

# OPINION

## Cramer caves again

In a recent interview, respected former Sen. Kent Conrad was appalled by the current Senate. What a fall.

For years, Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., has cultivated the image of the supposed evangelical conservative. Sometimes he is Scrooge, quoting 2 Thessalonians to justify his vote to reduce spending on the food stamp program. He opposes health care for those with preexisting conditions, and made the bizarre claim that abortion causes school shootings.

In running for the Senate, he promised to vote with President Trump "100%" of the time. So far, he has kept this word. Perhaps he, too, listened to the president's spiritual adviser Paula White—Cain who said, "To say no to President Trump would be saying no to God."

If you're a woman...Yikes! Other leaders also seem so aligned. Mega-church pastor Rodney Howard-Browne claims Jesus would "beat the crap" out of John Bolton, saying, "I have no respect for someone who is disloyal to the president." When did Jesus, the Prince of Peace, ever strike anyone?

But now we come to the impeachment. On his website, Cramer calls the impeachment a "tragedy," ignoring the 13,000+ Ukrainians slaughtered by Russia; the approved money withheld in order to simply announce an investigation against Trump's political rival. No real investigation needed. So much for attempting to root out corruption. All this while ignoring corruption elsewhere, even in his own background.

Cramer then pivots to money: "Look at the stock market. Look at the economy. We see record low unemployment numbers for a more demographic and growing investor confidence thanks to trade deals secured by President Trump," despite all the biblical warnings on the love of money. Even Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., declared his actions wrong.

It's interesting that the president constantly complained that he was treated so unfairly by the Democrats. He had no witnesses in the hearings. Or only secondhand.

That would be because he blocked firsthand witnesses. It reminds me of the old Dear Abby column, when she defines "chutzpah": a man who kills his parents then cries out to the court for mercy, because he's an orphan. If innocent, show us the truth.

For someone who claims to adhere to the bible, it is difficult to see the biblical application here. It's impossible to see Cramer following his oath as a Senator: "to support and defend the Constitution." Yet he supports a show trial, without witnesses, without documents, following the lead of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who declared the verdict before a trial has begun. That is un-American. And the lack of accountability only emboldens the president to repeat his efforts to bribe and influence other governments to bend, not to the will of America, but to his own, personal agenda.

And, no, joining in a March for Life does not absolve the president. "Pro-life" must include the living, including Ukrainians.

An old line I heard says, "If two people always agree, one of them is unnecessary." I hope Cramer will re-think his allegiance, and remember his oath to this country, to his office, and even his faith.

Interested in a broad range of issues, including social and faith issues, Erickson serves as a regular contributor to the Forum's opinion page. She is an English instructor.



JOAN BRICKNER

## Routine sealing of search warrants docs is a concern

### OUR VIEW

At almost 10:30 p.m. on the night of Sept. 7, 2019, a man walked into a liquor store on Main Avenue in Fargo, brandished a handgun, and demanded that the clerk fill a "thank you" bag on the counter with cash from the till.

As ensuing events unfolded, we now know that the man not only committed a serious crime, but triggered a worrisome response by police, whose reaction to a news report about the robbery has resulted in the routine sealing of search warrant documents.

The ability of police to conduct searches is one of the most significant powers our laws grant to law enforcement. A search intrudes upon a suspect's normal right to privacy and could result in collection of evidence leading to the person's arrest and imprisonment.

Here's the sequence of events that prompted Fargo police to more frequently seal search warrant records.

The liquor store robber wore distinct yellow, white and black shoes and the handgun was black and silver. A Fargo police officer investigating the robbery identified a "person of interest" when reviewing similar handgun robberies.

Video from an earlier robbery in Moorhead showed the "person of interest" wearing the same distinctive shoes and discovered

that the man posted a picture of the same shoes on his Facebook page — completing an incriminating fact pattern that led to a search warrant of the man's Fargo apartment.

During the search, police found the distinctive shoes, along with a "thank you" bag and handgun consistent with those used in the liquor store robbery. When questioned by police, the man denied committing the robbery, but could not produce a convincing alibi.

The man's name aired in a local television newscast on KVLY, even though the man had not been arrested for the Fargo liquor store robbery — and still hasn't, which is why The Forum is withholding his name.

Policy of the Fargo Police Department grants detectives discretion in seeking to have the documents laying out probable cause for a search warrant, and a description of any items seized, sealed.

There are no guidelines — again, this consequential decision is at the officer's discretion. And, based on reporting by The Forum's April Baumgarten, it appears that judges are often willing to go along with requests to seal.

This involves a delicate balancing act, with various rights and interests at stake.

The evidentiary

standard for a search, a probable cause to believe a person committed a crime, is lower than the "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard required to convict a person of a crime. So not all searches lead to criminal charges. Therefore, there is an interest in not casting suspicion on the person who is not charged.

