

## Letter to the Editor

### Don't overlook the June 9 primary election

Thomas Jefferson said "We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." On June 9, North Dakota will conduct its state-wide primary election. If the past is any indication, "the majority who participate" as Jefferson mentions, may only be 11% of eligible North Dakota voters.

Since 2000, North Dakota has averaged a disappointingly sparse 22% turnout for the June primary election. Said a different way, nearly 80% of eligible North Dakotans have stayed home and remained silent when it comes to electing their mayors, their city councils or commissions, and deciding who shall serve on their park board. Not all school board elections are on the primary ballot, but many are. An overwhelming majority are yielding their vote for local representation in their school districts to a fraction of the population.

Yes, there are partisan races on the June primary ballot. Nominations for statewide and legislative candidates will make up the front page of your ballot. But on the other side of your ballot, you will find races that determine key local leaders; 728 city council and commission seats are up for grabs; 502 spots on park boards across North Dakota are up for a vote; city mayors and commission presidents, the leading voices of our cit-

ies - 205 of them to be exact - will be decided on June 9. In all, 1,500 races and measures will be on primary ballots in our state.

North Dakota offers several options to make participating in our elections convenient for the voter. Eligible North Dakotans can choose to utilize absentee, early voting or Election Day to cast their ballot. Early voting begins June 1 in Sioux, Stutsman and Ward counties. Cass and Grand Forks counties will offer early voting beginning June 2. Burleigh County starts early voting on June 3. Morton and Stark counties will launch early voting on June 4.

If you are voting absentee be sure to get your ballot in the mail as soon as possible or drop it off at your county office before the polls close on June 9. Ballots will not be accepted if they arrive after Election Day.

The June primary isn't a warmup for November. The election results in June will have an impact on your everyday activities and quality of life.

The next election is always the most important election. Don't sit this one out.

To find a sample ballot, polling locations, early voting locations and hours go to [nd.gov](http://nd.gov).

Michael Howe  
North Dakota  
Secretary of State

## What is a farmer's life worth?

North Dakota is experiencing a crisis: farmer suicides. A producer told me his family knew three farmers who had taken their own lives in recent months. According to the CDC, farmers are three times more likely to die by suicide than the general population. These are neighbors, friends and people who fed the world.

Farmers manage operations involving millions of dollars. This year, as one farmer told me, is "make or break" because input costs are higher than the crop revenue may be this fall. He knows others in similar high-stress situations. When a farm family's business is on the line, their home and generational legacy is on the line as well.

The national 988 lifeline saves lives. But many farmers won't bare their soul to a stranger who doesn't understand agriculture. Rural people are proud and raised to solve their own problems. This

is one problem no one should face alone.

I am organizing roundtable discussions on rural mental health and suicide prevention, and I invite every North Dakota candidate to join me. This is not a Red or Blue Team issue. This is a human issue. As long as someone is breathing, there is hope. Once they stop, it's too late.

Let's bring farmers, faith leaders, agriculture organizations and healthcare professionals together to share agriculture-specific mental health resources and figure out a solution. One conversation at a time. If the first roundtable is meaningful, I'll organize more. To be part of this effort, call me at 701-400-6767.

A farmer's life is worth it.  
Vern Thompson  
Candidate for N.D.  
Agriculture Commissioner  
 Fargo, N.D.

