

## OPINION

## REVIEW EDITORIAL

# Legals are necessary

## Printed word provides tangible proof

**H**ow much did the school board decide to pay the superintendent?

What culverts will the county replace this summer?

What payments did the city council approve this month?

Seems like the kind of information Iowans want to know.

While some of those figures are reported by your local newspaper, others are included in the public notices published on a regular basis in this paper and thousands of others in Iowa and across the country.

That has been the case for decades. Counties, cities and towns, school districts and other public entities have been legally mandated to publish a bare-bones account of their work, including salaries, bills paid and other financial details as well as election dates and more important public information, in at least one local newspaper.

That has been under attack by politicians for many years. They claim it's a matter of saving money, even though the cost for legals — as they are referred to — is estimated at less than one-tenth of 1 percent of annual budgets for these governments. They also dismiss newspapers as a historic business, no longer crucial to understand how public business is conducted.

Really? It seems to us that honest, accurate reporting is more crucial now than ever before. We also wonder why some politicians are so eager to avoid public scrutiny and want to make it more difficult to track their work.

Legal notices are once again being targeted by the Iowa Legislature. We think it's worth your time to learn about this proposal, and to contact your local legislators and make it clear you oppose this effort to make public information more difficult to obtain and understand.

Senate File 546 would change the law by creating a state website where legal notices are published. Local governments would no longer have to publish them in a local paper, most of which make these public notices available both in print and on their websites.

We think this is a terrible idea. Here's why:

Newspapers serve as a watchdog on government entities. It's an important part of our role in American society.

We publish legals to keep the public informed — and to keep an eye on the work of elected and appointed officials.

Newspapers provide a permanent record. Legal notices are published, and the papers preserved in newspaper offices, libraries and by individuals. The information published weeks,

months or years ago still is available, either with a search of archives or through an online search.

Newspapers are neutral observers. We will not alter a legal notice to favor an agency, an official or a citizen. They are published as they are produced. We strongly disagree with allowing governments to control how this information is published and preserved.

Newspapers have absorbed many body punches over the last few decades with the rise of the internet. While many have failed, others, including the newspaper you are reading, have adapted and survived. While some people would like to see us go under, we plan on being part of this community for a long, long time. Stripping the modest but needed income derived from legal notices is just another attack upon the service we provide.

All 99 Iowa counties have at least one newspaper, with 241 community papers providing information to residents. Some have newsrooms staffed with experienced reporters; others are smaller operations with a handful of people doing multiple jobs.

Many of these papers publish legal notices, and they don't rake in piles of cash for doing so. The fees charged are set by state law, and they are not major money-makers for papers.

What they do, however, is provide crucial information for their readers. Recent research shows 84 percent of Iowans read local papers either in print or online, and 93 percent report being in contact with a paper. Legal notices are regular reading for many people, and they depend on them being in their paper, not on some state website where it would be included in a huge log of data from across the state.

Senate File 546 was approved by a subcommittee and moved forward by the Senate Ways and Means Committee. It could be approved by the entire Legislature this session, sending the bill to Gov. Kim Reynolds, who has been open in her disdain for Iowa newspapers and unwillingness to respond to important and timely questions.

Even if you don't read legals very often, it's easy to understand how important they are to keep government operations open and transparent.

A public notice printed in a newspaper creates tangible proof of prior notice, relatively unalterable evidence of publication and, equally important, of the precise words used.

We want to see this misguided and dangerous bill rejected, and we ask you to join us to help that happen.



## School's logical process

**T**here is an interesting study in contrasts playing out in Iowa.

One example comes from the Davis County School District in Bloomfield in southeast Iowa. It is the 96th largest of Iowa's 328 public districts, with an enrollment of 1,150 students.

The other example comes from the Iowa Legislature and Gov. Kim Reynolds.

The Davis County school board is wrestling with an incredibly difficult decision — whether to hold classes four days a week instead of the traditional five-day-a-week schedule.

