

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Federal rail push adds to local plans

Concerns about rail safety are nothing new to Borderland.

While we've experienced few major rail accidents, everyone in the community understands it could happen.

The increased use of rail cars carrying crude oil through Minnesota have amplified the need to seek the highest safety standards. It's a smart move as rail traffic is expected to increase and trains are expected get longer.

Canadian National Railway, the largest railroad in Canada, reported an 82 percent increase in crude oil shipments in three months ending in June. Canada's overall exports of crude oil by rail have grown tenfold in just more than two years, according to Canada's National Energy Board.

Local officials have long known the risk of a spill of oil or chemicals exists here. As a result, hazard mitigation plans have been put in place that are updated every five years. That plan is now being renewed and county officials will include derailment situations and responses. Local emergency staff regularly attend training sessions on how to handle spills of materials considered hazardous.

Those efforts, along with this new push to increase the number of puncture-resistant tank cars and put in place routing requirements that

would send trains carrying hazardous materials away from population centers make sense. It's smart to consider proposals to restrict train speeds when trains carrying flammable materials must travel through a populated area.

However, these efforts to make rail traffic safer must be balanced with the ability to move trains and the products they are carrying to their destinations in an efficient and timely manner.

Clearly, we must not become complacent. Accidents happen and we must recognize the potential for a spill of some sort and be as ready as we can to protect the people who live here and the precious natural resources in our front and backyard.

But we also must be able to to trust the Federal Railroad Administration to make sure the reports required from rail companies about the contents of their trains are accurate. Recent media reports about the administration's reluctance to provide information about the reports worries us.

Emergency staff rely on those reports to react appropriately should a spill occur. The administration and our federal leaders must hold these rail carriers accountable for the accuracy of their reports. An inaccurate report could lead to an accident no one is prepared to handle.



PAID ELECTION LETTER

Droba brings fresh perspective, leadership

To the editor,
International Falls Central District voters,
I am writing this letter as a full endorsement for Harley Droba for city council.

I have known Harley for over 12 years. In those years he has impressed me with his ability to find solutions to issues using his fresh thinking, determination, and his overall wish to make things better. An example of his fresh approach to old standards was hosting a non-alcohol New Years celebration at International House of

Bowling. The idea went against the traditional idea of a New Years celebration, yet it was a resounding success both in a business sense and a social sense. Families were able to come to a celebration with their children to family friendly environment and enjoy the evening together. You can imagine what most people thought of the idea, but in the end Harley was right. Harley possesses a creative mind that seeks common ground among the different players in all situations. His concern for the people around him

drives his actions. You can be sure Harley will put all of his focus and actions toward helping improve his district and the city of International Falls. All of his intentions will be to work toward a successful prosperous future for all of our citizens.

With Harley's skills in being able to lead people and help find consensus I believe he can assist the entire council in working important issues forward to successful outcomes. That would be a change we all would welcome.

There are many

challenges ahead of our city and surrounding area. The time for new fresh thinking is here. When you place your trust in Harley Droba you will not be disappointed. He has never disappointed me.

Most importantly exercise your right and vote.

All the best,
Joe Van Guse
International Falls, MN

Editor's note: Paid for by Harley Droba for Council, Joe Van Guse, treasurer, 806 Eighth St., International Falls, MN

How to contact your lawmakers

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PAID ELECTION LETTER

Ecklund brings vision and common sense

To the editor,
I met Rob Ecklund at a Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club Board meeting where Rob serves on the board. I was impressed with his energy and willingness to be involved in the club's projects.

This past summer the Rainy Lake flood consumed much of his time and effort as well as

all the county's officials. When the water level finally went down, Rob found time to plant trees in the fishing club's Rat Root River restoration project and helping with the Senior Fish Fry.

With the community facing economic problems in the future, Rob's positive attitude, his energy, his vision and

common sense will serve his constituents and the community very well. His pledge to attempt to get the whole community to cooperate and work together will help in the community's need for business development locally. The community's need for jobs for our younger workers is great. Rob has just finished

his first term as commissioner. He worked hard and put in long hours representing us. I hope you will vote for Rob Ecklund for Koochiching County commissioner in District 4 for another term.

Thank you,
Tom Worth
International Falls, MN

PAID ELECTION LETTER

Jespersen: Determined, experienced law man

To the editor,
In 1988, I hired a young Brian Jespersen, who expressed a desire to become a police officer. All the years since, I've watched Brian develop into a determined, experienced law man.

In 2007, Brian went to the Koochiching County

Sheriff's Office where he served as undersheriff for Sheriff Brian Youso. In 2012, the Koochiching County Board appointed Brian county sheriff to complete the term of retired Sheriff Youso.

Sheriff Jespersen proved his expertise and his ability to work with

other county and city officials in dealing with the flood of this past summer.

I believe Koochiching County needs Sheriff Jespersen. I support him 100 percent and I hope you do as well.

Thomas F. Hardy
International Falls

chief of police (retired)
International Falls, MN

Editor's note: The above letter was paid for by the Committee to Keep Brian Jespersen Sheriff, Mike Holden and Brian Youso, co-chairs, 900 20th St., International Falls, MN 56649

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Strong start on fixing child protection
With just three months before its recommendations are due to the Minnesota Legislature, the new Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children needs to get to work.

Fortunately, the high-caliber list of people just appointed suggests the group is up to its critical mission: diving deep into Minnesota's flawed child protection system and finding fixes.

Gov. Mark Dayton recently announced the task force's formation after a haunting Star Tribune story detailed the brutal death of 4-year-old Eric Dean. Fifteen reports alleging that Eric was being abused

had been filed with child protection officials.

Yet the little boy from Starbuck died in February 2013 from abdominal blows. Among the injuries noted by the medical examiner: bite marks on his scalp and face. His father's girlfriend is serving a life sentence for his murder.

On Friday, Dayton released the names of the 24 people who will serve alongside task force co-chairs Lucinda Jesson, Department of Human Services commissioner, and Toni Carter, a Ramsey County commissioner. The list is impressive. Members appear to have deep expertise and bring to the group valuable perspectives. Physi-

cians, law enforcement officers, county-level human services officials, judges and child advocacy experts will serve. The group also brings geographic diversity, with members from the metro and greater Minnesota.

In particular, the Star Tribune Editorial Board was pleased to see Kathleen Blatz named to the group. A former state Supreme Court chief justice, Blatz has long been a champion for transparency in the child protection system. She has also long questioned whether the system responds forcefully enough to abuse reports.

Other task force members also stand out for their

willingness to ask tough questions and for their child advocacy expertise. Among them: Dr. Mark Hudson of Children's Hospitals and Clinics, Rich Gehrman of Safe Passage for Children of Minnesota, and state Sens. Julie Rosen, R-Fairmont, and Kathy Sheran, D-Mankato.

The appointments of Jesson and Carter as co-chairs raised concerns that the panel would protect the status quo. But with the additions of Blatz and the other excellent task force members named last week, Minnesotans should have high expectations for the work that lies ahead.

Minneapolis Star Tribune, Oct. 6

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.

These letters will not be published the week prior to the Nov. 4 general election, so the editions of Oct. 25, Oct. 29 and Nov. 1 will not carry paid election letters.