

OUR VIEW

Masks remain the simple solution

News that Sunnyside, Inter-Faith and other senior care centers are struggling with Covid-19 outbreaks makes us question not their procedures, but this: Why are so many people unwilling to take the most basic step and wear masks in public? We wish they would.

It's community spread that's bringing Covid into the homes of the most vulnerable.

Most people seem to have gotten on board with social distancing recommendations and we are grateful most of our neighbors are taking this pandemic seriously and are wearing masks. We know that health experts have told us that the virus is spread airborne, which means that infected people breathing around uninfected people increases the chance of spreading the disease. Masks help minimize that infection risk. Please wear one in public.

This virus can spread in other ways, too, so we encourage people to wash their hands frequently and take other basic precautions.

Still, we are seriously confused about people who refuse to wear a mask or to take the pandemic seriously. We know that health experts wear masks to reduce the chances of passing along infections all the time. From operating rooms to routine doctor visits, professionals wear masks because they know they work.

We simply can't understand the political statement some think they are making. We are all in this together. It's a virus that we are only beginning to get under control, and wearing masks reduces the spread. It attacks bodies with no regard to what political affiliations that body's brain may have.

Nor can we understand how some people claim the death rate is so low that we shouldn't be worried about this virus. Ask anyone who has contracted the disease. It can be intense, very unpleasant and scary. Herpes doesn't kill anyone but we don't know anyone who is willing to get exposed to it just because it doesn't kill you. Covid-19 is a dangerous and unpleasant disease that we all need to take seriously to prevent it spreading.

One person dying from it is too many, and there have been far too many local deaths from Covid -19.

We are appalled at people who state, publicly, that it's just old people who were going to die anyway. Such callousness is incomprehensible.

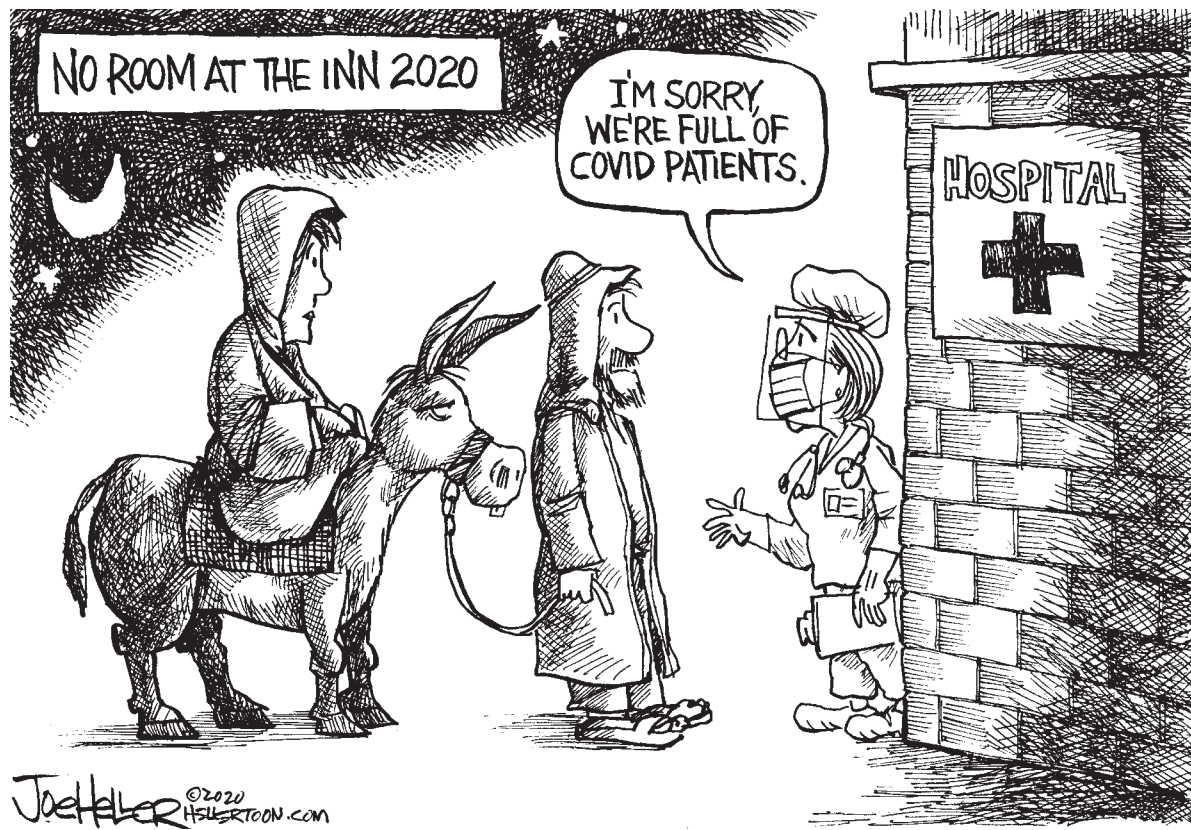
An uncovered cough or sneeze (or even just breathing) by an infected person in Walmart could eventually be carried to a patient in a nursing home in Carlton. Please wear your masks.

Let's protect everyone in our midst.

