

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Election coverage

Covering elections — similar to crafting legislation — is like making sausage. It may not be an exact science, but consistency is important. And we will try to apply that same rule when it comes to news coverage of candidates seeking office in the Nov. 4 general election.

Our goal is to provide valuable information about candidates seeking the jobs that will impact all our lives into the future.

Toward that end, we extend appreciation to all the candidates who responded to questionnaires sent to them. The questionnaires are a part of The Journal's effort to provide information to voters prior to the mail ballots that will be soon sent via mail to many rural Koochiching County voters.

The Journal sent the first week in September the questionnaires to candidates in races for local positions. We asked them to provide a photograph, if we did not already have one of them, a short biography and the answers to our questions. We limited their responses in their entirety to 500 words or less. And to be sure the candidates received our questionnaires, we made follow-up calls and emails to them.

Unchallenged candidates were not asked questions about their views. Instead, we asked them to provide a biography and a photo of themselves in an effort to save space for the candidates who will face races in the general election.

We plan to publish the candidate responses in the Oct. 4 edition of The Journal. The responses will be published verbatim — as they were provided to The Journal. The only changes Journal staff will make to these responses is to correct spelling errors. In addition, we will only publish responses from candidates who met our Sept. 14 deadline. Unfortunately, several candidates chose not to respond and we will simply list their name as a candidate.

Each election year, The Journal publishes these responses to provide our readers an opportunity to

see how these candidates view themselves and the issues involved in the office they are seeking.

As in the past, we will not cover fundraisers for candidates. However, should candidates in races for state and federal positions come to Borderland and seek interview opportunities with us, we will try to make that connection.

We will also provide information to our readers about candidate forums, such as the one scheduled for Oct. 28 in the community. However, we won't report on these forums because it is difficult to provide equal and fair coverage of the answers given by each candidate.

As in the past, we have allowed candidates to provide one press release announcing their candidacy. That period has now ended in this election cycle, as most voters already know who is seeking an office that may represent them.

The beginning of 2014 brought a new policy to The Journal. A charge of \$30 has been required to publish letters to the editor from candidates or about candidates.

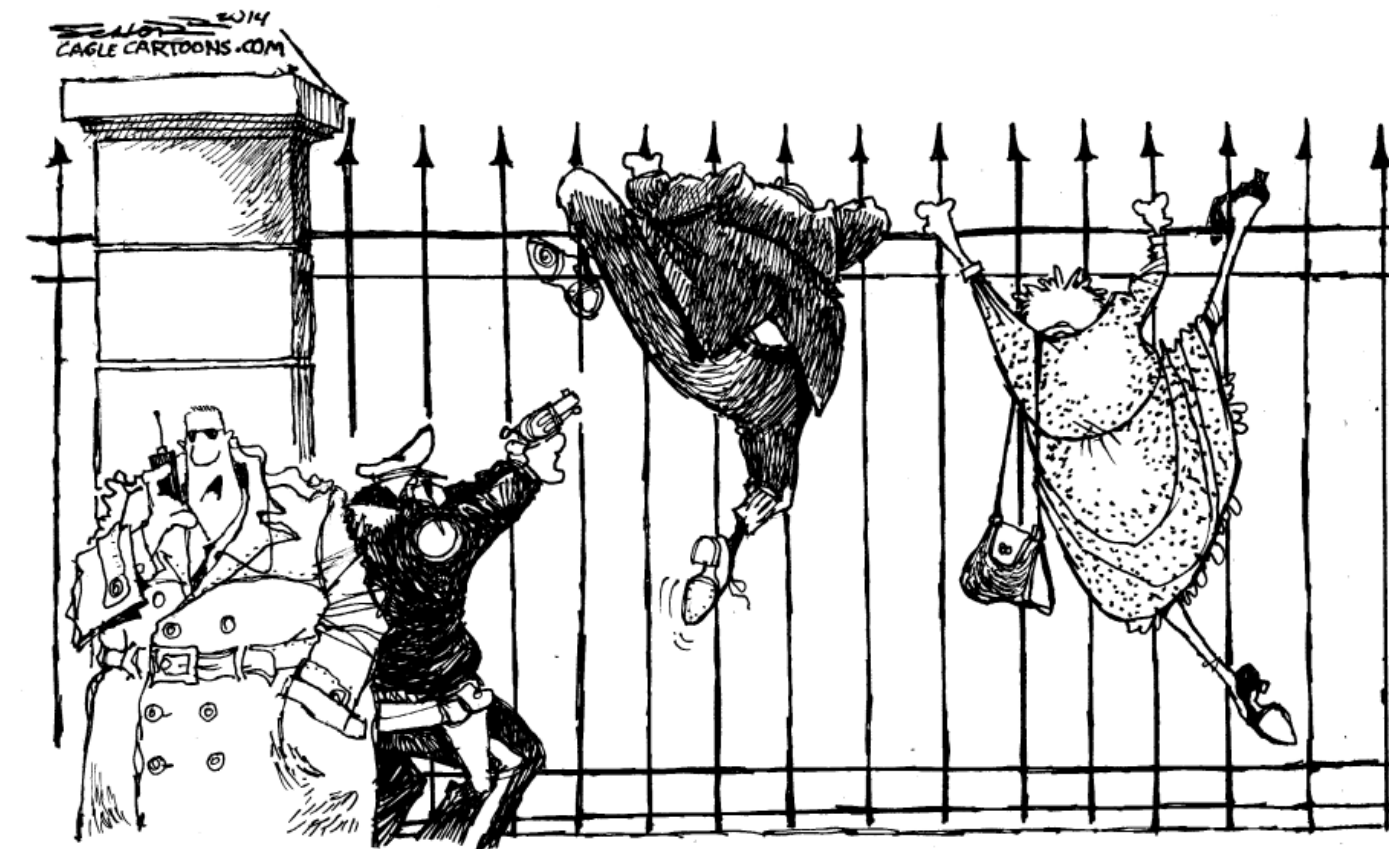
These paid election letters must be 500 words or less and the fee must be paid prior to letter being published. The name and city of the author will be published with the letter. If the letter is paid for on behalf of a candidate, we need that information, including the address, which will be included in an editor's note.

