

OPINION

OUR VIEW

To cancel or not to cancel

Whether to cancel school on a cold day may seem like an easy decision. When it's very cold, school should be canceled, right?

It's often not that simple. School administrators must consider a number of factors before canceling a school day.

And despite Borderland's reputation for being bold in the cold, other school districts also wrestle with the issue.

For example, Minneapolis Public Schools and Anoka-Hennepin Schools were closed on Wednesday due to extremely cold temperatures and wind chill. And just across the river, the St. Paul Public School District kept its schools open, with classes as usual on Wednesday. Absences were excused.

Parents playing arm-chair quarterback on this one does no one any good. After all, any parent may keep their child home from school for any weather-related issue without penalty to the student.

For some parents, keeping children at home isn't a concern. Their child may be old enough that an adult isn't needed to stay with them; a parent or other adult relative may be available at a moment's notice; and there's plenty of food and warmth there.

For other parents, however, finding out their child

has no school to go to is a problem. They may have no one available to watch their small child and they cannot skip work; they may count on the public school system to provide a meal for their child because there is not enough food at home; and their home may not be safe for a children to stay home alone during the winter.

School District 361 in International Falls delays the start of classes when the temperature and wind chill combine to equal to 50 below zero or colder. It closes schools using a three-part system that considers road conditions, visibility and actual air temperature.

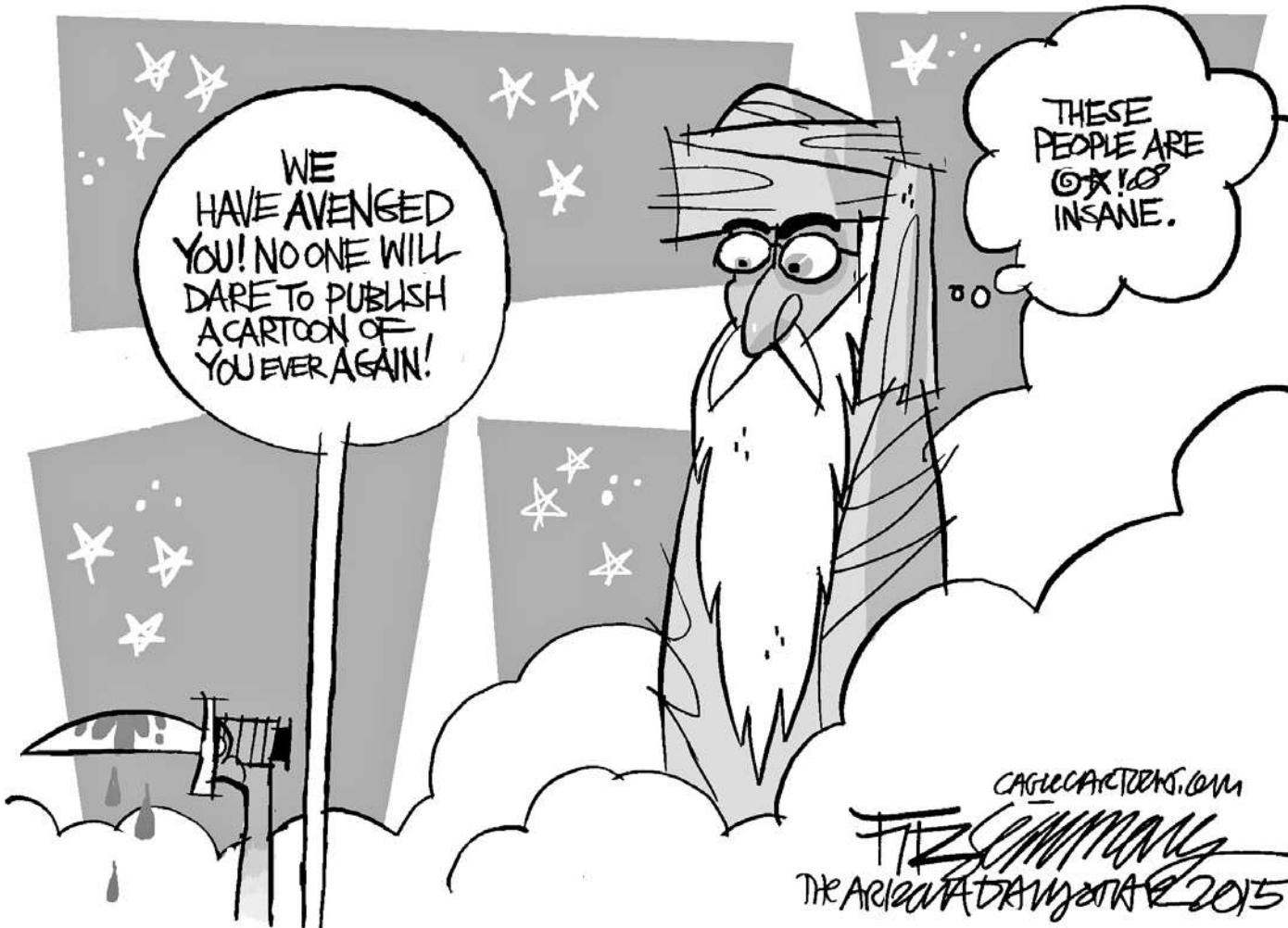
In Borderland, we may take for granted that everyone has the appropriate cold-weather clothing, parents who make sure their children are safely dressed, and enough food, warmth and supervision at home.

