

OPINION

Let's fight for clean energy

Minnesota has been a national leader in the fight for clean energy. We've set ambitious goals in the past, such as reaching clean energy transition goals, and we've achieved them. Now, especially as science identifies Minnesota as one of the fastest-warming states in the country, is the time to build on that success and continue growing our clean energy economy. Since elected, this has been a priority of mine at the State Capitol.

It's imperative that all policy-makers, regardless of political affiliation, acknowledge the evidence behind the changing climate patterns so we can work together to make positive change. Minnesotans are ready to take on these challenges as people from across the state, especially young Minnesotans, are calling on us to take meaningful action. Even Minnesota's largest utility, Xcel Energy, has recognized the



Zack Stephenson
State Representative

urgency of addressing climate change, and is committing to be 100% carbon free by 2050.

The 2018 report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that the world must sharply curb carbon dioxide emissions in the next 12 years to head off the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. One of the first bills I authored last session squarely works toward one solution by cutting back on carbon dioxide emissions.

My Clean Energy First Act would require that any new power generation built in Minnesota come from clean energy unless it can be proven by clear and

convincing evidence that clean energy wasn't affordable or reliable for the need. With the overwhelming majority of our state's fossil fuel power generation set to reach the end of its useful life over the next few years, my bill creates the framework for an orderly and smooth transition to a clean energy future.

Last session, the House took significant steps to prevent further consequences of climate change and build a clean energy economy. In addition to passing my Clean Energy First Act, the House set Minnesota on a path to achieve 100% clean energy by 2050. We worked for the creation of a Solar for Schools program that would save school districts money. Additionally, our clean energy plan would have shaped policies in our budget to accelerate the creation of clean energy jobs, reduce transportation emissions and support more efficient buildings and community

solar gardens. Unfortunately, none of these efforts were supported by the Minnesota Senate majority.

Despite this challenge under a divided Legislature, the House has formed a new Climate Action Caucus. This dedicated group, which I'm proud to be a part of, has been working together and with Minnesotans on a comprehensive plan to fight climate change and create a future in which we all thrive. These include strategies for the transportation, housing and public health sectors and more that we'll continue to examine in greater detail during the 2020 session. Additionally, Gov. Walz has shown commitment to taking bold action on addressing climate change.

The governor recently announced new executive action to establish the Climate Change Subcabinet and the Governor's Advisory Council on Climate

Change. Building on existing interagency collaboration and climate-related initiatives, the Subcabinet and the Advisory Council will guide the Walz-Flanagan administration in creating robust and collaborative action to combat climate change.

As Minnesotans sharing one environment, we're all in this together. I am thankful for everyone's work to promote awareness and pressure elected officials at all levels of government to act. Our children and grandchildren deserve the same opportunities we've had to enjoy our waters, lands and parks, and everything else that makes Minnesota an amazing place to live.

Rep. Zack Stephenson represents House District 36A, which includes the city of Champlin and part of Coon Rapids. Contact him at 651-296-5513 or rep.zack.stephenson@house.mn.

Letters to the editor

Ask the County Board to accept refugees

make a positive difference for future refugees.

Sandra McAnany
Coon Rapids

To the editor:

President Trump recently issued an executive order that requires local approval of any refugee resettlement in communities. This decision must be made by the end of January 2020. Gov. Tim Walz submitted a letter consenting to refugees being resettled in Minnesota, but county level consent is also needed. Kandiyohi County led the way for this approval with a 3-2 vote to accept refugees.

As a resident of Anoka County, I would encourage the County Board to also approve resettling refugees into our county. We have an outstanding educational system with English as a Second Language services readily available. Coon Rapids has an organization in place, Transformative Circle, which is building bridges across the area and could help new refugees feel welcomed. And as a fairly white county (84.5% per U.S. Census estimates in July 2018), continuing to accept refugees would allow all of us to learn more about other cultures.

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners meets twice per month, typically on the second and fourth Tuesday. Please consider contacting your commissioner today to share your views about the importance of refugees and our capacity within Anoka County to assist. Information about the board and list of Commissioners is available at anokacounty.us.

Together, all of us in Anoka County could

Look again at commissioner's explanation

To the editor:

Commissioner Matt Look's November letter to the editor claiming Anoka County turnover is low should be very concerning to the taxpayers. Commissioner Look states, "In reviewing the DHS list, we found the list identified 79 individuals who had been certified as assessors. DHS then took the fact that 29 of those individuals were no longer certified to mean there was a 37% turnover." Commissioner Look also concludes that the DHS information is inaccurate and that, "Unfortunately, this is nothing new for DHS as we have seen time and time again, they seem to have a difficult time with accuracy." Although Commissioner Look claims that Anoka County's turnover rate is actually "... lower than any of the counties highlighted," his analysis is flawed at best and, at worst, deceitful.

Consider the following: According to the information received following a data request, Commissioner Look's claims are false. For example, Commissioner Look claims that of the 79 individuals who were certified assessors, only 44 conducted assessments. Of these he states, "... one retired, two resigned and 41 are still employed at Anoka County." From this he calculates the assessor turnover rate as 6.8%. He failed to disclose that only 38 rather



than 41 are still doing assessments, yielding a 13.6% assessor turnover rate, double his calculation.

Next, Commissioner Look's mix and match misleading analysis is also demonstrated by the fact that of the 29 individuals no longer certified, only 14 remain as Anoka County employees. Incorporating this fact yields a 52% turnover rate for this group of County employees.

Finally, another factor Commissioner Look failed to consider is whether any of the other counties had similar issues or other reasons that might have affected their turnover rate. Without this information, Commissioner Look's conclusions are as bad or worse than his claims of DHS's inaccuracies.

I would strongly urge that before Commissioner Look criticizes the DHS or others for faulty in-

formation, he ensures his facts and claims are accurate and not misleading.

William Erhart
Ramsey

Anoka County vaccination rate should be higher

To the editor:

I am writing to inform about vaccination rates in our county and state. Vaccinations should be mandatory before reaching school age or before preschool/kindergarten, depending on when the child is enrolled into school.

In the 2018-19 statistics from the Minnesota Department of Health (tinyurl.com/relocrp), kindergarten vaccination rates were 91.78% to

95.04%, depending on the vaccine. For seventh-graders the vaccination rate was 91.44% to 97.07% depending on the vaccine.

For each vaccine in the report, less than one quarter of one percent of kindergartners in Anoka County had a medical exemption. Non-medical exemptions ranged from around 3% to almost 4% of kindergartners in Anoka County, depending on the vaccine. Anoka County seventh-graders saw similar rates of medical exemptions as kindergartners. Non-medical exemptions for seventh-graders ranged from 1.64% to 2.7%.

If you are not familiar, medical exemptions to vaccines include autoimmune diseases and allergies. Non-medical exemptions include religious or philosophical beliefs surrounding vaccinations.

I don't know if it is

wishful thinking to hope that we as Minnesotans and Americans would care more about the health and safety of children, but I am deeply saddened that those numbers are not at or near 100%. I never disregard medical exemptions, because those have a reason. But when it comes to non-medical exemptions, I am a religious person myself, but that will never negate the fact that children without vaccinations are not only a danger to themselves but the infants who are not old enough to receive a vaccination.

I write this letter to make people more aware of the decisions they are making for their children. They are choosing to put their children and others at risk.

Karoline Steil
Spring Lake Park

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