

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

Stauber's cowardice

In backing Trump's attempted election thievery, the congressman puts party over country

While Joe Biden is indisputably our President-elect following Monday's vote by the Electoral College, residents of the Eighth District should not forget that their own elected member of Congress signed onto a transparent attempt to overthrow the clear will of the American people, including the clear will of the people of Minnesota.

That's not a small thing, and the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court, including all three Trump appointees, held firm against an unconstitutional attempt to install Donald Trump for a second term, does not negate the horror of an amicus brief to which Stauber and 125 other Republican members of Congress signed their names. That list should be displayed for years to come as the ultimate roll call of craven politicians.

By signing his name to this, Rep. Stauber threw in his lot with thieves. Despite all the fulminations by many Republicans about stolen elections, it was Trump and his minions who sought to steal the 2020 election through a number of half-baked strategies cooked up long before Election Day. Had the election been closer, and Trump's team more competent, they might well have succeeded.

Donald Trump had every reason to think he would lose his bid for re-election, yet he somehow believed the Supreme Court might ultimately set aside the election results and the U.S. Constitution to keep him in power. He acknowledged as much in ramming through the appointment of Justice Amy Coney Barrett just ahead of the Nov. 3 election.

Trump didn't care that America's voters made their choice clear, electing Joe Biden by a 306-232 electoral vote margin and a popular vote advantage of more than seven million. He thought he had at least five votes on the nation's highest court and he expected that if given the opportunity, no matter how preposterous the legal claims, they would ignore their obligation to the constitution and hand the election to him. He believed this was possible because Donald Trump has never understood the concepts of honor or principle, and it is unimaginable to him that others might actually believe in such things.

The Texas lawsuit to which Rep. Stauber attached his name was a complete fraud. As the Supreme Court noted, Texas had no standing to sue other states for how they conduct their elections, and the suit advanced no intelligible claim.

Further, the lawsuit was a virtual acknowledgement that

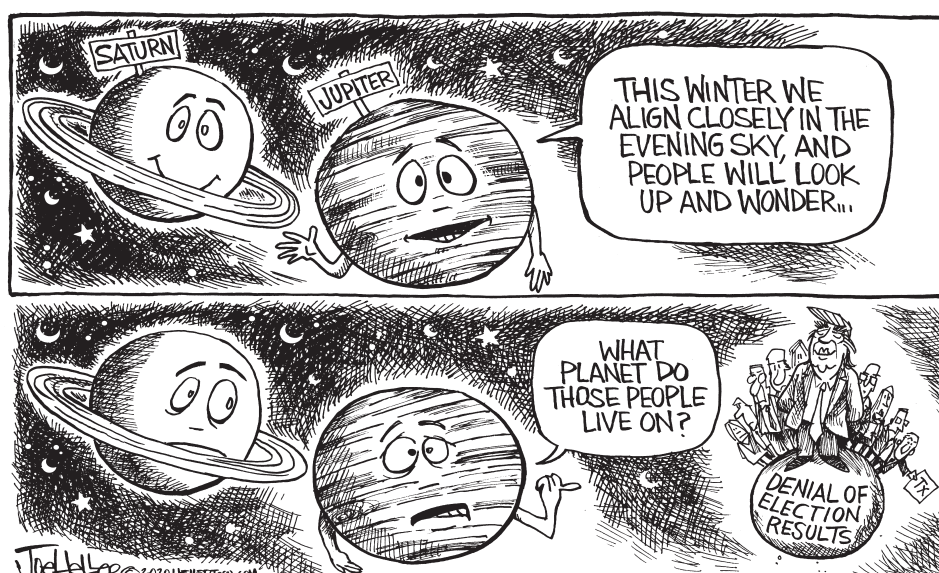
Trump and his legal team had found no evidence of voter fraud. That's why the suit shifted its legal arguments to suggest that the four states the suit named, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia, had harmed Texas by instituting changes in their election rules without legislative approval.

