

OPINION

“CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...
ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;”

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

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Editorial

Environmental review

Sen. Bakk revealed why a mineral withdrawal study makes sense

Sen. Tom Bakk spoke the truth at a recent community joint powers board meeting in Ely, and in doing so he highlighted why those concerned with the risks posed by the just-released Twin Metals mine proposal have pushed for completion of a study on a proposed mineral withdrawal.

For years, Twin Metals supporters have claimed that the study was somehow short-circuiting the established process, and that any attempt to foreclose the possibility of a mine short of the completion of an environmental impact statement is somehow illegitimate.

“Let’s follow the science. If it’s proven it can be done safely, then let’s do it,” has been the standard line from mine supporters for the past several years.

Unfortunately, that isn’t the question that the environmental review process is designed to answer. As Sen. Bakk noted, the environmental review, which is the initial part of the permitting process, is designed to better understand the risks and attempt to mitigate those risks to the extent that’s financially feasible. That process is not designed to answer the more fundamental questions of whether a proposed project makes sense or poses too great a risk to allow to move forward.

“So, once they start down that road of applying for those permits it’s pretty hard to stop,” said Bakk.

Whether the Twin Metals project can be done safely would not be addressed by an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a permitting review, which is why mine supporters are being disingenuous, or simply reflecting their misunderstanding, when they claim otherwise. The reality is that a major sulfide mine is going to have significant, negative environmental effects. It will never be “safe” from an environmental perspective. Whether those effects or risks are acceptable is a political question, not one that will be determined or even considered by an EIS or the subsequent permitting process. Major industries have long understood that once a project begins the environmental review process, the larger political decision has essentially already been made that the project should advance. As Sen. Bakk stated: “The truth is, the environmental review process is not intended to stop projects.”

So, when does society ask the fundamental questions? Such as, is a sulfide mine located directly upstream from

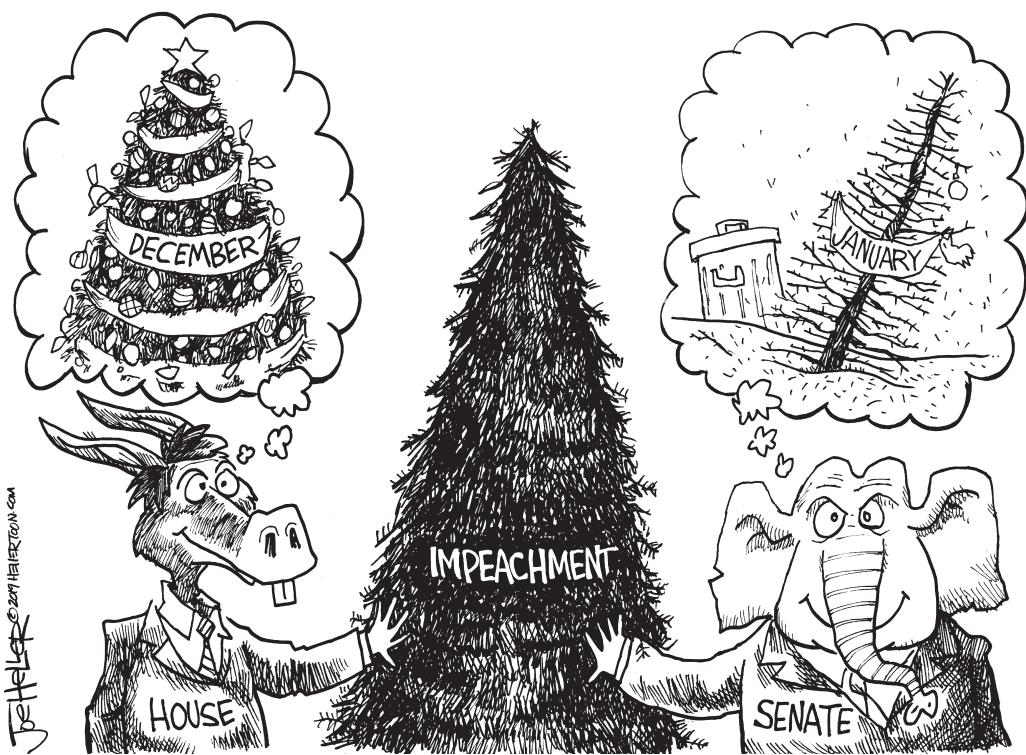
the nation’s most spectacular water-based wilderness a good idea? And how will the economic costs balance out against the economic gains that such a mine might bring?

