



**Carmage Walls**  
**Commentary Prize**

**2019 Entry Form**

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**Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)**

**We have long advocated for the completion of a four-lane expansion of Highway 14, one of the most dangerous roads in the state.**

**In fact, starting with a three part series in 2010 that detailed the number of accidents on the road over a 10 year period, we have advocated for completion to increase safety. The state completed a \$40 million expansion of the part we detailed a few years ago.**

**Last year's editorials advocated for completion of another piece and opposed an attempted bureaucratic end run that would push funding only to metro area roads. We won again, as the Legislature voted to move money back to Highway 14.**

**This year's editorials advocate for the last piece of the road to be funded. And our editorial was used in testimony on the measure at the Legislature.**

**Rep. Jeff Brand's floor speech on Highway 14 citing Free Press. April 29**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fswu-GoSKk&feature=youtu.be>

**All of our Highway 14 editorials were shared broadly to other newspapers around the state by us and the Associated Press.**





Editorials are the institutional voice of The Free Press and independent of the newsroom reporting staff

## OUR VIEW: HIGHWAY 14

# Bipartisan effort delivered needed road funding

The long and winding road to funding Highway 14 is coming closer to an end with Gov. Mark Dayton's approval of a bonding bill crafted by the Republican majorities at the Legislature.

But it's not quite time to say it's done. There remains to be funded a 12-mile stretch between Nicollet and New Ulm that would complete the road as a major corridor from medical facilities in Rochester to manufacturing facilities in New Ulm.

New Ulm has important commerce that would benefit from a fully-expanded

Highway 14. Such major manufacturers as Kraft, AMPI and 3M employ hundreds of people and do business all over the world. Two years ago, Kraft began a \$100 million expansion project. There are also several over-the-road trucking companies in New Ulm, including J&R Schugel, which has 600 power units and 1,000 trailers serving 48 states.

The Highway 14 Partnership has been instrumental in pushing for completion of the four-lane expansion. Its members include cities, nonprofits, businesses and chambers of commerce all along the highway.

Over the years, both Democrats and Republicans have pushed for the funding, and both parties have been successful in getting different parts of the expansion approved. This year was no different.

The Free Press and other media around the state have also long supported the funding. An in-depth Free Press report in 2010 showed the two-lane part of the highway from North Mankato to Nicollet had one of the worst safety ratings in the state. A follow-up study by MnDOT showed it was even worse than early estimates.

That and other studies also showed the need for new highway funding and helped create the Corridors of Commerce funding program that uses trunk highway bonds to fund important "regional corridors."

The Owatonna to Dodge Center section received \$174 million from the Corridors of Commerce program this year.

Tweaks in the rules of that program this year created a situation that favored more metro area roads. Republicans and Democrats alike were justifiably opposed to the new MnDOT scoring system, which the agency said was established by the Legislature.

One can argue the merits of the new program and where they originated, but there are still some necessary adjustments required to create a level playing field between what is considered greater Minnesota and the metro area.

But both Democrats and Republicans can go to the voters this fall and claim some credit for unearthing another big piece of funding for Highway 14. We only hope they also vow to complete the job.

## OTHER VIEW

# 'Probably' isn't good enough

Dallas Morning News

"Probably" isn't a word you want to use when talking about whether children are safe. But that is precisely the word that comes to mind as we review the recent controversy that erupted over whether the federal government "lost" 1,475 migrant children who had been placed in the homes of caregivers.

Here's what we know: In April testimony to Congress, a Health and Human Services official revealed that the government didn't have a good handle on nearly 1,500 kids it had placed with caregivers. That testimony resurfaced over the weekend when immigration activists fanned the public

debate with a series of tweets linking these children to the Trump administration policy to separate families who attempt to enter the country illegally.

The reality is that the kids in question here are not a product of the administration's new policy. In fact, they are kids who are emmeshed in a federal system that has long had to deal with the children of immigrants.

But these kids are connected to this debate. If the current system doesn't do a good job of keeping track of children, why would a new approach that separates children from their illegal-immigrant parents as a matter of policy adequately handle the children in its care?

