

# Opinions

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Work on mental health issues

Minnesota needs more gun laws just like Minnesota needs more taxes.

What needs to be worked on more is the mental health issue. Every mass shooter has had mental problems that were either not prop-

erly reported and/or inadequately healed or just plain ignored.

So don't be infringing on peoples' rights because of bureaucratic and political failings.

Dale C. Stowers, ROCHESTER

### Why is it difficult to believe 7.5 billion can have an impact on climate?

Regarding John Howie's March 27 letter to the Post Bulletin encouraging us not to believe claims of mankind's connection to global warming, I have this to say. We humans on this entire planet have spent the better part of the last 100 years screwing up every aspect of our environment. It doesn't matter if you are talking about the air, the water or the land, we have severely compromised it all. Why is it so difficult to imagine that

seven and a half billion people might be at least partially responsible for the rapid warming of the earth as well.

Perhaps the reason that the man influenced climate change deniers reject this is because they are afraid that it is going to cost them something. God forbid we should spend any money studying this important issue. Our government, meanwhile, spends more money on less worthy endeavors.

John McCormick, ROCHESTER

### Regarding the Historic Third Street parklet

I see no mention of the safety issues of having people sitting so close to moving vehicle traffic or how the city will prevent the space from becoming a hangout

for people after business hours.

These issues should be included in the decision-making process.

Jeff Morgan, ROCHESTER

### More specialists needed to conquer addictions

An estimated 20.7 million Americans age 12 or older needed treatment for substance use disorder in 2017, but only about 4 million of them received any form of treatment.

This gap will never be closed with the current addiction treatment workforce.

To make a meaningful impact on the current opioid overdose epidemic, and to stave off emerging addiction epidemics, it is imperative that our country make strategic investments to grow the ranks of trained and qualified addiction specialists.

Congress has an opportunity now to fund two new programs that would strengthen the addiction treatment workforce. First, Congress should appropriate \$25 million in funding for the Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Workforce. This would provide for a new and robust student loan repayment program to profession-

als who pursue full-time SUD treatment jobs in high-need geographic areas.

Second, Congress should appropriate \$10 million for the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration Program authorized in the 21st Century CURES Act. This would fund more training opportunities for medical residents and fellows in psychiatry and addiction medicine, as well as nurse practitioners, physician assistants and others who are willing to provide SUD treatment in underserved communities.

I urge lawmakers to take the next step and appropriate federal funds for these programs. Building a robust SUD treatment workforce is critical and should be part of any comprehensive federal response to the opioid overdose epidemic. Otherwise, far too many patients will continue to not have access to care and more lives will be lost.

Rhonda Keith, DOVER

### Some billionaires are like Smaug, the dragon, reclining on his hill of treasure

The Mayo brothers are inspiring examples for those who still have much left after they've attained their material luxuries.

Instead of hoarding, they put that excess to good use. After they'd built their mansions, bought their steamboats, traveled the world, they set up the Foundation.

Eighty years later, we are beneficiaries of their good fortune. When we enjoy their parks. When we see a concert at the Civic Center or a game at Mayo Field. When we fly out of the Rochester Airport. When we tour Mayowood Mansion. When we are uplifted by works of art. And, most importantly, when we are treated by a well-educated doctor at the clinic.

In a world inhabited by billionaires who've amassed half the world's wealth, how different it would be if they had something of the spirit of the Mayos! Some do, but too many are hoarders, like Smaug, the dragon, reclining on his hill of treasure. He will never use any of it, but it's his alone!

This is the true shame of the filthy rich, whose good is not the common good of humanity; whose motivation is always, after each dollar, "just one dollar more;" who would rather people suffer than relinquish any of their uneffacious lucre.

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Nick Ozment, PLAINVIEW

### The homeless deserve the same respect as any other citizen

There are too many people in our city who are homeless, people who have nowhere to lay their heads at night, nowhere to be safe and warm. Some of these folks sleep in the skyways at night now that the Salvation Army warming center is closed. These men and women are citizens — they are our neighbors, people who deserve the same respect and rights as any citizen here in Rochester.

