

OPINION

"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...
ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS,"

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

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Editorial

Police in Tower

City residents have made it clear that local policing is not a high priority

The city council in Tower has an important decision to make in the coming days over whether they wish to contract for coverage with the soon-to-be reconstituted Breitung Police Department.

Based on public sentiment, including survey results, officials in Breitung likely made the right decision—for them—in moving ahead with the hiring of a police chief. Yet, as most of us know, these twin towns don't always view things in the same way and that certainly appears to be the case when it comes to local policing. When Breitung suspended its police department back in March, we had expected to hear more from residents in Tower on the subject. Instead, the change, for the most part, generated a collective shrug from the community. When the city council held two well-publicized public meetings to take citizen input on the subject, council members sat in nearly empty rooms. Out of the roughly 500 residents in town, only 23 bothered to return a survey asking for opinions on the question. And only three of those surveys indicated contracting with Breitung as their first choice. The most popular of the eight options offered on the survey was to simply rely on 911 service from the St. Louis County Sheriff.

Perhaps residents in Tower recognize the tradeoffs involved. Up until March, the police contract consumed about 30 percent of the city's levy. That's a huge expense for a service that, as the past several months have shown, city residents don't care all that much about. If the city missed plowing the streets after the next big snowstorm, you can rest assured that city council members would catch heck for it right away.

They catch grief regularly for the condition of city streets, or for the city's longstanding failure to enforce its blight ordinance. But the disappearance of the Breitung police? It's been mostly just crickets.

The tradeoffs are very real. When the city spent approximately \$115,000 on its police contract last year, that was money that couldn't be used to improve city streets and alleys. It's money that couldn't be used as the local match on any number of grant-funded projects, or for economic development, or for any of a number of other services that small towns often provide for their residents. Perhaps, most significantly, it's money that could otherwise support a sizable reduction in the city's property tax levy, which is

already among the highest around, given the size of its tax base. That could save some city residents \$1,000 or more per year, on residential property alone.

What's more, the city could just wait and see how it works out in Breitung. It appears that Breitung is moving ahead with the hiring of a police chief, regardless of what Tower decides to do. That means there's no inconvenience for the township if the city holds off on a decision. As a city that's still recovering from its financial crunch, the city could simply bank the savings it is presently experiencing from the discontinuance of its police contract to bolster its cash flow and begin to rebuild its reserves.

It's not as if the city doesn't have police coverage, no matter which way the council goes. Since the Breitung police department suspended operations last March, St. Louis County Sheriff's deputies have been noticeably present in the community. The sheriff's office is a well-run, professional organization that provides generally prompt response to emergency calls and maintains real investigative resources when crimes are committed. One could argue that Tower-Soudan would be better served having the sheriff's office as the primary responding agency rather than a very small police department with marginal resources. And, since taxpayers are already paying for the sheriff's office through their county levy, there need be no additional cost for that service.

Most residents of the Tower area, including Greenwood, Vermilion Lake, Kugler, and Eagles Nest townships, have long relied on the sheriff's office for law enforcement. Greenwood alone has nearly twice the year-round population, ten times the summer population, twenty times the property value, and at least as many businesses as Tower, and relies, without issue, on the sheriff's office for local law enforcement. If residents there didn't feel they were well-served by the sheriff's office, we suspect we would have heard about it by now.

It's understandable if members of the city council don't rely on the feelings of township residents to make their decision. They'll likely rely, instead, on the input they received from residents of Tower, who've made it abundantly clear that a local police department is not a high priority.



Letters from Readers

Why do free people fall for charlatans?

Why do free people fall for charlatans?

The Rise of the Moors group had 200 or more people rally in Philly. It's amazing to me how a free people, such as we are, can fall for the words and ideas these charlatans expound. The Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Jim Jones, David Koresh, are four that come to my mind easily. The list is much larger though I won't go into it here; I'm sure that the point is clear.

Skip Dickinson
Britt

New thinking needed in forestry

Recent breakthrough research has revealed that trees exchange nutrients not only with like species, but with other trees not of their DNA.

