior.

While there are myriad examples of this behavior, perhaps the most damaging to our political institutions is the way in which the current care takers of those institutions have disregarded the practices that maintain the integrity and

credibility of our democratic institutions.

It started with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg criticizing Trump.

It was unprecedented for a sitting Justice to insert herself so directly into the partisan debate surrounding the election of the person who will lead a separate, co-equal branch of our federal government.

And President Obama got in on the act. The sitting president deeply inserted himself into the presidential race by calling Trump "unqualified" and demanding that Republican office holders withdraw support for Trump.

While the president in many respects acts as the head of his political party, the president also holds an office that demands that he represent the country, including those who support candidates the sitting president may not like.

It's one thing to support a candidate for the presidency. It's a whole other matter to so strongly criticize a contender for the White House.

This is especially true when the man uttering the attacks is himself uniquely unqualified, with a track record to prove it.

Every American, regardless of partisan affiliation, should condemn the calculated and pre-mediated way in which the president and Supreme Court justice have endangered and undermined the credibility of our democratic institutions in the name of scoring political points.

It proves, once again, that Democrats are more concerned with power and maintaining than power than they are in ensuring that the American people have faith that there will be equal justice under law and that some things are above partisan politics.

Of course, this is intentional.

In our system, political institutions are designed to act as a check and balance against unfettered power.

In other words, liberals like Ginsberg and Obama see our system as a large barrier against the kind of concentrated power needed to implement their world view.

It's hard for government to do "big things" when no one person can impose their will on the country.

Hence, all the political games from Obama regarding executive orders, recess appointments, and others abuses of power.

For him, divided government is anathema.

And the same holds true for judges who think like he does.

In their world view, the rights of individuals are subordinate to government's "right" and ability to govern for the "collective good."

This publication is disgusted by the way in which these two have trashed our Supreme Court and the Office of the Presidency.

For shame.

August 10, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "So I may have short-circuited it and for that, I will, you know, try to clarify."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

PRIMARY ELECTION SPECIAL EDITION!

1. The Results are in.

THE RESULTS ARE IN

Last night's primary races provided precisely the kind of topsy-turvy and unpredictable results that have become the norm in this unique election cycle.

There were a number of interesting races and results, starting in Senate District 31, where both incumbent state Representatives faced intense primary challenges.

Perhaps the marquee primary of the cycle featured House Speaker Kurt Daudt being challenged by former Isanti County commissioner and former Commissioner Daudt colleague Alan Duff.

The race was closely watched as it was really a proxy battle between the House Speaker and special interests from outside the district who wanted to depose Daudt.

In particular, wealthy GOP donor Bob Cummins and his wife went after Daudt by establishing a PAC to play in the race. The PAC was run by Sheila Kihne, a failed candidate who herself attempted to "primary" an incumbent GOP state Rep. in the Eden Prairie area in 2014.

These outside interests teamed up with certain activists within the local party, who may have taken the term "teamed up" a bit too far, as a campaign finance complaint was lodged against these activists. If the facts as alleged are true, these activists flagrantly and blatantly broke the law. The Watchdog will be following this case closely and report findings as they are made available.

In the end, it was a bit anti-climactic as Daudt shellacked Duff by a whopping 72-28% margin.

The result didn't surprise this publication.

Given that there were two closely watched primaries in the area, the staff spent a good deal of time talking to Republican activists and opinion leaders in the area to get their take on both this race and the Tom Hackbarth / Cal Bahr primary race.

The overwhelming sentiment from these observers was that Kurt was a good man who had done a good job both representing the district and leading the House GOP in Saint Paul.

It was also clear that Daudt's extensive family history in the area was a benefit. Many people knew the Daudt family or had a connection to the family.

This race was clearly about more than one state Rep. in a far northern exurban district.

In many respects, it was about control of both the local GOP and the direction of the House GOP caucus.

Kurt Daudt is decisively and firmly established his control of both.

The loss has to be a real embarrassment for Bob Cummins and his crew. They took a shot at the title and got humiliated.

On the other side of the district, the match-up was Cal Bahr against incumbent and long-serving Rep. Tom Hackbarth.

Many of the same interests that opposed Daudt also supported Bahr.

Bahr defeated Hackbarth, putting an end to Hackbarth's 20-plus year stint in Saint Paul.

Some see Bahr's win as an upset, but upon further examination that isn't the case.

While Bahr must be given credit for really stepping up a campaign that stumbled a bit out of the gate, it's also true that Hackbarth was a deeply flawed candidate who was ripe for a fall.

It wasn't quite the David vs. Goliath match-up less informed folks are portraying it to be.

While Hackbarth had over two decades of name identification and a voting record that pleased most activists.

On the other hand, there were warning signs everywhere, starting with Hackbarth's loss of the endorsement.

The endorsement loss was a clear signal activists were displeased with him.

Hackbarth then exacerbated the endorsement issue by reneging on a pledge to abide by the endorsement.

Many activists with whom we spoke were upset with both the choice to run against the endorsed candidate and reneging on the pledge.

The second major factor at play was Hackbarth's demeanor and personality. As this publication has noted on many occasions, he has a well-earned reputation for being a jerk.

Despite the reputation, we were nonetheless surprised by the number of people who had a story to tell of being insulted, berated, or belittled by Tom Hackbarth at some point. Many of those people didn't know Cal Bahr well but were eager to cast a vote against Hackbarth.

Finally, this is definitely an election year where experience isn't an advantage. Many activists were receptive to a message of change and renewal after 20-plus years of the same legislator.

In a low turn-out primary, all of the above equaled a not-so-surprising loss.

The other big primary news was in Minneapolis, where two long-serving liberal stalwarts were turned out of office.

With a combined 64 years of legislative service, state Reps. Joe Mullery and Phyllis Kahn lost their primaries to newcomers.

While the mainstream media doesn't want to talk about it, the primary issue in this primary was race and ethnicity.

Both incumbents possessed impeccable liberal credentials, so that wasn't an issue.

Even gender wasn't an issue, as each candidate faced a challenger of the same gender.

Candidate qualifications weren't an issue, either. Both Kahn and Muller possess advanced degrees and a long list of legislative accomplishments, especially Kahn.

Mullery faced Fue Lee, a native of Laos while Kahn faced Ilhan Omar, a native of Somalia.

Thus, the real difference in each race was group identity politics.

While other issues may have touched each campaign and motivated certain voters, it was racial politics that played a strong role.

Many voters in both races were motivated to vote for the challengers because of that person's immutable characteristics.

Of course, this is nothing new. Ethnic groups new to the United States have had a history of organizing themselves and exercising political power precisely by rallying around a candidate of the same ethnicity or religion.

This observation shouldn't be construed to take anything away from either Lee or Omar. Both candidates have impressive resumes.

But that doesn't mean that an examination of the role race played in these races should be off limits.

The point here is that it's a bit ironic that legislators like Mullery and Kahn who promoted a focus on group identity politics have themselves now become victims of the same.

While Minneapolis will remain a liberal bastion for the foreseeable future, those carrying the liberal torch are likely to look a whole lot different as new

refugee groups mature and learn to master the levers of societal influence.

Finally, we end up in the south Metro, where Jason Lewis won a four-way primary for the GOP endorsement for Minnesota's Second Congressional District.

Lewis was the conservative favorite and prevailed rather easily over his challengers.

The real race here was between Lewis, the activists' favorite, and Darlene Miller, the Establishment favorite.

Miller, in fact, garnered the endorsement of incumbent John Kline.

While some may argue that Miller was the candidate better positioned to win the general election, Lewis is precisely the type of candidate the district and America need.

Washington is hopelessly broken and Establishment candidates won't cut it.

While this publication can thank John Kline for his service, he voted for Medicare Part D and did very little to control Washington's debt-fueled spending orgy.

For far too long, we've heard promises out of Republicans in Washington about fixing things.

So far, it's been a bunch of bunk and even the most thoughtful of Republicans are sick of being played for fools.

It's time for real change.

August 19, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week:

"Agriculture is highly dependent on trade, and a well-implemented Trans-Pacific Partnership is essential for economic vitality and job security, not only for our state, but for our nation."

- Land O' Lakes CEO Chris Policinski

"Moving toward a trade protectionist agenda is not the answer to our economic challenges for the country and certainly not for Minnesota."

- MN Chamber of Commerce President Doug Loon

"I did ask him in the meeting if he would consider doing a special session, set aside the things we can't agree on and let's be Minnesotan. Let's be Minnesota nice and focus on the things we can agree on. Let's get a session and just work on the things we can agree on. The governor flat out said 'no, we're not going to work on those things without Southwest Light Rail.'"

- House Speaker Kurt Daudt

1. Rip Van Dayton;
2. Get Those Hip Boots;
3. Free Trade Troglodytes.

RIP VAN DAYTON

Our intrepid governor was asleep at the switch again. The Democrats called the play, the ball was snapped, and Dayton was sawing logs over on the sidelines.

Last week, on August 12th, Hillary and Slick Willie released their 2015 tax returns, with the purpose of attempting to shame Donald Trump for not releasing his tax returns.

You know, that whole mature, adult thing about "nah nah nah, I'm transparent and you're not."

It's what keeps the American people awake at night, wondering if Donald Trump claimed that prize he found at the bottom of his Lucky Charms as

income.

Of course, let's not wonder how "public servants" Bill and Hillary managed to earn \$10 million, supplementing the \$153 million they've reported since entering public life.

Selling influence is lucrative, apparently.

Back to the story at hand.

During this whole juvenile charade, someone over at the Governor's Manse realized that Mark hasn't released his tax returns since he was re-elected back in 2014.

CRAP!!! Call the accountant and get something thrown together ricky-tick!

You can just imagine the panic.

Does anyone know how much that new Picasso is worth? How much did the South Dakota trust fund earn? Did I claim the butler as a dependent? Can you deduct mental health screenings for a dog? Is "fun boy" an occupation?

Thankfully, the compliant media found nothing to criticize when Mark released two years' worth of returns only a week after Hillary sprung the scheme.

And in typical liberal/DFL fashion, the governor used the opportunity to thump his chest, cop a morally superior attitude and declare, without a hint of shame, "The people of Minnesota and the nation should know how their public leaders earn a living."

Funny, he didn't have that same attitude back last year. Or the year before.

Classic.

And in true liberal fashion (and the Dayton tradition), there was controversy surrounding Dayton's charitable giving.

Readers will recall that Dayton, who preaches the virtue of charity at the point of a gun, got exposed when it was revealed in a previous tax return that he had given only scant hundreds to charity.

This year, it was claimed that Dayton made "over \$10,000" in charitable contributions.

The problem? There is no record in his return of these contributions.

Is Dayton lying? Embellishing?

Was the lack of a record of these donations a function of the scramble to get his returns assembled so he wasn't on the wrong side of the DFL morality play about tax returns?

It shouldn't take more than a few days for Dayton's army of accountants, lawyers, and tax advisers to assemble a verifiable, certified record of his 2015 charitable giving.

Let's see it. We'll wait. We just won't hold our breath.

Moreover, Dayton claimed about \$10,000 in charity on \$385,000 in income. That's not even 3% of income.

How compassionate.

In addition, 2/3rds of his income was income off daddy's trust fund in South Dakota.

How ironic that liberals display outright contempt for the efforts of productive people to earn wealth, yet there is nothing but fawning adulation for a lazy dilatant who plays politics in the same way other people try scuba diving or curling. When the check from South Dakota shows up each month, it's easy to have a hobby.

And this guy was elected - twice.

GET THOSE HIP BOOTS

Get those boots, because the BS is about to get way deep. Now that Governor Dayton has refused to call a special legislative session, the DFL will surely bust the Truth-O-meter in spewing tripe about how this is Daudt's fault, Hann's fault, Reagan's fault, Bush's fault (both of them) and Pawlenty's fault.

No. This one is one Dayton. He's the one vested with the SOLE authority to

call a special session of the legislature.

He chose not to do so and chose not to do so because he insisted that any agreement with the legislature include a light rail train of dubious merit.

Thank goodness Daudt's GOP primary opponent didn't win. As a fan of trains, he would have folded right away.

We're surprised Dayton had time to negotiate all this, what with the scramble to get two years of taxes done and off the Clinton team. Hillary? Is that you? Hello. Hill? Mark Dayton here. Mark Dayton. Governor of Minnesota. Yeah, I've been here since 2010. In any case, I got those taxes done just like your staff told me to. The charitable contributions? Yeah, I just made it up. Don't worry. The media will never follow up. Biden's on the other line? Okay. Holler back, girl.

What's ironic is that this whole light rail excuse is little more than a pretext to blame the House GOP for gridlock.

The Watchdog is here to make the call that Dayton and the Met Council will find a way to get the funding without legislative approval. You heard it here first.

We're run over this ground but it bears repeating.

The House GOP passed a broadly popular tax bill. DONE.

The House GOP passed a robust and quality bonding bill. DONE.

Transportation didn't get done?

Yeah, it didn't get done when the DFL had only themselves to overcome back in 2013 and 2014.

That gas tax that just has to be a part of a transportation deal? Nope. They didn't pass it when they could have.

What's the common thread of failure here? It's not Kurt Daudt and his GOP majority.

Let's indeed get some change in 2016. It starts with a new majority in the Senate.

In the meantime, let's hope our GOP legislators hit back with authority when the inevitable BS come flowing from the mouths of DFL spin masters.

FREE TRADE TROGLODYTES

It's good to see state and national business leaders calling out both Trump and Clinton on their know-nothing kow-towing to popular opinion regarding free trade.

While it's neat sound bite that appeals to a particular segment of the voting population, it isn't true.

While there is always a measure of economic dislocation in a dynamic economy, free trade isn't the hobgoblin it's made out to be.

How important are export markets to Minnesota?

In the agriculture-intensive state, 1/3rd of all planted acres are destined for export.

In all, foreign exports support 800,000 here.

Disrupting international trade won't bring back jobs permanently lost to technology and innovation.

Nor will it bring back jobs where it makes sense to build things near their final sale points.

If you can build a widget destined for South Korea in South Korea, it doesn't make sense to build it in America and pay to ship it from Virginia.

Building an economic wall around the country makes as much sense as building a wall against Mexico or a wall against Canada (right, Scott Walker?).

Free trade is a good thing, no matter what grandstanding, pandering politicians say about it.

We live in a global economy and that won't change.

Ridiculous proclamations against free trade and stupendous flip-flops on the subject only reinforce the idea that when it comes to trade, government should do what it does best. Get out of the way - quickly.

August 26, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Our commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so called 'trigger warnings,' we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual 'safe spaces' where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own."

- John Ellison, University of Chicago Dean of Students

1. At the Fair;
2. Train in Vain;
3. What's a MICA?

AT THE FAIR

It's that time of year. The Great Minnesota Get Together is upon us and that means the traditional farewell to summer, excellent junk food, and lots of politics.

If you haven't, make sure you stop by the booth sponsored by the Minnesota House of Representatives, located in the Education Building.

The booth is manned by staffers and legislators, who volunteer time and appear on a bi-partisan basis, with a legislator from each party present.

It's a great opportunity to meet legislators, get the latest legislative news, and take the famous annual survey.

Here's a sneak peek at this year's questions, courtesy of Harold Hamilton:

ONE. Do you support an increase in the Metro area sales tax to fund mass transit, including bus and light rail projects?