There is no disagreement about opening search records after a suspect has been arrested. But if sealing search documents becomes the norm, an important part of our police and court process plays out for a time in the dark.

That lack of transparency is a recipe for abuse, as we recently learned was the case with the highly secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. An investigation recently found that the warrants issued by the court frequently were based on misleading information by FBI agents.

The presumption should be that routine search warrants should not be sealed after they are served but before an arrest. That's been a longstanding practice. We urge judges to carefully scrutinize police requests to keep search documents under seal, and to grant such requests sparingly.

The recent trend of sealing search documents much more frequently, seemingly on a whim, should end.

Editorials represent the views of Forum members and the Editorial Board.

## Rush Limbaugh changed my life

In June 2006, I was sitting in a Perkins restaurant having a late lunch with a friend when my phone went out of control.

It was buzzing and beeping and ringing incessantly. While at first, I ignored it, I eventually broke out of my conversation to see what was going on, worried that something terrible had happened.

What happened wasn't terrible. It was Rush Limbaugh.

He had mentioned on his radio show something I wrote on SayAnythingBlog.com.

My phone was exploding with messages from friends and family and readers all over the country who had heard it.

When I got home from lunch, I discovered that the blog was offline, crushed under a spike in traffic. A frustrating development, since you want to be online when a national figure like Limbaugh sends thousands of visitors your way.

At the time, the blog was going on three years old, and I was operating on a shoestring budget scraped together on the meager revenues of a few banner ads.

I couldn't afford, on a month-to-month basis, the sort of web hosting it takes to handle a Limbaugh-sized audience.

Still, that was a pivotal moment in my career. When I started in late 2003, blogging was a hobby for me — a fun way to explore and understand current events. By 2006, with readership growing, I had begun to realize I was kind of good at it, but I still wasn't convinced it would ever do anything more than something I did in my spare time.

Then Rush Limbaugh, a man I had grown up listening to in the car with my parents, somehow found a thing I wrote and considered it worthy of touting to his national audience of millions.

Suddenly, bigger things seemed possible.

Suddenly, friends and family, who I suspect thought the whole blogging thing a little silly, started looking at me differently.

It's fair to say that Limbaugh changed the trajectory of my life. If he hadn't mentioned my post that day, I'm not sure I would have kept at it, and you probably wouldn't be reading this column.

There are a lot of people working in politics and the media these days, especially from the Republican/conservative perspective, who have similar stories. It's hard to overstate the man's importance to the conservative movement. For a long time, conservatives looking for a right-of-center perspective on the news of the day had nowhere else to go but his omnipresent, mid-day show.

His is an enormous talent, deployed with savvy and humor, and a willingness to speak hard truths. That he also sometimes descended into the puerile, that he displayed a propensity to become almost a caricature of himself, only showed that he was human.

I was stricken by the news of Limbaugh's illness. With his energy and his optimism, it didn't seem like he would ever have to quit. Perhaps it is the product of middle age. I'm no longer the 20-something upstart I was when Limbaugh crashed my website for me.

Now I'm closing in on the dreaded 40.

Still, I look at Limbaugh's life, and I find solace. With hard work and prodigious talent, he ascended to heights of success and influence achieved by few others working in his medium. However you feel about his politics, what he did with his life more than his words and a newspaper is both astounding and inspiring.

An example to the rest of us of what can be achieved through hard work and tenacity.

Good luck, Rush. And thank you. To comment on this article, visit [www.sayanythingblog.com](http://www.sayanythingblog.com)

Rob Port, founder of SayAnythingBlog.com, a North Dakota political blog, is a Forum Communications columnist. Listen to his Plain Talk Podcast and follow him on Twitter @RobPort.



ROB PORT Forum News Service

Commentary



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Are you all so perfect?

By Betty Dickson Moorhead  
I watched President Trump's State of the Union address last week. I thought it was very good. Although, seeing Speaker of the House

Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., sitting on the platform was a disaster. Does she have any friends?

I have never seen people so against a president in all my years. No other president has been treated in such a rude

manner.

Trump has tried to do right, but no one gives him a chance by condemning everything he tries to do.

This is not the American way. Wake up, America! Are you all so perfect?

#### Trump and Pelosi both appear childish

By Michael A. Ross Detroit Lakes, Minn.  
Isaiah 3:12: "Childish leaders oppress my people."

President Trump snubbed Speaker of the House Nancy

Pelosi, D-Calif., by refusing to shake her outstretched hand. Pelosi tore up her copy of the president's State of the Union address.

Both actions were in front of Congress and on every TV

network for the nation and the world to see. How childish, juvenile, callow. These are our highest officials of government?

These are our "leaders." God help us.

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