

OPINION

"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...
ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;"

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

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Editorial

Just release the emails

Pete Stauber shouldn't let St. Louis County taxpayers take the hit for his misdeeds

Why won't St. Louis County Commissioner Pete Stauber release his email communications with the National Republican Congressional Committee? That would be the simplest way to resolve the controversy, which has now embroiled the county in a lawsuit over access to government records. That lawsuit will not only cost county taxpayers, potentially tens of thousands of dollars, but makes it appear (rightly or wrongly) that the county is cooperating with the Stauber campaign on some kind of cover-up.

It also creates an issue that can't be welcome as Stauber campaigns for the Eighth District congressional seat now occupied by DFLer Rick Nolan. Why Stauber won't put an end to the matter by simply releasing the emails is a valid question. To date, his actions suggest that the content of the emails could be embarrassing—and possibly worse than that.

We know that Stauber's use of the county email system for political purposes was a violation of county policy. But, depending on the content of the emails, there could be a bigger infraction in play. The National Republican Congressional Committee is defined as a political action committee, and it's one that makes tens of millions of dollars in so-called "independent expenditures," during campaigns, either in favor of GOP candidates or, more likely, in attack ads against Democratic opponents.

Under federal election laws, political candidates are not allowed to communicate directly with groups like the NRCC to coordinate their activities and political messaging as it relates to these independent expenditures. To be accurate, we have no evidence at this point that Stauber might have engaged in such illegal coordination, but release of his emails could easily clear up the question.

This puts St. Louis County in a troubling position. If litigation eventually results in the release of the emails, and they reveal that Stauber engaged in potentially illegal coordination with the NRCC, it will appear that county officials withheld evidence of a federal crime and, in effect, provided aid to Stauber's

election effort by doing so. We can say, comfortably, that county officials don't like being caught in the middle of a mess that Pete Stauber created. Privately, county officials acknowledge they'd like Stauber to just release the emails and leave the county out of it.

Stauber's campaign suggests that the candidate is "abiding by the county's decision," not to release the emails, but that's dishonest since the county is not releasing the emails only because Stauber doesn't want them released. He is perfectly free, at any time, to make them public, at which point the county's involvement goes away.

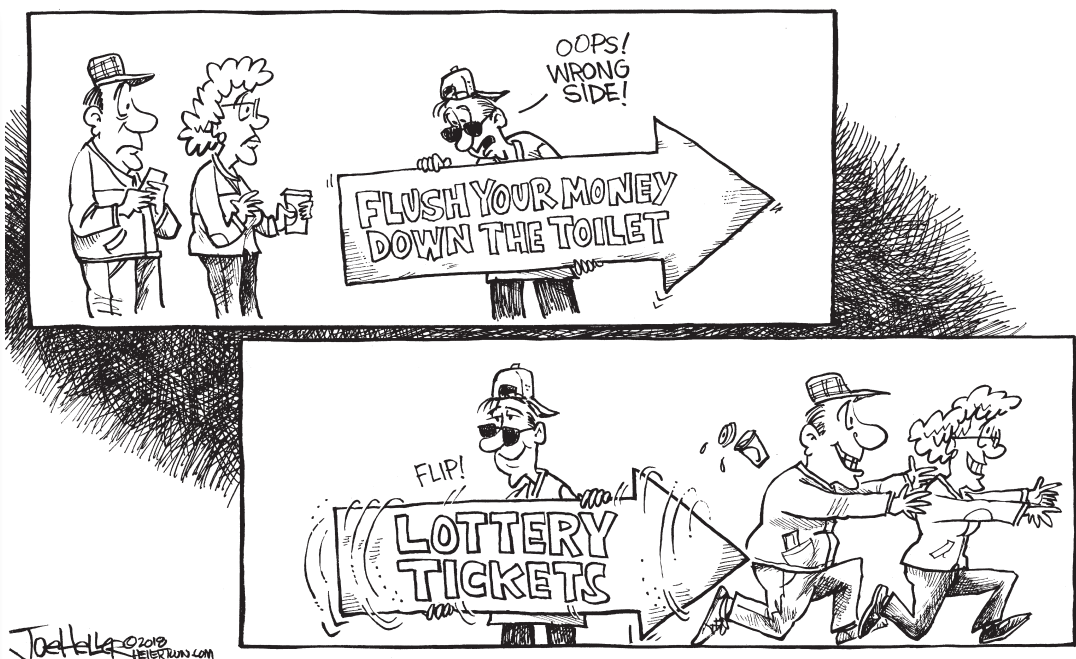
That's why two of Stauber's fellow commissioners, Tom Rukavina and Frank Jewell, publicly urged Stauber to release the emails to spare the county and its taxpayers from the burden of a lawsuit and the poor publicity for the county that the issue has already generated.

