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Guest Editorial

Investing in internet access for all Minnesotans

by U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar

As people across the country stay at home to keep themselves and their families safe in the midst of this pandemic, being connected to the outside world is especially important. With schools and businesses closed, kids are learning from home, parents are working and searching for jobs from home, and families are accessing telehealth services from home. But those things aren't possible without access to high speed internet.

In rural communities throughout Minnesota, roughly 16 percent of households lack access to high speed internet. That means 144,000 households are missing out on the benefits that come with broadband. And that's simply unacceptable. I've heard from school superintendents across our state who are partnering with small broadband providers directly in order to help their students without internet access. These are innovative partnerships that will help our kids during this difficult time.

But in 2020, it's not right that some parents in rural parts of our state have to drive to restaurants and coffee shops so their kids can do their homework. One mother from Embarrass, Minnesota had to drive forty minutes to a McDonald's parking lot in Virginia to get an internet connection so her son could do his homework and her daughter could video-conference with her math teacher. We need to make sure our children can continue their education by participating in distance learning with internet access at home.

That's why—following the announcement that K-12 schools would be closed in response to the pandemic—I worked to urge the Federal

Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman to ensure that all K-12 students in our state have access to high-speed internet so they can access online learning.

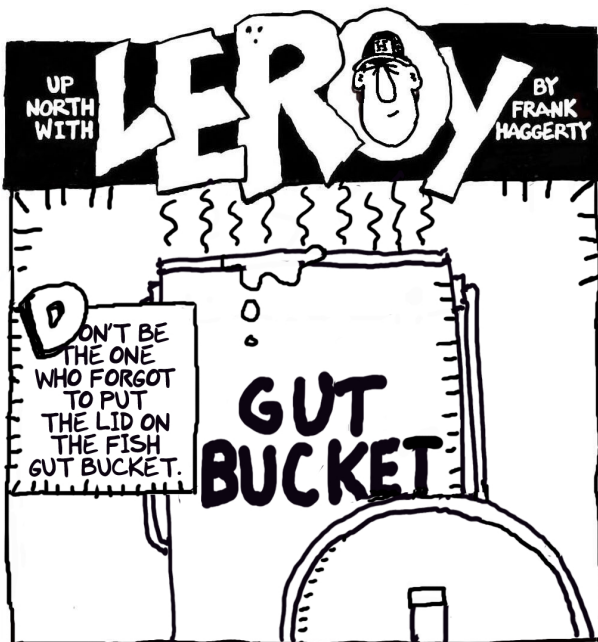
I also introduced legislation to help small broadband providers continue to provide internet services for students and low-income families in rural areas. This legislation would create a \$2 billion fund at the FCC that would help these families remain connected to their school, work, and communities.

I've always believed that when we invest infrastructure like broadband, we invest in opportunity for every American and help to bridge the digital divide. My bipartisan legislation to improve the accuracy of the FCC's broadband availability maps was signed into law last month. This bill is in an important step forward in helping us to determine where broadband is available across the country. Our students and families need reliable broadband services so they can continue working and learning during this time.

But there is more work to do and I will continue to press for additional funding so that all students can access the internet at home, regardless of their zip code.

Our children—no matter where they live—deserve to be able to do their homework at home. Families should be able to access the services they need. These are uncertain times, which are testing all of our courage and fortitude, but I will continue working to make sure Minnesotans get the help they need.

You aren't fighting this crisis alone—we are all in this together. And I know we will get through this together.



Letters

...hardworking Christian men and women

Dear Editor,

Thank you for keeping freedom of the TRUE press alive!

I would like to share with your readers some news from another part of the world that I think they may find interesting. The rural people of South Africa share much in common with their brothers and sisters here in America.

They are hardworking Christian men and women with traditional values, who seek to live simple lives and pass on a better world to their children.

However, due to the deteriorating situation in their country, the future is bleak and things are getting worse all the time.

Imagine being a farmer, having to lock yourself and your loved ones behind electric fences, guard dogs and barred doors and windows every night. Every evening you live in fear that criminals may short the fence, jam your phone signal, poison the dogs and try to break in. Help may be hours away as the understaffed police service is distracted elsewhere and the government has outlawed neighborhood watch groups.

If you pass the night in peace, you may go out to find some of your livestock stolen or cruelly injured and valuable equipment gone.

This is the reality for farmers in South Africa. From January through April of this year, there were 100 farm attacks resulting in 15 murdered farmers and multiple injuries, many of these as the result of torture (the statistics for May and June aren't in, but appear to be just as bleak). This, along with the looming threat of land expropriation by the government, is putting South Africa on track for future food insecurity.

There are many, many other things going on as well with deep underlying issues that are too complex for me to address here. I encourage each of my fellow readers to learn all they can about the plight of South African farmers, share what they learn with friends and neighbors, and pray for them.

Roderick Coleman
St. Paul, MN

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From the miscellaneous drawer

by Anne Swenson

The elderly...

He following statement struck me as amazing: "Within just a couple decades, older people are projected to outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history," said Jonathan Vespa, a demographer with the U.S. Census Bureau. "By 2035, there will be 78 million people 65 years and older compared to 76.7 million under the age of 18."

And while that is surprising, this info from AARP is tragic: "More than 46,000 nursing home residents have died from COVID-19 so far. That's 517 a day - and the number keeps growing."

Seems there are a number of things that need to happen here in the United States.

One is that higher standards need to be set for personnel and safety within the nursing homes. In this era

of room cameras and other materials, which could be tied into a monitored central safety station,

Surely the residents would be better protected. Especially since they can't have visitors to monitor them.

Who is charged by law to oversee nursing homes and how often are they inspected? Are we abandoning helpless older adults to unsafe conditions and untrained workers?

