

STEVENS COUNTY TIMES EDITORIAL

SPRING

HEY, DORIS, ...
I THINK I
FOUND THE
NEIGHBOR'S
CAT!



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What's behind the push for 16-year-olds voting?

To the editor:
There are laws that you can't buy hard liquor until you are 21 years of age. There are laws that you can't buy weapons until you are 21 years of age. There are laws that you can't buy cigarettes until you are 21 years of age. (Stevens County also may enact that law.)

There are laws that you can't be tried in an adult court for many crimes unless you are 18 years of age.

Why? Because studies reveal a person's brain is not fully developed until about 25 years of age.

So, why are liberals and many Democrats seeking to lower the voting age to 16 years of age?

Is it possible they feel they can mold their malleable minds at age 16 to vote Democrat, and remain a Democrat, then, for life? A thing they can't do when a mind is not fully developed.

**Ted Storck,
Morris**

County should raise tobacco sales age to 21

To the editor:
Despite great progress, smoking claims the lives of more than 6,300 Minnesotans each year and costs our state more than \$7 billion every year in excess health care costs and lost productivity. As a resident of Morris/Stevens County, I am writing to express my strong support

of an ordinance to increase the tobacco sales age to 21 in Stevens County.

I am writing as a parent, coach, and director of the West Central Wildcat AAU Program. The schools and parents in our community work hard to equip students with knowledge about tobacco harms, but that alone cannot prevent them from using tobacco. Education and information about the damaging health effects are only one piece of the puzzle. Public policy is a key aspect of preventing young people from starting down the path of addiction.

There is a growing threat of e-cigarette use among young adults. High school administrators and teachers all over the country are dealing with the explosive rise of students using e-cigarettes and popular devices such as JUUL in school. In Minnesota, youth tobacco use is up for the first time in 17 years, largely due to e-cigarettes. There is a serious public health concern for the nicotine addiction young people are facing by using these popular devices and I'm concerned about the youth here in our community.

Raising the tobacco sales age to 21 in Stevens County will show our neighboring communities that we are serious about preventing future generations from the harms of tobacco addiction. Thank you for prioritizing the health of our youth and our community.

Sincerely,
**Jodi Holleman
Hancock**

MnDOT reminds motorists of emergency boxes at rail crossings

The Minnesota Department of Transportation reminds motorists to use railroad emergency notification system signs when there is a safety issue or emergency situation at a rail grade crossing. The blue and white signs are posted near the crossing on both sides of the road and should be clearly visible to the motorist. The

emergency notification system sign includes the railroad's emergency contact phone number and the U.S. Department of Transportation's national crossing phone number, which identifies the exact location of the crossing to the railroads.

Motorists can call the phone number listed on the sign to report emer-

gency or dangerous situations such as a signal malfunction, if someone or something is on the tracks or if the crossing is blocked for more than 10 minutes.

The Federal Railroad Administration requires each railroad to have emergency notification system signs at all public rail crossings.

Shopko's closing, now what?

The planned closing of the Shopko Hometown in Morris, along with all remaining Shopko stores in the U.S., has sparked discussion about what could take its place.

Some may be speculating about the possibility of a Target or Walmart being placed in the Shopko site.

Others may be speculating about a new restaurant or another retail or service business.

Whatever fills the soon-to-be empty space when Shopko closes in June, it won't be a Target or Walmart.

The population of the region won't support such a store. Although demographic information from the state indicates that Stevens County's population is projected to grow some in the next 10 years, that growth combined with the populations of nearby communities, isn't enough to support the number of shoppers needed to sustain a Target or Walmart.

The census bureau population estimates for 2017 are: 5,900 Grant, 9,600 Stevens, 10,900 Pope, 3,300 Traverse, 9,400 Swift County. It's not an exaggeration to say that each of those roughly 34,000 total people would need to spend hundreds of dollars each week to keep a Target or Walmart afloat in Morris. That just isn't going to happen.

What could happen is a smaller retailer, a locally owned service, retailer or restaurant, perhaps even a smaller chain retailer or restaurant

or a mix could locate in the Shopko building. That would be somewhat like what happened in the former Coborn's building.

Just because the population won't support the criteria for a larger big box retailer, it doesn't mean the population can't support something on a smaller scale.