Yet most states, including Minnesota and, yes, even Texas, had implemented similar changes in their election rules without legislative approval in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott had, on his own authority, extended the deadline for early voting. And the Texas Supreme Court gave a clear wink and a nod to looser mail-in voting requirements, finding that local election officials had no obligation to investigate whether requests for mail-in ballots, based on disability or absence, were fully substantiated. As a result, Texas, like many other states, saw record increases in both early and mail-in voting. But these changes were only a problem, apparently, in states that Biden managed to flip to his win column. In other words, voting for Biden was the real crime of these four states.

Even more appalling than the hypocrisy of the case was the astonishing logical disconnects. The Texas lawsuit wanted to invalidate the votes of millions of residents of the four states, but only their votes for president. The fact that those same ballots also elected Republican office holders in many other races was to be ignored.

Yet the Trump team's incompetence obscures the dangerous implications of their attempt to overturn the election. Given the lack of evidence, the Trump team had little realistic hope in the courts, but that was only part of the game plan. Trump's false claims were also meant to convince enough of his base of his lies that they would join him in pressuring governors, secretaries of state, and state legislators to use their raw political power to overturn the election results if the courts refused to do so. Though unsuccessful this time, it is an incredibly dangerous precedent, that may haunt this country for years.

Fortunately for America, there were some courageous Republican officials, mostly at the state level, who refused to bow to Trump's pressure and personal attacks. In so doing, they stood up for country over party. When given that same opportunity, Rep. Stauber sided with would-be thieves and his fellow political cowards. Voters in the Eighth District shouldn't forget.



Letters from Readers

Stauber tried to subvert democracy

Congressman Peter Stauber, you really revealed yourself and your Republican Party's desire to end democracy in America when you signed the Texas lawsuit that the Supreme Court refused to even hear. What a long shot attempt to turn our country into a dictatorship and keep Trump in power!

Please resign your seat in the House of Representatives immediately. You don't deserve the office.

Lee Peterson
Greenwood Twp.

Betrayal is inevitably a failed strategy

Regarding your Dec. 4 Bakk and Tomassoni editorial, the question that needs to be answered is: what did Bakk and Tomassoni promise in exchange for their thirty pieces of silver? Gazelka does not hand out choice tidbits of pork just for kicks. Betrayal is inevitably a failed strategy and it always has a bad odor. To praise it because of an incidental benefit is naive at best, hypocritical at worst. Will Pawlenty's park become a modern field of blood?

Don Brown
Greenwood Twp.

Another missed boat for education

In the 1960s, William (Bill) Norris via the company known as Control Data Corporation launched a computerized learning system called Plato.

Plato never was accepted in American educational systems. From his own mouth Bill once related to the author how it was still in use in Russia. This conversation having taken place in the '80s.

Today we find ourselves struggling with online learning. Yet 50 plus years ago we were shown the way.

Plato died about a month after the death of its father, Bill Norris.

The axiom of the elderly in my youth comes to mind, "Too soon too old, too late too smart."

Jeff Wilfahrt
Ely

Heroes, patriots, and betrayers

Even as President Trump desperately tries to overthrow the election results, we find heroes and patriots. Also, we see exposed those who put themselves ahead of country.

Attorney General of Texas, Ken Paxton, who has been indicted for numerous illegal activities, attempted to file a baseless suit with the U.S. Supreme Court to disenfranchise millions of voters and to reject the election outcome. Mr. Trump expected the court to support his goal of a peaceful coup d'état by invalidating the election results and empowering him to remain in office.

The heroes in this were the Supreme Court justices. Seven of nine judges would not even allow the suit to be filed with the Court, and all nine judges indicated they rejected the case on numerous points. They did their Constitutional job; they are heroes and patriots in that they protected the most fundamental base of democracy, the Constitutional right of citizens to vote to select their leaders.

Other heroes have been the poll workers, the secretaries of states and election officials in every state who, despite the conspiracy theories, conducted a fair election and have stood by their results, regardless of party. This, even as Trump's desperate campaign to discredit and toss out the election result continues unabated.