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STEVE JAMESON, Publisher

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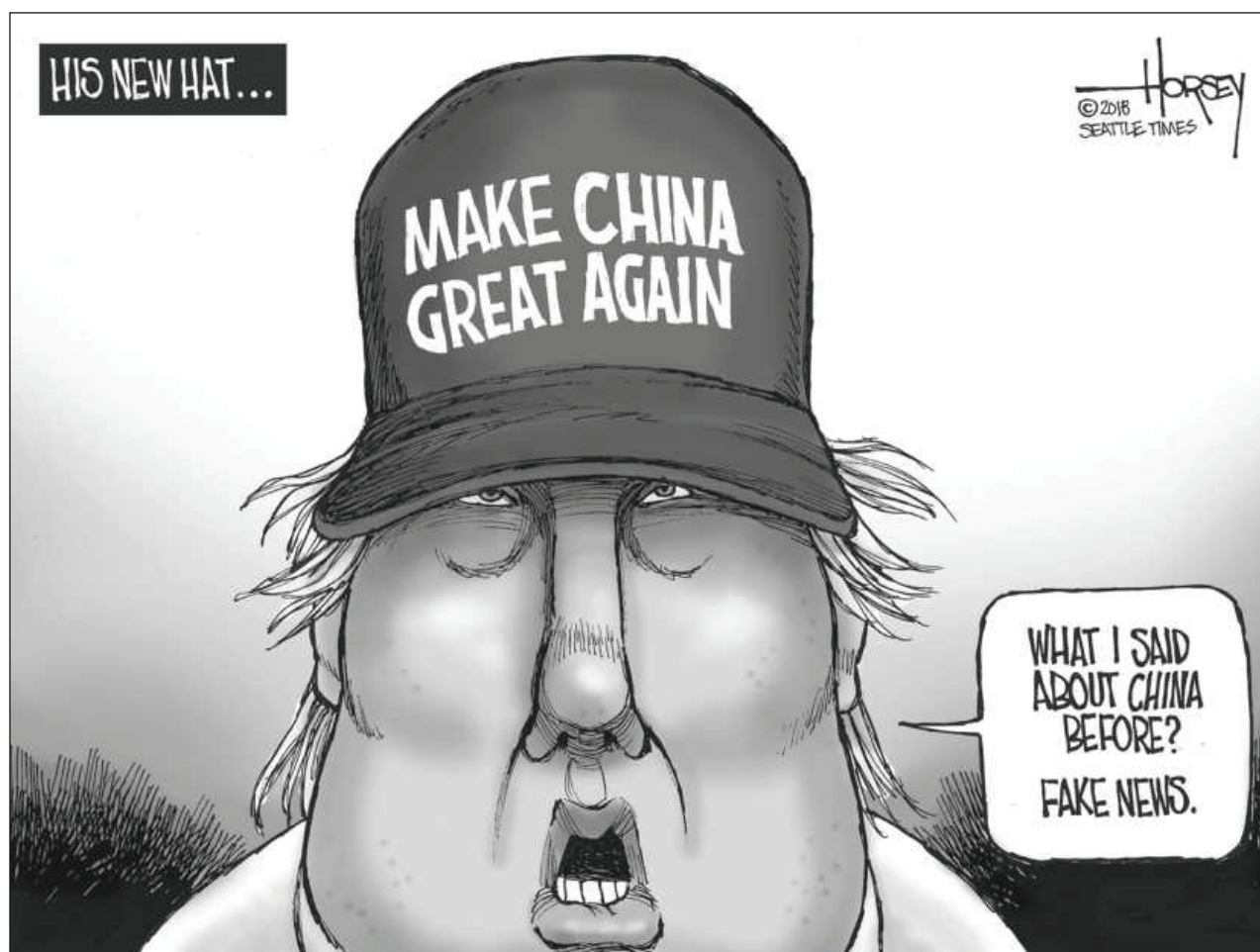
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## IN RESPONSE

# Taxpayers would bear burden

By Diana Karau

How will the proposed osteopathic medical school TIF District No. 5-1 impact taxpayers in the city of Gaylord, Sibley County, the Sibley East School District and other taxing jurisdictions?

As the city of Gaylord prepares to consider and likely approve a \$5.7 million tax increment financing (TIF) plan that will be in place for the next 25 years, all Sibley County taxpayers will be impacted, because TIFs touch every taxing jurisdiction within the proposed TIF district.

Medical school developer Phil Keithahn, local representative for the Danza Group of Minnesota, would have you believe that the impact of the proposed development will be good for our communities. I, for one, do not believe that for one minute.

To add insult to injury, no one at the city of Gaylord has ever been able or willing to answer these very simple questions: What has been the positive economic impact of the many TIF plans approved over the last few decades by the city of Gaylord? What have been the measurable outcomes of these corporate subsidies? How many good paying jobs have been created? How many of these jobs have been filled by local residents? Have these corporate subsidies decreased the tax levy of any of the taxing districts as a result of increased property values that result from these TIFs?

The city of Gaylord will not answer these questions because it can't.

But know this: This project will impact the level of services provided to residents in each of these taxing districts and they will either be required to cut costs or raise taxes.

The taxpayer profile of Sibley County being asked to bear the burden of this private development is comprised of approximately 75 percent who are farmers in a struggling ag economy; 16 percent of seniors who live on fixed incomes; 10 percent who live in poverty; and those whose average median income is \$55,000 per household.

I must ask the question, will the public good be served by taxpayer dollars being used for this private development? I believe the answer to that question is no; but I have no doubt that the private gain of a handful of people will be achieved at the expense of poor, working taxpayers who are struggling to make ends meet. This in effect is crony capitalism, aka the poor stay poor and rich get richer.

*Diana Karau lives in Gaylord*

# Puerto Rico's 4,600 dead

By Timothy L. O'Brien  
Bloomberg View

Last October, President Donald Trump visited Puerto Rico for a photo op, 13 days after Hurricane Maria had ripped across the island, leaving its residents, communities, roadways and power grid in tatters.

