

OPINION

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.”

OUR VIEW

Gather information

As we all watch and wait for the water levels to stabilize and the rain to stop, it’s time for property owners who have experienced damage to gather information, document damage and make the right phone calls.

One of those calls should be to Koochiching County Assessor Len Peterson’s office at 218-283-1122. Peterson asked this week that residents with damage to property away from the Rainy Lake area contact his office to allow for an assessment of damage. He said the lake area will likely be handled at a later date, assessed in door-to-door visits.

The information will be used to provide information as the community, along with many others in the state, seek state and federal disaster relief, as well as to determine whether tax credits apply locally.

County officials urge residents to take photos and notes of damage and keep track of expenses incurred to provide to county officials.

Those same notes and photographs of damage may be of value when property owners check whether their insurance covers their damage. The Minnesota Department of Commerce advises taking photographs or video of the inside and outside of the premises, showing the

damage and surrounding area.

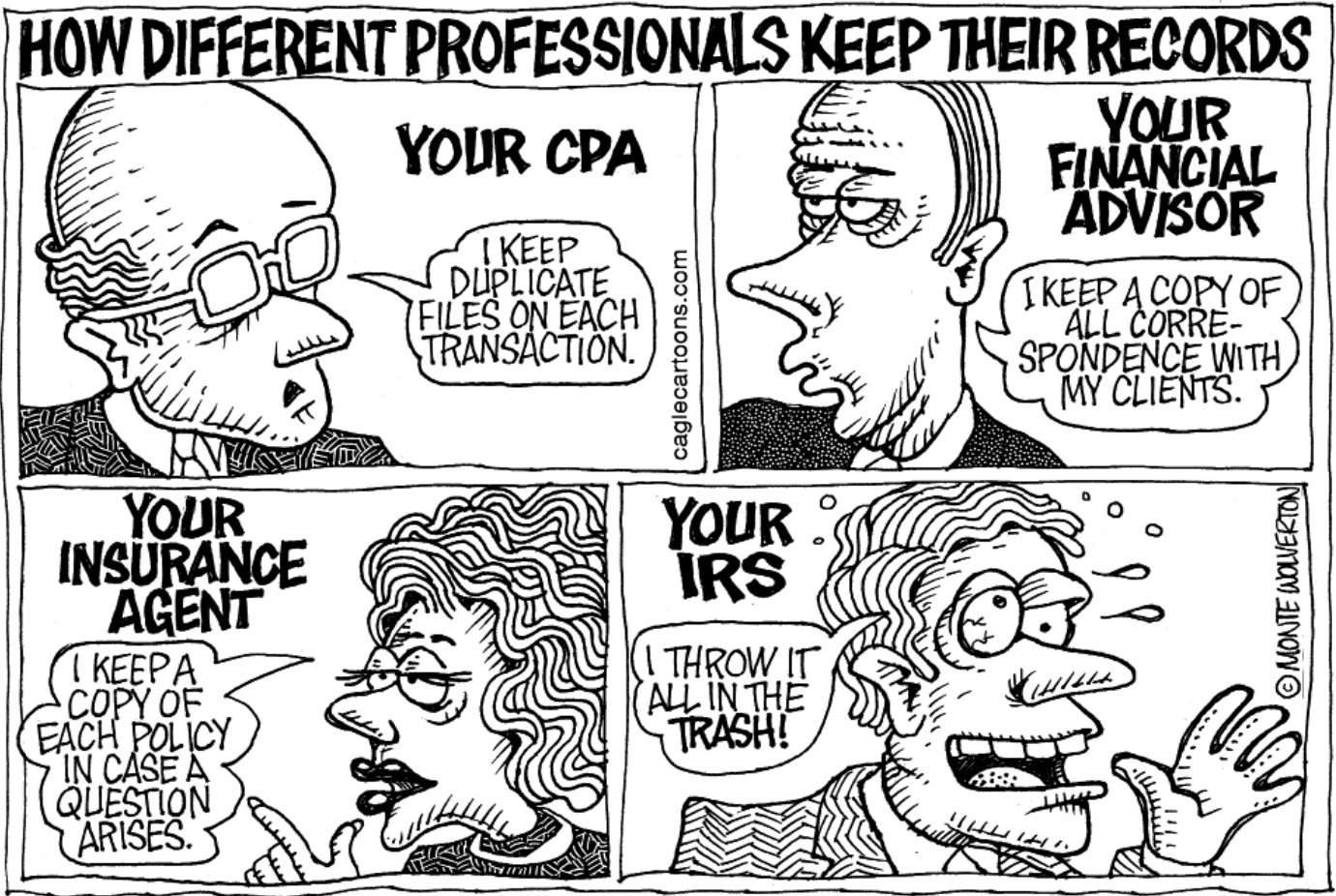
Meanwhile, business and property owners, as well as renters, may qualify for financial assistance from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The SBA may provide assistance if 25 homes and/or businesses in the same county have suffered 40 percent or more in uninsured losses. At that point, the state can request a SBA disaster declaration. Minnesota homeowners, renters, and business owners in the declared county, as well as the counties surrounding it, may then be eligible for low-interest loans.

