

# Open forum

## Local man in need of kidney transplant

Hi, this is Dave Thouin, a longtime resident of southeastern Minnesota and former U.S. Navy Viet Nam era corpsman who served at the U.S. Naval Hospitals in Boston and with the NATO forces in Naples, Italy. I am in critical need of a kidney transplant. As hard as it is to share such personal information, I'm doing this for the sake of my family, particularly my wife, Carol. I am reaching out for help as I have a lot more living I want to do on this earth.

I'm searching for a living donor, as that significantly improves one's survival rate and a kidney is one of those miraculous organs that you can live a long life just having one of. I am also on a kidney transplant waiting list, but the wait is long. My blood type is O+. As a stem cell donor to my brother several years ago, I know, first hand, the deep feeling of satisfaction in the positive outcome of his survival.

You can help me fight this fight in several ways:

1. Spread the word to people you know who may be willing to get tested as a potential donor.

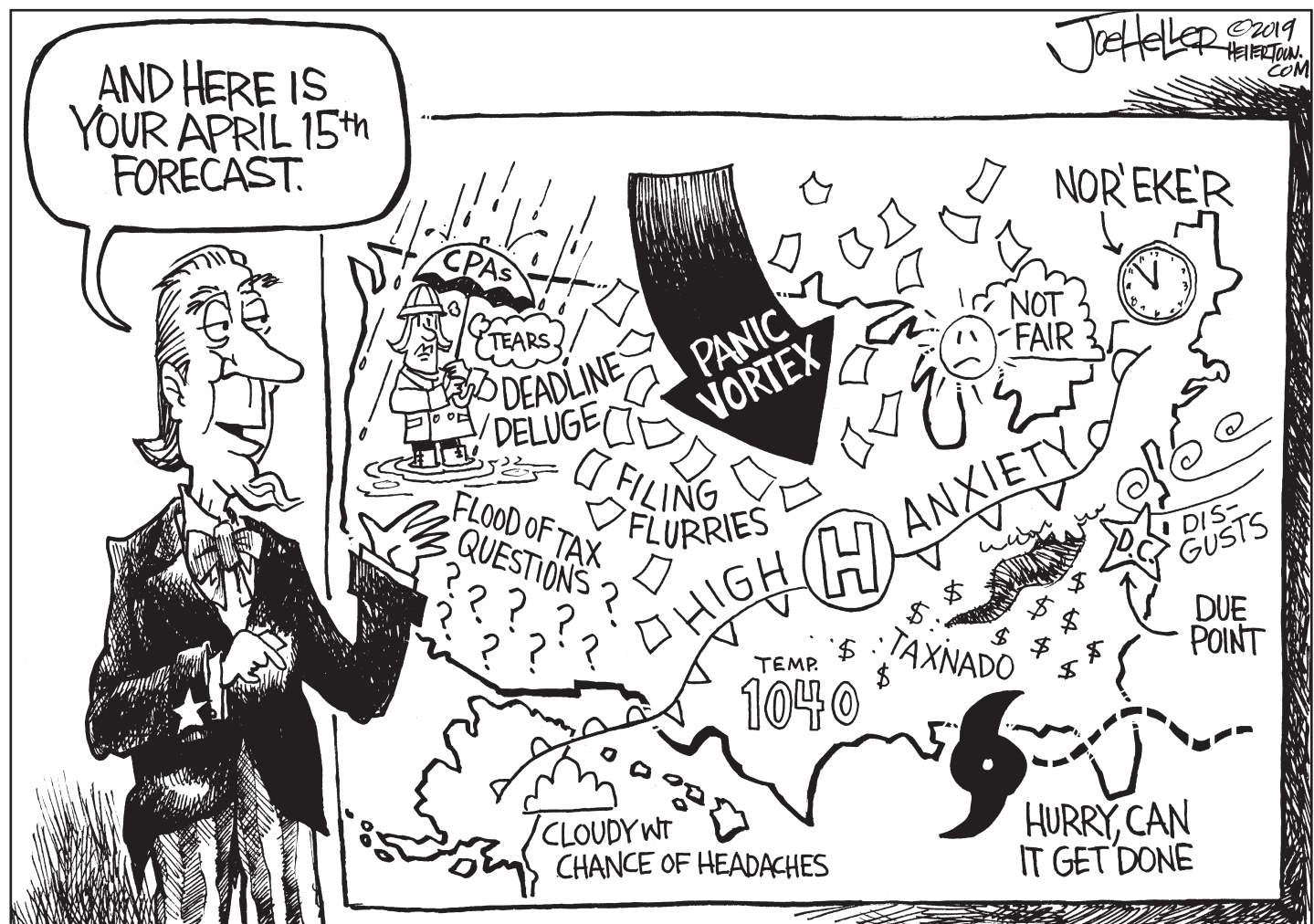
2. Prayers and support have been and continue to be helpful.