On the other hand, there are those who seek personal gain. Pete Stauber took an oath "I, Peter Stauber, do solemnly swear that 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; So help me God." He supported

the baseless suit and applied his name to the suit filed by AG Paxton to disenfranchise millions of voters and to reject an election outcome. That is in no way 'defending the Constitution', no matter how you try to spin it. Also, claiming with no evidence that Secretary of State Simon has done some illegal act for which he provided no evidence is an attempt to weaken Minnesotans' faith in our election system.

This is personal. I voted absentee. Mr. Stauber was complicit in attempting to disenfranchise not only people in Michigan, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, but also Minnesota. By rejecting the outcome of the election, he would disenfranchise the entire nation. This is not fun and games. This is not merely trying to show he is "Trump enough" nor a means to incite Trump supporters to contribute more to his campaign. This is serious. This is our democracy at risk.

It is important to note that others betrayed their oath in addition to Mr. Stauber. Reps. Hagedorn, Emmer, and Rep.-elect Fischbach also signed on supporting the Paxton filing attempt.

They owe all Minnesotans an apology. All betrayed their constituents and country. All should immediately resign.

Keith Steva
Cook

We welcome your letters

The *Timberjay* encourages letters to the editor. You can submit letters by mail at PO Box 636, Tower, MN 55790, or email letters to marshall@timberjay.com.

We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

Letters are subject to editing, primarily for length and clarity.

Letters are a great way to offer your input to the *Timberjay's* editorial page. We want to know what you think!

The long and the short of it, putting life into writing

As long as I can remember, I have had a preference for longhand and a fascination with writing instruments: fountain pens, calligraphy pens, gel pens, feather quills, markers, crayons, chalk, pencils, brush tip pens and brushes of all types, from 4" wide to liners, triggers, and daggers. The variety of possible marks to be made are beyond counting. Yet we volun-



BETTY FIRTH

tarily limit ourselves to stiff symbols on a screen or printed out to paper. With thousands of font choices, the world is dominated by Helvetica, Arial, Times, Courier, and others that look pretty much the same to the average onlooker.

Helvetica leads the pack for some bizarre reason as the most famous of all fonts. Look at it: It is without person-

ality, no flourishes, no interesting descenders or ascenders, not even any serifs (those little projections finishing off a stroke). According to the font experts, its popularity is attributed to it being "modern, simple, and as versatile and trustworthy as it is Swiss, created by Max Miedinger in 1957." I, however, think it's just boring, and its sameness makes it difficult for the eye to read, without any serifs to bind the letters together and lead the eye to the next word. The homogeneity bores our very eyeballs, which want to wander to something

more entertaining. Born in the 50's, like many products of bland design and questionable taste, it appears eager not to offend, remaining neutral like the Swiss. Why would you do that when you can **dance with Broadway, garner attention with Impact, paint with Brush Script, make your point with Marker Felt or just have a good chuckle with Comic Sans?**

I was appalled to learn a while back that cursive writing is barely taught in school these days, or not at all. How will these deprived children read

the treasured love letters sent from grandpa to grandma? How can they appreciate John Hancock's dramatic gesture on the Declaration of Independence, much less read that document in its beautiful, original script? Handwriting is not just a rusty, obsolete tool to be tossed away. It can flatter, caress, sing, or shout the words skittering or marching or creeping across the paper. It reveals so much about the writer that many companies have included handwriting analyses in

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Letters from Readers

Stauber undermines his oath of office

Congressman Pete Stauber has violated his oath of office by adding his name to the baseless Texas lawsuit to cancel Joe Biden's victory in four states and invalidate the votes of millions of voters. By doing so, Stauber has betrayed the trust of his own constituents.

This publicity stunt was a shameless attack on America's system of free and fair elections. Even more shameful perhaps was the flurry of Republican officials—including Stauber—who tripped over themselves in an opportunistic rush to join in on this act of sedition.

Legal experts around the nation, including Republican elected officials in charge of the election process and almost 60 lower courts, judged the lawsuit meritless. Thankfully, the Supreme Court summarily dismissed the suit without a hearing because of the unconstitutionality of one state interfering with another state's election process.