Write it.
Send it.
We'll print it.

news@PineKnotNews.com

Write a letter to the editor.



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Protesting is the American way; depending on how it's done

In a way, I actually enjoy seeing people's continued protests over the 2020 elections. Such a demonstration of civic pride and patriotism is central to the American way.

Now, I certainly think they are wrong, and I don't agree with the conspiracy theories and accusations made without evidence, as those types of statements are damaging to our society. But if they want to get together and let each other know how they feel, I'm fine with it.

Have you ever been to the White House? There's was a protester who camped in Lafayette Park at 1601 Pennsylvania Avenue from 1981 to 2016. That's 35 years of continuous protesting. She was protesting nuclear proliferation, and some say her success was apparent: many of her stated goals were realized during her 35 years of protest. Others think her living in a tent camped on the sidewalk was silly and had no real effect. Who knows? She's free to use her time as she likes. It's America.

There's some certain need for humans to socialize. It's why this Christmas season is so sad for many of us, because the coronavirus has made family gatherings difficult. It's why people drink in bars and eat in restaurants. Fireworks are more enjoyable with a crowd around you, oohing and aahing. It's more fun to watch a hockey game in person, with a crowd of fans, than it is to watch it on TV. Socializing is in our nature.

I recall the Minnesota Twins World Series victory in 1991. Just after the game went into extra innings, I could almost feel downtown Minneapolis calling to

me. I hopped on a bus and went to the Metrodome, which by then was crowded with fans, most of whom hadn't attended the game but simply came down to be part of the action. Like me. A few hours later I had a brief conversation with Jack Morris at the Loon Café. I felt a part of it all. You would have thought I was the one who had just pitched 10 shutout innings. Gathering with other fans, otherwise complete strangers to me, felt good.

So I understand why some people feel called to openly protest and gather after a major event in their lives they feel strongly about. You take it personally when police kill a black man in south Minneapolis. You feel cheated when your candidate, the one politician who finally seems to understand what you believe in, loses a big election. How could any of this have possibly happened?

So, we take to the streets. Washington, D.C. has almost continual protests in the streets. Capital police are very experienced in crowd control because they spend a lot of their time managing protests of all sizes from a few carrying signs outside the White House to tens of thousands gathering on the Mall in January for Roe v. Wade protests. Disruption is normal, and not too severe. Essentially, if you plan to see the sights in our nation's Capital, you should expect to deal with some type of demonstration, because that's what happens in D.C. It's normal.

But it's not normal for protesters in Minneapolis, for example, to spill out onto the freeways, disrupting traffic. It's not acceptable

for armed protesters showing up at state capitals, threatening violence. It's criminal to burn buildings, vandalize church property, loot businesses; it's even wrong to litter. If hundreds plan to show up and protest, they should clean up after themselves. Litter isn't making a positive statement. Neither is violence and disrespect.

Last weekend, a truck parade rode through our neighborhood. It was about 9 p.m. when we heard loud, booming music coming down our dead-end street. Several pickups, windows open, music blaring, lit up with lights and political signs woke up my sleeping 6-year-old and scared the rest of my family. It was late; it's a quiet street; we had no idea they were coming. Later, we saw on a Facebook post that they claimed, innocently, that they were simply showing their kids Christmas lights around town, but that's baloney. Driving around loudly in neighborhoods with political messages is a protest. The fact they weakly denied it was evidence, to me, that they knew what they were doing was disruptive.

They made their point. They changed no one's minds in our household. I wish next time they'd keep their parades out of the neighborhoods and maybe hold them in daylight hours when kids aren't sleeping. But I respect their willingness to demonstrate, even if I don't agree with their message. It's America, after all.

Pete Radosevich is the publisher of the Pine Knot News and an attorney in Esko who hosts the cable access talk show Harry's Gang on CAT-7. His opinions are his own. Contact him at Pete.Radosevich@PineKnotNews.com.

HARRY'S GANG



Pete Radosevich

If hundreds plan to show up and protest, they should clean up after themselves. Litter isn't making a positive statement. Neither is violence and disrespect.

OUR VIEW

Responsibility can keep things open

Finally. After a holiday season where restaurants and bars were closed for indoor dining, the state has finally allowed them to open dining rooms for dine-in customers, following a few guidelines to keep patrons and staff safe from the coronavirus.

We are pleased that Gov. Tim Walz and health experts, who have relied on science and facts in making difficult and unpopular decisions, see that the spread of the virus is slowing just as a new vaccine is being rolled out. That combination, plus the public's awareness of safety precautions, means that dining rooms should be able to open safely.

It's been nearly a year since the coronavirus made its appearance in Minnesota, and we applaud leaders for acting quickly to slow its spread. People have learned safe distancing, are comfortable wearing masks, and are generally more cautious when interacting with others. Although the death rate is not as high as initially predicted, our county has seen more than 40 people die from the virus, and more than 2,000 laid low from infection, suffering from the disease. And that's just the ones that tested positive, there are certainly more out there.

Had the government neglected to act, the infection rate certainly would have been devastating.

