

Editorials are the institutional voice of The Free Press and independent of the newsroom reporting staff

OUR VIEW: BONDING

Critical needs should be addressed

While DFL Gov. Tim Walz and the DFL-led House have put forth billion dollar plus bonding bills that would protect state's assets from falling into further disrepair, the GOP-led Senate seems to be stuck in "the way we've always done it" philosophy.

Why it matters:

State buildings and infrastructure need critical repair and maintenance.

The Senate GOP leadership has resisted a bonding bill mainly, they say, because they don't do big bonding bills in odd years when they're working on the state budget. They say that's just the way it's always been done.

Except when it hasn't.

The divided government in 2017 and 2018 passed bonding bills of \$1 billion each year, mostly because Gov. Mark Dayton and Republicans couldn't agree on a bonding bill in 2016.

The GOP also doesn't seem interested in hearing from state budget officials who say some of the needs for repair and maintenance are critical. Ceiling tiles are falling on people at the child development building at the University of Minnesota, according to a report in the Star Tribune. The DFL proposals call for \$28 million to renovate the decrepit building, which has been languishing on a fix list for 20 years.

Management and Budget Assistance Commissioner Britta Reitan urged the House Capital Investment Committee Tuesday to approve a bigger bonding bill this year because many of the projects that are part of the state's 85 million square feet of infrastructure "can't wait."

Gov. Tim Walz also has given a good reason to do bonding this year — to take advantage of low interest rates and avoid another year of inflation in the cost of building.

Republicans say they worry about the amount of bonded debt. Walz's \$1.3 billion proposal would increase debt and principal payments \$74 million; the House DFL's \$1.8 billion proposal would raise those payments \$122 million.

That would bring the state's total annual debt payments to \$1.3 billion, about 5 percent of the state's annual budget.

DFL lawmakers also point to the \$5 billion needed for mostly outstate wastewater treatment infrastructure, and things like the replacement of a sewer system at Togo prison in northern Minnesota.

We urge legislators to come together for a bonding bill this year that covers the most critical needs and projects that if not done now will cost far more later. That may be less the \$1 billion, but probably not by much.

OTHER VIEW

The unending war claims more lives

Newsday

These days, Americans are not often confronted with the fact that the nation's longest war is still cutting short the lives of its soldiers. But our war in Afghanistan, in its 19th year, rages on, and it has ended the life of Marine Cpl. Robert A. Hendriks of Locust Valley, N.Y.

Hendriks, a 26-year-old reservist and infantry machine gun specialist, was killed Monday when his convoy was hit by a roadside bomb near the U.S. base in Parwan Province. Also killed were Sgt. Christopher A. Slutman of Yonkers, a FDNY firefighter, and Sgt. Benjamin S. Hines of York, Pennsylvania.

It's not surprising that the war has mostly faded from the top headlines. More than 2,300 U.S. service members have died in the conflict, 13 last year and seven this year. The United States once had 100,000

service members there, but now has fewer than 14,000. And with then-President Barack Obama promising to end the war in his second term and President Donald Trump promising the same since his presidential campaign, many Americans likely have a sense that this war is largely past.

But Hendriks' mother, Felicia Arculeo, said she is "broken into a million pieces." His brother, Joseph Hendriks, also a Marine stationed in Afghanistan, will accompany the body home.

The United States went into Afghanistan to destroy al-Qaida and remove the Taliban from power. Today, America is trying to negotiate a peace that grants the Taliban power in hopes it can control the Islamic State insurgents who sprang up when al-Qaida faltered. Hendriks died doing his duty for his nation. That nation has a duty to stop asking its soldiers to die for no clear purpose in Afghanistan.

FOUNDED IN 1887

The Free Press

1st Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

STEVE JAMESON, Publisher

EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT

JOSEPH SPEAR, Managing Editor
KATHY VOS, News Editor
TIM KROHN, Business Editor
ROBB MURRAY, Features Editor
PAT CHRISTMAN, Photo Editor
JIM RUEDA, Sports Editor

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

JUSTIN NILES, Audience Development Director
GLEN ASLESON, Facilities & Technology Manager
TODD BROUWER, Press/Post Press Manager
DEB PETTERSON, General Manager - The Land

LETTERS POLICY

The Free Press welcomes letters on any issue of general community interest. Please limit your letters to no more than 275 words, typewritten or clearly printed. Letters or emails citing facts that are not commonly known should include the source. Letters must contain the author's name, address and phone number for verification. All letters will be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling and space. You may email letters to the editor to editor@mankatofreepress.com.

FIRST PHOTO OF A BLACK HOLE



YOUR VIEWS

State schools should move up to D1

I recognize there is a debate over the role of sport in our colleges. But if we are going to field college sports, Minnesota State, St. Cloud and Duluth should move to FCS (Division IAA) status for football and D1 status for the balance of their programs.

I do not believe the current situation for DII is financially feasible, rendering its future in real doubt.

Currently, Minnesota has one DI team in football and basketball. North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa combined do not have the population base of Minnesota. Yet Iowa has four DI basketball teams, two DI football teams and one FCS team. North and South Dakota combined have four DI basketball teams and four FCS football teams.

A check of the rosters of those schools consistently shows a significant percentage of their team members come from Minnesota. (This past year NDSU had five Minnesota students on its men's basketball team.)

Mankato, St. Cloud and Duluth going D1 would give the Minnesota student athlete an alternative to the Dakota schools and Iowa. D1 would also raise the status of the schools and their host communities.

Look no further than Maverick Hockey for proof of that. I recognize the cost to make this jump is huge but I find it interesting that Iowa, South and North Dakota were able to find the money.