Stauber took an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic . . ." Any elected official who supported this cynical attack on American voters and our democratic system should have an indelible black mark next to their name in perpetuity. By joining this effort, Pete Stauber has brought shame to himself and all those he purports to represent. His actions have fostered a climate in which ordinary elected officials in many states have been threatened with violence.

After the Electoral College's Dec. 14 vote, some Republicans (not Stauber) have finally begun to acknowledge that Joe Biden

is the president-elect. That is a good sign, though far overdue.

Stauber should apologize to all residents of the Eighth District for his role undermining faith in our electoral system and leading us down the path to anarchy.

News outlets have begun to call out the Republicans who attempted to undermine the legitimacy of our system of government and fanned the flames of anarchy.

Congressman Stauber certainly deserves their censure. We all must work to protect the Constitution from those who, like Pete Stauber, seek to weaken it.

**DFL Senate District 3
Executive Committee
Leah Rogne, Gheen
Bryan Hansel,
Grand Marais
Megan Bond,
International Falls
Joseph Boyle,
International Falls
Barb Crow,
Duluth Township
Todd Redmann,
Two Harbors
Melissa Roach, Cook
Bernadette Smith, Cloquet**

Open letter to Rep. Stauber

I recently heard that you signed and endorsed along with 125 other House Republicans to support the lawsuit from Texas attempting to overturn our free and fair election—clearly a move that is an attempt to overthrow our democracy and our democratic process. Your actions are not only bizarre, but outright ridiculous. Frivolous upon frivolous lawsuits have been filed by Trump, the RNC and the ex-President's ridiculous "Save America" PAC, only to be thrown out of the courts by Trump's appointed judges, not

just the state and federal lower courts, but now the Supreme Court of the United States.

On the topic of Trump's "Save America" PAC, it will most likely line his personal pockets by around \$170 million-plus dollars. Yes, for all of those who have contributed, sorry, you have been duped.

I have been a lifelong Republican, but from the insane actions of ex-President Trump, the actions of both Republican Houses of Congress, since the election, the divisiveness and rhetoric, calling for violence and retribution for anyone who speaks out against this Fascist we currently have in office, is reprehensible.

By endorsing this lawsuit, you are complicit in the furthering of the antidemocratic processes, promotion of violence, racism and divisiveness our ex-President promotes. You, Sir, are condoning all the bizarre actions, false conspiracy messaging and continuous lying and tweets by, "I think I am The Supreme Leader," ex-President we now have in office.

Sir, as I previously said, I have been a lifelong Republican who supported you in the last two elections.

I no longer can call myself a Republican and affiliate myself with a party which has promoted and endorsed so many un-American and bizarre Trump-isms, and a party that continues to endorse for this would-be autocrat in the White House.

I seriously doubt you will ever see this email, let alone have the courage to respond to it. Perhaps I will see some canned response by you or one of your aides who most likely could give a damn about any of your constituents' concerns, or perhaps your only desire is to stay in office by placating some faction of those Trumpers who

have been brainwashed by his rhetoric. However, it gives me some relief to speak my mind to you and forward this message to the op-ed columns of our local newspapers.

Respectfully,
**Jeffrey Stebbins
Cook**

The people will prevail over the socialists

It is people just like you, Marshall, who have allowed this garbage to happen in America and for socialism to take hold and government control every aspect of our lives! Well, Marshall, one day, if this continues, the government WILL control what you can print and to hell with your free speech constitutional rights!

However, I do NOT obey ANY unconstitutional orders by ANY government officials and have taken oaths to support and defend our Constitution and will ALWAYS do just that! Too bad people like you don't take oaths to protect anything! The "PEOPLE" WILL prevail, period!!!!