But closing businesses creates its own devastation, affecting people's livelihood. We feel for those people, even as we believe the restrictions were necessary for public health. But now we hope to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

We encourage people to patronize local bars and restaurants, but exercise restraint and caution when doing so. Wear your masks. Follow the establishment's protocols. Don't risk exposure to the virus. If we ignore safety procedures, cases may spike again, causing more restrictions. But if we enjoy ourselves safely and cautiously, we just may beat this virus.

So, go ahead and dine in at your favorite Carlton County establishment — or continue to order by delivery or carryout — but do so safely.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Electoral college has more resistors

The age-old debate of why we need the electoral college has just been answered. The political party that has fought for so many years to keep it has finally decided that the electoral college votes were somehow wrong and wanted them thrown out and that Congress should decide who should be president. President Donald Trump, six Republican senators and more than 120 members of the U.S. House of Representatives all signed on to nullify the electoral votes and somehow change the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. If that's not clear enough evidence that the Republicans no longer want the electoral college, then I don't know what is.

Just think, if we didn't have an electoral college, we wouldn't have needed congress to meet on Jan. 6 and maybe the protesters wouldn't have stormed the Capitol.

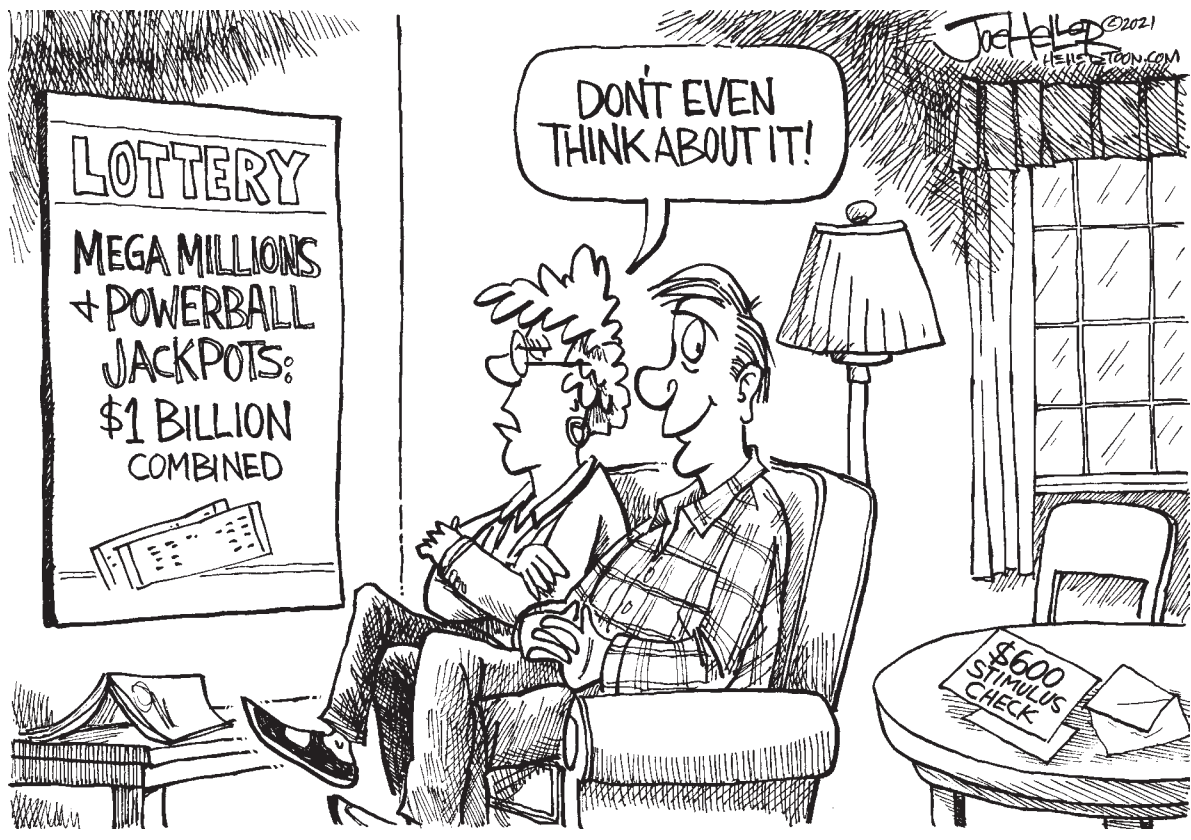
We are the only democracy in the world that has an elector-

al college. I can't help but wonder, if the electoral college is so good, why didn't other democracies adopt it? The only thing I've heard from other democratic-run countries is that they feel it is antiquated, and that we are laughed at for this system.

I think it's time to start the process of changing the Constitution to ban the electoral college. There is absolutely no reason that we can't count on every state to run a fair and honest election, and when the votes are tabulated a president is elected. Every state has both Democrat and Republican election judges and observers. Our last election had several recounts as well as countless court challenges that proved election results were accurate.

I hope this letter doesn't make people think I want more division in our country. My goal is to simply get rid of the electoral college and elect our president by popular vote.