The decision-making process has been marked by ongoing public information over the past five months. There has been lots of opportunity for people to ask questions about what is best for the Davis County schools and Davis County kids.

The process is geared both for learning what people in the district want and for helping the community become comfortable with the decision the school board eventually makes.

On the other hand, the solid Republican majorities in the Iowa House of Representatives and Iowa Senate, with a Republican in the governor's office, seem more interested in gaining legislative victories and less interested in following a process that builds confidence and acceptance among Iowans whose opinions differ from the Republicans.

See what you think: There are several reasons the Davis County School District has been thinking about switching to a four-day schedule. Money is not the prime motivation, but eliminating one day of classes would cut fuel costs for school buses by 20 percent. That is not insignificant. Davis County has one of the biggest bus fleets in rural Iowa because the district covers the entire county. And every dollar spent on transportation is a dollar not available for classroom learning.

The bigger reason for the possible schedule change would be to make it easier to recruit and retain quality teachers in a rural county.

The decision-making process being used in Davis County has been refreshing. Last October, superintendent Dan Maeder created a team to formally study the pros and cons of a four-day school week.

Business owners, parents of



**RANDY EVANS**  
STRAY THOUGHTS

students and other residents have been looped in. School employees were surveyed.

Informational meetings were held via Zoom so people could hear what was being learned and ask questions. Representatives from Waco of Wayland and Moulton-Udell, two rural districts that already have switched to a four-day week, shared the pluses and the minuses. And more community forums are planned in the coming weeks.

Through all of this, Maeder has been available to the public, the people for whom he works — at his office, at school board meetings, at school activities, and at the Casey's or Brothers Market — if local folks have questions to ask or comments to offer.

The process Maeder and the board are following certainly contrasts with the process we see at the Iowa Capitol.

Parents whose opinions are in line with the governor's on LGBTQ issues, controversial school books or other hot-button topics can get meetings with her or have their calls returned by her aides. Parents of LGBTQ kids or people who oppose banning certain books are frustrated by the governor's refusal to meet with them.

In the Legislature, it is not unusual for the public to get less than one day's notice before a controversial bill is debated. Sometimes an important proposal is introduced in the Legislature, voted on by both the House and Senate, and then signed into law by the governor, all in just a handful of days.

A few weeks ago, governor unveiled a huge bill to reorganize the executive branch of state government. Unlike Dan Maeder, Reynolds and her staff have not been available to answer reporters' questions, or the public's, about the far-reaching bill. That there are questions should surprise no one, because the document authorizing the reorganization, Senate Study Bill 1123, is 1,570 pages long.

One worrisome section would change the long-standing practice of when Iowa's attorney general, rather than the locally elected county

attorney, prosecutes an accused criminal. For nearly 50 years, the attorney general has stepped in only when the county attorney asks for help.

Reynolds' government reorganization makes clear the attorney general could choose to prosecute any criminal case, even without an invitation from the local county attorney.

That change raises concerns political considerations could be injected into the decision whether someone is, or is not, prosecuted on criminal charges. While campaigning last year for Brenna Bird, Iowa's new attorney general, Reynolds often told voters, "I want my own attorney general."

But giving the governor her own attorney general gives many Iowans the hives.

That is especially true with some lawmakers pushing for teachers and librarians to be prosecuted for the books they make available or for transgender people to be prosecuted for using bathrooms not matching their gender at birth.

Calhoun County attorney Tina Meth-Farrington, the president of the Iowa County Attorneys Association, is a Republican like Reynolds and Bird. She told the Cedar Rapids Gazette she thinks the governor's proposal is intended to allow the attorney general to prosecute local cases if a county attorney chooses not to file charges.

"It's there because there's a concern there have been county attorneys who campaigned on spending time and resources on more important things instead of low-level crimes," Meth-Farrington said, apparently a reference to new Polk County attorney Kimberly Graham, a Democrat.

Graham has pledged not to prosecute low-level drug crimes like marijuana possession.

She also has vowed to not ask for bail for people not considered to be a threat, although a judge, not the prosecutor, makes that decision.