"I've been to Puerto Rico many times as, I think, most of you have known. And I've always loved it. And your weather is second to none, but every once in a while you get hit. And you really got hit," Trump told the crowds greeting him. "Every death is a horror. But if you look at a real catastrophe like Katrina, and you look at the tremendous hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people that died, and you look at what happened here with, really, a storm that was just totally overpowering — nobody has ever seen anything like this. What is your death count, as of this moment — 17?"

Someone at the gathering told the president the figure was slightly lower: 16.

"16 people certified. 16 people versus in the thousands," Trump said. "You can be very proud of all of your people, all of our people working together. 16 versus literally thousands of people. You can be very proud. Everybody around this table and everybody watching can really be very proud."

Trump emphasized all that the federal government had done to assist Puerto Rico when he wrapped up his speech.

"I appreciate your support and I know you appreciate our support, because our country has really gone all out to help. And it's not only dangerous, it's expensive, it's everything," he said. "But I consider it a great honor, maybe because I know so many people from Puerto Rico that are such great people. I come from New York."

On Tuesday the New England Journal of Medicine published a new estimate of the lives lost on Puerto Rico due to Hurricane Maria: about 4,600. That stands in stark contrast to the 16 deaths the president cited in October, and the official death toll of 64 that the Puerto Rican government has stood by for months.

To put the tragedy in context, consider the death tolls from other recent hurricanes.

Hurricane Camille, one of the most brutal hurricanes to hit the U.S. in the late 20th century, made

**Hurricane Irma left about 130 dead last year; Hurricane Harvey, a companion of sorts to Irma, killed about 110. Hurricane Katrina, which Trump cited as a benchmark of catastrophe, left about 1,800 dead after it made landfall in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi in 2013. Some 3,000 people died in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001.**

landfall in Mississippi in 1969 and left about 260 dead. Hurricane Andrew killed about 65 people when it swept across the Bahamas and Florida in 1992. Hurricane Irma left about 130 dead last year; Hurricane Harvey, a companion of sorts to Irma, killed about 110. Hurricane Katrina, which Trump cited as a benchmark of catastrophe, left about 1,800 dead after it made landfall in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi in 2013. Some 3,000 people died in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001.

Compared to all of these events, Hurricane Maria represents an epic loss of life. And the New England Journal noted that its estimate of about 4,600 dead on Puerto Rico "is likely to be an underestimate." It said that the "mortality rate remained high through the end of December 2017, and one third of the deaths were attributed to delayed or interrupted health care."

Reporters on the ground in Puerto Rico last fall saw this coming. As they toured the island after Maria hit, it was obvious that Puerto Rico's heavily damaged hospital system and unreliable power grid would conspire to produce deaths well in excess of the government's (and Trump's) lowball figure of 16.

"It's unclear what is happening with the deceased who are at the morgues of the 51 hospitals that have had to close their doors," the Miami Herald wondered last fall. BuzzFeed News provided an answer about what was happening to some of the corpses that were piling up at the time: They were being burned.

When I visited Puerto Rico in November, I noted that it was "swamped in a humanitarian crisis, with running water still unavailable in some areas, roadways in disrepair, thousands of people living in shelters and about 100,000 people estimated to have fled since the hurricane hit on Sept. 20." Puerto Rico's challenges were perfectly suited to a veteran builder and a self-described man of action like Trump, yet he seemed uninspired

by — and unengaged with — the task at hand.

A reminder of the timeline surrounding Trump's response to Hurricane Maria is instructive. Two days after the storm made landfall on Puerto Rico, Trump was campaigning in Alabama and said nothing about it. His first tweets about Maria weren't posted until September 25. His first Situation Room meeting in the White House to discuss how to respond to the catastrophe occurred a day later.

To be sure, Puerto Rico presented unique challenges. It is mountainous, surrounded by water, and plagued by corruption and political mismanagement. Yet some of these problems faced the Obama administration when it responded in 2010 to an earthquake in Haiti. There, the U.S. deployed 8,000 troops in a couple of days. Two weeks later, 22,000 troops had been dispatched. The Trump administration only had 7,200 members of the military in Puerto Rico two weeks after Hurricane Maria touched down.

Trump, undaunted, gave himself a "10" when asked by White House reporters to grade the federal response to Hurricane Maria about a month after it first ravaged Puerto Rico. That perfect self-assessment came at a time when electricity and potable water were still in short supply on the island. Puerto Rico's residents remain saddled today with an unreliable power grid, despite billions of spending and public-private partnerships overseen by the U.S. government and the Trump administration that were meant to address the problem.

More than infrastructure is also at stake in Puerto Rico, of course. Lives have been lost; about 4,600 of them, and counting. With the next hurricane season just around the corner, Trump has a brief window to try to secure Puerto Rico's future — and actually earn his 10.