TWO. Should criminal background checks be required on all gun sales, including private transactions and at gun shows?

THREE. Should schools and businesses be able to require individuals to use bathroom and locker room facilities based on biological sex, as defined at

birth?

FOUR. Should government agencies and institutions be required to obtain parental consent before disclosing personally identifying data on students to a third party, other than law enforcement?

FIVE. Would you support increasing the state's 28.5 cent per gallon gas tax by at least 10 cents to help fund highway and bridge needs across the state?

SIX. An ignition interlock device requires users to blow into a breathalyzer device on the vehicle's dash board; if the device detects the presence of alcohol the vehicle will not start. Should everyone convicted of DWI be required to use such a device for a prescribed period of time before they can regain full driving privileges?

SEVEN. Should it be mandatory that employees in work places with six or more workers accumulate one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours worked, with a maximum of 40 hours accrued in a work year?

EIGHT. When a mentally capable adult is dying from a terminal illness, do you think this adult should be allowed to receive a prescription for life-ending medication they may self-administer?

NINE. Should it be illegal to talk on a wireless communication device while driving?

TEN. Should the state provide an individual income tax credit of up to \$5,000 for principal and interest payments on student loans?

ELEVEN. From 1913 until 1973, legislators were elected on nonpartisan ballots, meaning there was no political designation for individual members. Should legislators be elected without political party designation?

TWELVE. State legislators currently earn \$31,140 annually, and they are eligible for additional per diem and other expenses. Should an independent, citizens-only council be created to set salaries for legislators? The question will be on the November 2016 ballot as a proposed constitutional amendment.

Vote wisely, Watchdogs.

TRAIN IN VAIN

Once again, the DFL has been caught playing political games. For once, this publication hopes they pay a price for their feckless partisanship and willingness to place politics ahead of governance.

As readers know, the DFL killed a special session of the legislature that would have delivered over \$550 million in tax cuts and over \$700 million for roads and bridges all because Kurt Daudt, David Hann and their GOP colleagues wouldn't agree to fund the Southwest Light Rail Project.

This week, a bombshell was dropped when House Speaker Kurt Daudt revealed the existence of an email from Met Council Chairman Adam Duinick to Governor Dayton stating that the federal government has no plans to execute a funding agreement until sometime in 2017 because of ongoing litigation regarding the project.

"He's (Dayton) hid that from the public and from the Legislature and from the press since January of this year. We know the federal government is not going to fund it for a year and a half. There is no deadline. There is no reason that we have to take action now on Southwest light rail," said Daudt. Moreover, if this project was such a critical priority, how come it wasn't a priority?

Consider that the DFL-controlled Senate unveiled at massive, kitchen-sink bonding bill that clocked in at a whopping \$1.8 billion. Was the relatively meager \$135 million in state funds for light rail included in that bill? Nope.

Moreover, did every single DFL Senator vote for that bonding bill? Yep.

Did the DFL-controlled Senate have any hearings on the project? Nope.

This is the same cynical political ploy the DFL used on the gas tax. They had every chance after the 2012 elections to pass a gas tax, as they controlled both houses of the legislature and the governor's office.

Did they pass it? Nope.

Did they have the time and political capital to pass gay marriage? Yep.

Did the gas tax suddenly become a priority once the GOP took the House after the 2014 elections? Yep.

Governor Dayton and his DFL cronies have made the obvious decision that they see some sort of political advantage in failure and grid lock.

Blame the GOP, hope the voters swallow it, win back the House and hold the Senate.

If successful, the game becomes a whopping "twofer" for the DFL as they bank all sorts for money to waste.

With no tax bill this year, there is \$550 million added to the bottom line.

With no bonding bill, there is a cool billion in bonding to spend.

Do you think DFL one-party rule in 2017 would pass \$550 million in tax cuts?

Hell no. It would be \$550 million in giveaways to favored constituencies like the teachers' union.

Do you think the DFL bonding bill would feature hundreds of millions in spending on roads and bridges?

Hell no. Look for cultural centers, solar gardens, wellness centers, and ski jumps.

One has to wonder how many times the DFL can get away with scamming the public until people wake up and realize they're being played for fools.

WHAT'S A MICA?

This week's installment of questionable government spending comes in the form of dues some counties are paying for a lobbying association called the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).

This group claims it represents (read "lobbies") urban and "growing" counties in Minnesota.

This group isn't to be confused with the Association of MN Counties (AMC), another lobbying group that already represents these counties.

Note that all these dues are funded with tax dollars from each of these counties.

For example, according to state documents, Dakota County paid over

\$108,000 in dues to MICA in 2015.

Saint Louis County paid \$53,000.

The normally conservative counties of Scott and Carver also pay into this organization.

How many pot holes could be filled with this money?

Perhaps hire a sheriff's deputy instead?

Maybe even cut taxes!

These four counties all have fiscally conservative county commissioners in their ranks.

Watchdogs who live in these counties should contact these friends of the taxpayer and ask why one dime is going to support this MICA group.

Don't these counties already have lobbyists in the AMC who represent them already?

In fact, Saint Louis, Dakota and Scott have contract lobbyists working for them in addition to AMC.

Do they really need a third organization? Really?

Contact them today.

Dakota County: Chris Gerlach. chris.gerlach@co.dakota.mn.us

Dakota County: MaryLiz Holberg. maryliz.holberg@co.dakota.mn.us

Scott County: Mike Beard. mbeard@co.scott.mn.us

Carver County: Tom Workman. tworkman@co.carver.mn.us

Saint Louis County. Chris Dahlberg. dahlbergc@stlouiscountymn.gov

September 2, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Many Minnesotans have serious doubts about the wisdom of tying their environmental and economic future to a fossil industry of a soon-to-be past era."

- Willis Mattison

Quote of the Week: "The DFL environmentalists want to deprive us of our quality of life and use of our wilderness. These fakes who call themselves Democrats oppose mining, the right to own a gun, freedom of speech, our American values, and the style of life we have on the Iron Range."

- Robert Vlasisavljevich. Mayor of Eveleth

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

- Hillary Clinton

Fact of the Week: Exploitation: "the action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work (or vote!)."

1. Exploited.

EXPLOITED

As we approach Labor Day and move closer to a pivotal election, many working class voters are taking a long, hard look at the Party that professes to have their back, the Democrat Farmer Labor (DFL) Party.

For generations, certain segments of the American populace have loyally voted DFL - and received nothing in return.

While there may have been a time when the DFL was ruled by leaders with an authentic egalitarian world view, that time has long passed.

Today's DFL party is run by wealthy, urban elites who hold views that are diametrically opposed to those held by the working class, be it the minority working class in the urban core or the white working class in rural counties.

These urban elites are deeply involved in politics to promote radical gun control, abortion on demand, gay marriage, a radical environmentalism, and economic policies that appear to be progressive but instead leave massive loopholes through which they escape their self-professed obligation to "pay their fair share."

These radical views are not only at odds with those in the working class, they are harmful.

Today's DFL is led by a trust fund governor who's lived a life of carefree luxury.

It's led by a House Minority Leader who lives in a tony Minneapolis enclave and pays more in property taxes than some people make in a year.

It's led by a clownish U.S. Senator who made a fortune playing the fool in Hollywood, writing vacuous trash while doing dope.

All three live in Minneapolis and consider walking down to the farmer's market to pick up some kale to be "farming."

These feckless politicians string along these groups, promising help and support that never comes.

Take mining. The Iron Range has always been sensitive to economic shocks, as any commodity-dependent area would be.

The plunge in commodity prices, particularly iron ore, has wrought economic devastation that has resisted the general recovery being experienced across the country.

Economic distress is quite evident across the Range.

Of course, the antidote for this malaise would be to get more mining jobs up and running, especially for those minerals, ferrous and non-ferrous, that have recovered in price point.

But the urban elites who run the DFL won't allow it.

Instead, they engage in a cynical game of stringing people along, claiming that there's just "one more" environmental regulation to clear.

Years later, miners are still waiting for good jobs. They won't be coming, at least so long as Mark Dayton is governor.

You see, there is no intention to allow this mining to start up. It's all a smoke screen to cop some more votes out of Iron Rangers for the next election.

It's about the false hope. The DFL party has delayed considering a resolution to oppose mining.

It wasn't defeated. Only delayed until after the election. Just like Hillary's calendar.

There are some signs of life in the traditional constituency. The unions representing construction trades men and women, the skilled mine workers, have been courageous in calling out Dayton and the Democrats.

There are also Iron Range Democrats who have also bravely declared that the emperor has no clothes.

And it's not just mining. Enbridge Company recently announced that they will bypass Minnesota in building an oil pipeline out of the Bakken Oil Field.

The pipeline, and its jobs and tax base, will simply bypass Minnesota.

The oil will still flow, it will still be transported, it will still be consumed.

Nonetheless, the DFL environmentalists will thump their chest publicly while private cheering that the pipeline won't run near their lake home, the one they use when they're not at the Minneapolis condo.

In the urban core, the same exploitation occurs with black citizens.

For generations, the DFL has run our urban cores. For blacks, the schools are horrible, the crime is worse, and the economic opportunity non-existent.

Nothing has gotten better for that demographic.

It could.

Education reforms could make the schools much better. But the DFL would

never offend the teachers' union.

Reforming welfare programs would help. But there is an industrial complex of government workers and non-profits that rake in government money to administer these growing and failing programs. Can't offend the government unions and the non-profit executives who attend the swanky fundraisers.

It's about exploitation.

Consider the Huffington Post [article](#) this week regarding the leaked memo from Nancy Pelosi's staff, encouraging DFL congressional candidates to distance themselves from black activists.

The memo reads, "Listen to their (BLM) concerns, but don't offer support for concrete policy positions."

The memo puts the lie to the concern Democrats claim to have for black lives.

It's kind of like transportation. When they had control, there was no gas tax. Now, it's all about the gas tax.

Also consider an opinion piece this week regarding the continued folly of Southwest Light Rail.

The author, Mary Pattock, describes meeting some black supporters of the transit line, which doesn't offer service to the most underserved areas in Minneapolis and those most in need of transit options.

"We really didn't know the facts and were told what to say," one black testifier related. After being told how the route circumvented their neighborhood, they ripped off their stickers.

Exploitation.

It remains to be seen if members of these exploited groups will fight for their right to self-determination and do more than vote DFL by rote.

The Iron Range appears to be moving that direction.

The big test will come in the campaign between DFLer Rick Nolan and Republican Stewart Mills.

If Mills wins, we can say that the Iron Range and northern Minnesota are waking up.

The urban core still appears to have a ways to go. In the meantime, you can rest assured the DFL will do nothing to enhance educational outcomes, reduce crime, or encourage a culture of work and personal responsibility.

September 9, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Donald J. Trump on Wednesday called for a vast expansion of the military, including 90,000 new soldiers for the Army and nearly 75 new ships for the Navy, requiring up to \$90 billion a year in additional spending."

Associated Press (9/7/16)

Factoid of the Week: The United States currently spends more than \$600 billion a year on the military, more than the next seven countries combined.

1. Trump as Commander-in-Chief;
2. The Consequences of Liberalism;
3. Colin Kaepernick Doesn't Matter.

TRUMP AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Donald Trump launched a foray into the military affairs realm this week by proposing a massive expansion of the military, requiring up to \$90 a year in additional spending to cover the cost.

With national defense often cited by voters as an important issue this election, both Trump and Clinton have been racing to establish their bona fides as military leader, which is difficult for both since neither served and have little to offer in establishing their experience to serve as Commander-in-Chief.

Trump has apparently settled on a "more is better" strategy, hoping voters see his call for quantitative military expansion as evidence of competence.

This approach raises three important issues.

First, how does he propose to pay for the expansion? Thus far, the answer has been in the form of vague platitudes about reducing "wasteful spending," expanding energy production, and collecting unpaid taxes.

Good luck with that. That's about as realistic as the candidate who proclaims he eliminate the federal tax code and replace it with a post card.

The reality is that a Trump administration would be forced to lift the "sequester" that cut both military and domestic spending in order to get the extra appropriations.

That would mean domestic spending (read welfare spending) would also skyrocket, on at least a dollar-for-dollar basis.

In short, there would have to be a deal with the devil to bust spending caps.

And don't think for a minute there would be a plan to pay for the spending buffet. It would come at the expense of our children and grand-children, already handcuffed to \$18 trillion in national debt.

This observation leads to the second question. Why does this country need a military budget approaching \$700 billion per annum, which is more than the next seven countries combined?

Sadly, the debate over military policy has started to mimic our debates over public education.

It's become all about the money. It's a debate only over how much to spend.

Just like with education, it would be nice if Trump and Clinton would first define the national security interest, as they see it.

When the national security interest is defined, the resources needed to defend it come into view. Without it, it's nothing more than the military-industrial complex feeding at the public trough, much like the teachers' union.

A critical and related question concerns our allies. Both candidates should clearly articulate the role that our allies should play in defending common security interests around the globe.

For 70 years, our leaders have operated off of a post-World War II template, treating allies like global wards of the state.

If America has common cause with the likes of Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, France, Germany, and Britain, those countries should contribute resources commensurate with their global status.

It's high time that these allies pull their weight and stop freeloading off

American military resources.

Doing so wouldn't signal American weakness or the abdication of this nation as a global leader in defending common interests regarding freedom of navigation, territorial integrity, or the fight against radical Islam.

This isn't 1945. Or even 1965. It's 2016 and it's time for a commander-in-chief who acknowledges a new geopolitical template in military affairs, one that includes more robust participation from allies who share our values and strategic goals.

Finally, it will be interesting to see how Trump's message plays in rural areas dominated by working class whites.

While feelings of patriotism run high in these areas, there is also a weariness of global military ventures.

These areas send a disproportionate number of sons and daughters to fight our wars. These areas bear the brunt of the death and injuries inherent in armed conflict.

Will Trump be seen as a defender of America, one who stands in contrast to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's appeasement? Is this part of making America great again?

Or will he be seen as a chicken hawk calling for more sons and daughters to be fed to the war machine?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LIBERALISM

The following report was submitted by a loyal watchdog who serves as the accountant for a number of small businesses:

I want to share a story of a client of mine who is impacted by the new minimum wage law that took effect August 1st. The law requires employers to pay \$9.50/hr if gross sales are above \$500k during the last 4 quarters (this business is at approximately \$575k).

This business is a small fast food restaurant franchise. The newly enacted law will add about \$2700 in additional payroll costs per month, for an annual cost of \$32,400. This is a business that opened up in late 2013. As of 2015, it had not reached profitability yet. These new payroll costs will most likely

force it out of business. Its payroll consists mainly of part-timers who will now be out of work.

This is social engineering at its worst. Thinking you can magically increase someone's pay without considering the consequences is insanity. Now, 30 employees will be out of work, but liberals will feel good about themselves. This is what fighting for the middle class looks like.

When government artificially raises the cost of labor, consequences indeed follow.

Those costs include fewer workers hired, especially those in need of entry-level jobs (e.g. teenagers and the disabled).

Those costs include higher prices for consumers, as employers pass along those higher labor costs.

