

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

Things can get better

When you hear about someone struggling with depression and committing suicide, it may conjure an image of someone who has been down in the dumps, sullen, withdrawn and sad. But clearly, there is more to it, as we were reminded of Monday when it was reported that a man whose life has been spent bringing joy and humor to others reportedly took his own life.

Comic, dramatic actor and philanthropist Robin Williams apparently committed suicide after years of battling addiction and recently depression.

Here's a guy who seems to have the world by the tail, but he apparently did not feel that way. And it might seem like Robin Williams has everything to live for — money, fame, friends, family. But his death should put into perspective for us all that, even with all the things that may seem like an equation for happiness, there is more to being healthy and happy.

Williams, 63, was quoted in a 2013 news story as saying: “You get to a certain point where you are grateful for what you have ... You accept the idea of there being some things you can change and some things you can't.” At that time, it was reported Williams had a renewed sobriety, a new wife, a new heart and a new television series.

So what happened? We will never truly know, but the issues that come with depression and addiction can insidiously slip into a life, eating away at the ability to be truly happy.

And at some point, keeping up a facade may become too much.

Many of us grew up with Robin Williams, starting with his TV portrayal of an alien on “Mork and Mindy,” then through a multitude of comedy and drama films and most recently back on TV. And it's not over. He appears in four movies yet to be released.

The National Institutes of Health says a major reason people with suicidal thoughts don't seek help is the belief that nothing could possibly make things better. We wish he could have found a way to make things better. But his death should bring to the forefront the need to erase the stigma and the costs associated with seeking mental health services. Talking to someone about how we feel mentally should be no different than talking to a doctor about how we feel physically.

If we gain anything from the loss of Robin Williams, it should be an understanding that suicide has no boundaries; it touches rich and poor, funny and sad, famous and private. If you, or you suspect someone you care about, seems to believe nothing could possibly make things better, talk to them and get them to talk to a professional. Things can get better.

Williams performances touched millions of people who never knew him. And yet they genuinely mourn and grieve for the loss of someone who did something so valuable and needed by so many — he made us laugh.



'LEAVE IT TO ZYGI TO FIND ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE A BUCK...'

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Jaksa responds to mayor's comments

To the editor,

Regrettably, I find myself writing this letter to respond to charges made by the mayor (Bob Anderson) in a private interview with The Journal and then published without comment from me. I am referring to the mayor's charge that I, Councilor Gail Rognerud and EDA (Economic Development Authority) Director Shawn Mason have worked against him as mayor and that is why he shuts us out from his circle when working on city business and does not speak to us outside of official business.

I am a person who respects the democratic process and once the election was over, I embraced the vote of my constituents and

called Mayor Anderson to welcome him aboard. I also told him that if he works with our skilled staff, there is nothing that can stop us from realizing our full potential as a city of economic vibrancy. Just lately, when I introduced him at the “Medical NAFTA” meeting in Fort Frances on July 3, I complimented him on his value as a well-connected city official because I know that if he chooses to be an ally in getting cross border shared medical services over the legal and regulatory barriers that prevent us from sharing services, that we have a great advocate at our side.

In our discussion on the airport, I have only tried to address how we are going to pay for the airport reconstruction. The city council, unanimously, has

voted that we consider alternative funding methods with the airport commission; but these proposals have run into a stone wall at the airport commission, of which Mayor Anderson is chair.

I have no secret agenda. My only wish is to work for bettering our city as an independent, valiant fighter for the best interests of our city residents. Whenever the mayor chooses to do that, I am on his side. Believe me, I am much too busy solving problems and considering solutions to have time for conspiracies. People who know me know that I say what I believe is true and expect the same from others and that I listen to people who disagree with me and can change my opinion when convinced another view is better.

Of course, the council has honest differences of opinion on what is best for the city, but at no time have I taken these differences personally as long as accusations that impugn the character of myself or my fellow councilors or city staff are not involved.

I would say the same for Gail as a long term, successful city councilor and all my fellow councilors, including Paul Eklund and Pete Kalar. Gail has served as councilor for 30 years because she has ethics that are unimpeachable and motives only to serve the interests of the people. She is a model for me to follow and anyone seeking to serve.

Cynthia Jaksa
West Ward Councillor
International Falls, MN

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

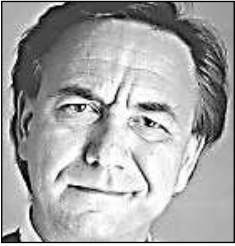
GUEST COLUMN

Congress has ridden lethargy into the ground

More fun than fourteen barrels of flunkies watching our elected officials exit Washington like scared rats streaming out of a sewer to escape Godzilla. And really, who can blame them. Anybody who's ever spent a summer in DC can tell you the climate is real similar to Hell. With humidity. Then again, not sure even Hell has winged insects the size of footstools. It's not called Foggy Bottom because that's the first thing that springs to mind when Diane Feinstein walks away, you know.

Funny thing is, this is the same Congress that lies on the verge of breaking all previous records for complete and utter futility. The Zero Zip Zilch Crew. Who have ridden lethargy into the ground and taken loitering to bold new heights. Or is it depths? Folks who would need hydraulic mechanical assists to raise their attitudes from stuporous to torpid. From the lair of the drugged slugs. Debi Does Drowsy.

In essence, they're taking a vacation from nothing. Which is a lot like waking up to take a



Will DURST
RAGING MODERATE

nap. Topping breakfast off with a sleeping pill. Floating off to a loafing, lay-about layoff. Playing hide and seek with the mirror. And losing.

The 113th Congress is destined to go down in history as the most Do-Nothing Congress of all time. Accomplishing less than all the other Do-Nothing Congresses combined. Which is saying something, because there were plenty.

“Proud to Put the Nothing in the Do-Nothing Congress.” Enshrined as the undisputed heavyweight champion of Indolence. The Friends of Inertia. Slouching towards Slouchville. The Slacker Congress.

What we the public fail to understand is that nothing can be downright tiring. Yes, there's the failure to pass a highway bill or any hint of immigration reform, but let's focus on the positive. During the past 19 months, the Republican-controlled House has shut down the government and voted to defund or repeal Obama Care about a gazillion times and don't forget the 2 dozen or so Benghazi hearings. They have definitely earned that approval rating lower than thumbtacks in your underwear while riding a motorcycle. Over railroad tracks.

And now these hordes of professional indolents have slipped the surly bonds of sloth and been released into their home districts to freely roam amongst we innocents as a 5 week recess begins. One question: how do you relax after suffering through the arduous routine of nothing? Slip into a coma? Binge watch The Leftovers? Will sunstroke play an integral part? And not just any vacation: a five-week paid vacation.

Who told our esteemed representatives we were Europe?

The odd part is... they have to. It's the law. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires Congress to take off the entire month of August. Not sure, but perhaps it was in response to members of Congress wandering aimlessly en masse in our nation's capital during peak tourist season; frightening small children and prompting plaintive cries from local merchants.

All we can do is hope our pooped populist politicians finally get some quality downtime, in order to come back tan and rested and ready for the tough task of remaining inactive and unable to pass any sort of worthwhile legislation when they return after Labor Day. Pretty obvious, that holiday sure weren't named after these guys.

Durst is an award-winning, nationally acclaimed political comic. His columns are distributed by the Cagle Cartoons Inc. syndicate.

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.