

OUR VIEW

DHS crisis needed to fix the ailing state agency

A crisis within Minnesota's mammoth Department of Human Services comes at a good time for a complete analysis to see if the agency is really functioning like it should be. Most will agree it hasn't for years.

Over the past few weeks, it has been the talk of the state. Minnesota's DHS is in shambles and in desperate need of repair.

Earlier this month the top two deputy commissioners abruptly resigned, causing widespread speculation that things are running amok with the state's largest government agency. Within days, Commissioner Tony Lourey resigned, followed by his chief of staff, Stacie Weeks. The two deputy commissioners then opted to stay on after all and withdrew their resignations.

Gov. Tim Walz has decided to take a careful path to figuring out how to fix the fractured agency. He appointed Pam Wheelock, a well-respected veteran in state government, as acting commissioner. Walz wants a complete overhaul of what's happening within the agency before making permanent plans.

Wheelock is expected to analyze, stabilize and clean up the agency before a permanent commissioner is named. It may take considerable time to do, but it's the right thing to do.

For a long time, many people have criticized DHS for growing too complex and too large to be efficient and accountable. Most people would not disagree that DHS needs to be restructured and revamped from top to bottom.

Undoubtedly, DHS, like most government agencies, is experiencing growing pains. What worked 10 or 15 years ago may not work today. It needs to be overhauled in some fashion. And the governor has vowed to get to the bottom of what's really going on within the agency that handles the state's welfare system. In addition to welfare, DHS is responsible for MinnesotaCare, Medicaid, food stamps, nursing homes, assisted living, MNSure, the state's Sex Offender program and much more.

Sometimes it takes a crisis like what's currently going on at DHS to make monumental and lasting changes for the better. Any sort of crisis brings on new opportunity. Let's hope DHS is now finally on the path to sorting out what ails it.

Once the total overhauling is done, all Minnesotans will benefit from it and make our government run smoother.

GUEST COLUMN

Poll shows teachers still unaware of their union membership options

BY CATRIN WIGFALL

For over a year now, teachers have had the freedom to choose whether to financially support a government union. Their freedom to choose was reinforced on June 27, 2018 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Mark Janus in *Janus v. AFSCME*.

But there's an information gap regarding this choice and what it means for teachers and their rights. Three in four teachers have not heard of *Janus v. AFSCME*, according to a national poll of 1,003 teachers conducted by YouGov on behalf of Teacher Freedom. Fifty-two percent of teachers surveyed thought they were required to pay dues to a union to keep their jobs.

The poll also revealed several misconceptions teachers have about what happens if they leave the union. For example, just over a third of teachers believed the terms of the negotiated collective bargaining agreement would no longer apply to a teacher who is not a union member. Twenty-five percent believed a non-member would not receive any pay increases negotiated by the union. Both beliefs are false.

All employees—regardless of union membership status—are covered by the union contract that dictates wages, benefits, hours and working conditions. The union is the exclusive representative of all employees in the bargaining unit and must represent all employees in good faith. Because the teachers' union fought

for, and won, the exclusive right to be the bargaining agent for both members and nonmembers, no one else can represent all employees in the unit. In fact, the union has pushed back against reforms that would change this forced representation.

According to the poll, 84% of teachers believe they should be able to join or leave a union at any time, but only 30% say it's easy to resign from the union. Minnesota teachers are still bound by an annual union resignation "window" that limits when they can exercise their choice regarding union membership.

Minnesota teachers are restricted to opting out from Sept. 1-30, during their busiest time of the year. Thankfully, there are resources to help teachers who want to learn about their options. If you are an educator wondering if union membership is the best choice for you, visit EducatedTeachersMN.com to learn about the pros and cons of union membership, and how to stop paying union dues.

It is important teachers understand their rights regarding union membership. The *Janus* decision empowers educators to make the right choice for them, their profession, and their students.

Catrin Wigfall graduated summa cum laude from Azusa Pacific University in California where she earned a bachelor's degree in political science. She joined the Center of the American Experiment in 2017.

many anonymous people who contributed during our fundraising. You have all helped us to make a permanent contribution to the heritage of our community.

We also thank the many people who have attended and participated in the history tours of the last three years. Without the support of you, none of this would have happened.

Barbara Mrotz
Ellendale Area Heritage Society

Melodrama produces some community fun

"It's been an absolute blast," affirmed Kari Bottin, director of a Blooming Prairie melodrama performed Saturday, July 20 by local actors at the Blooming Prairie Servicemen's Club.

It indeed was a "blast" for the audience, too, which responded with uncontrollable laughter to this rollicking performance.

The play was titled "A Penny Saved or The Widow Rootstock, Fully Loded." The melodrama was produced by special arrangement with Pioneer Drama Service, Inc. of Englewood, Colo.

The show at times resembled a skit on the Carol Burnett television show. It was slapstick comedy at its best with the local actors breaking up at times when they forgot their lines, or improvised with some new lines.

This was the fourth melodrama performed by local stock to benefit the BP Servicemen's Club. Five organizations are involved: American Legion and Auxiliary, VFW and Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion.

It's just amazingly amazing that 10 members from the community can put together a one-time performance show in such a short time.

The cast and director invested a lot of hard work in making this show a success but credit for this successful venture starts with Karen Beede and Carol Holman. They came up with the melodrama idea and were organizers behind the scene.