Those costs also include fewer employers as some are forced to close because of yet one more governmental mandate, as well as fewer employers because fewer and fewer Americans want to the risk and hassle of dealing with the government in the time-honored quest to make a buck. It's much easier to get a cushy government job and become the one enforcing the stupid rules as opposed to one absorbing the stupid rules.

COLIN KAEPERNICK DOESN'T MATTER

There has been a whole lot of outrage regarding San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's refusal to stand for the National Anthem.

The Watchdog says, who cares?

First, the guy has a First Amendment right to sit out the Anthem. No person can be compelled to stand for its playing. Heck, there is a First Amendment right to burn the flag.

Look, it is a well-settled principle of American jurisprudence to interpret the First Amendment, in part, as defending unpopular speech.

In short, Americans have a constitutional right to talk and act like a jackass.

Kaepernick's stunt is the epitome of jackass behavior.

Only in America could a mediocre, soon-to-be-retired journeyman quarterback earn a \$61 million contract, live in a mansion, be worshiped like a rock star, and still complain that he lives in an oppressive country.

Moreover, this publication isn't into feigned respect and faking it in general.

If this petulant punk doesn't respect America, then who wants his fake pride and patriotism?

And best of all, the right of free speech works both ways. If we were to call for Kaepernick to be chop blocked, crack-block blocked, hit after the whistle, or horse-collared, it would be totally cool.

Here's to hoping you get under center soon, Colin.

September 16, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "I'm not saying we are writing off the Iron Range, but you don't need the Iron Range to win statewide."

- DFL Chairman Ken Martin

Quote of the Week: "The Republic may not give wealth or happiness; she has not promised these. It is the freedom to pursue these, not their realization, which the Declaration of Independence claims."

- Andrew Carnegie

Quote of the Week: "I would rather not have to vote for her, although she is a friend I respect. A 70-year person with a long track record, unbridled ambition, greedy, not transformational, with a husband still dicking bimbos at home (according to the NYP)."

- Colin Powell

1. Exploited - Round 2;
2. Gangster Government;
3. Too Cute, True Colors.

EXPLOITED - ROUND 2

Here they go again. It seems as if the DFL is working hard to kick the working class out of their party, which is starting to mimic the European social model they desire. That model consists of one class of ruling elites and another comprised of a dependency class bereft of dignity and hope, clinging to government programs that offer only base sustenance and plenty of hopelessness and despair.

Minnesota DFL chairman Ken Martin this week offered the ultimate insult to the Iron Range by declaring that the DFL doesn't need the Iron Range.

Martin, who doesn't live on the Iron Range, or in rural Minnesota, or even in a suburb, couldn't have been more condescending and dismissive in his remarks.

Never mind that in 2010, Mark Dayton won the governorship by fewer than 9,000 votes out of 2.1 million cast. One could easily say that the Iron Range

was the difference. But when you're purging the party of under-educated people who work with their hands, believe in church, and own guns, what difference do the facts make?

The Iron Range and the whole northern tier have been economically reeling, especially with the continued weakness in commodity prices.

The slow economic recovery from the Great Recession has certainly not reached many areas in the Eighth Congressional District.

This malaise is a double-whammy, with a slow economy compounded by Governor Dayton slowly killing mining and pipeline projects in the area.

The Twin Metals project, Polymet mining, and the Sandpiper pipeline stand as short-hand for DFL apathy and outright hostility towards the working class.

The haughtiness displayed by the urban DFL elites reared its head again this week as they defended themselves by declaring that Governor Dayton has been present to dispense welfare benefits throughout the economic crisis he has helped foster.

How compassionate.

"Thou shall not know the dignity and security of a good job, but thou shall have welfare, sayeth I," Dayton was heard to proclaim as his private jet crossed Saint Louis County on its way to Napa Valley.

Any shred of doubt regarding DFL elitist hostility was obliterated this week as well when the Obama Administration ignored the rule of law and marched head-long into lawlessness when federal agencies, in defiance of a court order, suspended work on the Dakota Access pipeline.

Ironically, the Dakota Access is the alternative pipeline project to the aforementioned Sandpiper project.

As readers know, the Dakota Access has been the subject of violent protests, with protesters trespassing on pipeline property to vandalize equipment, assault construction employees, and disrupt the project.

Opponents filed for an injunction in federal district court, seeking to halt the project.

The case was dismissed, as the judge found "no reason" to delay or halt the project.

Within minutes of the ruling, the Obama Administration stated it would refuse to issue a critical easement permit, saying the project "needed review," even though the pipeline owner had played by the rules and cleared every hurdle.

With over \$2 billion invested, the project is at standstill, with workers idle.

Talk about moving the goalposts.

Talk about gangster government.

Democrats don't want good blue collar jobs. They want another class of government dependents.

Wake up, people. Wake up, blue collar people!

GANGSTER GOVERNMENT

Under Barack Obama and Mark Dayton, gangster government is everywhere.

Essentially, gangster government is the absence of the rule of law.

In the previous story, gangster government refused to let a project move forward despite the ruling of a federal judge.

The rule of law said there was no reason to halt the project. Gangster government said otherwise.

Minnesotans recently learned that MnSure, the state Obamacare exchange, was in deep trouble, with steep premium increases and the withdrawal of many insurance providers.

In order to both save the exchange and their collective hides, the Dayton administration starting reaching out to insurance providers, asking them what kind special exemptions and waivers they would require in order to enter the exchange market and provide insurance policies.

As if the bureaucracy ever had the authority to unilaterally grant a license to ignore the law.

Taxpayers have already seen the thousands of exemptions the Obama Administration has granted regarding the federal law's Obamacare mandates.

The IRS has also reported that only about 33% of those who fail to obtain health insurance are being fined, as required by federal law and as upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

While the term "gangster government" is somewhat satirical, the subject is very serious.

The rule of law and equal protection under the law are bedrocks of our democratic institutions.

In a representative democracy, the governed have to perceive in equality under the law. It is the very glue that holds democratic government together.

In a government by the people, of the people, and for the people, disparate treatment is a poison because it is so antithetical to democratic principles.

And that's exactly what we have had under DFL rule in Saint Paul and Washington.

The selective enforcement of the law and the granting of favors to favored constituencies have given rise to a feeling that the deck is stacked against most average Americans.

It's Solyndra and special favors. It's waivers from Obamacare to favored groups. It's an executive order forcing personal care attendants and daycare providers into labor unions as a favor to those unions.

No wonder people are angry. They're getting jobbed by gangster government and they're smart enough to see it.

They work hard. They play by the rules. They do the right thing. Yet they can't get ahead and they watch the gangsters and the hustlers get ahead, gaming the system to suck yet another goodie out of the government they have rigged in their favor.

It's a donation to the Clinton Foundation that yields a meeting with Hillary Clinton. It's pay to play.

And some wonder why and outside like Donald Trump is doing well.

TOO CUTE, TRUE COLORS

We're used to DFL dirty tricks, but this one really takes the cake.

The lawsuit to throw Donald Trump off the ballot over a minor technicality went beyond the pale and failed the very low expectation this publication has for the DFL and chairman Ken Martin.

The DFL and their legal team got excited when the state GOP didn't elect alternate presidential electors at their state convention this summer.

The DFL state party immediately jumped into action, claiming that they were only upholding our sacred election laws.

It was bitterly ironic to see the crowd that cried "disenfranchisement!" over photo ID voting requirements seeking to disenfranchise the hundreds of thousands who want to vote for Donald Trump.

It's a rare day in court when a political party seeks to use the judicial branch to rig and steal an election.

Again, this coming from people who oppose photo ID, support same day voter registration, and think that having the whino down the hallway vouch for your identity at the polls is sufficient.

The Minnesota Supreme Court rightly recognized these shenanigans and refused to get played by a group that has no respect for the rule of law (see above).

Voters must remember these dirty tricks in November.

Trying to throw the GOP nominee off the ballot. A new low.

September 23, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We are not designed to be using this money to fund his buddies and pay out large payments to people that obviously weren't performing their duties."

- State Rep. Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth)

Quote of the Week: "Since we didn't appropriate money for these severance packages, where did they take the money from?"

- House Speaker Kurt Daudt (R - Crown)

1. Gangster Government - Again.

GANGSTER GOVERNMENT - AGAIN

The list of outrages just continues to grow as we experience the 6th year under Mark Dayton's erratic and autocratic rule.

Six years of gangster government.

One hallmark of gangster government is a raiding of the government treasury for personal gain.

This administration has done more than any other in Minnesota history to use the public fisc to reward political cronies with cold, hard cash.

Perhaps a brief retrospective is in order to refresh your outrage.

MnSure Bonuses

In October of 2014, the state rolled out its health insurance exchange, the state's version of ObamaCare.

The rollout was more of a flameout as the web site bumbled and stumbled, resulting in lost data, long waits, and total confusion.

Oh well, it only cost about \$100 million to create.

Just one month after the disastrous exchange launch, and while the system

was still in meltdown, MnSure executives were awarded \$26,000 in bonuses. Bonuses! Paid for by the taxpayers.

A \$100-million-dollar project utterly fails and those responsible collect bonuses.

Would this happen in the private sector?

We all know the answer.

Dayton attempted to deflect responsibility by claiming he didn't authorize the bonuses.

So what.

It happened on his watch and he advocated for MnSURE.

It was his political appointee who oversaw the debacle. (She was subsequently busted vacationing in Costa Rica for two weeks just a month after the rollout, while her office was melting down).

Leadership.

Moreover, he didn't join the chorus of calls requesting that the bonuses be rescinded.

Massive Pay Raises for Political Appointees

So let's go back in time to 2013, when Minnesotans handed over the keys to state government to the DFL lock, stock, and barrel.

The DFL controlled the House, the Senate, and the governor's office.

This circumstance, not surprisingly, unleashed an orgy of government overreach.

One of those items was the legislature giving the governor the ability to unilaterally jack up the pay of agency heads.

It is important to note that agency heads are not career public servants.

They are appointed by the governor and are often times political cronies of the governor who get these appointments by virtue of their connections to the

governor and not their talents or abilities.

So what did Dayton do with this new authority?

You guessed it.

He "adjusted" the salaries of these cronies. Adjusted them up. Way up. Way way up.

Over \$800,000 up, to be specific.

These political cronies, as state agency heads, were looking at a nice pay day:

- * Administration, \$144,991
- * Agriculture, \$144,991
- * Commerce, \$144,991
- * Corrections, \$150,002
- * Education, \$150,002
- * Employment and Economic Development, \$150,002
- * Health, \$150,002
- * Housing Finance, \$144,991
- * Human Rights, \$144,991
- * Human Services, \$154,992
- * Labor and Industry, \$144,991
- * Management and Budget, \$154,992
- * Natural Resources, \$154,992
- * Higher Education, \$144,991
- * Pollution Control, \$150,002
- * Public Safety, \$154,992
- * Revenue, \$154,992
- * Transportation, \$154,992
- * Veterans Affairs, \$144,991
- * Commissioner, Bureau of Mediation Services, \$140,000
- * Executive director, Gambling Control Board, \$119,997
- * Commissioner, Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board, \$140,000
- * Chair, Metropolitan Council, \$144,991
- * School Trust Lands Director, \$125,009
- * Ombudsman for Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities, \$119,997
- * Commissioner, Public Utilities Commission, \$140,000
- * Executive Director of Pari-mutuel Racing, \$115,988

Dayton presented no data to support the need for the pay raises.

He only remarked that his appointees were "talented" people who could "make a lot more in the private sector."

Never mind that there are legions of executive compensation experts and human resources consultants who can study these issues and produce empirical data on the subject.

Severance Pay - The Parting Gift

Now we learn that Dayton handed out nearly \$80,000 in "severance" payments to three of his political appointees who voluntarily left state employment.

There is no reason to believe these handouts were anything other than one more pay day to political friends on their way out the door.

Specifically, three of Dayton's appointees got severance checks.

Employment and Economic Development Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben got a severance check for \$33,750 when she resigned.

The DEED Commissioner before her, Mark Phillips, got a check for \$27,097.

Higher Education Office Director Sheila Wright got \$18,064 in severance after only seven months on the job. Seven months!

The only explanation offered by the governor's office was that Dayton felt "circumstances warranted the payments."

Well, that settles it. The king decreed it, so it must be true.

And our hard-hitting media apparently was satisfied with the answer and didn't bother to ask, "what were those circumstances?"

Thus, Mark Dayton has handed out nearly \$1 million in taxpayer-funded paydays for his political cronies with utterly no justification.

Moreover, most of those hand-out aren't one time payments, with the salary increases built into future budgets year after year.

Mark Dayton's disregard for the hard-working people who pay the taxes that

fund state government is astounding.

He clearly doesn't understand the value of a dollar and obviously has no respect for the average Minnesotans who work hard, play by the rules, live within a budget, and want nothing more in life than an opportunity to get ahead.

But what do you expect from a silver spoon trust fund kid who has never been concerned with money and is connected with the working class only through the domestic labor they perform for him?

These handouts should be campaign fodder for every Republican legislative candidate in the state.

It's this year's Senate Office Building. A symbol of the way in which the DFL has become arrogant and out of touch.

There's a reason why working class areas of the state are trending red. Look for that trend to accelerate this election.

September 30, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "The public deserves to know if you're on their side or only care about the people who bought your election."

State Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL - Golden Valley)

Quote of the Week: "Without [donor] information, it's hard for people to know exactly who is spending money to influence their vote."

- State Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL - Minneapolis)

Quote of the Week: "Big money goes around the world, Big money underground, Big money got a mighty voice, Big money make no sound, Big money pull a million strings, Big money hold the prize, Big money weave a mighty web, Big money draw the flies."

- Geddy Lee

THE BIG MONEY

Let's be honest. Money buys votes. Money buys influence. Money buys elections.

While money has always been "the mother's milk of politics," even Big Daddy Unruh would be surprised by the way the money chase has come to dominate today's politics.

And while Unruh, an infamous Democrat who died in 1987, would have likely been surprised by the money flowing into politics today, he surely would have been pleased at the way Democrats have mastered the vote buying game.

The Party of the Workin' Man no longer gives a crap about him (other than demanding his vote).

The Workin' Man has a job that pollutes Mother Earth, an unenlightened values system, and a wallet too light to play in the political arena.

The Democrats who own today's DFL live within two or three zip codes in Minneapolis, drive a foreign car, and don't know anyone who gets paid by the hour except their own au pair, gardener, chef, and housekeeper.

This set includes the union bosses who share a big equity stake in the machine.

This week, candidates, political parties, and special interest groups were all required to turn in their latest campaign finance reports.

These reports detail the revenues and expenditures of these people, giving the average voter a look at the people who really matter to politicians - the ones who fund their re-election.

And make no mistake, this is where the action is centered when it comes to funding elections.

The quaint notion that candidates raise and spend money may still be true, but it matters less and less.

In short, the lion's share of political spending happens outside of what the campaigns themselves raise and spend.

Moreover, the realm of special interests and their campaign spending is a shell game with money shuttling back and forth between groups like a game of three card monte.

Follow that dollar. Now you see it, now you don't.

Let's examine the machine in action by taking a look at the campaign spending of Education Minnesota, the teachers' union.

You know, the union that forces to every public school teacher to fund the union whether they want to or not. It's the law, a law written, passed, and protected by DFL legislators.

Why would that be?

Could it be that this union's political spending makes it nothing more than a campaign arm of the DFL?

