

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

Reserve a site now

Got campsite? Maybe the more valuable question is: “Got Reservation?” Planning an overnight stay at many of the campsites in Voyageurs National Park this summer now requires a reservation and fee. While we clearly understand the aim behind the reservation and fee program, we sympathize with local folks and regular visitors who cherished the freedom to make a last-minute decision to camp and headed for the lake. The program will likely encourage overnight stays in the park by visitors wary of leaving home without being assured the place they want to set up their tent is not already being occupied. And more visitors, say many, means a boost in our local tourism economy.

This park has had no fees nor reservations associated with it since it was established in 1975. That can’t be said for most national parks. Clearly, we’ve had a pretty long run of being able to come and go as we pleased. The park’s new program seems to have been embraced by many. VNP Superintendent Mike Ward reported more than 200 people made reservations that included more than 1,300 visitors

in just the first two days of the reservation program’s availability at www.recreation.gov. Reservations may also be made by calling the National Call Center at 877-444-6777. For some, making a reservation has been a little tricky. Visitors who use the online site should search in the “where” space in the left corner for Voyageurs National Park Permits and select “permit and wilderness” from the “interested in” drop box. Four options will be offered below a description of the park. We encourage anyone who would like to camp in the park to reserve a campsite now in order to enjoy the lakes and forests that are our backyard. Some folks may be disappointed their favorite site is already reserved. But remember, there are other days and other sites that offer similar breathtaking views as well as the sounds that mean summer to us. The park’s reservation and fee system, while well intended, may feel like a bit of a bother. But we must get used to it. It’s these fees that will be used to maintain and rehabilitate existing sites as well as help fund new and expanded opportunities in the park.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time to talk about sexual violence

To the editor,
The children and teens of today are our hope for tomorrow. It’s important for us as parents, caring adults and communities to help set young people on the path for a healthy future and support them as they work to create positive change. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and this year’s campaign is focused on youth. This April, “It’s time ... to talk about it! Your voice. Our future. Prevent Sexual Violence.” Friends Against Abuse encourages individuals

and communities to support healthy sexual development. Young people face many challenges during adolescence. Stereotypes and negative messages in the media don’t make this process easy. By learning and talking about healthy adolescent sexuality, adults are able to support the teens in their lives. It’s time for adults and communities to be a resource to teens so they learn and grow. How can we support teens during this time of change and discovery? Young people

need age appropriate information about healthy sexuality and relationships from trusted adults. The first step is to start an open and honest dialogue. Ask questions and, most importantly, listen. We can all play a role in modeling healthy behaviors, promoting positive skills, and creating safe environments. It’s important to empower the voices of youth and challenge negative, unhealthy messages. It’s OK if you don’t have all the answers. It’s more

important to welcome questions and learn together. To create a vision for a future without sexual violence, every voice can play a role in a healthier, safer tomorrow for all. You can use your voice to start the conversation. You can support the voices of young people, and together we can amplify our voices for a healthy future. It’s time ... to talk about it!
LeeAnn Meer
Executive Director
Friends Against Abuse
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

New theater troupe plans for future

Letter to the editor,
The Borealis Bards performance at last weekend’s Castle Backus Royal Feast was a treat for everyone who attended. The newly formed theater troupe headed by Doug and Beth Lowthian featured performers ranging from elementary age to retirement age and everyone in between. They performed skits, songs and recited poems just like professionals, prompting laughs and cheers from the crowd. I would encourage anyone who enjoys the theater to check out this up-and-coming group. With plans for doing full-

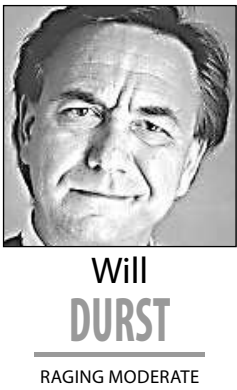
scale productions in the future, they are looking for more community participants of all ages who want to join the fun. I can’t say enough about how hard this group worked for this show, and how well they carried out the entertainment for the evening. They are to be

commended for a very successful inaugural performance.
Robin Bjorkquist
International Falls, MN
Editor’s note:
Bjorkquist serves as the events coordinator at Backus Community Center.

GUEST COLUMN

Tina Turner, Mad Max, Al Gore and you

According to a new UN report, there’s good news and bad news about global warming. The good news — it’s worse than we thought. Yeah. That’s the good news. The bad news — you don’t want to know. Because then there’s worse news and ultimately, “holy moley, is that an asteroid the size of a mini-mall crushing my house” news. The same kind of news a doctor offers up after inviting you into his office, closing the door and advising you to sit down. Or your lawyer recommending a friend who “specializes in this sort of thing, but I warn you, he’s not cheap.” A mechanic walking slowly from your car, wiping his hands on a rag, sadly shaking his head. Or when a spouse’s packed bags are stacked near the front door and a voice from the kitchen intones: “We need to talk.” After delivering their communique describing how not only has global warming already arrived, but it’s unpacked, made friends with the dog, is



sleeping on the couch and drinking daddy’s bourbon that he thinks nobody knows is behind the Wheat Thins; the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change threw up its hands and ran screaming from the room. The unreported nature of these actions can be chalked up to being considered normal activity at the UN. Remember about 10 years ago, when the IPCC told the world that something had to be done soon or all hell was going to break loose? Well, guess what? Nothing was done and all hell has broken loose. You

can actually see chunks of it littering the outskirts of Phoenix. With Lucifer himself haunting the halls of the Arizona State Capitol. The gist of the statement is instead of wasting time on political gridlock strangling all efforts to diminish global warming, we need to learn to live with it. Seriously. That’s what they said. Their recommended strategy has evolved from halting climate change to surviving it. From mitigation to adaption. No more trying to keep gas out of the basement, now we concentrate on not lighting any matches. Turns out, Al Gore was right. Next we’ll discover he really did invent the internet. Time to wave bye-bye to certain South Sea Islanders, unless they begin building a big bunch of boats real soon. Europe will need to increase flood insurance coverage exponentially. Sales of air conditioners in the US are destined to skyrocket like condom sales in a bus station brothel, and

Australia might just want to pack up and move. Now. Its not just increased temperatures and rising sea levels and more severe weather and ocean acidification and species extinctions and multi-ecosystem collapse and slathering on sunblock 8000 and polar bears wandering Winnipeg; they’re also predicting violent conflicts over dwindling food supplies and fresh water. Like the beer cooler at a 7-11 on Bourbon St. the Saturday before Mardi Gras. So for all you survivalists who have always imagined living like a post-civilization Mad Max fighting feral dogs for scraps while fending off leather-clad, Mohawk-sporting punks, your dreams may have finally come true. Hey, this could be fun. Especially if you’re Tina Turner. And secretly, who here among us, isn’t? **Durst distributed by the Cagle Cartoons Inc. syndicate. Durst is an award-winning, nationally acclaimed political comic.**

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