**Dave Akerson
Lake Vermilion**

Stauber should remember his oath

I was dismayed on Dec. 11, when our Eighth District Congressman Pete Stauber proudly announced that he had signed on to a lawsuit sent to the U.S. Supreme Court by the Texas Attorney General that was, in essence, designed to overturn the presidential election. Despite the fact that the outgoing president had failed in dozens of prior attempts to reverse President-elect Biden's win, Pete Stauber

chose to sign on to this bogus "last ditch" effort to interfere with the results. And worse than just his signature of support, he intended to include a challenge to the integrity of Minnesota's electoral process!

Minnesota has always been known for its impeccable elections and extraordinary voter turnout. This year was no exception. Our Secretary of State, along with county-level officials and thousands of volunteer precinct-level election judges, invested a lot of forethought, time and energy to assure that all votes, and the vote count, would be secure and accurate. Stauber hasn't a single reason for his offensive accusations that question the integrity of elections in the state of Minnesota. His actions not only undermine trust in our constitutionally guaranteed system of free and fair elections but also tear at the very fabric of our democratic society. So truly, Pete Stauber has shown that he's nothing more than one of Trump's lapdogs, standing by to bark on command.

After meticulous counting and recounting of the election results, most Americans accept the facts, and are ready to leave behind the fraught pre- and post-election antics of one sore loser and his bunch of lackeys.

Here's a reminder for you, Mr. Stauber. When you were sworn into office, you took an oath to defend the Constitution, not a lame-duck president! If you don't trust the integrity of Minnesota's electoral system, then please just move to another state, or better yet, another country such as North Korea, where they will welcome a person with a political intellect like yours.

**John Hess
Linden Grove Precinct
Election Judge**

TOWER...Continued from page 3

to be funded by a state grant that remains up in the air after significant mishandling of the first phase of the project by the prior city administration. Ranua noted that if the grant funds, which will now require additional legislative approval, aren't approved, the project won't go forward at this time.

The city likely won't have the expense of purchasing a new ambulance after taking delivery of a new vehicle earlier this year.

"I know there's a lot of work that's gone into this, and it has taken a little longer, but I think the end result is worth it," said Mayor Orlyn Kringstad.

Ranua said the need to significantly restructure the city's budget is what took time. With a better budget structure in place, Ranua said the city can begin to address its lack of reserves. She said financial officers recommend that cities should have three months of operating costs in reserve. "We just don't have

that right now, but we can now work towards it," she said.

Councilor Kevin Norby asked how well the city's spending this year tracked with its budget. "In some areas we're fine," said Ranua. "In other areas, like sewer, we needed more. We also had some major repairs to aging equipment. But there was enough buffer in the system to allow for those."

Councilor Dave Setterberg credited Ranua with keeping close tabs on the city's basic operational costs. "Vic's been doing a great job of tracking electric use," he said. "She was able to knock down the electric bill by about \$2,000."

Ranua said using the city's programmable thermostat helped reduce heating costs, both at city hall and the civic center. "We also saved several thousand dollars on office supplies," she said.

In other business, the council, after considerable discussion, approved a three-per-

cent increase in Ranua's salary, beginning on Jan. 1. The council action, motioned by Councilor Joe Morin and approved unanimously, was necessary because Ranua is no longer covered under a union contract and it had been 14 months since she started with the city. Even with the pay raise, which puts her annual salary at \$53,086, she continues to earn over three thousand dollars less than the former clerk-treasurer at the time of her termination in 2019.

The council also voted to continue a benefits package that includes about \$13,000 toward a family health insurance package, although Setterberg said the council will likely still need to address other issues about Ranua's benefits in the future. He made a brief reference to the fact that Ranua, in terms of total wage compensation, earns less than any other full-time city staff person, which impacts other related benefits,

like PERA. Unionized city staff receive \$12,000 annually in what's called "longevity pay," which generally is designed to help pay for health coverage. But because it's considered part of their wage, unionized workers receive additional PERA. In Ranua's case, her benefits aren't considered part of her wages, so she doesn't receive credit for that compensation under the PERA system.

Ranua's pay raise came in the wake of a performance review, conducted by Setterberg and Norby, in which they determined she is "meeting expectations."

