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America's Newspapers

Early thawing followed by freezing causes buckling roads, damaged vehicles, and busy street crews and mechanics - Pothole season now?**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - January 10, 2008****Author: ERIN RICHARDS, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

Pothole season — usually a phenomenon of early spring — has come early this year, the byproduct of the recent yo-yo between freezing and thawing weather conditions.

While road crews hustle to fill the voids before the next snowfall, area auto mechanics are repairing an increasing number of cars damaged by the crippled roadways.

"A lot of times the road can look fine this week and then thaw and then the next week, it's horrible," said George Torres, the director of transportation and public works for Milwaukee County.

The problem starts with a road that's slightly compromised with even a little crack, Torres explained. Melting snow is adept at filling in the cracks, and when the liquid freezes, it expands and pushes up the base of the road.

"As long as it stays frozen and cold, there's no problem," Torres said. "But with all this thawing, the minute a car drives over a compromised piece of pavement, it collapses."

Snowplows inflict similar damage by scraping out the loose debris, said Patrick Madison, who's driven a snowplow for 35 years for the City of New Berlin.

"Frost is unforgiving in Wisconsin because it makes the clay move as one solid piece," Madison said, adding that regions with more sandy soil don't have as many problems with roadways buckling in winter.

"We have two full-time guys here at the city that fix potholes, but this time of year, sometimes they put the mix in and cars just bomb it right back out. Then it gets deeper as more of the fill is pushed out and finally, we go by with the snowplows and cut the rest of it right off," Madison said.

On Wednesday afternoon, City of Waukesha operators Bob Burke and Chris Gluth were repairing a road called Milky Way by shoveling heavy, coarse fill the color of black tar out of the back of a city truck and into several potholes. The two workers scraped away the loose rubble from the road before scooping the fill mixture into the water-filled crevices. They evened out the patch by driving back and forth over it with the work truck.

"The last three weeks we've been really busy," Burke said. "It's a big, temporary Band-Aid, but it should last for a while. We don't normally do this sort of work, but the city needed some extra guys."

Typically, two types of fill are used for potholes: hot mix and cold mix. Burke said they were using a cold mix, which takes a few days to set completely. Hot mix must be carted around in a heated trailer, and is more pliable and easier to manage.

Mike Cunningham, the owner and manager of Precise Alignment Service in Big Bend, had already serviced two cars Wednesday morning that had broken steel belts in their radial tires from hitting potholes. The repair, he said, could cost anywhere from \$35 to close to \$200.

"It's normal this time of year, but I've seen it a lot lately," Cunningham said.

At Frame & Axle Service Co. in Brookfield, owner Keith Reagles said he's been fixing a slew of SUVs and trucks that have hit potholes and broken the sway bar link between the front wheels.

"It's about \$50 to \$100 to fix," Reagles said, adding that drivers would know something was wrong because the vehicle "clunks like crazy."

Department of Public Works officials encourage drivers to call their local municipalities or counties

regarding potholes on streets.

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America's Newspapers
City to speed up pothole repairs - Seasonal crews called to work 2 months early
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 14, 2008
Author: LARRY SANDLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Under fire from aldermen and residents complaining about huge potholes punctuating city streets, Milwaukee officials pledged Wednesday to speed up repairs by calling in seasonal workers who usually wouldn't start until spring.

Plans call for 18 workers to hit the streets in two-person pothole-patching crews as early as Monday, city budget chief Mark Nicolini told the Common Council's Public Works Committee. Another 18 to 20 employees would start in mid-March, Nicolini said.

Ordinarily, those 36 to 38 employees wouldn't be on the payroll until mid-April, Nicolini said. But this winter's unusually severe weather has stepped up the freeze-thaw cycle, pulverizing the pavement of streets citywide, public works officials said.

The early call-up of seasonal forces will take \$120,000 from the city's contingency fund, Nicolini said. But he and City Engineer Jeff Polenske said they may ask the council to approve a bigger withdrawal to let pothole crews work later into the fall.

Aldermen lambasted the Department of Public Works for not moving faster in response to pothole complaints.

"One of my biggest concerns is the safety issue, because some of these potholes are just crater-sized," Ald. Willie Wade said. "They're bigger than I've ever seen before."

Ald. Jim Buhl voiced "extreme frustration" that potholes reported two weeks ago on N. 76th St. still haven't been patched, including "one bad stretch between Keefe and Lisbon that looks like the surface of the moon." Polenske and Nicolini said 76th St. is set for a \$9 million repaving project next year. Aging streets are part of the problem, and the city has budgeted more money this year to speed up repaving and reconstruction projects, Polenske and Nicolini said.

Suburban water: In another matter, the panel backed a renewal of a 10-year, \$1.3 million-a-year deal to sell Milwaukee water to Menomonee Falls — but without changes sought by the suburb.

Last month, the committee delayed action after aldermen berated the village for lack of cooperation on public transit and affordable housing. State rules would prevent the city from cutting off water to Menomonee Falls. But Ald. Bob Bauman said the city didn't have to agree to give up its veto over the Waukesha County community's groundwater sales to its neighbors, or to expand the area served by city water.

Under the version endorsed unanimously by the committee, the only change to the water deal would be an automatic renewal provision that would eliminate the need for future council votes unless either side wants to renegotiate the terms of the agreement. The full council will consider the issue Feb. 26.

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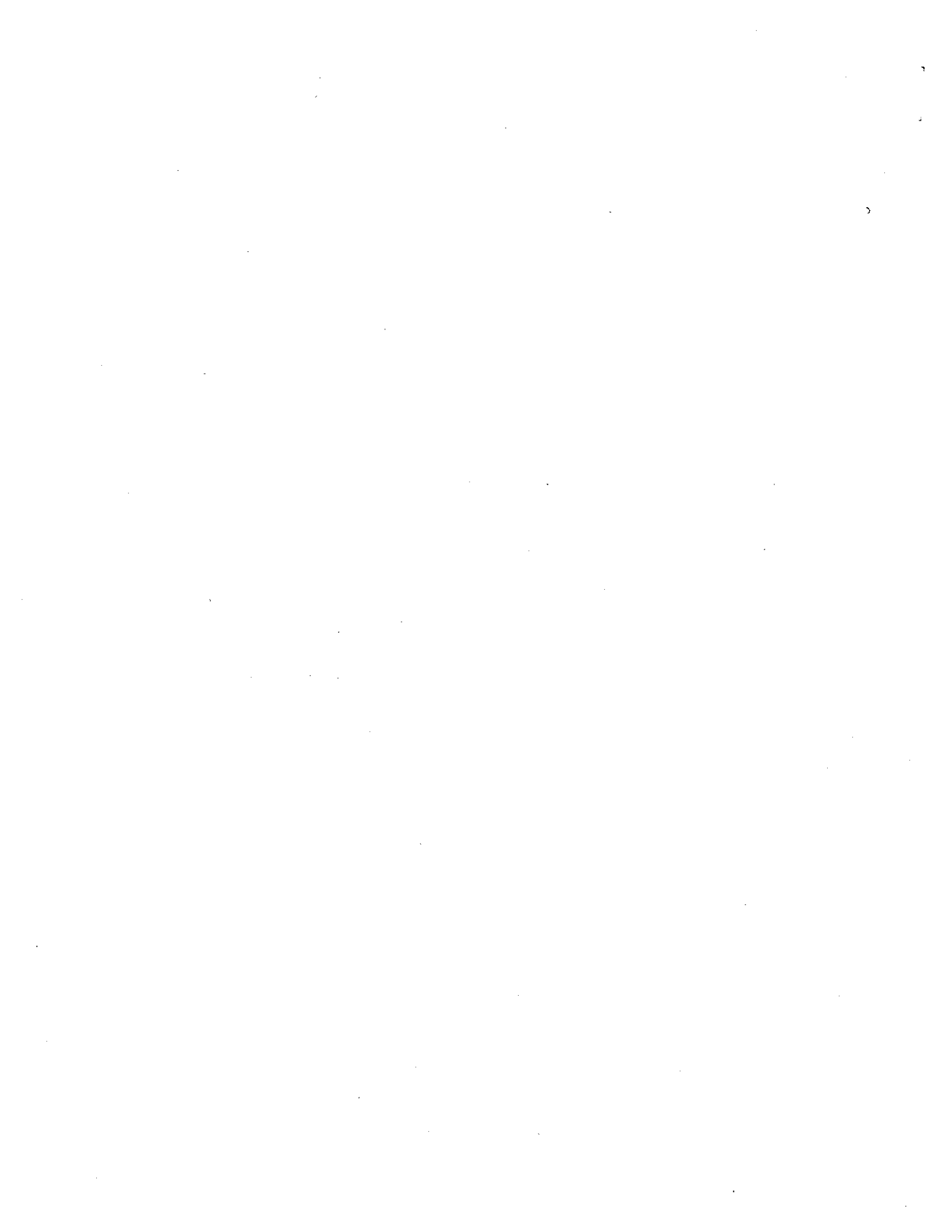
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Correction: CORRECTION: from 2/15/2008: Because of an editing error, an article in some editions Thursday about potholes misspelled the surname of a Milwaukee alderman. His name is Jim Bohl, not Buhl.

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**CORRECTIONS**

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 15, 2008

Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

An item Thursday in the Regional News Watch about a brawl at Bradley Technology and Trade High School incorrectly stated that the school's safety aides were away at training at the time. The Milwaukee police officers assigned to Bradley Tech as school resource officers were at training.

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Because of an editing error, an article in some editions Thursday about potholes misspelled the surname of a Milwaukee alderman. His name is Jim Bohl, not Buhl.

