

OUR VIEW

What lies ahead in 2020?

Other than a presidential elect, all U.S. House of Representatives will be up for election, 34 of 100 U.S. Senate seats will be on the election ballot come Nov. 3, and there'll be a number of Minnesota House and Senate seats up for grabs. In a few words, it will be a crazier than normal year.

Just in case you missed the last three years, our nation has witnessed one of the most tumultuous political 1,100 days in our Republic's history.

Americans elected a president from outside of politics in an Electoral College landslide, losing the popular vote by about 2.8 million. However, the Electoral College, the ultimate decision making apparatus in U.S. presidential elections was 304-227, with President Trump edging out Hillary Clinton by 77 electoral votes.

Will 2020 election results garner a similar outcome?

Perhaps the 2020 election will be the most contentious in history.

U.S. House elections will perhaps be the most closely watched segment of the congressional toss up. With 435 seats on the line, Democrats, now in control of the House, will try to ward off a super charged onslaught by Republican contenders who lost control of the House in 2018. That election brought us the Squad - Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA). Republicans hope to reverse that outcome.

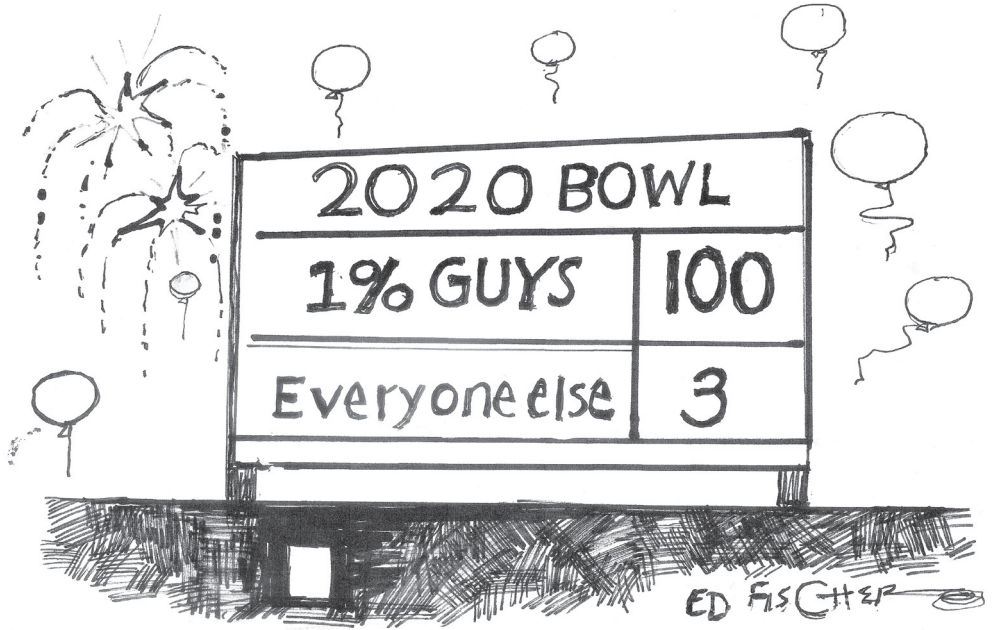
Senate races could offer some tense moments as the Republicans try to hold on to its majority. One seat that will draw the most attention is that of Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, R, and majority leader heading into the election.

Minnesota state elections could prove to be contentious as well. Voters in the Gopher state are set to elect eight U.S. Representatives, one from each of the state's eight congressional districts.

All 134 Minnesota House seats will be contested.

All 67 seats in the Minnesota State Senate are up for election in 2020.

Any observer of 2020 national state elections should be revved up as we the people enter the first election of the new decade.



GUEST COLUMN

Impactful stories of 2019

BY TIM PENNY

With 2020 just days away, I am reflecting on Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's (SMIF) many accomplishments in the past year alongside our regional partners and collaborators. It was a year filled with incredible stories of people doing amazing things for this region. I am thankful that SMIF was able to play a role in moving this part of the state toward an exciting future.