The period covered in the latest reports is January 1, 2016 through September 20, 2016.

During that period, the Education Minnesota PAC brought in a whopping, eye-popping \$2.2 million.

They turned around and spent all but \$160,000.

The bulk of the expenditures went to:

- Contributions to candidates (\$75,550)
- Contributions to political parties (\$707,700)
- Contributions to other political funds and PACs (\$931,625)
- Independent Expenditures (\$65,000)

Contributions to candidates

Did we say that Education Minnesota is an arm of the DFL? We take that back. Only 98.7% of their contributions went to DFL candidates.

The rest went to Republicans - all three of them.

Not that this publication is pleading for bi-partisanship here. Since concepts like merit, productivity, and accountability are foreign to the teachers' union, it's not a surprise that they do their best to keep Republicans from introducing such concepts to our taxpayer-funded education workforce.

Contributions to political parties

This is the pot of money that flows to organizations like the House DFL caucus, the Senate DFL caucus, the state DFL party and local DFL units.

For example, the PAC gave \$291,250 to the House DFL caucus, which seeks to gain a DFL majority in the Minnesota House.

The Education Minnesota PAC also gave \$316,000 to the Senate DFL, hoping to help them keep a DFL majority in that body.

\$95,000 was shuttled over to the state DFL, to assist in electing and re-electing DFL endorsed candidates.

The remaining money was sent out in smaller tranches to local DFL parties. This practice is a bit of money laundering. Because there are contribution limits to candidates, the trick is to give to the local DFL party once a PAC maxes out to a candidate. For example, the Education Minnesota PAC

will max out to a candidate in Senate District 100. Then, the PAC will send money to the Senate District 100 DFL, which will very likely spend the money on behalf of their endorsed Senate candidate in that district.

Slick, huh?

Contributions to other political funds and PACs

This is where the shell game gets really confusing. Under this category of funding, we see all sorts of PACs and other political interest groups shuttling money around and between each other for purposes that aren't at all clear, other than electing Democrats to office.

For example, the Education Minnesota PAC sent \$456,625 to something called the Alliance for a Better Minnesota Action Fund.

This PAC is funded in a big way by unions like Education Minnesota as well as other shadowy interest groups like one called WIN Minnesota.

Note also that the Education Minnesota PAC gave \$300,000 to WIN Minnesota.

Do you feel like your swirling in a cesspool of political influence?

Good. You're a normal and concerned citizen.

Essentially, this category attempts to capture the spending done by PACs and "PACs of PACs" that aggregate astronomical sums of money to influence electoral outcomes.

Money flows in and out, almost like a Panamanian banking system.

These expenditure totals are emblematic of the way in which The People have lost control of their government.

They've lost control because their government in many measures has been bought and paid for by special interests.

And DFL politicians stand in front of microphones to decry the influence of money in politics.

What a bunch of BS.

Independent Expenditures

These expenditures consist of mailings in favor of legislative candidates favored by Education Minnesota.

Every single mailing was on behalf of a DFLer save one, those for Jim Abeler, when he ran against the endorsed Republican to win the special election in Senate District 35.

One can't help but wonder what Jim Abeler is prepared to do to return the favor.

There you have it, Watchdogs. A primer on the dirty, murky world of special interest political spending.

This is how we lost our democratic political institutions.

You take the Education Minnesota PAC and multiply it by thousands of similar organizations operating across the country at the federal, state, and local level.

Americans are rightly demanding that the money changers be ejected from the temple.

Guess which candidate for president offers hope in that regard?

October 7, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week: "So you've got this crazy system where all of a sudden 25 million more people have health care, and then the people who are out there busting it, sometimes 60 hours a week, wind up with their premiums doubled and their coverage cut in half. It's the craziest thing in the world."

- Bill Clinton

"The only thing we're going to try to do is lower costs so that those cost savings are passed onto you. And we estimate we can cut the average family's premium by about \$2,500 per year."

- Barack Obama

"We are far better off doing it our way and having control over it."

- Mark Dayton, upon signing MnSure into law

"This is the most significant reform of health insurance we've seen in Minnesota in 50 years."

- State Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL - Inver Grove Heights)

1. MnSure Meltdown;
2. Meet Your Candidate - Rob Farnsworth;
3. Getting Slimed.

MNSURE MELTDOWN

The state's insurance exchange has imploded. Just as many, including this publication, predicted.

As readers have surely learned over the past week, the state's Obamacare exchange is collapsing, with similar meltdowns occurring across the country.

Now, before you think this piece is just a recitation of the bad numbers spilling out from MnSure and Obamacare, read on.

There are two important things you need to know about the MnSure debate as it unfolds just weeks before Election Day.

The first thing to know is an important historical fact regarding healthcare in

Minnesota that will surely play into the debate and public discourse.

Back in 1976, the legislature created the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association (MCHA).

The government-regulated non-profit was designed to offer health care coverage for the "hard to insure," those with very difficult health care issues that made them hard to insure.

Essentially, it was a high-risk insurance pool that sought to provide coverage.

It was a model health care idea and it worked well for 38 years, until it was closed down in favor of, you guessed it, MnSure.

MCHA was one of the innovations that made Minnesota a leader in health care and showcased our state as one with among the lowest numbers of uninsured in the nation.

So why bring it up?

We raise this historical item because the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The Star Tribune, a font for liberal/DFL ideas and collaboration, this week penned an editorial describing their "fix" for the broken MnSure system.

The "fix" consists of putting citizens with difficult health issues in a special pool where they can shop for health insurance, with heavy state subsidies.

Wait a minute. That sounds exactly like what the state used to do with the MCHA high risk pool.

So the state wasted over \$150 million on a web site, including consultant's fees and employee bonuses, created a mess, and the solution is to simply go back to where we were before Obamacare.

Only in government.

Recall that Governor Dayton and DFL own this debacle lock, stock, and barrel.

They created this mess without a single GOP vote.

Of course, that hasn't stopped DFL politicians from trying to pin blame on Republicans.

This finger pointing comes in the form of demanding that the GOP help the DFL get out of the mess and find solutions to their problem.

This is typical, expected, and emblematic of the shameless nature of their politics.

DFLers set fire to some issue, and then jump up and down demanding that the GOP play fireman (fire person?) and douse the flames.

It's all part of the deflection of the issue. This all follows a familiar pattern:

First, DFL identifies some issue as being in need of a government solution.

Two, DFL creates policy that makes situation worse.

Three, DFL blames some boogie man (e.g. Big Insurance Companies) and demands GOP fix problem.

Four, DFL uses the we-care-about-people-so-our-results-don't-matter excuse.

Five, GOP fixes problem. Or if they don't, DFL blames GOP for not caring and not having a solution.

Needless to say, the GOP has solutions, and has had solutions.

The House and Senate GOP should go through the record and tally the number of amendments that were offered by their members in all committees and on both floors.

Amendments were offered by the GOP. The DFL rejected them.

Now, the DFL wants GOP ownership of their problem.

We would love to see a response that goes like this: "The GOP offered X suggestions to improve MnSure. They were rejected. Legislative Republicans hope Governor Dayton and DFL legislators will now listen to our

ideas now that their ideas have been tried and have failed."

The GOP should stand firm in demanding true reforms in exchange for any fixes. If not, the FL can lump it. They own it.

This is a big issue. The Watchdog has spoken to many legislative candidates over the past few weeks. Many say the biggest issue they hear about on the trail is the cost of health care and the damage wrought by Obamacare.

No wonder the Star Tribune and the DFL are demanding fixes. Their Big Idea is under fire.

What a debacle.

MEET YOUR CANDIDATE - ROB FARNSWORTH

Between now and Election Day, the Watchdog will occasionally highlight interesting legislative candidates.

This week's candidate is Rob [Farnsworth](#), who is running as the endorsed Republican in District 6A, in the heart of the Iron Range.

Farnsworth is interesting because he represents the vanguard of political realignment on the Iron Range.

He's Republican through and through. He's pro-life. He's pro Second Amendment.

He supports the Range economy, backing mining and other skilled trade jobs.

But he's also proudly pro-union and pro-labor.

In other words, he's precisely the kind of person to represent the folks on the Iron Range, folks who are increasingly ignored by the DFL.

Farnsworth recently earned the [endorsement](#) of the Duluth News Tribune, hardly a conservative mouthpiece.

But it's easy to see why he's earned support across the political spectrum.

Listen to what he had to say regarding his candidacy: "The DFL that most Iron Rangers are voting for hasn't existed for 20 years. The DFL in the Twin

Cities, that has taken over the DFL in Minnesota, wants to end mining. At their convention and then again at their executive board meeting in the Twin Cities, they tried to pass an anti-mining resolution that I believe will be passed in November because they just pushed it down (the road). This is not a group that is in favor of mining."

Farnsworth grew up in Chisholm, the son of a miner. He's living down the road in Hibbing these days, teaching in the Hibbing School District.

Can he win? Of course it's an uphill climb, but there is always someone who is at the forefront of change.

Two years ago, few people thought Rep. Tim Miller would win his traditionally DFL district in western Minnesota.

He shocked the world in 2014 and looks poised to hold the seat in 2016. Sources tell the Watchdog Miller is in excellent shape, which is a credit to him and to the changing politics of the district.

Is Rob Farnsworth this year's Tim Miller?

Conventional wisdom would argue against it, but conventional wisdom is out the window this year.

The Iron Range is another area turning red. Farnsworth is the darkest of dark horses, but it's a race we will be watching closely on Election Day.

GETTING SLIMED

Recent campaign finance reports have shown, not surprisingly, that liberal special interest groups have accumulated millions to dump into (and on to) legislative races.

Republican candidates around the state in targeted races are telling the Watchdog that they are getting "slimed" with all sorts of negative advertising, telling voters what evil people they are, simply because they chose to throw their hats in the ring as Republicans.

The liberals say, "When they go low, we go high."

Yeah, right.

To showcase the DFL high road, Harold Hamilton encourages Republicans to scan the negative mail and send it to him at harold@anokacountywatchog.com.

Or send it to him on Facebook.

Let the world see the "high road" the liberals are taking this year.

October 14, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "There's never been anybody in the history of politics in this nation that's been so abusive to women. So can anything you want to say about it, but Bill Clinton was abusive to women. Hillary Clinton attacked those same women and attacked them viciously."

- Donald Trump

1. The Case Against Trump;
2. The Case for Trump.

Editor's Note: Loyal Republicans are facing a true dilemma this year. Not in many generations has the Grand Old Party been so divided over its nominee for President.

Thoughtful and dedicated activists across the country are on opposite sides of the central question of the election cycle: Whither Trump?

This week, the Watchdog delves into this question, making the case both for and against Donald J. Trump.

THE CASE AGAINST TRUMP

Donald Trump is going to lose. The handwriting is on the wall. He has no realistic path to 270 electoral votes and will hand the keys to the Oval Office to Hillary Clinton, one of the most unpopular figures to ever run for president.

Trump has only himself to blame for this debacle.

He lacks the temperament needed to run for, win, and serve as President of the United States.

Republican voters should have seen it way back in the early primary contests, with Trump mocking and belittling his opponents in a juvenile, middle school sort of way.

Any dime store political operative could have seen that this schtick wouldn't

sell to a general election audience, even against an opponent as reviled as Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It is now time for Republican leaders to publicly break with Trump for a greater good - the Party itself.

It is time to break with Trump, who is going to lose anyway, in order to save Republican majorities in the House and Senate, as well as further down the ballot in state legislatures.

These majorities are at historic levels at the state and federal level, representing years of hard work that is in jeopardy from an insurgent candidate who cares little for the Republican brand and did nothing to help build and nurture it in the first place.

A perfect narrative presents itself here. Speaker Ryan and Leader McConnell should make the case that GOP majorities are needed in Washington to act as a check and balance against a Clinton presidency.

With fully 60% of voters finding Hillary Clinton untrustworthy, they will be highly receptive to such a message. As unpopular as Trump may be, she is running right behind him.

This "check and balance" message allows GOP candidates to run against both Trump and Clinton, thereby freeing themselves from these two political millstones while forcing their Democrat opponents to stand by Hillary Clinton.

The "ick" factor regarding the Clintons is alive and well. Republicans would do well to exploit it.

There is no loyalty to Donald Trump regardless. Trump has consistently bad mouthed GOP leadership and has no real relationship with the national party.

In these circumstances, Congressional Republicans are on firm moral ground to distance themselves from this very flawed and already defeated candidate, who appears hell bent on going out in a blaze of scorched earth glory.

With Hillary Clinton and her abusive husband back in the White House, checking her reckless and feckless ambitions will be paramount to saving the Republic.

Just as importantly, breaking with Trump is necessary to save the national party and the GOP brand in general.

In essence, politics can be seen as a numbers game. You need more votes than the other guy to win.

Given America's changing demographics, it's political suicide to be seen hurling insults and thinly veiled racism against the very people Republicans need to win over to remain competitive in coming years.

The party of Abe Lincoln offers ideas and principles that benefit every American, regardless of race, gender, etc.

Trump's pandering to certain elements interferes with this important outreach and is a losing strategy in the long term.

No matter the outcome of the election, Trump has already visited much damage to the brand in this regard. It's time to stanch the bleeding and begin those outreach efforts anew once Trump is a historical footnote.

Moreover, some of Trump's policy positions are anathema to core Republican principles and therefore also threaten the brand. For example, He opposes free trade. Republicans support free trade and understand the net benefit free trade confers on the country.

Another example is spending. Trump proposes to expand a host of domestic spending programs while also cutting taxes, a formula to bust spending caps and accelerate the already staggering federal debt.

A political party is united by shared principles and values. The core principles shouldn't be sacrificed at the altar of particular campaign, even a campaign for president.

THE CASE FOR TRUMP

While the path may be narrow, the path still exists, and it is worth pursuing.

The stakes couldn't be higher. The next president will appoint at least, if not multiple, justices to the Supreme Court.

The president serves as commander-in-chief. With America facing multiple

threats from a host of sophisticated and dangerous foes, ceding the election seems foolish.

Donald Trump, though flawed, is a far cry better than Hillary Clinton on numerous important issues besides just these.

Moreover, Donald J. Trump is the duly endorsed Republican nominee for president. He deserves the full support of the party and the party faithful.

The practice of other Republican office holders denouncing Trump is a dangerous precedent and threatens to weaken the party as a whole, sewing seeds of disunity to division that won't disappear after Trump, especially if he loses. Finger pointing, recrimination, and infighting will be result, thereby weakening the party instead of saving it.

While Trump is crude and brutally honest, it's not as if he a convicted criminal or even stands accused of the things that Bill Clinton ever did.

Instead of knuckling under to the Democrat Establishment, Republicans should rally around Trump and help fend off attacks that make crude banter look like a criminal offense.

In many respects, Donald Trump is precisely the man needed for these times.

He's a true fighter against the Establishment, which is perhaps the only "crime" he's really committed.

The Washington Establishment sees in Trump a mortal threat to their secretive rule.

If the past couple of years have shown us anything, they have clearly shown us all that there is indeed an Establishment that serves the interests of the privileged few at the expense of the masses.

Edward Snowden demonstrated that there exists a massive surveillance state that engages in surreptitious and invasive domestic spying, shredding our Fourth Amendment rights in a way that shocked us all.

