

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

Celebrating with sense

Graduation is a rite of passage and deserves celebration.

Following the pomp and circumstance, graduation ceremonies often involve parties where friends and family congratulate the graduate and their parents for many years of effort toward this special day.

And for many, responsible celebration is easy. It means food, gifts and perhaps the raising of a glass in cheers to the former student. But for others, the party has just started with one glass and finishes when the keg, case or bottles are empty.

Celebrating the graduation season with an alcoholic beverage is fine for people age 21 and older; illegal for people less than 21. And it's illegal for someone age 21 and older to provide people less than 21 with alcohol, regardless of whether they are a parent or someone else.

We urge people to use good sense when celebrating Borderland college and high school graduations. And good sense means providing food for everyone, and if alcohol is served to people of legal age, a way to get safely get home.

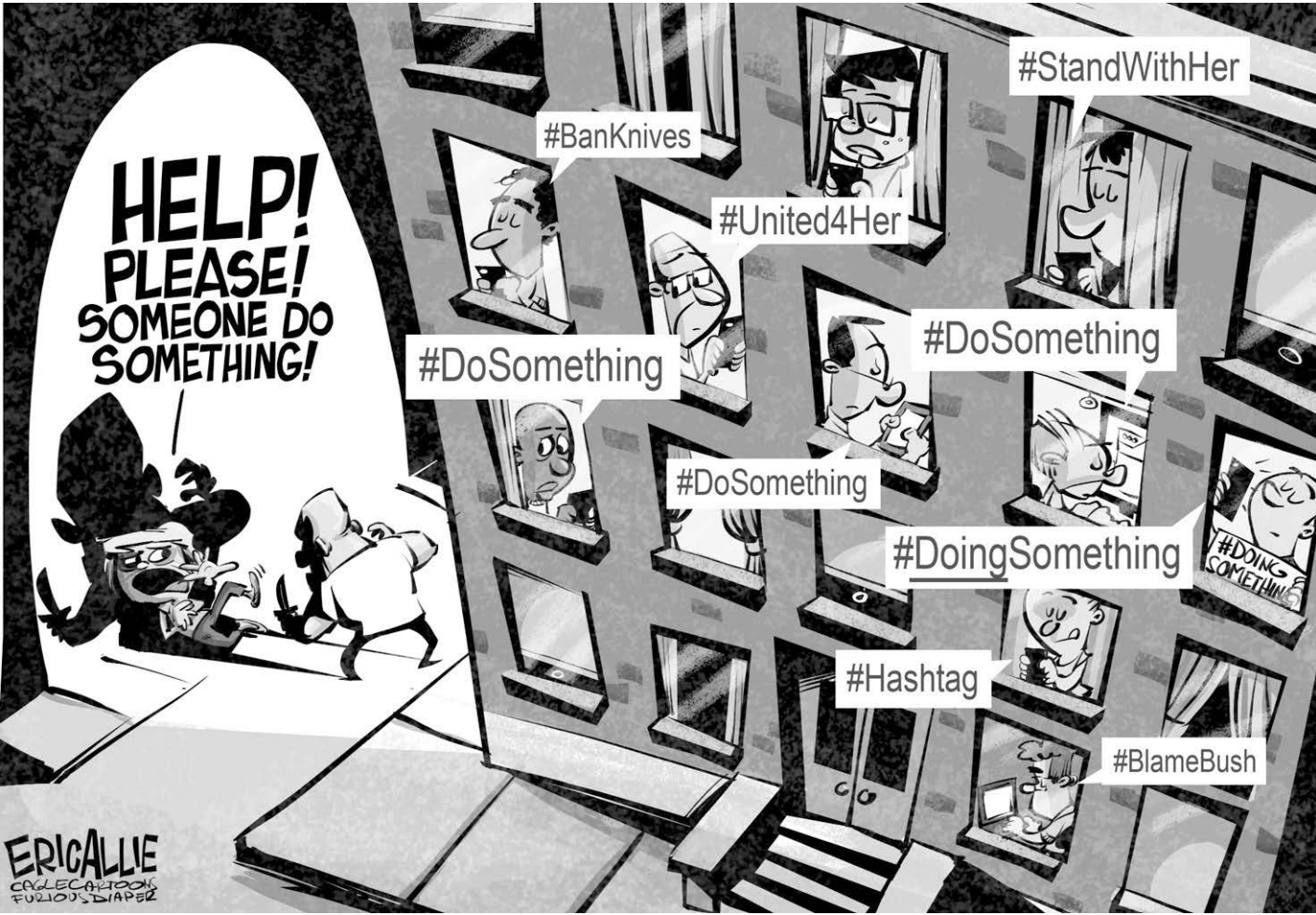
It's best to consider whether alcohol will be a part of the celebration before the party begins to keep things from getting quickly out of hand.

If alcohol is going to be served, ask a few friends and family not to imbibe and give the graduate the gift of driving those who have had alcohol a safe and sober ride home. If that's not the plan, have the local taxi's telephone number handy as the party wraps up. But be sure to have a plan.

If alcohol is served, again bring out the food, put away the alcohol, and get out the coffee and soda pop as the party nears the end. That will give party goers another chance to eat and drink a couple hours before they leave.

Memories of graduation should be filled with tears of joy and anticipation of the next phase in life. But without celebrating safely, those memories may involve tears caused by the loss of life in an alcohol-related accident of a graduate, or one of their friends and family.