Bill Zelazny,
Cromwell



On court, experience should be valued over any ideology

The Supreme Court took a hard turn to conservatism when President Trump appointed Amy Coney Barrett just a few months ago. Despite the disappointing way she was confirmed to the court, she exhibits the finest qualities we should look for in a Supreme Court Justice: moderation and restraint.

Coney Barrett has been portrayed as a deeply conservative legal advocate. You may be surprised that many on the liberal spectrum are satisfied with her on the bench, even though the Senate confirmed her along party lines, 52-48.

But in reality, many trust her role on the court, while conservative, will be acceptable.

Her background includes a short stint as a judge on the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, but most of her career was spent teaching at Notre Dame Law School, teaching civil procedure (the rules on bringing and governing lawsuits), and constitutional law. She attended Rhodes College in Tennessee (not to be confused with being a Rhodes scholar, which is a scholarship program for students to study at Oxford), graduating with honors, and went on to Notre Dame Law School, where she graduated at the top of her class and was editor of the Law Review. She clerked for Antonin Scalia, and there is no better prep for becoming a Supreme Court justice than clerking for a sitting justice.

That's an impressive resume for a Supreme Court justice. The position is, actually, an academic

job. You don't need trial skills, or even practical experience working in a law firm. Some of you may disagree with me on this. It involves analyzing the law; the Constitution; and the results of cases decided before them, called precedence in legal terms.

So the political bent of a candidate is not nearly as important as their credentials and their resume. From that, confirming senators should be able to distinguish a potential justice with a political, activist agenda from a serious student of the law. It's the student of the law we should appoint.

So, what does a judge do, exactly? In their most basic form, they resolve disputes. You and I can't agree on how much money I owe you, so we bring it to court and the judge applies the law to the facts and makes a decision. A criminal commits an act that the state thinks is a crime, but the criminal thinks the state can't prove he did anything wrong. Well, the judge listens to the evidence and the facts, as determined by a jury, and makes a decision.

By the time you get to the United State Supreme Court, the issues are very, very narrow: Does a criminal have the right to an attorney, even if he can't afford one? Can the government condemn property for a highway if the highway isn't really necessary? Do women have the right to control what happens to their bodies if they are in the process of reproducing?

In those cases, we want people on the Supreme Court who rule cautiously, slowly, and deliber-

ately. No rash decisions here.

The court must be able to find a constitutional basis for every decision, and they can't allow pressure from politicians to sway their decisions.

It's been said the framers gave us two houses of Congress so one, elected every two years, can bend to the popular whim. And the second, elected to six-year terms, can be more deliberative and make unpopular, but necessary, decisions without fear of immediate repercussions.

I think the framers intended the Supreme Court, with justices appointed for life, to move so slowly that the only change that comes out of their decisions is slow, incremental, and necessary. This provides some stability and predictability to our nation.

That's why the newest justice, rushed through the nomination process and expected by her nominator to be loyal and return a favor, agreed to decline hearing lawsuits brought before the court to challenge the election results. She was faithful to the law, and to the Constitution.

That's the way it should be. I wish we had more progressives on the Supreme Court, and I think our nation would be better off that way. But I can live with a Supreme Court full of justices dedicated to the law. God help us if the politicians take over the courts.

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HARRY'S GANG



Pete Radosevich

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OUR VIEW

Church leads in response to Covid

Good Hope Church in Cloquet recently suffered an outbreak of Covid-19 in its congregation, and immediately took steps to minimize the effect on the community, as we reported in last week's Pine Knot News.

We applaud the responsibility in acting quickly to contain the outbreak as much as possible. The church canceled services, informed members and strongly encouraged testing. It contacted the health department and did its own contact tracing. While most of those infected had mild symptoms, they looked out for everyone.

"We want to be conscientious for the few who may be very negatively affected," Pastor Mike Stevens said.

Such open and quick reactions will be what helps us combat and beat this virus. We believe the experts who say we eventually will achieve herd immunity, but no one seems to know how long that will take or how devastating that process might be.

There often seems to be a common misunderstanding of what herd immunity means. The concept is that if enough people get vaccinated or are exposed to a contagious virus like Covid-19, they become immune, thereby decreasing the likelihood of spreading the virus. If, say, 80 percent of people already have had the virus or have been vaccinated, the remaining 20 percent are less likely to be exposed to the virus, thus achieving herd immunity.

The problem is that without a vaccination, millions must contract the virus and suffer its consequences. While many exhibit only mild symptoms, more than 500,000 people in the United States have died from the virus in the past year. That's an enormous number of deaths. And many more have suffered greatly. Without the vaccine, the health costs of letting so many people catch the virus are just too great.

That's why we applaud Good Hope Church and others like them who have treated this pandemic with transparency and are taking proactive steps to slow the spread. Soon, we hope, this virus will be contained and we can get back to a semblance of normal life. If everyone follows the example set by Good Hope, we can hope that time will be sooner rather than later.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What would Jesus do in a pandemic world?

I have a question for Father Fish and for all the other Christians who feel unfairly treated by Covid-19 restrictions. If He were here today and living among us in human form, and He had two options — doing

whatever He pleased in order to satisfy His own selfish desires — or the opposite — taking temporary precautions that limit some of His freedoms in order to help preserve the health and lives of his fellow humans: What would Jesus do?