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YOUR OPINIONS

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 16, 2008

Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

PEACE

There's nothing unreal about peace Today, peace activists — not to be confused with passivists — are accused of not living in the real world. Two thousand years ago, a man named Jesus walked the roads of the Roman Empire. He did not urge his followers to honor God by espousing Pax Romana and taking up the sword to bring peace. Jesus walked in solidarity with the poor and the powerless. His real world consisted of forgiveness and love. His real world looked upon those shunned by society, those condemned for breaking Jewish traditions, those who were prostitutes and adulterers, as children of God. He reached out to all with love and compassion.

Today's peace activists follow in the way of Jesus. They will not take up instruments of torture and violence. They will not label people as terrorists and then brutally destroy them. They believe all of God's creation is sacred and must be cherished and protected. They believe in the potential of the human person for good. They believe in the God-given gifts of creative intelligence and compassionate love. They believe in the real world of Jesus.

Lillia Langreck

Milwaukee

HISTORY

Harnack's heroism worth remembering Today is the 65th anniversary of the execution, on Adolf Hitler's order, of Milwaukeean Mildred Fish Harnack for resisting the tyranny of the Third Reich during World War II. Harnack was the only American civilian the Nazis executed. Hitler personally ordered her death, rescinding a lesser sentence from a people's court.

Married to Arvid Harnack when the couple attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mildred moved in 1929 to Germany, where her husband was in the ministry of economics. He maintained his position after the Nazis seized power, while she supplemented their income by teaching German to British and American diplomatic families. Arvid Harnack was related to the family of famed theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom the Nazis also executed.

When the war broke out, Arvid Harnack joined the "Red Orchestra," a network of influential Germans who supplied mostly statistical information to Soviet secret agents. The network was exposed when a Soviet spy's radio messages were intercepted, and Red Orchestra members were arrested, imprisoned and brought to trial. Mildred Harnack was caught in the Nazi dragnet, and her fate was sealed. She suffered terribly in prison and was subjected to a cruel trial before Hitler's order sent her to the guillotine.

The American occupation of Iraq is approaching five years. While there is no valid comparison to Nazi tyranny, it is perhaps a worthwhile time to reflect on the heroism of a Milwaukeean whose life was sacrificed for resisting a dictatorial military government that occupied all of Europe. Mildred Fish Harnack was a true American hero. Wisconsin should remember her with pride.

Gary Shellman

Glendale

POTHOLES

Roads should be made more durable In speaking with other drivers for the Milwaukee County Transit System, I've found it appears that most, if not all, streets that are plagued with major pothole problems are those paved with asphalt, not concrete.

Given the extreme weather conditions Milwaukee streets are subjected to during winter months, might there be some odd and somewhat humorous relationship between pothole-plagued streets and "pothead" planners? Or, if asphalt is used on Milwaukee roadways, knowing it is not as durable as concrete in our weather conditions, can we conclude that potholes result in large part from roadway planners who should be considered "at fault" for the potholes we have?

Karl M. Dorfner

West Allis

INCARCERATION

What's behind stats? Eugene Kane's Feb. 10 column should have had a different headline. Instead of "Who's behind prison walls affects us all," it should have read: "Milwaukee ranking is worth examining."

He cites data such as the fact that blacks are incarcerated at a rate more than 10 times the rate of whites when the state black population is only 6%.

That is misleading because the only concentration of black population in Wisconsin is in Milwaukee. With the black population of Milwaukee nearing 50%, the ratio of blacks to whites may be just about even.

If blacks are given stiffer punishment for the same types of crimes as a whites, it may be because the crime by a black person is also his third or fourth offense. Kane does not look into whether that might be the case.

I'm a native of Milwaukee and am appalled at the news I read of my hometown every Sunday. If Kane feels blacks are discriminated against with recent data, he didn't read the first page of his own paper on Feb. 10, where an article noted there were 11 shootings in one day.

I feel sorry for the black population that moved north to Milwaukee originally for good factory jobs. When all the manufacturing industries left Milwaukee, many workers weren't prepared for anything else and were unemployable.

There are two risks for this economic condition: People who can't find work are potentially angry ones. Add to that problem long-term segregation into crowded areas, with large numbers of people who are poor or unemployed, and you can't help but have crime. What else is there?

Milwaukee has to find a way to teach struggling people pathways to good jobs where they can earn decent wages. Perhaps even moving out of the crime-infected areas for training would help. You have to find an answer before the whole city goes under because people are afraid to live there.

Fay Stone

Platteville

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Fees for uncleared sidewalks add up - Snow must be removed within a day bills start at \$118

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 17, 2008

Author: LINDA SPICE, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

More than 4,000 complaints to Milwaukee city officials have been filed against property owners who failed to shovel their sidewalks this winter.

Now, those property owners will be seeing bills for hundreds of dollars to pay the city for doing it for them.

A city ordinance requires snow and ice to be removed or prevented from posing a hazard on sidewalks within 24 hours after snow has stopped falling. If the city is forced to provide the service, property owners — not their renters — are charged \$93 for a 60-foot lot and a \$25 administration fee for the first occurrence. That administration fee grows to \$50 for each subsequent occurrence, and "we have a lot of repeat offenders," said Cecelia Gilbert, spokeswoman for the city's Department of Public Works.

Fees are higher for wider lots.

First-offense bills went out Monday, and they range from \$118 to \$572 each — with a total tab of \$56,181 to cover charges for labor and equipment. If bills go unpaid, the city treasurer's office will tack the charge onto the yearly property tax bill.

"People are sick of the weather, sick of walking on icy sidewalks, sick of driving over potholes," Gilbert said.

Between Dec. 1 and Friday, 4,109 complaints were logged to the Department of Public Works, compared with 1,924 during the same time last year, a jump of more than 113%.

Complaints are given to inspectors, who visit the offending property. If the inspector comes to a block and sees others also have not shoveled, those property owners can expect a letter asking them to shovel within 24 hours, or the city will do it for them.

Property owners billed for snow removal may appeal the charges by filling out an application in the city clerk's office. The appeals are considered by an administrative review appeals board to determine whether charges were justified.

But be aware: Inspectors take pictures to chronicle what they find.

"There are sidewalks that haven't been touched since we got the 14 inches of snowfall, and then the 5 to 7 inches on top of that," said David Slyyer, forestry service manager for the city.

About 30% of the properties inspected end up being assigned to sanitation workers for snow removal, he said, noting: "Seventy percent or so residents do take the necessary action to clear the walk. If they made a good-faith effort to do it, even though there is some snow or ice on the sidewalk, we generally accept that."

While residents are shoveling their sidewalks, Fire Department officials are also asking them to adopt a hydrant by helping to clear snow 3 feet on all sides.

Fire Lt. Larry Jenkins said buried hydrants haven't been a huge problem this winter, but "if hydrants are already hidden, we're never going to find them until it thaws out," he said.

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YOUR OPINIONS

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 18, 2008

Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

SNOWPLOWING

Good work, Milwaukee DPW I appreciate those who have plowed the streets of Milwaukee. With all the snow we've been having, I think they have done quite a good job. It is mind-boggling that the Department of Public Works has been able to move snow from the roads in ways that limit the disruption of traffic. Roads were a bit slushy, but at least they were drivable.

I admit, I do not like all the shoveling that comes with snow, but I commend those workers for all the time spent on such a big job.

Roberta Schobert

Wauwatosa

SCIENTIFIC PROOF

One's experience doesn't prove the rule As evidence that secondhand smoke isn't harmful, letter writer Joyce Scantling pointed out that her husband is fine after years of her smoking ("Experience trumps scientific 'evidence,'" Feb. 14). I love that logic. I went to Catholic schools and was an altar boy, but I was never molested by a priest. Therefore, the church sex scandal never happened. All the victims should give back any money they won and apologize immediately.

OK, that was sarcasm. You shouldn't make sweeping statements based on one case. And it's ridiculous to write, "Go on the Web and find out the truth." You can come up with almost any theory and find "evidence" on the Web to support it. If it's not there, you can post it yourself and call it the truth. I'll stick with the doctors.

Todd Weigel

Wauwatosa

AIR TRAFFIC

Controller shortages are a serious issue One might think that the Federal Aviation Administration is well aware that its ranks of controllers are dwindling ("Air traffic controllers get greater burden," Feb. 13). But that is not the case. For years, controllers have retired without being replaced, which has caused today's shortage. Like an ostrich with its head in the sand, the FAA is hoping the problem goes away.

A consequence of this avoidance is that taxpayer money is used to pay controllers overtime. Not just any overtime — mandatory overtime, from the holiday season to the present, as if working first, second and third shifts all in one week isn't stressful enough. Add more airspace to deal with and new controllers to train.

If you talk to controllers, you will find that it took a year or two for them to reach a fully competent status. Somehow these time frames have changed, along with the "current acceptable staffing range" reported by the FAA. It scares me to think that new trainees have to cover the retirees' spots within the next few months and that our seasoned controllers are leaving before their mandatory retirement dates.

As airport patrons, we want safety and flights that depart on time. We won't see this until the FAA looks at the numbers and staffing in a realistic manner. Overworking current staff will not solve the problem.

Margaret Otis

Wauwatosa

GUN LAWS

Statistics show guns can prevent crime In his Feb. 13 letter, "It's not clear how concealed carry helps," Daniel Adams questioned whether a concealed-carry law in Wisconsin would have prevented the murder of Lodewikus "Vic" Milford. The answer to that question will never be known, as nobody can say for certain whether Milford would have armed himself if it were legal to do so here, as it is in 48 other states.