Other recent email document releases proved that the Democrat Party rigged their nomination process in favor of Hillary Clinton, putting the lie to the idea that there was a competitive race.

Like him or not, Senator Sanders and his supporters had the fundamental right to a fair and equal campaign for the Democrat nomination. He never had a chance.

More recent email leaks have shown that our major media outlets have been conspiring with Hillary Clinton to provide her favorable coverage. Reporters friendly to Clinton have leaked questions to her prior to interviews, have given her veto power over stories before their publication, and otherwise slanted coverage in her favor.

On the other side, coverage of Trump has been clearly biased. While stories such as the leaked and now infamous audio tape are newsworthy, many of the follow on stories clearly are not.

For example, Watchdog staff recently saw a news report in which some forgettable contestant on "The Apprentice" from many years ago recently heard from another contestant that Trump allegedly made a negative comment regarding her skin tone.

Really? A hearsay comment from 2007 is now a news story?

There is a reason that Trump is the recipient of this avalanche of negative media.

It's because he's fighting the Establishment and fighting for us.

Donald Trump isn't nearly the Neanderthal he's portrayed to be.

The Establishment would have done it to any of the GOP candidates, don't kid yourself.

Mitt Romney was about as close to a Boy Scout as a presidential candidate can be.

The Establishment took his time at Bain Capital and used it to make Romney look like a destroyer of worlds.

Do you wonder why Hillary Clinton gets a pass on her email, Bill's sexual assaults, and tough questions about her troubled tenure as Secretary of State?

Do you wonder why Donald Trump is constantly asked about audio tapes over 10 years old, comments about someone's appearance, and other assorted hearsay regarding height, weight, etc.?

Really? This country is burning to the ground and the Establishment wants to distract us with sob stories from years ago regarding hurt feelings, bullying, and self-esteem.

This is the ultimate Establishment con job.

If we can't see through it, we don't deserve anything other than to live under the yoke of the Elites.

Finally, far from undermining the Republican Party, Donald Trump is building it, helping shape a political realignment that is moving millions of rural "Reagan Democrats" into a permanent home in the party.

This year's GOP primaries and caucuses saw record numbers, with new voters participating for the first time.

These folks were inspired to attend because of Trump's candidacy and his alone.

Moreover, these voters are far from the ignorant louts the Establishment portrays them to be.

They are hardworking people who play by the rules and have clearly come to see that the game is rigged against them.

Faulty trade deals have sent their jobs to low cost foreign destinations.

These deals might be good for the wealthy elites, but they have decimated once proud and thriving towns across this great nation.

Millions of hard working people are working even harder, only to see their pay and benefits cut.

Political correctness in the form of speech codes, "safes spaces," "trigger words," "micro aggressions" and other forms of censorship are strangling our cherished right to free speech.

Opposition to the squelching of the free exchange of ideas isn't racism. It's a well-founded regard for the role free speech plays in a free society.

The American people are smart. They know that their democratic institutions have become corrupted and are no longer serving the common good.

Donald Trump has tapped into that concern.

The elites who favor the status quo are powerful and work to destroy those who threaten their hold on power.

That they're attempting to destroy Donald Trump is no surprise.

October 21, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

1. If Not Rigged, Heavily Tilted.

IF NOT RIGGED, HEAVILY TILTED.

Much has been made of Donald Trump's assertion that the presidential election is "rigged" in favor of Hillary Clinton.

Of course, the mainstream media has heavily excoriated Trump for this (and nearly everything else he says) because, as they say, there is no evidence of "widespread" voter fraud.

But "rigged" is not synonymous with "widespread" voter fraud.

In fact, Trump's description really has nothing to do with voter fraud, although there are certainly many well-documented cases, usually in favor of Democrats, because it's orchestrated by Democrats.

Instead, Trump makes a valid point regarding how our democratic institutions have become corrupted, thereby breeding a distinct lack of faith among average citizens that they're living in a two-class political system.

Despite the media and Democrats portraying Trump's claims uninformed, even crazy, the evidence points to Trump being right.

Consider the hallmarks a democratic republic.

One is an independent media.

While conservatives have always pointed to media bias, the recent Wikileaks email revelations have proven this institutional bias beyond a reasonable doubt.

These email revelations have demonstrated that the media has often coordinated and conspired with the White House and the Clinton campaign to amplify their messaging.

Far from acting as an independent investigatory body providing objective news and analysis, the media has been in secret collusion to play the public for fools.

CNN provided debate questions in advance to the Clinton campaign.

The AP colluded with Clinton's State Department to launch favorable stories at convenient times.

The Clinton camp was given veto authority over quotes in news stories before they were published.

Today, an independent media doesn't exist in this country. Journalism is a lost art.

Another hallmark of a free nation, even the bedrock of such a nation, is the Rule of Law. It's the principle that no person is above the law and that all stand equal before Lady Justice.

Hillary Rodham Clinton has proven time and again that some people are above the law. The rules don't apply to them.

Clinton and her predatory husband have successfully ignored the criminal justice system for decades.

It's his sex crimes. Her billing records. Cattle futures. Email servers.

They walk free (and rich) while other citizens who engage in the same or lesser crimes are held accountable.

How ironic that many condemn Trump rhetoric about a rigged system yet turn a blind eye to the actions of the Clintons and others who give rise to that rhetoric.

Trump is only the messenger who has proclaimed that when it comes to the rule of law, the emperor has no clothes.

There's one set of rules for the Clintons and another set for the rest of us.

Even our political institutions are under assault.

Without Wikileaks, who would have believed that the Democratic nomination was indeed rigged, yes rigged, in favor of Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders.

Email evidence demonstrated that Democrat party officials were colluding with Clinton staffers to favor her with respect to the nomination.

So powerful is the Establishment that even Bernie Sanders has been co-opted, now campaigning on behalf of Clinton, even though he was shut out of the nomination illegally.

We also learned this week that Democrat operatives were behind much of the violence at Trump campaign rallies earlier in the campaign.

The public now has irrefutable proof that Democrats intentionally incited violence at the campaign events of the Republican nominee in order to discredit him.

Even worse, these scummy political operatives used mentally ill people to incite the violence, sending them into the rallies to incite others to assault them.

Talk about exploitation.

A third hallmark of a true democratic republic is equal opportunity.

The belief that with hard work, the right attitude, and a whole lot of ambition, a person can get ahead and enjoy a decent life.

That isn't happening. Millions of Americans are playing by the rules, working hard, and trying desperately to get ahead.

They are being held down in many cases by laws and policies made by their own government.

Environmental extremism has deprived them of quality construction trade jobs.

Obamacare has raised healthcare costs through the roof while reducing their health care options.

Unfair trade practices like steel dumping and currency manipulation have

killed jobs and opportunities.

In this environment, it's little wonder that Donald Trump has secured millions of followers who know our nation is in crisis and are willing to get behind an anti-establishment outsider.

They're so desperate for change and so angry with the ruling elites that they are "all in" for an exceptionally flawed candidate.

They don't care.

While the media and the Clinton camp have conveniently attempted to distract the public with stories regarding Trump's alleged behavior, the real story remains front and center in millions of living rooms, bar halls, and coffee shops across this great land.

The real story is the ongoing debate about whether or not this nation has lost its way.

The real story is about how the American Dream is becoming unavailable to the average citizen, in large part because our large and overbearing government is making it so.

Put another way, it is increasingly apparent that our government serves the ruling elites at the expense of the rest of us.

Hillary Clinton represents that ruling elite.

No wonder they doing everything they can to destroy Donald Trump.

If our system isn't fully rigged, it's certainly tilted heavily against the rest of us.

October 28, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Most Americans, most Minnesotans want their president to be a role model, and someone people can look up and aspire to. Part of being a role model means you need to model behavior. You need to act a certain way. There's a certain decorum that goes along with these positions."

DFL State Party Chairman Ken Martin 10/27/16

1. Role Models;
2. Coercion.

ROLE MODELS

Editor's Note: The following piece contains language that some readers may find offensive.

That's what happens when one examines Bill Clinton's behavior.

Indeed, Mr. Martin, we do demand that our president to be a role model and model good behavior.

Now that the chairman of the state DFL is on record agreeing, let's review how well the Clintons have modeled that aspirational behavior. Let's review how well they've conducted themselves regarding "decorum."

"I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time. Never. These allegations are false."

- President William Jefferson Clinton 1/26/98

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton lied under oath as a defendant in Jones v. Clinton regarding his sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton lied under oath to the grand jury about his sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton lied under oath during his civil deposition when he stated that he could not recall being alone with Monica Lewinsky and when he minimized the number of gifts they had exchanged."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that the President lied under oath during his civil deposition concerning conversations he had with Monica Lewinsky about her involvement in the Jones case."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton endeavored to obstruct justice by engaging in a pattern of activity to conceal evidence regarding his relationship with Monica Lewinsky from the judicial process in the Jones case."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton endeavored to obstruct justice by helping Ms. Lewinsky obtain a job in New York at a time when she would have been a witness against him were she to tell the truth during the Jones case."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that the President lied under oath in describing his conversations with Vernon Jordan about Ms. Lewinsky."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton endeavored to obstruct justice by attempting to influence the testimony of Betty Currie."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"There is substantial and credible information that President Clinton endeavored to obstruct justice during the federal grand jury investigation. While refusing to testify for seven months, he simultaneously lied to potential grand jury witnesses knowing that they would relay the falsehoods to the grand jury."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"Ms. Lewinsky testified that she and the President engaged in 'phone sex' approximately fifteen times. The President initiated each phone sex encounter by telephoning Ms. Lewinsky."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"Through the most sensitive DNA testing, RFLP testing, the FBI Laboratory determined conclusively that the semen on Ms. Lewinsky's dress was, in fact, the President's."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"According to the President, a man could regularly engage in oral sex and fondling of breasts and genitals with a woman and yet not have a 'sexual affair' with her."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"During this encounter, Ms. Lewinsky did not perform oral sex on the President. The President fondled Ms. Lewinsky's bare breasts with his hands and mouth and fondled her genitalia directly by pulling her underwear out of the way. In addition, the President inserted a cigar into Ms. Lewinsky's vagina."

- Special Counsel Kenneth Starr Report

"The original disbarment lawsuit was brought by a professional conduct committee of the Arkansas supreme court in the wake of the Lewinsky revelations and Mr. Clinton's admission that he lied to the investigation."

- News Reports

"Although we did not find clear evidence that Secretary Clinton or her colleagues intended to violate laws governing the handling of classified information, there is evidence that they were extremely careless in their handling of very sensitive, highly classified information."

- FBI Director James Comey 7/5/16

"We've seen the heavy assault on our post in Benghazi that took the lives of those brave men. We've seen rage and violence directed at American embassies over an awful Internet video that we had nothing to do with."

Hillary Clinton 9/14/12

"I remember landing under sniper fire. There was supposed to be some kind of a greeting ceremony at the airport, but instead we just ran with our heads down to get into the vehicles to get to our base."

- Hillary Clinton 3/21/08

"Far from running to an airport building with their heads down, Clinton and her party were greeted on the tarmac by smiling U.S. and Bosnian officials. An 8-year-old Muslim girl, Emina Bicakcic, read a poem in English. An Associated Press photograph of the greeting ceremony, above, shows a smiling Clinton bending down to receive a kiss."

- Washington Post

"So when I was born, she called me Hillary and she always told me, 'It's because of Sir Edmund Hillary.'"

- Hillary Clinton

"Hillary Clinton was born 5 years before Edmund Hillary became famous for scaling Mount Everest."

- Fact

There you have it. The integrity, decorum, and honesty of the Clintons summed up neatly.

COERCION

Unless you've been in the intensive care unit for the past couple of weeks, you're surely aware of the MnSure/Obamacare debacle, with health insurance premiums rising by high double digits for people who purchase plans on the state-run exchange.

Putting aside the juvenile and irresponsible rhetoric of the Democrats (yes, they own this one in whole), there are some teachable moments here regarding how the liberal template works when it comes to governing.

First, note that all programs, while couched in altruistic and egalitarian rhetoric, ultimately rely on the threat of force and coercion to achieve the public policy goal.

The very foundation of Obamacare rests upon coercion in the form of penalties for not carrying insurance (the "individual mandate") and various other taxes, like the medical device tax. We all know what happens when you don't pay your taxes. You get to deal with the IRS.

Second, the prescription for any failing liberal social program is more of the same poison.

With Obamacare crashing in flames, notice that the Democrat solutions all rely on even more coercion.

For example, Johnathan Gruber, the father of Obamacare, has said recently that the solution to fixing Obamacare starts with jacking up the tax penalty for not having insurance.

Gruber believes that the system is failing in part because not enough healthy "host bodies" are paying into the system to pay down health insurance costs for sick people.

Others have predictably blamed insurance companies, proclaiming that their revenues should be seized and used to buy down insurance costs.

Still others have come forward to finally reveal the ultimate goal of Obamacare, a single-payer health care system on par with those in failing European legacy states.

Think about all the coercion entailed in a single-payer system.

A liberal's dream.

It's always about growing government at the expense of freedom.

Always.

November 4, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

FINAL THOUGHTS

Here we are, loyal readers. The bitter end. Either you have already voted or you are quietly biding your time until Election Day.

We close out the cycle with some final thoughts regarding one of the most vexing, frustrating, and bizarre presidential campaigns we've ever seen.

The first observation is that Bill and Hillary Clinton are most corrupt political figures in perhaps the history of this country.

These people make Richard M. Nixon look like a pick pocket. Hell, they make the Soprano Family look like a bunch of pikers.

These two predators have been running a criminal enterprise for 30 years, dating back to the Arkansas days.

Where to start? Where to end?

We all know about Bill the rapist, Bill the liar, Bill the pedophile.

We all remember cattle gate, the Rose Law Firm, Monica, etc.

That all looks small time in the face of the Clinton Foundation pay-for-play scheme that netted the Clintons over \$100 million. No wonder FBI sources are saying that indictments are likely.

And then there's the email server. What seems to be lost in the email story is the rationale for having a home brew server in the first place.

Hint: It wasn't about convenience. She had a personal server installed in order to hide communications from Freedom of Information Act requests as well as hide communications from anyone she chose to hide them from.

The email server was, in other words, a device used solely to evade the law, conceal communications, and otherwise avoid the very laws under which the

rest of us must live.

In that sense, the email server stands as a potent symbol of the Clinton's above-the-law modus operandi.

The server stands as a reminder that the Clinton's unmitigated arrogance, insatiable greed, and nihilistic world view.

Put another way, they're really scummy human beings.

Moreover, Captain Obvious has now arrived on the scene in the form of FBI sources stating that it's a "99% probability" that foreign governments hacked the email server.

Thus, Hillary Clinton put the safety of Americans directly at risk with her concealment scheme.

This will no doubt become all the truer in coming days and weeks when we learn that there was more classified information on her server than what is now known.

Whether that information comes from WikiLeaks or an examination of pedophile/pervert Anthony Weiner's lap top, we don't know.

Little did we know that "Carlos Danger" was a danger to more than teenage girls.

As practiced liars and scam artists, the Clintons have successfully avoided being held accountable for their crimes over the years.

Has their luck run out?

We don't know. What we do know is that Bill and Hillary Clinton utterly lack integrity, honesty, and basic human decency.

