

Editorials are the institutional voice of The Free Press and independent of the newsroom reporting staff

OUR VIEW

# Food recovery program a win-win



Thumbs up to the South Central Minnesota Food Recovery nonprofit for expanding its organization, partnering with more groups and ultimately providing more food for those in need.

Natasha Frost, owner of Wooden Spoon, began three years ago collecting leftover food from organizations and restaurants to give to those in need. More recently they have making the food e into frozen meals. Churches

and other groups helping distribute the meals are already working on expanding freezer space to store the meals.

Now the group has more partners and funding. It just received a grant from Blue Earth County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership and Nicollet, Brown Le Sueur and Waseca counties SHIP to create a certified space specifically for volunteer work in Frost Plaza in Mankato.

Volunteers now process food and prepare meals in space not well suited for food.

With additional partners joining, the group is already planning for bigger and better things and applying for more grants. The Food Recovery concept is a good one — reduce food waste and thereby greenhouse gas emissions, prepare meals that can be stored and ultimately get food to people who need it.

## Birk insults women

Thumbs down to GOP lieutenant governor candidate Matt Birk for insensitive and tone-deaf comments about the role of women in society and about women who have abortions.

At the National Right to Life conference last month in Georgia, Birk said American culture “loudly but also stealthily promotes abortion” by “telling women they should look a certain way, they should have careers,” according to a report in the Star Tribune.

He criticized abortion rights supporters who opposed abortion bans that don’t include exceptions for rape and incest saying they “always want to go to the rape card.”

He went further saying exceptions for rape and incest regarding abortion amount to “Two wrongs is not gonna ... make it right.”

The GOP ticket, with Birk and gubernatorial candidate Scott Jensen, opposes abortion with no exceptions for rape and incest, with the only exception being the health threats to the mother. Jensen has said the health of the mother exception could include cases of rape or incest.

However the GOP ticket wants to dance around the abortion issue, Birk’s comments speak to a wider set of concerns about how he sees women in society.

## Payday loan pressure

Thumbs up to local efforts to reform how payday loans operate.

Advocates from local nonprofits plan to call on the Mankato City Council to place interest-rate caps on what they call “predatory” payday lenders. Payday loans, usually \$500 or less, give borrowers quick cash to be repaid in full at high interest by their next paycheck.

Critics say the loans target people in desperate situations, enticing borrowers with limited credit options to take on enormous debt they can’t dig themselves out of.

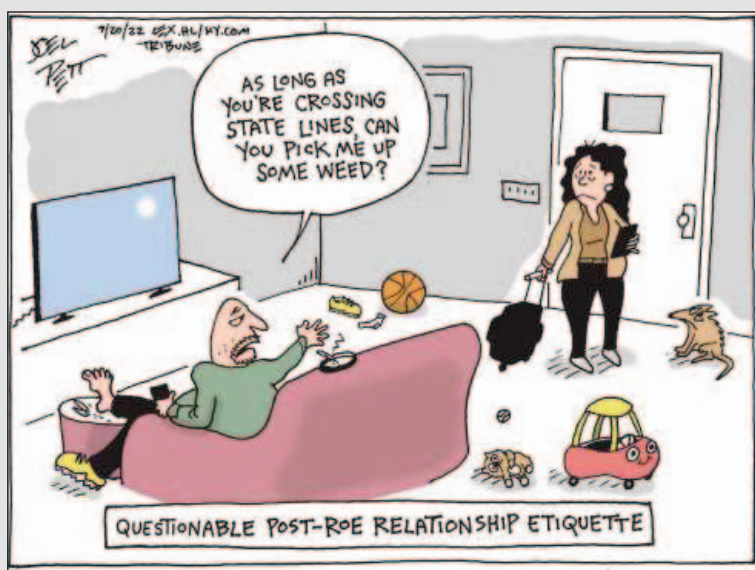
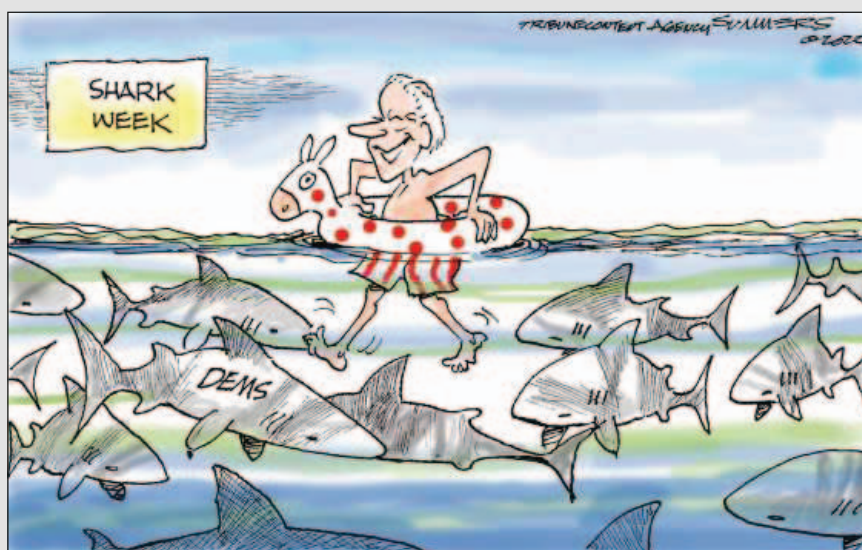
After gaining little ground on a statewide cap with the Minnesota Legislature, advocates from local nonprofits held a briefing Wednesday to outline what a city ordinance could look like. Minnesotans for Fair Lending, the Minnesota Council of Churches’ Mankato Refugee Services office, the Greater Mankato Area United Way and Exodus Lending partnered on the event.