However, data from the U.S. Department of Justice shows that law-abiding citizens successfully defend themselves with firearms against criminal attacks as often as 500,000 times a year.

A 1994 study commissioned by the Department of Justice Statistics put the number of successful citizen defenses with firearms at 1.5 million per year. An ongoing study by the criminology department at Florida State University estimates the number of defenses to be as high as 2.5 million annually.

In Milwaukee, we've seen numerous cases where citizens have used firearms to defend themselves against criminals. In one highly publicized case, a pizza delivery driver shot armed robbers twice within a period of just six months.

Clearly, citizens are capable of defending themselves when allowed to do so. The problem in Wisconsin is that Gov. Jim Doyle does not trust the law-abiding people of Wisconsin to carry weapons for self-defense.

While we don't know what would've happened had Milford armed himself, one thing is certain: More people will be injured or killed because of Gov. Doyle's cold-hearted vetoes of proposed concealed carry laws.

Richard Baker

Greenfield

CIRCUS PARADE

Parade vs. potholes What is wrong with the priorities of our city government? If it is possible to find \$1.5 million to host a parade, put it toward fixing our streets ("Mayor wants to revive big parade," Feb. 14).

Milwaukee used to be called "the best-kept secret" and was a wonderful city. Now, it is crumbling around us, and we are told there is no money to fix infrastructure. Now, there just might be money for the return of the Circus Parade! I am sure I speak for many: We do not need a parade. We need our streets fixed the right way — not with two-man crews with a bucket of tar and pebbles.

Christine Volin

Milwaukee

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**America's Newspapers****QUICK HIT****Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 22, 2008****Author: SONYA JONGSMA KNAUSS, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

Driving to work has turned into a pothole-dodging exercise for me, and driving home is even dicier if it's getting dark. So I was happy to hear that starting Monday, the Milwaukee Department of Public Works has dispatched several two-person crews to patch potholes, which have become noticeably larger and deeper recently. Unfortunately, they weren't quite fast enough. This week, my husband hit a pothole that gave our car a flat tire. Neighbors told him his was the fourth flat on that hole that day.

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America's Newspapers

YOUR OPINIONS**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI)** - February 23, 2008*Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel***CROPS**

Farmland should be used for farming The Conservation Reserve Program — or, as I call it, the Crop Reduction Program — is the Wisconsin practice of paying people not to farm. When the law was first developed, it was to help farmers keep crop prices higher by limiting production. It made sense then; it doesn't now. With ethanol on the rise, this raises prices, but the increase in crop prices is hurting the very people the program was meant to help.

Farmers need to buy grain to feed livestock, and the prices for grain are higher because there's not enough to go around. If you look at who's been benefiting from the program, it's landowners who are not farmers — landowners who put their land in these programs so they don't have to pay higher taxes. Farmers want to farm. I know this, as a recreational landowner who refuses to put my land in these programs. I reduce my taxes by letting farmers farm my land, and there's no shortage of farmers to do so.

End the Conservation Reserve Program. Let farmers farm. This will increase the tax base and help reduce state budget woes.

Clark Green

North Prairie

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

New energy options could create jobs Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) correctly worries about Wisconsin's over-reliance on coal-fired power plants to produce electricity, but his concerns regarding the possible loss of jobs for residents of the upper Midwest are entirely off base. In fact, the remarkable potential for the creation of jobs due to the research and development of renewable energy sources, as well as the construction, operation and maintenance of renewable energy projects, is readily apparent.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, state-level renewable energy technologies would create nearly three times as many jobs as producing an equivalent amount of electricity from fossil fuels — resulting in a net benefit of 120,000 jobs.

Moreover, renewable energy technologies tend to create more jobs than fossil fuel technologies because a large share of the expenditures for renewable energy is for manufacturing equipment, installation and maintenance. Those activities typically are more labor-intensive than extracting and transporting fossil fuels. Sensenbrenner needs to realize that climate change is a problem that needs real answers.

Jim Hilgendorf

Germantown

STREETS

Why can't we figure out state winters? Wisconsin. We have cold winter weather, snow, ice, sleet, freezing rain and — déjà vu all over again — dangerously low supplies of road salt. Doesn't this come up year after year?

Maybe the government purchasing employees who are responsible for salt supplies could be given a crash course on just how bad our winters can be. It seems that they are buying enough for a best-case scenario, rather than what can happen in the real world of Wisconsin.

On the bright side, however, last weekend's rains filled up our gazillion potholes with rain that turned to ice and smoothed out our rides around town.

So then the question could be asked, "Who needs salt?" Could be brilliant planning by our city fathers.

Gregg Kellner

Mukwonago

Road conditions need attention My daughter flew into Milwaukee last Saturday afternoon and flew back to Minneapolis Sunday. I met her at the airport, and the first thing she said to me was, "What is the problem with the roads in Milwaukee?" She has never driven on roads in such terrible condition. I explained that people have expressed their concern, but nothing seems to get done. I find it hard to believe that the high taxes people pay in Milwaukee result in roads horses would not walk on.

Ron Swenson

Stevens Point

COMMUNITY

It's nice to read positive reporting I appreciate Laurel Walker's nice column about good things that are happening in our community ("Vranys' annual ice rink keeps the kids coming," Feb. 19). I wholeheartedly agree that the best way to know your kids is to know their friends.

Encouraging and focusing on families involved in activities that create positive relations between adults and youth is the kind of positive news we need more of. Keep up the good work.

Rhoda Flagg

New Berlin

TEACHER RESIDENCY

School Board doesn't want to negotiate I am a Milwaukee teacher who has taught in the Milwaukee Public Schools system for 17 years. I am well aware of the fine teachers who are lost every year due to the residency requirement.

Our union has proposed several options to the board during contract negotiations over the years. One proposal was to require teachers to reside in Milwaukee for 3 ½ years, and then they would be allowed to move. There have been other scenarios proposed, but they are always turned down in negotiations.

The proposal I have mentioned is more than fair. The issue of residency always seems to get dropped in the negotiation process. It needs to be revisited and considered in order to hire and retain quality teachers.

Lisa Eusebio

Milwaukee

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YOUR OPINIONS

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 24, 2008

Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

Experience was a sobering civics lesson for children As a Wisconsin taxpayer, I decided that I would let my children see civics in action as the Legislature met to consider virtual schools. We turned off our computers, shut our books and headed to Madison. Yes, our virtual school was closed for the day.

That day will remain forever etched in my children's minds. They were able to see that profiles in courage exist in a few. They were able to see what a puppet Gov. Jim Doyle is for the Wisconsin Education Association Council. They were able to see that WEAC is not here for the kids but for the money. They were able to see that a senator can be so influenced by his peers he can change his vote. They were able to see how afraid WEAC is of virtual public school success.

What they saw was a mockery of our legislative system. How do you explain that to them? Special interest groups need to stop having the influence they do. It is time Doyle stopped giving us lip service and practice what he is campaigning about with Barack Obama. Doyle needs to be accountable for his actions. I demand it as a taxpayer. He has ignored my phone calls asking for explanations. Please help us save our virtual public school — we need it.

Jenny Lecato

Grafton

No need for attendance cap for virtual schools Other than greed and politics — which seem to go hand in hand — I don't see the reason for a cap on attendance in virtual schools. Teachers, unions and school boards have held the public hostage long enough.

Welcome to the age of computerization. The ever-increasing costs of education and maintenance — or lack of maintenance — in our brick and mortar schools, have inspired an alternative approach. Teachers, unions and school boards have refused to govern themselves and set standards. Students spend minimal time every day on academics and bring home hours of work with pounds of books.

Virtual schools give parents the ability to contact accredited educators for assistance without time restraints. They also allow students to work together — not cheat — creating a sense of team work. All this with low maintenance costs and fewer employees. Gov. Jim Doyle should encourage this type of education, rather than put up roadblocks. It is more fiscally responsible and in the best interest of taxpayers, not the teachers union.

Russ Peck

Jackson

MITCHELL AIRPORT

Are controllers using outdated technology? I find it most curious that I can navigate the world in my car using a high-tech global positioning system, but according to recent reporting, it seems that air traffic controllers are still watching the same screens that have been used since World War II. What's up with that?

Alice Nolan

Cedarburg

Mitchell International isn't really cosmopolitan Why does Mitchell International Airport persist in calling itself international? There are few international flights into or out of it — even when flying to Toronto, one has to go through customs for the United States in Toronto. In more than 30 years of travel, I never have been able to

fly from Milwaukee to Europe. It has always had to be O'Hare in Chicago. I wish Milwaukee would get rid of the joke of calling its airport Mitchell "International."

Nick Burns

Kohler

CUBA

U.S. must engage Cuba As the Feb. 20 editorial "A failed Cuban policy" stated so well, our Cuba policy has been a failure. After nearly 50 years in power, Fidel Castro has not only survived every effort on our part to destroy him but is now orchestrating his own succession under Cuba's socialist constitution.

A new Cuban government will emerge today as the Council of State elects its leaders. These will include old as well as new figures, most likely led by Raul Castro as president. The United States can continue to hide its head in the sand and refuse to deal with a "Castro-lite," or it can take this opportunity to engage the new Cuban leadership.

The overwhelming majority of Americans support opening up to Cuba, as do a growing majority of Cuban-Americans in Florida. The time has come to stop playing politics and take a forward-looking approach. If we can deal with China and Vietnam, why not Cuba? Engage the Cubans now and let the chips fall where they may.

Ricardo Gonzalez

President, Madison-Camaguey (Cuba)

Sister City Association

Madison

U.S. has not made things worse for Cubans In "A failed Cuban policy," the Journal Sentinel Editorial Board attributed at least some of the hardships of life in Cuba to the U.S. trade embargo. While I agree our approach to Cuba should change, I disagree that we've added to the hardship of the Cuban people, especially since we give aid in the form of food and medicine.