There actually is a process for reviewing these larger public interest questions associated with a project like Twin Metals — and that’s the study that was underway as part of the proposed mineral withdrawal, at least until the Trump administration opted to end it just months before it was due for completion.

Rather than spend a decade and hundreds of millions of dollars conducting an environmental review of a project that could ultimately be disastrous for the region’s long-term economic and environmental health, the two-year study was supposed to assess the economic costs and benefits of the proposed mine and answer the larger question of whether this was the right place for this most dangerous form of mining.

This wasn’t a made-up process simply invented by environmentalists to try to scuttle the Twin Metals proposal. The mining withdrawal process was established in federal law decades ago as a way to protect other public values from exploitive uses or for reserving federal lands for a particular public purpose or program. The withdrawal process, which invariably includes a study, examines the bigger questions about the costs and benefits associated with a project, or whether its location is appropriate given the inherent risks.

These are the broader questions that Minnesota and the Walz administration must have answers to before agreeing to undertake any kind of environmental review. The administration should not only insist that the Trump administration release the data gathered to date for the aborted federal withdrawal study, but that the feds actually complete the study through a fair and transparent process. If not, the state of Minnesota should conduct its own examination of those issues. Only then, can Minnesotans make a fully-informed decision about the actual merits of a sulfide mine just upstream from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. If a state EIS begins on a mine plan, those fundamental questions will never be answered and Minnesota will risk losing one of its most spectacular assets without ever really having a debate.



Letters from Readers

Had Obama acted anything like Trump

For the 46 percent of us who voted for Donald Trump in 2016, it’s time to take the hypocrisy test. When the Republicans controlled both houses of Congress, if Barack Obama had said and done then the things said and done now by Donald Trump, what would have happened? The Republicans in the House of Representatives would have voted to impeach him, and the Republicans in the Senate would have voted to remove him from office.

**Jim Ganahl
Cook**

Remembering the reason for the season

Today, we tell of The First Story, making it a celebration of pomp, an affair of gold-embroidered vestments and costly columns and altars of marble, and choruses of choirs, of jeweled windows and incense, of the extreme abundance of gifting and getting.

Yet, we are unable to find and feel the simple spiritually-edifying peace and pleasure in the formerly plain and humble stable. The brown-haired, grave-eyed peasant girl, with her little baby, unable to see the beauty in the crumbling mud walls and the low ceiling of the stable, where the only incense was the sweet smell of the cow’s breath.

The only vestments were the baby’s swaddling clothes, rough, coarse, fibered from the hand looms of Nazareth.

The only pomp, the simple gifts of three men, the only chorusing, the quiet crooning of a young mother holding her first born babe upon her breast.

A little child lies in the midst of the stable with simple people, his mother and father, and three travelers, who were led there by a star in the night. Here lies a little child who would come to stand in the midst

of wise men and the learned. They would be gently taught, not to be of selfish conscience, and to be defined only by their riches, but to explore the unplumbed depths of the human heart, to set aside their learning, their wisdom, and their earthly mammon, so that in the end, after all trial has been made and every expedient tested, they would discover that the simplest way is the best, and humblest means the surest.

It was this little baby, who would become our most profound community organizer, whose only act of aggression was turning over the tables of the money-changers in the Temple in Jerusalem, who would change the heart of man by teaching the enduring, loving spirit of justice and mercy for all mankind.

It was the helpless child in the stable, whose first bed was a feedbox for animals, that would come to spark the mind of man, a spark that would kindle the world with the flame of eternal light.

The little child, who was to be the bread of life for human beings, who sacrificed his life at the age of 33, tenderly taught that each of us must always offer our gifts of loving kindness, warm hearts, and the outstretched hand of tolerance and love. He showed mankind how love and altruism will always surpass individual greed, and that justice for all was truly the moral test of our spirituality, the simple gifts that make peace on earth, our transcendent duty, our Christmas Story.

**Tim Duff
Tonka Bay**

Trump fiddles while the planet burns

“It’s another lost year, another lost decade. I don’t want to belittle the important things that have happened and are happening, but they are not enough. People will look back at us and wonder, “What were you doing?” These gloomy comments were spoken by Rod Jackson, a professor of Earth

Science at Stanford University and Chair of the Global Carbon Project, held in Madrid.

Global greenhouse emissions hit yet another record high this year. Carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels and industry totaled 36.8 billion tons.

