

VIEWPOINTS

LETTERS FROM READERS

Letters to the editor are not fact checked by the Aitkin Age and should be considered matters of opinion.
The deadline to submit letters to the editor has been changed to 5 p.m. on Thursdays.

Minnesota's high taxes, electricity blackouts

According to the Tax Foundation, Minnesota had the fifth highest individual state tax rate at 9.85% on income over \$166,040. Only California, Hawaii, New Jersey and Oregon have higher rates.

Furthermore, for both California and New Jersey, the top rate only kicks in at an income threshold of \$1 million. Minnesota doesn't just tax the rich heavily; our starting rate of personal income tax, 5.35%, is higher than the top rate in 23 states.

The Tax Foundation reported that ours is only one of 12 states and the District of Columbia to impose an estate tax. Six other states impose an inheritance tax. To compound this, of the 13 jurisdictions, Minnesota's exemption, \$3 million, is lower than in eight states.

At 13%, Minnesota has the second highest minimum rate of estate tax after Vermont. Minnesota's top rate of estate tax, 16%, is the joint second highest.

Yet, the Office of Management and Budget released a forecast projecting a \$7.7 billion surplus for the 2022-2023 biennium. What the heck is Gov. Walz planning to do with the \$7.7 billion?

Gas prices are the highest they have been since the Obama Administration. The price of propane and natural gas in Minnesota are up

250% and 60% over last year. Diminished coal supplies and over-reliance on wind and solar could bring rolling energy blackouts in a harsh winter. The blackout that affected Texas in February 2021 demonstrated the devastating consequences that occur when we take the reliability of the electric grid for granted. Twenty million Texans, nearly 70% of the state population, lost power during the polar vortex, leaving them without heat or running water for an extended period of time in sub-freezing weather; 210 people died in the polar vortex.

Xcel Energy recently announced it will shut down all its coal-burning plants by 2030.

All the information written thus far was gleaned from the winter issue of the magazine, "Thinking Minnesota."

I have little doubt that the state Public Utility Commission strong-armed Xcel. I had a 39-year career with Xcel.

As the number of customers relying on wind and solar keeps rising, there will be blackouts and electric bills will rise exponentially.

Jim Warneke
Aitkin

Township Day is March 8

All township residents have a direct voice and a direct vote with their local

government. On Tuesday, March 8, townships will hold their annual meetings on "Township Day." Make sure to attend to make your voice heard!

The tradition of a town meeting has roots in colonial America. New England town meetings gave citizens a way to exercise local authority. Those meetings were especially important in the development of democracy because it emphasized problem-solving through group efforts.

Growing from this historic background, we are still effective as 'grassroots government.' Residents participate in discussion and a direct vote on the tax levy, and many townships will be electing new officers.

We encourage every township resident to attend your annual meeting - together we'll shape the future. Mark your calendar for March 8 and find the location and time by checking your local newspaper or contacting your township clerk and invite your neighbors to the annual meeting on Township Day.

Jeff Krueger
executive director
Minnesota Association
of Townships

Here we go, again!

Senior Judge Jeffrey White of California put the grey wolves back on the Endangered Species Act list.

Sounds familiar to the last time we had a New York judge put them back on the list. Why can federal judges from the east and west coast decide for the midwestern states?

It should be up to individual states - they have no clue what is really going on with our wolf population in Minnesota.

I am, along with many deer hunters, sick and tired of competing with the wolves in the northern half of Minnesota. We have a populations of wolves here that's thriving and spreading. A lot of hunters this year have seen more wolf sign and deer kills by wolves than ever.

Part of the judge's decision was that last February, Wisconsin hunters killed 218 wolves in one hunting season, blowing past its 119 wolf limit. That tells me that the wolves are over-populated - not endangered.

If the DNR doesn't do something, maybe the deer hunters should stop buying their licenses and see how that works.

Oh, I know they'll say it's out of our hands, it's a federal matter! All hunters and sportsmen should call or write to their senators and representatives and tell them they are fed up with New York and California judges making decisions for our state that they don't know anything about.