Chris Jenkins,
Cloquet

Express yourself

Send your opinions to:

Email: news@PineKnotNews.com

Mail: Pine Knot News Editor,
122 Avenue C, Cloquet MN 55720



Voter ID is intrusion, plain and simple, by government

There's talk in the Minnesota Legislature to bring back the "voter ID" issue. The problem with voter ID is that the logic behind it is backward — that since we need an ID to write a check or buy liquor, we should thus require an ID to exercise the most basic right in a democracy — voting. That logic is backward because the government has intruded on our lives so much that we shouldn't allow them to intrude on our most basic right in a democracy — voting.

We should not need an ID to buy liquor and tobacco. Those items are not such a privilege that we must prove our age to the government before buying them. Sure, I agree we should restrict such sales to those old enough to use them, responsibly or not. But requiring an obviously 35-year-old man to show his ID before buying beer for the weekend is an infringement upon our rights. It's an unreasonable search.

It's similar to requiring an ID to write a check. I've been in retail business for a long time — verifying that someone has the same name as the person on the check does little to prove the check is good. And there are much better ways to identify stolen checks than requiring an ID. Here's one of them: I say if you want to know if a check is good, ask to see the checkbook ledger balance. Then you'll know how

much money is in the account.

I tried that technique years ago at my brother-in-law's tavern and motel in Two Harbors. I was working alone when a middle-aged guy came in for a room, and wanted to pay with a check from the Twin Cities area.

HARRY'S GANG



Pete Radosevich

"I have plenty of ID," he kept telling me. I told him I'd rather see his bank balance — boy, did he laugh. He had \$35,000 in his checking account. It turns out he was in town buying a car from the dealership across the road. We ended up chatting at the bar until

closing time. And yes, his check cleared.

So, I believe there are better ways to reduce fraud in voting. Want me to be specific?

Let's just keep doing what we have been doing. We have registration, vouching (with address verification) and other methods. There is virtually no voter fraud in Minnesota. I can even prove that. After the Al Franken-Norm Coleman Senate election in 2008, we spent the next seven months painstakingly recounting each and every ballot in the State of Minnesota.

Know what we found? Over 900 ballots had been rejected incorrectly. That means our current system rejected more ballots than a voter ID law would prevent from voting (using data used by voter ID proponents). Clearly, requiring voter ID might actually

make our elections less secure, at least in Minnesota.

Plus, we just put this issue to the voters. In 2012, voters were asked to amend the Minnesota Constitution to require picture IDs to vote. Minnesotans rejected that notion 54 percent to 46 percent.

I can understand the logic behind voter ID initiatives. On the surface, it makes sense. Something as important as voting should not be jeopardized by fraudulent voting. So, most would agree, requiring an ID to vote would, in fact, solve that problem. But as the first part of this column shows, there is no problem to be solved. Investigations by the government and all major political parties have shown that voter fraud is virtually non-existent in Minnesota.

Imagine the outcry if IDs were required to enter church services. Or to cross the border into Scanlon. Or to pick up your mail from the mailbox. Or to simply walk down the street. There's no reason we would need to do that, as none of those activities are being abused. No, until there is a problem, there's no need for the government to infringe upon our right to vote. If that changes, I'm willing to re-address the voter ID issue.

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OUR VIEW

Keep online access to public meetings

Part of our responsibility as Cloquet's only locally based newspaper is to attend public meetings and report back to you. It's a primary function of local journalists, and we take that responsibility very seriously. That's why we send reporters to attend every Cloquet city council meeting, every Carlton County board meeting and many school board meetings in Esko, Carlton, Wrenshall and Cloquet, as well as other government meetings. Citizens need and rely on the Fourth Estate as watchdogs to ensure our government is working openly and transparently.

So we were excited to see local governments open their meetings back to the public, after more than a year of pandemic-related remote meetings. Esko has been allowing the public to attend its school board and township meeting for a couple of months, and the city of Cloquet plans to allow the public to start attending meetings next week.

Since we attend most government meetings, we can tell you that public attendance is often quite low. Many times, no one is in attendance except us. Unless there is some particularly controversial issue — hockey, anyone? — it's usually not more than a handful. For the Duluth TV stations to show up, the issue must be wildly controversial, and even then, they get their shots and leave well before the meeting is over.

But we noticed an encouraging sign during the pandemic, when most meetings were held remotely via Zoom or other teleconferencing: more of the public seemed to be attending. William Bauer, the Cloquet school district technology support specialist who's been livestreaming the meetings on YouTube, told the school board that each meeting online attracted between 20 to 30 viewers. That's far more than in-person attendance had been for most meetings prior to the virus.

That's why we encourage local governments to continue to livestream their meetings, even though the public is once again allowed to attend in person. Greater access to the public is simply good for democracy, and the expense is minor compared to the benefit of the community being able to easily watch government in action. Cloquet, for example, has had its council meetings streamed live for a few years now. Those same Cloquet meetings are also broadcast on CAT-7 (operated by the Pine Knot News), a boon to many who have cable but not internet access.

