

# 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

### The future of news

Minnesotans still rely on newspapers as their most trusted source of local information

Newspapers around Minnesota have been making a point in recent days, and we're joining that chorus in a full-page advertisement that appears in this week's edition. At a time when so much has been written about the imminent demise of newspapers, a recent statewide survey in Minnesota found that the vast majority of Minnesotans still regularly rely on newspapers, either in print or digital, to stay informed about their community.

We suspect that the percentage of regular newspaper readers is even higher in small towns and rural parts of the state, where residents are more community-focused than in larger cities. Despite all the changes in how we access information today, most newspapers still remain the most credible source of local news and information.

At the same time, we've reported regularly over the past few years about the closure of some longstanding newspapers in our region. Newspapers in Two Harbors, International Falls, Hibbing, Warroad, and Chisholm have disappeared, while the *Duluth News-Tribune* has gone from daily to twice-weekly.

There's no question that the industry is in trouble, in large part because the basic business model of newspapers—which dates back to the mid-1800s—has all but collapsed for many papers in the Internet age. Yet, we know from the feedback we receive every day that residents in our region rely on, and look forward to, the arrival of the *Timberjay* each week. And because so many area residents continue to rely on this newspaper, business owners continue to recognize the value of advertising here, both in print and on our very active website.

In a very real sense, the traditional newspaper business model can still work, when newspapers make the commitment to quality news coverage. That was the message that *Timberjay* Publisher Marshall Helmerger brought last month to the National Summit on Journalism in Rural America, where he was a featured speaker. The event, sponsored by the University of Kentucky-based Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, brought about 50 invited guests together just outside Lexington to discuss the challenges that print journalism faces today and to highlight some of the ideas that are helping newspapers remain successful in today's challenging environment.

Helmerger, and other speakers at the summit, talked about the many ways they had worked to build and maintain

their newspaper's relevance to their communities. Newspapers that are engaged in their communities and that go beyond mundane reporting and reliance on press releases, are maintaining readership and advertising.

One key factor that helps newspapers maintain success is independence. Attendees at the recent summit were well aware of how profit-focused corporations were playing a major role in the demise of many papers. Too many newspapers have vanished as a result of a predictable downward spiral. Corporate vultures, like Alden Capital, swoop in as new owners and they quickly gut the newsroom in order to wring more short-term profits from the business. But as the newspaper's coverage declines along with the number of reporters, readers lose interest and subscriptions dry up. Then the advertising follows suit and as the profits fizzle, the corporate owner shuts it all down, selling off the equipment and real estate to squeeze the last few bucks out of the deal. The impact on the employees and on the communities that have now lost their only reliable source of local news isn't even part of the equation. It's just about money.

This same process has left communities across our region and around the country without sources of local news—and that has consequences. Studies have shown that local officials in areas without regular news coverage are more likely to make questionable decisions. Taxes tend to be higher as well because the local watchdog died an ignominious death.

Our nation's founders understood that accurate information was key to any form of successful self-government and it's why they enshrined freedom of speech and of the press as the first order of business in the Bill of Rights. Thomas Jefferson viewed the press as just as important as the government in that it made it possible for voters to make informed choices about who would lead them.

While the internet these days is full of "information," much of it is nonsense, generated by bad actors and bots to manipulate the gullible. Smart users of the internet know that when they want credible information online, they turn to newspaper websites. Despite the changes in the industry, Minnesotans still trust newspapers, whether in print or online, to deliver them the news they need to be effective, contributing members of their communities. Newspapers that live up to that trust still have a viable future here.



## Letters from Readers

### Rep. Ecklund has been there for schools

As a community, we have a big responsibility to educate our children and prepare them to be the leaders of tomorrow. We also have a responsibility to do so without undue burden on our local property taxpayers. As a board member of the St. Louis County Schools, I try to balance these competing needs.

What has been most helpful is that the state of Minnesota has stepped up and provided increased aid to local school districts like ours. I credit this to the local leadership our schools have received from state Rep. Rob Ecklund. Rob has always worked to achieve adequate funding for our schools—from increased per pupil aid to support for innovative programs from our local development agency, the IRRRB. In fact, taconite taxes, the IRRRB, and its school fund have provided needed property tax relief for our residents while giving our schools the funding necessary to provide students with a good education.

I would encourage you this fall to support Rob Ecklund for state representative. He's been a proven and trustworthy friend of education and taxpayers.