It may be that because I lacked grandparents to care for, that I am concerned. It may be my current age which worries me.

Fortunately I have family and friends locally who assist me.

I'm hopeful that in this new world of change and uncertainty, more people of all ages will step up and take over the roles which have long been handled by others.

Lend a hand, your mind and spirit

to make this a better world for everyone. Here in Ely there are organizations and volunteer jobs that need you. Interested in sports, the arts, history? They all could use your help.

If you need some ideas, call me, or check with your church, the city or anyone you recognize as being a leader.

You can make Ely an invigorated, friendly city

* * *

- In the Ely Echo for June 26, 2010, 10 years ago, the headlines were:
- Townships looking to build new fire hall;
- Historic Pioneer Mine building to be open July 4th weekend;
- Fiber project topic of next EADA mixer.
- Suit filed over proposed cell tower.



More than ever, it isn't easy being in blue

by Tom Coombe
Echo editor

Anyone lamenting their poor timing in life should consider the recent set of circumstances that befell Chad Houde.

After serving better than a decade on Ely's police force and impressing council members and observers with a great interview on May 1, Houde was selected to be succeed the retiring John Lahtonen and take over as Ely's police chief.

Houde's first day the job was May 30, less than a week after the shocking and horrific video that showed a Minneapolis police officer killing a man in custody, with his knee atop the man's neck. It was also the morning after law and order were nowhere to be found in Minneapolis, where city blocks burned, businesses were looted and the streets taken over amid rioting over the death of George Floyd.

By the time Houde finished two weeks in his new job, Minneapolis city officials voiced support for defunding and dismantling their police force and "defund the police" became a phrase known across the nation.

It can't be easy to be a cop these days, even in Ely.

A thankless job even on its best days, the position of police office now comes with heightened scrutiny, and prejudgment from a seemingly growing segment of a fractured nation.

And that's unfortunate and frankly, flat out wrong.

This isn't a missive about systemic racism, an issue much too complex to tackle on a Thursday afternoon as

deadline approaches. Much has and will continue to be written on the issues of race and injustice that date back centuries in American history, and clearly continue to exist today.

Instead it seems here that cops, as a whole, are getting a bum rap.

As surely as there are bad teachers, bad business owners, bad doctors and bad people, and bad writers, there are bad cops. The Memorial Day video from the Minneapolis street corner, lasting nearly nine minutes, provided ample evidence of that.

Yet it's not fair to judge an entire profession, or call for its dismantling, based on the actions of a few.

Protests, some that devolved into riots and many others that were simply peaceful, sprung up across the country in the wake of the killing of George Floyd.

The movement went beyond the urban areas to small towns including Ely, where on June 6, Ian Lah organized an event that attracted about 250 people who marched from Central Avenue to Whiteside Park.

Those marching chanted and carried signs, a few with messages that were clearly anti-police. That was their right, and Ely's police were there to make sure those marching were protected and able to exercise their freedoms.

I'm told Houde met with Lah, to make sure the march would go on peacefully and with police there as a safeguard, but in the background and doing nothing to take away from the focus of the event.

Along the route, it was also Ely

police that made sure some with a loud and opposing viewpoint, perhaps one that Ely officers agreed with, stayed away from the participants.

It was professionalism at its finest and that's been the norm here in Ely.

That was on display during the public interviews for the chief position, where three internal Ely candidates provided example after example.

Instead of rigidity there were stories of discretion and common sense.

Instead of an air of superiority were examples of community engagement, from "Coffee with a Cop" sessions to an appreciated presence in the public school system.

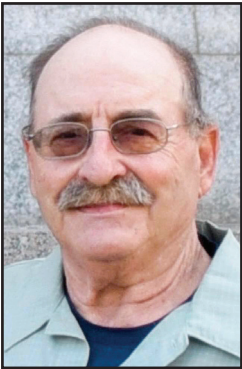
One finalist had a very revealing story: one involving now regular contacts with someone he arrested years earlier, who is now overcoming their struggles with substance abuse and keeping in touch with the officer.

Those are Ely success stories but by no means Ely-specific. Cops can, do and as they should play meaningful and supportive roles in the communities they serve. In a half-century, there have been more than a few times when relief and a sense of safety prevailed upon sight of a cop nearby. The good outweighs the bad.

Chief Houde may not have been blessed by timing, but Ely's in good hands under his leadership and well served by the department under his watch. No matter what slogan or catchphrase one may hear.

LAST WEEK'S						
Weather report						
Observer: Wade Klingsporn, Vermilion						
Community College	Day	Date	High	Low	Precip	Snow
Readings taken at 7 a.m. for the previous 24 hours.	Mn	6/8	62	45	0.83	
	Tu	6/9	83	57	0.06	
	Wd	6/10	85	56	0.01	
	Th	6/11	60	48	0.09	
	Fri	6/12	64	36		
	Sa	6/13	66	33		
	Su	6/14	67	40		
	2020 Precip: 6.21"		Snow on ground: 0"			
	2019-20 Snow: 94.7"		2018-19 Snow: 84.3"			

STARKOVICH FIRE RELIEF FUND



June 4th was a tragic day for Paul Starkovich and nephew, Shane Starkovich. All belongings and their home were destroyed by fire. Paul was treated for burns and originally released only to be sent to Duluth that evening for a broken hip while maneuvering his best stop, drop and roll to extinguish the fire on his back. Paul had hip replacement June 5th and is recuperating nicely.

Their hometown of Ely has been both supportive and generous during a difficult time for all mankind. Paul & Shane sincerely thank you for your help.

Please consider a donation if you are able. Locally: Ely Area Credit Union has 2 separate Fire Relief Funds, please specify if for Paul/Shane or both.

Also online at: GoFundMe.com