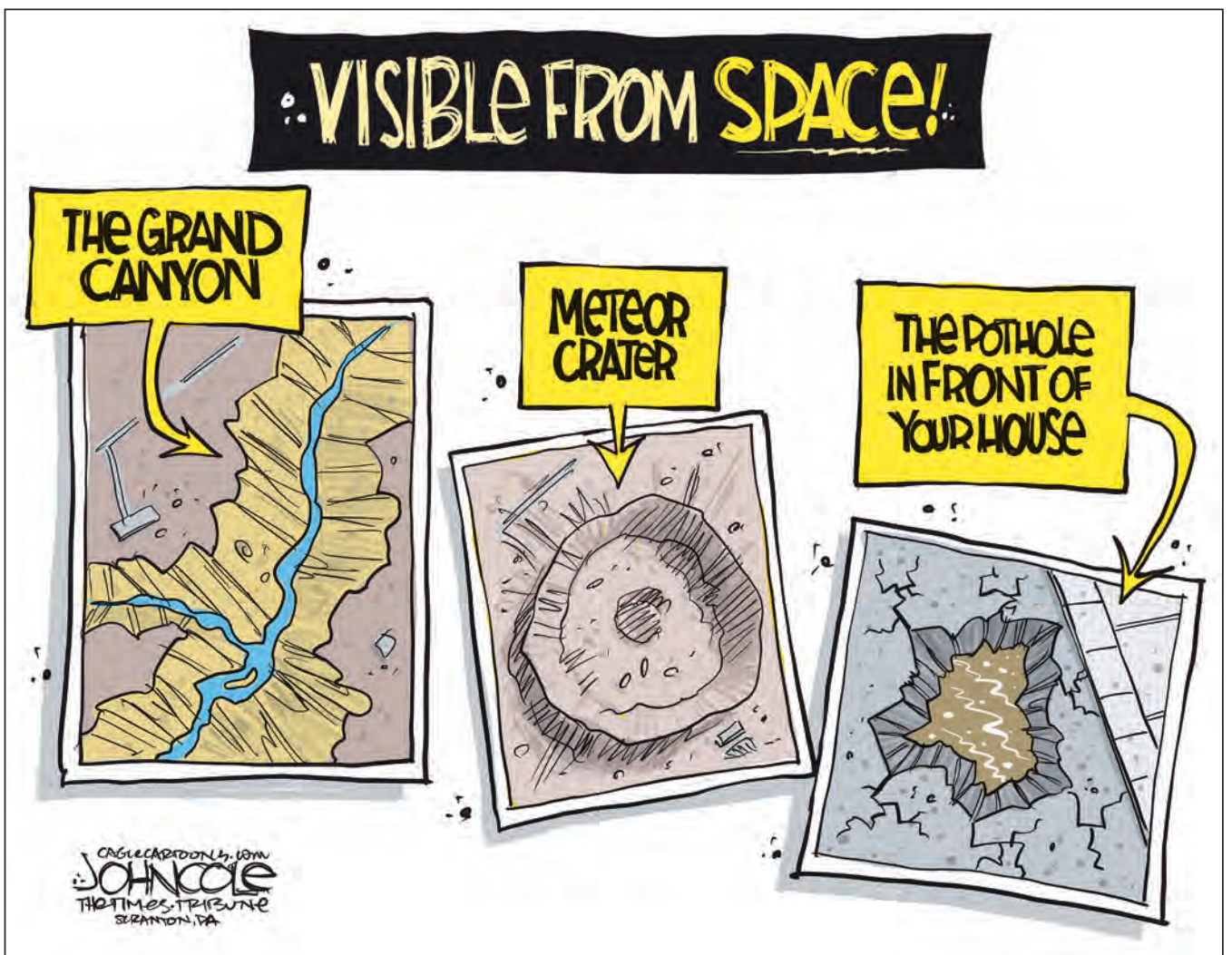
## Letters to the Editor

### Our Policy

The Editor of the "New Rockford Transcript" welcomes letters from readers. Below are the submission guidelines for Letters to the Editor.

- All letters must be signed. Anonymous letters will not be published.
- Letters written on behalf of groups will be published with both the group and individual signer(s) names.
- Only one Letter to the Editor will be published per candidate for any local race during an election, and one letter each for and against any local ballot initiative. Additional letters will be subject to regular advertising rates.
- All letters must include the author's phone number and address for verification.
- Each writer is limited to one letter per calendar month. We reserve the right to edit or omit any and all letters.
- Letters reflect the view of the author and NOT of the newspaper, its staff or owner.
- Letters can be sent to the mailing address or email address below.

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## Beware distracted drivers this summer

by Tom Purcell

As millions of Americans hit the roadways this summer, it's time to be especially aware of distracted drivers.

According to Distraction.gov, distracted driving involves "any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving" - everything from eating and drinking to using a navigation system to checking digital devices.

When I lived in Washington, D.C. - land of the most distracted drivers on Earth - I saw people do nutty things on the Beltway: applying makeup, reading books and newspapers, working on computers and participating in online conferences and, of course, texting.

Texting continues to be the most dangerous distraction. According to the latest CTIA data, Americans exchanged nearly 2.2 trillion texts in 2024 - and surveys show that millions of them were sent and read while behind the wheel.

The latest National Occupational Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) shows that whereas

fewer people are talking on their phones, many more are visibly manipulating their digital devices - a number that has more than doubled since 2015.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that young drivers, ages 16 to 24, are distracted by digital devices at much higher rates than older drivers.

All told, digital-device distractions cause approximately 1.6 million crashes and hundreds of thousands of injuries each year - including 3,208 deaths in 2024 alone.

Which means we drivers need to knock it off.

How many studies do we have to do to finally realize how dangerous it is to let digital devices distract us as we drive?

Carnegie Mellon University found that using a digital device while driving - even just listening to a hands-free conversation - reduces activity in the brain's parietal lobe by 37%.

Since the parietal lobe handles spatial awareness, processes what drivers see

around them and helps them judge where their car is in relation to everything else on the road, distracted drivers are at greater risk of missing hazards, drifting out of their lanes, misjudging distances and reacting more slowly to sudden changes in traffic.

