

# Opinion

OUR VIEW

## Mosque investment is a good step forward

Investments in Rochester's downtown are always welcome, and one that's been recently announced is not related to Mayo Clinic, not a hotel, a restaurant or apartment building.

Masjed Abubakr Al-Seddiq, the Rochester mosque on North Broadway, received a \$1.5 million grant from the state Department of Employment and Economic Development. The money will be put toward building renovations at the mosque, and also to enhance career advancement and job training programs at the mosque.

Said Hussain, a member of the mosque's board, said the investment will provide "something down the future the (East African) community has never had before." The

training will help prepare members of Rochester's large but relatively silent Islamic community to be greater participants in the economic life of the city and region.

We applaud this investment and are eager to see what comes of it. Thumbs up.

**TEACHERS IMPART AN IMPORTANT LESSON**

By a 60-40 vote, the Rochester Public Schools' teachers union approved a new contract with the district, one that ultimately stands to give teachers about a 6.7% raise over the life of the two-year contract.

Raises are great, but the teachers might actually be losing ground financially with this contract thanks to inflation, currently at 7.9%.

Why did teachers agree to it, then? A couple of reasons.

One, in addition to pay, the contract offers some family benefits that will help teachers lead more balanced lives. And two, teachers are not unaware of the financial challenge the school district will face in closing a massive forecasted budget deficit.

Rather than hold out for higher pay and see education quality decline as a result, the teachers took a modest increase in hopes that it will allow children to get the best possible education. That's a lesson in service – one that we should be thankful for. Thank a teacher today. Thumbs up.

**SMALL TOWN, BIG BUCKS**

It was great to see the Fools Five Road Race back in action this year in Lewiston. The springtime tradition had been put on hold for a few years

during the pandemic.

That was a loss for runners, but also for the recipients of the money raised from the fun run. Proceeds go toward cancer research and treatment.

This year's run raised a startling \$89,000. "Our little town does such a big thing," said Lindsey Ruhland, a participant who also has a child, her oldest daughter, Sylvia, who had a brain tumor removed and remains cancer-free at age 10.

Even small groups can make a big difference. Thumbs up to the runners, contributors and organizers.

**PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS**

Some bumpy city sidewalks through downtown Rochester will be replaced, and the going ought to be relatively smooth for property owners.

The project's \$2.6 million estimated cost will be underwritten largely by Destination Medical Center dollars. If that sounds like a lot of money for sidewalks, it could have been a lot more – plans to install heating elements throughout would have jacked up the cost still more. Those plans were set aside.

However, some businesses would like to have heated sidewalks – they help keep sidewalks clear of snow and ice through the winter, making those sidewalks safer, and probably cleaner of salt that can get tracked in. The city is taking a flexible approach and letting those businesses opt in to heat at their own expense.

That sounds like a win-win for the businesses and taxpayers. Thumbs up.



## 3 questions on immigration Democrats aren't asking

President Joe Biden seems intent on easing entry into the United States at the politically worst possible time. It's not impossible that he has a plan to keep order after he ends Title 42, which has made it harder for asylum seekers to enter the country.

Even if he manages to skillfully handle what will undoubtedly be a new surge at the border, it will lead to more ugly incidents for the news channels. In any case, the move will be interpreted as relaxing border controls, which almost everyone, including most Democrats, fears.

And so why is he doing this seven months before a midterm election? The reason is that Biden and the Democrats advising him are not asking three important questions.



FROMA HARROP

And that's how we get headlines like the following from The Hill website: "Democratic poll: 66 percent of voters would be 'upset' without immigration reform." Who sponsored the poll? The Immigration Hub, a group that advocates for more open borders.

Here's a headline on the NBC News website: "Biden's handling of immigration gets low marks in his own pollster's survey." That survey was commissioned by a group called the NILC Immigrant Justice Fund.

It happens that both surveys were "conducted" by so-called Democratic pollsters. These polling companies know that the advocacy groups hiring them expect certain results. Like the advocates, the pollsters get paid whether or not their work helps the party retain power in November.

Question No. 3: Over the weekend, CNN's Abby Phillips said that ending Title 42 "is a promise he (Biden) made in the campaign. Now he has to keep it." Who says? The problematic word is "now." Why do Democrats constantly criticize their leaders for not instantly delivering on their vows as candidates?

If there are good arguments for removing this restriction – and there are – why can't

it be done after the election? Former President Donald Trump broke dozens of campaign promises, including the big one to replace the Affordable Care Act. I don't recall Fox News hounding him about that or much of anything else.

As the facts change, so should campaign promises. But that's a discussion for another day.

Another CNN host said it was understandable that Sen. Mark Kelly, Democrat of Arizona, expressed concern that the change would start another stampede to the border. But she seemed mystified that Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan would warn of a migrant surge "all the way up in New Hampshire."

Let me explain. The people in New Hampshire, progressives included, tend to be conservative in manners, dress and respect for the law. They don't want to turn on their TV and see chaos at the southern border. This is about civic order.

In his State of the Union address, Biden said, "We're putting in place dedicated immigration judges in significant larger number so families fleeing persecution and violence can have their cases heard faster and those who don't legitimately here can be sent back."

Fingers crossed. It may be too late to ask the three questions, but Democrats should at least keep them on file.

LETTERS

**THOMAS HAD ETHICAL OBLIGATION TO RECUSE HIMSELF**

The discussion has begun about the involvement of Genni Thomas, who was engaged with those supporting overturning the 2020 election and her husband, Clarence Thomas, a member of the Supreme Court, who did not recuse himself in a case involving an aspect of the election's legitimacy.

It appears that the approach so far is that the Supreme Court is not bound by any code of conduct or ethics outside of itself. It seems to me, however, that since the members of the Supreme Court are all lawyers, each Justice is bound by the code of ethics individual lawyers are bound by. Under this code, if Clarence Thomas were an individual Judge, not on the Supreme Court, the question of recusal would be relatively simple.

I have not seen anyone raise the issue in this context, i.e. Justice Thomas is a lawyer and is bound as all lawyers are by a code of ethics. Therefore, to focus on the lack of a code for the Supreme Court does not address the fundamental reason why he should have recused himself under a lawyer's code of ethics and it does not matter that the Supreme Court is not otherwise bound by a code of ethics.

Patricia Keefe, Rochester

**MLK'S WORDS ARE WORDS TO LIVE BY TODAY**

On April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King delivered his "Beyond Vietnam

— A Time to Break the Silence" speech at Riverside Church in New York City. On April 2, 2022 the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft sponsored a re-reading of the speech at the same church under the title: "MLK 55 years later: can the church study war no more?"

King called for a "radical revolution of values ... the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society." He warned against "the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism..." He said: "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death ... War is not the answer ... We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation ... in the final analysis our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional" and called for "unconditional love of all mankind."

On April 4 there was a march from Riverside Church to the Isaiah Wall in the United Nations that has etched on it the words of Isaiah 2:4: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Facing a world with multiple ongoing wars, an urgent need to address the climate crisis, a pandemic, and the threat of nuclear war, King's words are more relevant today than ever. We would do well to heed them.

Rich Van Dellen, Rochester

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