The impact of climate change upon planet Earth is not evenly distributed. There are major variations and different degrees of destruction of housing, transportation and communication systems. This devastation is taking place in diverse geographical locations due to multiple causes of climate devastation. There are no boundaries.

Nothing is immune to the forces of climate change and it is manifested in numerous forms such as floods, droughts, fires, winds, disease, lack of potable water, and food scarcity.

It seems paradoxical that, after years of study, an international seed vault was established on the Svalbard archipelago, Norway. It was expected to be viable for many centuries and to withstand even a nuclear bomb. The billions of flora seeds from all around world are stored in the vault to be used at times when climate change has eradicated various types of vegetation. It was designed not to rely on potentially-vulnerable mechanical refrigeration equipment, but to be kept constantly cool by the natural environmental permafrost. Ironically, due to climate change, the permafrost is beginning to melt,

Sad to say, neither the President nor any member of the White House staff attended the Paris accords conference even though the United States is a prime contributor to the adverse elements causing global climate change.

Global climate change is decidedly an international issue and the administration should not ignore the issues, but participate in seeking remedies for this realistic threat to humanity.

**Gerry Snyder
Ely**

Here’s how to survive a blue Christmas

I once made up my mind to get a divorce on Christmas morning. My alcoholic husband had not come home. It wasn’t the first time, and Christmas wasn’t his holiday, but this was my Christmas morning. It wasn’t what I deserved, and it wasn’t what my little girl



**JEAN
GENDREAU**

deserved.

Another Christmas, my heart hurt so badly I could barely go outside. My new baby had died. I had his blanket, but he was gone. I didn’t want to live because it hurt too much. And Christmas — every image of Mary holding baby Jesus — made me cry again.

When your heart is broken,

Christmas can really hurt. It’s easy to drown in false family images and media hype. It feels impossible to swim against the tsunamis of “should’s” and “if only’s.”

Here’s how to survive a blue Christmas.

1. See the hype for what it is.

The first step is to see the media hype for what it is: lies told by advertisers. Every advertisement wants to sell you an emotional image because that’s how the companies make

money. They don’t know you personally and they don’t care about who you are. They know that manipulating people’s dreams increases sales. Images of happy families and romantic couples sell products but do not tell any truth about real families, real couples or real life.

So shut out the false images. Turn off your TV. If you watch old movies, remember that the movie producers needed to make money too. You can sing “White Christmas” all you want, but in

the real world, snow is cold and needs to be shoveled.

2. Look to January.

Try taking your mind past the Christmas season. January is real, so go there. Make concrete plans to start new things in January. If your heart is broken, try experimenting with online dating in January, just to see how it feels. Maybe you’ll learn something new. Is there a hobby you’ve always wanted

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Letters from Readers

How to help those down on their luck

When people are re-homing after hospitalizations, evictions, incarceration, or maybe just a series of bad breaks with no friends or family ready and able to take them in, they need help now more than ever.

Direct financial contributions would get the most bang

for the buck, but if you'd like to see something put together with your own hands, here's an idea - a bag full of stuff they can actually use.

This list has been developed after asking street people "What is actually needed and useful?"

Most of these items are available at Dollar Stores and used-a-bit places for about a dollar apiece, aiming at a budget of about ten to twenty

bucks per bag.

1. Towel and wash cloth (no, they don't have to match).
2. Small bottles of shampoo, hand lotion, conditioner (Avoid items containing alcohol).
3. Boxed bar of soap.
4. One or two pairs of sweat socks
5. A pair of warm gloves - size medium or large.
6. A hat and/or scarf
7. Pack of three or four

Peppermint Lifesaver rolls.

8. Snickers/granola/"energy" bars; beef jerky/sausage sticks.
9. Toothbrush with cover for the brush head, with a small tube of toothpaste.
10. Water bottle.
11. Grocery-size durable bag with handles or draw strings to put this stuff in.
12. Blanket, if possible - these are hard to find for less

than ten bucks apiece, though.

Food items should go into one separate Ziploc bag, toiletries in another. Another item that is always very much appreciated - a \$10 gift card to McDonalds or Burger King, allowing the luxury of being indoors with a warm meal.

**Dave Porter
Minneapolis**

FAMILIES...Continued from page 4

to try? Sign up for a class in January and do it now.

