

Opinion

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.



Karen Cyson
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Those who had measles must tell their story

I vividly remember having measles and mumps at the same time, which is why I was home on the sofa watching television on Nov. 22, 1963. The combination was more surreal than anything an 8-year-old should have to experience.

Before concerted vaccination programs, the U.S. had upward of 200,000 cases of mumps per year. Measles vaccines introduced in 1963 and mumps vaccines introduced in 1967 resulted in dramatic decreases in the spread of these diseases. Measles was declared eradicated in the U.S. in 2000.

Silly me. I thought having spots on my lumps while watching Walter Cronkite deliver devastating news was unpleasant. Little did I realize that as an adult I'd be living in a time when people did "internet research" rather than listening to medical professionals, when they'd take health care advice from television celebrities, when unsubstantiated and discredited research which never proved a causal link would lead parents to leave their children unprotected from the scourge of these highly communicable diseases.

But here we are, living in a nation led by a game show host, where parents will listen to medical advice from B-list personalities. Where has this taken us?

Since 2015, there's been a resurgence of both diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that as of July there have been 1,799 cases of mumps in 45 states and 1,241 cases of measles in 31 states in 2019.

The U.S. earned its measles eradication status in 2000. In 2019, we will probably lose that designation due to multiple measles outbreaks spread by unvaccinated children and adults.

While there is much conversation about vaccines, pro and con, and serious threats to babies and those with compromised immune systems who cannot be vaccinated, no one seems to be talking about the diseases themselves.

Come on, baby boomers. This is your place in the debate. It's time we started speaking up about what it was like to have these diseases. Parents today have no memory of anyone around them having measles, mumps, rheumatic fever, whooping cough, rubella (German measles), tuberculosis, scarlet fever and polio. It's no wonder they don't take the threat seriously.

Speak up and let parents know what it was like "back in the day." Talk about the fevers and the blisters. Talk about the eye damage and sterility. Talk about the scars and the lung damage. Talk about the permanent damage and the braces and the wheelchairs from polio. This is your story to tell.

Polio was declared eradicated in the

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OUR VIEW



The St. Cloud City Council's decision to move the public forum portion of its weekly meetings from before the open discussion to after the meeting is adjourned has sparked concern. DAVE SCHWARZ/ST. CLOUD TIMES FILE

Council got it wrong; Hontos got it correct

Letter protested attack on public's right to be heard

When it comes to the public's right to be heard, St. Cloud City Council member George Hontos got it right in criticizing recent moves by the City Council.

Sure, he might not be all that diplomatic. But he's still right about the most important issue here – constituents are due a fair and reasonable opportunity to express their views at City Council meetings to the widest audience possible.



Hontos

The council's recent decision to move the public forum portion of its weekly meetings from before the open discussion to after the meeting is adjourned – when broadcasting has ceased and minutes aren't being taken – is absurd. It's a move that damages not only residents' right to be heard, but also dings public regard for what is otherwise a generally well-run city.

Hontos was 1,000% correct in his Aug. 14 Times commentary to state this is an attack on the public's right to be heard.

The five council members who supported these changes clearly do not value accountability and transparency. They also are sending a pretty strong message of disrespect for the views of residents, intentional or not.

Got something to say? We're gonna make you wait until our meeting is over. And we're also going to adjourn and then not broadcast your appearance or put what you said in our official minutes.

Talk about putting a heavy mute on the voice of the people.

The Editorial Board

Our View represents the Times Editorial Board, whose members seek to provide opinion, information and leadership that promote public discussion and build a better community.

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- **Lisa Schwarz**, news director
- **Randy Krebs**, engagement editor
- **Anna Haecherl**, content coach

Censure vote

By 4-2 secret ballot Monday, the council censured Hontos for his Aug. 14 Times letter to the editor.

In it, Hontos publicly objected to the decision the council made about moving the public forum and changing what council members could address during their open forum portion of meetings.

According to the Times news report, first-term member Mike Conway cited Monday a rule of council conduct that states council members "respect the majority vote of the council, and do not undermine or sabotage implementation of ordinances, policies and rules passed by the majority."

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We can solve the civics crisis across Minnesota



Your Turn
Rep. Dean Urdahl
Guest columnist

Our republic faces crisis after crisis: Our government is crippled by polarization, Congress can't seem to get anything done, Supreme Court appointments have become a three-ring circus, no agreement can be reached on immigration and our borders, health care solutions can't be reached, our infrastructure is decaying, and the national debt is out of control.

It's easy to identify the problems. Digging deeper shows that these are the results of a more pervasive root cause: the diminishing of civic education nationally and in Minnesota. The

foundation of our understanding of how our government works is withering. The outcomes include confusion, misunderstanding and decay in our system. A district court judge has told me that every day he sees the repercussions of citizens not understanding how our system works.

The failure is measurable. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, the highly respected "Nation's Report Card," reports that 75% of our graduates leave high school not proficient in civics. They are failing. A nationwide poll found that two-thirds of Americans can name an "American Idol" judge, but only 15% can name the chief justice of the Supreme Court. One-third of our graduates can't name

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St. Cloud is better than reputation that persists

Your Turn
Jeanine Nistler
Guest columnist

St. Cloud has its problems. All communities do.

But not all cities' problems are featured in the New York Times, which is what St. Cloud experienced in the summer when the city was portrayed as racist, and more specifically, anti-Somali.

That NYT article stirred up my 95-year-old friend June, who asked me to write this to make the case that St. Cloud is a better community than its "White Cloud" reputation leads people to believe. June asked me to share as proof the fact that St. Cloud residents – white, black, brown, young, old – work side by side in the community gardens

of the Central Minnesota Sustainability Project.

I'll tell you more about my friend June in a bit. And I'll risk her scolding me for mentioning her by name.

But first, let me tell you about the gardens.

The Central Minnesota Sustainability Project (CMSP) was born of a local couple's love of people, the land and natural food. Rick Miller and Carol Gibson-Miller created CMSP in 2009.

A decade later, that labor of love has yielded far more than fresh vegetables for dozens of gardeners.

As June attests, the gardens are bringing people of diverse backgrounds together as they plant, weed and harvest their individual plots within the

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