*O'Brien is the executive editor of Bloomberg Opinion. He has been an editor and writer for the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, HuffPost and Talk magazine.*

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### OUR VIEW: ROAD FUNDING

## More highways are getting worse

According to the latest state pavement condition report from MnDOT, Minnesota roads are getting worse. And it appears that is just fine by the GOP-led Senate.

Majority Leader Paul Gazelka and Sen. Jim Abeler, among others, have been on record saying Minnesota doesn't need more tax money to fix roads. It's just not true. Not unless Gazelka and Abeler want to lower the longtime, bipartisan standards agreed to for the condition of state highways.

#### Why it matters:

Current road funding will not prevent the number of poor roads from increasing by another 100 miles in the next four years to 600 miles total.

The number of Minnesota state highways falling to the poor category increased by approximately 17.5 percent from 2017 to 2018.

MnDOT reports in 2018 there were 502 miles of state highways in "poor" road condition, 88 more miles than in 2017. This is the primary result of underfunding of Minnesota roads since the days of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's over-riden veto on road funding. The DFL has never, in our memory, opposed increases in road funding, particularly the funding that is used to maintain or improve crumbling roads, many of which are in outstate Minnesota.

The parties can argue about expansion and new nice interchanges for the metro area, but basic road conditions remain in a downward spiral across the state.

MnDOT says based on the current funding projection for the next four years, all types of roads, state highways, interstates and national highways (like Highways 169 and 14, which run through Mankato) will all deteriorate further with more listed in "poor" condition. Some 98 more miles will move to "poor" condition during the next four years.

MnDOT experts note: "Once a pavement falls into the 'poor' category it normally will require major rehabilitation or reconstruction to restore any meaningful amount of service life. These types of repairs are expensive, thus making it much harder with a limited budget to recover once the amount of miles in this condition becomes very high."

With 600 miles of roads in "poor" condition, Minnesota will have the distinction of having enough miles of poor roads that one could drive the length of the state on crumbling highways.

We need more road funding. We urge the Republican caucus to face facts and join with Democrats and Gov. Tim Walz and approve an appropriate increase in the gas tax. The longer we wait, the more it will cost and fewer roads will be fixed.

### OTHER VIEW

## Kowtowing to the anti-vaccine crowd

The Kansas City Star

Some long-gone diseases are back, and the resurgence of measles in particular now poses a serious public health threat across the country. Yet the wacky, downright dangerous response of some Missouri lawmakers is to worry more about discrimination against unvaccinated children than about the legitimate risk that those kids pose to the whole community.

Yes, in Missouri, where you can still be fired for being gay, a lawmaker/pharmacist who's been on probation for writing and filling false prescriptions for himself, his relatives, employees and even his dog, is leading the "anti-discrimination" charge on behalf of the unvaccinated.

As a pharmacist, "I'm not against vaccines," said Rep. Lynn Morris, a Republican from Ozark. "I am for people having the right to choose what they want done to their

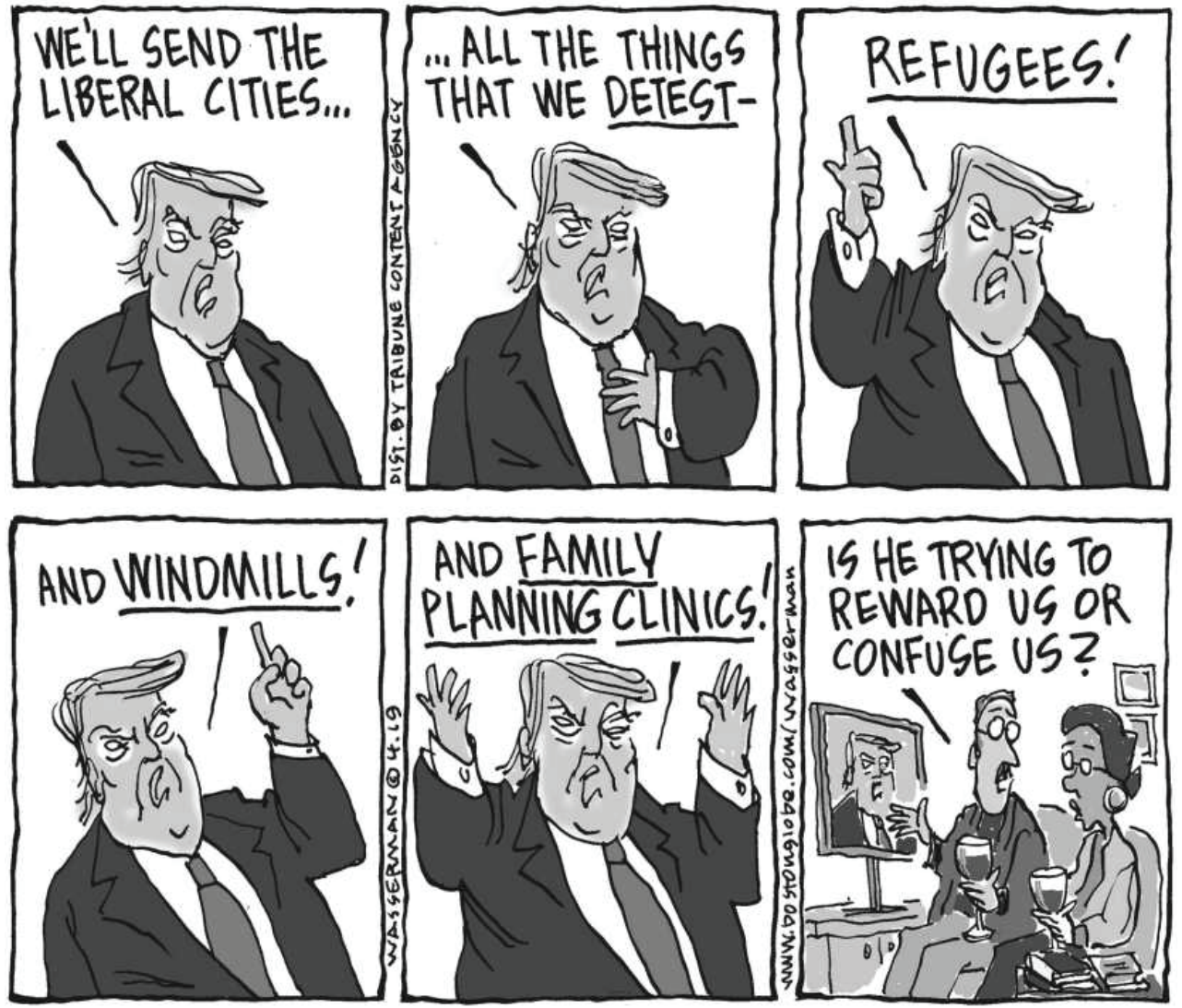
children. Parents are getting bullied. They are being intimidated. I just don't think that's right."

