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OUR VIEW: INFRASTRUCTURE

Hagedorn's 'no' vote hurts constituents

There were 6.8 billion reasons for Minnesota members of Congress to vote for the recently passed federal infrastructure bill.

But Minnesota Republicans, including 1st District Rep. Jim Hagedorn, didn't apparently favor any of those reasons.

The Senate passed the vote 69-30 and the House passed it 228-206

Minnesota will get an estimated \$6.8 billion from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, with much of it going to Minnesota roads and bridges which have been crumbling under neglect for decades.

Hagedorn's vote against the bill is particularly bad, given the investments the bill makes in rural districts like the one he represents. Two thirds of Minnesota's money (\$4.5 billion) will go to roads and bridges that were graded by the American Society of Civil Engineers as a D+ and C.

But Hagedorn, in a statement on the infrastructure and Build Back Better bill, takes out his partisan bullwhip and calls

these "a Trojan Horse for the Democrats to force their socialist agenda on the American people."

Minnesota will get \$680 million to improve drinking water and make small-town public water facilities more efficient. The town of Waldorf in Hagedorn's district has been struggling for years to get funding for its water system, and while it finally got state money after 10 years, federal money could certainly help complete or enhance the project as well as others in many small towns throughout the 1st District.

As debate started in the House on the infrastructure and Build Back bills, Hagedorn called the efforts "the most radical and extreme agenda in American history."

The state will get \$100 million to expand broadband, and there remain many areas of the 1st District without viable broadband. In a September 2020 debate, Hagedorn agreed with Democratic challenger Dan Feehan that rural broadband expansion was important and said it would get bipartisan support in Congress.

But apparently not from Hagedorn, who voted against one of the biggest investments in infrastructure in years. Hagedorn did not respond to a Free Press inquiry seeking an explanation of his vote.

Thirteen of Hagedorn's Republican colleagues saw the benefits of the bill for their district and voted with Democrats. Those Republicans were from conservative states like Nebraska, Ohio, West Virginia and Alaska, states won by Donald Trump in the last election.

And of those 13 Republicans, eight had fewer Democratic voters in their districts voting against them than Hagedorn, meaning they voted with Democrats even though the number of Democratic voters in their districts is small.

Hagedorn had more people vote against him than for him in the last election, only winning because the fringe Grassroots Party got 20,000 votes. Nearly 46% of voters in his district voted for his Democratic opponent. That should compel him to heed bipartisanship a bit more.

Hagedorn's vote against the infrastructure bill is a slap in the face to his constituents who would benefit from many of its provisions.

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The Free Press

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AARON RODGER'S OFFENSIVE LINE EXERCISES THEIR BODILY AUTONOMY AND REFUSES TO BLOCK UNTIL THEY KNOW MORE ABOUT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS.

Hawley a poor representative for males

WASHINGTON — Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., isn't wrong about the left's efforts to demonize mostly White males for their "toxic masculinity." Still, there are times when shooting the messenger, figuratively speaking, holds some appeal.

New to the gender wars, the boyish Hawley butched up his act during the Jan. 6 Capitol riots when he raised his fist in solidarity with the insurrectionists who forcefully tried to block certification of the 2020 election.

To Hawley's mind, presumably, the men (and the smattering of women) who breached the U.S. Capitol that day, where legislators huddled in fear for their lives, represented the sort of masculinity he now says will be his signature issue. Hmmm: Why is it that the guys who look like they've never so much as pushed a lawn mower are always the ones who want to saddle up and save the women-folk?

In a keynote speech last month at the National Conservatism Conference, Hawley called for "revival of strong and healthy manhood in America," and said the left is trying to redefine masculinity as toxic. He mentioned man's important role as father, husband and protector — and you'll get no argument from me on that — but if Jan. 6 wasn't an example of toxic masculinity, what was it?

In Hawley's worldview, the modern, conservative-male model isn't only a good father and faithful husband, he's also a strongman willing to take up arms to defend his beliefs. If you believe, say, that Donald Trump really won the 2020 election, despite all evidence to the contrary, then the manly thing to do would be to crush Capitol security and go searching for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., sing-songing "Nancy! Oh, Nancy! We're looking for you!" as captured in a video of the rampage.

Or so one might think given Hawley's fistful of brotherhood.

To his credit, Hawley says he's not trying to paint all men as victims but that the left wants to redefine "traditional masculine virtues," such as



The Associated Press

Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri

courage, assertiveness and independence, as a "danger to society."

