

OPINION

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OUR VIEW/ENDORSEMENT

Let Grimm, Erkkila vie to rep western Duluth

One has a background in business. One has experience working with and helping families and others in need of assistance and services. Both support responsible mining and a St. Louis County without a Duluth-Iron Range rift.



Erkkila



Grimm

In the Aug. 11 primary, voters from western Duluth have the chance to send Eric Erkkila and Ashley Grimm to the Nov. 3 election in the race to replace District 3 Commissioner Beth Olson on the County Board. A field of three first-time candidates will be trimmed to two on primary day.

organizer, helped build a summer program to give teens their first work experiences, is trained in restorative justice, and majored in history and political science at the University of Minnesota.

“What gets me really excited about running for the County Board is that there’s almost no other level of government that is charged with supporting families in the way that the County Board is,” Grimm said in a separate virtual interview with editorial board members. “I see (the challenges) every day with families. How they can build stability or how our services have gaps in them that leads to family separation. I see that every day in the work that I do. I want to be someone who’s knowledgeable about both the work that the county does, the impact that it has on families, and the real community organizing that it takes to get to where we need to go. I don’t want to lose the progress that Beth Olson has made.”

 “Why did I run? I got tired of complaining, and I wanted to start doing something to help the county,” Erkkila said in a candidate screening interview held virtually this month with members of the News Tribune Editorial Board. “The county has a huge budget. It’s a huge geographical area. It’s got a lot of issues that need to be dealt with, and I thought, well, at this point in time, the county has been good to me, so I wanted to come back and pay it back.”

The county’s big budget pays for things like highway maintenance, programs that help families in distress, and public safety. To responsibly pay for it all, Erkkila said, the county needs to do more to spur economic growth and the tax base.

“I bring the private-sector view to this, that by developing things, as the pyramid gets bigger at the bottom, you can support more going up,” he said. “We need a bigger tax base and more economic development.”

We also need to protect the county’s half percent sales tax for highway repairs so it’s never drawn from for other things. And we need an adequately funded St. Louis County Sheriff’s Department, Erkkila said.

“As far as I’m concerned, that sheriff’s department is way understaffed,” he said. “The police are an integral part of the community as far as keeping it safe and keeping people safe.”

Erkkila lives and works as a supplier to the mining industry from his home in western Duluth. He also has a cabin on Lake Vermilion, so he sees how “the Range needs Duluth, and Duluth needs the Range. ... I don’t know that Duluth would be the city that it is today (without the Iron Range). ... We have to get along to bridge that gap.”

 Grimm works at the Damiano Center in Duluth, operating a family and employment program. She is also a community

Grimm has also served seven years on the Duluth Human Rights Commission, including as its chair and vice chair. Her work included Duluth’s Homeless Person’s Bill of Rights. Energetic and smart, Grimm seems far better versed on Duluth-specific issues, but she has plenty of time before Election Day to bone up on county matters.

Asked about her priorities and focus if elected, Grimm said, “It’s making sure we have well-run county services right now, that over 1,800 county workers are supported and have not only the gear they need but the support in terms of work environment on the ground. ... One of the other top priorities is strong public health initiatives. ... This isn’t just about western Duluth. I want to be a strong representative for our families out here.”

 Also on the primary ballot for County Board District 3 is Joe Macor, who, with his wife, owns and operates a foster care home for disabled adults. He’s also a longtime volunteer coach for the Denfeld Junior Football League.

“I grew up here,” Macor said. “I want to make sure that my kids and the kids that I’ve coached the past 20 years have opportunities to stay here, to be successful, and certainly that there are some well-paying jobs in this county for them.”

READER'S VIEW

Don't play Russian roulette with others' health

There remains in Duluth and in the nation at large a core group of people who feel the wearing of masks in public is an infringement on their rights, however defined.

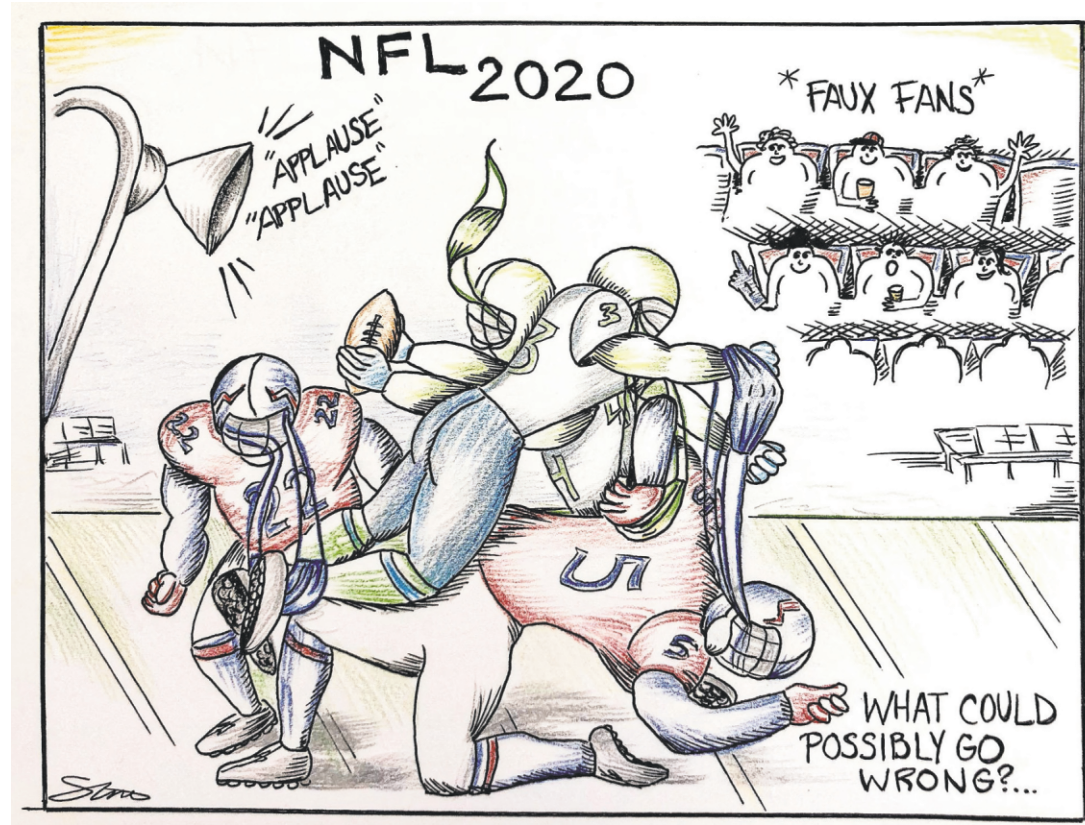
The major factor in mask mandates is public safety. If you wish to play Russian roulette with your health