These letters are labeled "PAID ELECTION LETTER" to set them apart from other letters submitted on other topics by readers.

Letters may be emailed to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

These paid election letters will not be published the week prior to the Nov. 4 general election, so the editions of Oct. 25, Oct. 29 and Nov. 1 will not carry paid election letters.

Each election offers voters a chance to select a candidate who best represents their views. The information we plan to provide is intended to help voters do their homework in selecting the candidate they believe does just that.



"RIGHT, CHIEF... WE CAUGHT TWO MORE SCALING THE WHITE HOUSE FENCE... UNFORTUNATELY, THEY'RE ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS TRYING TO GET OUT..."

GUEST COLUMN

Good news for the future of wood products

BY DON C. CAREY
 Certified Tree Farmer

To those of you who may not be subscribers to the "Minnesota Conservation Volunteer," a magazine put out every two months by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, I would like to quote some of the highlights from their article entitled "Branching Out" in the October-November edition. Since the major economic output in Koochiching County is the harvesting of wood, and the manufacturing and processing of products made from wood, this should be an encouraging look at the future.

No one needs to remind most of us that Koochiching County is a dynamic land mass for the abundant growth of many different species of trees, and woody shrubs, such as willow and tag alder, all of which could now be used, thanks to research, for the mass production of many wood based products other than lumber, paper, insulite, fence posts, high line poles, etc. Due to the Internet, and our many electronic devices available for the immediate transfer of, and collection of information, the decline for print paper is worldwide. The result has been the closure of may paper mills both here in Minnesota and also in Canada. "The harvest of Minnesota trees (as of 2005), was down to 2.5 million cords — less than half the amount of timber that can be sustainably harvested each year, according to a 1994 statewide assessment that balanced the natural, recreational, and economic benefits of harvest." These closures and cutbacks have resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs, and an economic downturn not just for the communities directly affected, such as International Falls and Fort Frances, Ontario, but also for the loggers and the timber harvesters across the state of Minnesota. "Direct (wood) industry jobs dropped by 35 percent (in Minnesota) between the years 2000 and 2012." That's the sad economic picture, but now there is good news on the wood products horizon.

Now enters the researchers and financiers of wood products research, developing, and production: The Minnesota DNR, Forestry Division; The University of Minnesota Laboratories, St. Paul; The University of Minnesota Duluth's Natural Resources Research Institute, Minneapolis; Life Science Alley, Minnesota; BioBusiness Alliance, Minnesota; Superior Thermowood of Minnesota; Minnesota Forest Industries; Segitis Industries of Minnesota; The Minnesota Loggers Education Program; The Dovetail Partners, Twin Cities, Minnesota; and "The more than two dozen Minnesota companies (that) are producing or developing bio-based products, non food products made from plants, animals, or other living things."

