

OUR VIEW

Record surplus calls for drastic change

Minnesota seems to have hit the jackpot. Last week state budget officials announced that Minnesota will have a historic \$9.2 billion surplus. It's believed to be the most of any other Midwestern state.

And now the fun begins at the State Capitol as lawmakers wrestle with what to do with the hefty windfall.

Sen. John Jasinski, who represents Steele and Rice counties, put it bluntly: Minnesotans are "way, way, way overtaxed." Senate Republicans are now proposing the largest tax cut in state history.

Under the Republican plan, a Minnesota family making \$100,000 would see tax savings of \$1,000 each year. A typical person making \$37,000 would receive an annual reduction of \$500.

"What Republicans have proposed is permanent, ongoing tax relief for all working Minnesotans and senior citizens," said Senate Majority Leader Jeremy Miller, R-Winona.

DFL Gov. Tim Walz wants one-time rebate checks paid out to all taxpayers. "This gives us the opportunity to get those checks in the hands of folks," Walz said.

And, of course, this is all coming to a head just in time for this fall's election.

While the governor's idea for a rebate would be nice for the pocketbook, we wonder if rebates would in the long term be shortsighted. After all, it's time for state officials to give back what they have taken from us.

With democrats and republicans sparring over what should happen, it would seem that a permanent and significant tax relief is what Minnesotans deserve. We need to look at long-term solutions and what's best for the state over the long haul.

As both sides figure things out, they also need to proceed with caution. There is great uncertainty right now about the economic effects of the war in Ukraine, the future of the pandemic and inflation.

It's no secret that taxes in Minnesota are high. This is the time to roll back and undo some of the damage that has been done in the past. Let's make this an affordable state to continue living in.

YOUR VIEW

Be open to other perspectives

To-the-Editor:
I attended the Owatonna School Board meeting on Jan. 24 and witnessed a powerful moment.

During the public forum, one person spoke in opposition to a variety of topics currently supported by our school board. It was obvious she has made her opinions known previously. In her statement, she told the school board that she was honestly trying to have an open mind on these matters. I believe she was sincere, and I commend her, as well as the school board and our superintendent, for providing an excellent example of what true public debate and true learning looks like.

Learning is not

about being on the same side of an issue. Learning is about being open to hearing a perspective you had not yet considered, and being open to considering if there is something of value in that different perspective. That is why students open textbooks everyday - to encounter new and different perspectives.

Thank you to our school board, our superintendent, and all those who offer various perspectives during public forum. May we each strive to have an open mind towards ideas that are new or different than our own. That is ultimately how we learn.

Julie Fiske
Owatonna

Thanks for support with snowmobile accident

To-the-Editor:
Hi, Senator John Jasinski, back in my office. You all heard I had a snowmobile accident about three weeks ago. I just wanted to say thanks to all the people that have sent me cards and texts and voicemails and things like that, as well as all the first responders and the deputies and the sheriffs and the doctors and the nurses that have taken care of me and got me back

on my feet over the last three weeks. It's truly phenomenal.

It really is an eye-opener to what can happen to a person. So I am very, very thankful for everybody who has shown me so much love and family connections over the last three weeks. So I want to say thank you again to that. It really does mean a lot. Thank you.

Sen. John Jasinski
Faribault

A gift to our Steele County friends



Hot Pursuit
RICK BUSSLER

Some exciting things are happening with the Steele County Times, and I'd like to share some of them with you this week.

This week we're going out to an expanded audience as nearly every household in Steele County will be receiving the newspaper. In the newspaper industry, we refer to it as a "sample copy," where we send the paper to everyone whether they are a subscriber or not. It's a gift to our friends who cherish local news.

Our primary mission is to provide quality community news with the best interest of Blooming Prairie, Ellendale, Medford and Owatonna as well as the rest of the county in mind each week. We think we provide a dynamic newspaper filled with hometown news for our readers every week. We don't want

anyone to miss out.

But that's not all that's going on.

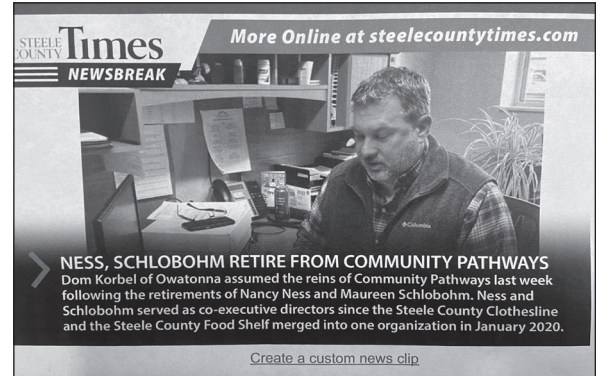
Along with the great print product we produce each week, we are always looking at opportunities to enhance the ways we reach the community.

We are launching an indoor digital newscast network with the help of a company that has become the largest indoor digital billboard network in Minnesota. Right now, the company has over 250 venue locations that feature indoor digital billboards. About half of them are partnered with newspapers.

Basically what happens is digital screens will be installed in various businesses like bars, restaurants and service places. The screens will feature captivating hyper-local community content, including advertising from local businesses. This is a different way for businesses to reach clients.

