

## OUR VIEW

### Can the U.S. afford the stimulus program?

A stimulus package of \$2.2 trillion will provide direct financial help to Americans. It targets individuals, small business and corporations hit hard by COVID-19. The Senate passed the stimulus bill by a vote of 96-0 earlier last week after two failed attempts. It was moved on the House on Friday where it received the go ahead by a voice vote and was moved to the White House for the president's signature.

The legislation would provide one-time direct payments to Americans of \$1,200 per adult making up to \$75,000 a year and \$2,400 to a married couple making up to \$150,000, with \$500 payments per child. Republicans have called for minimum payments of \$600 to Americans, and aid would be phased down at income thresholds of \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 per couple. In addition, there would be \$500 payments per child.

The stimulus would establish new and generous unemployment benefits by adding \$600 per week to normal state benefits for up to four months. It would provide an additional 13 weeks of benefits to 39 weeks of regular unemployment insurance through the end of 2020, if a worker is sidelined by the outbreak. The coverage would be retroactive to Jan. 27, and coverage would be extended to "gig" workers and independent contractors, according to published reports.

One question: Where is this money going to come from in the short term? It would seem that proponents are going to ask the Federal Reserve to implement its ability to print money that has no tangible backing.

There's a simple explanation that makes this radical stimulus over-the-top in government excess. As of March 23, 2020, the country has a national debt of \$23.6 trillion. Add on top of that the nation's unfunded liabilities of \$132 trillion. That's a whopping \$155.6 trillion of debt our government has racked up as of last Monday and it's increasing faster than a SpaceX satellite. (Of the enormous debt, \$7 trillion of that debt is held by foreign countries - let that sink in.)

Every indication from Washington, D.C. is that this is not the last spending bill being considered. More trillions will be dumped into the economic crash brought on by this virus.

Would someone with a modicum of common sense please tell everyone how a nation with assets totaling \$145.8 trillion is going to handle \$160 trillion of debt? It's time to get real. The treasury is paying \$3.7 trillion just in interest on that monstrous national debt. And, we're racking up a deficit of \$1.6 trillion.

Let's approach it another way. How does the nation's debt look to most Americans? Most honestly, never stop to think about the nation's debt. Most are more concerned about their credit card balance that's racking up 22% for unpaid balances. However, on top of that credit card balance, each citizen of the United States is saddled with \$408,211 of nation's debt. (View the U.S. Debt clock by going to: <https://www.usdebtclock.org/>)

If anyone is interested in how our national indebtedness has grown compared to our gross domestic product (GDP), take a look: in 1960 it was 53.10%. Just 20 years ago we were at 58.66% of debt to GDP. Today, we are 108.82% to GDP. That's a 50.16% increase in just 20 years!

Our nation's debt is far more serious than a pandemic that has virtually shut the nation down because 143,527 Americans have contracted a virus (as of March 30) that has crippled our economy.

## YOUR VIEW

### Congress needs to focus on flooding

To-the-Editor: Our business, like many across Minnesota, has been hit hard by COVID-19. Supply lines cut, concerns for employee safety, and a declining end market means our future is uncertain. While the immediate threat of COVID-19 will pass, it's a reminder of the devastating impact natural disasters have on our communities.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recently released its forecast indicating that 123 million Americans in 23 states, including Minnesota, could be impacted by spring flooding. Every

year our state is faced with catastrophic floods that destroy businesses, public infrastructure, personal property, and in some cases cost lives. In fact, flooding is now the costliest and most common natural disaster we face.

With all natural disasters, planning and resilience are critical in mitigating the damage. FEMA has found that every \$1 spent before a natural disaster saves \$6 in recovery.

Because we know severe weather and flooding will strike again, Congress should address repeatedly flooded properties, discourage building in risky areas,

and create a nationwide disclosure law so anyone buying or renting a new home is given the flood-risk information they deserve.

Minnesota's entire congressional delegation should support these proposals, especially Representatives Phillips, Emmer and Stauber who hold relevant committee assignments. If they take action then businesses, homeowners, and local communities will be safer the next time flood waters rise.