In other action, the council:
► Gave approval to holding two regular meetings per month in an effort to reduce the length of council meetings. Ranua asked if it would be possible to hold meetings on a different day than Monday. She said Monday meetings generally mean she loses one off-day the weekend prior in

order to complete meeting prep. Kringstad said she should check with the city attorney to see if he is available any other evenings during the week.

► Approved using a new credit card processing company for Hoodoo Point Campground and, potentially, for online bill paying for city utility accounts. Ranua told the council that the current processor had been steadily increasing fees and was prone to overcharging customers, which requires staff time to correct. "If the system could also work for online utility payments, I would be in favor of that," said Kringstad. "I pay almost all of my bills online."

► Approved a household income survey documenting that 63.1 percent of households in Tower are considered low-moderate income, which will qualify the city for CDBG funding possibilities.

WRITING...Continued from page 4

their hiring procedures. I want to fill the gap, right the wrong, gather the cursive-less chicks under my wing and teach them, assuring them it's not too late, they can still find their way to grace and gracefulness through the flowing of ink. In fourth grade, my classmates and I were required to write our essays with fountain pens, no undependable ballpoints allowed; hence, the seeds of my addiction.

Others I've met throughout my life love writing instruments as I do, delighting in sampling pens and collecting quaint bottles of multi-colored ink. I seek out office supply stores to see what treasures I can find. Those compatriots who also love pens (called penophiles, I have just learned) are not always writers, but they are almost always likeable. How about you? Do you know the brand of your favorite pen? Will you search for it for

ten minutes rather than substitute another? You may just be a closet penophile. My current favorite is Tul from Office Depot.

Which brings me to the topic of abbreviations. I avoid them whenever possible. Yes, they save a few nanoseconds, but they are stingy; they suck the rhythm and beauty right out of words. January, February, November, and December flow like the river of time they represent, while Jan., Feb., Nov., and Dec. sound like quick punches in the boxing ring, and Sept. like a disease you might pick up in the hospital. And Xmas? Come on, now. The texting phenomenon has lured people into a jungle of abbreviations and quick responses, providing the opportunity to rapidly say absolutely nothing interesting, original, or substantial, IMHO.

Writing out your thoughts with a pen you love gives you

more time to reflect on what you're saying. There's no delete button or easy way to erase, unless you write in pencil. You can cross out words, but they're still there to remind you to take care with what you say and how you say it.

With speed being the goal and the prize in so many aspects of our culture, what are we losing? Our sitting President has made it abundantly clear that the ability to spill your thoughts instantly to the world is not necessarily a good thing. Slowing down the process might not help a hopeless case, but for many, it could provide a pause before spitting out regrettable words that pollute the environment with our frustration and really bad grammar. Google mail has a "Don't send" recapture button for a very good reason, and I have mine set to the longest option of 30 seconds for retrieval. Again,

a moment to reflect, consider, think "OMG, I really don't want to say that!" and save a friendship or a job.

Letter writing helps you be more rational and even look wiser. By the time you finish the letter, look up the address, write it on the envelope, find a stamp and affix it, seal the envelope, and get it to the mailbox, you have had an ocean of time to reflect on what you have said and how you said it and to consider other options such as sitting on it for a few hours or weeks, to give the feelings time to simmer down and mature, like a good soup. What a gift it is to find a jewel of a handwritten missive tucked in the pile of advertisements and bills.

We need to be thinking in the long term these days with deep thoughts about our world: our water and air, our wild lands, our towns and cities, our climate,

our food supply, the health of people all over the Earth, and our relationships with them. There are no quick, abbreviated, tweetable answers, but there is room for thoughtful consideration and thoughtful acts, no matter how small. It's time to remember what we have in common and dwell on that. Perhaps it's time to take out that ink pen and write some holiday cards to those we like and admire and maybe a few to those we'd like to like better. How about a lovely card to your elected officials, expressing your appreciation for their service as well as for improvements you'd like to see?

It's Christmas, folks, and thanks to the pandemic, I know you've got the time. I do hope you have a lovely, warm, peaceful season of light.