It is impossible to include all the impactful stories of 2019, but this list is a start:

1. Rochester-based Sonex Health, a company that received one of our equity investments, continues to rapidly grow, benefitting patients dealing with carpal tunnel syndrome. Doctors Darryl Barnes and Jay Smith developed a minimally invasive surgical tool that is changing not only the amount of time in the doctor's office, but also the recovery time.

2. The city of St. James has experienced growing pains and, at times, divisiveness. A town that has Scandinavian and German origins is now home to large populations of Latinos. Two years ago, Marta Zelaya, originally from El Salvador, along with other community leaders helped create the Uniting Cultures/Uniendo Culturas organization, through a grant from SMIF's Small Town Grants program. Now this organization is changing the dynamic in this small town with activities such as a popular town-wide "fiesta" and

community meals that bring people together and create a welcoming environment.

3. The child care shortage continues to be an issue throughout Minnesota. In response, SMIF established a Communities Addressing the Child Care Shortage program. This program helps communities develop individualized plans to address the shortage in a way that works for them. For example, the city of Wells has created two initiatives through this program: a forgivable loan program and a space that family child care providers can rent to run their child care business. Tiffany Schrader, who works for the city, says they are committed to creating more child care slots in Wells.

4. When Efraim Cadriel realized his work as a nuclear medicine technologist was triggering his trauma from his years as a combat medic and x-ray technologist, he decided to retire and become a mushroom farmer instead. Efraim and his wife, Jessica, moved to Kasota and co-founded EJ Mushrooms. Through a loan from SMIF's Grow A Farmer Fund, they converted their garage into a year-round mushroom farm. This unique career choice has given Efraim hope, and one day he would like to share that by employing other veterans. EJ Mushrooms is another addition to a strong and growing local food economy in our region.

5. The community leaders of Houston have a lot of passion for their town. Nestled in the beautiful Root River

Valley in the southeastern corner of our state, this active community is home to just under 1,000 people. This year, they began the Houston Area Community Foundation (HACF), an affiliate fund of SMIF. Mimi Carlson, former SMIF Board of Trustees member and current HACF president, says this decision is a no brainer for the community. By building an endowment fund, HACF will be able to adapt to the needs of the community and support the Houston area for years to come.

All these amazing things that have been accomplished in 2019 would not be possible without the support of SMIF's donors. For every \$1 raised in local contributions, SMIF invests \$10 back into southern Minnesota. In the last year alone, we invested over \$5.4 million through grants, loans, and program support. Local donations to SMIF help us support entrepreneurs, young children and our communities today and for years to come. Here's to a new year and a bright future for southern Minnesota. To find details about these stories or to support our work go to smifoundation.org.

As always, I welcome your comments and questions. You can reach me at timp@smifoundation.org or 507-455-3215.

Tim Penny is the president and CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. He represented Minnesota's First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1982-1994.

It's a Baker's Dozen giveaway

With the new year, and a new decade as well, upon us this week, we have decided to kick things off in a big way with the newspaper. We're creating an opportunity for readers as well as potential new readers to kick off the new decade by winning some cold hard cash.

We might actually be accused of trying to sweeten up our readers a little bit over the coming weeks. I wish I could say we're offering fresh cookies like Sweet Martha's makes available every year at the Minnesota State Fair. But instead we're baking up a subscription offer that could sweeten your pocketbook.

Yep, you're reading things right. We are giving away lots of cash over the next few months. In all, \$1,500 will find its way into the hands of lucky readers. It's called our Baker's Dozen Giveaway promotion.

Here's how it works. Renew your subscription or take out a new subscription for a reduced amount (\$35, normally it is \$46) plus you will get a month added onto your subscription. That's where the Baker's Dozen comes into play. To top it off, you will be entered into a contest to win a \$50 bill. We will award one lucky subscriber \$50



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

for us to connect with our readers. We truly value each and every one of our readers. You are the reason we exist in order to collect the history of the communities we serve.

I'm also hoping this promotion will allow us to grow our subscriber base. We are always looking for new readers. So help us out by spreading the word to your friends, family members and neighbors that they need to subscribe to the Steele County Times. We have carved out a little niche that nobody else can offer. It's a secret that we are going to be passionate about letting everyone know in 2020.

