

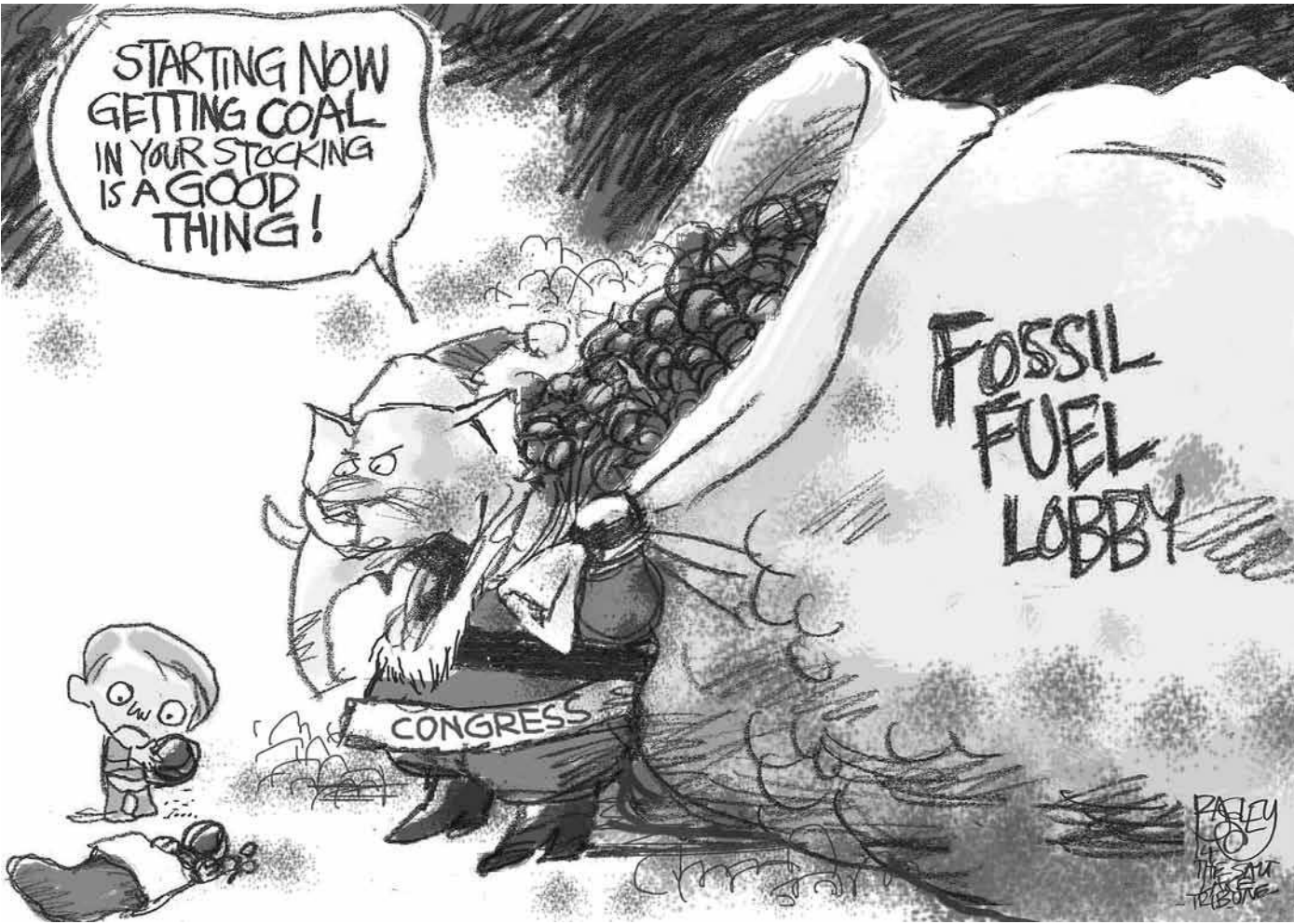
OPINION

OUR VIEW

Repairing the damage

Many Americans probably assumed the CIA had employed techniques most would call torture in an effort to gain information following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on the CIA’s detention and interrogation program proved the routine use of torture as policy. We’ve heard both sides of the argument. Some people say torture was justified to get information from the people who were involved in the 9/11 attacks about future plans to harm our citizens and allies. Without use of these techniques, they say valuable information that could have protected other Americans could never be obtained. We lean with others, who say the use of cruelty to gather information should never be endorsed by the United States and is never justified. This side of the argument contends use of torture by our nation makes us just as bad as the terrorists on which it was approved for use. Will this report hurt the ability of the U.S. to seek out and act against terrorists? It’s doubtful. Will the report be used to spur lasting reform of this nation’s policies? We hope so. When a staunch Republican like veteran and former

prisoner of war U.S. Sen. John McCain decries the use of torture, we ought to listen. McCain knows too well the impact of torture, experiencing it after his own capture by the North Vietnamese in 1967. He testified on the Senate floor the practices failed their purpose, which was to secure actionable intelligence to prevent further attacks on the U.S. and its allies. Instead, he said the practices damaged our nation’s security interests and its “reputation as a force for good in the world.” The United States should have that reputation and we should work hard to repair the damage done to that reputation. We should be proud, despite the ugliness in the report, the torture detailed within was reported. Many nations which are doing the same kind of torture, and even worse, never admit it to its own citizens, let alone the rest of the world. The report must serve for some good. By acknowledging the cruelty of which we are capable, we have set ourselves apart from those who aim to do us harm. We must go a step further by allowing the report to help guide us away from the justification by the actions of our enemies to again employ these methods.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