3. Be honest about family.

Family dysfunction is a third source of Christmas pain. Even if we only see our family once a year, Christmas really rubs our noses in the yuck. Not only do we get all the old patterns shoved in our face, but myths about so-called happy families make everybody crazy.

It's a myth that all families are happy or should be. What's real is that families are happy sometimes, but all families—all families—have hidden, unhealthy, unhappy patterns. Some have a few, and some have many, but all families have problems.

There's only one way to move towards a happier family, and that is to openly work on what is not working. But media and our culture pretend that none of that exists. We think, "Wow, what's wrong with me?"

One way to handle this is the temporary patch, the "I can do it for a few days" technique. If it makes your

mother happy that you go to church with her, you can try doing it, telling yourself that it's only one day a year. As you sit in church, you can plan amazing and creative January rewards for yourself.

But what if sitting with your belittling, criticizing father makes you feel hopeless and crazy? There are good people who do not go home for Christmas.

Just because it's family does not mean it is good. Just because someone says they love you does not mean they know how to love you in the best way. Some of the cruelest wounds from families happen when a family member says they are loving you when in fact they are manipulating, hurting, belittling or abusing.

Maybe you need to find other family. Not blood family, but people who support you and care for you.

And you need to talk to a therapist. Many family patterns destroy individuals with their cruelty. A therapist's job is to support

you while you learn how to love yourself better.

Perfect families—which is such a part of Christmas hype—are a fantasy that hurts people. Even though most people want to hide family problems, denying them is exactly what causes emotional pain and illness.

Lasting joy comes when we see the unhealthy along with the healthy. I am whole and so are you—but we are complete, complex packages with both good and challenging qualities. And that is okay.

Being happy and whole with your own family is possible. There are truly happy families—but their joy is neither automatic nor easy. Taking the first steps towards real family happiness means seeing a sympathetic therapist and getting open-hearted, non-judgmental support for the real you. Then you can scrape off the fake roles and discover the truth of love that might lie hidden underneath. A real family loves the authentic you, not the pretend you.

4. Look for the light beyond despair.

But what if someone you love has died? There's no quick fix. Turning off the TV and making new plans won't touch that pain.

Think instead about love itself. The love that person had for you still exists because love itself never ends. Yes, it's easier when they have their arms around you in physical form. But real love is an unseen, eternal thing. You still have that love now, today. You always will. If you sit quietly and close your eyes, you can still feel the love.

Buddhists teach that after death the family or loved ones should send thoughts of encouragement and love to the dead person. The idea is that the one who has died can then feel that it's okay to move on into another level of existence.

Try sitting quietly and sending your loved one a message of encouragement and gratitude. Even if your loved one died in pain, you can feel gratitude

that the pain has ended and that your loved one is free and at peace. It doesn't bring them back, but it might help you see today in a new way.

If there is just no relief from your grief, then see a therapist. The death of a loved one can feel like trying to carry 1,000 pounds. You don't have to carry it alone.

Light in the Darkness

In the end, Christmas—like life—is about light in the darkness. I've been in despair. What I know for sure is that, if I get help and keep breathing, the year turns. It happens slowly, but the light comes back. Not in the way I wanted, maybe. After all, my marriage was really over. My dead baby was really gone. But eventually something changed because things always change. I had three more perfect, exquisite babies. Eventually I found a partner who cherished me as I really was.

And, so, sit with me now in the darkness. Breathe with me. The darkness around us is complete and that is okay. Darkness

is the womb of hope. The year always turns. The sun always rises. Death is a beginning, not an end.

Breathe slowly with me. Be gentle to yourself. Wrap yourself in kindness like grandma's quilt and wait.

I know something that you don't know. The love inside you is a seed. Your only job is to wait for the sun.

Christmas matters because it is the darkest time of the year. It is the longest night. Our job is to trust that change happens. I promise you that the light will come again.

In Ely, Minnesota, we will have a "Longest Night" service for people who feel quiet, thoughtful or sad at Christmas. The service will be at the First Presbyterian Church at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 19. This will be a gentle, quiet, heart-energy service of love and remembrance. Everyone is welcome, whether or not you are Christian.

RENTALS...Continued from page 3

to give property owners time to prepare before the rental season hits. But some at the hearing noted that not everyone rents solely during the summer months. It's unclear what those who rent during the winter will have to do about current bookings if the new regulations are adopted this winter.

In part because of such concerns, board member Roger Skraba argued that the county was moving forward with the changes too quickly and he urged the board to table the issue for further consideration of some of the concerns raised by the public.