Meth-Farrington told The Gazette, "I don't want this office politicized, and this is kind of throwing politics into the game. I just don't like that."

Randy Evans lives in Des Moines where he is the executive director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council. He may be reached at DMR.evans2810@gmail.com.

## EDITORIAL PAGE LESSON

■ **What's an editorial?** An editorial is the newspaper's view on an issue. In developing editorials, employees of the newspaper consider what, in their collective view, is best for the community. Editorials are meant to suggest a course of action and to foster discussion.

■ **What's a column?** A column is one person's opinion on any given issue, published as a regular feature

in the newspaper. A column does not necessarily reflect the views of the paper.

■ **What's a letter to the editor?** A letter to the editor is a reader's view on an issue, submitted to the newspaper for publication. Submit your letter online at [www.nwestiowa.com/submit](http://www.nwestiowa.com/submit). All letters require a verifiable name, phone number and signature. They also are subject to editing as needed.

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## OPINION

# Church has changed, but it's mission continues

I often find myself involved in a discussion with a fellow believer regarding how our N'West Iowa churches aren't what they were "back in Grandpa's Day."

Although, in contrast to grandpa's time, community churches are not the center of life they were when Connie and I moved to Iowa, I can make a good argument those local churches still connect with members and nonmembers in amazing and wonderful ways.

But like society itself, much has changed in church dynamics and many new forms of outreach could never have been imagined by our forefathers.

That outreach is not necessarily better, but it has adjusted to meet today's current lifestyle.

As recently as the middle of the last century, life in N'West Iowa was greatly different. We were still mainly an agrarian society. Farms were smaller, and there were many more of them.

The average farm family found themselves strongly tied to their animals, land and crops. There was little time to run to town and almost no time, ever, for a vacation or trip somewhere.

Church was, for some, the only opportunity to freshen up, hitch up and drive to town. Church served as a social experience and opportunity to develop relationships as much as to communicate with God.

And with most farm homes being



PETER W. WAGNER  
PUBLISHER

no more than seven miles from the family church, it was possible to leave the homestead in the hands of God for two or three hours while the family journeyed to Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday night services.

But the automobile, the bright lights of the big cities and the switch to larger farms, many specializing in grain production or large livestock operations, changed all that.

Suddenly, the three church services of the week were not the only chance to see friends, discuss crop conditions and share new recipes. It is not unusual for rural families to make two or three trips to town in one day.

Belief in a Creator and faith in Jesus Christ did not become any less important, but the competition of those "bright lights," additional Wednesday night activities, faster planting and harvesting and, eventually, the introduction of television and the internet, changed the way we live.

Not just on the farms but also in our towns. We found ourselves with

more leisure time and our commitment to and need for the church often fell by the wayside.

But contrary to some modern thought, the church — local and worldwide — is far from dead. It has just changed, along with our culture, to be even more personal, less centralized and specific in its ministry.

There is a different kind of commitment in church today than we saw 60 years ago. Connie and my Sibley church, in many ways, offers more opportunity for involvement than it ever did in grandpa's time. And ours is in no way the largest, most active church in our four counties.

There were no weekly Bible study groups at our Sibley church 60 years ago. The few that did exist were part of monthly circle meetings or some adult fellowship.

Today, I know of three weekly Bible classes that meet in our facility. One, on Tuesdays, is interdenominational attended by a number of women. Another, on Monday nights, is for men of our church and is well attended.

A third, on Wednesday mornings, centers on the study of the Old Testament. That group started with Genesis 1:1 over seven years ago and has worked its way to 1 Samuel. The gathering of senior adults is not large, but few members ever miss being there.

Additional Bible and church studies are offered every Sunday. Along

with traditional classes for the youth, the church offers two morning adult classes and a well-attended program for high school students.

