

## OUR VIEW

# Paper mill a model of public-private, bipartisan success

It might not be much to look at, just a hulking, earth-toned, mostly windowless factory-like structure. But our paper mill in West Duluth continues to be a shining example for our city and for all of Minnesota of the jobs-supporting, community fortunes-bolstering success that can come from true bipartisanship and public-private cooperation.

The example was reinforced last week when the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development announced it would provide \$1.3 million from the state's Job Creation Fund to help ST Paper of Wisconsin reopen the shuttered former Verso Paper Mill.

Just like when the mill was first created in the 1980s, bipartisan, public-private cooperation and hard work are helping to bring it back. It closed in the summer of 2020 when the already shrinking market for the supercalendered graphic paper it was manufacturing was decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The reopened mill will produce tissue paper, the market for which is always strong.

With a promise of at least — at least — 80 family-supporting jobs within three years, ST Paper is investing \$25 million for renovations to the West Duluth plant, similar to other mill overhauls it has completed successfully elsewhere. That's the private investment.

The public support — in recognition of the promise of a strong payback on investment and the chance to revitalize and restart what has been a major industry for our city — comes from the state Job

Creation Fund and a \$3 million forgivable loan through the Minnesota Investment Fund, both of which were supported by both Republicans and DFLers in St. Paul. Duluth and St. Louis County also agreed to abate about \$1.2 million in property taxes to help make the mill's reopening a reality.

The mill's original opening in 1987 meant new industry, new jobs, and renewed hope at a time when U.S. Steel and then the Duluth Air Base, Clyde Iron, Jenos, and so much else all had closed, plummeting Duluth into dark days of economic doldrums. This was around the time when that infamous billboard went up along I-35 on the way out of town: "Will the last one leaving Duluth please turn out the lights?"

The new mill "symbolized a newfound resilience in Duluth, our refusal to give up or give in — even when a Twin Cities newspaper said we were 'dying,'" as a News Tribune editorial opined in January 2020.

We're emerging from dark days once again, this time because of a virus and a pandemic that just won't ease its grip and that has devastated our economy anew. Old-fashioned bipartisanship and public-private partnering are again providing a flash of hope for a rebirth — just like three and a half decades ago.

Like the demand for the bathroom tissue it soon will be producing, Duluth's paper mill can be around for a long time, bolstering fortunes from the shores of the St. Louis River and helping pull Duluth and the state of Minnesota out of this latest economic downturn.



News Tribune file photo

Interstate 35 loops past the former Verso paper mill in West Duluth on May 18.

## CANDIDATE FORUMS THIS WEEK

The second of four candidate forums featuring Duluth City Council and Duluth School Board races is scheduled for Thursday at 10 a.m.. Voters are encouraged to log in and watch.

A first forum co-hosted by the News Tribune and Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce was Tuesday with candidates for two open At Large seats on the Duluth School Board.

Thursday's forum is with School Board District 1 candidates Dana Krivogorsky and Rosie Loeffler-Kemp, the incumbent. To register in advance to attend, find the link in the online version of this notification at [duluthnews-tribune.com/opinion/editorials](http://duluthnews-tribune.com/opinion/editorials). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

