

OUR VIEW

Time to end state tax on Social Security

Did you know that Minnesota is one of only 12 states to tax Social Security benefits? That's right – one of 12. Given the state's projected \$7.7 billion budget surplus, it's time for Minnesota to repeal its tax on Social Security income.

Remember that even the federal government didn't tax Social Security income until 1984. Minnesota initially declined to conform to the federal treatment, and for tax year 1984, the state allowed a subtraction for Social Security benefits that were taxable federally.

But it didn't take long for Minnesota to jump on the taxation bandwagon.

Those who support retaining the tax say not all Social Security income is taxed and the greatest beneficiaries of any reduction in taxation will be the very rich.

They are correct when they say not all Social Security income is taxed. But the elimination of the tax would benefit many senior citizens – not just the wealthy.

According to a 2020 report prepared by Minnesota House Research, in tax year 2017, about 565,000 resident returns in Minnesota reported about \$12.8 billion in Social Security income. Of that amount, 48.9% was taxable federally and about 41.3% was taxable in Minnesota.

Very few Minnesotans with a federal adjusted gross income of \$25,000 or less paid any taxes on their Social Security income. But nearly 17% with incomes ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 did pay taxes on a portion of their Social Security. Moreover, the amount of the Social Security taxed jumps dramatically depending on one's income – 0% for low-income seniors, to 50% for middle-income earners and 85% for the highest earners.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue estimates that eliminating the Social Security income tax would provide \$540 million in tax relief for Minnesotan seniors in the first year.

Many Republicans have said repealing the state tax on Social Security is a priority this legislative session.

Few Democrats have publicly supported the idea.

We simply don't understand why.

Given the state's projected \$7.7 billion budget surplus, a bill to repeal the tax on Social Security deserves an up or down vote this legislative session.

YOUR VIEW

AG candidates coming to town

To-the-Editor:

The Steele County Republican Party is looking forward to hosting the five Republican candidates running for Minnesota Attorney General. Everyone is invited to attend the Meet-and-Greet at 6:30 p.m. followed by the debate at 7 p.m. at the Owatonna VFW on Wednesday, Feb. 23.

The evening will not only help educate us on the issues and where each candidate stands. It is also a great opportunity for people to meet the candidates face to

face before the debate starts. This is a very important elected office in the State of Minnesota and you will hear what the candidates plan to do about the out-of-control crime statistics.

To round out the event, you are welcome to purchase delicious burger baskets from the VFW Kitchen from 6 to 6:45 p.m. This is a free event and everyone is welcome to attend.

See you Wednesday, Feb. 23 at the Owatonna VFW.

**Pam Seaser
Owatonna**

How to contact your elected officials

LEGISLATURE

Senate District 24

John R. Jasinski
3211 Minnesota
Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-0284
sen.john.jasinski@senate.mn

House District 24A

John Petersburg
217 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5368
rep.john.petersburg@house.mn

House District 24B

Brian Daniels
231 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-8237
rep.brian.daniels@house.mn

Senate District 27

Gene Dornink
3229 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5240
sen.gene.dornink@senate.mn

House District 27A

Peggy Bennett
307 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-8216
rep.peggy.bennett@house.mn



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

Growing up Mickey Mouse was a big idol of mine. After all, who doesn't adore the cartoon character created by Walt Disney in 1928?

Besides Mickey, I don't mind tossing around a phrase here and there: "Quiet as a mouse." I also remember back on the farm when a few cats would play a game, "Cat and Mouse." It was fun to watch—in a barn!

Or there have been a few times when I wanted to eavesdrop on someone else and thought, "It would be fun to be a little mouse in the corner."

But that's about as far as my love for any sort of mouse goes.

I'm fairly certain you know where this is headed.

Nyah, Nyah, Nyah... can't catch me

I have been fighting the battle of the mouse (or perhaps mice) in the house this winter. Not sure how many, it doesn't matter. The thing that matters is that I know there is one for sure and most likely where there's one, there's more.

Though they're probably as harmless as can be, I am terrified of the little creatures.

Things had been pretty good for several years. There has maybe been an occasional one outside in the garage or shed, but nothing more.

That's until this winter. I'm sure I can thank Mother Nature's arctic air for the rouse in my house.

What annoys me the most is that they are in the kitchen, usually in a towel drawer or behind the stove. I ripped everything out and began "baiting" them with Tomcat Mouse Killer. It's a disposable station

that effectively "kills up to 10 mice with one bait block while providing the highest level of station security."

I won't resort to mouse traps unless you want to come and take them out of the traps for me.

At this point, I'm not certain I believe bait stations are effective as they have been met with mixed results. Or maybe it's because there is an army of mice living with me.

I'm smart enough to leave the drawer empty with the station propped in the corner. Within a few days last week, the entire block was gone with remnants, ie: mouse droppings, sprinkled around the drawer.