It's also important to remember that Morris, Hancock and the region have many smaller, locally owned businesses that work hard to capture your retail and service dollars.

Shopko's loss will be felt in Morris and the region. Employees will need to find different jobs and will need to face the uncertainty that comes with that. Shopko was a draw to the community and that benefited all businesses in Morris.

And yes, we may need to drive out of town to find certain items we frequently bought at Shopko.

What won't help the remaining businesses and services in Morris and in the region is to focus on the loss of Shopko and complaining to our friends and neighbors about how there is no place to shop in the area. Instead, let's make it a point to educate ourselves on what's available in our area, try to spend as much time and money in those businesses as reasonably possible and share about our experiences with friends and neighbors.

Rural America needs Medicare for all

By Barb Kalbach
Distributed by Otherwords

We've got a rural health care emergency on the horizon. Rural hospitals are closing or teetering on the brink of closure at an alarming rate. More than a hundred have closed since 2005 and hundreds more are on life support. Long-term care facilities are vanishing across rural America or being bought up by large corporations who care about profit, not the care of our loved ones.

Most rural hospitals have even stopped delivering babies — you'll need to go to the city for that, so plan ahead.

I know firsthand. I'm a registered nurse and lifelong Iowan from the country. I've kept a close eye on where we've been with health care, and where it appears we're headed. It's not looking too good for my community and others if we stay on our current failed path.

Medicaid expansion was supposed to help here in Iowa. It sure didn't — because we handed the program over to private, for-profit "managed care organizations." What we got in return was less care — and more services denied, facilities shuttered, and lives lost to corporate greed.

Hospitals that were already struggling now have to submit and re-submit claims to these private companies and wait months, if not years, to get paid. Even without privatized Medicaid, we'd still be facing an impending rural healthcare emergency. Privatization merely hastened what was already happening.

Americans spend about twice as much on health care than any other developed country, but we live shorter lives — even as we create "health care billionaires" that get profiles in magazines like Forbes.

The for-profit health care system is an extractive industry, helping to suck the wealth and life out of communities, especially in rural areas. We're being left behind because the for-profit insurance industry doesn't see us as worth their time.

Rural hospitals, local nursing homes, and care facilities are the lifeblood of our small towns across the heartland. We're watching our farms and small towns wither away as the countryside empties out and our health declines.

But it doesn't have to be this way. A system that puts the wellbeing of our community ahead of the bottom

I'm a registered nurse from rural Iowa. In communities like mine, privatized care is an extractive industry — and it's drying up.

BARB KALBACH

line of a select few can and will deliver the care we need, where and when we need it, and keep our rural communities alive and vibrant.

Which brings us to the Medicare for All Act of 2019 introduced by Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington state. Instead of allowing private corporations to decide who pays for health care and how much, we would put our financing back into public hands — and our health care decisions back into the hands of patients and their care provider.

Under Medicare for All, virtually all aspects of our health care will be covered. This includes, but isn't limited to, medical, dental, vision, hearing, prescription drugs, mental health, addiction treatment, and much more.

Medicare for All also covers long-term and in-home care as well. What a gift to our families, especially those that often go unseen by an industry dominated by profit: the elderly and people with disabilities. Long-term and in-home care allows people to stay near their families or in their homes, rooted in the communities we call home.

Perhaps most importantly for Iowa and other rural communities, Jayapal's bill includes a special projects budget for capital expenditures and staffing needs of providers in rural or medically underserved areas.

Will this cost money? Of course it will. But we'll actually spend less overall than we're currently spending in our broken health care system, and we'll get better and more comprehensive coverage.

For all these reasons, Medicare for All is the prescription America and our rural communities need.

Editor's note: Barb Kalbach is a fourth-generation family farmer and registered nurse in Adair County, Iowa. She's a member of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, part of the People's Action national network of grassroots groups. Distributed by OtherWords.org.

MEETINGS

Hancock City Council
Hancock City Council will meet at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 8 in City Hall.

will meet at 9 a.m. on Tuesday in the commissioners boardroom in the Stevens County Courthouse.

Stevens County Board of Commissioners
The Stevens County Commissioners

Morris City Council
The Morris City Council will meet at 5:15 p.m. on Tuesday, April 9 in the council chambers in the Morris Area Senior Center.



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