Congratulations graduates. You deserve to celebrate, but we urge you all to do it safely.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Spend money when contract signed

**To the editor,**

After the letter to the editor in the May 10 edition concerning our sewer and water situation, it would be interesting to hear the views of the past two mayors and councils about why they strapped the taxpayers with some unnecessary costs for equipment and construction of the sewer facility.

It leads one to believe that maybe the city council should take a long look at getting rid of a department or two and curtailing this unnecessary spending. Case in point, the Donahue property, multimodal and any of those ideas of “maybe they will come if we have this or that.”

Try doing what other developers do: When there is a hard money contract in place, then spend the money for the upgrades that are required — not on maybe they will come if we have them.

The taxpayers have some huge increases in sewer, water and road infrastructure to deal with, so we should be conserving our money instead of needlessly spending on maybe projects.

**Dick Koeneman**  
International Falls, MN

GUEST COLUMN

A second chance for Donald Sterling?

Some 20 years ago, a 12-year-old boy on a trip to San Francisco was taken into a restaurant in Chinatown. He saw the menu, and in a loud voice said: “Chinese food? I hate Chinese food. I don't even like the Chinese!” Then he noticed all the Asians glaring at him. He was one of two non-Asians there.

“Oops,” he said, turning red. But the “Oops” didn't erase perceptions now embedded in minds of the other diners.

Fast-forward to the case of the Los Angeles' Clippers justifiably reviled owner Don Sterling. Sterling, whose innermost racist feelings — about blacks and the players who helped enrich him —came to light in a recording secretly made by his then-girlfriend, did an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper to try and do damage control. He was virtually pleading for a second chance. Instead, he wound up proving (1) he is a confirmed racist, (2) if the NBA values its branding they must get him to sell the team, and, (3) he is not quite as smart as a can of cat food.

Faced with a lifetime ban and \$2.5 million fine from the NBA, Sterling told Cooper his racist comments had been “one...terrible mistake” in 35 years, and insisted he wasn't a racist. But he couldn't keep himself from lashing out at Magic Johnson, who is demanding



Joe GANDELMAN  
INDEPENDENT'S EYE

and became an instant poster boy for the kind of dumb, inflammatory comments also made by some Tea Partiers who play to their like-minded choir while alienating the rest of the audience. He also undermined those who argued that his recorded comments were private and he shouldn't be judged by one slip. Sterling now has enough slips to open a lingerie department. In a post-Sterling CNN reaction interview, dismayed director Spike Lee spoke for many Americans when he said Sterling should “Shut the -- -- up.”

Indeed: there is a mainstream in American politics and culture and he who crosses it may find his image, branding and acceptance by society will never be the same.

“Seinfeld's” Michael Richard's career died when he lost his temper at a comedy club in 2006 and shouted the “n word” at a black audience member. Radio host Don Imus' career and image were never the same after 2007 when he jokingly called members of the Rutgers girls basketball team “nappy-headed hos.” Actor Mel Gibson's recorded anti-Semitic rants led to denunciations, decreased box office pull and virtual Hollywood blacklisting. And despite her proclaiming a comeback since her disastrous

remarks that sounded like she was nostalgic for slavery, to many Americans, Paula Deen remains a prohibitively spoiled dish.

That Sterling is Jewish has now led some Jewish organizations to distance themselves. The Jewish Federations of North America declared: “The Jewish people have a long history of fighting racism and we are deeply disturbed by the reprehensible statements attributed to Donald Sterling....There is no place for racism or bigotry in America today and certainly not in Jewish life.”Should Sterling be given another chance, or should the NBA battle him in court? His mea culpa proved him to be mea racist and mea estupidio. It makes it impossible for the NBA — and the league's basketball players — to change their minds and ever say “Oops.”

**Gandelman's column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. Gandelman is a veteran journalist who wrote for newspapers overseas and in the United States. He has appeared on cable news show political panels and is Editor-in-Chief of The Moderate Voice, an Internet hub for independents, centrists and moderates. He also writes for The Week's online edition.**

How to contact your lawmakers

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Monday, and the amount of \$13 million for Lewis & Clark is far, far less than the \$69 million Dayton had spoken about just a few days earlier. It should be noted that Dayton's requested bonding bill amount was \$1.2 billion; the Senate's is a little more than \$1 billion.

Meanwhile, just a few short days after inviting Laverne Mayor Pat Baustian up to St. Paul and making him a State of the State guest \_ and touting the importance and benefits of Lewis and Clark \_ Dayton is now recommend-

ing \$20.2 million in funding for the project in a new bonding bill. The Minnesota House, for its part, was seeking \$20 million, but House Speaker Paul Thissen confirmed Monday the money had been stripped entirely. What happened?

Unsurprisingly, the answer is completely about politics. Many Republicans are hesitant to embrace higher bonding bill figures, so DFL leaders have crafted smaller packages in attempt to lure votes from the other party. Our Republican representa-

tives, though, care far more about getting money for Lewis & Clark than they do about the ultimate size of the bill, but now ironically may not get to vote for anywhere near \$69 million \_ instead, less than a third of that, and perhaps even nothing.

If Lewis & Clark really is as important to the governor as it seemingly was last week, he needs to put his foot down and demand the full amount. Our future as a region depends on it.

**Worthington Daily Globe, May 5**