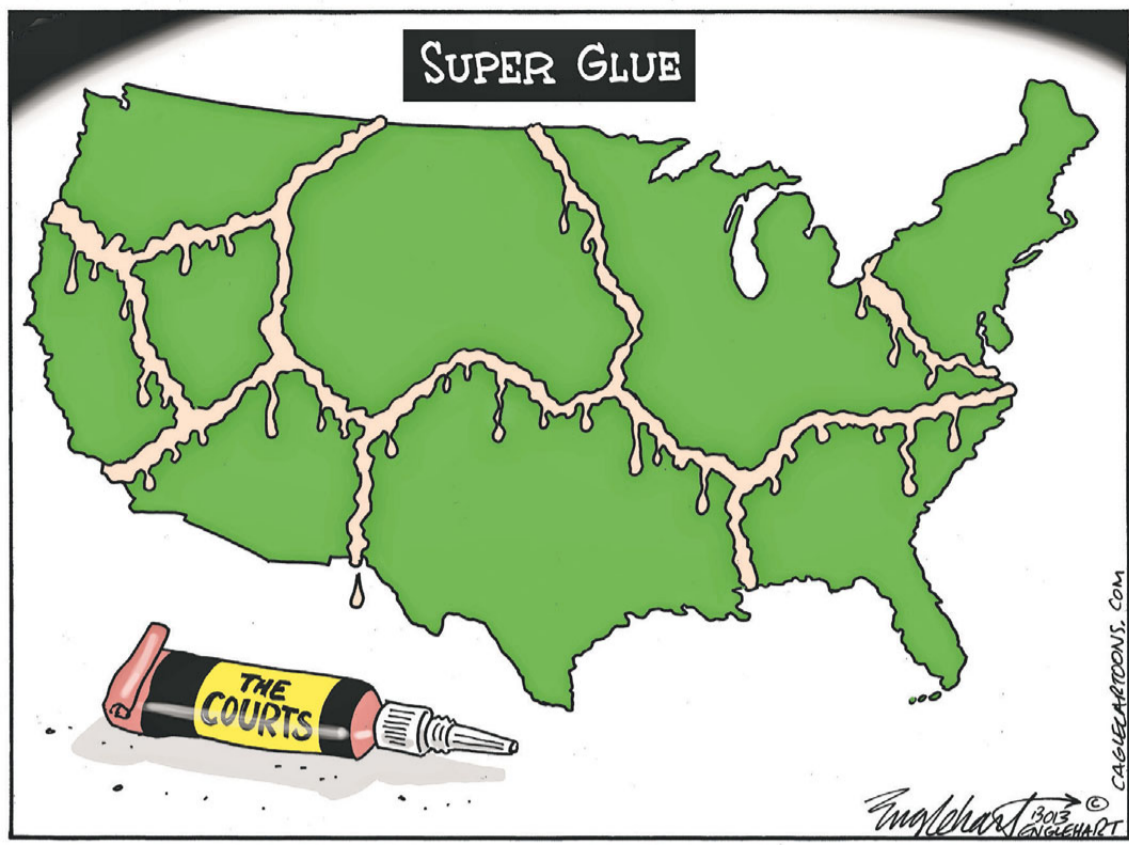
A third DNT/Chamber-sponsored forum is scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday with candidates for two open At Large seats on the Duluth City Council. Those candidates are Azrin Awal, Joe Macor, and Terese Tomanek, the incumbent. The link to register to attend is also with the online version of this.

The final candidate forum is set for 10 a.m. Tuesday with City Council candidates from District 2 (Mike Mayou and Dave Zbaracki) and District 4 (incumbent Renee Van Nett; challenger Howie Hanson has declined to participate). Register in advance online to attend.

All the forums will be posted afterward for viewing any time, on-demand. Live online audiences are limited to 100.

The newspaper and chamber have been partnering to host candidate forums for at least 11 years as part of a commitment to help eligible voters in Duluth make informed choices. The forums also inform the News Tribune's endorsement decisions.

## CARTOONIST'S VIEW



Bob Englehart / Cagle Cartoons

## A JUDGE'S VIEW

# Path to the bench includes 'Baby Judge School,' patience

In the past four years, eight of our 16 judges in Duluth's Sixth Judicial District have retired or left office, with several more departures



DALE HARRIS

looming on the not-too-distant horizon. Even allowing that judicial careers are relatively short because most of us are middle-aged when we start out, this level of turnover is historic. It reinforces the importance of proper training for new judges.

No judge comes to the bench with a perfect background for the job. In our district, judges usually hear every type of case, so it is all but guaranteed that a new judge will have at least a few subject areas where the learning curve is particularly steep. For me, topics like family law and probate law were all new because I had never practiced in those areas. My criminal law experience was trying courts-martial in the Navy, so even though I knew some of that substantive law, I still had to learn all of Minnesota's procedural rules.

So how does a new judge learn the ropes? The short answer is "on the job." (The long answer is they're thrown into the deep end of the pool,

from a very high platform, with an anchor tied to their feet. And the platform is on fire.)