Steve Wold
Aitkin

MY VIEW BY SHARI HORTON

The centers of my orbit



SHARI HORTON
Columnist

From the moment my twin boys took their first breath, I fully understood unconditional love and knew my life would never just revolve around myself again. Much like the earth's orbit around the sun, my life has revolved around theirs for 20 years.

I transitioned from a 20-year successful career to motherhood. I've juggled several jobs since they started school, primarily working from home. It was a decision I'll never regret. Sacrifices were made, but time is fleeting and precious and you can't put a price tag on that.

I was privileged to see the firsts - crawling, walking and words. I was here to nurture when they were sick, attend school events and enjoy countless evenings on the bleachers as their biggest cheerleader. A few gray hairs were earned as I helped them learn to drive a car and navigate heartbreak.

Inch by inch then by leaps and bounds, we, as parents, let go. It comes with the job, and it is most certainly not my strength.

Letting go accelerates at warped speed when the first driver's license is proudly earned. Then, in the blink of an eye, they're standing proud, diploma in hand, faced with important life decisions. They think they know more than we parents do at this point, but they don't. They still need us because "adulthood" is hard; the transitional years, often harder.

One son moved to college campus last year during the height of the pandemic. I tried to hide my tears as he emptied his closet and as we readied his dorm room. The tide of tears flowed for quite some time after. Following multiple quarantines and a host of frustration, he returned home just three months later to complete the year online. This past fall, he resumed in-person learning and moved into an apartment.

In the meantime, my other son joined the military. Saying, "see you later," was unimaginable. Following the last hug, I left him and fell to my knees in the sub-zero dark night and sobbed. Longing for another, I knew the second goodbye would have been unbearable. I counted the weeks and days until I would see him. My calendar pages were worn from all of the number crunching. My heart was consumed with worry knowing he was facing unimaginable physical and emotional challenges. I lived for Sunday phone calls and letters to home. The reunion after six months was indescribably emotional.

As I continue to navigate this new path, I realize it is an inevitable part of the journey. I read somewhere that as parents, we are the bow; our children, the arrows. We are never meant to hold them back but to let them soar.

I can only hope I've equipped them with the compass they need to stay on course, follow their hearts and dreams, lead happy lives and come back home to mom often and always when they need a safe and soft place to fall.

I am blessed to share this journey with these wonderful human beings and have much to look forward to in life's unwritten chapters. They will always and forever remain tethered to my heart and the center of my orbit.

Flying high once more

It was early morning when I came into the kitchen and heard the low menacing growl that only our oldest cat, Nemadji, makes when he has caught something, usually a mouse. He was warning the other cats to stay away; it was his.

I went down the stairs to the basement thinking it was just another mouse. But I saw it was too large for a mouse. Nemadji continued to growl, but I gingerly opened his mouth and carefully took the little creature into my hands. One look at those big round black eyes and



LINDA HOMMES
Columnist

flat tail, and I knew it was a flying squirrel.

As I gently carried it up the stairs toward our back door, it stirred, then wriggled. I said softly,

"looks like you have another chance." Opening the door, I sat it down and watched as it bounced down the stairs and scampered away into the dawn.

But where had it come

from? The answer, as I looked around, came when I saw the wire mesh screen from the stove vent lying on the stove top. The squirrel had apparently made itself a warm winter home somewhere above the vent and had somehow fallen onto the screen, then to the stove top. I'm sure it was as bewildered at that turn of events as was Nemadji.

I love flying squirrels but had not seen one around our area for many years. Rusty, the stray who stayed, managed to take out a whole family of flying squirrels when he was then an outside cat. All I would

find was the telltale flat tail. Previously, from the kitchen window we could watch the acrobats "fly" from our spruce trees to the security light pole and on to the bird feeders.

I've missed them over the years, but now I have hope that there is another family close by. I'm trusting that the little one I rescued will once again fly high.

Linda Hommes lives on a small farm on Camp Lake in Kimberly Township. An outdoor enthusiast, she writes nature essays, memoir and poetry.