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THE OPINION PAGE

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OUR OPINION

State's pull tab loophole needed closing

The differences between South Dakota and North Dakota? South Dakota has about 120,000 more residents, about 2 million more head of cattle and what seems to be an uncountable number of more places to gamble. Down there, one can find some game of chance about anywhere. Who hasn't stopped for gas in South Dakota and noticed video lottery machines beckoning nearby?

Now, in North Dakota, efforts are being made to limit gambling in places like gas stations and grocery stores. Last week, Forum News Service reported that state officials are taking steps to clarify state law to limit machines in such locations.

Turns out, North Dakota law allows e-pull tab machines in bars, but they are finding their way into other establishments. It's because of a loose definition of what a bar is, according to North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley.

So, on Thursday, May 19, the North Dakota Gaming Commission voted 3-2 to approve a new definition of a "bar." According to the new wording, a bar is a place that sells alcoholic beverages, but that's not to include "off-sale liquor stores, or gas stations, grocery or liquor stores."

There is a small number of gas stations and retail stores that already have e-tab machines, and they'll be allowed to keep theirs. Fair enough – after all, the idea is to crimp the growth of new machines in certain places that don't seem to meet the definition of "bar."

As Wrigley said last week: An "explosion of these machines would have occurred without this language being changed." And, as FNS reported, Wrigley said having tab machines in gas stations, convenience stores, liquor stores or grocery stores goes "well beyond the legislative expectations and intent with the existing law."

North Dakotans do enjoy their e-pull tab machines. The FNS report last week noted the state is on pace to spend approximately \$1.8 billion on them this fiscal year – up from \$1.3 billion last year.

That's a lot of pull tabs, and more power to the folks who enjoy them. Gambling isn't the issue – it's a perfectly legal activity. It's the expansion of it into places that it shouldn't be that is concerning. A loophole has existed, Wrigley said, and it needs to be closed.

Lawmakers must be involved, and that's the idea, Wrigley said. The Legislature should review the issue in next year's session and clarify what, exactly, is a bar, and where the tabs can be sold.

"It was the right time to (clarify the law) now before any more horses run out of the barn and let the Legislature decide a year from now whether they want to open the door or keep the door shut," Wrigley said.

Agreed. And if the Legislature wants to expand gaming, we suppose that's fine – although we have enjoyed the distinction of being different from our neighbor to the south, where gambling exists seemingly everywhere.

Planting garden creates a home

Grand Forks
Please permit me one more column about the epic move Suezette and I are making from Wheatfield Township to Greater Grand Forks. This column is about dirt. Soil would be a more polite word, but I've always thought of the stuff that supports a garden as dirt, and not as soil. The word "dirt" has a gritty sound to it, in contrast to the silky sound of "soil."



MIKE JACOBS

As I write, dirt is on my hands and my trousers and my shoes. I have marked out a garden patch in the backyard of our new home. The patch is very much smaller than the one I worked in Wheatfield Township, and very much less contiguous.

Basically, I spaded up a low and sunny spot anticipating a crop of radishes, onions and other root crops. I picked a space to plant some herbs, including chives and oregano, both cold-hardy perennials. I'm toying with the idea of adding various kinds of mint, but not so much for the flavor as for the aroma. The trouble with mint, of course, is that it is a highly invasive plant, and it's not as hardy as oregano or chives.

With improving weather – so we dare hope since we are North Dakotans – I'll be able to put out these plants this week.

Much of my new garden is in what I call "garden

bags," which I fill with dirt. They are large enough to accommodate many garden vegetables. I've had good success with herbs and eggplant and tomatoes. I'll be putting sets of those plants out this week, too.

I'm not so sure about other garden staples. I won't be planting potatoes, for example, and probably not garlic. Both need space and benefit from heavy mulching, which might not please my neighbors.

I am imaging erecting a trellis for pole beans and supports for peas, but I may reconsider, given the population of rabbits I've seen inspecting my property (or is it really their property?). Rabbits make quick work of seedling beans.

But really, what gardener can forgo a crop of peas, rabbits or no?

To me, establishing a garden plot is a way to claim territory. I have never felt that I belonged in a place until I had staked out a garden patch. This is a heritage from my parents, of course. The family garden of my childhood was a huge undertaking, and it involved every member of the family. I couldn't have been more

than five years old before I began "weed patrol," and by the time I was 10, I was a gardener first-class – not that I welcomed the status. I mostly detested the work, and I frequently shirked it by concealing myself in a patch of corn, say, or sneaking off to hide behind the barn, often with a book in hand.

Such shenanigans were never successful. I was always caught and sent back to the garden. These were important lessons, of course, and I felt the strength of them when I turned the soil behind our new home. A garden is a direct link to the earth as well as a source of food and – perhaps the most important lesson – a way to be connected, to earn your keep, so to say.

So when I turned the first shovel of dirt behind our home, I felt an immediate connection to the place, as if I owned it. This must have been the feeling that my grandfather had when he turned the first furrow on his prairie homestead in Mountrail County a little more than a century ago.

