

Opinion

TOMORROW

Vaping may be safer, but it still has its dangers

OUR VIEW

Goodhue County residents being shortchanged

Can two people take an entire county in a backward direction? Well, they're trying it in Goodhue County.

The death of a member of the Goodhue County Board last April opened a spot that should have been filled relatively quickly by appointment. In fact, several names have been put forth.

But two members of the board, Barney Nesseth and Jason Majerus, have steadfastly refused to vote in favor of any of the candidates. That leaves



Nesseth

without representation.

The ever-changing excuses from Nesseth and Majerus for leaving the seat open simply don't hold water. One gets the impression that they're trying to hold the county hostage in order

to drive an agenda that, in our view, will drag Goodhue County backwards, instead of moving it forward.



Majerus

to drive an agenda that, in our view, will drag Goodhue County backwards, instead of moving it forward.

“I think it's putting politics before people,” said Prairie Island Tribal Council President Shelly Buck. “That's what it's all about.”

Buck had requested an answer from the board as to why District 1, in which the Tribal Council is based, has to go for

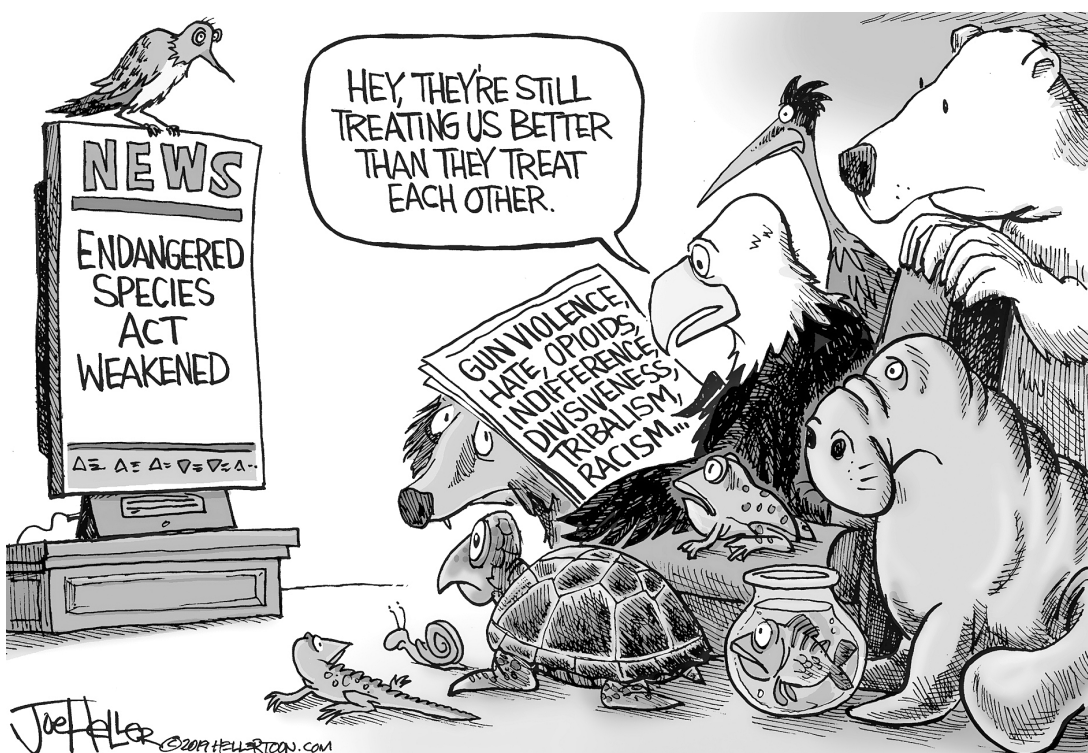
months without representation on the county board. The two factions on the board couldn't even agree to write a letter in response.

It is, of course, a concern whenever citizens are left without representation on a board that sets spending and taxing levels. In this case, it couldn't be helped initially, as Commissioner Ron Allen, who represented District 1, died in April.

However, there is a mechanism in place for filling that seat — appointment until the next election, at which time a new commissioner would be elected — to make sure all residents of the county have continued representation.

That mechanism has been wrecked, though, by Nesseth and Majerus, and we wonder if they can ever regain or deserve the respect of county voters.

We'll find out when these positions come up for reelection. For now, though, we hope citizens of goodwill can use their influence to get proper representation for all of the residents of Goodhue County.



