

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

When is it too young?

If you're never too old to learn, can you be too young for school? It's a question the International Falls School Board tackled this week when the parent of a 4-year old girl asked that she be allowed to attend kindergarten this fall. The girl won't turn 5 until Nov. 26, well after the normal cut-off date for entrance to kindergarten. The value of early education has been well documented and researched. And the right age for children to start school has long been debated. In one corner is the theory that children should begin school sooner than later to help them develop the best they can. And on the other side of the argument is the theory that children should spend more time playing, and formal schooling should be delayed, sometimes up until the age of 7. But when is a child too young for kindergarten? Age 4 may seem young to some people, but old enough to others, as in the case brought this week to the school board. While we think age 4 is young for most kids, it appears the school board has devised a policy that will help the district determine whether early admission into kindergarten should be allowed for specific children. Each student considered

for early entrance to kindergarten will be academically evaluated with standardized tests. Information about the child's social abilities will be sought from preschool teachers and daycare providers. In addition, children will need to demonstrate superior intellectual ability, parents will be required to pay a \$100 fee to cover the costs of evaluations, and assessments will be conducted, with a recommendation to the district superintendent, who will make the final decision. Clearly, the school board and administration are not taking this issue lightly. They agreed that a flexible policy is needed, but also acknowledge there may be drawbacks to starting kindergarten early. Many children age 4 may not be emotionally or socially ready for a school day that demands learning and attention. But some children at age 5 still face those challenges. Each child is different and must be considered on their own abilities and needs. It appears this new policy will provide objective guidance that will help the district's administration determine whether a child, whose age is in question, is truly ready for kindergarten regardless of their birthday.



GUEST COLUMN

Inaccurate political rage is all the rage

Do you have personal issues? Do you want to seem intelligent, well informed and on-top-of-it-all without having to bother to put in any effort or time to see whether your assertions are accurate? If so, then join the trend that's all the rage in the 21st century: show indignation now and worry (or, more likely, don't) about accuracy later. And, for heaven's sake, never EVER worry about "nuance." The following cases are not from The Onion, and weren't created by New Yorker satirist Andy Borowitz: CASE ONE: That photo of the movie producer Steven Spielberg, after he "went" hunting. At issue: a photo of Spielberg on the Jurassic Park set smiling, sitting in front of a dead dinosaur. He was then denounced as "despicable," and called other unprintable names online. Reality: dinosaurs have been extinct for (ahem) a while. Now someone has posted a photo of him next to a dead ET. How long before "murderer" denunciations pour in? The Spielberg photo spoofs the controversies over Kendall Jones, a Texas cheerleader who posted photos on Facebook of her alongside big game animals she killed, and 17-year-old Axelle Despiegelaere from Belgium. Despiegelaere won a lucrative L'Oreal modeling gig after a photo of her cheering her country at the World Cup went viral and charmed millions. A photo her on Facebook holding a rifle next to a dead animal in Africa surfaced, and sparked outrage. L'Oreal didn't expect this branding when they hired her, so they declared her work for them completed, and dumped her. She deleted the page. CASE TWO: The Texas politician trying to save his community from a bus of migrant children who actually weren't. There's an old joke about the stupid racist who went to an anti-illegal immigrant rally and yelled out: "Go back to Africa!" Life imitated joke when Arizona Republican congressional candidate and state legislator Adam



Wasman got excited about positioning himself to show the world (and voters) that he opposes migrant children settling in his community — only to find out later the kids on the bus he said were immigrant kids were campers going to a YMCA camp. He was at a protest near an area expected to be a shelter for the arriving kids when he spotted a bus, and Tweeted: "Bus coming in. This is not compassion. This is the abrogation of the rule of law." He told a TV reporter on camera: "I was actually able to see some of the children in the buses. The fear on their faces.... This is not compassion." The reporter then informed him that the kids (reportedly laughing and taking cell phone pictures of the media) were actually YMCA campers. Kwasman assumed a bus arriving was THE bus and the kids he saw therefore MUST have been migrant kids. Still, this much must be said in his defense. If the kids had been wearing yarmulkes he wouldn't have reached that conclusion (I think). He expressed compassion for the kids. And he never yelled "Go back to Africa!" CASE THREE: My website The Moderate Voice's raging emails. On

the left they say they'll never visit again because we run Michael Reagan's column. But many other posts disagree with Reagan. On the right they say you can't be moderate because posts criticize Rush Limbaugh, conservatives and the Tea Party. But Limbaugh, conservatives and the Tea Party are trying to purge moderates from the GOP. A reader who I learned writes a diary for a liberal blog called the site right wing due to a conservative website widget — the same widget that runs on Political Wire (a centrist news aggregator), Crooks and Liars (a liberal site) and Hinterland Gazette (a center to center-left site). These days, many people obsessed with ideology, party or issues put their mouths or keyboards in gear before they put their brains in gear — if they ever get around to doing that at all. That's the style: assume and attack. Who cares about facts? If it makes you feel good — and scores with those who already agree with you — run with it. Gandelman is a veteran journalist who wrote for newspapers overseas and in the United States. His columns are distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate.

While Election Day — and to a lesser degree primary day — comes with a certain clout, there's no reason voting should be limited to one day, which is why absentee balloting started in the first place. The important part is that as many people as possible cast educated, well-reasoned votes. The date that ballot is cast isn't as important. The trends favor absentee balloting or even early voting. In the 2012 general election, 40 percent of ballots were cast before Election Day, and that number is likely to increase. In Mower County this year, residents will be able to obtain absentee ballots at the city clerk's offices in Rose Creek, LeRoy and Grand Meadow (absentee ballots are also available via the mail). While this may seem like a minor change to

some, it will save residents living on the eastern side of the county a trip to Austin during work hours to obtain a ballot. Every little change helps. The cities of Sargeant and Taopi will also switch to mail balloting to save on election judge and other costs. It's just another sign that elections are changing, and it's time for the public and elected officials to discuss ways to engage and include voters. The elephant in the room is voter turnout. Only 9 percent of eligible Minnesota voters participated in the Aug. 14, 2012, primary — the second lowest turnout in the 62 years state officials have kept such election records. The 2012 election was better — 77 percent of registered voters in Minnesota — but there's still room for improvement.

Other countries are switching to online balloting, which comes with several red flags: hackers, security, authenticity, etc. After the many pitfalls of the websites for the Affordable Care Act, it's unlikely the public will rally behind on online voting anytime soon. But that doesn't mean it's not worth studying. Are we saying it's the right option? No. There's far too many unanswered questions. However, it's always the right time to be proactive in considering new approaches. Plus, the more we know now, the more secure such a system will be if it is indeed in the nation's future, however far out. No-excuse absentee balloting is a reasonable first step in Minnesota. It's time to discuss other options. Austin Daily Herald, July 16

How to contact your lawmakers

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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.

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.