**Dan Manick**  
St. Louis County  
School Board Member  
Cook

### Stauber has violated his oath of office

Pete Stauber swore an oath to "protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Pete Stauber broke that oath when he supported Trump's big lie, claiming that the election was stolen, when in fact there was no evidence to support that claim. Stauber was an enabler, purporting this mythical claim.

Every time he had an opportunity to uphold his oath

and repudiate that false claim, Stauber aligned himself with the conspiracy theorists, the coup plotters and the insurrectionists, all determined to overturn the results of the election. Stauber continued to repeat the false claims that the election had been stolen and even went so far as to join a bogus lawsuit filed by the Texas attorney general to invalidate the election that the Supreme Court dismissed as meritless.

Stauber voted against the January 6 Select Committee, a bi-partisan committee investigating the details of the attempted coup, the attack on our nation's capitol with the intent of stopping the certification of the electoral votes. Stauber stood against all attempts to unveil the truth and voted against enforcing Congress' investigative powers. He put his political allegiance ahead of his obligation to defend the Constitution.

Stauber's dismissive attitude towards the work of the January 6 Select Committee is chilling. As truth and facts continue to surface, it is unforgivable for any member of Congress to deny the truth and reality of what happened on January 6. It was one of the most tragic cases of political violence to occur in this nation and all those who supported it or promoted the big lie must be held accountable. As more information and facts are disclosed, it is clear that any member of Congress who continues to dismiss or minimize the reality of what happened and how it happened should be disqualified from office.

"During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." -George Orwell.

I want honest and truthful leaders. Therefore, I will vote for Jen Shultz, a breath of fresh air with the depth of knowledge, education, and honesty.

"Truth in the end shall prevail." -Ulpion Fulwell

**Ellie Larmouth**  
Tower

### EMS study should be a valuable blueprint

I am very pleased that Greenwood Township has agreed to hire a consultant to study our existing EMS system and make suggestions for improvement. We are blessed to have a number of ambulance services that make up a part of our EMS system. They are all experiencing the reality of increased cost and low reimbursement. We cannot afford to waste this valuable resource. The consultant will help to identify improvements that will address the financial issue as well as show us a blueprint for long term improvements that can benefit our regional EMS system. Every one of us, not just Greenwood residents, can be the benefit receiver of Greenwood's commitment for this forward-looking engagement of a consultant.

**Chuck Richards**  
Greenwood Township

## 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.

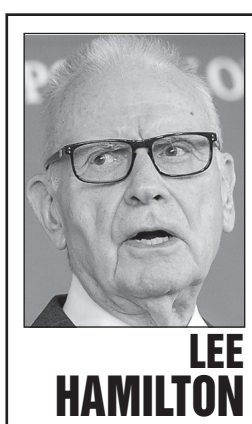
We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

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!

# Remember what government can do

Here's a question: When was the last time at least half of Americans said the government in Washington could be trusted to do the right thing all or most of the time?



**LEE HAMILTON**

and that was really just a blip. Before that, you'd have to go back to the 1960s.

And after the 9/11 bump subsided? You won't be surprised to hear that ever since the end of the George W. Bush administration, the percentage of those trusting government all or most of the time has been hovering in the low 20s or even the high teens.

This is not a good state of affairs. Trust is a bedrock requirement of democratic governance. When it's gone, replaced

by suspicion and lack of confidence, our system cannot work. For representative democracy to function as it should, the public officials, politicians, and policy-makers who act in our name have to have the support of ordinary people—who can trust that our representatives will level with us without half-truths and that government can efficiently and effectively deliver the goods, services, and policy impact we expect.

There's no question that over the past decades—starting with the Vietnam War and

Watergate—that faith has been put to the test. In many respects, Americans have taken a dimmer view of the effectiveness and relevance of government the more it has been hamstrung by partisan division just as they've been feeling left to their own in the face of economic and cultural dislocation. Globalization, the changes wrought by technology, skyrocketing income inequality, slow wage growth for working families, concern about hot-button social issues—all of this has ratcheted up a sense of loss of control. And that was before the

pandemic.

Yet despite all this, when I look around I'm reminded of just how much our government has accomplished—and how thoroughly it's taken for granted by many Americans. People often question the value of government in their lives, even while depending on a monthly Social Security check, or driving on an interstate, or attending college thanks to a student loan, or going online, or relying on the overall safety of our food and medications, or

See REMEMBER, pg. 5