The old ice cream social our church held annually 50 years ago has disappeared, but it has been replaced by various, more serious types of community outreach. The church provides a sit-down meal one Saturday each month for all who want to attend. It also holds an annual community turkey dinner each Thanksgiving Day. And for the members, it sets aside the hour after church each Sunday for a time of coffee, pastries and fellowship.

There also are many ways for the youth to get involved. On Wednesday nights there is Awana, a Bible-based evangelism and discipleship program with a meal for the students and volunteers before the lessons and games. The high school students, with the help of their parents, regularly serve a soup and pie supper and, some years, an Easter morning breakfast.

There has always been some sort of Vacation Bible School at almost every church in America since the turn of the century. However, the dynamics and depth have changed greatly since I was a boy. Our early June VBS attracts numerous boys and girls from outside our membership each year, as do similar VBS programs at other churches in the community.

True, our Sunday morning atten-

dance is down, but that's partly because we've made it easy to watch a livestreaming of the service on our website and later on YouTube.

I have been encouraged by the many Bible studies, Christian growth and fellowship programs in our church that have been started by a member rather than pastoral leaders. The recent establishment of a Grief Share program is one example.

I am writing this to share an important point. Today's congregations may be different from those of 60 years ago, but so is the world we live in.

Many churches are reaching out to connect with their members and others in much more personal ways than did our grandparents.

The church still has one great mission: To share Christ with the world and others searching for a stronger, more personal relationship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Yes, I would like to see more bodies in church on Sundays, but I am excited about many of the one-on-one efforts being made by N'West Iowa churches today.

Don't get down on your church and your faith. Get instead on your feet and do what you can to support the work of the church in N'West Iowa and around the world.

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## IOWA VIEW

## Carbon dioxide pipelines set to bulldoze property rights

In my 24 years of legislative service and many more years of active involvement, I have never seen in Iowa such a massive power play as is orchestrated by elitist investors for Summit Carbon Solutions and Navigator CO2 Ventures.

They see more than \$20 billion of our tax dollars at their fingertips if only they could be granted authority to condemn several hundred miles of some of the richest farmland in the world — many of the owners of which have held their land in the family for five or more generations.

This is the "Green New Deal" cross-wired brain spark of U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-New York), U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-California) and U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-New York) come to Iowa to roost in the capable brain of former Iowa ethanol nabob and current Brazilian ethanol mogul Bruce Rastetter. Ethanol has done much for Iowa but putting a billion gallons of Brazilian ethanol on the market puts Rastetter in direct competition with Iowa ethanol today.

As recently as 10 years ago, Rastetter, CEO of Summit, was busy ridiculing global warming and its proponents.

Today, he and the father of fracking, Harold Hamm of Continental Resources, supported by foreign and domestic investors, have launched a massive political machine designed to kick aside the property rights barriers protected by the Constitution,



STEVE KING  
FORMER CONGRESSMAN

the oath to the Constitution of all legislators, the Republican Party of Iowa platform, respect for private property and common sense.

Aside from the volatile risk of 2,000 pounds per square inch pressure and the deadly effects of heavier-than-air CO2 gas, which by the way we use to euthanize hogs in our Iowa packing plants, the essential legal point remains: Property rights are sacrosanct. They have been protected in Western Civilization since John Locke wrote in 1689, "That no person shall be deprived of his life, liberty or property without due process of law."

Property rights are natural rights, flowing from the laws of nature and nature's God. They are protected in our Fifth and 14th Amendments to our Constitution.

Fifth Amendment: "No person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation."

Fourteenth Amendment: ". . . nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

And for good measure, here is the language from the Republican Party of Iowa's platform: "We oppose federal or state government taking private property away from the owner for the use of another private party. Eminent domain should be used only for public use."

It is worth noting the Texas Republican Party has just censured U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales for standing "in opposition to the core principles of the Republican Party of Texas." Similar potential action will almost certainly be a discussion item in Iowa should our legislators fail to protect the property rights of Iowans.

Hundreds of Iowa landowners want only to be left in peace to live and farm their land. They have been hounded relentlessly by agents of Rastetter's Summit company and threatened with condemnation of their land to facilitate hazardous high-pressure pipelines through their farms near their homes and families.

