

ND has a role in restoring long-distance passenger rail

North Dakota is at the epicenter of a passenger rail renaissance in the United States, and the Grand Forks Herald editorial board's recent editorial (Our opinion: Not every town can have train and air service, May 21) rightly highlights the growing public interest in passenger rail across the Northern Plains. Ridership on the Empire Builder is increasing, and North Dakota's recent appropriation to assist with a rail service plan demonstrates a serious, statewide conversation about restoring options long lost to rural communities.

That said, the editorial's concerns about feasibility,



Strohmaier

duplication, and federal subsidies warrant a more comprehensive understanding, especially as this initiative enters a new phase of technical planning and public input.

The proposed Big Sky North Coast Corridor does not duplicate the Empire Builder. It revives a former Amtrak route – discontinued in 1979 due to federal budget cuts, not a lack of demand – that connected Jamestown, Bismarck, Dickinson, Glendive, Bozeman and Missoula. Today, those cities remain completely unserved by long-distance passenger rail.

Importantly, the route has received strong support from North Dakota's top leaders, including Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and all four U.S. senators from Montana and North Dakota. It is also backed

by a growing coalition of local and regional stakeholders, including the cities of Jamestown, Dickinson, and Bismarck, as well as the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization – all of whom recognize the economic and mobility benefits of restoring this service.

Yes, passenger rail in America needs public investment – just as do highways, airports, and especially Essential Air Service (EAS) flights to rural communities. The real question isn't whether public investment is justified; it's whether it helps expand opportunity. Long-distance rail provides safe, efficient, and weather-resistant transportation for seniors, students, families, and business travelers – especially in areas underserved by air or bus.

This project is still ongoing. We are moving into Step 2 of the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor ID program, where key planning work will be undertaken: identifying station locations, estimating ridership, integrating air service and conducting detailed cost-benefit analyses. This federally led process is designed to ensure transparency and avoid duplication. Communities across North Dakota will have the chance to contribute to shaping these decisions.

Let's avoid pitting transportation modes or rural communities against each other. Rail won't replace air travel, but it can bridge gaps, improve reliability, and serve as a vital alternative when other systems fail. Especially in a state where long highway distances and limited air service are

common, having dependable ground transportation isn't a luxury – it's a necessity.

The bigger picture is this: we're no longer just thinking about ideas. North Dakota is part of a nationwide movement toward practical investment in intercity rail, supported by data and public backing. This corridor demonstrates careful planning, growing public support, and a long-overdue commitment to a multimodal future that provides rural Americans with more than one option.

The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority welcomes continued discussion and thanks the Grand Forks Herald for helping elevate this one.

David Strohmaier is chair of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority in Missoula, Montana.

North Dakota schools need federal funds now

BY NICK ARCHULETA

North Dakota's public schools and the students they serve find themselves once again being negatively impacted by political gamesmanship – and it is unacceptable. The recent decision by the U.S. Department of Education to withhold millions in federal education funds from our state is already beginning to damage our schools, shortchange our students, and strain educators



Archuleta

who are already doing more with less.

These funds are not a luxury. They are essential resources intended to support low-income students, students with disabilities, and vital programs that help both rural and urban districts thrive. When the federal government withholds this funding, it is not politicians who suffer, it is the kids in our classrooms, especially in communities that rely most on this support. The Department of Education's irresponsible action to delay the delivery of resources appropriated by Congress for express educational purposes must not be allowed to stand.

Delaying the provision of these funds does nothing but disrupt plans and promote chaos in school districts across North Dakota. School boards, administrators, and teachers have been planning for the 2025-2026 school year for several months. For the administration to withhold suddenly and arbitrarily \$26,573,545 from North Dakota's schools is a travesty and serves only to undermine our state's great public schools. But maybe that is the point. If it is, it does not reflect well on the Department of Education.

School leaders across the state are already facing difficult choices. This careless

decision to withhold funds may cause districts to freeze hiring, increase class sizes, cancel professional development, and/or slash desperately needed programming for our students.

Importantly, this is not a partisan issue. It's a matter of protecting the future of our children, the quality of our public schools, the recruitment and retention of our teacher workforce, and strengthening our communities.