3. It's not my place to outwardly ask for someone's kidney - that's a very powerful and personal gesture, however we would be truly grateful for any such selfless gesture. Potential kidney donors need to be generally in good health and all medical costs incurred by the donor will be covered.

To learn more about being a kidney donor, contact the Mayo Clinic Transplant Center in Rochester at 507-266-7868 or log in to [mayoclinic.org/livingdonor](http://mayoclinic.org/livingdonor) for more detailed information. Additional information about kidney transplant can also be found at the National Kidney Foundation [www.kidney.org/transplant/livingdonors](http://www.kidney.org/transplant/livingdonors)

Feel free to contact me directly with any questions at 507-696-7447 or [djtgonavy@centurytel.net](mailto:djtgonavy@centurytel.net). Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

**Dave Thouin**  
Spring Valley



## Radiant thoughts of lost 'friend' cut through gloom of rainy day

After work one rainy day last week, I decided to take a run on the Root River Trail from Lanesboro despite the weather conditions. Although the trees were still bare, offering little protection, I thought the valley surrounded by bluffs would offer a little buffer from the wind, softening the blow of the light rain.

As I made my way west of Lanesboro, I spotted the Duane Benson farm. In the gray, monotone atmosphere, it looked so different than I recalled because I had always pictured it as a radiant place with the sunshine acting as a spotlight, highlighting this heavenly paradise on earth.

Part of that cheerful, upbeat image is probably because of the man who lived there. Benson was such a radiant person who made a name for himself in so many ways.

He played in the NFL for nearly a decade, operating as team captain of the Oakland Raiders in 1971 and playing in a Super Bowl. Then he served in the Legislature for more than a decade, helping craft bipartisan bills, MinnesotaCare being one, which still address key issues today.

After he left politics, he became executive director of the Minnesota Business Partnership, a group of CEOs from Minnesota businesses, was a charter member of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, which oversaw construction of the

### Reflections from my Notebook

By David Phillips  
Bluff Country Newspaper Group



state's professional football stadium, and served in many other capacities, including initiatives to further early learning as well as college education.

Yet, it wasn't his accomplishments that touched me.

My memories aren't of his time in the NFL, the state Legislature or state boards. Instead, I recall the brief moments we connected — on a school bus riding to the start of the Trout Trot race in Preston, when we sat across from each other during lunch when he was a guest speaker at a service club or at a foundation banquet when he bought me a drink before the dinner, where, again, he was a guest speaker.

Those encounters probably happened about a decade apart, yet it always seemed as if we had talked just the day before. We weren't close enough to be considered friends, but he treated me like a best friend every time I saw him.

Those memories flooded my mind as I ran past his farm, which didn't have the radiance on that wet day last week.

### Minnesota legislative update

By Sen. Jeremy Miller



working with Gov. Walz and the Democrat majority in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

The Senate Republican approach focuses on improving accessibility, affordability and accountability in the ways you interact with your government and the state, without asking you to pay more taxes. To help you easily find more specifics about the budget proposal and breakdowns by spending area, you can visit our budget website at [www.mnsenaterepublicans.com/budget](http://www.mnsenaterepublicans.com/budget).

Senate Republicans are committed to making government more affordable, more accessible, and more accountable for the people of Minnesota. As I have met with concerned citizens throughout the district and at my office in St. Paul, I have noticed a few recurring themes — “health insurance is too expensive;” “it's too hard to find childcare;” “I don't want to pay higher gas taxes or tab fees.” Our budget proposal addresses Minnesotans' priorities, but doesn't ask them to pay more than they already are.

#### Transportation funding

Transportation funding, and specifically the governor's proposed 20-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase, is one of the most controversial topics at the Legislature this session. In 2017, Senate Republicans successfully worked in a bipartisan manner to authorize billions of dollars in funding for transportation, including additional permanent, on-going funding for roads and bridges by redirecting existing transportation-related revenue. Gov. Walz's budget reverses that bipartisan work and shifts about \$230 million away from roads and bridges every year. To fill this hole in his budget proposal, the governor chose to raise the gas tax, tab fees, motor vehicle sales taxes, and more. However, data shows that relying on the gas tax is not the best approach as revenue from the gas tax begins to decline each year starting in 2023.

The plan proposed by Senate Republicans dedicates approximately \$8.12 billion over the next two years to Minnesota roads, bridges, transit, and transportation debt service. The permanent funding comes from current gas tax revenue, tab fees, bonding, and the general fund. Under current law and without the gas tax increase or other fee increases, Minnesota's transportation funding system will receive over \$530 million in increased state revenue over the next two years due to automatic increases in the system.