I am a loyal Gopher backer, but the time has come for some competition for the U.

Competition improves everyone. The U needs some competition. The time is now for these state schools to move up.

Steven Fink
North Mankato

Hagedorn's met with many

A recent letter writer asked "Where's Jim Hagedorn?"

Well, a quick glance at Congressman Hagedorn's Facebook page shows that in the three months he has been in office Hagedorn has met with constituents and representatives from Head Start, Boys & Girls Club, college and university administrators, labor union retirees, community health center representatives, senior citizens, representatives of the Mayo clinic, high school students, college students, post-grad students, farmers, agricultural processors, medical researchers, renewable energy advocates, doctors, nurses, small business owners and on and on.

Hagedorn has met with state and local officials regarding flooding, Trump Administration officials to advocate for a quick resolution to tariff and trade difficulties, and federal agriculture officials to urge the use of E15 year round and to promote ethanol and biofuels.

Where's Jim? He's apparently been meeting with a wide range of people, including many whose political views differ from his. What these people and groups seem to have in common is wanting to have constructive discussions about actually working together to fix the problems facing our country.

And then there are those whose sole desire seems to be agitating for a public forum so they can whine and complain about the fact that their guy lost the last election

Stephanie Hueper
Mankato

We need solutions on education, housing

This letter is in response to Fred Lenz' April 2 letter "Private schools shouldn't be subsidized."

Education: I am sure many parents would like to send their children to private schools with smaller student ratios. This is a choice folks make. Our public schools struggle with large classrooms, and students who require extra help. The teachers are definitely qualified but are stretched thin.

Why don't we do something to support them and our much needed public schools?

No, I am not a teacher.

Soft skills in employment: Social skills and communication are essential in any environment but even more so in the workplace. Many retired folks have these skills.

These folks could help these young ones learn the importance of having these skills. Parents could also stress the importance of these skills. Why not have a program which would use the retired person's skills? They could be paid a wage and in turn it is a win-win for everyone.

Affordable housing: There are reasons this is such a big issue. I have rented the same apartment for several years. When the first owner sold the buildings my rent increased a reasonable amount, which I expected.

Now the building has been sold again. Not only has my current rent increased to \$1,100, but water is no longer included. If I have company that stays longer than five days, my rent will be increased.

I could go on but I'm sure you now realize why housing is a problem in Mankato.

When will housing issues be addressed, not just talk but action?

No, I have never been a problem renter.

Ruby Mehr
Mankato

Mental health program for youths is needed

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a crucial time in a person's life. For young people living with mental health conditions, becoming an independent, well-functioning and productive adult can be challenging.

A lot of our youths in this transition age experience poverty, trouble with the legal system, homelessness, early pregnancy, underemployment and increased school dropout rates. One in every five young people in Minnesota have a mental health condition impacting their emotional well-being and development.

The Transition to Independence Process model should be adopted by the state of Minnesota to support youth between the ages of 14 and 25 living with mental health conditions to become independent, well-functioning and productive adults.

The TIP model is an evidenced-based program that incorporates family involvement and increases their positive relationship with their environment.

Oreoluwa Dasylva
Mankato

Fight climate change with suntan lotion

The issue of climate change is being used by the left Democrat Party

as a manipulative scare tactic for votes and will result in costing all of us a pile of money. These supporters of drastic climate change are oblivious of the facts of science but experts on booze and pot. For example, ban cigarettes and smoking but legalize pot — yeah, right.

Data regarding climate change is based on mixed fragmented patterns of geologic evidence, borings and carbon dating. For the past 40,000 years, it shows a mixed pattern of previous evidence known to have actually occurred, however to determine climate change is not an exact science. Moreover, you cannot measure levels of carbon dioxide and determine the bench-mark of climate safety — it's impossible.

Throughout the natural history of the planet those levels have not been clearly defined. If patterns hold — they were either low, moderate or high — levels are determined by outside variables and before man-made carbon emissions.

We're still in the climate cycle of the neoglaciation which began circa 700-800 years ago — with gradual unstable warming and cooling periods. There is nothing a Republican or Democrat can do to revise this regardless what they tell you.

If you want to fight climate change — use suntan lotion.

Cliff Stemper
Cleveland

It will never be time for 'Medicare for All'

I am responding to Glen Peterson's article, "It's time for 'Medicare for All.'" (April 8).

Glen, please do some research on Medicare. You will find horror stories. I owned a business called a "clearinghouse". We processed insurance claims for doctors and clinics. We were the entity between the clinic and an insurance company. I retired just this year.

Medicare claims were about 30% of our business. However they were about 90% of our problems. We could send a claim to a commercial carrier and it got paid with no problems. Rarely had to contact them.

Think of this. Every state administers Medicare for their state. Thus it is duplicated 50 times. Commercial carriers process claims at one facility I don't know how many people they employ but it must be over 100,000. Medicare had \$60 billion losses due to fraud in 2017.

Commercial carriers had very little fraud if any. This is because fraud will impact the commercial carrier's profit. An AARP article of March 2018 details this.

There is enough fraud every year in Medicare to provide good insurance for every uninsured person in the country. The answer to this mess is to dump Medicare and Medicaid. The government should contract to commercial carriers to administer health care.

The government contracts to construction companies when they want something built. They should do the same with health care. Why do you think Canada sends patients down to Mayo Clinic? It is because they can't handle them. If we had socialized medicine where would we send our overload?

To Mexico? Want to discuss the VA while we are at it?

Gary Lindsay
North Mankato