

OPINION

EDITORIALS, LETTERS, COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

By Publisher Brent Schacherer and Editor Stephen Wiblemo



The walking school bus to Park Elementary School is back for the fall, along with a bike train to the Middle School.

Back to school, drive with care

Can you believe the start of a new school year is already upon us? It feels like last week I was attending the first commencement ceremony in Whalen Gymnasium, and beginning next week a new class of seniors will begin their final year of high school.

The start of a new school year is an exciting time, even for those who aren't going to school or who don't have school-age children. It's a time of optimism when our young people head back to class, or are going to class for the first time, to begin learning how to become the next generation of leaders in our communities.

The start of school also means the start of more students on the roads and sidewalks. While this can be a busy time, especially for parents of younger students who have to prepare their children for school while getting themselves ready for work, it is crucial to the safety of our community for motorists to slow down and be alert, especially in school zones.

On social media, the McLeod County Sheriff's Office recently took the time to remind motorists to be on the look out for school buses, and always follow the law.

That means when a school bus has its stop sign out and lights flashing:

- vehicles traveling in both directions on a two-lane road must stop
- vehicles traveling in both directions on a multi-lane road paved all the way across must stop
- vehicles behind the bus on a divided highway must stop, while vehicles traveling in the opposite direction should proceed with caution

When in doubt of the rules, just stop. It's better than a ticket or worse possibilities.

If you have young children walking or biking to school, there are also opportunities to join a bike train or walking school bus.

Michelle Kiefer with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota is leading the bike train to Hutchinson

Middle School Wednesday mornings Sept. 4-Oct. 30. The train starts at 7:05 a.m. from Heritage Avenue Northwest/Golf Course Road and makes seven stops along the way:

- 7:09 — Golf Course Road/School Road
- 7:11 — School Road/Eighth Avenue Northwest
- 7:13 — School Road/Rolling Oaks Lane Northwest
- 7:20 — School Road/ Lewis Avenue
- 7:22 — School Road/ Roberts Road
- 7:25 — School Road/ South Grade Road Southwest
- 7:27 — Hutchinson Middle School

Wearing a helmet is strongly encouraged, and if you have questions call Kiefer at 507-430-2280.

The walking school bus to Park Elementary School is led by Doug Hanneman, Carol Runke and Ardis Tobison on Wednesdays Sept. 4-Oct. 30, before and after school.

On mornings, the bus starts at 7:55 a.m. at Franklin Street Southwest/Linden Avenue Southwest and makes four stops along the way:

- 8:05 a.m. — Little Lambs Christian Center
- 8:10 a.m. — Third Avenue Southwest/Franklin Street Southwest
- 8:15 a.m. — Park Elementary School

After school, the walking school bus meets on the concrete picnic table and travels back along Frankling Street. Walking bus leaders chat with students, wear bright reflective vests and carry red flags to alert motorists when they arrive at intersections. Children are asked to sign in when they join the bus, and the entire route is on a sidewalk.

So when you're driving to work next week, be on the lookout for school buses, bike trains and walking school buses starting Sept. 3. Let's make this a fun and safe school year in Hutchinson.

READER LETTER

We can solve the civics crisis in Minnesota, if we want to

FROM REP. DEAN URDAHL
District 18A, R-Acton Township

Our Republic faces crisis after crisis: Our government is crippled by polarization; Congress can't seem to get anything done; Supreme Court appointments have become a three-ring circus; no agreement can be reached on immigration and our borders; health care solutions can't be reached; our infrastructure is decaying; and the national debt is out of control.

It's easy to identify the problems. Digging deeper shows that these are the results of a more pervasive root cause: the diminishing of civic education nationally and in Minnesota.

The foundation of our understanding of how our government works is withering. The outcomes include confusion, misunderstanding and decay in our system. A district court judge has told me that every day he sees the repercussions of citizens not understanding how our system works.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, the highly respected "Nation's Report Card," reports that 75 percent of our graduates leave high school not proficient in civics. The growing

emphasis on science, math and reading is important. But it comes at a cost. When some areas are emphasized, others are diminished.

I spent 35 years as a social studies teacher. As a current member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, I serve on the Education Policy Committee. In previous sessions I have offered legislation to elevate civics education in Minnesota. I successfully authored a bill requiring students to take a civics test based on the test immigrants must take to become citizens. A study by the Woodrow Wilson National Foundation found that only 36 percent of Americans could pass a test that immigrants pass at a 97.5 percent rate.

Last session, I tried to pass a bill that required civics courses be offered for credit to juniors or seniors in high school. Facing stiff opposition to that from the Minnesota School Boards Association, I compromised to change the requirement to "encourage."

In its recent wrap up of the legislative session, the MSBA touted its success in weakening my bill by claiming that it would reduce the number of electives and reduce local control.

I find the local control argument ridiculous. Under my provisions, school boards would still have much flexibility. Keep in mind that one of the MSBA's top agenda items is to gain the ability to continue levy referenda by a majority vote of the local school board, instead of putting that vote before the people.

Next session, the MSBA plans to double down on its campaign against civic education. MSBA officials want to no longer have to offer the civics test. This crosses the line from passivity to enmity regarding civics. Testing conveys a message; we care about what we test. Eliminating the test implies MSBA doesn't think civics is important.

I cannot overemphasize the fact this is a crisis with dire consequences for the future if we continue to diminish the building blocks of our nation.