We hope other government units will continue to make their meetings open to the public electronically as well as in person. It's just good for our community.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Congress is out of control, out of touch

Congress is out of control and running rampant. They regularly pass legislation that serves only their self-interest, they bow to special interests, they receive money and "gifts" from lobbyists (payoffs) and they answer to no one.

Imagine passing a bill that allows you to invest based on knowledge of upcoming legislation that will guarantee your investment will grow. Give yourself a raise, increase your stipend for travel, housing and food without oversight, pull federal marshals off one flight so you can have more personal protection when you're not even

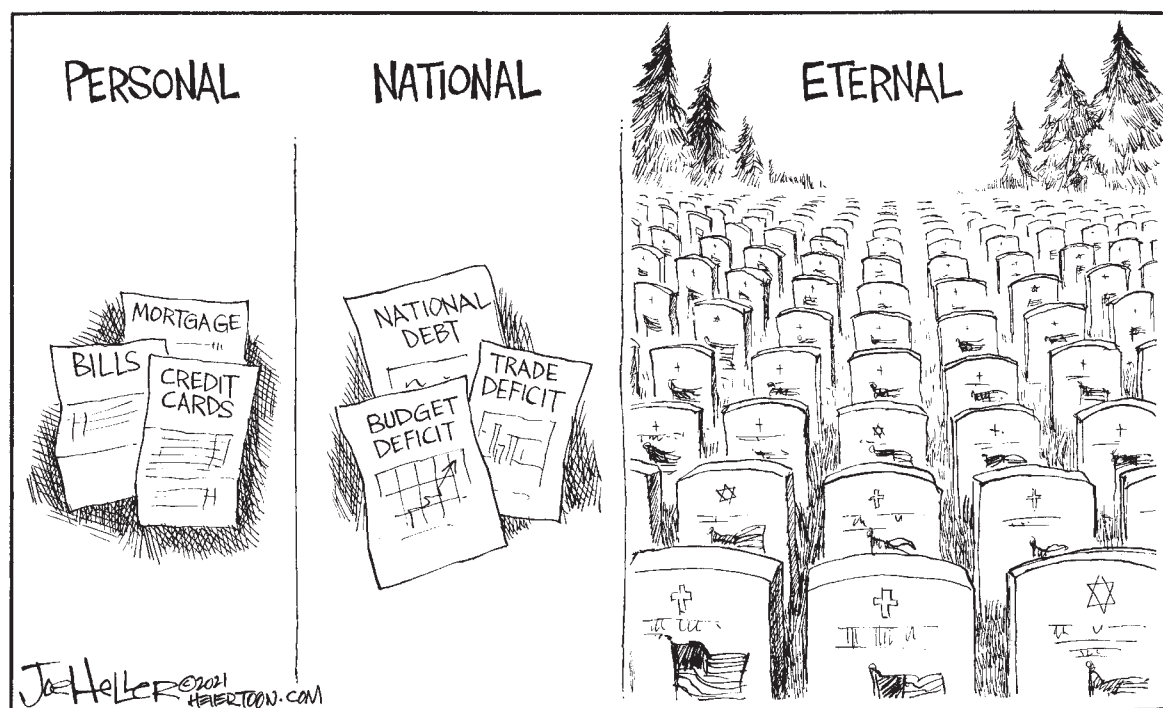
performing an official duty.

This is your Congress: more than 50 percent are millionaires. Does that represent our population? Make calls. Send emails. It's time for accountability. We need at minimum two amendments: term limits for congress with benefits packages voted on by voters. Do these two things, and they'll work for us again.

At the state level, implement a salary for the year. Then if you get done early, good for you; and if you don't do your job in a timely manner, you still get paid the same. An emergency situation would be paid separately. Quit ripping us off.

Trevor Weston,
Holyoke

The debt we owe



We all revere Memorial Day, for the dead and the living

Memorial Day is Monday, and many people take advantage of the long weekend to get to the cabin, maybe travel or barbecue, and enjoy other activities to mark the "official" start of the summer season.

I keep hearing complaints that the true meaning of Memorial Day has become lost, as too many people simply see the day as an extra day off from work to relax and play. I have to disagree — I think the extra day off makes it much easier to remember those who have come before us, and the fact that it's a federal holiday (which means the banks, post office and other federal offices are closed) makes it even more solemn and important, even if many of us are at the cabin or otherwise taking it easy.

After all, our ability to have a long relaxing weekend is the result of those who served our country in the past and provided a framework for future generations to enjoy their freedoms. Where would our country be if not for the brave soldiers who fought in the war to end all wars, or its sequel, World War II?

Before those wars, America was a nice, relatively low-key country that mostly kept to itself. Sure, we were involved in foreign affairs but not to the extent we saw after those skirmishes. We became a world superpower, and with that, our standard of living began to increase steadily until it seemed most of us were living like kings. None of that would have been possible if we hadn't been victorious in those wars.

Even the wars that followed, in Korea and Vietnam, helped

slow the spread of communism and stabilized our role as a worldwide force. I'm not willing to discuss the political downsides of such events here, as I think it's best to focus on the positive sides of it all for Memorial Day, but our country's armed forces shaped our society in a way that we can hardly imagine. Our freedoms and our standard of living simply wouldn't have been possible without them.

