

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

Innocent until proven guilty

We’re glad that Perham High School dropped its plan to have students and their guests move by a passive alcohol screening device before admittance to the school’s prom May 3.

It was the right move by the school’s administration, but it shouldn’t have taken protests and media attention drawn by the American Civil Liberties Union. Instead, school administrators shouldn’t have even considered such a plan and should have checked with the school’s attorneys before moving forward.

Students, just like anyone else, should be presumed innocent. The prom idea smacks of the kind of thinking that once brought DWI checkpoints, which stopped all vehicles on a single road in order to have the driver prove they had not been drinking. It’s one thing to suspect someone of illegal activity based on their behavior, but another to suspect everyone and require them to prove their innocence.

Perham school officials relied on the tried and true method of detecting use of alcohol by students: chaperones and stops by local law enforcement at the dance and the post-prom party.

And while school officials said they never intended to ask students to blow into a Breathalyzer, they did plan to have

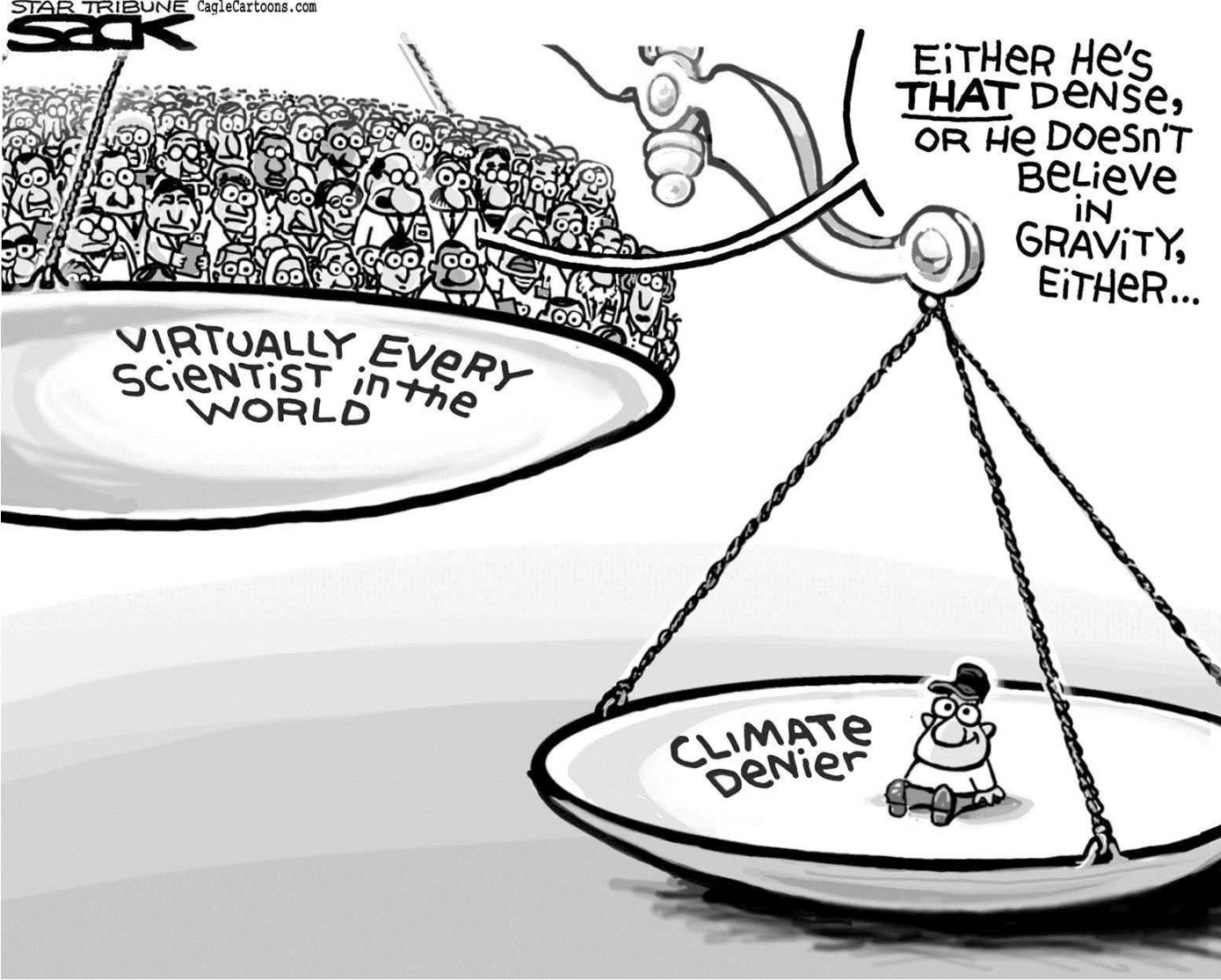
student admittance to the events approved by a passive air alcohol sensor. Had the sensor detected alcohol in the air, further testing would have been sought, said school officials.

No one can blame school officials for attempting to keep young people safe. Proms are celebrations of spring and the end of the school year and that kind of excitement can lead some students to imbibe in alcohol. And alcohol combined with youth can sometimes lead to tragedy.

But clearly, school officials should have given more thought on how to keep students from adding alcohol to the mix, and how to handle students expected of drinking.

Perham was smart to drop the plan, but it appears many other schools are coming close to violating the civil right of their students by requiring students to submit to a breath test before entering school dances. ACLU-MN contends Breathalyzer testing of prom attendees contravenes the protection in the U.S. and Minnesota constitutions against suspicionless searches.