He won the homestead in a lottery arranged by Congressman Louis B. Hanna, who later became governor of North Dakota. Hanna had determined that the Indigenous people of the Missouri River Valley were not using the land above the Missouri River Valley, and he persuaded Congress to declare it surplus, clearing the way for homesteaders,

who were awarded land by lot.

Grandpa got a good plot, on the banks of Shell Creek not far from the town of Van Hook. Today it's a plum patch, planted for wildlife, part of the mitigation for flooding by Garrison Dam, which was built less than 50 years after Grandpa first turned the soil there, and which destroyed the established farming culture of the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation. Just a short distance from Grandpa's place, there's a large fishing camp with rigs of all kinds and services to sustain them.

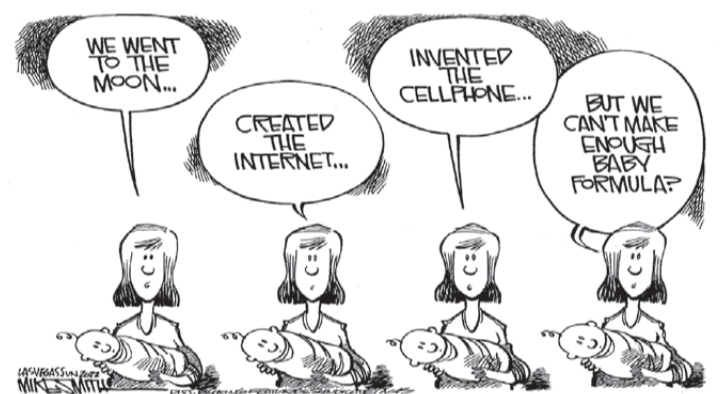
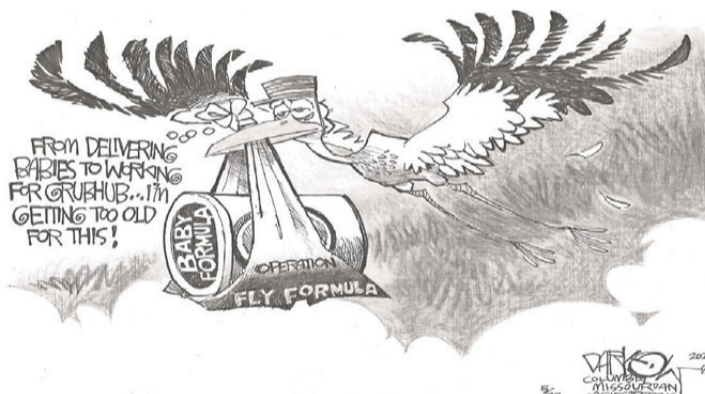
In Grandpa's time, however, it was an unbroken prairie. He was the first person to put a plow shear in the ground there. I can't suppress the feeling of – what other terms are there than completeness and continuity? – that I feel with him, despite the indisputable fact that he, and I after him, benefited from the taking of other people's land and heritage.

So my feelings when I turned dirt in my new backyard were mixed.

The one strong strand was this: This spot is mine now. I'm prepared to plant a garden, and so this is home, a common thread from my own time, my grandfather's time and the long time that Indigenous people worked the same dirt.

Mike Jacobs is a former editor and publisher of the Grand Forks Herald.

DOUBLE PLAY



OTHER VIEW

Sweet, overdue victory for US women's soccer

The Seattle Times
America didn't invent soccer, but this nation has taken global leadership in making the world's game truly equitable.

A May 18 collective bargaining deal solidified an arrangement a long time coming: equal pay for the men's and women's national soccer teams. It is staggering to contemplate how slow this progress has been. The Women's World Cup – which the U.S. Women's National Team has won four times – has been a global event since 1991.

Yet, three decades later, it still took protracted negotiations and a lawsuit, settled in February, for America to become the

first nation to equalize pay for its international soccer representatives. The movement needs to go global. Women's World Cup teams competed in 2019 for shares of \$30 million – less than 8% of the \$400 million that constituted the pot in the 2018 men's tournament.

The U.S. women won the 2019 Women's World Cup. For that, players took home \$110,000 bonuses, about \$300,000 less than members of the men's team would have made had they won a men's World Cup title in 2018. The new landmark agreement will pool FIFA's unequal payouts so each player on a U.S. World Cup team, men's or women's, gets an equal share of the

collective prize money. Extra bonuses for wins have also been equalized between teams, ending the upside-down reality where the women's side was given short shrift despite winning more. About time.

"It's just a little bit surreal," star winger and Seattleite Megan Rapinoe told The Philadelphia Inquirer. Who could blame her for needing a moment to adjust to such a historic correction?

Another well-considered element of the bargain between U.S. Soccer and the respective national teams: the men's team will have federation-provided child care, as the women's team has for 25 years.

These significant strides toward ending senseless and outdated gender biases are years overdue. However, they arrive just in time to resonate powerfully as American soccer takes another leap forward in prominence.

In 2026, stadiums across the U.S. – potentially including Lumen Field – will host men's World Cup games, which have not been played on American soil since 1994. The host role will put a powerful spotlight on America's advance in soccer gender equity; co-hosts Canada and Mexico – and the rest of the soccer, football and fútbol world – should follow suit.

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