One of these concerns is the proposed minimum buffer of 300 feet between short-term rentals, which Jeff Lovgren, of Lake Vermilion, raised during the hearing. He told the board it would lead to potential friction between neighbors if they both wanted to rent but only one could obtain a permit to do so. The ordinance does include a conditional use permit which would allow a way around this issue, but as Lovgren noted, a CUP would come with a different set of

requirements, meaning one neighbor could end up paying a lot more to rent out than another.

This imbalance of power was one of Tanya Nichols' main concerns. Nichols lives in Duluth and currently rents out her family's property on Little Pequaywan Lake. She argued for a better way of resolving issues between rental property owners and neighbors, especially when it comes to heavily emotional situations. Sjoberg agreed with her, saying there should be an opportunity for corrective action rather than the owner immediately losing their permit.

Another one of the major concerns brought up during the public hearing was the potential for the new regulations to drive current rental property owners out of business. Several of those who spoke to the board stated that they would likely have to sell their properties if the new ordinance language was adopted. Mike Mellesmoen of Embarrass argued that people might dump their properties and drive down property values. He, and several

others, said they were simply seeking fair treatment for all property owners, which they believe the proposed ordinance language changes are not currently providing.

There are several other regulations and standards that property owners will have to meet should the board adopt the new language, including:

► Obtaining general liability insurance for the property in an amount consistent with St. Louis County board coverage requirements. A copy of the policy must be provided to and kept on file with the county.

► Properties that are used primarily for renting purposes will be deemed Commercial Use-Class II properties and will be subject to ordinance requirements regarding commercial use.

► Accessory dwellings cannot be used for rental purposes unless a permit is obtained for the overall property.

► Performance standard permits for rental properties will not be transferable upon a change in ownership. This includes properties that change

hands within a family.

► Rental dwelling units must be located on a conforming lot.

► Only one dwelling per parcel may be rented. Additional renting of recreational vehicles, tents, garages, accessory structures, pole barns, sheds, fish houses, boathouses, or other similar structures will not be allowed.

► Conditional use permits may be applied for in the case of more than one dwelling unit being present on the same parcel or in the case of single units on contiguous parcels under common ownership. In some cases, this may also constitute a resort and will be subject to the applicable standards for such.

► Obtaining and maintaining an applicable Minnesota Department of Health Lodging License and other applicable licenses. A copy of said licenses must be provided to and kept on file with the county. They must also be posted in a prominent location within the rental dwelling.

► Sufficient on-site parking must be provided to the renters and no person shall ever be allowed to

park a vehicle or motor vehicle on or within the limits of any road or right-of-way.

► Providing a Minnesota tax identification number and other applicable identification numbers to the St. Louis County Planning and Community Development Director.

► Sewage treatment and the disposal of solid waste must comply with St. Louis County Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Ordinance 61 and Solid Waste Ordinance 45 respectively, along with their successors or replacements.

Not everyone who spoke at the Dec. 12 hearing had hesitations regarding the potential regulations. Several people told the board they believed things were heading in the right direction and that they were pleased with the work the board was doing. Lisa Clausen and John Wilson, both of Big Pequaywan Lake, said that health, safety, peace, and quiet were all factors the board should consider.

Clausen, who lives next door to short-term rentals, said the impact of

having a constant rotation of strangers has "ruined the dream" she and her husband had of living there. According to her, those who rent are using the buildings for commercial purposes in a residential zone. The turnover has been a lot for her family to deal with and the property owners don't seem to care if there are issues unless it's after 10 p.m.

Bonnie Dresen of Little Pequaywan Lake also had concerns regarding renters who come into the area for a short period of time. She and her husband have lived in their lake home for forty-eight years and are concerned about the renters not being invested in the area or the properties in the same way as full-time residents.

The new ordinance language is currently undergoing a 30-day review process. The full county board is expected to take the new rules up some time in January, and the public will have at least one more public hearing opportunity when they do. The county will announce that date once it's set.

SCHOOLS...Continued from page 3

service is available because it helps keep seniors closer to family," he added. Pallansch acknowledged that operating a smaller facility can be challenging, but he said it can be done successfully with the right staff in place.

Unlike some senior facilities, which only accept private pay res-

idents, Pallansch said Vermilion Senior Living is open to elderly who rely on Medical Assistance or other public funding sources for their care. You can contact Vermilion Senior Living at 218-753-7788.

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