*Matt Steinrueck  
St. Louis Park  
(Manager of operations for a medical device distributor)*

### Hope: It will help us cope

To-the-Editor: My great grandfather, Ed Trom (originally Troim), immigrated to rural Dodge County from Norway in 1892. Back home in Hemsedal, Norway, Ed's eldest brother, Knut, held the prestigious position of firstborn son and inherited the Troim family farm, which included the main farm near the village of Hemsedal as well as the mountain farm.

Despite this coveted position, Knut's descendants suffered their

consequences of the German occupation during World War II. Son Jeger and his family lived on the Troim family farm. Shortly after invading Norway in 1940, German soldiers commandeered the Troim family home, where eight soldiers occupied the second floor of the Troim ancestral home.

For one year, the Troim family lived with the oppressive presence of Nazi Germans and interference in their rural way of life. Nazi German soldiers lodged their an-

imals in the Troim barn and neighboring fields, refusing to remove their animals when Jeger and his family returned cattle from the mountain farm to the Troim family farm at the end of summer, a power play to increase the soldiers' influence.

As we cope with a global pandemic, we can learn from the resilience of ancestors who faced considerable hardship. Hope-it will help us cope.

*Sonja Trom Eayrs  
Maple Grove*

## We are there with you

As we continue to struggle through one of the worst public health outbreaks in American history, I want you to know we are here for you and with you.

It doesn't matter what happens or when it happens. Your local newspaper is always a reliable source to be counted on.

Through our weekly newspaper, we will pass on vital information and let you know how others in our communities are managing through the COVID-19 crisis.

Public Health Director Amy Caron, who serves both Steele and Dodge counties, has been providing us with accurate information throughout the pandemic, sometimes on a daily basis. We have turned around and passed this on to our readers through the weekly newspaper as well as our website and email alerts.

Among the on-going sadness and anxiety, these are uplifting moments that remind us of the resilience of the human spirit. We will be there to share those stories as well. Last week



**Hot Pursuit**  
RICK BUSSLER

we began a weekly feature, "Seeing the Good." We are pumping out positive stories in the midst of a devastating crisis.

We are here to help you make sense of the situation and to help you navigate through it all. We want to provide you with useful information that will keep you safe, which right now means staying at home. What a better time than to reacquaint yourself with your local newspaper to see what you are missing on a weekly basis if you are currently not subscribing.

Together, across the decades, this newspaper and its readers have lived

through some pretty horrific events—natural disasters, financial downturns, farm crisis, murders and periods of extreme political division.

We will overcome. We have to overcome. There is no other choice.

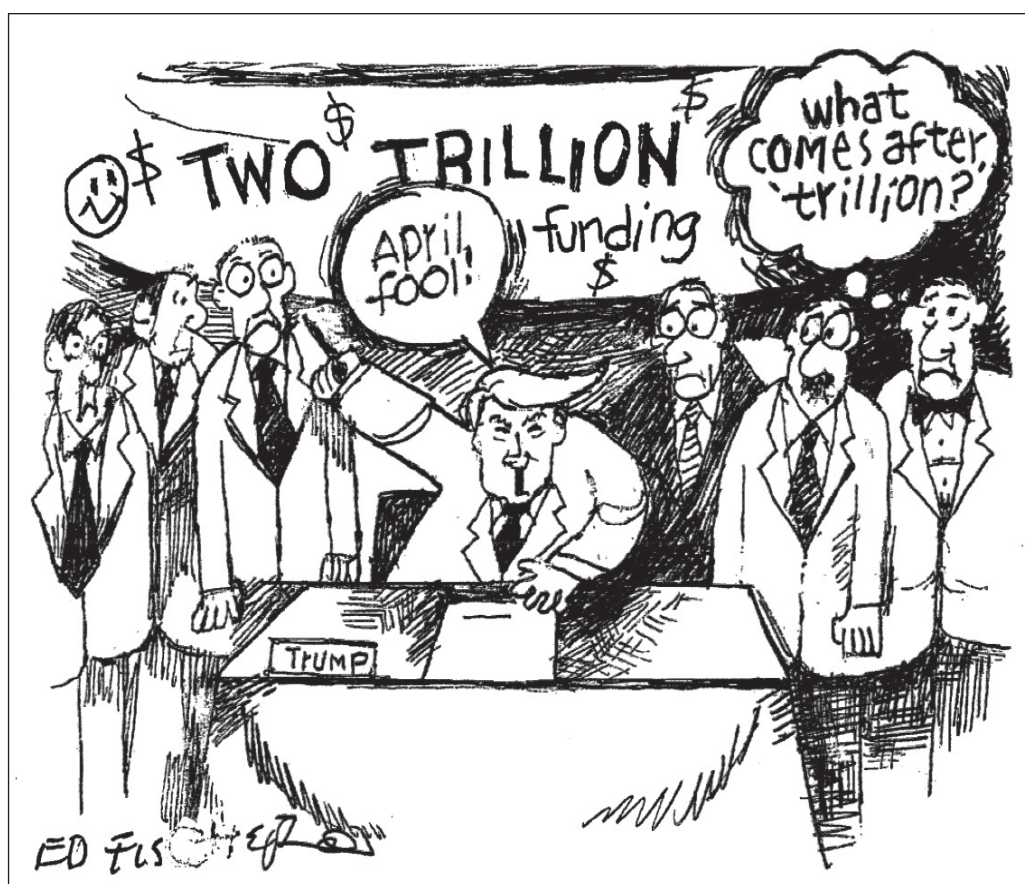
Steele County and the surrounding area has always been strong, and neighbors have always helped out neighbors. That hasn't changed. And this crisis will be no different in changing anything like that.