Cuba, which enjoyed generous support from the Soviet Union before its collapse, and currently from countries such as Venezuela and China, has had a very poor standard of living with no improvement since Fidel Castro came to power. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba increased its dealings with countries the world over. Yet Cuban life remains a hardship for most, despite the fact Cuba has a world of good to offer.

The blame lays squarely at the feet of Castro, who has disallowed free and creative thinking, investments and ownership, stifling anything that would allow Cubans to build a better life. Cuba is a reflection of Castro's failure.

Chris Mackenzie

Milwaukee

MIKE MCGEE JR.

Community should take responsibility for leaders It is no small wonder that Milwaukee has minority problems when a community continues to elect alleged criminals ("McGee survives primary fight," Feb. 20).

A lot of African-Americans I know are decent people, and I'm proud to be considered a friend. But I also know black pastors and politicians who feel they have to abuse and use the system to their own ends, stifling the future of their followers.

Black pride in the inner city does not mean encouraging ignorance. I can't imagine Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell or Barack Obama grew up with that mentality.

Communities, businesses and families are all a reflection of their leadership. We are responsible for whom we put in positions of authority.

Fred Greb

Waukesha

Here's one way McGee could help constituents How about having Milwaukee Ald. Mike McGee Jr. and his fellow inmates work on repairing all the potholes in his district?

Yes, I live in the 6th District. Since phone messages to his office go largely unreturned, and he allegedly is running the district from his jail cell, I can't think of a better way for him to earn his keep. This would show his loyal followers that he is truly interested in the community's concerns and would prove he is worthy of all the uninformed votes cast for him in the Feb. 19 election.

Beth L. Bertram

Milwaukee

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

It's unlikely there will be real change after election There will be a cosmetic change in who runs things if a woman or an African-American is elected president. Although the cosmetic change is positive — since it puts a bit of color in our nation's cheeks — it will not affect matters of substance.

Minorities will continue to be oppressed, and women will have less power than men.

Real change must be made from the inside out, not from the outside in. Whoever wins, money will remain in charge.

Richard Kovac

Stevens Point

Electing Obama could result in large tax increase One rarely seen but extremely important story in the ongoing presidential campaign is Barack Obama's proposed tax and spending increases. William McGurn, a speechwriter for President Bush who was formerly an executive at News Corp., found that Obama's tax strategy will add \$1,800 in taxes for a family of four with \$60,000 in earnings in 2007.

Obama also voted against wiretapping terrorists calling the United States from terrorist states. All this, yet people think we're not ignorant when it comes to who we vote for and why we vote?

Jim Hayett

Merton

Next president could help usher in justice, peace I've never heard anybody put Jesus' message of peace better than letter writer Lillia Langreck ("There's nothing unreal about peace," Feb. 16). Humans must be ever-vigilant against demonizing one portion of humanity for problems that a more enlightened, courageous and compassionate political leadership could be addressing.

That type of governance will be the true bearer of Jesus' virtues, contributing to a sustainable standard of living for all, instead of greed and poverty; allowing freedom and tolerance for people to live by their own lights; and providing just law and police enforcement, not the mass murder of war.

Those we vote for can bring about Jesus' peaceful vision, but it will take impassioned, committed, outspoken citizens to bring those exemplary leaders to the fore. I'll add my voice to the dream!

Minnie Frew

Greendale

WATER

Water center exists already at UW-Madison The editorial "Studies that are all wet" on Feb. 19 calling for a school of freshwater science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee overlooked the existence of the

Center for Limnology at UW-Madison, founded in 1982, and a century of national leadership in the field of inland freshwater research. It would be better to direct resources to a proven program than to duplicate what we already have.

Tom August

Milwaukee

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Section: J Crossroads

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Correction: CORRECTION: from 03/05/2008: Due to an editing error, a Feb. 24 letter to the editor from Jim Hayett mistakenly identified William McGurn as a former News Corp. executive. He is an executive with the company.

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JIM STINGL - Pothole crews get a winter workout, a taste of futility

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 27, 2008

Author: JIM STINGL, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Let the record show that on Tuesday at 2 p.m. I became part of the solution. I patched one pothole.

Only a million to go.

Jon Nessmann and Fernando Garza form one of the city crews that spend their days shoveling a black, dense, gooey mix into the craters along many of the main streets of Milwaukee.

They let me tag along for a while as they worked along Chase Ave. between Oklahoma and Lincoln avenues.

Potholes are the Satan's spawn of Wisconsin winters, and this year the gestation period has been unusually quick. Heavy snow and frequent cycling from freezing to thawing — not to mention lots of aging, crummy roads — have left us dodging deep holes and cracks all over southeastern Wisconsin.

Some are so nasty that they may cause you to utter a bad word and look in the rearview mirror to see if your hubcap is rolling away. There's a section of State St. east of 68th St. in Wauwatosa that's basically one long hole with scattered bits of road between. I've been avoiding that street entirely.

Milwaukee wants you to call 286-CITY to report potholes, and since December, 2,938 people have done that. Actually, it may save time to just let the city know the rare stretches of road where there aren't any.

When civilization finally crumbles for good, it will be traced back to potholes. Museums will display the mangled suspension parts of our automobiles.

Nessmann and Garza run into two kinds of people when they're out there in the streets. There are the winter-weary souls who wave and give the thumbs-up sign when they pass. And there are the distracted speeders who don't seem to notice the flashing go-around-us arrows on the city truck that blocks the lane the men are working in. This can be dangerous work.

Keeping one eye on traffic, the workers shovel the cold asphalt stew from the truck and into each hole, working it in and tamping it down. Then they move the truck forward to the next bunch of chuckholes, concentrating on the deepest ones and letting the little stuff go.

"We want to get them fixed as much as anybody else does because we ride on the same roads," Nessmann said.

There's an air of futility to the whole exercise. Snowplows come along and tear out the patches, or the moisture in the ground heaves and undoes the repairs. But it helps until a more permanent hot patch can be applied when the weather warms up.

"It's a never-ending battle," Nessmann said. "It's hard to keep up. We've been on the same streets numerous times."

They're trying to prevent what happened to Wauwatosan Jim Anello, who hit an all-star pothole with his Prius recently and blew out a front tire. That was on Roosevelt Drive near 55th St.

"Since the roads were snow-covered, I didn't see the pothole coming," he said.

He also could not have anticipated the kindness and trusting of one of the strangers who stopped to help. A woman named Crystal gave Anello her cell phone to call for help and told him to contact her later at home to arrange to return the phone after everything was straightened out.

"I will always remember Crystal. She saved our bacon," Anello said.

It was a warm moment in this harsh season that has brought us a bumper crop of potholes, glacial snowbanks and cold, cold days. Is it just me, or has it been winter for like a year and a half now?

It's cruel that we're about to tack an extra day onto February. Let's move Leap Day to June 31st and make it a holiday.

----- Call Jim Stingl at (414) 224-2017 or e-mail at jstingl@journal sentinel.com

JSOnline.com

You can't drive in Wisconsin this winter without encountering a few pretty good-sized potholes. Tell us about the worst of them on our online forum, www.jsonline.com/links/potholes.

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Section: B News

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Record Number: MERLIN_12625191

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YOUR OPINIONS**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI)** - February 27, 2008**Author:** *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel***DISASTER RESPONSE**

State needs to figure out how to respond

I found the article about the failure of Wisconsin's emergency management system rather frightening ("Patrol wouldn't shut I-90," Feb. 22). Wisconsin failed its citizens during the recent snowstorm. With more than 2,000 cars stranded on I-90 outside of Madison for up to 12 hours, one must wonder what our government would do if faced with something worse than a blizzard.

According to the report issued by the National Guard, the interstate was not closed even though car after car after car continued to logjam the highway. And, to make matters worse, the poor people stuck in the vehicles were not allowed to be helped. Unbelievable! I can't wait for the lawsuits.

These officials are probably some of the same people coming up with plan upon plan — masters at second-guessing. We're supposed to look for them in catastrophic times for leadership?

We're continually asked, I should say demanded, to funnel more money to these lifelong gravy trainers who would be utterly lost in the real world. This is the same incompetence that broadcast Wisconsin citizens' Social Security numbers all over the state.

Not to worry though. My friend and yours, Jim "Balanced Budget" Doyle, says he's sorry. That is one statement I have to agree with.

Jerry Luedtke Vernon

Fire the boss

If the Journal Sentinel's reporting on the I-90 logjam is correct — and I have no reason to believe that it is not — then Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent David Collins should have been fired for incompetence no later than Feb. 9. It's obvious that the job is over his head, and he should be replaced immediately. Why is he still on the taxpayers' payroll?

D. J. Slavik Glendale

PABST FARMS

Take the time to develop it right

The developers of the Pabst Farms Town Center still have the opportunity to create something special: an environmentally sensitive, regional mall that will be an economic stimulant for Waukesha and Jefferson counties. The Pabst Farms location, directly between Madison and Milwaukee, is in the second-wealthiest county in Wisconsin. It was my understanding that the original plan for the buildout of Pabst Farms was 15 to 20 years.

With these things in mind, the developers should exercise patience in developing this shopping and entertainment area. Pabst Farms and Development Diversified Realty should strive to attract stores such as Costco, Trader Joes and Borders rather than Target and Kohls. Without stores to make it a regional draw, the development could turn into just another forgettable interchange, like I-94 and Highway 83.