Although Memorial Day is an official day to remember the sacrifice many in the armed forces made in the name of patriotism, it's also a nice day for us to remember other loved ones.

I've celebrated Memorial Day since I was little. As a Boy Scout, we participated in the military celebrations put on by the American Legion and the VFW, and I remember the absolute honor I felt when Rol Falk, the retired sheriff, asked me to play taps on the bugle one year.

More recently, I've taken my kids to visit cemeteries where many of our ancestors and old friends are buried. We often start in Esko, because my good friend Jeff Korpi is buried there. I tell my boys how excited Jeff was when he found out Tara was pregnant, and how many evenings he spent at our house playing with them when they were babies. Their favorite story, one they insist I tell every year, is how we were just too busy to celebrate Patrick's second birthday on his actual, midweek birth date. Korpi was having none of that — showing up at dinnertime with treats for the kids, a cake, and presents for Patrick that were highly inappropriate for a 2-year

old — flashlights, pocket knives, and silver pieces. We still have them all, and every Memorial Day I remind them how great their Uncle Jeff was.

Next, we head up to Calvary to see family members, many of whom had served, including my Uncle Stan, who served as a paratrooper; and their grandparents, Tony (Marines) and Marg, an American patriot in her own right. We spend a little time reading the gravestones of relatives before heading up to Two Harbors. We have no relatives buried in that cemetery, but a good many of the people who influenced me growing up are, and the kids love hearing my recollections of who they were and how they affected their father as a child. At least, I think they enjoy the stories. They become a bit solemn and reflective during these visits, possibly mimicking their father, but I think they are feeling it, too.

Then, it's off to Brighton Beach for a picnic and some fun on the rocks. By the looks of it, the kids have forgotten the pomp of Memorial Day by then, and sensing my vulnerability, usually suggest we stop for ice cream on the way home. But a few days ago they asked if we were going to visit the gravesites again this Memorial Day, so I think the message has gotten through to them. And that's the real lesson of Memorial Day. Here's hoping you have a happy, safe, and honorable Memorial Day weekend.

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HARRY'S GANG



Pete Radosevich

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It's easy: Get shot

People who are not getting vaccinated are naive, selfish and

self-centered. Get the shot.

Dave Hennum,
1959 Cloquet graduate and

Pine Knot News subscriber in San Antonio, Texas

OUR VIEW

Simply put:
Get vaccinated

Well, here we are again. Before the recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control this week for mask wearing, there were already telltale signs that the pandemic we prefer to talk about in the past tense just isn't over yet. Because of the Delta variant that has been spreading among mostly unvaccinated people in pockets across the country, including in Minnesota, masks are back in our lives.

It didn't have to be this way.

The dangerous variant is feasting on the unvaccinated. And it is leaving our children who can't yet be vaccinated ever more vulnerable to Covid-19 and its unknown long-term effects.

It didn't have to be this way.

Carlton County should be proud that its population was one of the first in the state to reach a 70-percent vaccination rate among those who could be vaccinated. And we've mostly kept up, despite the pool growing wider for those who can get a shot, now including those as young as age 12. All of this vaccination news is welcome, but it doesn't mean much when we still have too many people without vaccinations hosting Covid and spreading it around. In short, the unvaccinated are putting their own lives at risk — as well as those of others, including children. They are keeping the Covid scourge, and its variants, hanging around. They are almost assuredly going to put us back into mask wearing, almost undoubtedly for schools in the fall if trends keep up.

It's pretty simple. Get vaccinated.

Drop your conspiracy theories from the politically motivated anti-vaxxers — who we are learning are mostly the same Russian and foreign agents that have been polluting American social media for years in an effort to create dysfunction and mistrust.

