



Readers Write: Border wall dispute, the VA and suicide prevention, the Vikings, online commenting

December 31, 2018

It occurred to me that an important underlying reason for Democrats' resistance to funding the "wall" is not about the \$5.7 billion cost (a relatively small amount), its purported effectiveness (it is not — I learned about effective border security solutions on a trip to Israel last year) or even President Donald Trump's irrational and egotistical petulance (a problem bigger than the "wall"), but more about the physical symbol it would represent. The U.S. is a country of immigrants, and this is a value that should be sustained (with a reasoned vetting system for immigration). However, the wall would represent a message to the world about the isolationist nature of our country. U.S. policy could quickly shift with a change from elections; however, a wall's physical presence would be a lasting symbol of this threat to U.S. values. To paraphrase President Ronald Reagan about another wall: "Mr. Trump, let go of this wall."

Jill Smith, Mendota Heights

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Left-wing voices rage that President Trump's insistence on funding a wall along our border with Mexico represents America as heartless and racist. In 2017, U.S. border agents confiscated enough fentanyl to kill every American, all of which came from Mexico. Ninety percent of the heroin entering our country comes from the Mexican border. A woman, eight months pregnant, was able to scale our fence to ensure that her child would be born on American soil. Given the current divide over the government shutdown, we have one political party that tolerates these insidious invasions without the least regard for the consequences for our citizen taxpayers. If our citizens fail to understand the essential necessity of securing our borders, we are no longer a sovereign country.

Mark H. Reed, Plymouth

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The problem with the wall is the problem with most of the "conservative" issues today, namely, it is not grounded in reality. If you want to stop the flow of illegal immigrants, make being found with one on your payroll a felony. Make it as bad as dealing drugs. That is never discussed, because the dirty little secret is that "conservative" farmers, contractors and business owners (Trump) hire them do hard physical labor like construction, field work, roofing, landscaping and housecleaning. They are paid substandard wages in unsafe conditions, and if they complain, their own employers turn them in to ICE.

The Koch-brothers-founded Cato Institute published an article in May 2018 stating that overall welfare benefit usage by immigrants is lower than that of native-born Americans, and that the crime rate for illegal immigrants is lower than that of native-born residents. Nobody in ICE or law enforcement who has a brain thinks that building a wall across hundreds of miles of our Southern border will stop the flow of immigrants or drugs. Drugs don't flow through the Southern border, by the way. They come in by the ton through the main ports of entry. The wall is like voter ID, guns, climate change and health care. The "conservative" positions aren't based on data, facts or reality. They are meant to energize the base so that "conservatives" can give themselves tax breaks that run up the deficit and do nothing for the rest of us but raise interest rates.

Martin Masters, Shoreview

Opinion editor's note: *The Cato Institute describes itself as a "public policy research organization — a think tank — dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace." [Read the full summary of its 2018 immigration research at tinyurl.com/cato-imm-2018.](https://www.tinyurl.com/cato-imm-2018)*

THE VA AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Editorial scapegoated the agency; consider the many obstacles it faces

Once again, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) appears to be the "poster child" for federal government incompetence — this time, courtesy of a quoted critic and the Star Tribune Editorial Board, in its Dec. 28 [editorial](#), "The VA fails basic but vital mission." Could this attention-grabbing headline have been balanced, along the lines of "VA's effective vet outreach campaign needs attention"? Especially as the VA is recognized as being historically more effective in its outreach, prevention and treatment efforts for veterans, likely to be suicide-prone, than any other entity? In this "call-out" for greater VA accountability, the entire VA is dismissed in the minds of average readers, because of failure to run a full PR campaign in 2018. Depicting the VA in these terms, the Star Tribune, unwittingly perhaps, supports the Trump administration agenda of portraying all government programs (except the military) as dysfunctional. Not only does this build the case for VA privatization, it also dampens the morale of local hardworking VA employees.

The question the editorial fails to explore is the prior and current "political context" that has led to VA problems. The administration and Congress have continued the historic underfunding and staffing of the VA. Congress approves VA secretaries who refuse to fill the VA's 38,000 nationwide staff vacancies, and the president freezes salaries. Importantly, Trump and Republicans are working to starve the VA, by diverting its critical funding — and veterans — to "for-profit community health care" through the unfunded Mission Act of 2018.

Jeff Roy, St. Louis Park, and David Cooley, Shorewood

The writers are combat veterans who served in Vietnam.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Legends of the falls

As we all know, St. Anthony Falls, the only major waterfall on the Mississippi River, gave rise to a flour milling industry so powerful that we became the milling capital of the world for 50 years. It was the engine for growth for Minneapolis.

In 1960, our Twin Cities-area population reached nearly 2 million. Without the fan numbers to support it, the NFL would have never granted a new franchise to start here. But every year our purple warriors get us excited — only to let us down (“Dud and done: Offense sputters, defense buckles as Vikings’ playoff ambitions extinguished,” Dec. 31). Even though we know it’s coming, it still causes a major depression for most of us.

On dark days like this, I have to wonder if the yearly angst is worth it. Maybe we would be better off without major sports teams — to be nothing more than a “cold Omaha.” Ah, heck, there’s always next year. Skol!

Bob Andersen, Edina

COMMENTS

My wish for the New Year: Better behavior online

Many of the articles in the online version of the Star Tribune have comment sections attached. I like to read all the comments, whether I agree with the individual commenting or not. Here are some suggestions for the people who will be contributing online comments in 2019:

1. Read the article the journalist took the time to write. You will be much better prepared to produce a meaningful comment.
2. President Donald Trump is not responsible for everything, good or bad. If the article is not about Trump and you can’t tie the article to Trump, then just don’t.
3. Civility. Not everyone knows how to be civil and oftentimes comments get by the moderators. If you have any doubts about your comment, try this as a way to measure the civility of your comment. If you wouldn’t stand in the middle of your street and scream your comment at the top of your lungs — then don’t. And don’t post it here, either.

My New Year’s wish is to come away from the online comment section having learned something or having a better understanding of an opposing writer’s view.

Teresa Maki, Minnetonka