The other observation is that we now know that there is indeed an Establishment in this country that controls outcomes to favor a small elite at the expense of everyone else.

Exhibit "A" is the mainstream media, which has been caught red-handed assisting the Clinton campaign while working to trash anyone who dares get in

the way.

Donna Brazile at CNN passes on debate questions to the Clinton team.

Other journalists offer stories and quotes to the Clinton camp before publishing, giving the campaign veto authority.

No wonder 75% of respondents in a recent USA Today poll said the media was biased in favor of Clinton.

We can only wonder what the other 25% are smoking.

Even 74% of self-identified Clinton supporters believe the media favors her.

Even more ironic are the numbers in the same poll that show that 45% of respondents believe that news media is the primary threat to our election.

By comparison, only 10% say that about "foreign interests."

No matter who prevails on election day, the mainstream media has finally been exposed and has perhaps irreparably destroyed any remaining shred of objectivity remaining.

The media in this country will never be trusted again.

But it's not just Trump and the biased coverage of him.

Look at the way FBI Director Comey has been attacked. He was a darling of the Establishment when he ruled for them.

Now that the evidence has taken him and the Bureau another way, his very integrity is under assault.

How typical of the Clintons that people who dare get in the way are savaged. Whether it's the FBI Director or one of Bill's sexual assault victims, the attacks are brutal and sustained.

Other institutions like the Department of Justice have been similarly compromised.

Attorney General Lynch meets with Bill Clinton while Hillary is under investigation.

A political appointee at Justice tips of the Clinton campaign to committee hearing activities.

Third, given what we know, it is now time for GOP candidates to put their DFL opponents on the hot seat.

Every DFL candidate should be put on the record responding to the following question:

Does Hillary Clinton possess the integrity and character to serve as president of the United States?

Of course, Republicans must ask this question because the media won't ask it of Democrats (see above).

It would quite interesting to watch Rick Nolan, Angie Craig, and a bevy of legislative candidates answer this question while standing in front of a microphone.

It has become clear that a vote for anyone other than Donald Trump is a vote to give Bill and Hillary Clinton the keys to the Oval Office.

To do so would reward the Clintons for years of criminal behavior and knowingly entrust the presidency to a person lacking in the character and integrity needed to effectively lead a great nation.

While some would find it easy to vote for Trump and others not so easy, it is imperative to deny the White House the Clintons.

Their reclaiming of the White House will only mean an even more diminished America, as a President Clinton would surely be weakened, dealing not only with criminal justice issues, but also likely issues of blackmail.

Who knows what kind of dirt foreign governments, friend and foe alike, may have acquired from the home brew server?

Clearly, the Clintons view government service merely as a means to acquire power and wealth.

They have no reservations whatsoever about leveraging our governmental institutions to self-deal, grift, defraud, and otherwise run nothing short of a

criminal enterprise.

Thank God for the RICO statute.

See you all on the high ground November 9th!

November 11, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: The Watchdog pauses today to recognize the service of those Americans who have worn the uniform of our country in the Armed Services, including Harold Hamilton, United States Navy.

Quote of the Week: "Silver added that in the past 24 hours, Clinton's odds of victory increased by about 5 points-from 65 percent to 70 percent."

- Nate Silver, 538 Poll 11/8/16

Quote of the Week: "Hillary Clinton leads Donald Trump by 8 percentage points among Minnesota likely voters in the latest Star Tribune Minnesota Poll."

- StarTribune 10/23/16

Quote of the Week: "According to a new KSTP/SurveyUSA poll, Craig leads Lewis 46 percent to 41 percent."

- KSTP 10/19/16

1. The Jig is Up.

THE JIG IS UP

Understandably, political observers are offering up opinion and analysis of Election 2016.

As the Watchdog contemplated our thesis, we came to a simple phrase describing what we saw Tuesday night.

The jig is up.

The election of Donald Trump and Republicans means that the jig is up with many organizations, most notably the legacy media and the Democrat party.

Let's start with the media and their polling firms.

Yet again, the pollsters (well, nearly all of them) blew the call.

Of course, there are cries of protest and all sorts of excuses proffered as to

why pollsters got it so wrong.

Have you noticed that they always get it wrong in FAVOR of Democrats?

The reality is that most of these pollsters are part of the Establishment.

As such, they aren't interested in offering an objective look at the state of any particular race.

Instead, they seek to shape perceptions and enhance the vote for one candidate and suppress the vote for another.

For example, we saw a StarTribune poll late in the election that showed Hillary Clinton up by 8 points in Minnesota just before election day.

Donald Trump, using legitimate pollsters and not propaganda skills, saw a closer race and spent time in Minnesota at the end.

While Trump was closing the gap, the legacy media rhetorically asked, "why is he wasting time here?"

He was here because the race was much closer than the media was willing to acknowledge, hoping to suppress the Trump vote.

Here's a smattering of national polls on the eve of the election:

NBC News: Clinton +6

CBS News: Clinton +4

ABC News/Washington Post: Clinton +4

Rueters: Clinton +3

The national vote is nearly tied as of this edition.

In North Carolina, Quinnipiac had Clinton up 2 points. Trump won.

In New Hampshire, every poll had Clinton winning, including one that had her up 11 points. The state has yet to be called, it's so close.

Clinton was up 8 points in Wisconsin polling.

She was up by 5 points or more in most polls in Michigan.

Up in Pennsylvania.

You get the picture.

The legacy media's polling will never be trusted again.

The same holds true regarding their "objective reporting."

The jig was up when Dirty Donna Brazile of CNN was exposed giving the Clinton campaign early access to debate questions and polling data.

Combined with WikiLeaks revelations, Americans saw that the media was in many respects a propaganda machine shaping opinion and making news instead of reporting it.

The jig is up.

The election of Donald Trump was, most importantly, historical because it heralded a true re-alignment of American electoral politics.

For some time, our politics have been shifting, with the Democrats becoming a very regional party based on the West Coast, the Northeast Corridor, and other urban centers like Chicago.

While some have minimized the Republican shift as one to "rural" America, that isn't quite true. It's more the GOP is coming to represent rural areas and just about every other area that isn't on the West Coast, the Northeast Corridor, and Chicago.

That realignment came to full fruition this election, as Trump gave voice to many who live in those areas, especially in rural America.

Our politics are indeed polarized.

Indeed, there is a cultural and political geography in America, with two camps.

While this shift has reshaped the GOP, it has shattered the Democrats.

As has been discussed many times in this publication, white working class voters have been drifting to the GOP. In 2016, it was a full-on stampede.

If you consult a map that shows where Trump increased the GOP vote, most

of those places are in the places the liberal elites call "flyover" country.

2016 was the year that many voters in these locales either rejected the Democrats or became re-engaged in politics.

These voters finally got fed up with the so-called "party of the working man."

They got sick and tired being labeled as ignorant and unproductive because they don't have a college degree.

They're sick and tired of having their jobs in mines, factories, and pipelines shut down in the name of environmental extremism. "We're going to put a lot of miners out of work" she cackled famously.

They're sick and tired of the elites making fun of their religious faith and their lifestyle, which includes hunting and driving a truck.

"They bitterly cling to their guns and religion" he said.

They're sick and tired of abortion on demand, safe spaces, speech codes, trigger words, pick-your-bathroom, gun confiscation, participation trophies, gender neutral toys, and Heather's two mommies.

They're sick of unfair trade as the liberal elites destroy main street economies in the name making another million or owing one more yacht.

It's not that these San Francisco values are practiced. It's that they are jammed down the throats of those who disagree.

It's not so much a rebellion as it's an affirmation of what over half this country believes.

In short, they've had enough of being told what rotten people they are because of their values system and lifestyle.

This is especially true when the elites scolding them simply lack values at all.

Trump's uncompromising populism is also more than a "whites only" philosophy.

One of the great untold stories of this campaign is that Trump did better with minorities than Romney.

Like working class whites, many minorities are realizing they're not getting the same opportunities as the elites.

America should never promise an equal outcome, but it should always promise an equal opportunity.

It has been amusing to watch the elites and others wipe tears of disbelief away as they wonder why so many millions cast off the yolk of Democrat control in favor of Trump and Republicans.

We don't expect them to get it.

Regrettably, this country is deeply divided and will be for some time.

The difference is that one camp finally decided to stop taking guff from the other camp.

And that's the biggest story of 2016.

November 18, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week:

"On election day, students at Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter, MN, received an email from their Dean of Students-Jones VanHecke-who said that pro-Trump and pro-NRA chalk messages found around campus may be considered 'hate speech' or 'bias language.'"

The email also stated that the writings were 'being reviewed' by the 'College's Bias Response Team.' (Really? What does that even mean?) They stated they will determine if the college will take actions to punish the responsible parties."

- Downtrend.com news report

"The University of Michigan Law School announced a 'post-election self-care' event with 'food' and 'play,' including 'coloring sheets, play dough (sic), positive card-making, Legos and bubbles with your fellow law students.'"

- USA Today news report

"Stanford emailed its students and faculty that psychological counseling was available for those experiencing 'uncertainty, anger, anxiety and/or fear' following the election."

- USA Today news report

1. Back to Basics.

BACK TO BASICS

Alright, Watchdogs. With the election over (for everyone except crybaby slackers on college campuses and violent street protesters), it's time to revisit some political fundamentals that will surely arise during the coming political debates at both the state and federal level.

Fundamental Rule: Liberals will always maintain that the solution to every failed government program (and there are many) is more government.

Nowhere will this prescription more pronounced than the coming debate over

the future of Obamacare.

Many Democrats will no doubt push for everything from an increased IRS "individual mandate" penalty to increased government control over healthcare to an outright universal "single payer" system, which is the ultimate goal of liberals.

In the reality-challenged world of the typical liberal, they believe that "universal" healthcare means that government provides all the healthcare that citizens care to consume.

In other words, these knaves believe that with a stroke of the pen, government can provide what the private sector can't produce: an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord of high quality healthcare at rock bottom prices.

Of course, that a bunch of fantasy and feel-good aspirational rhetoric.

The Iron law of Economics is that all resources are limited, including health care resources.

Government-controlled "universal" health care only provides universal access and not universal care nor the universal provision of what each citizen may need.

Put another way, universal single-payer care really changes only the mechanism for allocating health care resources.

Because health care is a limited, it must be allocated in an environment where there is more demand than supply.

In a free market system, it is allocated by the market and thus allocated efficiently, by definition.

Of course, there is no truly free market health care system that we can think of.

At best, health care markets in some countries are mixed, with elements of free markets intermingled with heavy governmental regulation.

Some liberals really think that citizens in Canada or England really get all the health care they need at a low cost.

Think again.

While access may be greater, quality suffers. Have you heard of any Americans rushing to Canada to get that specialty procedure or that heart bypass?

Any doctors leaving America to practice in Great Britain, where they are government employees represented by a union?

This is because government in Europe can't escape the fundamental issue of scarce resources. They must still confront the issue of deciding how to allocate healthcare.

They choose to do it by rationing, governed by a system that is inherently inefficient because the market they created lacks price signals that tell the market what to produce or not produce.

If you want to see the future of single payer universal health care in America, look no further than the Veterans' Administration system.

It's a total disaster, featuring the worst government has to offer. Rotten quality, a lack of accountability, and a distinct lack of service to the very people the system was created to serve.

The federal government should open the VA health care system of any elected official who supports universal health care. That should quiet them down, as it's a hallmark of liberalism to find their ideas to be good for OTHERS.

There is no such thing as universal health care. We can only debate how to best allocate the resources available.

Let's visit another fundamental topic, that being how government sets budgets and spends money.

With Republicans controlling both houses of the Minnesota legislature, taxpayers will surely be subjected to no small amount of whining and crying from the DFL that Republicans are "cutting" some plethora of much needed government programs. "Cut to the bone" in fact. "Draconian" cuts, even.

Here's how most of those "cuts" really shake out.

You see, most government programs are on auto pilot.

There is a baseline, there is a projected expenditure, and the projected trajectory becomes the new expenditure, subject to legislative intervention.

This is where political deception comes into play.

Let's say there's a government program that spent \$100 million in the last budget cycle.

The projection is that more people will take advantage of the program in the upcoming cycle, making for a 40% over the baseline, to \$140 million.

Republicans, being cruel and uncaring, want to reduce the increase over baseline to 25%, way above inflation and population growth.

Nonetheless, Democrats will decry the 15% "cut" that the mainstream media will then parrot which in turn will mean thousands of people actually believing it.

Thus, only in government will you find a situation where a 25% increase becomes a "Draconian cut."

Now think about the deceptive rhetoric that happens when Republicans hold spending for a program area flat.

In the example above, the press release now decries the "40% cut." Dramatic! The humanity!

Think about how stupid this sounds when applied to the real world.

An employee at a small business is told that the plan is to give him a 15% raise at the end of the year in recognition of his good work and his value to the company.

The company, for various reasons, fall on some hard times.

Nonetheless, the employee is given a 10% raise instead of the promised 15% raise.

Would he then go home and tell his family his pay was cut 5%?

Hardly.

But in government that is precisely what happens.

So, when your favorite liberal friend or politician tells you about all the "cuts" coming from Republicans, be sure to ask how the new spending compares to the previous budget.

Odds are that you will find a spending increase. It just doesn't equal what the liberals wanted.

Look for this stupidity to rear its head in education, health care, and local government aid programs.

November 25, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week: "We're in a room full of liars, the deceitful, dishonest media who got it all wrong."

- President-Elect Donald J. Trump

"Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

- John Adams

"In a democracy, there is nothing to check the inducement to sacrifice the weaker party or the obnoxious individual."

- James Madison

"Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos."

- Chief Justice John Marshall

Editor's Note: A very Happy (and belated) Thanksgiving, Watchdogs! We hope your day was filled with rest, joy, and the company of loved ones. For those away from family who spent the day defending our great nation, we salute your service and offer our thanks for your dedication and sacrifice.

Today's edition focuses on the things for which we at Watchdog HQ are thankful this year. Enjoy!

THANKFUL. We're thankful for the Electoral College. Contrary to what most chowder heads believe, America is NOT and NEVER WAS a democracy. Our Framers had a thorough understanding of both human nature and political history.

They correctly saw direct democracy as a threat to individual liberty. They saw democracy as akin to mob rule.

For those who didn't pay attention in sixth grade, our federal constitution is a representative republic model, where the preservation of individual liberty is the touch stone.

The temporary passions of the mob, like the 2016 presidential election, do not rule the day.

We guess this is apparently breaking news to the clowns who can't let go of the election and have yet to reconcile themselves with the fact that Donald Trump will be the next president of the United States.

Our constitution is replete with checks against mob rule and the "dilution" of popular opinion: lifetime judicial appointments, a bi-cameral legislative branch, a Senate based on statehood and not population, six-year Senate terms, Marbury vs. Madison, the Bill of Rights, a chief executive veto power.

The main idea here is that America was founded upon the principle of individual rights and not on the idea that popular opinion should carry the day.

Our Framers clearly understood that democracy was a threat to individual rights and that the two were often in conflict.

In short, you folks clamoring for a popular vote for president are in favor of mob rule.

THANKFUL. Thankful for Donald Trump, the right man at the right time. Yes, the Watchdog staff has shared the disgust of others regarding Trump's behavior and demeanor.

