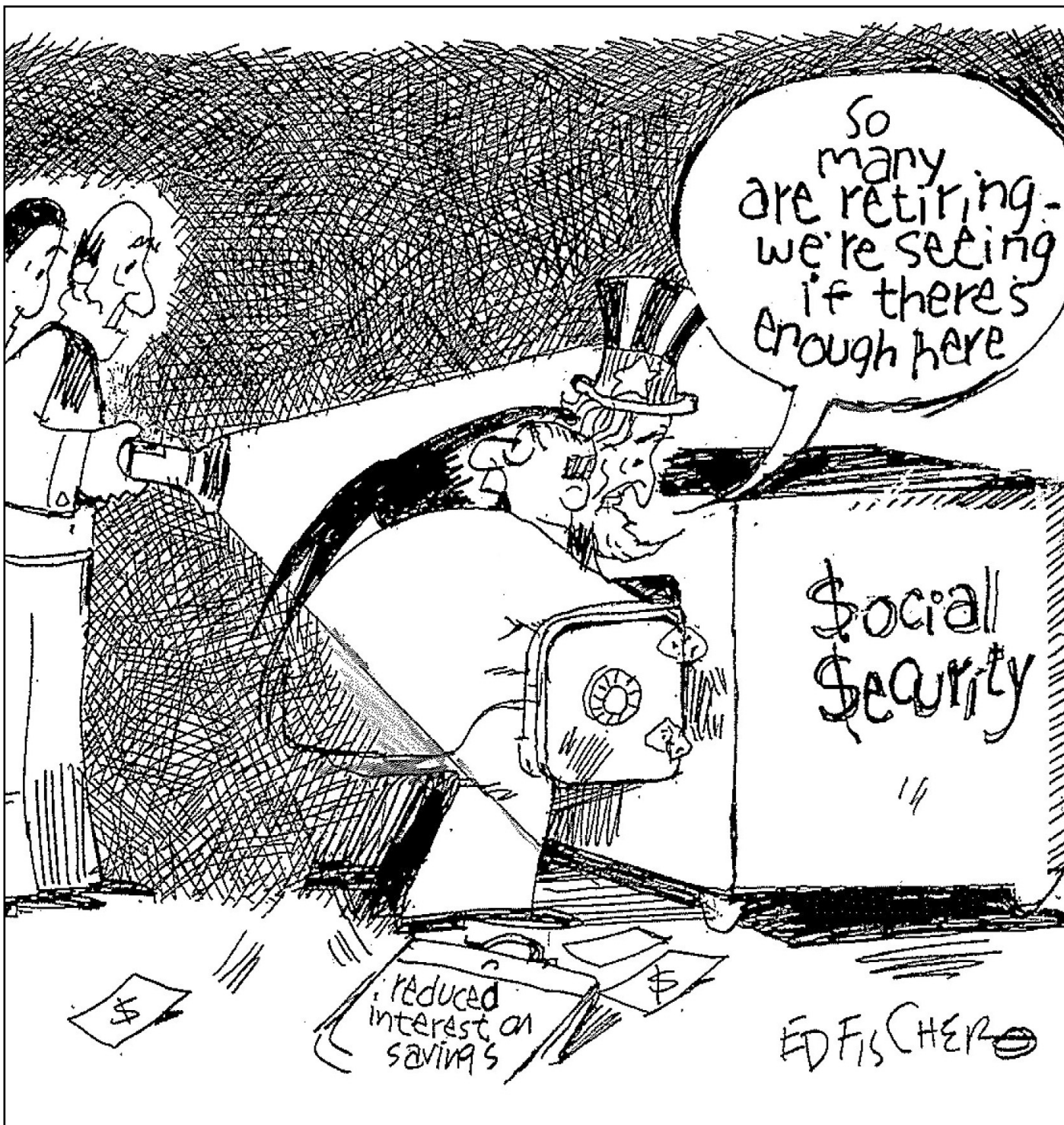


OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Come on Henning we are better than this

To the Editor,
 Henning Residents,
 I never thought the small town of Henning would run a campaign for local positions like Washington DC does. It has actually made me pretty sad. Where did the time go when candidates expressed to the public personally their plan to best run a community instead of using social media and other means to backstab individuals, to gain the feeling of "power" or wanting to be a pleaser versus being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. Do we want to be put on the map for that? If the answer is no, we have missed that opportunity. I have experienced "the talk" in area communities about what they are saying about Henning. We all may need to refresh our memory and watch the Disney movie "Bambi" and see what Thumper has to say about the respect of others.
 I am thankful that we still have the opportunity to express our options, but it is how we present ourselves as to how the reader/listener will interpret it. We all should respect each others option, but most of all tell the truth as to what we observed. For that reason, I found the need to express

myself with the truth in a situation I experienced personally. I was appalled when I read the column in last week's paper from a non-resident of Henning as only portions of the meeting were highlighted. I was personally at the September 1 meeting of the city council as a concerned taxpayer and family member of a resident at the assisted living facility in Henning. My observation of the meeting was quite different then what was expressed in the column.
 First and foremost, our local paper is something we should be proud of and not backlash it. They are the experts on what legally can and cannot be printed and to remain unbiased in their printing. I have seen nothing but the best of the Citizen's Advocate providing the facts they are given within the articles they publish for many local organizations and businesses in the community. The picture put in the paper was not just what was physically observed at a split second of the meeting, but was visible for quite some time at the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
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Is the outcome of an election really worth discrediting a local business?

A few weeks ago a person pulled me aside when I was leaving the bank and asked how I was doing.