New-driver regs should be increased

To the editor,
It seems there is going to be some unhappy people next year when new drivers are to drive an extra 10 hours in order to get their license. Some are concerned that as parents they are going to have to attend a 90-minute class. Already complaints that they are too busy to attend this class. It doesn’t fit in their schedule. From this point on ev-

eryone should take some time and watch how some of the teens are driving now. It obviously isn’t enough that the experts have told us of proven statistics how many crashes, injuries and deaths have occurred in relation to young drivers. Don’t we want our kids to be better informed? Better trained?
Driving is a privilege not a right, this is often forgotten. I wonder if some,

This time of year it’s time to slow down and carefully approach intersections. Maybe we should just make it 50 hours for the kids and mandatory 90-minute class for the parents. If they don’t attend, the driver does not get licensed. Ninety minutes is not an inconvenience when it comes to our kids.
Rich Burgess
International Falls, MN

How to contact your lawmakers

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GUEST COLUMN

The downside of living by yourself



Tom PURCELL

The number of Americans who choose to live alone continues to grow. So finds a recent Current Population Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. According to The Washington Post, the survey found that “the proportion of Americans who live alone has grown steadily since the 1920s, increasing from roughly 5 percent then to 27 percent in 2013.” The Post reports the number of men living alone doubled to 12 percent from 1970 to 2012. Some 15 percent of households are comprised of women living alone. In large urban areas, such as Manhattan and Washington, “about half of households have single occupants, and in some neighborhoods the proportion is two-thirds...” And why are more people living alone? Because they want to. The more their economic means have allowed it, the more people have chosen to get their own digs. As someone who lives alone, I’m just not so sure this is a good thing. I compare the way many single people live today with the home in which I grew up. I lived with five

someone else going in to get a shower. The only way I ever got in was by threatening to use my sisters’ toothbrushes. Our house was a chaotic place. Friends, family and neighbors were always coming and going. The doors were never locked. If you set anything you owned on a table, somebody would relocate it and you’d never see it again. And when something broke, which was about a dozen times every day, my sisters blamed me and everyone was happy. Well, unlike the way I grew up, I live alone now and have total command over my little world. This is not good. Because there is no one to tell me to clean, I follow the P.J. O’Rourke school of thought: I clean my place about once every girlfriend. You see, because I live alone, most daily activities are all about me and only me. And because so many people are living as I do, I wonder whether more of our population is becoming more isolated and insular. More of us are coming home to orderly little worlds that have not been

disturbed by the presence of other people. We don’t hear the sound of a baby crying or a stereo playing. We don’t know the scent of cookies being baked as a gift to us. We don’t know the chaos or uncertainty that always occurs when you live with creatures as unpredictable as human beings — people who help us escape the narrowness of ourselves. No, instead we know an orderly little existence. We have total control over every piece of furniture, every ounce of shampoo in the bathroom and every scrap of food in the refrigerator — though I admit I don’t toss things out of my refrigerator often enough. Much like comedian Blake Clark, I had one milk carton in my refrigerator so long, it had a picture of the Lindbergh baby printed on the back of it. **Purcell, author of “Misadventures of a 1970’s Childhood” and “Comical Sense: A Lone Humorist Takes on a World Gone Nutty!” is a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review humor columnist and is nationally syndicated exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc.**

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Full-time preschool should be required
Minnesota took too long — the better of a decade or more — to go from acknowledging the benefits of all-day kindergarten to helping school districts provide it. A new University of Minnesota study about the benefits of preschool should motivate the state — from parents to policymakers — not to make the same mistake twice. The study, done by a research collaborative at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public

Affairs, found the more time low-income children spend in preschool the better prepared they are for kindergarten. It echoes similar U.S. studies done in 2006 and 2013. Collectively, the message is clear: If the state is serious about improving overall academic performance, especially in closing its well-documented achievement gaps, Minnesota should begin plans now to create and fund all-day public preschool programs statewide. Yes, it will be complex. And no doubt, it will require

more public funding. But can Minnesota afford not to do it? The biggest areas of difference were attendance, language and behavior development. Overall, the study’s authors estimated the full-time students entered kindergarten with a 4- to 5-month head start on the part-timers, to say nothing of kids coming with no preschool experience. The good news is Minnesota already is focused on helping low-income kids gain access to preschool. The Legislature last year

increased funding for such scholarships, and Gov. Mark Dayton indicated that could happen again this session. While increasing targeted aid certainly is welcome in the short term, why don’t policymakers see the bigger picture and start now to develop mandatory, full-time preschool programs statewide? Still, the lesson from all-day kindergarten should be clear. More preschool means more Minnesota kids will be better prepared for kindergarten and beyond. **St. Cloud Times, Dec. 8**