As county officials have said, the emergency is not over yet, but now is the time to help prepare individually and as a community for recovery efforts and financial assistance. More information will become available as the true costs of this emergency are revealed as the water recedes.

We urge residents to document their damage, while at the same time counting their blessings as other communities appear to face even more difficult challenges caused by this spring’s unprecedented rainfall.

This, too, shall pass and we will be a stronger community because of it.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Memorial bench could be returned

To the editor,

If you have walked or driven around Ranier during the past few weeks, you will have seen all the efforts that have gone into trying to protect docks and property from flooding. I have seen many people out working and helping one another.

You might also notice in “original” Ranier

that there are several benches with plaques memorializing past residents. One bench is in front of Woody’s, another at Ranier Beach, one at Rainy Lake park and two located on the lawn at the community building.

The bench at Seven Oaks park is missing. It was taken this (last) week. That bench sat there for

several years and I could see it from my kitchen window. It was a memorial to Paul O. Swendsen and MaryJane Woods Swendsen — my parents.

To me, stealing a memorial bench is like stealing the headstone on a grave. It is downright shameful. It is especially shameful because I see so many people working so

hard to help one another and this goes against the spirit of all that community effort.

It is a very heavy bench and at least two people had to steal it. Maybe it is helping hold down a dock. Maybe it was tossed.

You can always bring it back.

Sue Swendsen  
Ranier, MN

Flood has neighbors helping neighbors

To the editor,

As a former International Joint Commission commissioner with personal friends and former IJC colleagues in International Falls and

the border region, I have followed the 2014 flood and response with much more than a casual, passing interest.

I have talked with several of those friends and colleagues who have

confirmed that neighbors are helping neighbors, pitching in to help out in the larger community across the international boundary and regardless of whether the impact is urban or rural. Just

what I came to expect from several decades of familiarity with the border region and its people.

Al Olson  
Chanhassen, MN

How to contact your lawmakers

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senatorbakkemail

Border bike patrol story seemed out of place

To the editor,

Along with all the photos displaying the selfless efforts of the community during this past week, Saturday’s article regarding the new Border Patrol Bike Patrol seemed out of place. Although many of those agents probably gave plenty of their own time in the flood relief efforts, it was difficult to connect the dots on this one.

Apparently, the agency is worried that their agents should be more welcomed in the communities they patrol. And a good way to do that is to pedal around neighborhoods in an effort to cozy up to the residents who live around here, possibly becoming their friends and confidants who might rat out an illegal alien, Canadian, or a local resident who forgot

to call in on the return from their lake cabin. Or, I guess, a terrorist, if we knew how to spot one up in these parts.

Perhaps one reason they are having such a difficult time blending into the community is because they don’t. I remember the local Border Patrol agent back in the 1970s and ‘80s who would stop in for a beer or two at Ranier Liquor after a day on the road. He connected with the locals because he was one of them, and shared work stories along with carpenters, teachers and fishing guides – in their respective uniforms.

I believe he patrolled most of northern Minnesota by himself, and spent very little time harassing locals. But these days, a short drive may bring three to five Border Patrol sightings,

a \$7 million dollar gated facility, and patrol boats guarding the waters of Sand Bay – a bit too much of Big Brother for most people. However, a few tax dollars may be saved if that massive iron fence can double as a bike rack.

As I read about the idea of agents driving to Crane Lake with bike in tow, and then peddling around town, it was hard to envision how that might work. Since most cabins on Crane are water-access only, and the town itself is only a few blocks long, bike paths may have to be built through the national forest to access most residents, or perhaps a boat taxi would be used. Has anyone considered a “foot brigade” instead?

But what stood out most for me was the 40 hour training course required by each agent for bike

safety and format. It was hard to understand why grown ups would need all that instruction on bicycling in this era.

I’ve heard many stories around Ranier of my grandfather teaching my uncle to ride a bike when he was about 10 years old – and blind from birth. He just put him on the bike and let him go down the hill, I supposed until he crashed. But my uncle did OK in life and graduated from Harvard Law School, maybe because my grandpa taught him how to fit in without feeling sorry for himself. Funny thing is that my grandpa was a federal employee also – a Customs agent. But I guess that was back when people still took care of themselves.

Dan Anderson  
Grand Rapids, MN

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.

Candidate letter policy

The beginning of 2014 brought a new policy to The Journal. A charge of \$30 will be required to publish letters to the editor from candidates or about candidates. The letters must be 500 words or less and the fee must be paid prior to the letter being published. The name and city of the author will be published with the letter.

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.