David Smart Waukesha

HEALTH CARE

System seems to only look out for itself

The Feb. 23 article "Doctors slow to volunteer for project" confirms why this state has the highest insurance rates in the nation. Heaven forbid that doctors would volunteer and the health care system agree to participate. Why in the world should they go out of their way to help people and give back to the community, when all they're concerned with are their profits and building bigger hospitals? Everyone involved in the health care system in this state should be ashamed of their greed.

As a self-employed person, I see my health insurance rates go up 30% to 40% every year for no reason. I haven't had any major illnesses or procedures; I'm not on any medication. It just doesn't make sense.

I've tried many times to negotiate with my doctors on small procedures to accept the rate my insurance pays for said procedure. They deny that option because I own a home and a car — because I'm not destitute, in their eyes, I don't need help.

This attitude by doctors and insurance companies here is a major reason Wisconsin isn't considered "business friendly," along with our high taxes.

When are we going to demand more from elected officials, doctors and insurance companies?

Victoria Zima Milwaukee

PRISONERS

Let them fill potholes

Beth Bertram had an excellent point in her Feb. 24 letter about enlisting Milwaukee Ald. Mike McGee Jr. to fill potholes, but as we all know, McGee is charged with felonies and probably would be a flight risk.

However, Milwaukee should have prisoners who are not felons or dangerous — and who are not flight risks — shovel snow and fill potholes. It would take some of the burden off city workers, who are overloaded with work due to the abundant snow this year. It would let the City of Milwaukee concentrate on snow removal and garbage pickup, which seem to be on the minds of most citizens.

I've been to Florida numerous times, and it has prisoners working on highways with signs stating "Prisoners at Work." Why can't Milwaukee do that, instead of prisoners just sitting in jail, doing nothing and wasting taxpayers' money? Get them out, and get them to work.

L. Miller Wauwatosa

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So, just how big was the pothole that ate your tire? - Readers share tales of lumpy, bumpy roads

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 28, 2008

Author: DON WALKER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

By his own admission, Michael Fendrich has been driving erratically lately.

He has good reason to. He's swerving to avoid a bumper crop of potholes that dot Wisconsin's roads and highways like a moonscape.

"I fell into a pothole on Brown Deer Road two weeks ago," Fendrich wrote in an e-mail. "The sound my fall made was so loud that my daughter and I started laughing. The next thing I know, my tire was flat and my rim bent. That was not so funny."

Fendrich, a social welfare professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, paid \$200 to have his car fixed. Recently, he was pulled over by Shorewood police. When he explained why he was driving so erratically, they let him go.

At JSONline.com, readers were asked to tell their pothole story and where the worst problems are. Hundreds responded, with exclamation points and all-caps for emphasis.

Brad, in Milwaukee, said he recommends wearing a mouth guard when traveling on N. 76 St. between W. Center St. and W. Capitol Drive.

"Yeah, they're that bad," he wrote the Journal Sentinel in an e-mail. "OMG," writes Aaron of Hales Corners. There is a string of potholes on W. Forest Home Ave., traveling northeast from S. 106th St., he said. "I seriously had a nightmare about potholes last week and having half of my car 'swallowed' by one of them," he said.

George Torres, Milwaukee County director of transportation and public works, feels everyone's pain. He drives between the County Grounds in Wauwatosa and the west side and has to navigate a particularly nasty stretch of W. State St.

"I've never been to Kosovo or Bosnia, but I imagine it's like that," he said of W. State St.

Torres is doing what he can. He has 110 workers on highway maintenance, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The workers are working off a list of locations.

He said the county is responsible for 2,200 land miles of state and interstate roadways that go through 19 municipalities. Plus, his crew is responsible for 145 miles of county highways, such as Silver Spring Drive, Good Hope Road and N. Port Washington Road.

Torres said his crews use a short-term "cold mix" to fix the potholes. "We call it throw and go," he said. "We can tamp it down, but they are not long-term fixes."

Here are some of the worst locations, as told by Journal Sentinel readers online:

- W. State St., from N. Hawley Road west through the village of Wauwatosa, got plenty of nominations. Bill Kappel, Wauwatosa's director of public works, admitted Wednesday that State St. should have been rebuilt years ago. The project was delayed when Milwaukee rebuilt the N. Hawley Road bridge and was delayed again last year because of the Hart Park makeover. Kappel said the road will be rebuilt later this year.
- W. Blue Mound Road, between Highway 100 and N. 124th St. K.J. Thompson of New Berlin writes that he can no longer drive on the road. "You have to swerve around them. Also, they are in two-three clusters, so swerving is futile."
- N. 76th St. near W. Burleigh St. Reginald Riley of Milwaukee said his Land Rover hit a pothole, destroying

the SUV's suspension. "I had to drive home at 10 mph and have my truck repaired for \$1,171," he said.

- Matt of Mequon and many others mentioned westbound W. Brown Deer Road., between I-43 and N. Green Bay Road. "It looks like a bomb went off in the street," he wrote.

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Pocked streets pick pockets - Auto repair shops do big business as alignments, suspensions, hubcaps, wheel wells and tires get roughed up by potholes**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - February 28, 2008****Author: MARINO ECCHER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

That sound your car makes as it rumbles over Milwaukee's cratered streets is reverberating loud and clear in local repair shops in what some mechanics are calling the busiest year they can remember for pothole-inflicted damages.

And while your vehicle's suspension may rattle, your wallet might end up absorbing the biggest hit.

"This year's one of the worst we've seen," said Michael Scott, manager of Pitstop Tire Shop, 3507 W. Wright St. "Potholes are making business go."

Alignments, suspensions, hubcaps and wheel wells all take a beating on the rough roads, said Ray Kurian, co-owner of Ray's O.K. Service, 4100 W. Loomis Road in Greenfield.

"It's probably the worst it's been in 10 years," said Kurian, who has been in the auto repair business for more than 30 years. "You name it, it's happening."

Repairs can run \$50 to \$75 for a wheel realignment and exceed \$500 when suspension or bearings break down, he said.

This week, dozens of Milwaukee-area drivers shared their pothole horror stories on jsonline.com, with some reporting huge repair bills.

One driver said a pothole near W. Keefe Ave. on N. 76th St. — a stretch he likened to "a dirt road in the rural south" — wrecked the suspension on his Land Rover and left him with a \$1,171 repair bill.

Another said he was set back \$1,200 after a pothole on Brown Deer Road near Highway 57 took the tire off his car and inflicted major dents.

Jim Neldner, owner of Jim's Auto Center, 4264 S. Packard Ave. in St. Francis, said driving over potholes can cause already-worn parts to break down.

"It's really hard on the tires, shocks and struts," he said. "We've had a ton of broken springs and ball joints that just fell apart."

Kurian said that even new or well-kept cars aren't safe. He said a 2005 Ford Focus came into the shop Wednesday with a wrecked suspension system.

"Even the people who do maintain their vehicles properly are subject to it," he said.

So what's a driver cruising toward a nasty-looking pothole to do?

"Slow down," Neldner said. "The harder you hit 'em, the worse it is for your car."

While some drivers might be tempted to let air out of their tires to avoid popping them on a bad bump, Neldner said tires are better off properly inflated. Otherwise, he said, the impact just gets passed on to other parts of the car.

The pressure from a pothole impact "has to go somewhere" and can break a car's rims if it doesn't blow out the tire, Scott said.

While road repair crews can temporarily refill potholes, Kurian said, they can't fix them permanently until the weather warms and snowplowing stops.

"As soon as we have another snowstorm, another freeze, that stuff (the fill) just lifts right out," he said.

AVOIDING POTHOLE DAMAGE

- Keep tires fully inflated.
- Leave space between your car and the car in front of you.
- Before you swerve to avoid a pothole, check for traffic.
- If you can't avoid a pothole, slow down.
- Don't brake directly over a pothole – this can increase the damage to the front of your car.
- Beware of water that may conceal deep potholes.

Source: AAA Wisconsin

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YOUR OPINIONS**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 4, 2008****Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel****GAS PRICES**

U.S. automakers are asleep at the wheel

Were you a little disappointed by the latest Milwaukee Auto Show? With gasoline prices threatening to reach \$4 a gallon, auto manufacturers are still touting horsepower, torque and breakaway speeds from zero to 60 in five seconds. Like we need this kind of speed to weave our way along Capitol Drive over thousands of potholes. With a half-dozen new hybrid models, I didn't see anything new that is more economical than the two vehicles in my garage that get over 27 miles per gallon on the highways. The cars are both foreign-built, 12 and 7 years old. A year from now, you'll read in the news that the American auto industry is puzzled, asking why auto sales are down.

John L. Campbell Brookfield

Bush ignoring prices

President Bush responded in typical fashion recently when asked by a reporter to comment on the predicted price of \$4 a gallon for gas. The information had been news for days, yet Bush responded, "I didn't hear about that." And why should he? He hasn't a clue what's been going on in this country for the past eight years.

Kurt Fifer Muskego

PUBLIC RECORDS

Enough of the blame-shifting

I have complimented Clerk of Circuit Courts John Barrett in the past for the great job his clerks do at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Unfortunately, Barrett's solution to the gaffe of placing private information online is to eliminate private data columns. How? There are none. Citizen names were jumbled in with other data in the public "Invoice Description" column for one primary reason: Barrett improperly sent them for inclusion. Now, he wants to blame hard-working county clerks for entering tainted data and Citizens for Responsible Government for inadvertently exposing this longstanding problem.

More regrettably, Barrett chose to place citizens at risk by alerting those who might improperly use the information before allowing an opportunity for its removal. CRG did so within minutes after notification and started the process well before the Journal Sentinel published any articles on it.