If you don't already follow me on Facebook, please give my page a “Like”. This is a great way to stay on top of the latest news from the Capitol! Visit my page here: <https://www.facebook.com/Senator-JeremyMiller/>.

As always, your feedback is extremely important to me and I encourage you to share your input on the issues being discussed here at the Capitol. If you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, please send me an email at [sen.jeremy.miller@senate.mn](mailto:sen.jeremy.miller@senate.mn) or call my Capitol office at 651-296-5649. It's a great honor to serve as your state Senator.

*State Sen. Jeremy Miller (R-Winona) represents District 28.*

## Lowering insulin prices can be matter of life and death for thousands of Minnesotans

### View from the U.S. Senate

By Sen. Tina Smith



Minnesotans who are frustrated and angry when they discover that they pay 10 to 18 times more for insulin than people with diabetes pay in other countries. That is just wrong.

#### Insulin not a new drug

Insulin is not a new drug. It was discovered in Canada back in 1921 and quickly became a lifesaver for people with diabetes around the world. The researchers who discovered it were awarded the Nobel Prize. They sold the patent to the University of Toronto for just \$1 because large profits were not their motive. Unfortunately, for millions of people with diabetes today, the three large insulin makers have a different motive.

Usually, a drug that has been around for nearly a century loses its patent and its price drops dramatically. However, incremental changes to the drug over decades; have allowed the three manufacturers to maintain lucrative patents and take older formulations off the market. Thus, 98 years after insulin's discovery, there is still no inexpensive supply of this lifesaving drug available in the United States.

#### Increasing transparency

Like the Minnesotans who raised their voices at the state Capitol, I've joined forces with several Senate colleagues in Washington, D.C., to put public pressure on the three insulin manufacturers to lower prices. We've pressed company executives to explain the reasons behind the recent spikes in insulin prices and we're

The gloomy appearance wasn't just from the gray skies overhead. My perception was colored by the fact that I also knew Benson would never be returning to the farm — a place he enjoyed, even preferred, while he was out in the world making a name for himself — because he died earlier this year after a battle with cancer.

He was 73 years old at his death, which is shorter than the average lifespan of Americans today. Yet, his life was far above average in what he brought to the world.

Sometimes we focus on the length of our lives rather than the quality of our lives. However, the key is what we do with our years rather than how many years we exist. Benson packed a lot of living into his years on earth.

His life is also a good reminder that the important things aren't necessarily what we accomplish. What lasts is how we treat people, something many of us forget in the daily rush to keep up with all our worldly commitments.

I'll never see Benson's smiling face in the physical world again, but I'm sure memories of his thoughtfulness, humor and warmth will pop back into my mind at times. Even if I'm in a gloomy, rainy funk, those images of Benson in my mind will always exhibit that radiance as if the sun is shining down from heaven on him.

pushing for them to be more transparent on how they set prices. We also want to know how those prices are affected by rebates the companies negotiate with the pharmacy benefit managers, who administer prescription drug plans for insurers and employers.

Beyond that, I'm helping to lead a bipartisan effort to get the Food and Drug Administration to revise its recent “generic” insulin approval policy to ensure lower-cost insulin competitors come to the market sooner rather than later.

In the coming weeks, I plan to reintroduce my “Affordable Medications Act,” a comprehensive bill to bring down the price of insulin and other prescription drugs. It would promote competition by reducing the time brand name companies can keep lower-cost insulin off the market.

#### Public pressure makes impact

The work we're doing in Congress and the public pressure from diabetes advocates across the country may finally be having an impact. Recently, Eli Lilly announced it will soon offer a half-priced insulin product. Although this move has taken far too long, and the product is still far too expensive, I hope it will spur other actions to bring down prices, and bring health care to people with diabetes who can't live without insulin.

One thing is clear to me — and to those who rallied at the state Capitol: the health and well-being of millions of people in Minnesota and across the country should not depend on the profit-driven decisions of insulin makers with near-monopoly power.

Our voices are strong, but only if we use them. I'll keep fighting for people with diabetes until they have access to affordable insulin.

*Tina Smith represents Minnesota in the U.S. Senate.*

**Spring Valley TRIBUNE**  
The Spring Valley Tribune (SECD 512-380) is published every Wednesday at 112 N. Broadway, Spring Valley, MN. Periodicals postage paid at Spring Valley, MN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Spring Valley Tribune, Box 112, Spring Valley, MN 55975.  
Yearly subscription rates: \$28 per year in Fillmore, Mower & Olmsted (MN) counties and Howard County (IA); \$34 per year elsewhere except Hawaii or Alaska, and foreign.  
Contact information: (507) 346-7365 • [info@bluffcountrynews.com](mailto:info@bluffcountrynews.com) • [www.svtribune.com](http://www.svtribune.com)