While the Stauber campaign and his supporters have been quick to dismiss the issue, Stauber's email issue is remarkably similar to the one that plagued Hillary Clinton in 2016. In both instances, the candidates in question violated established policy for the use of their government email accounts, and both declined to release some of their communications. In 2016, then-candidate Donald Trump publicly asked Russia to hack Hillary's emails to release 30,000 communications that Clinton had declined to release, labeling them as personal.

Trump repeatedly implied that the emails would show evidence of wrongdoing and the issue, thanks in part to James Comey's decision to publicly re-open a closed FBI investigation just 11 days before the election, likely helped lead to Trump's narrow election.

It's funny how the GOP frenzy over Clinton's emails, which Trump still trots out during rallies to chants of "Lock Her Up," hasn't translated into concern about Stauber's remarkably similar email problem. Or do the laws only apply to Democrats?

Political hypocrisy is nothing new, of course. But that doesn't make it any less tiresome.



Letters from Readers

Character shows in Eighth District race

Who is the real criminal?

The St. Louis County employee who broke county employee rules by using county email paid for by tax dollars for his own personal use to promote himself as the Republican candidate in the 8th Congressional District race or the Democratic candidate who saved someone from committing suicide and paid his parking tickets with his own money?

A vote for Stauber is a vote for Trump. Save our Democracy. Vote Democrat. Vote for Joe Radinovich.

**Joann Halunen
Lake Vermilion, Tower**

There's more to voting "pro-life"

Out here in Arizona while visiting with my friend Chrissy Mitchell I was impressed by her comments: Giving away National Parks is not pro-life. Not passing assault gun control and bump-stocks is not pro-life. Voiding environmental protections is not pro-life. Failing to fund education is not pro-life. And not supporting affordable healthcare is not pro-life.

**Judith Ulseth
Cook**

Paul McDonald is a real "people" person

I am proud to endorse Paul McDonald for our 4th District County Commissioner. I have known Paul for 50 years, so I speak with confidence of his character and his ability.

Paul has been a proven leader: as an instructor, as a coach, as an administrator. I feel Paul understands the issues facing us. He will work hard for every one of us: the student, the parent, the senior citizen, the worker, the taxpayer. Paul's vast knowledge of the issues facing the young and the old gives him great insight into the challenges each of us faces.

Paul will stand up and fight for what we need: jobs, decent wages, health insurance, good schools, infrastructure for our

communities, programs for people with special needs, drug education and treatment, police and fire protection.

Paul will be a real voice for us on the county board. He is a true "people person". Please join me in voting for Paul McDonald for County Commissioner on Nov. 6.

**Jerry Chiabotti
Soudan**

Unfounded claims against town board

In last week's *Timberjay*, Jeff Maus (a protege of John Bassing) made several unfounded statements about the Greenwood Township Board and implies that he knows how to campaign for a spot on the town board. Fortunately, the citizens of Greenwood Township recognize a charlatan when they see one: In the March 2017 election, Maus received a whopping 22 votes out of the 289 cast. Fellow citizens, keep up the good work!

**Steve Rodgers
Greenwood Township**

Enough of trickle down health care

With frightening frequency we see community benefits in our local papers for someone with a serious illness. Most of the time the reason for the benefit is to help defray the costs of medical treatment, travel expenses, or other medical costs.