Federal education dollars belong in our classrooms, not locked up in ideologically partisan limbo. With schools starting in just over a month,

we need leadership, and we need it now! That is why we are calling on North Dakotans to contact Sen. John Hoeven, Sen. Kevin Cramer, and Rep. Julie Fedorchak and urge them to work swiftly and decisively with the Department of Education to resolve this needless delay of funds allocated to benefit North Dakota's school children.

After all, North Dakota's students should not have to pay the price for the misguided actions at the Department of Education.

Nick Archuleta is president of North Dakota United, the state's largest professional union of public educators and employees.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Delivering real hope for ND's ag, energy

BY DOUG GOEHRING, NORTH DAKOTA AG COMMISSIONER
BY RON NESS, PRESIDENT OF ND PETROLEUM COUNCIL

To the editor,

The media narrative surrounding the Big Beautiful Bill (BBB) has been filled with misinformation, leaving most North Dakotans confused about what this legislation means for our state. We want to set the record straight about how this bill delivers transformational benefits for agriculture, energy and every working family.

For too long, federal policies have picked winners and losers, attacking North Dakota's agriculture and energy industries with harmful regulations and policies that favored intermittent energy sources while discouraging investment in our primary economic drivers.

Oil, gas and agricultural products are commodities that face price swings and volatility in global markets, while our input costs and regulatory compliance expenses remain mostly fixed, creating razor-thin margins that make it difficult to break even or operate profitably. Previous federal policies made this worse by adding bureaucracy and uncertainty. The BBB changes this dynamic, creating a level playing field and new opportunities for North Dakota industries.

North Dakota agriculture receives long-overdue support through significant farm policy reforms. It's been decades since farmers have been able to update base acres that



reflect modern crop rotations. The legislation strengthens the agricultural safety net with enhanced coverage programs, increased payment limits and improved disaster assistance. Beginning farmers receive extended crop insurance assistance, ensuring the next generation can enter and stay in agriculture despite increased capital requirements.

The energy provisions shift from regulatory hostility to genuine support for American energy production. The bill mandates guaranteed access to federal lands with known oil and gas deposits, establishes binding environmental review timelines, and eliminates delays that have plagued infrastructure projects. Changes have the potential to double

Bakken oil recovery and extend the play's productive life for decades.

The BBB delivers substantial tax relief to North Dakota workers through overtime tax exemptions and enhanced deductions. When workers have more take-home pay and industries thrive, Main Street businesses prosper, schools remain open and young people stay in North Dakota.

Agriculture and energy drive North Dakota, and with the passage of this bill, it supports food security, economic security, energy security, and royalties from mineral development that help lower our national debt. It builds a brighter future for this generation and the next.

Iran has reason to hate America

BY LILLIAN BACHMEIER
Mandan, North Dakota

To the editor,

Although Iran is a repressive regime, they have reason to hate America. Trump, who's allergic to reading history books, called Iran a "bully." You decide who the bully really is.

Iran's hatred for America didn't appear overnight. It was built brick by brick for 72 years of American interference, betrayal and bloodshed.

In 1953, the CIA overthrew Iran's elected leader, Moasadeh, for daring to nationalize their oil. He was replaced by the Western Consortium with

the Shah of Iran, a brutal monarch who tortured people for 26 years backed by the U.S. military. CIA torture included electric shocks to the genitals, extracted teeth and nails, heavy weights on testicles, banned religious gatherings, massive surveillance, while the consortium took 50% of their oil profits. While the Shah lived in opulence, 80% of the farmers were landless. He introduced heroin to make the people passive.

In 1979, the Iranians successfully removed the Shah. America would then punish the Iranians with brutal sanctions – keeping them from the world banking system, withholding vital drugs, medical equipment, technology, etc. Today, we are still choking Iran – 45 years of sanctions!

America sided with Saddam Hussein when he invaded Iran, giving him money, weapons, and intelligence. When Saddam gassed Iranian soldiers, nearly a million Iranians died.

While Israel was given the nuclear bomb, Bush Sr. labeled Iran "the axis of evil."

When Iran signed the nuclear deal in good faith with Biden, Trump shredded it and re-imposed brutal sanctions.

On June 28, Trump couldn't tolerate Netanyahu getting all the honor and glory for attacking Iran and impulsively jumped in.

This touches on the major crimes America has imposed upon Iran. There are far more. Just like Palestine, Iran fights back in whatever way they can. Can you begin to understand why Iran would hate America?

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— First Amendment of the United States Constitution

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