We expect this to hit by early May if not sooner. Stay tuned for more about this as it gets closer.

Within the next month, we will be revealing our newly revamped website at www.steelecountytimes.com.



NESS, SCHLOBOHM RETIRE FROM COMMUNITY PATHWAYS
Dora Korbel of Owatonna assumed the reins of Community Pathways last week following the retirements of Nancy Ness and Maureen Schlobohm. Ness and Schlobohm served as co-executive directors since the Steele County Clothesline and the Steele County Food Shelf merged into one organization in January 2020.

com. This has been in the planning stages for the past several months. You are going to find a website that's easier to navigate and be able to pull up local news, a lot of which is not hiding behind a pay wall.

February was a pivotal month for our website. We reached a record number of 38,000 unique visitors and nearly 1.5 million hits in what was a shortened month (28 days). The viewership has been climbing steadily over the past nine months.

Besides the beefed up website, we will also be adding another new and exciting digital option. Later this spring we will launch a news app where readers can get local news and sports as well as community notifications with just one click. This will offer fast access to information.

A news app is particularly exciting because

you will get breaking news and other information exclusive to Steele County. We want to keep you up to date with news that impacts you and your community. Again, we will share more about this once it's ready to go.

I'd also like to remind you that we are now serving Steele County from two great locations: Blooming Prairie and Owatonna. We recently opened a second office to better serve our readers in Owatonna. We are located at 109 W. Rose St.

As you can see, the gift of local news comes in many shapes and sizes. We are excited to offer you various options to keep you informed about the greater community of Steele County.

We're never sitting idle. We love going in hot pursuit of providing the area's best option for local news coverage.



GUEST COLUMN

Add 'em up and numbers are unfathomable

BY JAN MITTELSTADT
TIPPETT

Numbers are numbers - no matter what year it is, what state you live in or what country you visit. A one is a one; pi is pi. Scores are scores.

However, defining the meaning of a number, or a number used in a measurement, or the value of a particular number, provides a difference. Add in (no pun intended) numerology, and numbers take on yet another meaning.

I don't think I'm alone in my perception of numbers. What I think has to do with how I saw, used or spent it as a child. Or it could be what I figured out it was as I grew older, based on what is my own consumer index or my own experiences. I know about what one mile is - it was about a mile from the house I grew up in to the Owatonna Public Library. I know how long 100 yards is - I could see it from the bleachers

at the Owatonna High School. I know that 75 degrees in a comfortable temperature.

But 75 degrees Fahrenheit is 24 degrees Celsius. I don't immediately think that 24 degrees is a comfortable temperature. I think that 24 is cold, despite living in Minnesota where I see people in shorts when it is 24 F. (Those folks have a different thermostat than I do.) When I've been outside of the U.S. I have to translate those Celsius temperatures into Fahrenheit in order to decide if I need a jacket or not.

And then there's money.

Intellectually, I can understand what a certain amount of money might be - what it is worth, how much can it purchase, or how much I might need of it to maintain a certain standard of living. And dear readers three, we now must add in inflation, supply chain difficulties and the soaring price of gas and utilities.

My brother and I reminisce about the \$25 weekly budget my mom had for food. Alice and C.C. had a Friday night date to go to Duffy's. So did many of their friends. Duffy's was the place to be in the 1960s. When they came home, my dad beeped the horn and Ted and I went out to help carry in the brown bags. The truck of the Chevrolet Bel-Air was full, full to the lid. Today, \$25 in groceries might take one or maybe two plastic bags. One inflation calculator says that \$25 in 1962 equals about \$233 today.

I cannot wrap my arms around really big numbers. I can get millions. A million isn't even serious money these days. I cannot fathom what a billion or trillion of anything would stack up to be. Ms. Google tries to help out by using another example of a unit that we can understand - seconds. A story in the New York Times, and

not fake news at all, says that 1,000 seconds is equal to almost 17 minutes. It would take almost 12 days for a million seconds to elapse.

That is an understandable unit. It becomes a little less clear when it is mega-millions or billions. It would take 31.7 years for a billion seconds to elapse. Try subtracting 31.7 from your current age and think about all the time that has elapsed. The highlight reel would take a long time to share.

And if that doesn't make you shake your head, a trillion seconds would take more than 31,710 years to elapse. We often read about billion and trillion dollar budgets and expenses. No wonder we just nod our heads and go on with whatever we are doing.

Jan Mittelstadt Tippett is a retired newspaper publisher who lives in Owatonna.

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Subscription Rates:

Steele, Dodge, Freeborn & Mower- \$49
Elsewhere in Minnesota- \$52
Out of State- \$56

Ethics:

The Steele County Times strives to present the news in a fair and accurate manner. Please bring any grievances to the attention of the News Editor.

Postmaster:

Send address changes to:
Steele County Times
P.O. Box 247
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917
Published weekly by
Bussler Publishing, Inc., P.O.

Box 247, Blooming Prairie,
MN 55917
USPS 058-340
Periodicals postage paid at
Blooming Prairie, MN

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A state and national award winning weekly



MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

2022 - 12 state awards (1st place- General Excellence)	2017 - 2 state and 3 national awards	2013 - 7 state and 2 national awards
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 3 national awards	
2018 - 6 state and 4 national awards		

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