

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Actions stronger than words

Bullying and the repercussions of bullying are believed to have led to students dropping out of school, mental health issues, suicides, shootings, and other violence. Establishing a form that can be used to report and track bullying in International Falls schools is a great step toward getting a handle on an alarming problem.

Kudos to school officials for embracing the idea brought to them by teacher Beth Shermoen. The form was assembled by a local anti-bullying committee and school administrators. It will be available to all district students, parents and guardians to report a potential bullying situation.

We've heard for years that bullying is an issue in local schools and we hope this new way of handling reports will result in the alleviation of specific incidents.

And we're also very enthused that the district is implementing a program that is focused on changing behaviors associated with bullying. Known as PBIS, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports is showing positive changes in the schools.

Shermoen reported recently to school board members that the local advocacy agency Friends Against Abuse will begin support programs for individuals and groups in the Falls Elementary and Falls High schools, funded by grants from the local Marshall N. Knudson Family Fund. The support programs began last spring for students selected by the district social worker and school administrators and now will be expanded.

Minnesota has a weak bullying law and efforts are expected to change that when the 2014 Legislature is in session. The current law does not provide enough direction on district policies against bullying and does not require training for educators or activities for students on bullying prevention or intervention. In addition, Shermoen said the current law does not provide direction to districts on what should be done to help students who bully to change their behavior.

Clearly, Falls school officials are not simply talking the talk, but walking the walk when it comes to making measurable changes in how the district addresses potential bullying situations.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Which of our politicians voted For Obamacare?

To the editor,
We are witnessing an epic failure of American government. Obama's unequivocal promise from July of 2009, "If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you will be able to keep your health care plan. No one can take it away. No matter what." Obama, like the rest of the Democrats, in Congress never read Obamacare. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken signed a blank check that is harming Americans. Obama said whatever he needed to say to get Obamacare passed through a skeptical Congress. The president's salesmanship has proven to be, as many thought all along; a series of calculated lies.

Truth prevails in middle class America because we are the ones living the disastrous effects of Obamacare. Over 500,000 individuals have seen their health insurance policies canceled in just three states alone. Florida Blue has terminated 300,000 policies. Kaiser Permanente in California has sent cancellation notices to 160,000 people. Obamacare has

over-regulated the insurance companies with harsh mandates. These companies cannot charge high enough premiums to cover their cost of effective healthcare. This is all by design because the ultimate goal increasingly appears to be the destruction of the health care business and replace it with a single-payer health care system. Our Representative, Rick Nolan, fully endorses a government-run health care system.

A troubling headline reads: "U. S. employees slashing workers hours to avoid Obamacare insurance mandates." The article started with employees of the Mall of America in Minneapolis seeing their hours slashed to less than 30 hours a week to avoid the Obamacare mandates. Next it reports a survey done by the International Foundation of Employees Benefit Plans that found that 15 percent of large employers (50 or more employees) and 20 percent of smaller employers had plans to adjust hours so that fewer employees qualified for full-time medical insurance under

Obamacare. When consumers finally get onto websites Healthcare.gov or mnsure.org, what they will find is sticker shock. Not only are Obamacare premiums higher (especially if you do not qualify for subsidies) but deductibles have skyrocketed. When Obama first took office our nation was struggling economically and we have never recovered from our economic woes under his presidency. A major reason is the high priority he placed on government-run health care system. We are well on our way to a socialized style of government that controls health care and all other aspects of the lives of Americans. Some Republicans have stood up to this in the face of ridicule and character assassination. Government is not the answer. Government is the problem. In 2014 we have an opportunity to vote out those who gave us Obamacare and vote in those who will restore our great nation. I ask everyone running for office next year to pledge to rid us of Obamacare.
Julie Hindman
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How to contact your lawmakers

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Time to level playing field for timber

Millions of Americans nationwide directly or indirectly depend on the forest products industry to support their livelihoods. In rural areas in particular, timber serves as the backbone of the community, providing jobs and revenues for families, business, and much needed services. These areas are best served by policies that promote the use of sustainable timber, not restrict it.

One way businesses ensure sustainability is to certify their land or products to the standards of programs such as the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). These certification systems all promote sound land management and keep forests economically and ecologically viable for the near and long-term future. They do this by mandating that property owners implement sound practices that promote conservation.

It is not just foresters and tree farmers that express interest in certification. Many large retailers also want to source from supply chains that ensure sustainability. 3M, which employs 15,000 workers in Minnesota, sells products that are SFI chain of custody certified. As a result, the company ensures that consumers purchase products that contain materials responsibly procured from our land.

It is unfortunate that some



Tom SAXHAUG
SENATOR

policies favored by many cities across the U.S. fail to acknowledge ATFS and SFI timber as sustainable. Specifically, a majority of American wood that has been recognized by certification programs often finds it difficult to enter "LEED" projects, which number in the thousands nationwide. While LEED provides sustainable sourcing credits to wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), it fails to do so for lumber recognized by ATFS and SFI. Combined, ATFS and SFI forestland outnumbers FSC property by tens of millions of acres in the U.S., but businesses that utilize ATFS and SFI timber instead of FSC find themselves blocked from participating in LEED projects and unable to get building contracts.

This has the effect of limiting commerce in building markets and depriving businesses of new customers. With fewer markets to sell in, businesses see their revenues and employment levels

stagnate or fall. Furthermore, misguided pressure against private retailers from non-governmental organizations can negatively impact forest products markets. One group recently protested 3M in Minneapolis because they do not certify their products to their preferred standard. Businesses caught in the middle of these debates may decide not to take sides and withdraw from selling certified products altogether, which harms producers and consumers. Businesses cannot get their products to consumers if retailers will not stock them on store shelves. Here in Minnesota, the timber industry has declined by one-third in the last few years, straining families and businesses across the state. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources already recognizes FSC and SFI as equally contributing to sustainability, as do many private sector enterprises; however, our businesses must have fair access to markets in all 49 other states. We can promote this fairer marketplace by encouraging competition among forest certification programs, not exclusion. Such a step will allow more domestic wood into American construction and building projects increase the consumption of U.S. forest products overall and therefore lead to more jobs in Minnesota and throughout the country.