Karen and Carol used their years of connecting with Blooming Prairie people as a beginning to recruit volunteers, not only for the stage production, but also for sale of tickets and planning of a meal.

Sandy Jones was also a major contributor to helping create and design the set and props.

The show drew 190 guests who enjoyed snacks and a tasty meal before the production began. Jenny Cashman coordinated the dinner.

The comedic production takes place three days in the summer, sometime between 1865 and 1873.

The play centers around Dastardly villain Fouraberie Blackguard, played by Paul Heimgartner. He tells Widow Rootstock (Julie Peterson) that her late husband owed him a ranch as payment for money that the late Mr. Rootstock borrowed from him.

Widow Rootstock's three daughters, Violet (Karla Iacovino), Shirley (Miranda Camery) and Penny (Jackie Vorlicek), ain't buying that.

Blackguard tries every trick in the book



Reflections
HOWARD LESTRUD

to force the oldest daughter Violet to fetch her sister and return the deed, but she's no shrinking Violet. Blackguard uses a rope to tie up Violet and convince her to give him the property.

Violet, aka Karla, screams while being threatened by Blackguard. "You can do better than that," Blackguard tells Violet. She then used her Carol Burnett Tarzan yell to set the crowd in more laughing motions.

Biddy, played by Shirley Hinzmann, played the accident prone maid who was tantalized by Deputy Dewey Dauntley. Shirley played the part perfectly, imitating an accident ready to happen.

Tamzen Johnson had the most colorful attire of the cast. She played Blackguard's sidekick, Sidney Lark.

Carol Heimerman did a fantastic job as the Card Lady, inciting the audience to applaud, boo and hiss.

Some light moments included the cast members talking about going to 218 Liquor for some libation. Another fun moment



STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

A melodrama was presented at the Blooming Prairie Servicemen's Club on July 20. The principals were a team of nine actors from the Blooming Prairie area. Shown from left are: front row – Shirley Hinzmann, Julie Peterson, Tamzen Johnson, Miranda Camery and Kari Bottin; second row: Ryan Heimerman, Carol Heimerman, Karla Iacovino, Jackie Vorlicek and Paul Heimgartner.

was when Blackguard's mustache began to droop. He ripped the mustache off his face and threw it to the floor.

The story has a happy ending with Blackguard arrested by the deputy and by the sheriff (Julie Peterson). She also played the role of the judge.

The sisters also discover gold on their property to make the ending even sweeter.

"This was community fun at its best," said director Bottin. The actors and all of the volunteers made this production a rousing success. "We will have to do one again sometime," she added.

As the crowd filed out, Pastor Heidi Heimgartner was asked if she was taking the scoundrel Blackguard home. "Yes, she is and she thinks she's taking me to church tomorrow," he chuckled.

The battle of the socks

Faded flowers end up in the compost. Sour milk goes down the drain. And old socks? Well, they normally end up back on our feet. Unless, of course, you have the problem I'm experiencing.

I've waged a war on my assortment of socks. And it's one that I am quickly losing.

Sport socks, dress socks, funny socks, casual socks, you name it and they're driving me bonkers.

I'm ending up with holes in my socks in all places. Toe area, heel area, side area and everything in between are ending up with holes in them. And it doesn't seem to matter what brand they are.

It used to be that I could easily get a year or more out of one pair of socks, but not these days. I'm lucky I get six months now. I don't know what it's, but they are ending up with holes in them at a faster rate than I can wash them.

With holes appearing in every side of my socks, I'm convinced they just don't make socks like they used. Stupid me, why would I think they would? Nothing else is made like the good old days any more.

It always amazes me how two socks that have been paired together the entire duration of wear end up with the same fate within days, sometimes hours of each other. Two socks end up being tossed out at the same time. The more I think about it, perhaps that's a good thing otherwise I'd have one alien sock in the drawer with no match.

This past weekend I realized I am definitely losing the war on socks. I took out a



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

fairly new pair of dress socks that had been only worn maybe four times and guess what? Sure enough there was a hole in the side of one of them. Usually it's a hole in the heels, but this time it fooled me and went on the side almost to the point of being out of sight. How could this be? I'll probably still wear them for a few times until the hole gets larger, but they're headed for the same demise much sooner than expected.

It's to the point where I can't even get to the store to buy replacements any more without holes riddling all my socks.

Tight shoes, hot washes, sweaty and rough skin, I know socks have a rough life. But really only a couple weeks?

In recent weeks, it seems like my garbage can is filling up faster with holey socks than any other garbage. I'll confess I wear socks with holes for several times before I finally decide to part with them. I wear socks to the bitter end and beyond.

Socks, as I'm sure you're well aware, aren't exactly cheap. I usually look for the deals where you buy one pack and get another one free or half off. Perhaps the lousy quality is why they're being pushed out of the store so fast.

Some people suggest just forget about wearing socks and going without. But I'm not quite that adventurous. I need to have something covering my feet.

My sock drawer is calling. It's time for me to go in hot pursuit of figuring out how to win the battle of the socks.

YOUR VIEW

Heritage Society's goal has been reached

To-the-Editor:
Our goal has been reached!

Thanks to the generosity of our community, the goal of placing a marker on the graves of the Patterson Bros. and a roadside sign where the farm was, has been met.

A special thanks to Hope Creamery, Ellendale Lion's Club, Southern MN Initiative Foundation, Russ Goette for donating the silent auction item, Pattie Carlson and Jackie Froman for proceeds from the flea market, and the

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