Scores of county supervisors have been sued or threatened with lawsuits in intimidation tactics to discourage them from using their authority to refuse access to county property and to represent their constituent's interests. It is reported that 44 of 52 affected Iowa counties have filed objections with the Iowa Utilities Board.

A number of bills have been introduced in the Iowa Legislature to protect property rights from the CO2 pipeline companies. So far, they all

appear to be destined for extinction. Last year, all bills protecting the property rights of Iowa landowners were killed in committee. When the Legislature runs the clock out on a bill it's called "slow-walking." It has been clear to me as far back as New Year's they would try the slow-walking tactic again.

Republicans have an informal rule, which is actually only a practice, that no bill comes to the floor unless it enjoys majority support from the Republican Caucus. All leadership has to say is, "We don't have the votes." Of course, they don't.

Top donors and influencers in Iowa Republican politics, including Terry Branstad, are the chosen investors in the biggest fleecing boondoggle this state has ever seen. They have greased the skids of the Legislature for years. Why not be the darlings of the elitist beneficiaries of our tax dollars and avoid their wrath? The easiest path for beneficiary legislators is to dodge their responsibilities by refusing to allow a vote.

The absolute minimum we can accept from our legislators is a clear definitive vote on a bill that would remove the Iowa Utilities Board's authority to confer eminent domain in the cases of hazardous pipelines. They are operating on archaic decades-old authority that never contemplated high-pressure CO2 pipelines.

The IUB is a three-person board. Under current law, if

two of the three vote to grant Summit and Navigator eminent domain authority, the property rights of every landowner in their paths would be wiped out. That is definitively not due process!

Eminent domain should never be used to condemn private property for private sector profit. Even the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark property rights decision on *Kelo v. New London* (2005) was decided — erroneously — in the case of the government of the city of New London, CT, a public entity, who confiscated private property, then handed it over to a private developer. In the case of the proposed Iowa pipelines, there is not even a pretense of a government entity as an intermediate agent. *Kelo* is not applicable to the benefit of the CO2 pipeline companies. IUB authority to grant eminent domain directly to private investors is itself unconstitutional.

I can't imagine completion of 2,000 miles of pipelines without multiple lawsuits. I strongly believe the proposed use of eminent domain for CO2 pipelines will prove to be unconstitutional.

Private investors are poised to exercise eminent domain directly, without an intermediate government entity even as a fig leaf. All it takes is a slow-walk of the property rights bills until the end of the session.

Then only two unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats can order condemnation at

the direction and will of a self-selected group of elitist investors based on one word in an archaic section of the Code of Iowa, "hazardous." The statutory authority to order condemnation by the Iowa Utilities Board was passed decades ago during the national fear of, ironically, "Global Cooling."

A majority affirmative vote in favor of eminent domain by the Iowa General Assembly and a governor's signature should be a requirement. If not, the public will never accept such a power play. Accountability by recorded vote is a minimum standard for a free people.

A huge backlash will likely break out if the bills are slow-walked again.

I urge Gov. Kim Reynolds and the Iowa General Assembly to push for a clear, for-or-against vote on the use of eminent domain to condemn private property for use of a private business and specifically CO2 pipelines.

The top-down power brought to play in Iowa and the other states rivals anything I have seen in Washington, D.C. The arguments I am hearing in favor of the pipelines do not hold up or serve a public purpose, let alone the constitutional requirement of public use.

Steve King of *Kiron* served as a U.S. representative and chairman of the U.S. Congress Constitution Committee 2003-21. He may be reached at [steve@steveking.com](mailto:steve@steveking.com).

## Trust in locally elected school board members

### To The REVIEW:

I have read the numerous letters in *The N'West Iowa REVIEW* in response to the brouhaha over Dorrit University professor Scott Culpeper's talk noting the rise of Christian nationalism.