In other words, distracted driving is equivalent to driving at night with one eye closed and the dashboard lights turned off.

Here's another troubling finding: According to the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, texting while driving diverts your eyes from the road for an average of five seconds. At 55 mph, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded.

You'd think it would be simple common sense - that people would know better than to try to text and drive or take cellphone calls while they're roaring down a highway at a high rate of speed - but that isn't the case.

You'd think there would be no need for new laws and penalties to punish and prevent distracted driving, but unfortunately, there is.

Every day, newspaper headlines feature tragedies that involve distracted drivers - and the subsequent manslaughter lawsuits that many of these drivers face. It's

all heartbreaking and totally unnecessary.

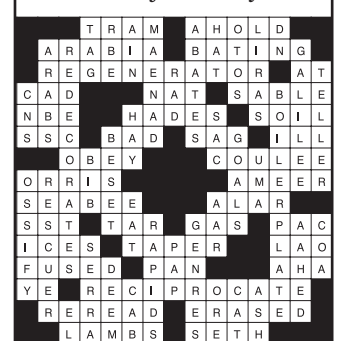
That is why many people - people like me who are otherwise wary of our government - agree that state and local governments need to crack down on this matter until a thickheaded public finally grasps the seriousness of using digital devices while driving.

So be careful when you hit the roadways this summer - careful to avoid a growing number of drivers oblivious to the dangers of distracted driving.

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See Tom Purcell's syndicated column, humor books and funny videos featuring his dog, Thurber, at [TomPurcell.com](http://TomPurcell.com). Email him at [Tom@TomPurcell.com](mailto:Tom@TomPurcell.com).

### - Weekly Crossword - Answers from May 25



## - Weekly Crossword -

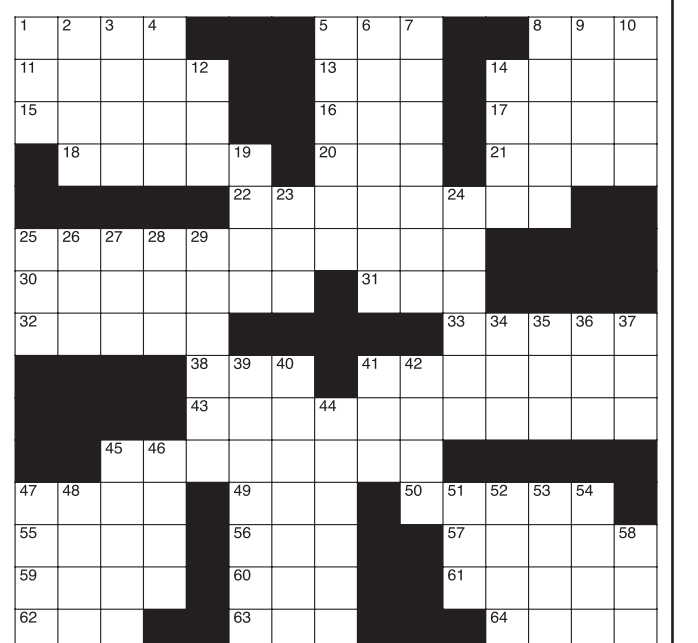
### CLUES ACROSS

- Egyptian bull-god
- A young canine
- Cologne
- Fictional British P.I.
- Midway between northeast and east
- A place to shop
- Minneapolis suburb
- Single lens reflex
- NY Mets great Tommie
- Informal loan clubs
- Habitual twitching
- Holm oak
- Willing to consent or submit
- In an early way
- Made possible
- Language in Ghana
- Relating to one's birth
- Deep-bodied fishes
- Defunct European currency
- Small American songbird
- One from L.A.
- After tenth
- Hillside
- Red deer
- Partner to "oohed"
- Indian musical pattern
- Israeli city \_\_ Aviv
- Golden peas plant

- Breezed through
- Midway between east and southeast
- Frameworks
- Danish krone
- Fall back
- Influential Korean leader

### CLUES DOWN

- Bridge building degree
- Expression of sorrow or pity
- Large, stocky lizard
- Turkish leader title
- Nag
- Blank
- Closely woven cotton fabric
- A nice shot in golf
- Away from wind
- Evergreen shrub genus
- Large African antelope
- Something you receive
- Satisfy
- Wet dirt
- No longer here
- Writing utensil
- Ribonucleic acid
- Consume food
- Licensed for Wall Street
- Alternative forms of a gene



- Buddy
- We all do it
- Chicken
- No seats available
- Yearned to possess
- Ineffectual
- Explosive
- Turkish title
- Worn near the foot
- Impatient
- Set an example for

- others
- Actor Pitt
  - Instrument of torture
  - Swiss river
  - Grayish white
  - A way to print
  - Storied college hoops program
  - Midway between south and southeast

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