Now it's bullying to point out the truth that what's not right is risking a serious outbreak.

Anti-vaxxers exploit fear and pseudoscience. But vaccines do not cause autism: In March, a 10-year Danish study of 10,000 children confirmed the findings of a 2002 study that found no link.

Not getting vaccinated, though, is demonstrably dangerous: The measles can in rare instances kill especially very young children. And about 5 percent of children who get the measles will develop pneumonia, which can also be fatal.

Through April 4, 465 cases of the measles had been reported this year in 19 states including Missouri, where lawmakers should be trying to head off a health crisis instead of stoking it.



## Our parties need to learn the opposite lessons

WASHINGTON — It would save pixels, ink and talking time if we all agreed on the obvious: Democrats are more divided than Republicans and will remain so for the foreseeable future. What matters is everything else you say once this reality is acknowledged.

First, the facts: Democrats are more diverse than Republicans in almost every imaginable way: racially, ethnically, religiously and ideologically.

And the Democrats' diversity is increasing because of the flood of new supporters fleeing Donald Trump's GOP. Many of these newcomers are not registered as Democrats, meaning that they won't vote in most of the 2020 primaries and caucuses. But their ballots helped Democrats win control of the House.

As for the Republicans, they are, overwhelmingly, a party of whites and Christians. They tilt male, especially in their leadership: Among women in the House, 89 are Democrats; only 13 are Republicans.

The GOP is the party of older people, the Democrats are the party of the young, partly because of the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the rising generations. In the 2018 House races, according to the exit polling, Republicans won 50% among those 45 and older, but only 36% of those under 45 — and just 32% of the under-30s.

The question raised again and again about Republican politicians is: Why oh why don't they have the courage to speak up against a president who, many times a day, violates the most basic norms of decency, val-

ues many of these same politicians lauded before Nov. 8, 2016?

The question regularly asked about Democrats is: Why do they fight each other about so much stuff, including single-payer health care, the Green New Deal, immigration, foreign policy and, rather embarrassingly last week, the shape of this year's federal budget?

The Republican question is easier to dispose of. The GOP has been working hard for half a century to become monocultural and mono-ideological. Trump has only accelerated the process.

Most are happy to be bought off with judges and tax cuts. And please, no elitist alibis that this is all about those Trumpist blue-collar folks. As The Atlantic's Ron Brownstein pointed out, using Quinnipiac polling from last year, 76% of white Republicans without a college degree supported Trump's wall — but so did 71% of white Republicans who did graduate from college. And remember that over 80% of Republicans are white.

There's a better chance of a Massachusetts politician coming out as a Yankees fan than of a Republican elected official turning on Trump.

Democrats love to say that diversity is a strength. Well, sure. If their coalition is clicking, it can amass a lot of votes — 9.7 million more than the Republicans in last year's House races. And while they may disagree on tactics — impeachment now, later or never? — they're united in wanting to contain and ultimately defeat Trump. They agree on other objectives, too, such as getting everyone health insurance, acting decisively on climate change

and reducing glaring economic inequalities. But on these questions, too, there is a wide divergence about the "how."

Those differences won't be wished away. As Gallup reported in January, 51% of Democrats see themselves as liberal, 34% call themselves moderate and 13% say they're conservative. The liberal number is way up (from 25% in 1994), but Democrats are a lot less uniform in their orientation than are Republicans, 73% of whom identify as conservative (compared with 58% a quarter-century ago).

