

# OPINION

OUR VIEW

## Welcome, thanks for coming

Help is here with Minnesota National Guard soldiers and personnel from state and regional resources. We've shouldered the burden of protecting property mostly on our own from east to west in Koochiching County, with volunteers of all ages and walks of life answering the call. We've done well, thanks to the Red Cross and a few others that have come to our aid early on. Now it's time to welcome the outside help and be grateful they are here. Many of these folks have gone through this before and can assist us in ways we may not even yet know. It's not just governments sending people to help, it's businesses and agencies that have a presence here sending staff to assist. With the help of the governor's declaration of emergency in 35 counties, including Koochiching and St. Louis counties, we may receive some financial assistance to help pay the costs associated with protecting public and private property. We can't say enough how impressed we are with the response from this community. Like we said before, businesses have again stepped up to offer their services as well as their employees; all levels of governments

are working closely together to meet each day's new challenges; and regular folks have given of their time and energy to do what is needed and asked of them. Clearly, we are in it for the long haul, with predictions Rainy Lake will continue to rise for another week and then take weeks to recede. There will be more work to do, more sloppy sandbags, and more wet and weary residents. Again, while we empathize with people experiencing damage to their homes, and other property, we must celebrate that no life has been lost and no one has been injured. Take a breath, Borderland. Count your blessings, get some food and rest. Give what you can when you can toward this larger, community effort that runs the entire length of Koochiching County. When you see someone you don't recognize in our community, whether they're in a sandbag assembly line or grabbing a sandwich at a local eating establishment, say hello. If they're here to help us, let them know we're grateful. To all that are coming here to help: Welcome, thanks, and come back when Mother Nature is bit more gracious.



GUEST COLUMN

## God doesn't make it rain

At their convention, Texas Republicans compared immigrants to terrorists, claimed therapy can cure homosexuality, and insisted that the only thing a rape survivor has the right to choose is to stay home and raise her child. A zombie hunting for brains would have starved in Fort Worth, but the dumbest thing to come out of their convention wasn't in the program, but from the mouth of the state's next Agriculture Commissioner, Sid Miller. Miller arrived at the convention having already become a national joke for sponsoring the sonogram bill that Doonesbury lampooned as "10-inch shaming wands." For the unfamiliar, the law requires doctors to perform a transvaginal ultrasound to give a woman seeking an abortion the shocking news of her pregnancy. Miller's role in passing this useless bit of state-sanctioned harassment is probably why Republican primary voters chose him to regulate our agriculture industry. Farmers are suffering from a long drought in Texas, but Miller told delegates in Fort Worth that their biggest threat was the Obama administration. Besides, he had a plan to end the drought. "God will bless us with rain someday," said Miller. Rev. Pat Robertson embarrassed himself when he blamed the earthquake in Haiti on Napoleon making a pact with the devil and ascribed the 2012 tornadoes in the Midwest on a dearth of prayer. He became such a joke that we all believed the urban legend that Robertson blamed Hurricane Katrina on lesbians. But what was once fodder for late-night comedians is now good politics in Texas, if not state policy. Miller's contention that God controls the weather is aberrant but hardly an aberration. According to the Texas Republican platform, climate change isn't a documented scientific phenomenon but a "political agenda that attempts to control every aspect of our lives." And Miller's hardly the only one. "I'll leave it in the hands of God. He's handled our climate pretty well for a long time," said Lt. Gov. nominee Dan Patrick during his primary. If you believe in miracles-the religious ones, not the Miracle on Ice or on 34th Street-then believing that God can make it rain does not sound crazy. But that is a far cry from assuming

that every drop of rain is planned by a deity and not what happens when warm, moist air cools and creates condensation. You know, science. Texas, which has an Office of State Climatologist, should be run by grownups comfortable with modern notions like meteorology. Much of our economy, from oil and gas to farming and ranching to clean energy and hi-tech, relies on a shared assumption that science is not witchcraft. Instead, we have Miller, Patrick, and Rick Perry, who in 2011 issued an official state proclamation that Texans should pray for rain. The nitpicky among us might cite our Governor for getting his religious chocolate in our state peanut butter, but the real danger in making it state policy to pray for rain is that it makes people wonder whether the C's he got at Texas A&M for animal husbandry and PE were the result of grade inflation. This argument should have been settled when Thales of Miletus became the Father of Science by rejecting mythological explanations for the physical world. In his day-half a millennium before Jesus was born-people thought capricious gods caused earthquakes, which is sadly not too far afield from believing that God conferred favor on his people by making it rain. What's next? Thunder means God is angry we're not limiting increases in state spending to population growth plus inflation? When a hurricane makes landfall in Texas, are we to blame Houston for passing equal rights for gays? These Republicans are making us look stupid, but we have bigger problems. The drought has already nearly tripled inflation at the grocery and is endangering the hydraulic fracking boom that is pouring tax money into state coffers. We can't make it rain, but we can address climate change. In fact, Texas could profit from it if we had leaders who could admit that it was real. But that would require us to start acting smarter than we are, and that means electing leaders who could pass a 6th grade science test. Stanford is a Democratic consultant who writes columns for the Austin American-Statesman and The Quorum Report. Stanford's columns are distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. He can be reached at stanford@oppresearch.com and on Twitter @JasStanford.

### 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

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Jaksa defends decision on grant

**To the editor,**  
This letter answers the allegations surrounding the city's grant application to update and modernize audio video equipment. The city's cash outlay for this upgrade is \$22,000. The grant provides another \$26,000. This means that the city can achieve a \$48,000 upgrade for \$22,000 cash. To understand the need for such upgrades, one needs to look no further than Bemidji; which recently spent more to upgrade its audio visual capabilities. The reason that Bemidji and other cities are modernizing is to take advantage of the cost savings and efficiency of modern technology. Modernizing will improve the recording

and transmission of city council meetings and will also allow for interactive audio visual participation in those meetings; allowing for example, the real time appearances of our state representatives at city council meetings without that person having to travel. It would also allow our city officials to make real time appearances elsewhere without requiring travel costs. Information such as charts, maps and graphs can also be presented without the costs of producing multiple paper copies. Modernized facilities improve efficiency and thus ultimately save money. Besides improving city council transparency, participation and efficiency, modernization will also benefit social

services, community action and educational organizations. Six local agencies indicated interest in using city chambers for televising. Take for example, Koochiching Aging Options. This organization conducts seminars for Caregiver and other elder issues. These seminars could be broadcast into homes, reaching more persons at less cost. The same is true for community health issues. Or in emergency situations, such as the current flooding, citizens can be provided with real time updates and advice. As far as the work on the grant: I have taken on that work, including preparing and submitting the grant application and researching what other cities are doing regarding modernization and the

costs of upgrades. I take costs very seriously. For example, I proposed a single monitor and not two as a recent letter to the editor alleges. Further the "monitor" is really a combination computer, video recorder, internet device, storage device, projector – almost like a large ipad. Because the grant is now available, this is the time to modernize and upgrade. In order to compete with cities like Bemidji for jobs and funding, we will eventually have to upgrade. Ultimately this upgrade will increase efficiency, services, improve communications and save money. Cynthia Jaksa West Ward Councilor International Falls, MN