That's just not the case.

When school is in session, but parents believe it's just too cold to send their kids to school, we encourage them to to keep them home. It's OK to do that and arrangements for such instances should be made ahead of time.

But when school is in session and even on a very cold day it offers a warmer, safer, healthier place than home to be, we are glad parents have that option.

FIRST AMENDMENT "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Grateful skills are available

To the editor,

On Dec. 19, my husband, John Wenberg walked into the Rainy Lake Medical Center Hospital, International Falls, with a slight pain in his upper right chest and sweating above his lips.

A nurse took him back to a room and he collapsed from a massive heart attack. What ensued next was the most amazing thing I have ever seen: The nurses called code blue and staff came from all over the hospital and began working on him. It was as if someone were choreographing a perfect ballet. The doctors and nurses worked tirelessly to bring him back to life. They were then able to send him by ground ambulance with two of the very competent paramedics we have available in this wonderful community. From here he went on to St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth and their staff took over his care.

Our family is so grateful to the amazing doctors and nurses we have at our local hospital. We feel we are so lucky to have such a great staff and facility in our small town. It does not get any better than this. It was a true Christmas miracle.

Pamela Wenberg
International Falls, MN

France cartoonists and murder

I woke up this morning to the news of the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo Magazine office in Paris. Twelve people were killed and eleven wounded, including two of my French cartoonist friends, Tignous and Wolinski. Cartoonists around the world are grieving.

Americans treat editorial cartoons as a trivial daily joke in the newspaper — in France, editorial cartoons are loved and respected. The Louvre has a branch museum devoted to cartoons; imagine if the Smithsonian had a cartoon museum, that's the way cartoons are revered in France.

"Charlie Hebdo" is a silly name; it is a weekly magazine filled with editorial cartoons, easily found on news stands everywhere in France. "Hebdo" means "weekly" in French, and "Charlie" comes from France's love for the comic strip "Peanuts" and Charlie Brown — therefore "Charlie Hebdo." The top cartoonists in France vie to be on the pages of Charlie Hebdo.

There are cartoon festivals all over France — the best one for political cartoonists is in the small town of St Just le Mar tel; I've been attending for years, along with other cartoonists I syndicate. The townspeople pitch in to throw a festival for the editorial cartoonists every year; villagers put cartoonists up in their homes, and they award a live cow to the "Humor Vache" cartoonist of the year. One greatly respected winner of the cow was Georges Wolinski, a brilliant cartoonist with a masterful loose, swishy, wordy style, highly respected by the French. We were fellow cow winners, having a beer together last October; it is hard to imagine that he is gone.

The Charlie Hebdo cartoonists are a diverse group of charming characters; they are the heart of the French cartooning community. There are not a lot of editorial cartoonists. We get to know each other; the murders are a blow that strikes close to all of us.

The Charlie Hebdo artists were energized and incensed by the Danish Muhammad cartoon fracas a few years ago. French cartoonists have a macho attitude, seeing themselves on the front lines of a free speech debate. One Charlie Hebdo issue, touted as "edited by the Profit Muhammad" had all blank pages. One Charlie Hebdo cover featured a drawing, by French cartoonist "Luz" of the magazine's publisher/cartoonist "Charb" having a sloppy kiss with a Muslim Man, under the headline "L'Amour plus for que la haine" or "love is stronger than hate." Charb was among those killed in the terror attack.

Terrorists have no sense of humor. Cartoons loom large in the Arab world, typically on the front pages of Arab language newspapers. It is no wonder that our cartoons seem to bother the terrorists more than our words. Sitting behind a beer with Charlie Hebdo cartoonists, the talk often turns to Islamic extremists and their assaults on press freedoms. No one can doubt that editorial cartoonists are leading the fight for press freedoms now.

Today we are are grieving, but as we move forward, I hope that our cartoons won't be chilled by these murders and that the cartooning community will step up to this challenge with even more brilliant and insightful work — I'm sure the French cartoonists will do that; they are my heroes.

Cagle is an editorial cartoonist who runs the CagleCartoons.com newspaper syndicate distributing editorial cartoons to more than 850 newspapers around the world including the paper you are reading now; he is a past president of the National Cartoonists Society. Comments may be sent to editor@cagle.com.



DARYL CAGLE
GUEST COMMENTARY

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	South, Suite 250 Minneapolis, MN 55415 612-727-5220 Website: www.klobuchar.senate.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	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
Duluth Office of Congressman Rick Nolan 11 East Superior Street Suite 125 Duluth, MN 55802 Phone: 218-464-5095 Fax: 218-464-5098	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
Brainerd Office of Congressman Rick Nolan Brainerd City Hall 501 Laurel Street Brainerd, MN 56401 218-454-4078	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
U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar Democrat 302 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 202-224-3244	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
Minnesota Office: 1200 Washington Avenue	

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.

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.