"Finding the Mother Tree" by Dr. Suzanne Simard illustrates the importance of fungal mycelia relaying nutrients back and forth along their underground networks to trees and other plants. In short, using the aid of the mycelia, trees help each other with nitrogen, water, and minerals, and also send warnings of disease or insect invasion. In turn the trees can give the fungal networks the sugars that they cannot make.

This is must reading for all forestry managers who presently think of trees as only a crop and also think of "weed" or competitive trees as needing elimination. For U.S. Forest Service lands, this has been partly dealt with in the courts whereby herbicides have mostly been eliminated and mechanical brushing is used instead. This gives other species a chance to grow back and re-integrate. However, on state and county lands here in Minnesota, herbicides are still in heavy use. Biologists, botanists and timber managers need to become re-educated as to the intricate and complicated relationships that exist in the world of tree roots and fungal life. Even new horticultural studies and practices have shown the importance of mycelia and their relationship with plants.

Unfortunately, government

management mentality is slow to change. Timber is a valuable and versatile resource, and select cutting while leaving "seed" or "mother" trees (with their established fungal networks) is better than clear cutting, as done in the past.

Mark Roalson
Hoyt Lakes

Critical Race Theory is not taught in our K-12 schools

Critical Race Theory, or CRT, which originated in the 1970s, is a body of legal scholarship that seeks to critically examine U.S. laws and how they intersect with race, examining possible disparate outcomes in the legal system based on race. In the 1990s, Critical Race Theory became a research design used by scholars in education focusing on inequities in the context of schools with research on the impact of segregation, relations between race, gender, and academic achievement and pedagogy.

Critical race theory is not a subject taught in schools, but a theoretical concept examined in research designs and methodologies. By scholars. By researchers. Not teachers. Not in classrooms. Not in elementary schools. Not in secondary schools.

Recently, an individual named Christopher Rufo went on a rampage against Critical Race Theory, erroneously claiming that it was being taught in our classrooms as an attempt to indoctrinate students. His bizarre rant incited such an uproar that lawmakers in 16 states have introduced or passed legislation prohibiting the teaching of CRT in public institutions with groups in stopping school board meetings and school administrators and holding rallies demanding that CRT be abolished.

The good news for everyone concerned is that CRT is NOT taught in any elementary or secondary classroom. It is a concept and research focus that is only applied in legal and academic research courses and designs.

Teaching accurate facts and history is not CRT. Learning about slavery, the civil rights movement, Japanese-American internment camps, the Tulsa Massacre, the

Underground Railroad, the Trail of Tears, Indian boarding schools, Sundown towns and green cards, segregation, the lunch counters, and the history of voting rights is not CRT.

In an effective classroom, teachers often plan curriculum units to nurture knowledge and critical thinking skills in students. Students in these classrooms have access to multiple resources, literature, and materials in examining a topic.

In my education courses, I often designed curriculum units. An example was one I developed on Emmett Till. Students utilized multiple resources. Factual news reports. Research. Books. One powerful book was a young adult story by Chris Crow, "Mississippi 1955" along with a factual book by the same author, "Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of Emmett Till." A beautiful poetic tribute to Emmett Till, "A Wreath for Emmett Till" by Farsi Chideya was also offered. The book begins with the words, "Emmett Till's name still catches in my throat like syllables waylaid in a stutterer's mouth." Students also pondered the meaning of a poem by Langston Hughes, "Mississippi 1955" along with a story song by Emmy Lou Harris, "My Name is Emmett Till."

The response of students was impressive as they pondered, digested, researched, and engaged in meaningful discussions and projects. This is teaching. This is critical thinking. Examining. Learning. Expanding. And growing.

For all who are up in arms about Critical Race Theory, you can relax. It is not being taught in any elementary or secondary classroom. It is a meaningless inflammatory buzzword which has alarmingly gained too much traction.

As a retired educator, I ask anyone who are concerned to spend time in classrooms. Talk to teachers. Engage in meaningful discussions. And listen. Listen carefully to those voices so vastly different from your own. Listen to your own children. Discuss books that they read. Read them together, grow, learn, and expand.