CRG never asked for nor did the county know it was releasing private data within public records. CRG apologizes for its unintentional role in this incident. Barrett should accept responsibility for his mistakes and work constructively to solve the problem of mixing private with public data. Reducing government transparency and access to public records is not a solution.

Orville Seymer Vice President, Citizens for Responsible Government Milwaukee

GREAT LAKES

A compact would protect our lake

Columnist Patrick McIlheran's questions about preserving Lake Michigan are worth an answer ("Water, water everywhere and maybe none for you," Feb. 27). Yes! We must save our lake for "the seventh generation," to use an American Indian adage. Ninety-nine percent of Lake Michigan was a gift from Mother Nature, contributed by melting glaciers. Only 1% is renewed each year. We are now withdrawing more than is renewed. Evaporation due to climate change increases the deficit.

At the Wisconsin Senate compact legislation hearing in Kenosha, an opposition spokesman said increased bureaucracy might delay building projects outside of the watershed. It was clear he wanted nothing to delay short-term building goals.

Our planet will survive despite our mistakes and with depleted lakes, but do we really want the legacy of a dried up lake that no longer sustains us and our economy? The Illinois loophole that allows an unmitigated diversion of 2.1 billion gallons per day is an unfortunate example of bad Supreme Court decisions made in 1967 and earlier without a compact.

We must pass the proposed compact to ensure a process to protect this vital, exhaustible resource that is held in the public trust.

Cheri Briscoe Milwaukee

Suburbanites can return for water

Patrick McIlheran's column of Feb. 27 gives the impression that he thinks keeping Lake Michigan water from Waukesha County is a bad thing. I take exactly the opposite position. I have no sympathy at all for thirsty Waukesha. None.

Milwaukee County has been badly damaged by the many people who grew up here only to migrate west to Waukesha County when they came of age. People who attended our schools, played in our parks, participated in our recreational programs and otherwise suckled from our bosom of culture and community have turned their backs on where they came from. Once they have grown up and are ready to give back (via taxes, community involvement, etc.), they moved away.

Waukesha is largely populated by people who have — or whose parents have — tossed away their old hometowns like so much used Kleenex. Many of these people still slink back into town for work, a ball game or the theater — testament that they still need us.

Milwaukee County has its problems, although they are largely over-advertised. They include some crime, budget issues, need for new investment. Every one of these problems is ameliorated a bit by every good, hard-working family that moves in and worsened by every family that moves out.

I say keep our water. If Waukesha residents must have it, make them pay a premium. If they protest, I would recommend they look for a new home in some wonderful communities along a wonderful lake — communities that have plenty of water and that will welcome them like prodigal children.

Michael A. Manske Milwaukee

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NewsBank^{inc.}

America's Newspapers

Storms burying budgets - Dispute over clearing bus stops may boost fees**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 6, 2008****Author: LARRY SANDLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

This winter's relentless snowstorms have blasted multimillion dollar holes in two consecutive Milwaukee budgets — and have uncovered a city-county dispute that has left 2,100 bus stops and hundreds of bus shelters unshoveled for years.

At the same time, some residents and aldermen are pushing for more extensive efforts to clear snow from bus stops and wheelchair crosswalk ramps, a move that could boost costs by some \$1.4 million a year — a \$7 annual fee increase for the average homeowner, city officials said Wednesday.

Mayor Tom Barrett and the Common Council budgeted \$4.9 million to clear snow and ice from city streets in each of the 2007 and 2008 city budgets, based on an average of four major snowstorms a year, Public Works Commissioner Jeff Mantes and Barrett aide Eileen Force said.

But the city was hit by 11 big winter storms last year, mostly in December, and four large storms so far this year, plus several smaller storms in each year, Mantes told the council's Public Works Committee.

Last year's snow removal effort cost \$10.7 million, or \$5.8 million over budget, Barrett said. And this year's effort already has cost \$6.5 million, or \$1.6 million beyond an appropriation that was supposed to last through December, city budget analyst John Ledvina told the committee.

"We have gotten walloped," Barrett said.

The city has shifted more than \$1 million to cover part of last year's costs, but the administration will seek council approval to borrow \$4.4 million, Barrett said. The city's contingency fund will be tapped to cover this year's overrun.

Those cost overruns, however, were less of a surprise to some city and county officials than the discovery of an apparently longstanding disagreement over which government agency is supposed to clear snow from Milwaukee County Transit System bus stops and bus shelters.

Mantes told aldermen that the city used to plow all 4,200 bus stops in the city, until state law was changed in the 1990s to allow buses to stop in minor intersections near bus stops. After that, he said, city and transit officials agreed the city could quit plowing those bus stops and focus on those at major intersections or in the middle of blocks and those identified as important for riders with disabilities — about half the citywide total.

Responsibilities unclear

That was news to George Torres, county director of public works and transportation. Torres said transit officials knew nothing of the agreement that Mantes described. He said the county's policy was for municipalities to take responsibility for clearing snow at all bus stops within their limits.

Mantes also said the city drew a distinction between a bus stop — the area at the curb near the transit system sign — and a bus shelter. He said the county was responsible for clearing snow from bus shelters, as part of the maintenance required under the terms of city permits for the shelters.

But county workers have never cleared snow from the shelters, either, believing that was part of the municipal responsibility to clear the bus stops, Torres said.

The transit system doesn't have figures on how many bus shelters are in the city, but it's likely a majority of the 755 shelters countywide, bus system spokeswoman Jacqueline Janz said.

To the applause of spectators at the meeting, Milwaukee Ald. Bob Bauman said, "To me, this is an argument over ridiculous technicalities. . . . People just want to get to their bus stop."

Mantes and Torres each said their departments could not afford to clear every bus stop and bus shelter.

Torres said court records indicate the dispute may date back to 1956, nearly 20 years before the county took over the bus system. Asked why it had not come to light in more recent years, he said this winter's "back-to-back-to-back snowstorms" had likely heightened awareness of the problem.

Mantes and Torres said they would continue to review the issue with attorneys and each other and would discuss ways to resolve it.

Clean crosswalks urged

The budget and bus stop shoveling revelations came as the city panel discussed a city Department of Public Works report on what it would take to clear snow from every bus stop and every crosswalk wheelchair ramp within 24 hours of a major snowstorm. The most expensive options would add \$345,000 to the cost of each big storm, an average of \$1.4 million a year, boosting the snow and ice fee by \$7 a year, from \$21 to \$28.

Advocates for the disabled urged the city to spend that money. Don Natzke, director of the county Office for Persons with Disabilities, said authorities risk a tragedy every time someone in a wheelchair has to use a street instead of a sidewalk and every time a blind or otherwise disabled person tries to navigate a snowy or icy ramp.

Northwest side resident Arlene Conley, who uses a wheelchair, said she had been confined to her home for most of February because of the snow and ice.

Bauman, the committee chair, called the \$7 increase "a small price to pay." That drew a heated response from west side resident Bob Weiland, who retorted, "I pay enough property taxes already. You're supposed to be doing that (clearing bus stops and ramps) now, and you're not. I want to know where my money is going."

Barrett said raising the fee 33% in next year's budget "is not acceptable to me right now." He said he would consider other options.

The 2007 budget included a 75% increase in that fee, from \$12 to \$21.

Also Wednesday, the committee called for a study of how to better patch potholes. Mantes said cuts in street maintenance, before Barrett took office, had a long-term impact. The full council will consider the issue March 18.

\$4.9

million Amount set aside for snow removal in 2007 and 2008, based on an average of four major snowstorms a year

\$10.7

million Cost of last year's effort

\$6.5

million cost of this year's effort so far

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YOUR OPINIONS

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 10, 2008

Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

SMOKING

Nonsmoking laws wouldn't be harmful I am 84 years old and never smoked, even when I was in the Navy in World War II. The Red Cross gave us cigarettes every time we came ashore. My wife smoked, and when she had lung cancer, she stopped cold turkey nine years before she died.

I have been going for Friday fish fries at a bar with 12 tables. Last year, it closed and moved a mile down the road. It now does not allow smoking. The bar has 26 tables and three times the business. I go to restaurants with no smoking, and they are all full. Ban smoking, and every bar and restaurant would be busy.

Donald Wilke

Pewaukee

Butts are litter With the debate about a potential smoking ban in full swing, I can't believe nobody talks about the problem we have with toxic-brained idiots who litter our streets and highways with cigarette butts. The fines we have for throwing garbage out of a vehicle should be steeper, with the money being used to fix potholes and such.

Robert Sasser

Milwaukee

CANDIDATES

Two-year campaign seems a little much Regarding the full-time campaigning of presidential candidates, letter writer David Radbil on March 5 posed a legitimate question: Who is doing their work in the Senate while they are absent from the workplace?

However, I think his inquiry doesn't go far enough. By November, the nonstop campaigning will have consumed nearly two full years of their time — two years away from the positions to which they were elected. Thus, an additional question: Do they continue to draw their salaries for those jobs? If so, is this ethical? Is it fair to taxpayers?

Regina Schulte

Burlington

ROAD SALT

Time to stop excuses and find alternatives The Feb. 29 editorial, "Salt still best option," sounds more like a plea to keep an addiction rather than facing the responsible task of greatly reducing its use.

The most obvious victim of road salt use is Lake Michigan. The Environmental Protection Agency says the salinity caused by road salt is "acceptable." With the lake level at historic lows, demands from Waukesha County to tap into it, other shoreline cities adding salinity, plus frequent summer droughts, I ask: Can Lake Michigan hold up?

Why does Milwaukee County deserve bare streets in winter? Other communities do not provide this. Do we have our priorities right?