Following are a few examples of the research, the development, and the production, relevant to the researchers and financiers mentioned above:

■ The International Pulp and Paper Company Sappi Ltd (of Cloquet, MN) retooled their paper mill in response to changing markets. Instead of paper-grade pulp, it's now rolling out thick, white sheets of a similar but more refined product called dissolving wood pulp. Packaged into hay-bale-size bundles, the product — some 1,000 tons per day — is shipped to Asia, where it's used to make textiles for clothing, creating a fabric similar to cotton, that can also be used to make other common products, such as disposable. Towels, tape, and cosmetics."

■ Superior Thermowood of Minnesota, "is one of the nation's first producers of thermally modified wood. They fill a garage sized, pressurized kiln, with wood (most any tree species can be used, including aspen and ash) and bake at 3350 degrees for 60 hours. As it bakes, the wood darkens into a rich brown tone. It also becomes more durable, decay resistant, and less prone to expand and contract. Fresh from the oven, the wood goes to manufacturers, who use it for guitar parts, flooring, and (many) other (developing) applications." Scientist Mathew Aro and other research staff at The UMD Research Institute, helped John Bieganeck (CEO of Superior Thermowood) get his business up and running. Mathew Aro, and other research personnel at UMD, are working to customize technology for various tree

species and applications, from aspen for siding to super durable oriented strand board for general construction. The goal is to increase (the) use of thermally modified wood."

■ Wayne Brandt, executive vice president for the trade group, Minnesota Forest Industries, sees "significant potential in biobased products for providing a big boost for wood use in Minnesota ... (upwards) of 2,300 jobs could be added in northern Minnesota through the developing of wood-based bio-refiners, which convert biological materials to products such as fuels and plastics." (and, dietary supplements, skin cream, etc.) "That potential moved closer to reality last April, when Golden Valley (MN) based Segitis, announced its choice of Hoyt Lakes (MN) as a site for a new facility to manufacture a sugar based substitute for phthalate plasticizers, which are widely used in consumer products."

■ At Two Harbors (MN), a more recent start-up, The Actives Factory, is extracting marketable chemicals from waste bark stripped from birch trees harvested to make paper. After purifying the chemicals, the Factory sells them to companies for cosmetic and pharmaceutical applications." CEO Brian Garhofer sees opportunity for explosive growth in demand once word gets around." Garhofer goes on to say, "We're getting requests from all over the world for these products."

■ "Sino Sarkinen (a scientist at the University of Minnesota Laboratories) is on a quest to convert lignin (from trees and woody shrubs) into biodegradable polystyrene-like plastic (which could conceivably, greatly reduce our reliance on plastic manufactured from petroleum.) He's also working to refine fuels from wood more efficiently, to make them more profitable." Such products will also create new uses for tree harvesting leave-behinds, such as tree branches, sawdust, toppings, stumps, disfigured trees, tree parts from sizing, tree bark, and unusable trees from paper manufacturing that were cut and left on the forest floor; etc.

■ "In addition to lignin and cellulose, trees (including woody shrubs, such as

tag alder and willow) manufacture a variety of specialized molecules. Since 1996, a small operation in Cohasset (MN) has built its business on tapping tree's abilities to make natural chemicals beneficial to people. The biopharmaceutical company, Lonza Inc., uses heat, pressure, and water to extract a complex sugar molecule from Tamarack (trees). The firm then concentrates and sells then sticky liquid, and a derivative powder, for formulating human dietary supplements and personal care skin cream."

■ Using wood products for fuel is fast becoming a major industry here in Minnesota, including the manufacturing of wood burning stoves and furnaces, and wood pellets for fuel to use in heating and energy generation. Many companies and municipalities are now involved, by using wood pellets as a primary source for heating and energy production. The University of Minnesota, Duluth is probably the lead researcher in wood pelletizing. They are experimenting with pellets made from sawdust, and pellets made from other woody substances, or a combination of substances. "The (university) researchers are also experimenting with torrefaction, which is a process that heats the pellets and turns them into a coal-like substance, making them more usable as a fuel."

Even considering our current uses of wood, and our current manufacturing of products from wood, here in Koochiching County, the county's wood availability could easily support some of the above mentioned wood based industries. Anyone who tells you otherwise, I would suspect, just hasn't done their research, has an ax to grind, or is totally against using trees for anything, other than something to look at. For more detailed information on the above, please pick up a copy of the September-October edition of the "Minnesota Conservation Volunteer" magazine and read the article "Branching Out" several times, so you can more easily absorb, remember, and put to use, the vast amount of information that could have a positive affect on Koochiching County's employment opportunities, and the economic health of the county's cities, towns, and rural communities.

Candidate letter policy

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Letters may be emailed to laurel@ifallsjournal.com. The Journal will publish a deadline for publication of paid election letters prior to the Aug. 12 primary and Nov. 4 general elections.

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.

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.