

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Good reasons for notice law

Minnesota lawmakers are set to consider a proposal to allow local governments to put public notices on their websites and abandon the state requirement to pay newspapers for printing them.

A preliminary hearing on Senate File 1152 may be conducted as early as the second day of the legislative session.

The public will not be well served by eliminating the newspaper as the main source for legal notices. That's especially true in a county like ours, where many people do not have Internet access.

The public notice requirement was put in place to provide information about government actions where the public is most likely to see it. Newspapers regularly cover government, so it makes sense people would look for such notices in their community paper. Providing these notices allows citizens to make well-informed decisions and be active participants in their government. Public notices help governments and their actions to be transparent to the public.

Newspapers supported legislation that became law nearly ten years ago requiring all newspapers that publish notices in their print edition to also place those notices on their website at no addition cost. Newspapers are about disseminating information, so that makes perfect sense.

That doesn't prohibit governments from also publishing the notices on their own websites, but that shouldn't be the only place people can find that information.

Newspapers have also

supported common sense changes in legal notice requirements, and many of those have helped to repeal outdated and obsolete public notice requirements.

Public notices are a part of our history and should be contained in a community's permanent record, a role newspapers have played for more than a century.

Yes, newspapers make some of their money by publishing legal notices. The Minnesota Newspaper Association estimated in 2011 the majority of newspapers make from 1 to 5 percent of their revenue from public notices. That money helps pay local taxes and provides jobs for local people, who in turn spend their money in the community on property, groceries, vehicles, and all the other needs of life.

Clearly, newspapers are a part of the checks and balances of a community. Do we really want a government to have sole responsibility and control over the dissemination of its own notices?

With no requirement for any other source of publication, some governments may decide when, how and where a public notice is placed on its website. Newspapers publish these notices in the same place with the same label, making it easy for people to find and read.

The bottom line is the more the public knows about what elected officials do, the better for all of us. Keeping the legal notice publishing requirement as is keeps our governments open and accessible, and leaves little room for speculation and rumor.

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.”



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ranier rec options are Minnesota nice

To the editor,

Recognition should go to the Rainer City Council or those involved in maintenance of the skating rinks, warming house, sledding hill and now the beautiful fire circle and seating area.

We and three of our grandchildren were thrilled to find some generous folks have donated several pair of gently used ice skates for those

who want to give the sport a try. The skates remain in the warming house for the next brave little one to give it a try. What a great opportunity for any family with younger kids who may not have extra resources to sink into skates, especially when those little feet grow so fast.

The weekend of sledding and skating went too fast. Sam, Harrison and Marley are all

looking forward to our next trip for more outdoor fun, roasting hotdogs and a few s'mores. Roasting sticks were even available. Kudos for all you have provided for the kids in our area. We would call that Minnesota nice.

Nancy and Wayne Lindstrom (Proud grandparents of Sam, Harrison and Marley) International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Elected with only 312 votes in 2008

To the editor,

Al Franken won the 2008 election by only 312 votes and became the Senate member who provided the 60th vote that gave us Obamacare.

Since the implementation of Al Franken's Obamacare, we have seen higher health care premiums, less choices in health care plans and exorbitant deductibles of \$5,000 dollars or more. Al Franken's Obamacare, with its thousands of pages of new regulations and taxes, has driven our great health care system into a tailspin. Our health care system is being destroyed as it adapts to the ever-changing Obama Executive orders to Band-Aid a broken Al Franken's Obamacare.

How Senator Al Franken feels about all this upheaval in our health care system is revealed by his quote of May 14, 2008: "A single-payer system would be the most effective in terms of reducing administration cost, and I would be thrilled to support such a system. I would fight to make Medicare a true single-payer system." Well Al, you are about to get your way, since most of those signing up for

your Obamacare are signing up for Medicaid, a government subsidy program.

The framers of the Constitution, in their wisdom, wrote the Second Amendment to the Constitution: "the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." They knew first-hand what it was like to live under a tyrannical government. In 2008, Al Franken received an 'F' rating from the National Rifle Association. On April 17, 2013, Al Franken voted to prohibit the sale of assault weapons and to limit magazine capacity to 10. Obama and Al Franken are on the same page and will use any gun incident to shred our Second Amendment rights.

The AFL-CIO says the Keystone XL Pipeline would call for 20,000 immediate jobs and as many indirect jobs with out any government funding. Why have our Senate and president failed to give the green light to this job maker? Our economy is in shambles with more people on food stamps than ever before (47 million or 1/6th of the country). Actual unemployment using labor

market participation numbers is anywhere between 11 percent-23 percent. Al Franken could help to relieve the recession unemployment numbers by introducing a bill to approve and begin construction on the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Unfortunately, the left radical environmentalists have an iron grip on stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. Obama and company have stalled the Keystone XL Pipeline for five years. Days ago (Jan. 31,2014), the State Department again cleared the way for this international pipeline while stating that project would not have a significant effect on atmospheric carbon. There is no excuse for Franken's obstructionist stance.

Liberal calls for longer unemployment benefits are a sign of an anemic economy. Obama's policies of these last five years are directly responsible for the health fiasco, high unemployment and an out of control national debit. It's time for a change in our elected officials starting with the Senate.

Julie Hindman Internaional Falls, MN.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Keystone XL oil pipeline has merit

The Obama administration's dilemma about whether to approve building the Keystone XL oil pipeline is coming down to a simple choice: Does the president embrace pragmatism or symbolism?

In the wake of the U.S. State Department's finding Friday that the 1,179-mile pipeline from west-central Canada to Nebraska is unlikely to alter climate change, Obama should embrace pragmatism and signal to the rest of his administration that he supports construction.

Doing so could help this proposal, already under federal study for five years, get through the eight federal agencies still examining it.

While each agency has its own role to fulfill, the State Department's final environmental assessment released Friday found no major environmental objections, which includes the standard Obama himself mentioned in June: That he would back the project if this report

showed it "does not significantly exacerbate the climate problem."

As international news reports have noted, the assessment determined denying the project would have no impact on climate change because oil extraction in Alberta will continue. Producers will simply use other means — namely rail — to transport their product to markets.

In fact, the report even indicated using rail instead of the pipeline could increase greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent or more. Couple that with the horrific rail accidents lately involving oil trains in North Dakota and Quebec and safety also becomes a primary reason to build the pipeline.

The \$5.4 billion pipeline will carry 830,000 barrels of oil a day from Alberta through Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines to get oil to Texas and the Gulf Coast.

The project is expected to create 1,950 annual construction

jobs in those states and contribute about \$3.4 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product. It would generate about 50 jobs once in operation. And not to be overlooked, it would mean America's importing of oil could come from its peaceful neighbor, not violent places such as the Middle East.

All those reasons are why Obama should back the pipeline.

Doing the opposite — rejecting it — simply puts political symbolism misleadingly ahead of a sound policy. How so? Environmentalists will cheer Obama for a "victory" in the battle to curb climate change even though his administration's own environmental assessment shows that's not the case.

As this board has noted previously, finding reasonable replacements to fossil fuels is a worthy and important search. But it's also a long and difficult one, which makes pragmatism today an essential component of this nation's energy policies.

St. Cloud Times, Feb. 5

How to contact your lawmakers

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