

Letters and Guest Columns Policy

The Devils Lake Journal welcomes letters to the editor and guest columns (preferably on local issues). The writer’s full name, signature, home address and telephone number must be included with the submission so we can verify it, including letters with multiple signatures. Address and telephone number are not published in the paper. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for potential libelous content, good taste, grammar, punctuation, length and spelling. Due to space limitations, we request letters to be 300 words or less and guest columns 800 words or less. Submissions should be sent to the Devils Lake Journal by e-mail to loleson@cmpapers.com

Exception: During an election year cycle all submissions favoring one candidate over another, or one party over another must be a paid political advertisement.

A call to action: “Let’s DO something!”

A young husband and father is killed by a sniper’s bullet while he speaks at a college campus.

“Why?” We ask.

Is this where we really want to be in our country?

Democrats are called “Extreme liberals” - all painted with the same brush - dismissed as non-persons - “wacky” they’re all the same!

Republicans are called names, too, “Maga Extremists” - radicals on the right. Ego-maniacs who want to turn the clock back to the 1930’s or more!

YOU’RE the bad guys!

No, YOU’RE the bad guys!

Aren’t we better than that?

Can’t we listen to one another and appreciate our differences without doing violence to our humanity?

I say it is possible.

I hope it is possible!

For a long time, now, I have wanted to “DO” something - to try to make the situation better - but have been at a loss trying to figure out WHAT to do.

I’ve come up with an idea that I hope you might find interesting.

It came to me as I covered the last political rally that was staged on the steps of the Old Post Office in downtown Devils Lake.

There were over 80 people gathered there and sharing their concerns about their own fears about what was happening around the country and right here at home.

A number of those gathered there on that day were from the Pekin/Tolna/Hamar area. They wore blue shirts with the slogan “Stronger Together” and spoke about the group they had formed of the same name that meets regularly - once a month, I think - for the purpose of supporting and encouraging one another during this confusing and difficult time.

That’s something we could do in Devils Lake, too!

So, after talking about it with a number of people, I booked the community room at the Lake Region Public Library for Wednesday, Sep. 17 from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. and have been getting the word out about this meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend if they can express themselves, their beliefs and fears in a respectful manner AND allow others to do the same. That’s all we ask.

Sep. 17 happens to be Constitution Day USA and that makes it a perfect day to DO something good for our community, our country and ourselves - can we meet together? Can we express our thoughts and feelings respectfully? Can we support one another - Republicans, Democrats and Independents (like me?) - can we?

I hope so.

I’ll let you know what happens!

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Guest Column: Concerns aired about CDC, Secretary Kennedy’s actions



by Mary Wakefield, Grand Forks, ND

As doctors and nurses in North Dakota we have grave concerns about the unprecedented chaos and collapse of critical programs at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the nation’s premier public health agency. For over 75 years CDC has protected generations of Americans. Now however, CDC’s capacity has been degraded through actions taken by Health and Human Services Secretary Kennedy. We urge the state’s congressional delegation to act immediately to prevent further destruction of the nation’s public health system that is critical to protecting the health and security of North Dakotans and all Americans.

Efforts to improve the effectiveness of federal agencies are important. However, recent unprecedented actions by the current administration are laying waste to the programs and expertise our state relies on for help. Over a billion dollars has been cut from CDC with more cuts proposed. These funds support prevention of acute and chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease that kill rural Americans at significantly higher rates. Secretary Kennedy is even limiting the availability of lifesaving vaccines.

Thousands of CDC staff have been fired, including physicians and other public health experts with deep expertise. These individuals were prohibited from doing their jobs for months while receiving salaries paid for by taxpayer dollars. Just as U.S. military personnel defend the country

against threats, so too CDC personnel protect the nation’s health. Both defense and disease surveillance and intervention sharing a common goal—to keep the American public safe. In fact, hundreds of CDC staff took their jobs knowing they can be called away at a moment’s notice. For example, in the past, when Grand Forks experienced a tuberculosis outbreak, CDC personnel traveled to the city at least five times. Some stayed for extended periods to help prevent further spread of this dangerous disease. Like the US military, CDC personnel have always gone where the country needs them.

Now however, mass firings include even the CDC director who was recently confirmed by the US Senate and supported by North Dakota’s senators. Firing her triggered the resignations of some of the nation’s senior experts in public health.

These personnel, program and funding actions will make it harder for health providers to do their jobs and families to stay healthy. For example, until now, CDC has actively tracked eight different bacteria that, in the food supply, can severely sicken people and are sometimes life-threatening, particularly in infants. Quietly and without public engagement, the tracking system no longer tracks six of these foodborne bacteria. When cases arise, the system alerting public health across the nation will not be activated in the same way. The erosion of national level public health expertise and support can result in sick children and workers,

hospitalizations and even deaths. It is as if the federal government is saying to health care providers and American families, you are on you own.

This seismic shift in America’s capacity to protect the nation’s health is unprecedented and made far worse by HHS political leadership pushing politically driven decisions and inaccurate information. The nation’s collective medical knowledge and gold standard evidence built across decades is being ignored. Downgrading public health capacity has no place in a country with premiere public health medical knowledge that, until now, has been the envy of the world. Former CDC directors, appointed by Republican and Democrat Presidents, have expressed grave concerns about the impact of these actions.

Members of Congress cannot sit by and watch this public health threat continue to worsen. We call on our elected federal officials to rapidly engage with the Administration to stop the devastating erosion of our government’s ability to support the nation’s health. Our Congressional delegation is well positioned to ensure that the health protections our parents had in the past are there for our children in the future. Senator Hoeven, as a member of the funding committee, should rapidly work to ensure CDC has adequate funding and personnel. Representative Fedorchak, on a committee with oversight responsibility, should immediately call for public hearings on the massive changes that have degraded CDC’s capacity. She should request that

the fired CDC director testify, along with leading experts who resigned because of the politicization of CDC. We are past time for Congress to exercise their funding and oversight responsibilities in protecting the public’s health safety and security.

The health of our state’s families and communities is too precious to risk. We share the deep concern our nation’s leaders in nursing and medicine are expressing about our degraded ability to respond to public health crises. We ask our elected officials to act.

Submitted by Mary Wakefield, Grand Forks, ND, and also on behalf of the following individuals:

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