The pundit-defying behavior of Iowa voters

MICHELLE GOLDBERG

On Aug. 9, Julie Allen, a 62-year-old Medicaid consultant, took time off work to sit in the scorching sun at a midday, open-air rally for Joe Biden in Boone, Iowa.

In 2016, she told me, she was “all in” for Bernie Sanders, but she now feels “he's past his time,” and as she considers her choices for the February caucuses, he's no longer in her top five. Instead, she's weighing Biden, whom she supported in 2008, as well as Elizabeth Warren, Pete Buttigieg, Kamala Harris and Gov. Steve Bullock of Montana.

She liked the idea of a Biden-Warren ticket, or maybe even a Warren-Biden one, since he already knows how to do the job of vice president.

“There's all these comparisons between how Warren and Bernie are so much alike,” she said. “I really think Warren and Biden are much more alike.”

This surprised me, since Warren and Biden are so far apart ideologically. But over the course of a frenetic campaign weekend in Iowa, when most of the Democratic field descended on the state, I heard the comparison more than once.

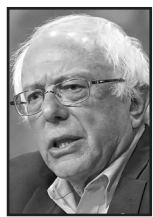
Waiting to see Warren speak at the Iowa State Fair, I met Janice Martins and Kay Havenstrite, Democrats from rural farming families that, they said, have been devastated by Donald Trump's tariffs. Both were torn between Warren and Biden.

“They have a lot of differences, but there's a lot of similarities as well,” said Martins, 49, pointing out the various ways that Biden has moved left in recent years.

After watching Biden and Warren campaign in Iowa, I think I understand why some people group them together. Both candidates are folks, white and in their 70s. Both speak of the searing childhood experience of seeing their fathers lose their jobs, and both make economic security for the middle class central to their stump speeches. They are sincere and unscripted and have the comforting aspect of benevolent parents.



Biden



Sanders



Warren

Talking to voters who admire both of them, I realized, not for the first time, how little the ideological lanes that we talk about in punditland really mean.

Somehow I always manage to half forget, between election cycles, how idiosyncratic many voters are, and how little their decision-making tracks the ideological battles that dominate social media and cable news.

At the Iowa State Fair, I met Joel Hall, an 83-year-old retired radiologist who left the Republican Party over Trump. One might think he'd be eager for a centrist option, but among the candidates he likes is Warren: “I think she's a good thinker, and I think she can get under Trump's skin.”

The people who turn out for campaign events in Iowa months before their first-in-the-nation caucuses are very well informed; several told me they feel a responsibility to see as many of the candidates in person as possible, sometimes more than once.

But they are judging the candidates by different metrics than many commentators.

At a Harris event at a Fort Dodge middle school, Stacey Helvik, 42, said she wanted to vote for a woman, particularly after the trauma of Trump's victory, but wasn't sure if it would be Harris or Warren.

“For me it's not so much policy, it's finding a person who I feel is someone who is trustworthy and admirable and has experience and conviction and can inspire all of us,” she said.

It might be precisely because Iowa Democrats get to know the candidates so intimately that they don't feel the need to plot them on

a left-right spectrum.

“We're just not pigeonholing,” said Mary McAdams, who chairs Ankeny Area Democrats, just north of Des Moines. “I saw people today at the Cory Booker event in Ankeny who were at the Kamala Harris event who were at the Pete Buttigieg event a couple of weeks ago. And for some of these folks, it's the third time they've seen some of these candidates.”

Ultimately, this is why I suspect Biden will fade in Iowa, despite many polls showing him ahead right now. As people see more of him, at least some are beginning to become alarmed about his pronounced verbal sloppiness.

McAdams was one of the few I spoke to who worried about Warren's electability, but she also seemed livid about Biden's repeated gaffes. These included his recent statement that “poor kids are just as bright and just as talented as white kids,” and the claim that he met survivors of the Parkland shooting when he was vice president, although the massacre took place last year.

“I am just ready to turn the other way and never turn back,” McAdams said. “You don't get to continue to make all of those gaffes. At some point that's got to stop.” She suspects that his front-runner status isn't durable, at least in Iowa: “I think the big lead that he has in the polls is just his name recognition.”

If she's right, there's no reason to think Biden supporters will flock to another moderate.

A recent poll of Democratic voters in the states with the earliest primaries showed that a plurality of Biden supporters — 24% — say Sanders is their second choice, followed by Warren, with 20%. No one knows what's going to happen at the caucuses.

There are no lanes, only the irreducible and hard-to-measure quality of human connection. This thing could go anywhere.

Michelle Goldberg is a political writer for The New York Times.

