

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

Expanding opportunity

A change in law being considered by the Minnesota Senate this week would allow Minnesotans to register to vote online.

Ramsey County Judge John Guthmann ruled Monday Secretary of State Mark Ritchie illegally set up an online registration system last fall. The judge and lawmakers of both political parties said Ritchie did not have the authority to set up the system. State law requires a voter registration application to be signed on paper. The judge ordered the online registration to end, but said applications of people who had already registered online would be valid.

Senators said they would consider a House bill approved 129-2 earlier this month that would give the needed legal authorization to allow online registration.

Ritchie says online registration is cheaper than a paper system, which would still be available.

But Republican senators said the website

and data security in the House bill is not adequate. Clearly, this concern needs to be verified and, if true, addressed. Seventeen other states have online registration and we'd hope security issues in those states have been reviewed as this bill moved forward.

Gov. Mark Dayton has said he would only sign election-related bills if there was broad bipartisan support. The House bill was supported by 66 percent of all Republicans in the entire Legislature.

We've opposed calls for voter identification at the polls. Proponents argued such rules would avoid fraud, but little evidence of widespread voter fraud was found. We said voter identification would limit participation in this democracy by students and elderly voters who may not have the preferred documents.

Instead, we support expanding voting opportunities. Online registration — once made legal and secure — would be one way to do that.



©Taylor Jones - all rights reserved.

caglecartoons.com

GUEST COLUMNS

LEED picks winners, losers in timber industry

BY BOB ANDERSON  
AND WADE PAVLECK

There is a lot of spin regarding environmental issues that often confuses the public as well as elected officials who make policy. Unfortunately, the voices of those who are directly involved in managing land and natural resources get ignored in the back-and-forth. Such is the case in the debate over forest certification. It is landowners, like Koochiching County, who often take the lead in promoting common-sense conservation methods.

One of these tools is forest certification, where a land owner voluntarily partners with and meets standards laid out by groups such as the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). ATFS, SFI and FSC require landowners and businesses to go above and beyond what is required by law to obtain their seal of approval.

More and more forest owners have chosen certification in recent years, which has the effect of increasing the amount of land managed responsibly in Minnesota

and the United States as a whole. Regrettably, government policies and special interests have spread confusion about the nature of these certification program in regard to “green” building standards. This confusion minimizes the benefits of a competitive certification market.

In hundreds of jurisdictions nationwide, many regulations enforce what is known as LEED standards that seek to improve energy efficiency. LEED stands for Leadership In Energy and Environmental Design. A consensus based national standard for developing high performance, sustainable buildings, LEED has specific guidelines for timber – it only awards its sustainable sourcing credit to wood certified by the FSC, not to that recognized by ATFS or SFI.

Since many accept LEED as the gold standard for sustainability, they may mistakenly conclude FSC timber is superior to that certified by other programs. But those with expertise on the issue think otherwise. These include the National Association of State Foresters, the Conservation Fund, and the Society of American

Foresters.

Rather than pit one program against another, those seeking to improve conservation and land management should promote certification as a whole. This is what Koochiching County has done, having certified its land to FSC and SFI standards. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources also certifies millions of acres of state land to FSC and SFI standards.

More policies should mirror these; those that pick winners and losers among these programs, such as LEED, squeeze forest products businesses by not allowing or making it difficult for their timber to penetrate new and growing markets.

The timber industry has not been immune to our sluggish economy. As we know too well, International Falls has seen too many reductions in our forest products industry. Resolute Forest Products suspended operations indefinitely. The kraft mill and paper machine in nearby Fort Frances idled in late 2012, and the Boise paper mill shut down two of four paper machines and an off machine coater, costing 300 jobs in October of 2013.

We should be expanding access to markets for our wood and forest products, not shutting them off. Land managers sink substantial resources into getting their products certified. If government policies recognize only a fraction of these certified goods, the incentives to pursue certification will drop, leading to less responsibly managed land, as well as fewer outlets for our forest products industry to sell their goods.

The forest products industry, which faced near and long-term challenges in recent decades, continues to innovate and respond to the realities of the marketplace. It is time for government officials across the nation to do the same, and recognize the benefits of all credible certified forest products.

*Anderson is the mayor of International Falls and former public affairs director at Boise Cascade Corporation. Pavleck is a Koochiching County Commissioner, member of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and the Minnesota Counties Natural Resource Committee. Together, they co-chair the county economic recovery program.*

How to contact your lawmakers

**FEDERAL OFFICES**  
**President Barack Obama**  
Democrat  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C., 20500  
202-456-1111  
Website:  
www.whitehouse.gov  
E-mail:  
president@whitehouse.gov

**U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan**  
2447 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515  
202-225-6211  
Website: www.nolan.house.gov  
Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan  
Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Duluth Office of  
Congressman Rick Nolan  
11 East Superior Street  
Suite 125  
Duluth, MN 55802  
Phone: 218-464-5095  
Fax: 218-464-5098

Brainerd Office of  
Congressman Rick Nolan  
Brainerd City Hall  
501 Laurel Street  
Brainerd, MN 56401  
218-454-4078

**U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar**  
Democrat  
302 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
202-224-3244

Minnesota Office:  
1200 Washington Avenue

South, Suite 250  
Minneapolis, MN 55415  
612-727-5220  
Website:  
www.klobuchar.senate.gov

**U.S. Sen. Al Franken**  
Democrat  
Senate Hart Building 320  
Washington DC 20510  
202-224-5641  
Website:  
www.alfranken.com  
E-Mail:  
info@franken.senate.gov

STATE OFFICES

**Gov. Mark Dayton**  
130 State Capitol  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN, 55155  
800-657-3717  
E-mail:  
Mark.Dayton@state.mn.us

**Rep. David Dill**  
571 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-2190  
800-339-0466  
rep.david.dill@house.mn  
Assistant: Joan Harrison

**Sen. Tom Bakk**  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Capitol, Room 226  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606  
Capitol Office phone:  
(651) 296-8881  
Email:  
www.senate.mn/  
senatorbakkemail

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.

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.