We agree with the ACLU on this one and urge schools to consider other ways to keep students safe that does not presume they are guilty of illegal activity and requires them to prove their innocence.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NIPCC: No Instances of Professional Climate Credentials

To the editor,

On April 23, Bruce Sampson claims NIPCC (Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change) consists of a large group of leading environmental scientists who use the peer review process. Investigating each NIPCC “scientist” one finds of the 34 authors only three might have some knowledge related to climate. They are Singer, physicist, and two meteorologists: Khandekar, retired Canadian who receives \$1,000/month from Heartland Institute and is on the International Climate Science Coalition advisory board; Weber, is with the German Coal Mining Association and affiliated with Science and Environmental Policy Project and Heartland. The remaining authors practice in areas of geography (3), geology (8), biology (14), medicine (3), petrochemical chemistry (1), a welding technologist, and a mushroom inspector. Leading climatologists? Peer review? The NIPCC concept of peer review is to collaborate among themselves and the institutions they are affiliated with, inviting no input from scientists outside of their inner circle. IPCC authors contribute their time on a voluntary basis whereas a majority of NIPCC authors were paid stipends and salaries from Heartland. To put the NIPCC authors and report in the same league as the IPCC is ridiculous. The IPCC has 235 lead authors, 176 contributing and 879 reviewers totaling 1,290 whereas the NIPCC has 34 – a 38:1 ratio.

The Heartland, Science and Public Policy Institute, SEPP, and ICSC among others are not unbiased organizations. They receive funding from ExxonMobile, Shell, Koch Bros., Phillip Morris, and Scaife Family Foundation to name a few.

Heartland and

its members have collectively received over \$67M from these sources and funneled monies to the ICSC and other organizations listed above. ICSC has an advisory board filled with global warming skeptics directed by Tom Harris, previously director of operations of an energy industry lobbying organization called High Park Group.

These organizations have an agenda publishing papers denying climate change and distributing disinformation to create the illusion that a debate rages as to whether or not global climate change is driven by human activity even though it is now settled science. Temperatures and CO2 levels have been on the rise globally and it is not slight as Sampson claims. CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere have risen 26 percent since 1958 and currently rising at 0.71 percent per year from our current level of 399ppm.

Follow the money. Research into where SPPI, SEPP, ICSC, and Heartland Institute get their funding and to whom they pay stipends and consulting fees. If voters use the NIPCC to decide public policy issues as important as global climate change as Sampson encourages, surely we are doomed. It is not a reliable source for information. Close to half of the authors of the NIPCC report are in their 70s and 80s and affiliated in some way with big oil and coal.

Take note voters. These individuals had a comfortable life, are on their way out and wish to preserve their financial well being and the industry interests that pay them. Don’t let them endanger your future quality of life. Choose leaders that have the backbone to curb CO2 emissions, encourage conservation, and promote alternative energy sources for fuel and electricity.

George M. Hnatiuk
International Falls, MN

Water/sewer rates insane; wake up people

To the editor,

I have searched in all of the United States and cannot find any higher water/sewer rates than what we have here in International Falls/Ranier.

■ Baudette: no minimum for water or sewer. \$3.25/per 1000 gallons for both. If a family of four uses 6,000 gallons the cost for water and sewer combined would be \$39.

■ Roseau: 6,000 gallons of water and sewer in Roseau will cost you \$25.45.

■ Phoenix, Ariz.: 6,000 gallons water and sewer will set you back a whopping \$23.10.

■ I. Falls: 6,000 gallons of water and sewer — a mere \$125.10 (here’s the breakdown: \$19.18 for first 2,000 gallons of water and and \$8.20 per 1,000 after that. \$19.18 + 32.80 = \$51.98. Sewer is \$25.88 for first 2,000 gallons and \$11.81 per

1,000 after that. \$25.88 + \$47.24 = \$73.12. So you pay \$51.98 for 6,000 gallons of water. After you doctor it up you pay another \$73.12 for them to take the 6,000 gallons back for a grand total of \$51.98 + \$73.12 = \$125.10).

■ Ranier: 6,000 gallons of water and sewer only \$101.31. The basic difference between the Falls and Ranier is this — Ranier currently charges its residents a minimum of \$25 for sewer for 2,000 gallons and \$2.45 per 1,000 after that. I. Falls has a library so they charge their residents \$25.88 for the first 2,000 gallons of sewer and \$11.81 per thousand after that.

For the record, after meeting their water minimums, if they have one, customers in most cities like St. Louis Park, Minnetonka, Hopkins , Virginia and more charge about \$2 per 1,000 whereas both the Falls and Ranier charge over

\$8 per additional 1,000 gallons.

I have a friend that lives alone and doesn’t have much. His last water/sewer bill for 1,000 gallons both ways was about \$60. In Baudette it would have been only \$6.50. My friend pays nearly 10 times the amount he would have to pay in Baudette.

Another person I know used the bathroom before jumping in his car to go to a medical appointment out of town. Upon his return it was discovered that the toilet flapper had been stuck to the tune of \$763.

Speaking of Lake of the Woods, during the five months in the winter there are upwards of 15,000 ice houses on the lake. On the weekend there may be as many as 60,000 people out there. Not all of them go to shore to poop and pee.

Why did we need to build a new sewer plant for our some 5,000 users? We clean it up so Lake of the Woods can do what in it? If it was mandated by the state, why is Roseau and Baudette’s sewer so inexpensive? Aren’t they part of the same state?

Ranier is forced to buy it’s water from the Falls where the new water treatment plant was financed by tax increment financing. It is this author’s belief that I. Falls is using the sale of the water as a cash cow to support non-water related items. An independent forensic accountant could probably determine that the Falls would go bankrupt if not for the onerous water rates it charges. The per capita income in Koochiching County is \$23,000. A water shelf next to the food shelf would be handy.

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The Journal welcomes letters from readers

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