Bernie Sanders needs a shot of dignity



FROMA HARROP

I have never been a big fan of Bernie Sanders. His authoritarian tendencies and aggressive attacks on any who would disagree have outweighed the good in him.

The good is his working-class voice, emphasis on economic issues and some solid ideas. But his recent lashing out at The Washington Post, where he accused the progressive beacon of punishing him, carried an air of populist paranoia — so much so he's being likened to Donald Trump.

Sanders' day in the sun was the 2016 presidential race when he seriously challenged Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton for the party nomination. That day is past.

Among Democrats, Sanders trails Joe Biden by 13 percentage points, according to a recent Morning Consult poll. Elizabeth Warren, meanwhile, is almost nipping at his heels.

Sanders may do OK in the first two contests, Iowa and New Hampshire, where the liberal white gentry wields many Democratic votes. But he will undoubtedly crash in the Southern primaries to follow, where African Americans are the deciders. Sanders generally does not bond with black voters, who tend to be more conservative. Quinnipiac puts him at only 8 percent among black Democratic primary voters.

Sanders did himself no good in 2016 when, having been trounced by Clinton in the Southern primaries, he waved away those contests as unimportant. In his worldview, what helps him matters. What doesn't help him doesn't matter. You're for him or against him.

Still, it was surprising to hear Sanders decry persecution by The Washington Post. Amazon paid no taxes last year, he told a crowd in New Hampshire. “And then I wonder why The Washington Post — which is owned by Jeff Bezos, who owns Amazon — doesn't write particularly good articles about me.”

The Post publishes far less good articles about Trump. And Trump wields a far greater threat against Bezos' business interests than Sanders ever could. The parallels between Trump and Sanders blaming liberal news sources for their setbacks is pretty glaring. Trump issues frequent Tweets against “the Amazon Washington Post.”

But it's not just The Post's picking on Sanders, according to his campaign. It's “the media.”

“The hyperoverreaction from many in the media to Senator Sanders' critique reveals a bias,” according to campaign manager Faiz Shakir, as reported by Politico. “There is a sneering, contemptuous disdain that infuses those comments and a willingness to put words into Bernie's mouth that he just didn't use.”

Whoa. The Post's executive editor, Marty Baron, would have none of this.

“Sen. Sanders is a member of a large club of politicians — of every ideology — who complain about their coverage,” Baron said in a statement. “Contrary to the conspiracy theory the senator seems to favor, Jeff Bezos allows our newsroom to operate with full independence, as our reporters and editors can attest.”

For the record, Biden reportedly isn't so happy with his general coverage, either.

Sanders' supporters now have Elizabeth Warren to carry the torch on such ideas as “Medicare for All.” Not that it's wise politics. It polls poorly once the public understands it would mean losing private coverage. Warren does have an electoral advantage over Sanders in calling herself a capitalist as opposed to a socialist. Her speeches are also less of a looping tape.

Interestingly, though, more Sanders supporters back Biden as their second choice than they do Warren. This may reflect Sanders' populist appeal to working-class voters rather than interest in his programs.

Sanders was never much of a team player in the Democratic Party. Indeed, he seeks the affiliation only when he's running for office.

Anyhow, his comet is on the way down. It's legacy time. Sanders should stop the angry thrashing and start a slow stroll for the gates with dignity.

Follow Froma Harrop on Twitter @FromaHarrop. She can be reached at fharrop@gmail.com.

Looking for your guidance

Each week, the Post Bulletin editorial board offers its views on a variety of topics in the Our View on this page. We've covered everything from the mayor's efforts to create safe places for homeless people to upgrades at any number of community institutions.

But are we missing something? Is there a topic, trend, or program that you want to know where the Post-Bulletin stands?

We are always interested in story tips from readers, but now we are asking for readers to tell us what is important for them to know where the PB stands.

Simply write a sentence or two stating what you think is worthy of Our View, and why. Send that, by Sept. 1, to letters@postbulletin.com, or mail it to 18 First Ave. SE, Rochester MN 55903. (Be sure to include your name and contact information in case we need more input from you.)

On Sept. 1, we'll compile the nominations. If there are dozens, we'll narrow the topics down by a popular vote among readers.

After that, our editorial board will get to work with research to develop and publish an opinion on the matter.

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.

Send letters and columns to letters@postbulletin.com, or to Opinions page, Post Bulletin, 18 First Ave. SE, Rochester, MN 55904. No attachments to email, please. Letters become the property of the PB and can be republished in any format.