Like the Mankato City Council previously deciding to rein in smoking in public places instead of waiting for the state to get around to it, the proposal is to have the city pass an ordinance calling for no more than a 33% interest rate on payday loans.

The average annual interest rate on payday loans in Blue Earth County in 2021 was 294%, according to the advocates. Borrowers also would be limited to two loans of up to \$1,000 per calendar year under the ordinance, with a minimum payback period of 60 days.

A broader solution to predatory lending practices would, of course, have been for the Legislature to take action. But in the absence of that happening, looking at solutions at a more local level may at least protect people in this community from diving deeper than need be into debt. At the very least, the proposal draws needed attention to the problem.

# VIEWPOINTS FROM THE CARTOONIST’S PEN



## EDITOR’S VIEW

# Walz right to push for special session

Gov. Tim Walz said he has made numerous concessions, some 100%, in negotiations with Republicans to get some kind of deal done in a special session, and more and more groups are pushing for one.



**JOE SPEAR**  
Managing Editor

On Friday, a building trades group delivered a resolution to Walz in Mankato that was signed by several Republican senators saying they would favor a special session that was narrowly focused on a bonding bill and a bill that would trigger federal infrastructure money.

Walz said he will discuss the idea with his team and try for a special session sometime after the Aug. 9 primary, when more legislators will know where they stand.

“I think there’s building pressure. I’m open to all of it,” Walz said in a meeting Friday with The Free Press editorial board. “I gave on other positions just to get things done,” said Walz, citing his support for moving motor vehicle sales tax to transportation funding, a position long opposed by himself and other Democrats and a longtime push by Republicans.

Walz called allegations that he told DFL House to kill a bill in the state government conference committee after it was agreed upon are “100% false.” GOP Sen. Rich Draheim, R-Madison Lake, made the allegation in an opinion piece in the July 1 Free Press.

A recent proposal for a special session came in the form of \$2,000 rebate checks to families to help them deal with inflation and other rising costs, and he notes with

some irony that the rebate idea touted by conservative interest groups and Republicans is no longer popular after a DFL governor proposes it.

On Thursday, the governor called for a special session to boost funding for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to work on a backlog of gun cases and the need for another State Patrol helicopter to help in the rising number of high-speed chases.

The helicopter ended 13 high-speed chases on a recent weekend in the metro area that could only have been stopped with the help of a helicopter, Walz said.

In each of the three announcements asking legislators to consider coming back for a special session, he has not heard one word from Republicans, he said. The House DFL responded, but leadership said they are so far only committing to “maybe” as an answer to a special session.

Walz said he would rather not call a special session without agreement on both sides on the issues, and he also doesn’t want to risk losing a commissioner to a Senate Republican vote to reject state Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm, someone he said he cannot afford to lose.

At one time, Walz had asked for a written agreement from Republicans that they would not hold commissioner votes during a special session. He now says he is open to a “trust” agreement without a signed agreement if it helps get a special session done.

Republicans have pulled back from

a preliminary deal for \$4 billion in tax relief, \$4 billion spending and \$4 billion as a budget reserve when GOP gubernatorial candidate Scott Jensen told them to hold off on a deal in hopes that Republicans would win the governor’s race and take majorities in the House and Senate.

Jensen has not denied that charge.

But Walz said even if he believed the opposite — the Democrats would control all three branches of power — he would still take a deal now. He also rejects a strategy to call a special session without agreements and to blame Republicans if nothing gets done.

Walz makes a good case for a special session, and it appears some Republicans are recognizing that with the signatures on the building trades resolution for a bonding bill. But it would be a mistake for House Democrats to create a special session that balloons out of control with abortion and gun bills.

Walz would do well to take a deal, however small, and House Democrats should go along. If they do, and Senate Republicans don’t go along, they’ll be facing a lot of negative talking points in November.

Right now it looks like Republicans are against everything, including rebate checks, local bonding projects, special education funding, public safety funding and road funding.

Not exactly a platform to win elections.

Joe Spear is editor of The Free Press. Contact him at 344-6382 or jspear@mankatofreepress.com. Follow on Twitter @jfspear.

FOUNDED IN 1887

# The Free Press

1st Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

STEVE JAMESON, Publisher

**EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT**

JOSEPH SPEAR, Managing Editor  
KATHY VOS, News Editor  
TIM KROHN, Business Editor  
PAT CHRISTMAN, Photo Editor  
CHAD COURRIER, Sports Editor

**BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

JUSTIN NILES, Audience Development Director  
GLEN ASLESON, Facilities & Technology Director  
TODD BROUWER, Press/Post Press Manager  
DEB PETERSON, General Manager - The Land

**LETTERS POLICY**

The Free Press welcomes letters on any issue of general community interest. Please limit your letters to no more than 275 words, type-written or clearly printed. Letters or emails citing facts that are not commonly known should include the source. Letters must contain the author’s name, address and phone number for verification. All letters will be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling and space. You may email letters to the editor to editor@mankatofreepress.com