

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Don't miss this chance

Tuesday offers an opportunity no eligible voter should miss. The general election offers people a chance to exercise their right to decide who will set the path for the future. Americans have fought and died for this precious right and not exercising it is a dishonor to those who have sacrificed for this freedom. At all levels of government, elected officials spend your money. It only makes sense to have a say in who is making the decisions on how that money is spent. The people on the ballot are the people who want to make decisions that will impact all of us in varying ways into the future. Casting a vote for the people who share and will best represent your views, values and ideas is a way to help guide the future. Clearly, plenty of information is available to help voters decide who has earned their vote. A recent International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce forum presented local candidates in races for elected offices. The Journal's Oct. 4 edition offered the responses to questions we posed to candidates in those local

races. Recent editions of The Journal have included sample ballots to allow voters to be familiar with what they'll see when they step into the voters booth. The Minnesota Secretary of State's website also provides sample ballots, as well as information on where and how to vote. Most candidates now have websites that offer their views and positions on issues. Find out where they stand before you cast your vote. When you don't vote, you lose the right to complain about the outcome of the election. Even more importantly, when you don't vote you have put your future and the future of generations to come in the hands of others. Voting is a chance to help create the kind of society in which you want to live in. Plus, it just feels good to be part of a democracy that comes together to make such important decisions. Kudos to all candidates who have offered us voters choices. Seeking elected office is an honorable offer to serve. Make sure you have exercised your right and take this opportunity to vote for the candidate of your choice.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

State chapter promotes voluntary switch

To the editor,

The Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society, first organized in 1944, is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote wildlife stewardship through science and education. The demonstration we hosted on Oct. 19 in Littlefork was meant to inform deer hunters about the non-toxic alternatives available to lead ammunition. Our organization is committed to promoting a voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition as a means to reduce negative impacts to wildlife in Minnesota. Our position statement on the issue can be found at: joomla.wildlife.org/documents/positionstatements/Lead_final_2009.pdf

We want to take this opportunity to clarify a few facts in the debate:

1. Lead is toxic to most organisms, but the digestive systems of birds are especially sensitive to ingestion of lead. Lead fragments in carcasses

from hunter-killed deer poison bald eagles every year in Minnesota. Simply put, lead fragments in big game carcasses kill scavenging eagles. Bald eagles were chosen as our national emblem in 1782 as a symbol of longevity and strength, and they are featured prominently in everything American from our currency to campaign ads (at least this time of year). Bald eagle populations are increasing in Minnesota but the deaths of individual eagles from lead poisoning are easily avoidable. Hunters can choose to minimize the risk to eagles and enhance their image as conservation-minded people by shooting non-toxic ammunition.

2. Lead is a potent toxin in humans. There is no safe advisable level of consumption. The negative effects of consuming lead have been known since at least the times of the Romans, and continue to modern times when lead was banned from paint, gasoline, and

children's toys because of known human health impacts, especially in children. Hunters should have the best information available on non-toxic ammunition in order to make an informed choice for themselves and their families.

3. California has adopted a regulatory ban on lead ammunition by 2019 because of the documented impacts to critically endangered California condors. However, Arizona, Utah, and other states within the condor range have adopted a voluntary approach (similar to what we are advocating in Minnesota) to reduce the use of lead ammunition by hunters. The results to date have been positive, with the number of condors in those states treated for lead poisoning in 2013 down 50 percent from the long-term average.

4. Non-toxic alternatives to lead ammunition are indeed more expensive than the cheapest

lead options available. However, the price of non-toxic ammunition is comparable to premium lead bullets chosen by many hunters. For example, on a quick search of Cabelas' website I found Federal Premium 30.06 165 gr. lead bullets for \$32/box versus \$38/box for copper bullets, a difference of \$0.30 per cartridge. The organization Hunting Works for Minnesota estimates that the average deer hunter will spend \$780 this year in pursuit of whitetails. In the bigger picture of what hunters spend on their sport annually, a few extra dollars to choose non-toxic ammunition that is safer for wildlife should not be a deciding factor for most hunters.

Steve Windels, PhD,
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International Falls, MN

Community generosity, support amazing

To the editor,

A few weeks ago, the International Falls community came together in a way I could never had imagined. The Mr. Pete Foundation Legacy Awards and Silent Auction was a true testament to the beauty of a tight-knit community.

The outpouring of support we received from day one is unbelievable. I want to recognize our premier sponsor Boise Paper along with subsequent sponsors

the Minnesota Power Foundation, Super One, and Gopher; along with donors Wherley Motors and Trustar. When we started on this venture just a short few months ago, we had no idea of what to expect. We were completely stunned at the generosity of this very special community and especially of the school district.

To each and every person who donated an item or came to the event, you are appreciated. Every

donation we received and smiling face we saw has meant so much. Lenards, Ready.Set.Dance, and Gearhart's Floral donated services that would have taken thousands away from the grants that we are preparing to give to teachers in the area. And Mr. Pete's former hockey players came through in a way that showed amazing heart and tenacity.

I also want to mention the Peterson family. They have put their heart and soul into this cause

and the ups and downs they have experienced on this journey is like no other. I appreciate their willingness to share their lives with all of us just as they have shared such a special man with the community. Mike Peterson is a true hero in my book and I am thankful that the community of International Falls is helping us to carry on his legacy.

Kim Sundin Oppelt
Duluth, MN

Water act would protect all rivers and streams

To the editor,

On the 42nd anniversary of the Clean Water Act, Environment Minnesota released "Waterways Restored," a report highlighting the exceptional progress made in Powderhorn Lake's water quality.

According to the report, the lake used to be a destination recreation lake, then could not keep

fish alive by the 1990s. Rules and funding from the Clean Water Act made it possible to clean up the lake, and CityPages named it best lake in Minneapolis in 2013.

All of our waters deserve a success story, but right now, a loophole in the Clean Water Act has left 51 percent of streams feeding into our lakes vulnerable to

pollution.

Thankfully, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed closing this loophole to protect all of the state's rivers and streams. The agency is taking public comments on its rule until Nov. 14, but polluters like agribusinesses and big developers are waging a bitter campaign against it.

The Clean Water Act has meant progress for Powderhorn Lake, but its promise isn't yet fulfilled. That's why it's so important for EPA to stand up to the polluters and extend protection to all of the rivers and streams in Minnesota.

Rachel Schindler
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How to contact your lawmakers

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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.