How about slowing down, allowing a safe braking distance and giving up the vain race to be the leader in a cluster of commuters?

Quit gambling with our main water resource.

Gus Ricca

Shorewood

WIGWAM SOCKS

Company deserves respect, customers As a former resident of Sheboygan, a longtime user of Wigwam Socks and a strong believer in fair labor practices — including workers' right to organize for wages and benefits — I was pleased and proud to read Rick Barrett's fine article "Premium hosiery is their stocking trade" on March 3.

Barrett detailed the complexity and difficulty Wigwam faces competing in a world market, and with U.S. outlets that do not share its values. I congratulate the company and its work force. A nontaxable benefit of such commitment and policy is being able to sleep at night — knowing you are walking with, not on, the rest of the world.

Don Richards

Milwaukee

Locally made socks worth a road trip I'm a 77-year-old lady whose exercise is pulling up my plain white ankle socks from Wal-Mart — day after day — but after your article on Wigwam Mills in Sheboygan and to support U.S. businesses, I'm getting together with a group of my friends, like we did to get medicine from Canada. We'll find someone younger to drive to Gander Mountain three hours away. Now, I also understand CAFTA and how it works. Never too old to learn.

Bonnie Jaecks

Nekoosa

PUBLIC RECORDS

Confidential info shouldn't be released Letter writer Orville Seymer of Citizens for Responsible Government misunderstands the process of bill paying in Milwaukee County and, ergo, misrepresented the role of John Barrett in this process ("Enough of the blame-shifting," March 4).

The county pays vendors for services. The courts assure the legitimacy of bills. Per requirements of Central Accounting, we submit the original invoice for payment. Invoice information, including confidential identifiers, is keyed into the system by Department of Administration staff. It is not problematic to enter that information for internal use; however, confidential information should not be released.

When the Walker administration gave this information to CRG, Barrett was not notified and was not given the opportunity to stop the release. When he was contacted days later, he requested removal of columns containing confidential information. This was not done. It was only after the press was contacted and the article published that the information was fully removed. This has been a costly endeavor for Milwaukee County. I hope CRG is willing to pay the county for this cost.

Deborah Bachun

Financial/operations manager

for the Clerk of Circuit Court,

Milwaukee County

Milwaukee

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Record Number: MERLIN_12713201

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Doyle looks to spare road work - Some lawmakers reject plan to add to debt

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - April 24, 2008

Author: STEVEN WALTERS and PATRICK MARLEY, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Madison — Legislative leaders are rejecting Gov. Jim Doyle's plan to go \$257 million deeper in debt to protect transportation spending — prompting fears among some that Doyle may scale back summer and fall highway maintenance and rebuilding projects.

The dispute is one of three major unresolved issues blocking a deal between legislative leaders and Doyle over how to rebalance the two-year, \$57 billion state budget that became law in October. Since then, the slowing economy has caused a projected \$652 million shortfall in tax collections.

Doyle said this week he is worried that the lack of a budget-repair deal could force the Department of Transportation to reduce \$261 million in construction contracts it plans to award in May and June.

"I think we're going to have to make some decisions and get something done," said Doyle, who returns from a trade mission to Ireland and the United Kingdom next week. "Each week that passes makes it more difficult."

Some lawmakers, however, want to see the state cut spending instead of going deeper into debt. In their March version of a budget-repair bill, Assembly Republicans called for \$220 million more in spending cuts than the governor proposed.

Long-term debt faced by state government increased by 87% in the past 10 years — three times the U.S. inflation rate over that period. And, this year, payments just on transportation bonds will cost \$174 million.

Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch (R-West Salem) and Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker (D-Weston) don't like the plan to divert more cash from the transportation fund.

Since 2003, Doyle — sometimes with the approval of lawmakers — has transferred \$1.1 billion from transportation to public schools, and covered that transfer with new debt.

"Transportation raids are on everybody's mind right now, especially as you drive back and forth from Milwaukee — potholes and that type of thing," Huebsch said. "While we have done that in the past, we may have gone to that well for the last time."

Decker said protecting transportation is a top priority for Senate Democrats. He said he hoped Doyle would not cut road projects while he and Huebsch try to negotiate a compromise.

Cutting projects "may be something that the administration is looking at that is beyond our control," Decker said. "It won't be us doing it."

DOT warning The Department of Transportation will post a warning on its Web site by today from Transportation Secretary Frank Busalacchi telling contractors that May and June projects "could be reduced dramatically" if a budget deal isn't reached soon.

Delays could threaten southeastern Wisconsin projects — including N. 76th St. from Florist Ave. to W. County Line Road, and on bridges over N. Teutonia Ave. and W. Silver Spring Drive, in Milwaukee County. In Waukesha County, work is expected to be done on Summit Ave. at N. University Drive and state Highway 67 southbound from N. Summit Ave. to I-94.

Under the budget passed last year, Doyle has the authority to transfer money from the transportation fund to plug deficits in the general budget.

In March, Doyle recommended a \$257 million transfer from the transportation fund to the general budget, and replacing the diverted cash with new long-term bonds.

State Budget Director Dave Schmiedicke said Wednesday that, in a worst-case scenario, officials would

have to take \$144 million from the transportation fund if a budget repair bill is not passed soon. Taking \$144 million would greatly reduce the number of summer and fall projects that can be done and cost the state federal aid.

The threat of scaling back scheduled highway projects became more real last week, after Doyle's top budget advisers objected to a tentative budget package negotiated by two legislative leaders.

Craig Thompson, executive director of the Transportation Development Association, said he is worried about what would happen if the impasse continues much longer.

"Our fear is, if they don't get something done, there's going to be job loss," Thompson said.

Lawmakers have not publicly spelled out exactly how they want to fix the budget, but two other major unresolved issues remain:

- **School-aid payment:** The Assembly and Senate want to push a \$125 million payment for public schools into the next two-year budget cycle — an accounting move that Huebsch said has been done before.

But Doyle said he remains opposed to that, because it would create problems in the next budget.

"It's going to be just as hard to pay it two years from now — in fact, it'll be harder," he said.

- **Tobacco bonds:** In 2001, then-Gov. Scott McCallum and the Legislature balanced the state budget with \$1.6 billion by issuing bonds to cover settlement payments from the tobacco industry. In March, Doyle estimated that refinancing that deal — and extending it to the year 2027 — could free up \$30 million to offset the deficit.

Decker and Huebsch say they want any new deal to bring in more than \$30 million, but they have not made their plan public.

Doyle said that with a downturn in bond markets nationally, he hears different numbers daily about what refinancing the tobacco bonds might be worth.

"It certainly gets a lot harder, as time moves on" without agreement on a budget-repair bill, he said.

Throughout the negotiations, Doyle, Senate Democrats and many hospitals have pushed for a new tax on hospitals, which would attract more federal aid and free up \$125 million to cut the deficit. But Huebsch said that would be a tax increase, which Assembly Republicans will never approve.

If Doyle does not agree upfront to budget deal passed by the Legislature, he could rewrite it with vetoes, something legislative leaders say they want to avoid.

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Cities' infrastructure could hit a dead end - New funding sources essential, institute urges**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - April 30, 2008****Author: TOM HELD, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

Milwaukee and 22 other metropolitan areas are "coasting on prosperity" while largely heading for a massive pothole because of a lack of planning and funding for roads, public transportation and other infrastructure, according to an analysis distributed Tuesday.

Repeating recent calls of crisis over the nation's deteriorating highways and bridges, the report from the Washington-based Urban Land Institute pushed for alternative funding sources to fill the shortfall in necessary infrastructure investment.

None of them have gained much traction previously in Wisconsin, particularly toll roads, fees based on vehicle miles traveled and private partnerships in road construction and fee collections.

The report urges naysayers to reconsider opposition to new funding in light of the growing gap between the money available for maintaining and building transportation and the need to upgrade a transportation system and stay economically competitive.

Nationally, the report estimates the shortfall in spending on transportation infrastructure, including rail, at roughly \$170 billion per year. In Wisconsin, the state Legislative Fiscal Bureau has estimated the funding for roads and mass transit falls \$698 million short of what's necessary to build up the transportation system to reach goals set for 2020.

"When you look at how big the funding gap is, and the buying power of the gas tax in future years, all those other options are going to have to be on the table," said Craig Thompson, executive director of Wisconsin Transportation Development Association. "We are way behind where we need to be from a competitive standpoint to compete economically."

Thompson agreed with one other recommendation in the Urban Land Institute analysis: Government bodies shouldn't siphon money generated through transportation user fees to fund other needs. That's a particular point of contention, given proposals by Gov. Jim Doyle to move more dollars from state transportation funds to fill other gaps in the state budget.

Public-private partnerships, similar to those that helped finance work on the Chicago Skyway and Indiana Toll Roads, are the favored option of Dale Anne Reiss, the global director of real estate for Ernst & Young LLP. Reiss participated in the analysis as an adviser.

"If the U.S. fails to embrace this model, it could lead to our economy falling behind more of our global competitors," she said.

Other countries, including China, India and the United Arab Emirates, are in a growth and development stage of road and transportation development, while the U.S. is in a "coasting on prosperity" stage, according to the report.

In addition to a massive public works program, the report recommended better land use planning, more federal coordination and better strategic investing to solve the infrastructure crisis.

Milwaukee was listed in the report as one of the metropolitan areas that is basing its long-range plans on improving transit options.