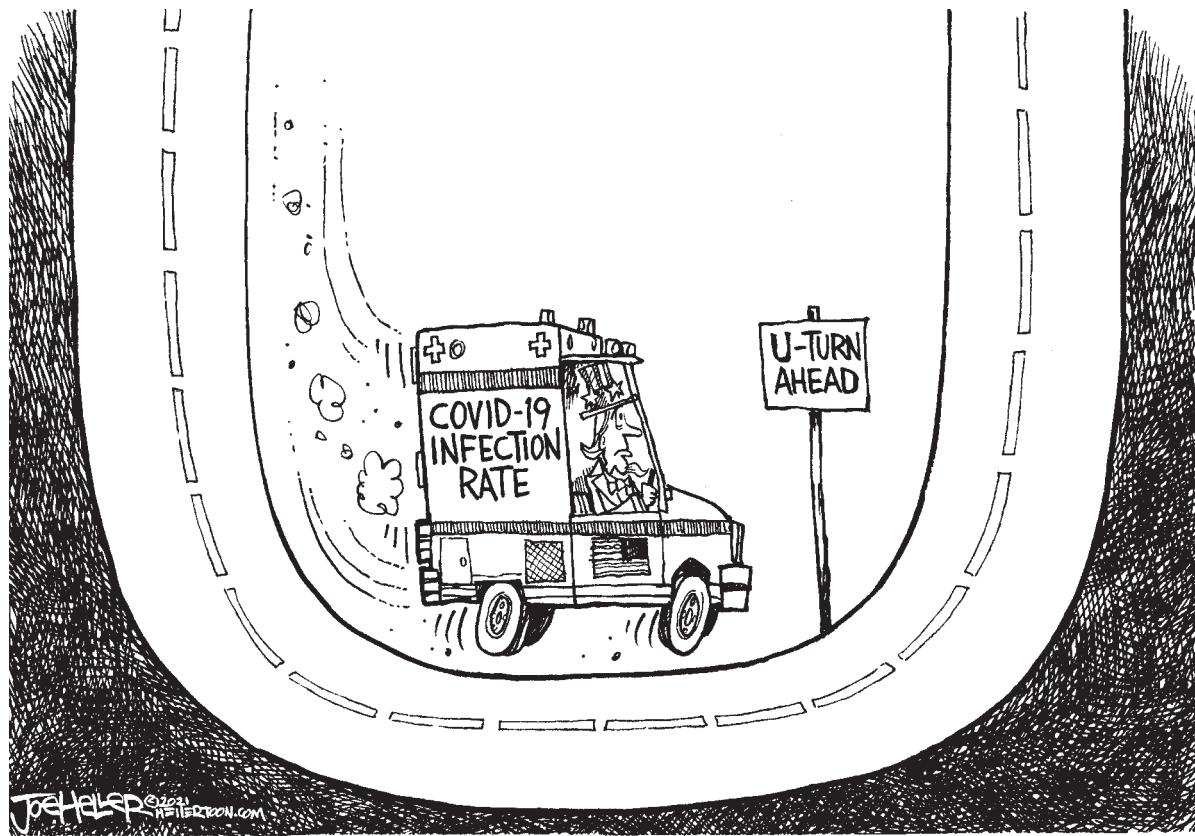
If it eases your soul, have a long talk with your doctor. Medical professionals are the ones we need to trust to get us through what has unfortunately been a continued pandemic.

If you think you are being controlled by those who are telling you to get vaccinated, so be it. We need to conquer this virus as a whole, not as some red and blue cogs repelling each other in a manufactured state of division.

At some point, any long-form explanation on why one should do the right thing just feels exhausting and unnecessary.

Do the world a favor.

Get vaccinated.



Bright power bill days ahead

After thinking about it for months, my husband, Rod, and I decided to install solar power at our home. Rod researched the options. We chose to go with a small company, Wolf Track Energy of Duluth, recommended by Jeff Corey of One Roof Community Housing. We decided against putting the panels on our roof, concerned about potential damage. We opted instead to install them in the yard south of our home.

More than a decade ago, we installed ground source heating and cooling, using an extensive system of pipes laid some 9 feet underground, shuttling water to and from a heat exchanger in the basement. To me it seemed a bit of magic to be able to extract several degrees of heat from underground water at 40 degrees and send it back out a few degrees colder in winter. And to extract cooling degrees in the summer.

Rod worked with Wolf Track to design the system. Rod and his

first wife, Barb, had designed the house in the 1970s and built it themselves with help from Rod's brothers. Almost 20 years ago, we added a western addition with a cathedral ceiling. We'd purchased a used backhoe for that job, and it has done plenty of work for us since.

ON THE MARK



Ann Markusen

We arranged with Wolf Track to do some of the installation work ourselves, saving us about \$5,000. Rod used the backhoe to dig two huge cylindrical post holes, into which we placed the post holders and then 19-foot metal posts, filling them in with concrete.

Lake Country Power installed two new meters: one for the solar power we generate, using and returning power to the power company, and one for the dual fuel LCP function. All of Rod's work and that of Wolf Track has been inspected by experts and approved.

A solar system is expensive. Ours cost something like \$35,000, some of which will be refunded

to us through federal energy-saving tax rebates. It would have been more if Rod hadn't done so much of the groundwork. We wanted to switch from electricity generated principally by large coal-fired plants to the west of us to an environmentally benign system. Now we will be able to sell excess electricity back to Lake Country Power.

Our panels — approximately 8 feet wide and 24 feet long — are now mounted and working. They can be adjusted for the height of the sun throughout the seasons. Currently, they are tilted almost straight up to take advantage of the sun's position high in the sky. In the winter, they will be angled to face a sun low in the south. We are looking forward to our next power bill.

Columnist Ann Markusen is an economist and professor emerita at University of Minnesota. She lives in Red Clover Township north of Cromwell with her husband, Rod Walli. Columnist Pete Radosevich is on vacation.

Express yourself

Send your thoughts to:

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- Letters to the editor should be kept to under 300 words. Longer pieces could be considered for a guest commentary. Commentaries should be kept to around 600 words.
- If you write a guest commentary, be sure to include some background information and any expertise you may have to lend credibility to your piece. And if you state opinion as fact, please include supporting material or links so they can be vetted.
- Items dealing with local issues will take first priority.
 - Any reader comments should be respectful.
- The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity, concision, grammar, newspaper style, libel and length.
- Letters and commentary must be original works by the author.
- Include your name with your address and phone number for verification purposes only. Only names and home cities will be published.
 - No anonymous letters are allowed.



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