

Editorial

My biases revealed for your consideration as elections approach

I believe every newspaper editor and editorial board should periodically reveal the biases that influence editorial decisions. It is especially important for us to do so during a period of divisive political elections such as we have coming up this fall. With that in mind, I will take this opportunity to reveal the biases that influence my editorial decisions.

First, I have already pretty much made up my mind on a few candidates for various offices.

I will not vote for Governor Pawlenty. His commitment to his "no new taxes" pledge was inane. It was as stupid as a pledge to "support any new tax" would be if made by another candidate. Elected officials have a responsibility to the citizens of the political unit they represent once they are elected. The governor has demonstrated that his loyalty is instead toward a rather insignificant, if well connected, segment of the state's citizens.

Congressman Gutknecht is also on my list of candidates for whom not to vote, in his case also because he has transferred his loyalty away from those he was elected to represent. In his case, he demonstrates almost mindless devotion to the Bush Administration's positions. While he has shown signs recently of beginning to wise up, if he had been loyal to the people of the First District instead of to the Administration we would all have been better served.

State Senator David Senjem and State Representative Randy Demmer each have my vote despite

the fact that we disagree on many issues. I was particularly disappointed that they both supported the Twins' stadium project. Nevertheless, I have had the opportunity, during the three years we have owned the newspapers, of working with both men. Neither has ever been reluctant to state where they were coming from, even on issues upon which we disagreed. Most importantly, they have both demonstrated consistently to me that they are concerned about the impact decisions that are made at the legislature will have on their constituents. I know from personal experience that they work hard to represent their constituents on issues important to the constituents. I have no question that their first loyalty is to the people of Minnesota's District 29, even though they are both good Republicans.

Those are the decisions I've made so far as specific candidates.

When I am looking at a candidate for any office, my first concern is, "Are they representing the people in the political subdivision from which they were elected or are they representing some other interest?" Elected officials derive their power from the people they represent, that is the essence of representative government. Our elected officials are there to represent us so we can do other things. When elected officials allow other interests to influence their decisions more than their constituents influence them, I don't believe they deserve to continue holding office.

When I am looking at a candidate, I am not particularly concerned that the candidate and I agree on all the issues. I am, however, concerned about whether a candidate's positions are locked in stone. If they are, I don't want the candidate representing me, even if we agree on the issues. Life is too full of changing challenges. We can't allow closed-minded zealots to represent us, even if they seem at first glance to be good Democrats or Republicans or Christians or businesspersons or whatever.

On the other hand, there are issues that influence my editorial decisions.

I am opposed to abortion in almost every instance. However, I do support a woman's right to choose whether to get pregnant or not. If a woman chooses to get pregnant, albeit the choice is made by her actions, then she has the obligation to carry through on the decision. If the right to choose is taken away from her through force, whether rape or incest, and she gets pregnant against her will, then the decision about whether to stay pregnant belongs to her.

I believe life begins at conception.

I support birth control methods that do not involve terminating a human life.

I believe everyone who opposes abortion should be personally committed to providing care for the children who result from the pregnancies that are then not aborted. It should not be done through taxpayer

support programs, but through programs supported entirely by the people who would involve themselves in another person's decision.

I am opposed to killing for any reason except in self-defense. That means I oppose capital punishment and support war only in situations such as World Wars 1 & 2.

I support universal medical care. Everyone should have access to basic medical care, including immunizations, preventive care, acute and chronic care regardless of financial ability to pay.

I support universal education throughout life. We all benefit from having an educated populace. Educated people are better equipped to deal with life's challenges in our modern society. Some people are able to educate themselves through reading and self-study, others need teachers and guided learning. We have the ability now to make education available to everyone, we should take up the challenge of seeing that it is available.

I support responsible management of the resources entrusted to our elected officials. Our governments at every level are wasteful and often do a poor job of maintaining the infrastructure our society depends on to operate. This is largely the result of partisan politics. Politicians of both parties act irresponsibly when it comes to maintaining our roads, bridges, government facilities and government equipment. They prefer to spend money on new projects and ignore those already in place until those

have deteriorated to the point something must be done.

I am opposed to allowing elected officials to set their own salary and benefits packages. They invariably overcompensate themselves. Elected office should not be compensated at levels comparable to similar jobs in the private sector because then it becomes a potential career choice. Career politicians are not desirable critters—even the best of them spoil as they age in office.

Taxes should cover the operating costs of government every year. If expenses go up, taxes should go up the same amount. Every generation should pay its own way and make a contribution to the future, too. The current system of borrowing against future tax income is irresponsible and should be criminal.

We should have more options for public service similar to Americorps and the Peace Corps. Everyone should have to serve at least two years in some form of community service. We could do service in law enforcement, court services, education, community maintenance, medical care, etc.

Authority at the Federal level should be greatly restricted, and government agencies at every level should have sunset limits to be reviewed every set number of years and with strict performance requirements.

Governments are supposed to serve the people. Every action of government should be examined by every citizen with that purpose in mind.

The above are biases that influence my editorial decisions. I reveal them so you can keep them in mind when reading our newspapers.

If you see that I am letting my biases interfere with providing you with the information you need from our newspaper, please advise me immediately of your concerns.

While we in the media like to talk about being objective, none of us is totally objective. We all have biases that influence what we cover, how we cover it and the opinions we express about it.

I try to be objective on every page of the newspaper except here on the editorial page. Here I feel comfortable expressing my personal opinion.

I want you to feel comfortable expressing your personal opinion here, too.

Democracy requires the cooperation of millions of people with millions of different opinions. It is important for us to share them, for us to understand them and for us to respect the differences. In doing that, we learn to develop solutions to the problems we face in our melting pot nation.

I take our responsibility as a newspaper and your responsibility as a citizen very seriously, that is why I wanted to reveal my biases to you as we enter the final stages of this year's election season.

Larry Dobson