Ellie Larmouth
Retired educator
Tower

Flight turns writer 'Blue' with envy

Most folks are familiar with the phrase "green with envy." While some attribute its origins to the ancient Greeks, others turn to William Shakespeare's Othello and his declaration of jealousy as a "green-ey'd monster" as the inspiration



DAVID COLBURN

for the phrase. Whatever its origins, green has long been the color associated with the feeling of envy.

But this past Tuesday, I sat down in front of my computer with my usual cup of extra dark coffee, a couple of pieces of toast slathered with smooth (never crunchy) peanut butter, and pulled up the

Washington Post website, to which I subscribe. It was to be a typical day.

But in the center of the page was a live video stream of the impending launch of Blue Origin, the rocket that was about to take the world's richest man, Jeff Bezos, and three other passengers to the edge of space. Bezos, known as the owner of the online shopping behemoth Amazon, also happens

to own the Washington Post. While he doesn't get involved in the paper's editorial content, how could the Post not cover live its owner's historic flight? Like millions of other kids in the 60s, space flight fascinated and enthralled me. I bought and assembled models of all of NASA's spacecraft and used them to do my own simulations while watching similar ones on TV. Out in the attic of the barn behind our house was a cardboard refrigerator box that I had converted into a spaceship that carried me, my sisters, and numerous friends on many a thrilling mission, aborted only by the sound of Mom's voice calling us to dinner. Like millions of other kids, someday I wanted to go to space.

But my space of being both a fighter pilot and an astronaut were crushed by an eye exam

1960s who grew up in awe

See BLUE...pg. 5

America's democracy is in trouble

My father-in-law is 95 years old this year. He is a remarkable man from the "greatest generation" having fought in World War II serving in the Army in the Pacific Theater. His memory and reasoning have not diminished. He is well informed and can speak at length about his thoughts on politics and the state of the union. Recently he said "While probably not in my lifetime, but highly likely in your lifetime, the United States will no longer be a democracy. Weakening of our democracy is already underway and is accelerating."

His words prompted me to consider the foundations of our democracy and to anecdotally assess the status of each. I've applied my own rating where a 0 means "poor" and a 5 means "good".

Democracy is based on everyone having an equal say in choosing our leaders. One person, one vote. A vote in California and a vote in Wyoming should ideally have equal impact in our governance. Due to a historic political compromise during Revolutionary times, we have the United States Senate. So, our democracy starts in a hole. In a perfect world the Senate would be eliminated. The president is selected by the Electoral College, which should also be eliminated in favor of a popular vote. Rating: 2

The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It doesn't say "white men", and the meaning "of men" has changed to mean over time "mankind", including people of all genders. Today, most state legislatures have submitted hundreds of bills to reduce the rights, including that of voting, of many minority groups: people of color, people of certain religious beliefs, various sexual preferences, at the same time increasing the position of certain religious communities and economic advantage. Rating: 1

The Constitution provides that the government provides education to all in the belief that an education provided on an equal basis will result in a pop-

ulation informed and will ensure the health of our democracy. Many states are now choosing to move public financing away from public schools which are managed by elected leaders to fund various forms of private education which are managed by various leaders who seem to be more concerned with indoctrination of certain religious or political agendas. Other governments are simply reducing educational funding in general. Rating: 1

The Constitution seeks that the least able and most in-need members of our communities are cared for and that all people have equal access to essential services and protection. To do so the Constitution decrees that the government provide certain services such as the U.S. Postal service and other services which have been determined to include Social Security, Medicare, and Affordable Care. As our government is elected to define and make our government work for the wellbeing and safety of our entire nation, it is in our best interest to work to trust (with vigilance) our elected officials and government employee and help them make our government work better and more efficiently rather than advocate for fewer services and to undermine the effectiveness of our government. Rating: 2