Business owners and Jehovah's Witnesses in town for conventions complain that they are uncomfortable with

the presence of these men and women in our public skyways. I was under the impression that Jehovah's Witnesses were people of God. They, and we, might recall this: "He who oppresses the poor taunts their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors Him." Proverbs 14:31.

We spent millions of our tax dollars on this Civic Center to benefit businesses and conventions. More of those dollars should go to ease the suffering of the poor, not to exclude them from our public places.

Candace Rasmussen, ROCHESTER

## Thumbs up/Thumbs down

# Thumbs up to council's new riverfront view

The Rochester City Council has decided to take the reins when it comes to a 2.5-acre site along the Zumbro River downtown.

The council has previously aligned itself with a developer who promised a twin-tower plan for the prime site before backing out after months of work by city staff.

After that experience, it was time for the City Council to say, "We're in charge here," and opt for a plan that partners with future developers in a way that gives the city more say over what the site becomes. Instead of the city accepting what a developer offers at the site, the city will now be a partner in that decision.

We think it's the best way to go forward, and it should be considered for other prime sites in the city.



Post Bulletin file photo

The Rochester City Council is focused on this riverfront site for redevelopment.

### Thumbs down to delayed spring planting

As if this past winter wasn't tough enough on farmers in our region, spring is turning out to be a real hum-dinger, too.

The heavy rain, ice and sloppy snow of recent days came just as planting season was at the forefront of thought. Agriculture officials said last week that sunny, dry weather would help get the soil ready for planting. Seen any of that since Wednesday? We didn't think so.

Whether and how far this spring storm sets back spring planting will be determined by next week's weather: It's a routine our farmers know all too well: Watch the sky and wait.

### Thumbs up to St. Charles developments

We've always thought the stretch of Interstate 90 between La Crosse and the Stewartville exit needs more places for travelers to stop, get off the road and refresh themselves. It can be a long, boring drive.

So we'll count it as good news that St. Charles appears to have a deal lined up for a new hotel and restaurant in the business park off of I-90. Those projects will join a new Love's Travel Plaza, which could break ground this fall.

When all is said and done, St. Charles might be considered the best place to stop for travelers on I-90 in southeastern Minnesota.

# Census does not ask about citizenship status

BY BRIANNA CEA AND THOMAS WOLF

Later this month, the Supreme Court will take up Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross' controversial decision to collect the citizenship status of everyone in the country in the 2020 census. In court filings, the Trump administration has defended the citizenship question as normal and inoffensive, part of an "unbroken tradition" whose "pedigree dates back nearly 200 years."

But look closer, as we did, and history tells a different story. Over the last year, we pored over archival material including 19th century census-taker instructions and decades-old papers on government statistics. We discovered that the Trump administration's history is misleading, where it's not outright false.

Never in the census' 230-year history has the decennial questionnaire asked for the citizenship status of everyone in the country. In reality, when a citizenship question was asked at all, it was directed to small segments of the population, such as foreign-born men 21 or older (1890-1910) or foreign-born people (1930-1950), mainly to gauge how well they were assimilating.

What's more, these questions had a bad track record. They were part of an approach that the Census Bureau ultimately rejected as incompatible with its constitutional duty to count every person.

History isn't on Ross' side. But one federal court already bought the administration's "we've done this before" narrative, so it's vital to set the record straight before the nation's highest court is similarly misled and the census is imperiled.

Before 1960, the Census Bureau tried to pursue two goals at once with the decennial census: to count everyone and to collect other information the government needs,

such as mortality or employment statistics. This led to major problems. These censuses were tremendously long, enormously expensive, often took years to complete and — most important — were plagued by inaccuracy. Census takers were bogged down seeking out answers to questions such as, is anyone in the household "a prisoner, convict, homeless child, or pauper?"

By the 1950s, the Census Bureau was able to apply emerging technology and new statistical methods to evaluate how accurate its population count had been. It was deeply flawed. Later analyses put the undercount of the 1950 census at 5 million to 5.5 million people, including a 12 percent to 13 percent undercount of people that the bureau labeled "nonwhites." The bureau also learned that it could collect better data more cheaply by asking most questions only to portions of the population and extrapolating from there.