Oh, yes, and if the House Democratic caucus is contentious, consider that 31 of its 235 members represent districts that Trump carried, and an overlapping group of 41 hold seats that went Republican in 2016.

There's no way this crowd can prevail unless it studies one of the most boring words in politics, forbearance — patient self-control, restraint, and tolerance.

Some forbearance mantras and exercises: Goals are the litmus tests, not the means; the left is right to be frustrated over the excessive caution of earlier Democratic administrations, but moderates aren't sell-outs for asking what the traffic of public opinion will bear; and keep looking across the aisle and think about what those guys — they are mostly guys — will do if they hang on to power.

As for Republicans, they need to learn the opposite of forbearance when it comes to Trump. They should look at those demographic numbers. How many decades do they think it will take to dig out of the wreckage this president will leave in his wake?

E.J. Dionne is on Twitter: @EJDionne.



EJ DIONNE  
Washington Post

## Judges should give America a chance

If you can't trust the courts, who can you trust? Nobody. So don't trust anybody ever again, because if a court gets a case concerning President Donald Trump that provides an illicit means of getting him, it very well may do it.

Well, not every court, but as one example, a federal judge in Alaska said Trump could not free up land for oil drilling, citing reasons pretty much the opposite of what the law says.

President Barack Obama did not have the authority to permanently stop drilling in millions of acres of Alaska and the eastern seaboard but the court said he did. Environmental groups that sued to overturn the Trump order did not have proper standing to sue. The groups said Trump wasn't permitted to act without Congress saying OK, but that's false. Even though the law says the D.C. Court of Appeals should hear any such cases, that is not what happened.

A Wall Street Journal editorial, after outlining all of these facts and more, tells us that "liberals are using the courts to lock in Barack Obama's legacy even as they howl about a supposedly imperial Trump presidency," and yes, I will go along with that. But the words do not go far enough. What's been happening is an assault on justice, converting

courts into political machines, a dive into shame.

Another illustration of that was how some courts did not want Trump exercising a clear right: deciding whether there might be circumstances requiring the denial of entry into the United States by people from countries brimming with violent hatred. True enough, some initial plans for a crackdown were not particularly well-formulated, but things got better and a main purpose was to encourage improved vetting. It didn't matter to judges who told us that things Trump had said during his campaign made him a villain you could not trust.

A phony assertion was that Trump was working to ban entry of all and any Muslims. But, while the evidence of that was not really evidence at all, the idea so easily penetrated some minds that some courts ruled against him. The Supreme Court set things right, but every direction you look there remain judges who think they are gods, free to do anything their high and mighty visions urge even if they are actually vengeful human beings. And thus we also had, as still another example, the ruling that Trump was not permitted to reverse Obama's executive order on not deporting Dreamers even though he was permitted to do so by law.

The use of courts to get Trump is not all that different from tactics used in other branches of government to get him, not the least being the Russian collusion investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller based on absolutely nothing. In the end, Mueller was honest, but the Trump administration must keep up its fight to make America reliable again. One means toward that end has been to put two outstanding constitutionalists on the Supreme Court.

Thanks to an excellent performance by Republicans in the Senate, we're also seeing numerous federal judges get appointed in numbers large enough to make a hefty difference over time. The thing about Republicans, at least some of them, is that too many tend to see the Constitution as lastingly respectable, still in tune with justice and reality, and not something that you reduce to vague principles that can be twisted and turned to mean whatever you want them to.

Along with others, I do happen to think we should find ways to give Dreamers a chance, for instance, and congressional Democrats had a chance to do just that. But when you start destroying our system of government to achieve the ends you seek, you are no longer giving America a chance.

Email Jay Ambrose at [speaktjay@aol.com](mailto:speaktjay@aol.com).



JAY AMBROSE  
Tribune News Service

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## OUR VIEW: HIGHWAY 14

# Legislature, governor need political will

There have always been good political reasons to fund the expansion of Highway 14 from two lanes to four from Rochester to New Ulm. But there are also good business and safety reasons.

Funding the final 12-mile stretch figures to be a genuine test of the audacity, honesty and political will of outstate legislators and the DFL governor.

### Why it matters:

The last piece of roadway from Nicollet to New Ulm has been blocked by bureaucracy and unwilling legislative leadership.

The stretch of road remains one of the most dangerous in the state. It serves 1,000 trucks leaving New Ulm every day, including large businesses like

Kraft and AMPI, which processes milk trucked in from California.

There's no question it will be an uphill battle, as it has been for decades. It's a battle against bureaucracy, and a political majority in the metro area that now has more reason to challenge the outstate project.

For years, a MnDOT road priority system left one of the most dangerous highways in the state off even a 20-year priority list. In 2010, a Free Press investigative report detailed the high rate of accidents on the stretch from Nicollet to New Ulm. As a result, MnDOT did its own study and found the roadway was even more dangerous than previously understood.