The leaders of our nation take an oath, "I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same." We should expect nothing less from our elected officials. President Trump not only incited the insurrection at the Capitol and supported it, but also attempted to secure support of the United States military to take power by a coup. Our own Rep. Pete Stauber, 8th District Congressman, signed an amicus brief in support of the petition filed at the U.S. Supreme Court by Texas to overturn the national presidential election results in a thinly veiled coup attempt, which would have invalidated millions of votes and would have interfered with the state's constitutional right to conduct their own elections. Rating: 0

Finally, a democracy to survive is based on a nation of people that have many different beliefs and values, but at the end of the day we accept our differences and work

together on those items on which we can all agree to move forward. That requires trust in each other and honesty. Truth based on fact and science, not rumor and conspiracies at every turn. The fact that 50 percent of Americans either have not believed the science to get vaccinated or believe that Trump won the election suggests we have a serious foundational problem that does more to undercut our strength in the world and the future of our democracy than any other aspect of our country. Rating: 0

We are doing poorly in all essentials of our American democracy. We are clearly in trouble. Our democracy requires our people to first recognize and acknowledge we are on a course that could make America the next China where our equivalent of the Chinese Communist Party is the American Republican Party and the equivalent of Premier Xi is Premier Trump. If that isn't what we want, we need to take this seriously and begin to work together to strengthen our struggling democracy. The outcome is not certain, unless we do nothing.

**Keith Steva
Cook**

Consider a regional approach to ambulance service

In the *Timberjay's* report on last week's Greenwood Town Board meeting, there is a paragraph about our ambulance service. Certainly, the Tower Area Ambulance Service, to which Greenwood and four other townships, along with the city of Tower, belong, is having problems. That's the primary reason that the Minnesota Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board agreed to conduct an assessment of the TAAS and will be presenting recommendations sometime this summer. The EMSRB regulates all of the ambulance districts in Minnesota.

I contacted the EMSRB's Holly Jacobs early on and recommended that the EMSRB take a regional approach in the assessment, looking at the nearby ambulance districts of Ely, Cook, Virginia and ours. They form kind of a corridor for emergency services. One of the

facts around here is that the Virginia Ambulance Service carries a lot of the responsibility for helping sick or injured people because Virginia is an "Advanced Life Support" service, meaning that Virginia ambulances have paramedics on board. It's an expensive service for Virginia to maintain, and we are very fortunate that they respond to calls throughout the area when injured or sick people need more than an ambulance which offers "Basic Life Support", as the TAAS ambulances do. I believe at some point, primarily due to the monetary and recruitment issues that rural ambulance services face, there will need to be a consolidation of ambulance services, much like we see with the area schools. In our area, Virginia eventually will play a pivotal role, because they have the population and they have a major hospital and fire department to draw paramedic personnel from. It will come, sooner or later. I just hope that the EMSRB is doing a comprehensive assessment and that their forthcoming recommendations will reflect that.

There is one other thing in the *Timberjay* article that I'd like to clarify: If Greenwood were to be included in the Cook Ambulance Service, Greenwood would NOT have to join the Cook Healthcare District, as my friend Carmen DeLuca misstated. Actually, a significant part of Greenwood is already in the Cook Ambulance District and is well served by them. But Cook is not an Advanced Life Support service and that is why I have advocated for the regional approach, relying heavily on, and also supporting the Virginia service. Like I said, it will happen, sooner or later, out of necessity and common sense.

**Lee Peterson
Greenwood Twp.**

Here's why I support Novak's goals and policies

It is about one month until our important mayoral election. We still have not heard a word from either mayoral candidate about their expected policies or goals that they have for our city, nada. Instead we

have seen some lawn signs up which are meant for name recognition. What a deal, lawn signs but no policies nor goals for our city. Sounds exciting.

In the short past years we have seen numerous new city streets with all new infrastructure added. And, thanks to our now retired county commissioner Mike Forsman, we have seen a number of city streets, which are county designated, newly paved. We can see on our City of Ely website the good number of city streets now in the process of being redone. We have a newer 17th St. which connects Sheridan to Pioneer Rd. Thanks to Mayor Chuck Novak, our city received a \$700,000 grant from DEED and a grant of \$250,000 to complete the project from the IRRRB. No Minnesota city in the last quarter of a century has received a grant this large for a city of our size. Maybe it helped that Gov. Mark Dayton visited our city twice and had amicable discussions with Mayor Novak. Mayor Novak gave our governor the Ely welcome.