In life, timing is everything and there's a reason Trump won even though he would have been toast in just about any other year.

After years of being pushed around and bullied by the Liberal Left, Donald Trump embodies the feelings of millions of Americans who have been yearning for a champion who will punch back.

A great deal of Trump's support comes from people who are sick and tired of watching mealy-mouthed conservatives apologize for their beliefs and values.

Trump is champion who won't take their BS and will give it better than he gets it.

Jeb Bush, Mitt Romney, Colin Powell. Establishment whimps.

If nothing else, Donald Trump has the guts to take on the Establishment.

THANKFUL. Thankful for the large number of Democrats who think the path to a sustainable center-left governing coalition runs through San Francisco, Minneapolis, and New York.

So let's get this straight. Democrats suffered a stinging rebuke from Middle America on election night.

The party is in danger of becoming a regional protest party based in urban areas, the Northeast, and the Left Coast.

The solution to that issue is to put Nancy Pelosi (San Francisco), Chuck Schumer (New York) and Keith Ellison (Minneapolis) in charge?

Wonderful. Please do.

The Watchdog has observed for years that the Democrats have abandoned rural America in favor of group identity politics.

This publication strongly encourages Democrats to double down on that strategy.

The Republican Party hasn't been this strong across the country in over 80 years.

Soon, it will be easier to find a unicorn than a Blue Dog Democrat.

See Colin Peterson while you can.

Keep it up Democrats, we're pulling for you.

THANKFUL. Thankful for a GOP majority in both houses of the Minnesota legislature.

We're thankful for many reasons, but the one that comes to mind is MnSURE, the failed Minnesota branch of the failed Obamacare program.

After getting spanked by the voters in large part because of MnSURE, Governor Dayton's "solution" to the problem is to raid the state treasury to pay for an expensive \$300 million band aid to paper over the program's systemic flaws - for just one year.

Legislative Republicans are right to demand fundamental changes to the program as a part of any agreement with a governor who proves nearly every day that he's just as out of touch as the other Minneapolis elites who lead the DFL.

And just like their federal counterparts, the DFL just can't help themselves when it comes to the smug, self-righteous superiority of the urban elites who rule their party.

Have you seen the names being floated for governor in 2018?

Erin Murphy (Saint Paul), Tina Flint Smith (Minneapolis), Chris Coleman (Saint Paul).

See you in January, governor.

THANKFUL. Thankful for Brooklyn Park Mayor Jeff Lunde. Mayor Lunde ran for state Senate against a DFL incumbent this year in a district that leans DFL.

Given Lunde's popularity and tireless efforts on behalf of his city, the DFL took his candidacy seriously and went to work destroying him in a relentless campaign of negativity.

Lunde absorbed the sling and arrows his grace and poise.

And his opponent, John Hoffman?

He was narrowly re-elected, before the Dayton administration made public a decision regarding a potential conflict of interest with Hoffman's employer.

During the 2016 session, Hoffman authored legislation that appropriated money for grants to certain non-profits.

Hoffman's bill was amended to greatly narrow the number of applicants eligible for the grants.

One of those few eligible applicants is Hoffman's employer, Ally People Solutions.

The state agency charged with overseeing these grants pulled the applications, citing a lack of conflict of interest language.

Huh.

THANKFUL. Thankful for our readers and our fellow travelers on the road to a Minnesota based on limited government and individual liberty.

Readers, thank you for your loyalty!

December 2, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "Whenever there's a question which has been given some high public visibility about the potential misuse, alleged misuse of public resources, I think the public deserves a quick and objective answer."

- Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles

Quote of the Week: "The governor has yelled at me before, he probably will again."

- State Rep. Matt Dean (R - Dellwood)

Quote of the Week: "By greater than a 3-1 margin survey respondents support environmentally-responsible mining in the region. Additionally, by more than 2-1, respondents support the building of new copper-nickel mines and believe copper-nickel mining can be done in an environmentally-responsible way. More than 60 percent support the Twin Metals underground copper-nickel project."

- Twin Metals Minnesota

1. A Petulant Child;
2. Suitness is Their Weakness.

A PETULANT CHILD

Well, that didn't take long. Just days into the new post-election reality, the man-child in the governor's office threw a temper tantrum befitting any well-adjusted, normal 3 year-old child.

Perhaps the governor grew overheated because he needed a nap.

Perhaps he threw the category 5 tantrum because the subject matter was one he knows well - art.

In this case, they weren't talking the kind of art that one sells out of the family trust fund to pay for political campaigns.

Instead, the subject matter was the kind of art that will hang in the governor's office now that needed and extensive remodeling is nearly complete.

As any visitor to the Capitol knows, art depicting Minnesota's role in the Civil War is prominent throughout the building.

This is because Minnesota played a vital role in that major historical period and because the Capitol itself was built at a time when Civil War veterans played a large role in the state's politics.

This week, a commission charged with overseeing these issues met to discuss whether various Civil War paintings would be re-installed in the governor's office.

When legislators who sit on the panel expressed their preference for keeping the paintings where they were, contrary to Dayton's wishes, he blew his top.

(Editor's Note: Now word on what paintings Dayton would install. Maybe one of him signing the stadium bill he didn't understand? Maybe signing the MnSure bill that wasted millions and condemned thousands to crappy, overpriced policies?).

As usual, Dayton screamed at his critics while labeling their concerns as "politics."

But in a new twist on his old antics, Dayton stormed out of the meeting.

It's about time Dayton be held accountable for his petulant, disrespectful and childish behavior.

Whether you agree or disagree with Dayton on various issues, every Minnesotan should condemn his behavior.

With his incompetence and behavior control issues, Dayton would be fired from any private company, if he would have even been hired in the first place.

SUITNESS IS THEIR WEAKNESS

Yes, we've all heard by now of the scam by which Dayton political appointees have been using two luxury suites at U.S. Bank stadium as their own patronage fiefdom to reward political cronies and give themselves and their families a taste of the good life.

With all that has been written, this one needs some clarity and analysis that only the Watchdog can provide.

Excuse #1: We can't provide the guest list.

Wrong. These suites are taxpayer assets, built and operated with tax dollars. The taxpayers have every right to know who is using these taxpayer assets and why. This isn't some CIA covert operation that demands secrecy and discretion.

The legislature should make crystal clear next month that the guest list is public data and that a guest list must be kept.

Excuse #2: The Suites are for marketing purposes.

If so, then why were people using the suites who clearly don't have an interest in renting the stadium?

So, former DFL legislator and DFL lobbyist Andy Kozak are now concert Promoters? Are they executives with the X Games? Please.

The common tie here is that they're political cronies of Mark Dayton and part of the DFL power structure. They were there to get some political payback. Period.

Excuse #3: The suites are needed to market the stadium.

Uh, no they're not, actually. A potential renter doesn't need to spend 3 hours in a luxury suite during a Vikings game filling his face with taxpayer-financed food and a VIP parking space to understand how the stadium may or may not be suitable for a particular event.

Potential renters can get a tour, sample food, see a presentation, ask questions, and get all the information they need without sucking up a hi-ho time on the taxpayer dime.

Perhaps the legislature should simply pass a bill that bans use of these suites.

This publication has yet to hear of a valid reason why they are needed.

Excuse #4: We can give tickets to our friends and family because we work long hours.

How arrogant. How totally out of touch.

Ted Mondale and Michele Kelm-Helgen, the folks responsible for this mess, are nothing more than political appointees who know nothing about building or

running a stadium. They have done nothing in their adult lives other than live off political favors, just like their boss, Mark Dayton.

Having been in politics for a lifetime, they know better than to say dumb things like that. They're collective arrogance is so overpowering, they can't even act like politicians, offering strategic lies and doubletalk to protect their hides.

Long hours? Prove it. We bet they can't.

And even if they did, so what? These two political appointees are on salary. Salary means getting the job done, no matter what it takes.

In fact, these two make nearly \$300,000 between them and God only knows what kind of sweet benefits. Odds are pretty good these two don't have to use MnSure to get health insurance.

Only Mark Dayton would think it acceptable to hire these two jokers to run a stadium.

To top it off, the two jokers have stated they will hold off on dispensing tickets to friends, family, and their book club until things are "clarified."

What's to clarify? Giving tickets to friends isn't okay. Got it?

Excuse #5: Governor Dayton will wait for the legislative auditor to tell him what to do.

The icing on the cake. Mark Dayton, yet again, displaying an utter lack of understanding regarding the reality of the situation.

Just yesterday, Dayton said he "expressed concern" to Mondale and Kelm-Helgen.

Really? Way to take a decisive and bold stand, governor.

What does that even mean?

Dayton is apparently content to stand by and watch Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles investigate and then explain to chowder head Democrats why abusing taxpayers for their pleasure is a no-no.

No action from our intrepid governor. Not even a condemnation of the behavior.

Only some vague talk of "expressing concern."

You can't make it up.

That's the problem. It's a big one.

Here's the solution, if the suites aren't simply eliminated.

One, a guest list must be kept that states exactly who attended and why that person attended. Guests must have a legitimate interest in renting all or part of the facility.

The list shall be public data.

Two, all guests must pay fair market value for their ticket, parking, and food/beverage and other benefits.

Three, a nepotism rule shall be in effect that bans stadium board members and staff from providing benefits to family relations.

Four, stadium board members shall be appointed by the governor and subject to Senate confirmation. Board nominees shall have a demonstrated record of success and experience in the field of finance, construction, or related private-sector market segment.

It's time to use the new majority to check a governor who is clearly having trouble governing effectively.

December 9, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again
- Author Unknown

1. Where Now, DFL?

WHERE NOW, DFL?

In surveying the wreckage from last month, it's helpful to start with a recap of exactly where things stand for the Democrats as we stand at the dawn of 2017.

While we all know that Donald Trump will be the next president and that the GOP has majorities in both houses of Congress, it helps to take a broader look at just how high the tide has risen for the GOP and how far it has fallen for the Democrats.

The GOP controls 37 state senates. The Dems control 13.

The GOP controls 31 state houses to the Dems 18.

In Kentucky, the GOP took control of the state house for the first time since 1921.

The GOP boasts of 33 governors to the Dems 16.

Across the country, there are 1,056 more GOP than Democrat legislators.

During the reign of Barack Obama, the Democrats lost a staggering 958 legislative seats.

By comparison, only 324 were lost during the George W. Bush presidency.

While Democrats crow about Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote, she only did so by winning the vote in California by a whopping margin, 61-33%.

About half of the entire Democrat caucus in the U.S. House represents either the west coast states or New England.

You can drive from Minnesota's western border all the way to the outskirts of Seattle without touching a House district represented by a Democrat.

If the congressional map were made to look like land and water features, the Democrat map would look like islands and archipelagos.

Man, it was bad.

So where does the DFL go from here?

Without sounding smug or dramatic, it looks like the Democrat coalition has broken up and it's not coming back.

That's because various elements in the coalition hold principle and values that are now diametrically opposed to one another.

Essentially, the shift has happened as the DFL has moved from a party with strong rural and working class leadership ("farmer" and "labor") to one that is centered on the urban core and now lead by elite, upper crust who live in that same urban core.

As this publication has noted many times, look at the leadership of the party on a national and state level.

U.S. Senate Minority Leader: Chuck Schumer (New York City)

U.S. House Minority Leader: Nancy Pelosi (San Francisco)

President: Barack Obama (Chicago)

MN Governor: Mark Dayton (Minneapolis)

MN Lt. Governor: Tina Flint Smith (Minneapolis)

MN House Minority Leader: Melissa Hortman (Brooklyn Park)

Yes, Tom Bakk of Cook is the MN Senate Minority Leader, but that is really a bit of tokenism these days and more of a nod to Bakk's personal ambition rather than an acknowledgement of rural importance.

The simple fact is that the value system (such that it is) of the urban Democrats conflicts with that of rural Democrats.

You can see that schism erupting in two issues prominent in the last two election cycles.

In 2014, the state's decision to legalize gay marriage, under the cute euphemism of "love is the law", played a large role in rural campaigns that November.

The result was a Republican pick-up of 11 seats in the MN House, with 10 of those wins coming in rural areas.

Polling data and anecdotal observations across rural Minnesota clearly demonstrated that rural voters were upset with the gay marriage vote.

In 2016, the urban/rural divide was exposed on an economic issue, that of jobs in general, but in particular, construction trade jobs in the fields of mining and pipelines.

On the one hand, a faction of the DFL strongly opposed those jobs, with environmentalists and Indian tribes as the face of that group.

On the other side stood union labor, in particular the skilled construction trades (electricians, pipefitters, carpenters, etc.).

The result was a disaster for rural DFLers, which is best illustrated in two long-time rural DFL strongholds in Districts 5 and 17.

In District 5, all three DFL incumbents in the legislature were wiped out, including two long-serving DFLers, Tom Anzelc and Tom Saxhaug.

The DFL dominance in these districts has waned over time, with a strong tipping point in 2016 to the GOP, with the unprecedented sweep.

In District 17, the change was more pronounced. Long a DFL stronghold, the district started tipping in 2010 when Bruce Vogel won a House seat in the district.

The DFL won the seat back in 2012, but Dave Baker recaptured the seat for the GOP in 2014 as one of the ten pick-ups that year.

In 2014, the GOP also captured the House seat on the other side of the district, a sea-change win in a deep blue area.

The 2016 cycle brought high hopes for the DFL in District 17. Both House seats were targeted by the DFL while there was no thought that they would lose the Senate seat.

In 17A, targeted Republican Tim Miller won re-election by an astonishing 60-40% margin.

State Senator Democrat Lyle Koenen lost on that side of the district 56-44%.

In 17B, incumbent Republican Dave Baker won by a similar 60-40% win.

The Senate vote was a 58-42% win for GOP challenger Andrew Lang.

The real question is whether this result is a one-time anomaly or evidence of a true political re-alignment in favor of the GOP in rural Minnesota.

In a real sense, the answer depends upon how each major party responds to the 2016 result.

So far, it doesn't appear that the DFL got the message.

After the election, DFL Chairman Ken Martin observed his party's need to fashion "initiatives" to appeal to rural Minnesota.

Of course, "initiative" is simply code for welfare and other government programs.

What rural Minnesota wants is good jobs, particularly in mines and on pipelines.

There will be a momentous showdown tomorrow when the DFL considers a resolution to formally oppose mining.

This consideration was delayed during the election cycle to paper over this showdown.

The importance of this issue cannot be understated.

The Watchdog has spoken with a number of DFL opinion leaders from greater Minnesota who have noted that the passage of this resolution means their permanent split from the DFL.

UPDATE: The Watchdog has learned that there will be a motion to "table" the resolution until 2018.

So what. Kicking the can down the road won't paper over this schism.

DFL candidates are already announcing for governor. You can bet that various DFL constituencies will be working hard to pin down the candidates regarding mining.

There will be no place to hide.

On the Republican side, leadership must grasp the opportunity, which means making some tough choices.

It's easy to support mining and pipelines. It's easy to support guns.

But it isn't as easy to support other issues like prevailing wage laws.

Internal polling from some construction trade union showed that over 50% of their membership voted for Donald Trump and other Republicans down ticket.

Maintaining those numbers will be very, very difficult if the GOP pushes for prevailing wage repeal bills, for example.