Then-Gov. Mark Dayton and legislators reacted and put together a plan to fund the \$40 million expansion.

Eventually, legislators came together with a bipartisan plan to fund other dangerous outstate roadways that fell outside MnDOT's criteria. They developed another funding mechanism called Corridors of Commerce that allowed outstate roads to be scored differently. It worked for a few years and funded at least two sections of Highway 14 east of Mankato.

But a state auditor's report criticized the program and directed MnDOT to put in more criteria for funding projects. Unfortunately, that new criteria favored metro area roads by a wide margin. Only special influence and legislation last year provided funding to the Owatonna to Dodge Center piece.

Under the new criteria, the Nicollet to New Ulm part of the project would not likely be on the list for decades.

It makes sense to us that that portion be funded. MnDOT has already invested in the North Mankato to Nicollet part and an interchange and bridge at New Ulm, where the work is in progress.

But one of three things must happen. Legislators could change the Corridors of Commerce criteria to make it more equitable to outstate. Or legislators could add the project as an earmark, as they did for Highway 212 near the metro area.

Or they could agree on a huge increase in transportation funding statewide via the gas tax and direct some of that funding back into the Corridors program or regular funding program to fund the projects further down the MnDOT list.

We urge lawmakers and leadership from both parties and the governor to come together to make this happen. Local governments and business have waited more than 50 years for this road to be completed. A completed four-lane from New Ulm to Rochester will boost economic development and commerce across southern Minnesota.

## Roll call votes online

The Free Press provides a record of all significant votes in Congress and the voting record of Minnesota members of Congress online at [www.mankatofreepress.com](http://www.mankatofreepress.com).

Votes are listed under "roll call votes" under the "news" accessed through the drop down menu at the top left of The Free Press home page.

Readers can find votes going back to 2011 on topics ranging from gun control to homeland security and from

veterans' issues to Medicare spending.

"Left and Right Scores" are also tallied for each member depending on ratings of various interest groups in categories that include liberal, conservative, green, business, social and labor categories.

Votes for this year can be found by searching "How they voted" on [www.mankatofreepress.com](http://www.mankatofreepress.com) in the search bar on the home page.

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The Free Press welcomes letters on any issue of general community interest. Please limit your letters to no more than 275 words, typewritten or clearly printed. Letters or emails citing facts that are not commonly known should include the source. Letters must contain the author's name, address and phone number for verification. All letters will be edited for clarity, grammar, spelling and space. You may email letters to the editor to [editor@mankatofreepress.com](mailto:editor@mankatofreepress.com).

Old George Washington Didn't Put His Name On Enough Things So Nobody Remembers Him



## YOUR VIEWS

# Farmers need Hagedorn to act

Farmers need action, not lip service, from Rep. Jim Hagedorn.

During his campaigns, Hagedorn spoke of his support of agriculture and small businesses. Now that he's a member of Congress, farmers in the congressman's First District need his leadership to renew the biodiesel tax incentive.

Hagedorn's congressional colleague, Rep. Angie Craig (D, 2nd District) recently sponsored the Biodiesel Tax Credit Extension Act of 2019 (HR 2089) — bipartisan legislation to renew the biodiesel and renewable diesel tax incentive for 2018 and 2019.

Hagedorn's district in southern Minnesota has two biodiesel plants producing over 80 million gallons of biodiesel per year. Make no mistake, jobs are on the line in the congressman's backyard if the tax credit extension fails to pass.

The situation is urgent. The biodiesel tax incentive has already been expired for 15 months. Meanwhile, Congress signaled several times that they support renewing the tax credit, but we are still waiting.

Everyone shares the value of this tax incentive, including farmers, bio-fuel producers and blenders.

The tax credit has helped the biodiesel industry grow rapidly. Uncertainty around the timing of renewal is threatening that progress. Nearly 5,400 jobs biodiesel supports in Minnesota across several economic sectors are at stake, including nearly \$1.7 billion biodiesel contributes to Minnesota's economy.

It also threatens the nation's environmental goals, as biodiesel is the most widely used advanced biofuel and only advanced fuel recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Southern Minnesota farmers like myself need the biodiesel tax credit, and we implore Hagedorn to play his part in helping to pass this vital piece of legislation before it's too late.

Michael Petefish  
Claremont  
President, Minnesota Soybean  
Growers Association

## Cheap clothing prices hurt environment

The Rana Plaza collapse was a structural failure that occurred on April 24, 2013, in Bangladesh, where an eight-story garment factory collapsed with a death toll of 1,134 and 2,500 injured. Workers were ordered to continue working, or lose a month's pay, even after they voiced safety concerns and cracks appeared in the walls.

Most of those workers were female, creating garments for retailers and consumers in the western world. They were making cheap clothes for our throw-away culture.

While we're paying cheap prices, the cost to the environment and garment workers is huge.

Each year, we throw away 11 million tons in the U.S. alone.

Garments, full of lead, pesticides and countless other chemicals, almost never break down and release toxic chemicals. Cheap textiles like polyester are derived from fossil fuels, contributing to global warming.