We try to give every new judge at least a couple weeks to watch some of their fellow judges on different calendars, take notes, and ask questions. After that, however, they go on the bench and start hearing cases. Those first few calendars can be a painful, albeit necessary, learning experience. Most of the attorneys, court staff, and other participants are pretty patient and helpful. Those within the system all have a vested interest in getting the new judge up and running as quickly as possible.

After a few months on the job, all judges have to attend a week-long new judge orientation course. Affectionately referred to as "Baby Judge School," the week includes an introduction to all the various subjects a district court judge might encounter. It is very practical training, most of it conducted by more experienced judges from around the state. The new judges leave with several useful (and voluminous) reference guides for the various subjects, plus a bunch of new contact numbers for questions.

There is also a follow-on trial skills training, where the new judges preside over a simulated jury trial with

experienced judges playing the roles of the attorneys and witnesses. It is a place to try things out, make mistakes, and get suggestions on how to manage a courtroom in a safe environment. I will neither confirm nor deny that the experienced judges tend to have plenty of fun as the "actors," but there is a lot of laughing over the course of the day.

Additionally, all judges must complete at least 45 hours of continuing judicial education every three years, so the learning never really stops for any of us.

Every new judge is also assigned at least one "mentor" judge. The mentor spends some time watching the new judge in action and providing feedback, and serves as a general point of contact for questions the new judge has along the way. The mentoring is mainly informal conversations, or even just letting the new judge vent a little, but it's an important relationship.

Becoming a judge is a significant leap for even the most experienced attorneys, and often a very isolating one. The education and training requirements in the judicial branch are designed to make that transition as smooth as possible.

Dale Harris of Duluth is a judge in the Sixth Judicial District.

## READERS' VIEWS

### Vaccine hesitancy may just be Darwinism

Regarding the Sept. 10 analysis, "Mayo doctor blunt about COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, 'We are very much losing the game,'" has no one just taken it into consideration that it's just Darwinism at work?

Survival of the fittest is how evolution ensures the survival of a species. The less "desirable" of the species die out to ensure the survivability of only the strongest and the best.

Just saying.  
Sharon Larson  
Solon Springs

### Reckoning on its way for Trump family

Republicans have tried to sabotage the investigation into President Donald Trump's involvement in the attempted overthrow of our democracy. How do these questionable U.S. senators look at themselves in the mirror?

Our previous president and his adult children are in for a long-overdue scrutiny of their business expenses and write-offs. The federal government has years of Trump's taxes and expense accounts.

The list of wrongdoing is, I suspect, long, and if it is, so will be the years they spend behind bars. I suspect Trump's chief accountant and his two sons will turn state evidence against Trump before he can throw them under the bus, as he has done to many others.

Our twice-impeached ex-president is an embarrassment to our country, our values, and our very democracy. He needs to spend the rest of his life in prison, wearing an orange jumpsuit. Then he will no longer be able to harm our country.

Trump still refuses to acknowledge that he lost the election — and by a huge margin. He seems unable to accept rejection. His incompetence in handling the pandemic cost the U.S. thousands and thousands of lives. His arrogance and refusal to accept responsibility seems truly criminal.

Thankfully, our country has moved on and is still fighting the coronavirus under the compassionate guidance of our President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Cheryl Jaros  
Duluth

## Readers' Views and Local Views

Letters to the editor are a critical part of the community dialogue, and the News Tribune attempts to publish all letters of opinion meeting our requirements. Letters are limited to 300 words, must be the original work of the author and must be exclusive to the News Tribune. Letters are edited for style, space, accuracy and civility. Letter writers are limited to one published submission every 30 days. With rare exceptions, the News Tribune does not publish poetry; letters that are anonymous, libelous or attack other writers; consumer-complaint letters; thank-you letters; or letters generated by political or special-interest campaigns.

We will consider exclusive Local View columns of 600 words or fewer. Authors should possess unique insights, and their commentaries should demonstrate greater knowledge of their subject than letters.

Email submissions to: [letters@duluthnews.com](mailto:letters@duluthnews.com).

Mail to: Readers' Views, Duluth News Tribune, 424 W. First St., Duluth, MN 55802.

Fax to: (218) 720-4120.

Include a full name, address and daytime phone number. Only names and hometowns will be published.