Let us add in the numerous refurbished buildings around our city such as the now-prized Ely State Theater and a refurbished VFW building and others around town. We can see the development of the new pocket park, the development of a first class mountain bike facility and the very important West End Project which will be a regional trail head.

The West End Project has received millions of dollars in state bonding money. Considering the large number of state bonding requests just from Northeast Minnesota and we voters can get an idea of how competitive these bonding requests from other cities are. Consider the number of state legislators, from both sides

of the political aisle, that came hundreds of miles to our city to be a part of the West End Project ribbon cutting ceremony. How important is that? All of these state legislators are on the state bonding board that decides which cities get bonding money. Many cities did not get a dime; while we got millions of dollars. It was Mayor Novak who extended the invitation and who gave the warm Ely welcome to these traveling legislators who are the deciders on bonding funding. What a plus that is for our fine city. The two stated mayoral candidates did not show up for this ribbon cutting event... they could not be seen.

A short time ago Mayor Novak, city clerk Harold Langowski, and economic developer John Fedo put in many hours working together to complete the request for an additional \$4.1 million in state bonding funding for the West End Project. This time they added funding to tear down the old city garage, funding for a workers housing so we can house many summer workers and the completion of Pattison St. to Central Ave.

The real significance of this bonding request is that none of this money will impact our needed local government aid. We can continue to use our LGA for projects that we have in Ely such as our infrastructure and streets. And, we can keep our taxes low, a strategy of Albert Forsman and Paul Kess, our two city council members who work on our city's budget committee and Mayor Novak. It's about making our City of Ely a great place to live, which is why I most certainly support his leadership as our mayor and his goal and policies.

**John Esse
Ely**

BLUE...Continued from page 4

in fourth grade – unable to read the teacher's chalk writing on the blackboard 15 feet away, I knew right away I'd never qualify to be either. It didn't lessen my interest or desire one bit, but it did change my reality. I've said for decades that the one regret I have about my mortality is that I'll never have the opportunity to fly through outer space to "seek out new worlds and new civilizations" or more mundanely to simply wave at an orbiting satellite on my way past it. It's something I've always wanted to do that won't ever happen.

So, as I watched on Tuesday of billionaire Bezos and his three passengers blasting off in Blue Origin as I sat and watched, wholly incapable of following.


It's just not fair – I wanted the experience as much as any of them. With Bezos, Richard Branson, and soon Elon Musk, space has become the new playground of the filthy rich. I didn't watch Branson's flight, didn't intend to watch Bezos's flight, and won't watch Musk's.

The reason is simple – I'm sorely afflicted by Shakespeare's green-eyed monster. In this, I am completely derelict in adhering to the Tenth Commandment, for in truth I totally, completely, 100 percent covet my neighbor's rocket ship. Unless Marshall and Jodi Helmsberger give me one super-sized Christmas bonus, I'll never be able to afford to buy a multi-million dollar ticket into space in my lifetime. Unlike the

inclusiveness of the future portrayed in the numerous iterations of Star Trek, commercialization has for the time being turned space into yet another realm of the haves and have-nots. So, Mr. Bezos, a fast phooey on you and your billions and the nanny-nanny-boo-boo of a ride on your Blue Origin rocket ship. It's of little solace that it was named New Shepard in honor of astronaut Alan Shepard, the first American in space. That Mercury flight opened a dream every American kid could aspire to. This one did not.


Shew, glad to get those sour grapes off my chest so that I can return to fully reveling in my life here on terra firma in the North Country. For I am quite content with

my station in life in the early years of my seventh decade on the planet, with a better job, house, truck, camera and cat than I need or deserve, living in beautiful country among terrific people. I find it more than OK that station is firmly planted on the ground instead of circling the globe high above. Possibilities realized are ever so much better than dreams never achieved.



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