It seems many who penned letters fail to grasp the pluralistic nature of our democratic republic which respects each citizen's right to observe their religious practice without interference or promotion from government.

Note: Jesus himself eschewed involving his ministry with political entanglements.

Following the November election, I am now represented in the state legislature by Skyler Wheeler.

As the leading advocate of private school vouchers, he and I have a philosophical disagreement about how taxpayer monies should be spent in regard to education.

I have had interesting exchanges with him on this subject.

It appears that the main thrust of the educational agenda the Republican legislators have chosen to focus on revolves around cultural or identity issues, the latest being protecting

children from sexually explicit literature found in some public school libraries.

It is clear that he is following the lead of other Republican leaders in stirring up distrust for our public schools.

I trust my locally elected school board members and administrators who oversee our local public school to continue to be responsible and responsive to concerns raised by parents.

I believe focusing on these issues by Rep. Wheeler and other politically motivated leaders are divisive and should be called out for what they are, distractions from the growing disparities between public schools which are adequately funded and schools struggling to provide for the variety of needs presented by students whose education they are entrusted with providing.

Jackie Austin,  
Rock Rapids

## Feenstra 'exceptional representative' for Iowa

### To The REVIEW:

This year marks the anticipated reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

Between crop insurance and conservation to biofuels production and international trade, Iowa farmers

and producers rely on vital programs in the Farm Bill to remain profitable, productive, and competitive in the international market.

Fortunately, our congressman, Randy Feenstra, knows the importance of the Farm Bill to rural Iowa.

He recently hosted a town hall in Sanborn to hear directly from farmers and producers about their suggestions and priorities for the Farm Bill, including protecting like-kind exchange and step-up in basis and addressing the unfair inheritance tax.

I am also honored to serve on his Agriculture Advisory Board — comprised of 60 Iowans from across the 4th District — which will counsel him on agricultural issues and critical priorities for our farmers as Farm Bill discussions proceed.

Iowa deserves a strong voice in the Farm Bill, and this board ensures that we do.

Farming for more than 39 years in O'Brien County, I appreciate Congressman Feenstra's work on behalf of our agricultural community on both the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Agriculture Committee.

He is an exceptional representative of our rural way of life.

Kelly Nieuwenhuis,  
Primghar

## Pipeline investors will get rich at farmers' cost

### To The REVIEW:

Sure are hearing lots of rumors about "big" money going to farmers selling out to the pipelines.

The number I am hearing might be enough to pay off some credit card bills and put money down on a new combine.

When the pipeline companies say big money this is what they are thinking:

Summit hazardous carbon dioxide pipeline:

- 12 million tons of CO2 each year.
- \$85 per tons tax credit.
- \$1.02 billion tax credit annually.
- \$2.8 million per day.
- \$116,438 per hour.
- \$2,000 per minute.

When these companies say CO2 pipeline, they are thinking a tube full of \$\$\$ put there by taxpayers and given to them as tax credits under Section 45Q of the federal tax code.

When I say hazardous CO2 pipeline, I am thinking a bomb — not only physically but financially.

Yes, these pipelines are hazardous to humans, animals and anything else within miles of a rupture.

But they are also explosive, financially:

1. Money you receive is taxable — both the land portion and the crop portion.

2. The easement you sign is on your entire parcel not just the pipeline path.

3. Liability insurance, with a hazardous pipeline on the farm, is not easy to get.

4. Does your bank allow you to grant easements across their collateral?

5. The easement is permanent.

6. The easement is fully transferable — who will your kids be dealing with?

7. The easement limits how you use your property, now and forever.

8. The entire farm is less attractive for sale with a hazard present.

Farmers who were the first to sell received a small percentage of what is being paid today.

Those who sell out today should know that each \$100,000 they receive is only one hour of flow in a pipeline project that will be an encumbrance on the land for generations.

The pipeline investors are getting richer every day — \$2,000 a minute as the hazardous compressed CO2 flows across your land, but your pay-day is over.

Dorothy Sloma,  
Sioux County landowner,  
Arnolds Park