



OUR VIEW

Where is our new judge?

We're short a judge in Carlton County, and it's time a replacement is named by Governor Walz. Last fall, Judge Mark Munger announced his retirement and then Governor Dayton's judicial selection committee selected three nominees to replace him. At the same time, Carlton County judge Leslie Beiers, who replaced judge Dale Wolf when he retired five years ago, asked to move her chambers to Duluth, leaving Carlton County with only one judge, and a slew of "visiting" judges to handle our county's legal needs. Leaving aside the issue that former Governor Dayton should have appointed a local lawyer to replace Judge Wolf in the first place — thereby keeping judicial oversight within our community and avoiding the problem of judges using Carlton County as a "gateway" to a Duluth judgeship — we need Governor Walz to appoint someone, and soon. The three selected by the selection committee are still in contention, but Judge Munger retired just as Governor Dayton's term expired, so it's the new governor who must appoint our judge. Only one of the three is a Carlton County resident, by the way, although all three would make excellent judges. Gov. Walz has, understandably, been busy getting his administration assembled. But he's taking too long to fill the vacant seat, and our justice system in Carlton County is feeling the strain. Justice delayed is justice denied, it's been said, and it's time he finish the work to appoint a judge to fill the seat. Carlton County deserves it.

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

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Get paid to stay at home

The Legislature is considering a proposal to make Minnesota employers of a certain size keep employees on the payroll, even while they are taking family leave. Essentially, the proposal would allow workers to continue to get paid while they are on leave for family and medical emergencies. This makes some sense, because most workers dedicate their work life to their jobs; they expect to spend most of their day, five days a week, year after year, doing their jobs. In exchange, the employer pays them a salary of some kind, either by the hour or by the year, in installments every couple of weeks. Workers rely on their income; employers rely on their staff. Of course, there are many part-time workers, like those at my Esko restaurant (Eskomo Pizza Pies), who work for an hourly wage, but most of those employees don't really expect many perks. Even those workers would accumulate paid family leave, but at such a slow rate as to make it insignificant. While the proposal has broad popular appeal, once the costs are added to the conversation, views quickly diverge. It's hard to argue that, with our country's high standard of living, we can't afford to make life a little easier for the workers who got us there. Employee benefits are a great way to balance the needs of workers against the profits of large corporations. But this idea goes a bit too far. Minnesota employees already enjoy a strong, healthy list of government-mandated benefits. The minimum wage is significant, and is scheduled to rise periodically. We are protected

by overtime pay laws to make sure employees are paid fairly. The Americans with Disabilities Act and equal opportunity laws eliminate the disadvantages some people faced that prevented them from advancing in the workplace. All Minnesota workers are entitled to unemployment insurance benefits, which protects them if they lose their jobs through no fault of their own. And all employees are covered by Workers Compensation, a no-fault system for treating fairly those who get injured on the job. We have strong unions, which ensure livable wages to many in our area. These are benefits that have been fought for over generations, and serve our economy well. Many jobs offer perks such as health insurance, vacation days, sick pay and retirement savings plans. These employers have decided to offer these perks as an incentive to attract employees, and to keep them on the job to prevent expensive turnover. That's the same route paid family leave should take. For example, health insurance was originally offered to workers as a way to get around federal government wage controls. Over time, the need for a health care insurance became so important that many advocate making health care a right, not a perk. That issue is far from

settled, but the discussion is happening and the time is getting close for mandated health care. More recently, the Family and Medical Leave Act has made it easier for workers to qualify for family medical leave, protecting their jobs when taking a leave of absence, for example, to take care of a newborn or to recover from major surgery. FMLA doesn't require that workers get paid during the leave, however; it just ensures that their jobs will still be there when they return. There's nothing in FMLA that prevents companies from paying employees during their leaves of absence; they can add that benefit if they want to. But it's not the right time to pass a law requiring it. A better solution would be to let the market implement the policy. Already, we see some employers such as Target and Walmart offer paid medical leave to some of their employees. Some states, such as Massachusetts, have mandated it by law. As the idea gains traction, more and more businesses will offer the perk to entice quality workers. Now is not the time for paid family leave. With too much uncertainty over the health care issue, figuring out how to pay for such a program is just too controversial and too complicated to make the idea practical. For now, we're just not ready to implement paid family leave.

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. Contact him at Pete.Radosevich@PineKnotNews.com.

Harry's Gang

Pete Radosevich

reasons. The Federal Trade Commission's summary of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act's rule reads: "COPPA imposes certain requirements on operators of websites or online services directed to children under 13 years of age, and on operators of other websites or online services that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information online from a child under 13 years of age." You may be ruining their fun (how cool is TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram or whatever apps I don't know about), but there is too much that they do not understand. I am all for anonymity and this letter isn't to discuss that, but consider one of the biggest draws to Snapchat is that it

doesn't retain previous conversations. You may have good intentions and find that app fun, but others may use it in ways that are much worse. Please carefully consider the risks and rewards, even after they are of legal age. I am repeatedly impressed with their maturity and responsibility once kids are given freedom, but this area is such a slippery slope. Remember, adults are having a hard time using those applications responsibly. You may know and trust your kid, how well do you know and trust their friends? Here is a shortened link to a good video for folks who want to learn more: <https://bit.ly/2Ut4iF4>

Russell Kurhajetz, Esko

LETTER to the editor

Parents, take extra care with kids and social media

To the editor:

I try to shy away from sensational news, but being a father of two girls has changed a lot of things for me. Please strongly consider whether your child needs a smartphone, tablet or other device. If you choose so, take the time to learn about controls to be put in place. For example, what apps can they install, what are they using it for, what should they not be doing, are there hours of use, and rules of etiquette around other people, including photos/videos of others. There is a scenario recently where a 10-year-old girl in Minnesota was Snapchatting with a 15-year-old boy, with her GPS on so that boy knew where that girl was. I will not share any more details of that story but it alarmed me for a number of

Think **Knot**