I quickly replaced the station with another. Same results.

If the bait is supposed to kill them elsewhere, why do I continue seeing signs of mice?

It's like they're teasing me.

I can just hear them whispering in the drawers and walls, "nyah, nyah, nyah... can't catch me!"

By now you're probably wondering where Ginger (my long-time cat, who actually turns 18 or 88 in human years, this week) is in all of this. Well, let's just say she's nowhere near the mice. She's as disgusted as I am with the thought of dealing with a mouse.

Actually, a few years back she got into a game with one on the dining room floor as she chased it back and forth. By the way, Ginger won the match. However, that's the last time I've seen her have anything to do with a mouse.

I guess this is one battle I'm going to have to fight on my own. I'm not sure who is going to win.

It seems like the mice are in hot pursuit of driving me out of my house or at least a little crazy.



GUEST COLUMN

Tax relief, public safety are priorities

BY PEGGY BENNETT

On Jan. 31, the Minnesota House of Representatives began the 2022 Legislative Session in St. Paul. As it stands today, Minnesota has a record budget surplus – the largest in state history. Sadly, our state also has had a record violent crime surge this past year. As such, tax relief and public safety will be among the top legislative priorities this year.

With an almost \$8 billion surplus, it is glaringly obvious that Minnesota taxpayers have greatly overpaid the state. I believe this overpayment should go back to Minnesota taxpayers through tax relief and through smart funding of local infrastructure such sewer and water for small towns.

One of our first tax relief moves should be to remove income tax on Social Security. Minnesota is one of the few states remaining that

continues to tax Social Security benefits. It has been one of my goals since entering office to see the Social Security tax permanently disappear. A few years ago we were able to eliminate this tax for thousands of recipients. With a record surplus, now is the time to eliminate it for ALL Minnesotans.

We also need to end the unnecessary unemployment tax hike on Minnesota employers. Our government promised Minnesota businesses that they would not be penalized for being forced to lay off workers due to Governor Waltz's assault on our small businesses. Our state needs to uphold that promise. Government gave us its word and it needs to abide by what it says.

Many local communities will be hit hard by new MPCA phosphate regulations that will double the cost of water treatment plants across

our state. In Albert Lea, what should be a \$20 million water treatment plant project will now cost \$40 million because of these mandates.

Albert Lea residents will see their water bills triple or quadruple – unaffordable increases for both home and business – if the state doesn't step up and chip in to pay for these mandates. These unsustainable increases will be on top of the already stressed family and business budgets due to high inflation driving up the prices of everything from gas to food to everyday supplies like toilet paper. Families are already scratching the bottom of their budget barrels and now we're going to quadruple their water bills?

Funding these water treatment plants would be a smart way to use the budget surplus to bring some financial relief to local communities. This is an unfunded mandate. If the state mandates

something, then the state should pay for it.

Public safety is also a huge issue for our state. I absolutely support our police officers – not defunding the police.

No one should have to fear being mugged, carjacked, or worse, when walking through their neighborhood or driving through a Twin Cities community. We need to fund law enforcement well and we need to stop repeat criminals from getting shorter sentences – or no sentences – and then getting back on the streets to continue their crime and destruction.

Some Minnesota cities have drastically cut their police budgets, demonized their police officers, and are now experiencing enormous law enforcement personnel deficits. Those cities that defunded their police departments now seem to expect the state come

See TAX on A3 ▶

STEELE COUNTY Times

www.SteeleCountyTimes.com

Offices:
• Blooming Prairie: 411 E. Main St.
• Owatonna: 109 W. Rose St.

Customer Service:
news@steelecountytimes.com
507-583-4431

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Times Staff:

• Rick Bussler, Publisher and Owner
952-224-6331, rbussler@steelecountytimes.com
• Deb Flemming, News Editor
507-583-4431, dflemming@steelecountytimes.com
• Sherrie Pechan, Office Manager
507-583-4431, news@steelecountytimes.com
• Wyoone Priebe, Sales Specialist
507-456-4299, wpriebe@steelecountytimes.com

• Sandy Finley, Sales Specialist
507-456-5297, sfinley@steelecountytimes.com
• Johnnie Phillips, Sports Editor
507-583-4431, jphillips@steelecountytimes.com
• Kay Fate, Staff Writer
507-583-4431, kfate@steelecountytimes.com
• Charlene Wolff, Owatonna Office/Sales
507-583-4431, cwolff@steelecountytimes.com
• Chris Baldwin, Staff Writer
507-583-4431, news@steelecountytimes.com

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2021 – 16 state awards	2016 – 8 state and 6 national awards	2012 – 2 state awards
2020 – 9 state awards	2015 – 7 state and 4 national awards	2011 – 4 national awards
2019 – 7 state awards	2014 – 3 state and 4 national awards	

(Awards presented by the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National Newspaper Associations)