or with the health of those who are dear to you, then I guess that’s on you and your right. As much as I may disagree with you, you are free to put yourself at risk. There is no law that mandates common sense.

However, no one has the right to play this same dangerous game with my health or with the health of those who are dear to me.

**Steve Cushing
 Duluth**

CARTOONIST'S VIEW



Contributed by Shannon Walters, Duluth

CANDIDATE'S VIEW

Women's health tops the issues in US Senate primary

Minnesota kills women in the federal breast cancer program to get the money, I believe. Minnesota needs to stop



STEVE CARLSON

stealing cancer treatment funds dedicated by Congress — and completely treat low-income women diagnosed with breast cancer in medical assistance for breast and cervical cancer.

Attorney General Keith Ellison’s interpretation ages women out of cancer treatment, which I think is a clear violation of the Age Act, as it’s denial and exclusion based on age. Money is taken from them and applied to younger women. Women die in Minnesota and other states because of U.S. Sen. Tina Smith’s actions ever since she was in the Minnesota governor’s office. Many more die nationwide by being aged out of their coverage.

Women 65 or older are excluded from the program. Women diagnosed with cancer at 64 lose coverage at 65.

In Washington, I would extend initial Medicaid coverage under the categorical Medicaid program to age 69, and I would work to educate fellow senators that aging women off coverage is a violation of federal law passed in 2000.

The Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act was not part of Obamacare. It’s the result of wonderful bipartisan women senators in action. Now they’re throwing granny

off the cliff.

The terrible June Medical v Russo case hit Minnesota women especially hard. A mother should not risk death because she decides to abort her baby. Throughout Minnesota, doctors without admission privileges to a hospital currently nonetheless perform abortions. The state needs to regulate the practice to ensure that women’s lives are protected in childbirth against abortion death or injury. Infection, anaesthetic complications, and hemorrhage are leading medical dangers to women in abortion.

No woman’s life can be abandoned by the Senate. The 14th Amendment grants states the right and duty to protect women. Now the court is left on the doorstep of overturning Roe v. Wade. The Russo case ensures abortion will continue to be dangerous for the mother. Russo needs to be revisited and modified.

The Alec Smith diabetes program also pays nothing; they won’t even identify whether a person is eligible for it. Minnesota violates the Constitution by refusing to give one dime to low-income diabetes patients. We need a real health-disparity program for low-income diabetes patients. Education, prevention, early detection, and treatment — not just a 30-day supply of insulin. Congress needs to take it up.

Opening during and after COVID-19 is a big problem. I’m grateful for the leadership of President Donald Trump and his team on this. It needs to continue. China’s behaved irresponsibly, destroying

samples and failing to inform the world and even the World Health Organization about the perilous nature of this new disease. In Minnesota and across the country, we have a big problem in nursing homes; we’ve done a poor job there. We have problems in the packing plants and other industries. I want to work with unions to address dangers and save jobs — good safe jobs. Minorities and low-income people are vulnerable to the coronavirus through employment, and we need a lot more care and knowledge there.

Reopening schools is big. It’s up to the governor and private schools. Naturally, we’ll need strict health guidelines. This is the domestic issue of the era, and we must win.

Health disparities and killer diseases are my focus in federal reform. Obamacare completely disoriented and crippled our health care, leaving the entire nation dependent on “expanding Medicaid” and now universal Medicare. Covering 80% of costs; excluding critical services and medical products; attacking killer diseases with education, early intervention, and prevention; and fully supporting diagnoses and treatments saves lives and money. It’s federal money well spent. We have to force the states to honor their commitments and obligations to patients.

Steve Carlson of St. Paul, Minnesota, is a Democrat candidate for U.S. Senate in the Aug. 11 primary. There are five Republican and five Democrat candidates for the seat currently held by U.S. Sen. Tina Smith. They were all invited by the News Tribune Opinion page to submit a commentary. Their “Candidate’s View” columns are being published this month.

READER'S VIEWS

Getting lyrics wrong isn't cool

This is to correct the “not cool” Jim Heffernan and his column’s reference to Little Richard’s lyrics in the song “Long Tall Sally” (Heffernan column: “A lesson in how not to be cool,” July 11).

No, Long Tall Sally did not see Uncle John and jump back in the alley. Here’s how it was written and sung by the very popular rock n’ roll artist, whose records were some of the first 45 rpms I ever purchased — me being “very cool,” of course, growing up in Two Harbors in the 1950s.

Little Richard sang, “Well I saw Uncle John with ball-headed Sally. He saw Aunt Mary coming and he ducked back in the alley.”

**Richard Bjorum
 International Falls, Minnesota**

Readers' Views and Local Views

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