The very real statistic is that health care costs are the leading cause of bankruptcy in America. We see these benefits and our inner voice expresses firstly sorrow for that person and their family, but we also know at any moment it could be any one of us. As age progresses, we realize with increasing strength that life is very short and we all want to live what is left with a quality of life that we envision.

A person can have a good high-paying job, the nicest car, beautiful home on the lake, hunting shack deep in the woods, but none of it is worth anything if one does not have their health.

The health care system in America is broken, and under the Republicans it is only getting worse with their latest promised

legislation to allow insurance companies to once again allow denial of coverage to anyone with a pre-existing condition. The House GOP's 2019 budget promises \$537 billion in cuts to Medicare, while Medicaid is slated for \$1.5 billion in reduced funding. Pete Stauber stated in the latest debate, "promises made, promises kept".

If those are promises the Republicans are keeping, I'm voting for Democrats! I'm voting for Joe Radinovich.

**George Pliml
Cook**

Open letter to St. Louis County officials

Mr. Rubin and Mr. Gray, As St. Louis County elected officials, we are requesting that the county comply with the Minnesota Department of Administration's advisory opinion 18-013 that Pete Stauber's emails with the National Republican Congressional Committee are public data. Pursuant to the Minnesota Data Practices Act, we request the emails be released to the public at the St. Louis County Board meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 23.

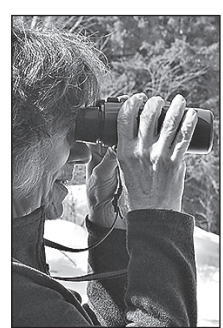
We understand that Pete Stauber could simply consent to releasing the emails but has refused to do so, putting the county in the awkward position of having to do it for him. The State of Minnesota clearly stated that the emails are public data and the county must release them.

As stewards of St. Louis County property taxpayers, it's our job to protect our constituents from having to foot the bill for an avoidable lawsuit or lawsuits that St. Louis county will certainly face for refusal to honor state law and make Mr. Stauber's emails public.

Thank you.
**Jason Metsa,
State Rep., Virginia
Rob Ecklund,
State Rep., District 3A
Liz Olson, State Rep.,
Duluth
Tom Rukavina,
St. Louis
County Commissioner
Gary Skalko,
Mayor of Mt. Iron**

When the sun shines, fall is irresistible...

I don't know what other people think, but there is something very special about this time of year. It's a wonderful feeling to awaken to a beautiful sunny autumn day. Most all the leaves have fallen and only those glorious tamarack offer that last golden blast of color. After



**KATHLEEN
MCQUILLAN**

weeks of rainy grey, the tree line across the field, set against one of our deep blue skies, is truly a "sight for sore eyes". Even the Vikings on television can't make me stay inside on a day like this.

Late season "outdoor chores" make my spirits zing. Hmm... How about washing

a few windows before hanging those storms? And what about these mums that might winter over if I make the effort to bundle them up? I just finished putting the last of the brussels sprouts in the freezer, so the garden is done for another year, except for that last row of beets I could grind up for a batch of that "super-food beet powder" I heard about on TV. Oh, and then of course there's the wood pile — popple cut from our woods last winter, but not yet split. We'll burn it

mixed with well-dried ash that's already in the woodshed.

All these tasks have just rewards. A crystal clear view of the sunrise out the living room window is not only a wonder to behold but also produces a great sense of satisfaction. And although I don't like to say "adieu" to the final vestiges of life in the flowerbeds, I know that I will appreciate any survivors come spring. No need to justify the investment of time and energy in growing and preserv-

ing homegrown veggies. The scrumptious tastes of summer that are set out on the supper table each evening between now and next year's harvests will be indescribably delicious!

Sitting inside the house for any length of time makes me sleepy or lazy, or both. To change that I only need to rise, put on my jacket and step out the back door. With just that first breath of fresh air, my blood

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