"Can we be surprised that after years of being told they are the problem, that their manhood is the problem, more and more men are withdrawing into the enclave of idleness, and pornography, and video games?" he said.

Again, although Hawley's not wrong about some of his observations, he's rather late to the revelation. Liberal attempts to equalize the sexes in all aspects of life, from combat to childbearing, are decades-old now. Welcome to the front lines, Josh! Along with a handful of others, I began writing about these deeply concerning societal shifts in the 1980s and '90s — spurred, in my case, because of having birthed a boy. Having until then been a gung-ho feminist myself, I was unpleasantly surprised by what I was seeing as a growing hostility toward my son and his kind simply because of his sex alone.

Incremental policy changes in education and across social institutions seeped into our lives without much notice, until one day Americans woke up and wondered what happened to their world. Women now outnumber men in college and the workforce, which isn't so much a negative as a question of why this has happened and what it signifies.

More to Hawley's point, the left's assault on masculinity recently has morphed into focused attack on the White-male-Christian point of view. Social media is rife with negative-to-hostile commentary on the WMCs, specifically evangelicals. To help us understand why, NPR naturally

interviewed a professor at Calvin University. Thus, Kristin Kobes Du Mez, author of "Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation," worries that the typical White male Christian believes that "Men are protectors, women

are designed to be protected. This vision of gender difference really runs through conservative Christianity and through American conservatism more generally," she said.

True that. But it's hardly news. The broader political splits in our country between red and blue and left and right are matched by even deeper differences about the traditional roles of men and women as America nears its 250th birthday. Those differences in belief and behavior can be traced both to some mostly unalterable biological differences and some fast-changing attitudes about who can do what now.

These points of view are unlikely to be reconciled anytime soon. What badly needs attention now is that men, either by choice or conditioning — or some zero-sum feminist engineering — are being left behind. There's plenty of evidence that our boys and young men are slipping behind their powerful, encouraged sisters and future bosses and spouses. Things were bad enough when I began writing "Save the Males" 15 years ago. They're quantifiable worse today. I applaud anyone who wants to put his (or her) shoulder into fixing that problem.

It's too bad Hawley has designated himself as champion for the much-maligned male of our species. The messenger really does matter — and his raised fist for the wrong cause signifies every argument against his qualifications to hoist the flag for real men.

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Ag has role to play in saving the climate

St. Cloud Times

The population is growing and the climate is changing, and both of those things will have a big impact on the future of agriculture and food production.

Farmers — some of them right here in Central Minnesota — are working on solutions to ensure the land they farm now will be healthy and productive for generations to come.

Those efforts could also help mitigate the effects of climate change, all while providing new agricultural revenue streams.

We focused on these practices in a series published last week on natural climate solutions supported by the MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellowship. Journalism fellow and St. Cloud Times reporter Nora Hertel visited 10 farms this summer and interviewed dozens of experts on climate change, forestry, agriculture and more.

We're encouraged by the practices she found in place on Central Minnesota farms. Cover crops, reduced

plowing and carbon sequestration are all becoming more common in fields near where we live.

It's early days in the quest to build functional markets that will make efforts like carbon offsets pay on a large scale for Midwestern producers. (Not sure what that is? Essentially, carbon offsets allow companies to pay someone else to clean up after their greenhouse gases.)

Until the monetization models fully evolve, however, help will be needed to get more farms, big and small, on board.

Since government subsidies and supports already shape agricultural production in America, some changes could help drive sustainable practices that pay off for farmers and those who want to do the right thing for the planet.

And whether you believe in climate change or not (spoiler: it's real), why wouldn't we clean up after ourselves, simply as a basic investment in our collective home?

Employing agriculture to combat climate change is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Depending on what you

farm and where you farm, different practices will come into play. And right now there isn't an exact answer for every scenario.

That's why we all have a stake in protecting producers while they experiment to the answer.

The thing that encourages us is that there are people who are giving it a shot, trying to find solutions and exploring options. The solutions are not all viable right now, but unless tried and tested, there's no way to tell which could become viable in the future. We all will benefit from those successes. We must not put the financial risk on farmers without a safety net.

Vegan or omnivore, blue or red, we all need to eat and we all need a planet with functioning ecosystems. We as consumers can support more sustainable farming practices, and farmers can work to implement them, but policy and regulation regarding carbon markets and assistance for farmers looking to implement sustainable agriculture practices are needed to ensure a healthy future.

Tell your elected leaders.