

OUR VIEW

There are better ideas than \$15 an hour

With the Democrats in control of the House of Representatives in St. Paul, we're sure to be discussing a state-wide minimum wage increase, probably to \$15 an hour, phased in over a few years.

\$15 an hour is not a lot of money. But it's a mandate that should not be implemented statewide.

Most arguments for such an increase center around the fact that a person working full-time at the current minimum wage, can't afford basic housing, groceries and transportation on their own.

But such an argument ignores the fact that most minimum wage earners don't rely on their wages to pay all their housing, grocery and transportation needs. Many minimum-wage earners are working part-time as a way to supplement their family income — or as first-time wage-earners — while concentrating on other occupations, like students, artists, homemakers and the like. For those workers, the current minimum wage is sufficient, and reasonable.

And for those who do rely on their minimum wage job for their entire income, Minnesota has a very nice and generous system of subsidies to help. We have food stamps and Medical Assistance; daycare assistance for working

parents; housing programs of all kinds, and public transportation. (In the bigger cities we support bus and rail systems; here in Carlton County we have Arrowhead Transit which, admittedly, could be improved to provide more reliable transportation to struggling workers, but is still a terrific program.)

A better long-term policy would be to strengthen such social services, making it easier and more efficient for those who can work full-time to support themselves with dignity. Such an expansion of social services will help even those less needy: for example, we now offer all-day kindergarten, which is open to all families, not just those who earn low wages. And by expanding public transportation, we'd hope to see increased participation by all community members, which will eventually reduce the need for our constantly expanding (and very expensive) public roadway system.

But raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour statewide is not the solution.

We welcome your input to the Pine Knot News community newspaper. Send your thoughts, letters or news to opinion@PineKnotNews.com.

How much housework do you do?

I was sitting in my office the other day when the phone rang. A person I had never met before wanted to hire me. When I asked this person how they happened to call me, they said, "My friend said you're the best divorce lawyer around."

Now, I am not necessarily the best divorce lawyer around, but I do flatter myself as pretty good at what I do. I suspect other divorce lawyers in town, like Dennis Korman or Jeff Westermann or Gail Nouska get called "the best" as well, maybe even more frequently than I do. The fact is, any lawyer who practices law is probably pretty good at what they do, just like most of us are pretty good at our jobs. Sure, there are a few clinkers, and now and then we all make mistakes that show our flaws but, overall, most of us are pretty competent.

But it got me thinking. Who would ever rate themselves in the bottom half of competency in any field? Mathematically, we're all average. How would I rate myself? I know that one: I'd rank myself in the top half. But that means there must be lawyers in the bottom half — whom would I put in that category? No one I know.

I asked my wife: How much of the housework, overall, do you do in our home? Her answer should have surprised me. She works full-time, and is in Minneapolis twice a week, and sometimes travels to Washington, D.C. for meetings. I do most of the grocery shopping and nearly all the cooking and dishwashing, most of the yardwork (poorly, I admit) and more. I estimate that I do about 70 percent of all the housework in our house.

She said she does about 70 percent of the housework.

That means, if my arithmetic is correct,



Harry's Gang

Pete Radosevich

that between the two of us, we get 140 percent of all the work done.

Try this little experiment in your home. Ask your spouse.

Or, try it at work: I bet your employees rank you

higher than your competitors do. But even your competitors probably won't rank you in the bottom half. This isn't Lake Wobegon — we can't all be above average. But that's certainly how we rank ourselves.

Now, don't be cruel. Have you ever seen America's Got Talent or any other similar show? Most of the contestants have more talent that I could ever muster. But once in a while, they show an act that is hideous: a singer who can't carry a tune; a comedian whose jokes are just not funny; or a dancer that moves more like a duck than a swan. It's fascinating to watch them, especially when the "talent" simply doesn't realize how bad they actually are. But I think those acts are put into the show for cruel pleasure — most of the acts that get on TV have, at least, some talent. Maybe they are not ready for nationwide superstardom, but if you saw some of those singers in a local talent show or singing karaoke at a local event, you'd think they were pretty good. You may even rank them in the "top half."

As for me, the next time someone tells me "I'm the best," I will simply nod, agree and compliment them on their discretion. There's nothing wrong with being, along with everyone else I know, in the top half.

Pete Radosevich is the publisher of the Pine Knot News community newspaper and an attorney in Esko who hosts the talk show Harry's Gang on CAT-7. Reach him at Pete.Radosevich@PineKnotNews.com.

LETTERS to the editor

Opinion page should present both sides of an issue

To the editor:

I love the new Pine Knot, and read it from beginning to end each week. It's fun to hear about the community activities and the history of my old "hometown" among other enjoyable articles. I do, however, have one objection/suggestion. In the past few weeks the paper has printed a "Guest Columnist" column by Justin Krych, an Esko resident and deputy chair of the Eighth District Republican Party. But I find no column from a Democrat, giving a liberal perspective on the issues.

As a newspaper, a fair and unbiased exchange would be to print both sides of these issues. Typically, newspapers attempt to remain neutral in political views, and this certainly is not so with your paper. If no one has stepped forward to

write such a column from the liberal side, please find someone. In today's heated political battles, we need fair representation from both sides of the political scene. If you can't show both sides, perhaps you should not show either one.

I look forward to seeing more balanced representation in the opinion section in the future. Thank you for hearing my suggestion, and hope you will take it under consideration.

Jan Green, Golden Valley, Minn.

Thanks for support

I want to thank everyone who played in the James Hagen golf fundraiser on July 30, along with all the family and friends who helped on the day of the tournament and everyone who donated prizes and cash, or who sponsored a hole. And thanks to the staff at the Cloquet Country Club.

Ernie Hagen, Cloquet

One man's answer to the question of consolidation

Come January, the school board at Carlton ISD 93 will have two new board members and the return of one current school board member as a result of November's election. I am hopeful the board will build upon the momentum created by the community engagement process over the past year.

Regarding the last board meeting Nov. 19, there were many things said that were thoughtful and true. And some that were perplexing.

The subject of consolidation is brought up at board meetings because there are many in the community that want it discussed. It is viewed as a potential solution to some challenges.

Longtime board member Tim Hagenah asked, "Why is it that not one person has explained to me why we should consolidate with Wrenshall? What do they have to offer?"

I found this perplexing, because it has



Guest Columnist

Dave Chmielewski

been discussed, in great detail, for years while Tim has been on the board. Nonetheless, it is still a good question. So, for Tim and maybe others, here is one person's analysis (this is deep

and technical, so bear with me).

Why is consolidation of any kind being discussed?

We have seven school districts in a county with 36,000 people. Carlton has around 422 students. The State of Minnesota sets up the rules of the game. For each student enrolled, the school district receives an allotment of money. The more students you have, the more money you receive. It then comes down to how the district balances that income stream against its operating costs.

Between Wrenshall and Carlton, there are three buildings and more than 800 students. If the two districts consolidate with a two-site option, they could eliminate one building. Duplicated staff and services would be reassigned or eliminated. A two-site option is discussed, because neither community wanted to completely give up its school, and Carlton just put \$5.5 million worth of nonvoter-approved money into the elementary school.

Consolidation was also brought up because both districts say they have facility deficiencies. Facility construction is costly and supported primarily by property tax dollars. When costs are spread out over

Continued on page 5

Pine Knot

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