Regardless of where one stands on this issue, members of the skilled construction trades see prevailing wage laws as a protection against low-cost, low-skill (sometimes illegal) labor undercutting Minnesota's high-skill higher-cost model.

In short, when you tell a man or woman who has put in many thousands of hours to learn and perfect a trade that they should make less money in order to be on par with crews of unskilled, illegal workers from Alabama and Mississippi, it's not a winning message.

Telling rural Minnesota that blue collar people in their communities make too much money is about as popular as telling them that mining should be illegal.

Unfortunately, the Minnesota GOP has a demonstrated history frequent tone-deafness.

If the party is serious about taking advantage of an emerging re-alignment in their favor, they would do well to listen carefully to rural voices like state Rep. Jason Rarick and incoming Senator Mike Goggin regarding what skilled trades men and women are thinking.

Let the GOP not snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

December 16, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Quote of the Week: "We've got what looks like an abuse of position and no one's paying a price at all."

- Professor David Schultz

TAXPAYER ABUSE

As the DFL surveys the wreckage of 2016 and engages in its own version of accident reconstruction, the party is clearly ignoring "taxpayer abuse" as a contributing factor in the November 8th crash, which took out many passengers on the S.S. DFL.

We know this to be true because the taxpayer abuse continues apace.

If you thought the DFL's use of luxury suites at U.S. Bank Stadium to reward political cronies was an outrage, read on, sit down, and familiarize yourself with stroke protocols.

DISLOCATED WORKERS?

Taxpayers learned this week that the DFL pulled a neat [stunt](#) by enrolling political appointees in a taxpayer-funded unemployment program because these hacks were shown the door when the GOP took over the Senate, which obviously meant there was no longer a need for as many DFL appointees in the Senate bureaucracy.

The erstwhile DFL staffers are tapping a fund called the "Dislocated Worker Program."

A review of the legislative record clearly demonstrates that the spirit of the law is to provide temporary benefits and job retraining to workers who experience a sudden and massive layoff in an industrial setting, such as a manufacturing plant or a mine.

In fact, the letter of the law is also fairly clear in showing that the program isn't meant for political cronies who lose their patronage jobs down at the Capitol.

Chapter 116L.17 lays out the criteria to enter the program:

"Dislocated worker" means an individual who is a resident of Minnesota at the time employment ceased or was working in the state at the time employment ceased and:

- (1) has been permanently separated or has received a notice of permanent separation from public or private sector employment and is eligible for or has exhausted entitlement to unemployment benefits, and is unlikely to return to the previous industry or occupation;
- (2) has been long-term unemployed and has limited opportunities for employment or reemployment in the same or a similar occupation in the area in which the individual resides, including older individuals who may have substantial barriers to employment by reason of age;
- (3) has been terminated or has received a notice of termination of employment as a result of a plant closing or a substantial layoff at a plant, facility, or enterprise;
- (4) has been self-employed, including farmers and ranchers, and is unemployed as a result of general economic conditions in the community in which the individual resides or because of natural disasters.

How in the world to these political hacks fall under any of these criteria, other than that Mark Dayton's own bureaucrats approve the applications, and we all know that words mean what Mark Dayton says they mean.

How utterly and totally shameless.

In addition to the letter and spirit of the law, the very marketing materials that promote the program clearly and explicitly note that the program is for workers who lose their job "through no fault of their own."

The DFL lost seats, and therefore patronage jobs, precisely because of their actions.

They were out in the field all summer and fall, working against GOP candidates and engaging in general political hackery.

Now that they lost, they want some parting gifts such as taxpayer-funded help with rent, car payments, and perhaps a couple of cool classes down at the local community college.

This is yet one more dirty diaper the GOP must clean up come January, as the DFL children continue to poop the taxpayer bed.

There should be no compunction whatsoever for the GOP immediately moving to strip these unearned and underserved benefits come January, or as a condition of holding a special session.

This program and the taxpayer funds that make it work are designed to assist in transitioning blue collar workers who are laid off from industries that are getting hammered and are unlikely to come back, at least as they were before.

It's designed to retrain these workers in new skills that will enable them marketable in a new field and help them once again know the dignity that comes with work.

The program isn't for political cronies who got a cushy job because their team won an election but are now out of those jobs because their team lost the next election.

It's almost unfathomable that we even need to have the discussion.

What this means is that these folks are sucking out money that is now unavailable for that 50-year-old taconite mine worker who lost his job and won't see it come back.

Here's an idea. If you have some DFL party hacks who need a meal and a place to sleep, have Ted Mondale and Michele Kelm-Helgen host them in their suites down at U.S. Bank Stadium. After all, the suites appear to be reserved specifically for DFLers.

MORE PAID TIME OFF

Are you worried that state employees work too hard?

Concerned that they don't get enough paid time off?

Fear not, Mark Dayton is in charge.

This week, his office [announced](#) that the state is now offering up to six weeks of paid time off for the birth of a child.

This benefit, on average, is worth \$6,200 to 32,000 potentially eligible employees.

That's potentially \$200 million taxpayers could be coughing up for state employees not to be at work.

So you say that this benefit is a net gain to the economy?

That may or may not be true, but then the benefit should have been accompanied by a corresponding cut in other paid time off, resulting in paid leave neutrality.

The amount of paid time off these state employees get is already "generous" to say the least.

Let's look at one state union contract to give you an idea.

Holidays:

Independence Day

Labor Day

Veterans' Day

Thanksgiving Day

Day after Thanksgiving

Christmas

New Year's Day

MLK Day

President's Day

Memorial Day

One Floating Holiday

Vacation Leave. Some members of state employee unions earn up to 29 days per year of vacation time.

Sick Leave. There are also 13 days of paid sick leave for state employees.

And none of this includes paid leaves of absence: bereavement leave, court appearance leave, educational leave, jury duty leave, military leave, voting time leave, emergency leave, blood donation leave, election judge leave, transition leave, and investigatory leave.

With this new paid maternity leave, it's possible that a state employee could be away from work, on paid status, for nearly 1/3rd of the work year!

Can you imagine being paid to be away from work one of every three work days?

Taxpayer abuse, plain and simple.

STADIUM SUITES

And the cherry on top of the sundae are, of course, the taxpayer-funded luxury suites down at the football palace.

As expected, we learned this week that the long-awaited guest list is replete with DFL cronies and other political hacks.

Yet more example of the patronage system employed by the "Party of the Working Man" to reward friends and donors.

The GOP must work to make Ted Mondale and Michele Kelm-Helgen eligible for the Dislocated Worker Program.

December 23, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: As is our custom, the Watchdog pauses over Christmas to recognize this season of joy, good cheer, family, faith, and country.

We pause to give a word of thanks and offer prayers for those who are deployed abroad in the defense of our great nation.

The Watchdog will return next week with a full production.

Merry Christmas, Watchdogs!

In the meantime, we offer a Christmas story - one of our favorites.

Twas the night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck...
How to live in a world that's politically correct?
His workers no longer would answer to "Elves",
"Vertically Challenged" they were calling themselves.
And labor conditions at the North Pole,
were alleged by the union, to stifle the soul.

Four reindeer had vanished without much propriety,
released to the wilds, by the Humane Society.
And equal employment had made it quite clear,
that Santa had better not use just reindeer.
So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid,
were replaced with 4 pigs, and you know that looked stupid!

The runners had been removed from his beautiful sleigh,
because the ruts were deemed dangerous by the EPA,
And millions of people were calling the Cops,
when they heard sled noises upon their roof tops.
Second-hand smoke from his pipe, had his workers quite frightened,
and his fur trimmed red suit was called "unenlightened".

To show you the strangeness of today's ebbs and flows,
Rudolf was suing over unauthorized use of his nose.

He went to Geraldo, in front of the Nation,
demanding millions in over-due workers compensation.

So...half of the reindeer were gone, and his wife
who suddenly said she'd had enough of this life,
joined a self help group, packed and left in a whiz,
demanding from now on that her title was Ms.

And as for gifts...why, he'd never had the notion
that making a choice could cause such commotion.
Nothing of leather, nothing of fur...
Which meant nothing for him or nothing for her.
Nothing to aim, Nothing to shoot,
Nothing that clamored or made lots of noise.
Nothing for just girls and nothing for just boys.
Nothing that claimed to be gender specific,
Nothing that's warlike or non-pacifistic.

No candy or sweets...they were bad for the tooth.
Nothing that seemed to embellish upon the truth.
And fairy tales...while not yet forbidden,
were like Ken and Barbie, better off hidden,
for they raised the hackles of those psychological,
who claimed the only good gift was one ecological.

No baseball, no football...someone might get hurt,
besides - playing sports exposed kids to dirt.
Dolls were said to be sexist and should be passe.
and Nintendo would rot your entire brain away.

So Santa just stood there, disheveled and perplexed,
he just couldn't figure out what to do next?
He tried to be merry he tried to be gay,
but you must have to admit he was having a very bad day.
His sack was quite empty, it was flat on the ground,
nothing fully acceptable was anywhere to be found.

Something special was needed, a gift that he might,
give to us all, without angering the left or the right.
A gift that would satisfy - with no indecision,
each group of people in every religion.

Every race, every hue,
everyone, everywhere...even you!
So here is that gift, it's price beyond worth...

"MAY YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES, ENJOY PEACE ON EARTH"

December 30, 2016

Public Policy Commentary

In This Issue:

Editor's Note: Welcome to the last edition of 2016! The Watchdog concludes 11 years of ongoing commentary with this edition. It was an amazing year in politics, with the election of Donald Trump and the ascendancy of the Republican Party, which is at a high-water mark not seen in many generations.

While we don't know what 2017 will bring, one magical moment is certain - the day Barack Obama leaves office. He has wrought a great deal of damage to our economy, our democratic institutions, and our standing both at home and abroad.

History will likely judge Obama harshly, putting him in the same category as Jimmy Carter. Both were bright men who entered office with high expectations but demonstrated that they simply weren't up to the task of governing a superpower.

The good news is that these eight years have proven that the Framers established a resilient and stable form of government. Over this time, the American people have quietly and deliberately engaged in a course correction, culminating with the election of the biggest outsider in modern American history.

Moreover, this course correction has also been happening at the Congressional, state, and local level, where Democrats have lost over 1,000 seats since Obama claimed that "he's got game," and that he would calm the oceans.

He's a funny president - funny like a clown.

Now begins the hard part. Republicans must govern in the manner in which they campaigned. They must, must deliver on their promises.

An opportunity exists to move the GOP beyond a protest party and make it one of a sustainable, center-right governing coalition.

The reality is that the GOP has a poor track record in this regard. All too often, the governing mandate has been ignored in favor of pursuing a narrow social agenda that doesn't resonate with the general electorate and has nothing to do with the reasons that electorate put them in charge.

Memo to the GOP majorities: Remember why you won. Deliver results.

If not, you will rightly be called out by your friends and foes alike.

A critical component of fulfilling the mission is pursuing an agenda that unites and grows the GOP coalition.

Divisive issues that cause family fights are counter-productive and have no place in the broader agenda.

Speaker Kurt Daudt once observed, "The GOP needs to stop drawing lines and shoving people on the other side of them."

As we stand at the dawn of a new year, the promise of a renewal of the American dream beckons.

Will the GOP deliver? We will be carefully and hopefully watching.

On behalf of my entire staff, I wish you a blessed and prosperous 2017.

The Watchdog looks forward to our 12th year in 2017!

- Harold E. Hamilton

Quotes of the Week:

"The hardest places in the United States to overcome poverty are the nation's cities, where rich and poor live in separate worlds and where most poor and most black children live."

- Star Tribune, quoting a recent academic study from Harvard and UC, Berkley

"Many of the places with the greatest so-called "income mobility" in the United States, where poor children grow up to be more affluent than their parents were, are in rural Minnesota and nearby states. Poor children in Minneapolis and St. Paul tend to stay poor, just as in most other big cities across the country."

- Star Tribune, quoting a recent academic study from Harvard and UC, Berkley

1. Another Nail in the Coffin.

ANOTHER NAIL IN THE COFFIN

And you thought 2016 was a bad year for music, as Prince, David Bowie, George Michael, and other luminaries passed on this year.

That was nothing compared to the year liberals and their failed ideology experienced.

After the stinging repudiation at the ballot box, liberals are now suffering repudiation in academia, with new studies showing just how destructive their ideas really are to the very people they self-righteously crow about helping.

This week, the Star Tribune (liberal legacy media outlet) featured an article highlighting a study by Harvard (liberal ivory tower institution) and UC - Berkley (ultra-liberal ivory tower institution) that concludes that poor people have the greatest chance at upward mobility living in the suburbs and rural areas than in the city.

In fact, the study concludes that there is essentially zero upward mobility out of the urban core.

Say what?

The results here cannot be ignored and should be headline news around the country.

Read this one more time: there is a growing and irrefutable body of empirical data that show the best place for the poor, especially minorities, to rise above poverty is in the suburbs and rural America.

So, the land of opportunity within the Land of Opportunity is in Red America and not Blue America.

For years and years, the urban, wealthy, liberal elites have lectured the rest of us regarding the best way to improve the lives of the poor.

In fact, these elites have gone beyond lecturing and have frequently denigrated the lifestyle of non-urban dwellers.

Our cars are too big.

Our homes and lots lack the proper density.

Our guns should be confiscated.

Our churches have no place in the modern Enlightenment.

Our jobs should yield to radical environmentalism.

Their cities are the real economic engines.

Their transit is superior to our outmoded roads and bridges.

Hell, they are just smarter and morally superior - in their minds.

The data sets tell a different story.

While the reasons for this disparity in opportunity will be hotly debated for years to come, there are some universal truths at work.

First, there is a limitation to what government can do regarding the elimination of economic disparities.

At a basic level, private societal institutions provide stronger support in binding together families and individuals to establish the mores and values that create opportunity.

In other words, the very institutions liberals have dismissed all these years really do matter.

Government programs can't replace churches.

Government programs can't replace private charity.

Government programs can't replace neighbors helping neighbors.

Most importantly, government programs can't replace intact families that raise children.

These institutions are weak in the cities and much stronger in rural areas.

Second, and related, cities don't offer opportunity because those who govern there only pay lip service to opportunity.

Our cities are a haven for segregationist policies.

In the urban core, the rich and the poor live in different universes.

The rich generally send their kids to elite prep schools. Ask Governor Dayton or any member of the Minneapolis legislative delegation where they send their kids to school.

The urban poor are sentenced to failing public schools, where school choice is vehemently opposed by the teachers' union.

The urban poor live in certain zip codes in the city while rich have their own zip codes.

In rural America, there is more opportunity because there are shared opportunities.

For example, there tends to be one school where everyone gets an education, regardless of race, color or creed.

There tends to be only teachers and some staff, and a distinct lack of a bureaucracy like diversity coordinators.

Other centers of daily life like hospitals and businesses are smaller in number, meaning everyone works at or patronizes that establishment.

In short, rural and suburban America tend to be more of a true "melting pot" of shared experiences and hence, shared opportunities.

On the other hand, our urban centers have become very much like legacy European societies, marked by little upward mobility, a permanent underclass, limited job opportunities, and a semi-permanent elite who wield influence based more on political connections than business acumen.

The urban core doesn't offer economic opportunity?

What a shocker.