

OPINION



PILOT EDITORIAL

Census participation much more than just the right thing to do

Over the next several months, we'll all hear repeatedly the benefits of participating in the decennial U.S. Census.

The drawing of legislative district boundaries is dependent on it.

The number of representatives we have in Congress is dependent on it.

The apportionment of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding is dependent on it.

But benefits aside, we should all willingly participate in the census for another reason: It's the law.

And not just any law, but constitutional law.

And not just any constitutional law, but an original constitutional law laid out in an original article authored by our Founding Fathers.

And not just any article, but Article 1, the first to appear in calligraphic hand under the famed preamble that begins with the immortal words, "We the People."

The census is not some recent bastardization of our revered Constitution.

It is not some modern means of government overreach.

It is not some malicious personal data collection mechanism.

It is a process vital to our constitutional republic.

So when you receive your first census mailing, do your civic duty, follow the law and reap the benefits.

All at the same time.

Contradicting conservation and profitable agriculture

On Dec. 16, 2019, a public hearing took place to discuss a proposed plan to make improvements to Judicial Ditch 3. The meeting assembled a group of conservation and agricultural professionals. Representatives of the Heron Lake Watershed District, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources were also present to make comment on the preliminary engineer's report for this project. Groups such as these have mission statements that vow to protect and improve our water and soil resources and, as farmers, we are to be stewards of the land. Yet we were considering a project that contradicts our mission and dedication to protect these very things. The drainage authority — in this case, the HLWD — has collected years of water quality monitoring data that show our waters are plagued with excessive sediment and nutrients. When outlining these issues, the HLWD states, "These problems are a direct result of drainage and the resulting higher peak and base flows." Approval of this project would produce more of what we know has degraded our water quality for over a century.

I understand we need

drainage in this part of the country to farm successfully. However, we have reached a tipping point at which we are asking our land to be something it is not. What was once wet prairie and marshland will always be wet to some point. No matter how much we tile to force water off the land as fast as possible, soil type, weather and other important variables all trump our best efforts to increase yield with agricultural drainage.

After I read the preliminary engineer's report, I was left wondering how an 8 percent reduction in flow rate to South Heron Lake was possibly calculated by the engineers. This project calls for 44 different branches of existing tile to be replaced with lines that are twice or more in diameter. On average, the proposed tile is 116 percent larger than what currently exists in the system. This substantial increase in capacity means the JD 3 output to South Heron Lake would be much more than what is currently discharged. The report mentions multipurpose drainage practices could be implemented in several areas and uses this point to justify the claim that there will be no reduction in water quality. I believe there is a very limited chance these additional

practices will actually be installed. The plan outlines installing one storage basin and a two-stage ditch with a calculated capacity of 20 acre-feet. There is no estimate given for the capacity of the first storage basin and I feel these two practices alone are not enough to offset the increased flow of the proposed JD 3 improvements. Furthermore, using conservation practices to justify drainage improvements is extremely contradictory and unacceptable. Conservation professionals well know drainage is one of the main contributors to degradation of our water quality as it adds significantly to the sediment and nutrient loads of our lakes and streams.

The other side to this debate is financial. No one's bottom line in farming is getting any larger. Adding hundreds of dollars per acre in input costs in the form of tax assessments places financial burdens on our farmers and landowners. Many elderly folks especially depend upon farm rent as their only income. They simply cannot pass these extra costs onto farmers renting ground as they are also unable to afford any additional overhead. Furthermore,

yield benefits from tile are difficult to calculate, as they are highly dependent upon soil type and weather. What type of yield increase per acre must we see to realize a profit on an investment we will likely not pay for in our lifetimes? After running some numbers, I found a \$150-per-acre assessment puts our farmers in the red when considering the average corn price in the last 10 years on the Chicago Board of Trade is only \$3.65.

When looking at this proposal from a conservation and financial standpoint, it is hard to understand why we as a community would approve of such a project. Increased output to South Heron Lake means additional reduction to our water quality, something we have vowed to protect and improve. Additionally, added financial burdens for our farmers, who may already be struggling to make money, makes this project a poor choice for people in our rural community.

(About the author: Lloyd Kalfs has a degree in natural resources from Northland College. He lives in Okabena.)

GUEST COLUMNIST
Lloyd Kalfs

What to do immediately after a crash

Question: What should a person do if involved in a crash?

Answer: Crashes happen every day in Minnesota — the Minnesota State Patrol alone handled more than 41,000 last year. It's important to know what to do immediately after one happens.

The first and most important thing to do after you've been involved in a crash is to get to a safe place. Worry less about "preserving the scene" for law enforcement and more about protecting yourself and your car from further

damage, especially if you're on a highway or interstate. This could mean driving — if possible — to the nearest off-ramp or underpass. If your car isn't drivable, stay inside the vehicle with your seat belt on, but move to the passenger's side so there is more room between you and traffic.

As soon as you are safe, call 911. When law enforcement arrives, you should exchange information with the other driver and take pictures of the damage and crash scene, but only when it is safe to do so.

What you will need to know about the other driver:

- Name
- Address
- Phone number
- License plate number
- Driver's license number
- Insurance company name
- Insurance policy number

Please remember that you can avoid a crash — and a ticket — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober.

If you have any questions concerning traffic-related laws or

issues in Minnesota, send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson, Minnesota State Patrol, at 2900 48th St. NW; Rochester, MN 55901-5848. Or reach him at Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us.



ASK A TROOPER
Sgt. Troy Christianson

LAST WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Q: What are you resolving to improve in the new year?



Source: Jackson County Pilot Website

THIS WEEK'S ONLINE POLL

Q: When will the Christmas decorations come down at your house?

Vote online at jacksoncountypilot.com.

Solution to the problem is so obvious

To the editor:

I am constantly hearing about climate change being a very real problem. God created the heavens and the earth — all that we see, including life itself — merely by speaking it into existence. With that kind of power, don't you think God could fix the climate change problem in a heartbeat, providing there actually is a climate change problem? The Book of Revelation explains exactly how this world as we know it will end. Guess what? Climate change is not mentioned.

I've had people tell me the Bible cannot be trusted or believed because it was written by men. One such person was a college professor. I reminded him the textbooks he teaches from were also written by men. The prophets who wrote the Bible could not have written it with the accuracy they did without a divine sense of intelligence — God — telling them what to write. But people refuse to believe in God; otherwise,

they cannot justify their behavior. They cannot pass legislation related to or embrace ideals such as same-sex marriage or abortion or the transgender movement if they truly believe in God because those actions are totally against how He intended us to live. Does that mean we are to persecute these people? No. But to legalize such behavior is to push God away. And when we do that, we have more violence, mass shootings, corruption, hatred, drug abuse and the like. We have created a serious dilemma, but because we have allowed ourselves to become so blind to the truth, we pass manmade laws to fix the spiritual problem we have created.

But what does God say about fixing the problem? "If my people, who are called by name, will turn from their evil ways and seek my face, I will hear from Heaven and heal their land."

That's the solution.

Daniel Miller
Spirit Lake, Iowa

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Jackson County Pilot welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must include the writer's name, as well as address and phone number for verification purposes. Letters should be brief, up to 300 words. The editor reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and the right to edit as needed. Submit letters in person at the Jackson County Pilot office, mail them to 310 Second St. in Jackson or email them to editor@livewireprinting.com. The deadline for letters is Monday noon. All submissions become the property of the Jackson County Pilot and may be published or otherwise used in any medium.

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