I must have looked stressed or worn out, because it wasn't the typical how are you doing opening statement that leads to a longer conversation. The tone of his voice sounded more like he learned my dog just died.

My response was short, and probably as somber as one would expect given the events of the past few weeks. All I said was I can't wait for this election to get over. He agreed and shared that same depressed look on his face.

One of the words I have heard a lot over the past few months to describe the state of Henning's election is "sad." Not necessarily concerning who may or may not be elected to the Henning City Council and as Mayor, but of the toll this election is taking on our small community.

That leads me to a Letter to the Editor entitled "Yes let's talk about the picture" that was featured in the Oct. 20 issue of the Citizen's Advocate. I feel it is important to address a few of the issues raised by Jamie Wilson in her Letter to the Editor, including that quotes from the mayor were being selectively picked to include in articles. Just as was the case when Jeremiah Rice and the late Jim Hermanson were mayors, the discussion at city council meetings seem to be led by the mayor. So many times, it is the mayor's comments that are used in the article since they are



Henning Happenings
 Chad Koenen

the ones leading the conversation. Under those previous mayors, we were never accused of being biased for not including more comments from the council.

I also feel it is important to address our policy regarding Letters to the Editor.

Recently, our integrity was questioned regarding Letters to the Editor and Letters of Endorsement not being published in the paper. The Citizen's Advocate received Letters of Endorsement for more than one candidate on Oct. 23, a full week after our policy deadline for such endorsements.

Our policy also states for Letters to the Editor to be published they must include a signature, which includes a Letter to the Editor that we received at the beginning of the election season. This unsigned letter is still in our office should the author wish to sign and have it published in the Citizen's Advocate.

We continue to maintain the same policy regarding Letters to the Editor that many newspapers in the state maintain. This policy has been in place for over 10 years, and up until this

“ When this election is over many of the people who have been commenting about us online, in the public and making innuendos about a perceived bias, will be able to go back to their life like nothing happened. Meanwhile, after the election, businesses like ours will be busy picking up the pieces left by the scorched-the-Earth approach being taken by some individuals who want their candidate to win. In the end we ask, was it worth it? ”

year, an issue concerning this policy has never been raised.

Basically, if a Letter to the Editor is signed and is submitted by our 12 p.m. on Friday deadline we will include it in our next issue. Our policy reflects our view on the First Amendment, everyone has a voice, not just the people we agree with. Therefore, if a Letter to the Editor is submitted on time, follows our policy and is factually accurate, we include it in the paper no questions asked. Our policy also states unsigned Letters to the Editor will not be included in our publication—period. The public has a right to know who is raising an issue and you should be willing to stand behind your words.

During an election year we also restrict Letters of Endorsement and Letters to the Editor to be fair to all candidates involved. We published our policy regarding political Letters to the Editor and Letters of Endorsement on Sept. 1 and a reminder was published on

Oct. 20 that stated the final week to publish endorsement letters was on Oct. 20. The only Letters to the Editor that will be included in this week's issue are responses to issues that are included in the Oct. 20 newspaper.

Devious comments about this publication began months ago after we posted potential tax and utility rates being proposed by the city's own financial planner. Much of the public information, which was discussed at length during a few public meetings, showed that utility rates and taxes could go up by as much as \$200 per month, over what a typical household was paying in 2019 by the year 2027, to cover future projects and upcoming costs (in the effort of full disclosure the council has not adopted their financial advisors plan fully and opted to make a smaller increase in utility rates next year).

Near the end of the meeting a city employee asked those in attendance to not release the public informa-

tion until more information is gathered by the council. If being biased, as we were accused of being in this very publication last week, was releasing this information despite a request from a city employee to those in attendance to not release the data presented at a public meeting, then I guess we are biased.

On occasion we get things wrong and when that happens, we accept responsibility and run a correction. Despite repeated comments being made in the public about the utility rates presented in this community, no such correction has been requested because the information released was the city's own figures.

If you want to attack us on what is in the newspaper then go right ahead it is your First Amendment right. In today's world attacking the media is the norm, perhaps even a game to some people. But attack us on facts.

I have been working at newspapers for 16 years and have never had so many conflicts occur during an

election season. In fact, I'm assuming the very contents of this editorial or Letters to the Editor in this week's issue will also be blasted in the public.

If anyone has an issue with this publication the respectable way to address it would be to contact us in person, on the phone or in email so that we can respond in kind.

The effect this election has had on the moral fiber (a term I learned while attending the Blandin Leadership training in 2013) of our business in the community is unfortunate and disappointing.

It seems like a majority of this community is about as fed up with the antics of this local election as we are, from both sides of the electorate.

After all, what is the end goal in all of this? To try to get a few extra votes by attacking the reputation of those who you deem as not supporting you or your candidate? Is taking a win at all costs approach to an election worth jeopardizing the integrity of a business?

When this election is over many of the people who have been commenting about us online, in the public and making innuendos about a perceived bias, will be able to go back to their life like nothing happened.

Meanwhile, after the election, businesses like ours will be busy picking up the pieces left by the scorched-the-Earth approach being taken by some individuals who want their candidate to win. In the end we ask, was it worth it?

CITIZEN'S Advocate

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Staff Members:
 Chad and Dani Koenen, Publishers

Office Hours:
 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Monday-Friday
 Closed Saturday-Sunday

Address: 412 Douglas Ave., PO Box 175, Henning MN, 56551-0175.
Phone: 218-548-5585
Fax: 218-548-5582
Email: news@henningadvocate.com
 www.henningadvocate.com

Letter's to the Editor

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