Our business neighbors, now and in future months, will especially need your help in keeping alive and fiscally well. Please consider supporting your local communities and the stores within them.

The Times has been there through thick and thin, and we will continue to be there for you. Don't ever lose hope of that.

Your neighbors are afraid for their health, the health of their loved ones, their jobs and financial future.

By going in hot pursuit of sticking together, we will come through this, too!



## GUEST COLUMN

### Help is available for people with dual diagnosis

BY MARK JACOBSON

Dual diagnosis (also referred to as co-occurring disorders) is a term for when someone experiences a mental illness and a substance use disorder simultaneously. Either disorder—substance use or mental illness—can develop first. People experiencing a mental health condition may turn to alcohol or other drugs as a form of self-medication to improve the mental health symptoms they experience. However, research shows that alcohol and other drugs worsen the symptoms of mental illnesses.

The professional fields of mental health and substance use recovery have different cultures, so finding integrated care can be challenging.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 9.2 million U.S. adults experience both mental illness and a substance use disorder in 2018.

Because many combinations of dual diagnosis can occur, the symptoms vary widely. Mental health clinics are starting to use alcohol and drug screen-

ing tools to help identify people at risk for drug and alcohol abuse. Symptoms of substance use disorder may include:

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Sudden changes in behavior
- Using substances under dangerous conditions
- Engaging in risky behaviors
- Loss of control over use of substances
- Developing a high tolerance and withdrawal symptoms
- Feeling like you need a drug to be able to function

Symptoms of a mental health condition can also vary greatly. Warning signs, such as extreme mood changes, confused thinking or problems concentrating, avoiding friends and family and social activities, and thoughts of suicide, may be reason to seek help.

Psychotherapy is usually a large part of an effective dual diagnosis treatment plan. In particular, Cognitive Behavior Therapy helps people with dual diagnosis learn how to cope and change ineffective patterns of thinking,

which may increase the risk of substance use.

Medications are useful for treating mental illness. Certain medications can also help people experiencing substance use disorders ease withdrawal symptoms during the detoxification process and promote recovery.

Dealing with a dual diagnosis can feel challenging and isolating. Support groups allow members to share frustration, celebrate success, find referrals for specialists, find the best community resources and swap recovery tips. They also produce a space for forming healthy friendships with encouragement to stay clean.

In Winona, there is a Dual Recovery Anonymous group for people living with mental health issues and substance use disorders. This meeting is held every Saturday from 1 to 2 p.m. at Hiawatha Mental Health Center at 420 East Sarnia St., Winona. The meeting is open to anyone dealing with any form of dual diagnosis.

*Mark Jacobson is a peer support specialist in Winona.*