Hurry, you have only 10 weeks to take part in this wonderful promotion. We have the \$50 bills ready to give out. After all, who couldn't use a little extra cash, especially after the holiday season?

We hope this creates some excitement and buzz with our readers. It's one way we're blasting off the new decade by drawing attention to the great things we offer our readers every week throughout the year.

Put down the paper now and go in hot pursuit of taking advantage of our Baker's Dozen Giveaway. It's a sweet way to kick off 2020!

cash each week for the next 10 weeks. And then in late March when the promotion ends, we will give out the grand prize of \$1,000 cash.

If you've just paid your subscription recently, no need to worry. You can still add on another year by taking part in the giveaway. It's also a way for you to avoid any future price increases for subscriptions.

It's maybe not the Powerball where you can win millions, but it's a nice jackpot nonetheless. Unlike the Powerball where you're most likely throwing your cash away each time you play, you will get something in return from us no matter if you win the cash or not. You will get a weekly newspaper packed with local community news delivered to your home each week.

This is a great way to support your local newspaper, and it's a fun way

STEELE COUNTY Times
BAKER'S DOZEN GIVEAWAY

Good news: Minnesota's economy continues positive trends

BY JOHN PETERSBURG

Some people say you can't pick up a newspaper anymore and find good news. I'm not sure that's entirely true, but for those that think that way I have a fiscal story to share that is very positive.

For the remainder of this budget cycle, which ends this summer, our fiscal experts project Minnesota to have a \$1.3 billion budget surplus.

It's always good to see state tax collections going up instead of down. The economy is pretty strong, especially when you compare where we are today to what was said in our February forecast. Back then, some had thought there might be a recession next year or some form of economic slowdown. Now, those bad news sce-

narios are no longer being discussed.

A number of indicators have led to the \$1.3 billion surplus. They include a growing number of sales taxes being collected, rising wages, and low unemployment.

In addition, the surplus allows us to completely fill the state's budget reserve account. This means Minnesota now has \$2.359 billion available the next time we face an economic downturn.

But most importantly, we have \$1.3 billion to allocate before the legislature adjourns in May.

I do know this: with this news, we should be able to get through a session without talking about raising any of your taxes, because if there's one thing a surplus proves it's that state gov-

ernment does not need any more of your money.

To me, we should be looking at providing tax relief to Minnesotans with this surplus. Or another option would be to use some of the surplus on one time spending projects - such as roads and bridges.

What we are seeing now is that Minnesota can collect more in taxes if people are able to keep more of their money and spend it. Approving laws that provided tax relief years ago helped create this positive economic condition. If we continue down this path, I believe the good news will continue. Happy New Year to you!

John Petersburg is state representative for District 24A, which includes Steele and Waseca counties. He lives in Waseca.

STEELE COUNTY Times

Founded in 1893
Bussler Publishing, Inc.
www.steeledodge.com
Email: bptimes@frontiernet.net

USPS 058-340
Published weekly on
Wednesdays
Postmaster: Send address
changes to:

Steele County Times
P.O. Box 247
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
Phone: 507-583-4431

ETHICS: The Steele County Times editorial staff strives to present the news in a fair and accurate manner. Please bring any grievances against the Steele County Times to the attention of the Managing Editor.

Publisher Rick Bussler
Advertising Director..... Annie Anderson
Staff Writer Howard Lestrud
Staff Writer LeMar Nelson
County Writer..... Chris Baldwin

DEADLINES
News: Noon Fridays.
Web: 11 p.m. (Daily)
Advertising: 4 p.m.
Thursdays.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Steele, Dodge,
Freeborn & Mower \$46
Elsewhere
in Minnesota \$49
Out of state \$52

A state and national award winning weekly

MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

2019 - 7 state awards 2018 - 6 state and 4 national awards 2017 - 2 state and 3 national awards 2016 - 8 state and 6 national awards	2015 - 7 state and 4 national awards 2014 - 3 state and 3 national awards 2013 - 7 state and 2 national awards 2012 - 2 state awards 2011 - 4 national awards
---	---

(Awards presented by the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National Newspaper Associations)