

answer to a court of law or the court of public opinion.

BENJAMIN CHERRYHOMES, Hastings

MANAGED CARE

Talk of transparency does not equal action

Please follow up on the published declarations made by Minnesota's premier health insurance spokesperson, Julie Brunner ("Know the full story about health plans," Feb. 23.) Please ask her *how* she will support, as she wrote, the transparency for how our dollars are spent on health care, and which she acknowledges we taxpayers deserve. Be sure to find out — and publish — her plans to make sure that Gov. Mark Dayton signs into law the current bill by state Sen. Sean Nienow. That bill requires precisely detailed, line-item accounting for managed care expenses to be reviewed by impartial auditors. If she does not support that mandate for transparency, readers deserve to see her alternative proposal.

DIANE J. PETERSON, White Bear Lake

VOTER ID

Focus on the motive of the effort being made

You need an ID to buy a gun or to buy cigarettes or to get money from a bank. However, you don't need an ID to volunteer at a soup kitchen or to report a crime to police or to help a little old lady across the street.

Do you see where I'm going here? Voting is a burden that a lot of people would just as soon not bother with. It has no immediate reward for the individual, but there are people who are relying on you. If your vote is a drop in the bucket that's scarcely worth the inconvenience, would you commit a crime just to put two drops in the bucket?

People who point out that getting an ID is easy are missing the point ("Voter ID opponents try, try again," Feb. 23). What's not easy is for a particular political party to guarantee that 100 percent of its supporters have ID come election day.

Why are the Republicans the ones pushing for voter ID? Because they'll win more elections that way. Why are Democrats against it? Same reason. Do the Dems have a well-oiled voter fraud machine? No, but the Republicans have a well-oiled voter-suppression machine. The GOP plays the hardest imaginable ball in order to win.

Purple Heart

It takes thousands of fraudulent votes to steal one election. But it only takes one piece of fraudulent legislation to steal thousands of elections.

PATRICK McCAULEY, Edina

TEACHER SENIORITY

Don't confuse layoffs with performance

The proposal to change the state's teacher seniority law confuses two very different issues: job performance and layoffs. A teacher, or any employee for that matter, who fails to perform adequately can and should be dismissed in a timely manner. Layoffs are a different matter. They are conducted when the number of people employed exceeds the number needed. They are not conducted for performance reasons. A good employer or administrator does not wait for the opportunity of a layoff to dismiss those unable to meet prescribed performance standards.

A layoff and a dismissal differ in another distinct way. A layoff is conducted for budgetary reasons, while a dismissal is conducted for inadequate performance or unacceptable behavior. It would be tempting for a cash-strapped district to trade the salary of a 25-year teacher for two first-year teachers, each at half the cost. Seniority not only protects the teacher who has invested many years in the profession, but also the best interests of students and parents who would be shortchanged by a system that considered experienced and inexperienced teachers to be of equal value.

JOSEPH EHRLICH, Arden Hills

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The golden rule holds the moral high ground

A recent letter writer certainly broke it down quickly when he announced that gay marriage is not a political issue, but rather a religious one, based upon his "infallible and inerrant" holy book. With respect, one's religious beliefs are not an entitlement to the moral high ground.

Treating others as you would be treated has always worked well for me, and I get to think for myself. Imagine such a thing.

RICHARD A. POMMIER, Long Prairie, Minn.

bridge-inspection firms in the world?

ROBERT ALBERTI, Minneapolis

I-94 FATALITIES

Smaller St. Croix bridge equals 15 miles of safety

Just a note of thanks to the writer of Thursday's Letter of the Day. As the writer rightly pointed out, money that could be spent to build more life-saving highway cable barriers is not available due to misplaced spending priorities. The proposed Stillwater "megabridge" is a prime example of wasting our precious transportation dollars to benefit a few at the expense of a majority of Minnesotans. A scaled-down version of a new St. Croix River crossing would save enough money to build 15 miles of new cable barriers. Apparently, the supporters of the current bridge plan, including the Star Tribune, are more concerned with the profits of land speculators in Wisconsin than they are for the safety of Minnesota drivers.

JOHN BAER, Stillwater

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Why do we assume that everybody has to travel by car? On Thursday, there was a front-page article about how cables can save lives — I'm certain that they can. Cars are still extremely dangerous and very expensive, and for a 300-mile trip, buses and trains could do it cheaper and more safely. These latter modes of transportation are not terribly convenient now, because they have been neglected as we pour money into cars and commercial jet airplanes. We really need to think about other ways of traveling.

RICHARD HANSON, St. Paul

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS?

We welcome your participation in these pages, whether in letters for the "Readers Write" section or commentaries for the "Opinion Exchange" page.

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