Rana Plaza is one of the many factories where garment workers are found in dangerous, toxic environments, working for low wages and without basic human rights.

Lucy Siegle, author and journalist, summed it up in the documentary

"The True Cost" — "Fast fashion isn't free. Someone, somewhere, is paying."

To combat fast fashion, buy less, wear it more and make it last. Ask yourself "Who made my clothes?" Use the Good on You app, which rates brands on how ethical they are.

April 22 - 27 is Fashion Revolution Week — an effort by conscious consumers who want to change the way clothes are sourced, produced and purchased, and who want to ensure that they are made in a safe, clean and fair way.

Join the Revolution.

Paulette Bertrand  
Mankato

## Carbon-free is a worthy goal for state

Minnesota is a leader in renewable energy, and I'm excited to advocate for legislation (HF 1833/SF2067) that will set our state on track to achieve 100% carbon-free energy by 2050.

As a pastor and person of faith, I understand the importance of moral vision. We need big goals to inspire us and move us with unity and purpose. A carbon-free economy is a worthy goal: it will protect the lakes, rivers and forests that we love and will allow our children and grandchildren to enjoy the beauty of this creation.

We would see solar panels of school buildings, more community solar gardens, electric car charging stations and other measures to help us grow into a green and prosperous economy.

I am assured in my faith that the Minnesota I hope for will come to be if we take these next steps to make this dream come true.

Andrew Davis  
St. Peter

## Trump's sole goal: Own the libs

President Trump is looking into giving a free trip to San Francisco, New Orleans or other great American cities to tens of thousands of refugees from Central America. All so he can own the libs.

"Owning the libs" is one of those phrases to have emerged over the last few years that vacillates between earnestness and irony. For people who use it earnestly, it means to do something, usually symbolic and petty, that infuriates liberals out of proportion to the deed to make fools of them. For instance, wearing a MAGA hat to a feminist poetry reading at a co-op bookstore in Berkeley. It's a form of taking the culture war to the enemy.

The ironic form of the phrase is to engage in unwitting self-sabotage while making a political point. When pro-Trump internet troll and conspiracy theorist Jack Posobiec (now a "correspondent" at One America News) had his wedding rehearsal dinner catered by Papa John's Pizza — then unpopular with the libs — that was some righteous lib-ownage. Hence one Twitter user's response to Posobiec catering choices: "Eating horrible pizza at my wedding to own the libs."

(There's even a Twitter account called "Own The Libs Bot" (@OwnTheLibsBot) that churns out made-up but often all-too-plausible examples of ironic lib-owning: "Defending pederasty to own the libs." "Getting a Confederate flag face tattoo to own the libs.")

Much of Trump's populist appeal stems from his willingness to go out of his way to own the libs.

Give the president credit: He is

a kind of savant at the genre, particularly in his preferred métier of Twitter. Tweeting footage of the 9/11 attacks while criticizing Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., last week is a good example, but his Colin Kaepernick tweets and calls to revoke media broadcast licenses are part of the canon. His defenders think this stuff is brilliant because it keeps the base riled up and, allegedly, produces gallons of delicious liberal tears. When you point out that such tweets offend more voters than they attract, "Shut up," they explain.

But no lib-owning tweet can hold a candle to Trump's announcement over the weekend that he is considering busing thousands of refugees to "sanctuary cities."

Many conservative commentators have celebrated this triumph of lib-owning, even as they concede in mumbled parentheticals that it won't actually happen — not least because it's almost certainly illegal without congressional authorization, which will never materialize. But some conservatives continue to defend Trump's theatrics on the grounds that people should take him seriously but not literally. But taken either way, the idea is nuttier than a squirrel's preferred last meal.

Stemming illegal (and sometimes legal) immigration is the president's signature issue. Moving the thousands of refugees currently in detention to sanctuary cities is literally achieving the opposite of his goal.

Moreover, the reason there's a refugee crisis at the border is that desperate Central Americans believe this is their now-or-never moment to

get asylum in the United States. What will happen when video of buses depositing refugees in Colorado, Vermont or Oregon is broadcast across South America?

Trump keeps asserting that these refugees are an army of invading murderers, rapists and drug dealers — and apparently he thinks most Americans believe him. So of course, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other San Francisco liberals must be terrified that the president has called their bluff.

The thing is, most immigrants who are in the United States illegally end up going to these very localities. Sixty percent of them reside in just 20 metro areas, most of which have adopted sanctuary policies and limited their cooperation with immigration enforcement. In other words, Trump is proposing fulfilling the final leg of the travel plans of every caravan working its way through Mexico.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump made Kate Steinle, the San Francisco woman who was tragically shot and killed by a man who'd been previously deported five times, into a martyr for his cause. Trump's logic suggests we need more Kate Steinles to own the libs.

Trump's trolling could pay off if some Democrats — say, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York — call on Pelosi and Congress to take the president up on his offer. Then, Trump could say, "See! The Democrats really do want open borders!"

That such a scenario is not unimaginable is further proof that our politics can always get dumber.

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