

# OPINION



## PILOT EDITORIAL

### Hamilton drops the ball on license vote

Local state Rep. Rod Hamilton doesn't drop the ball much, but he did last week in voting to give illegal immigrants the ability to obtain Minnesota driver's licenses.

For a guy known and respected for his thoughtful consideration and common-sense approach to issues and policy, Hamilton, who represents western Jackson County in the state Legislature, inexplicably cast a vote this past Friday that makes no sense.

The bill Hamilton voted for — and which fellow Jackson County legislator Bob Gunther correctly voted against — would allow people living in our state illegally to legally obtain a license to drive.

In other words, the bill would allow our government to license for legal activity people who are intentionally breaking the law the government is charged with enforcing.

The closest thing to a valid argument in favor of the legislation is weak at best.

Supporters say the change will lead to safer roads as more people learn driving laws. But if those living in Minnesota illegally refuse to follow immigration laws, why on earth would they be expected to follow driving laws?

Supporters also say the bill will let the estimated 95,000 immigrants who are in Minnesota illegally live and work with dignity and a measure of self-respect. Again, if those people refuse to respect our laws, we who follow those laws or those among us who enforce those laws, why on earth should they be afforded a like measure of respect in return?

At best, this legislation seeks to unfairly aid people who have broken immigration law; at worst, it condones, incentivizes and even invites illegal immigration.

This bill merited no votes in favor of it. The fact it got Hamilton's is too bad.

### Spring has finally sprung — or has it?

Have you ever heard those cute stories people like to tell about when you were just a baby, and the funny things that happened? Well, my birth story is one of those that gets told and retold, not necessarily because of how cute it was, but because of how odd, and I'm afraid we may be in for a similar situation.

I just celebrated my birthday. I will not share how old I am, because I like to just say I'm 24, and leave it there. We won't say how many times I've celebrated my 24th birthday, as that's beside the point.

But years ago in Michigan, in early April, there was a blizzard. Not just a little snowstorm, but a full-on blizzard. My mom was due to give birth to me in May but, as usual, I was a bit

impatient.

My dad was the pastor at a small church in western Michigan, and that evening one of his parishioners passed away, so he decided that blizzard or not, he needed to go see the family. As he went out, my mom warned him he should maybe think about hurrying, because she was starting to feel some contractions, even though it was a bit before my due date.

Pretty soon those contractions got worse, and it was time to head to the hospital, but my dad was not home yet. He ended up following a plow truck home, so he made it in one piece, but as the closest hospital was at least 20 minutes away in good weather, they were still not sure how to handle the situation, as

my imminent arrival was not so well planned on my part.

Now as I was there, but sort of in an uncomfortable position, I don't recall how it all worked out, but soon a lady from church was rushed over to watch my siblings, and somehow my parents got a police escort to the hospital, where an emergency doctor by the name of Dr. Romance slipped in the doors, delivered me and slipped back out. He was not my mom's doctor and, from the sounds of it, we never saw him again, but thank goodness for his timing. Maybe I can blame him for my hopeless romantic side; but either way, I was out, and I learned right from the start snow in April is just not right.

It would appear that, unfortunately, this

weather error seems to be coming again. Thankfully, at least for me, there is no baby on the way, and there is no urgent need to go anywhere. If the snow must come, then let it; and who knows, maybe it'll deliver some surprise romance.

But with any luck, it'll melt, and Minnesota will finally let us have our spring.



**GONE COUNTRY**  
Laura DeKok

### The most common violations I've seen

**Question:** What are the most common vehicle equipment violations you see?

**Answer:** I have witnessed and investigated numerous equipment violations over the course of my career as a Minnesota state trooper.

The most common violations I have seen are:

- Window tint violations: Law prohibits tint on the front windshield. Passenger cars are limited to 50 percent on all side and rear windows. Pickups, vans and SUVs are limited to 50 percent on the front side windows. Pickups, vans and SUVs are not limited on the rear side and rear windows.
- Headlight/taillights out: All motor vehicles, other than a motorcycle, must be equipped with at least two headlamps and two tail lamps.
- Cracked taillight lens/displaying white light to the rear: Vehicles must display red lights visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear.
- Suspended objects

from the rearview mirror: Objects suspended between the driver and the windshield are prohibited. This includes parking and handicap permits. Be sure to take them down when the vehicle is in motion.

- Cracked windshield: A windshield that is cracked or discolored that limits or obstructs proper vision is illegal.
- Bumper height violations: Bumpers shall not exceed a height of 20 inches on any passenger automobile or station wagon or 25 inches on any four-wheel drive multipurpose-type vehicle.
- Loud exhaust: Every motor vehicle must be equipped with a muffler in good working condition. It must blend the exhaust noise into the overall noise of the vehicle. No person shall use a muffler cutout. The exhaust system shall not emit or produce a sharp popping or crackling sound.
- License plate lights out/plates unreadable: A white light is required for

the rear license plate to be legible from a distance of 50 feet to the rear.

- Unsecured load: Drivers must secure their loads to prevent any leaking, blowing, shifting or dropping.
  - No seat belt use: Minnesota law states drivers and passengers in all seating positions must be buckled up or seated in the correct child restraint. Officers will stop and ticket unbelted drivers or passengers. Seat belts must be worn correctly — low and snug across the hips, and shoulder straps should never be tucked under an arm or behind the back.
  - No headlight/use in reduced visibility: Headlights must be on from sunset to sunrise when it is raining, snowing, sleeting or hailing; or when visibility is impaired by weather, smoke, fog or conditions that obstruct visibility.
- Other common violations include speeding, no proof of insurance, expired registration, only displaying one Minnesota

license plate, distracted driving, expired driver's license, driving without a driver's license and crossing over the center or fog lines.

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober.

If you have any questions concerning traffic-related laws or issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson, Minnesota State Patrol, at 2900 48th St. NW; Rochester, MN 55901-5848. Or reach him at, Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us.



**ASK A TROOPER**  
Sgt. Troy Christianson

#### LAST WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

**Q: What do you think of wind turbines in Jackson County?**



Source: Jackson County Pilot Website

#### THIS WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

**Q: How'd you fare this income tax season?**

Vote online at [jacksoncountypilot.com](http://jacksoncountypilot.com).

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<p><b>U.S. Rep. Jim Hagedorn</b> 325 Cannon HOB Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-2472</p>	<p><b>CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES</b></p>	

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