

OPINION

FIRST AMENDMENT “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

OUR VIEW

Clarity needed in proposal

Good intentions don’t always translate with new rules.

We’re encouraged by the Koochiching County Board’s pledge to find out more about an Environmental Protection Agency proposal to clarify in the Clean Water Act protection for streams and wetlands in the nation.

The intention behind the proposal to clarify the protection is to reduce confusion, clarify the types of waters covered under the act, save businesses time and money, provide benefit to the public and help states protect the waters, according to the EPA’s website.

The website also says the rule does not protect any new types of waters, broaden coverage of the act, regulate groundwater nor expand jurisdiction over ditches.

Koochiching County officials fear the clarification could lead to restrictions on the use of land and water in a county made up mostly of wetlands, development of which require a lengthy and costly mitigation process.

County officials are concerned the rulemaking process being used to implement the clarifications bypasses the legislative process upon which this this nation’s democracy was

founded. If it’s such a good thing for the nation, why isn’t the clarification being carried as a bill proposed by a member of Congress?

Clearly, the waters are muddled. No one seems to know the truth about exactly what the clarification would change in our lives. The idea that the EPA includes a “Ditch the myths and get the facts” box on its website indicates wide confusion among many about the potential impacts of the clarification.

Commissioner Wade Pavleck noted Tuesday former Congressman Jim Oberstar’s support of the clarification likely played a role in the late congressman’s reelection bid in 2010. But Pavleck said Oberstar had witnessed the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in a state that had no wetland protections. Pavleck said Oberstar believed the state’s strong wetland rules would supersede any federal clarification, but that has not been the case.

No one would argue for degradation of our state’s valuable water and wetlands, but in a vastly diverse national geographically, one size clearly does not fit all. It behooves the residents and representatives of Koochiching County to get educated on this proposal.



The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

Share your point of view

Make a difference by writing a letter to the editor or contributing to our online discussions. The Journal’s Opinion page is where meaningful community discussions take place.

How to contact your lawmakers

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Money before education

Over the past year, Falls High School has showed me that it cares more about money than education.

This is because I feel Post Secondary Enrollment Option students, including myself, have been disregarded when changes to the school were considered by the Falls School Board.

Why is this important to me? The fact that I am doing the same amount of work, but for a lower grade, grade point average, and class rank, quite honestly upsets me. Because of this, I want to help make things fair.

According to Kevin Grover, district superintendent, ISD 361 receives an average of \$8,553 from the state for each student within the school district. Depending on how many credits a high school student takes through PSEO, the school district either has to pay Rainy River Community College and retain the remaining amount, or RRCC is paid directly by the state, and the school district only receives 12 percent of the state funding for that student. Either way, if a student chooses to enroll in the



Eric
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Post-Secondary program, the district loses money.

Because we don’t earn ISD 361 as much money as regular students, the argument can be made that I and other students who attend classes at Rainy River aren’t students at FHS, and therefore don’t get a say in how things work. I believe that I am an FHS student. After all, I compete against other high schools as a Bronco, and plan to receive a diploma from FHS this spring. How would I be able to do that if I wasn’t a student?

I feel that us college students were disregarded when the board considered weighted grades last fall. The weighted grades program is meant to encourage student participation in more advanced classes. Basically, good grades in

a more advanced class are recognized by the school as a higher grade. This also helps students in more advanced classes compete in overall class rank.

I think the board could have done some things differently, such as recognizing certain PSEO classes as on par with weighted classes, or working with RRCC to determine which classes could be weighted.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, there is nothing preventing the district from doing this.

Falls High School and Rainy River classes become even more similar when considering concurrent enrollment. The concurrent enrollment program will offer college classes for college credit to high school students, similar to PSEO, but classes are held at FHS, taught by FHS teachers, and are weighted. Some of these classes have the same curriculum and are approved by the same colleges as PSEO classes.

I don’t think this sounds like a fair system. With weighted grades as they are, students who do the same amount of

work and belong to the same school, but are taught by different people at a different facility, can receive lower grades than their classmates, even though they are in equally advanced classes and earn college credit.

People who disagree with me think that if students don’t like this, then they should just take concurrent classes instead of PSEO. Some students prefer a different learning environment and alternate teaching methods than those at FHS. Students should not have to decide what classes to take based on the grades they believe they will get for taking those classes. Isn’t that what the weighted grades program is supposed to be about?

If I am a college student, then why do I care about what happens at FHS? I care because I am still a student at FHS, and what happens there affects me the same as any traditional student, if not more. No matter what kind of education I choose or prefer, I’m still a Bronco, and I’ll fight team fight until the grade, GPA, and class rank systems are all fair.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Disappointed by judging of classics

To the editor,

Writing this in regards to the judging of the classic car and especially the motorcycle judging in this year’s bass tournament.

I am hoping that next year’s judges are someone who takes into consideration the amount of blood, sweat and especially money that it take to bring these

beautiful vehicles back to the way you see when viewing them. Also, the amount of detailing it takes to keep them this way.

In my opinion, this

year’s judges suck. In talking to a lot of other people, they share my feelings. We can do better.

Barry Wagness
 International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Gun rights need to be protected

To the editor,

To all gun owners, gun enthusiasts, gun collectors and hunters: Al Franken has voted in favor of a gun ban supported by Obama,

Chuck Schumer, Michael Bloomberg, Dianne Feinstein.

They want to take our guns and Second Amendment away from all law abiding taxpaying

gun owners. They want it like Australia. Well, this is America — land of the free and home of the brave.

Al Franken was a crappy comedian on

Saturday Night Live and he’s even a worse politician. Remember this Nov. 4 when you vote.

Darren Wallen
 International Falls, MN

Candidate letter policy

The beginning of 2014 brought a new policy to The Journal. A charge of \$30 will be required to publish letters to the editor from candidates or about candidates. The letters must be 500 words or less and the fee must be paid prior to the letter being published. The name and city of the author will be published with the letter. Letters may be emailed to laurel@ifallsjournal.com. The Journal will publish a deadline for publication of paid election letters prior to the Aug. 12 primary and Nov. 4 general elections.