So the Census Bureau slimmed down its headcount form to a handful of questions. Everything else it put on a longer survey that went out to small sample groups. It has used that model ever since.

Citizenship-related questions were among the first to go. The bureau took them off the census completely in 1960 (except for New York and Puerto Rico, which had unusual redistricting needs). And, from 1970 onward, citizenship-related questions were only ever on the smaller surveys, like the long form (through 2000) or the American Community Survey (from 2005 on). But census officials never let similar questions back on the headcount form, because they knew that would hurt the count.

The bureau has long recognized that anti-immigrant environments make citizenship questions problematic. In the 1970s, as waves of immigrants from Latin

America and Asia arrived here, lawmakers and activists began searching for ways to limit their political power. In the lead-up to the 1980 and 1990 censuses, anti-immigrant groups and their allies pushed the bureau to exclude immigrants in this country illegally from the head count. To do so, the bureau would have to try to collect everyone's citizenship status.

The bureau repeatedly resisted these pressures. Census Bureau director John Keane warned the Senate in 1985 that citizenship questions posed a huge risk because "the Census Bureau could be perceived as an enforcement agency." Efforts to gather this information, he said, would lead people to refuse to participate in the census for fear that their answers could be used against them.

In the lead-up to the 2020 census, President Trump's rhetoric and policies have already created headwinds for an accurate headcount. Bureau research in 2018 found that 35 percent of Asian respondents, 34 percent of black/African American respondents, and 32 percent of Latino respondents feared information about them would be illegally shared with other government agencies (as compared with 24 percent of respondents overall). Adding a citizenship question will not help matters.

When the issue lands before the Supreme Court on April 23, the history of the census will be central to the arguments. That history should make it clear: There's no justification for a citizenship question in 2020.

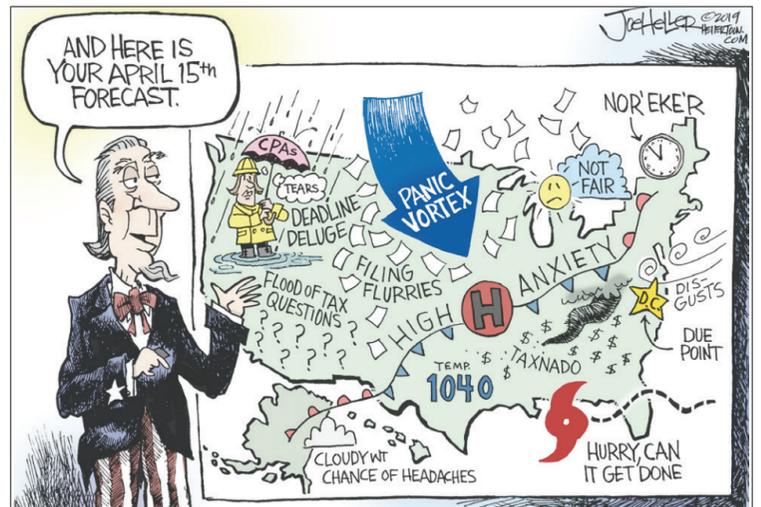
Brianna Cea is a research and program assistant in the democracy program at the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law. Thomas Wolf is counsel in the same program. This column was published in the Los Angeles Times.

### GOT AN OPINION? WE WANT TO HEAR IT

The Opinions page is where Post Bulletin readers share opinions and gain perspective on different points of view. Here's how to get involved.

**Letters to the editor:** We welcome letters of up to 250 words on issues in the news. Please include your name, address and daytime phone for verification. We publish a representative sampling of letters received, and those that are respectful, civil and stick to issues go to the head of the line. Letters will be edited for grammar, clarity and conciseness.

**Guest columns:** We also welcome columns on important public issues. Ideal length is up to 600 words, and we prefer guest columns that are exclusive to the Post Bulletin.



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IF IT MATTERS TO YOU, IT MATTERS TO US

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