Our local school boards are made up of good, conscientious people. Please talk to them. Let them know that neglecting civics education undermines democracy. School officials can make my bill's provisions work if they want to; they can rectify the proficiency failure rate, if they want to; they can help save our Republic, if they want to.

READER LETTER

Allow chickens in city limits

FROM CINDY SANDBERG
Hutchinson

Thanks so much for the last two articles on the progress of the chicken ordinance, especially the last one.

We moved to Hutchinson 27 years ago, and I was so excited that we were settling down in a small rural town. Being the first generation off the farm, I was hoping that I would at least be able to have a few chickens to help feed our family and teach

our kids where some food comes from. I called city hall before we were completely unpacked and found out that chickens were not allowed within city limits. I was terribly disappointed, and I have been waiting for this to happen ever since.

I would favor changing the proposed ordinance to a one-time permit fee, increasing it to 10 permits the first year and opening it up after that, allowing six chickens instead of four, and no need for immediate neighbor approval.

We have never been asked if our neighbors could have a dog, yet we have been bothered by dogs pooping in our yard or barking night and day. If there's a problem, there's always a complaint process.

Please contact your City Council member or go to the next meeting when the ordinance will be discussed and voted on. Your input is important, and the City Council is supposed to represent the people who voted for them.

READER LETTER

Return health insurance reform to states

FROM REP. GLENN GRUENHAGEN
District 18B, R-Glencoe

Medical price transparency is an important tool for consumers to help them make informed decisions about their health care. Unfortunately, far too often folks aren't being adequately informed of the costs of medical procedures before receiving them. This leads to surprise billings and other problems that cause financial hardship.

To combat this problem, the Legislature approved a bill in 2018 co-authored by me that expands the price transparency disclosures required of health care providers. The law was also designed to help patients compare prices and increase competition between health care providers, which should result in lower health care costs.

The current medical billing system is similar to filling your car with gas and then finding out what the price per gallon was after you filled up. That is irrational.

The law requires providers to maintain a list of their services over \$25 that correspond with their 25 most frequently billed procedures. If you check the costs for these medical procedures, you will discover that commercial

health insurance reimburses at the highest rate, and Medicaid and Medicare reimburse doctors and clinics at a much lower reimbursement rate. For example, for a metabolic lab test, commercial health insurance reimburses at \$44, Medicare at \$37 and Medicaid at \$9.40.

Another interesting fact is that of the top 25 medical services, only Medicare denies coverage for six of those medical services. Commercial health insurance covers all six medical procedures denied by Medicare.

Medical providers usually lose money on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates and generally will make money on commercial insurance reimbursement rates. Gov. Tim Walz's government health plan called "One Minnesota Care" would generally reimburse at Medicaid rates.

According to a May 5 story from the Star Tribune, there are 19 rural Minnesota hospitals in danger of closing because of low reimbursement rates of Medicare and Medicaid. This directly endangers rural Minnesota citizens with dramatically less access for critical health care needs.

Walz's "One Minnesota Care" single-payer plan would financially damage or even close more rural hospitals. It's clear that single-payer government health care would be a disaster, especially for rural Minnesota.

The transparency law became effective on July 1 of this year, and I recently checked with a local area medical clinic and they were compliant with the new law.

This law was one of many important health care-related reforms the Republican Senate and Republican House passed during the previous 2018 legislative session.

Obamacare has seriously damaged the private health insurance market and endangered health care access for rural Minnesotans. We can do better by repealing Obamacare at the federal level and returning health insurance reforms back to the states. This will result in affordable health insurance and increased access for all Minnesotans. It will also provide financial stability for our rural medical providers.

I will continue to fight hard to ensure you and your family have access to affordable and effective health care.

CHEERS

Cheers and a big **thank you** to all of the volunteers who worked at the north and south gates at the 2019 McLeod County Fair. You are the most awesome volunteers. Thanks for always being willing to volunteer. We know how hard you work. You are a very special group of people, young and old, and we are thankful for each one of you. We could not do it without you. Hope to see all of you back again next year.

— Kaitlin McGraw May and Marian Filk

Cheers to the woman who paid for my groceries on Friday, Aug. 23. I was at the checkout and couldn't find my bank card. It wasn't where I usually put it. So the lady behind me said, "Just add it to mine." I said no, but she insisted. By then I was in tears. I found my bank card, but she would not take a check. There are still some good people in this world. All she said was, "Pay it forward." She made my day.

— June Dawson

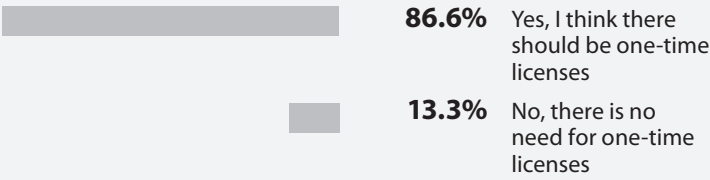
ONLINE READER POLL

Views from www.hutchinsonleader.com readers

Reader poll question

Should changes be made to city ordinances allowing one-time food truck licenses?

Total votes: 75



The current question is:

How will the Minnesota Vikings do this year?

About the poll:

The results of the most recent online reader poll from hutchinsonleader.com are above. Readers wanting to suggest a question may email wiblemo@hutchinsonleader.com. This poll is not a pure scientific sampling of readers' views but rather is intended to create community discussion of issues.