_____ Journal Sentinel reporter Diana Marrero in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

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Other government experience: None

Education: Graduate of South Division High School; took classes at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Family: Married; one daughter

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ELECTION 2008 - 11th District candidates focus on snow, crime Education, city's infrastructure also surface as issues

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 7, 2008

Author: MARIE ROHDE, *Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

Ald. Joseph Dudzik of Milwaukee's 11th District raked in nearly 77% of the votes in the February primary, but his challenger for re-election, Dennis Bach, says he is not discouraged heading into the April 1 general election.

Bach, who won 14% of the vote in the primary, said his long hours clearing snow from the streets as a city employee has left little time to campaign. But he said he's confident he'll be able to get his message out.

Bach said he's concerned that the city erred when it sold heavy equipment such as front-end loaders used in snow clearing.

"We pay (private contractors) more than it would cost if we had the equipment," Bach said. "I know we could do it less expensively. The equipment would pay for itself." The city has enough manpower, Bach said, but needs the equipment.

He said, "The issues facing the district are crime in the neighborhood, the potholes in the streets and the wasteful spending that's going on in the city."

Dudzik said: "For the city as a whole, the big issues are education and employment. You get those in line and you'll see a turnaround in crime and other problems."

He said: "I've never been a fan of the city taking over MPS (Milwaukee Public Schools), but I'm beginning to think we need to look at the schools more closely. We also need to be willing to invest in businesses that might bring in jobs."

Dudzik says the city's infrastructure needs better preventive maintenance.

Joseph Dudzik (inc.)

Age: 49

Address; time in district: 8113 W. Burdick Ave.; 48 years

Occupation: Alderman, 20-year employee with the City of Milwaukee, last job as a construction inspector

Elective offices: Milwaukee alderman

Other government experience: None

Education: Graduate of Milwaukee Hamilton High School; took classes at area colleges

Family: Married; two sons

Dennis Bach

Age: 40

Address; time in district: 4147 S. 56th St.; 10 years

Occupation: Driver of heavy equipment for the Milwaukee Department of Public Works

Elective offices: None

ELECTION 2008 - South side race pits familiar foes

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 10, 2008

Author: GEORGIA PABST, *Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

In their third matchup, incumbent Milwaukee Ald. James Witkowiak and former Ald. Angel Sanchez will face off in the April 1 election to represent the 12th District on the city's south side.

Witkowiak was first elected in 1992, re-elected in 1996, but ousted in the 2000 election by then-newcomer Sanchez, who became the first Latino elected to the Common Council.

But in a 2004 rematch, Witkowiak beat Sanchez. In this February's primary, the two emerged as the top vote-getters from a field of five in the largely Latino district.

For Sanchez, crime and neighborhood improvements are the main issues. He points to the slaying of a young boy in front of his house.

"There's a lot of problems with crime," he said.

"People want service. There's garbage and potholes, abandoned vehicles and boarded-up properties everywhere. People are tired of promises."

Sanchez said Witkowiak is providing a poor example by owning a boarded-up building on S. 5th St. The building has been cited numerous times by the Department of Neighborhood Services. So far this year, the city has collected \$900 in reinspection fees because the building has been boarded up for more than six months, according to city officials.

Witkowiak said he continues to collect and pay reinspection fines on the property because he won't put glass in the windows until a tenant moves in, he said.

"This is not a neglected property," he said.

Witkowiak said he believes a lot of progress has been made in the district in the past four years. Two new tax incremental financing districts — one in the Fifth Ward and one on Mitchell St. — have been created, along with a new business improvement district on Cesar Chavez Drive, he said. He also noted homeownership in the district is up.

Angel Sanchez Age: 38

Address; time in district: 727 W. Madison St.; 34 years

Occupation: Owner, Sanchez Construction

Elective offices: Milwaukee alderman from 2000 to 2004

Other government experience: None

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Family: Single; two children

James Witkowiak (inc.) Age: 58

Address; time in district: 529 W. Historic Mitchell St.; lifelong

Occupation: Alderman, funeral director, businessman

Elective offices: Milwaukee alderman, elected in 2004, 1996 and 1992

Other government experience: Board of the city's Neighborhood Improvement District C for eight years

Education: Mortuary science degree at Worsham College, Des Plaines, Ill.

Family: Divorced, no children

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City departments millions in red - Borrowing pursued to pay for storms

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 14, 2008

Author: LARRY SANDLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The combination of harsh winter weather and rising fuel prices pushed Milwaukee city departments at least \$7.4 million over budget last year, city officials say.

A Common Council committee has recommended borrowing \$4.4 million of the cost of clearing snow and ice from city streets, mainly from December's series of winter storms. If the full council agrees Tuesday, the money would be repaid over three years, adding \$1.6 million each to the 2009, 2010 and 2011 city budgets, including interest, administrators told the council's Finance & Personnel Committee.

Other overruns will be covered by the city's contingency fund or by shifting money from other accounts, budget director Mark Nicolini said.

Mayor Tom Barrett and aldermen had budgeted \$4.9 million for snow and ice removal last year, but the final tab was \$10.7 million, a \$5.8 million overrun. The city also spent an extra \$428,203 on fixing streets because of weather-related water main breaks; \$264,000 on overtime, because snow removal delayed garbage pickup to Saturdays; and \$6,913 on clearing snow from city-owned land, Nicolini said.

That doesn't count the cost of fixing the water mains themselves, because that expense is covered through water bills rather than property taxes, Nicolini said.

This year's snow-removal costs already have run \$1.6 million over a \$4.9 million appropriation that was supposed to last through December, and speeding up pothole repairs has added at least \$120,000. Nicolini believes the contingency fund can cover those costs.

Also in 2007, fuel costs ran \$929,988 over budget for the public works, police and fire departments, said Nicolini and the council staff.

The only other unexpected big withdrawal from the contingency fund was \$1.8 million for Fire Department overtime to cover for sick or injured firefighters. This year's city budget boosted the department's overtime account by the same amount, budget analysts said.

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Council approves billboard changes - Milwaukee accepts 8-second ad rotation but adds permit requirement

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 19, 2008

Author: LARRY SANDLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Milwaukee will allow digital billboards to change their messages every eight seconds, the Common Council decided Tuesday.

But in a victory for critics of electronic billboards, the legislation will require special-use permits — and potentially public hearings — whenever a new electronic sign is erected or an old-fashioned billboard is converted to an electronic format more than 1,000 feet from a freeway or Lake Parkway.

Only nine of the city's 579 billboards are now electronic, and current rules limit them to changing messages every 30 to 60 seconds. But current rules place no limits on converting traditional billboards to electronic ones.

The new ordinance would limit how bright the digital billboards can be and would require them to be at least 400 feet from a residential neighborhood and at least 1,000 feet from each other. Ald. Mike D'Amato, the measure's chief advocate, called that reasonable regulation that wouldn't obstruct business.

Opponents of the measure, led by Aldermen Bob Bauman and Michael Murphy, focused on the electronic billboards' aesthetic impact on neighborhoods and on the possible safety hazards of distracting drivers.

But Mayor Tom Barrett and Ald. Ashanti Hamilton said the electronic billboards are more attractive than many of the old-fashioned variety. And studies conflict on whether the new signs are dangerous to traffic. The legislation allows the city to reopen the issue after a Federal Highway Administration study is completed in 2009.

Bauman and Murphy won a 9-5 vote to require the special-use permits. That means neighbors who object to the signs can voice their concerns at a hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Murphy said the change "gives the public the right to be heard. How hard is that?"

D'Amato said little public opposition had surfaced to the signs and that the special-use permit amendment "goes too far to solve a problem that doesn't exist."

Some ideas rejected

Bauman lost in a bid to require sign companies to devote 25% of the time on the digital billboards to public service announcements. He and Murphy also gave up their fight to keep messages from changing more often than every 30 seconds.

D'Amato, Hamilton and Aldermen Joe Davis Sr., Willie Wade and Jim Witkowiak opposed the special-use permits. On the final 9-5 vote to approve the entire ordinance, Ald. Tony Zielinski and Common Council President Willie Hines Jr. joined Davis, Wade and Witkowiak in opposition.

Barrett said he plans to sign the measure, which he called "a solid compromise" that balances the changes in the billboard industry with safeguards for the public. Barrett's staff lobbied for the rules on brightness and distance but took no stand on special-use permits.

Interest in the debate overwhelmed the city's Web site, said City Clerk Ron Leonhardt. The site allows up to 34 users to view live Webcasts of council meetings, but far more viewers unsuccessfully tried to tune in after Journal Sentinel architecture critic Mary Louise Schumacher posted a link to the Webcast from her Art City blog on JSOnline.com, said Deputy City Clerk Jim Owczarski.

Borrowing OK'd

Aldermen also moved to deal with the aftermath of the harsh winter. The council voted to borrow up to \$4.7 million and transfer \$441,477 from the city's contingency fund to cover most of a \$5.8 million overrun on 2007 snow and ice removal costs, while administrators have shifted money from other accounts to deal with the rest. And aldermen called on the Department of Public Works to provide a report on how to improve pothole patching.

In other action, the council:

- Boosted the maximum penalty for setting off fireworks illegally from \$500 to \$1,000 and set a \$1,000 fine for parents or guardians who let minors use fireworks.
- Approved a union contract that will raise firefighters' pay by more than 9% over three years.
- Appropriated another \$50,000, in addition to \$50,000 already budgeted, for a study that could lay the legal groundwork for reserving a portion of city business specifically for minority-owned companies, instead of the current "disadvantaged business" program.

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Potholes deeper than pockets - Repair needs far outpace road budgets**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 20, 2008****Author: TOM HELD and LARRY SANDLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

The gaping potholes in southeastern Wisconsin streets are exposing even larger holes in funding road maintenance over the years, authorities say.

After deteriorating for years, miles of roads were vulnerable to the combination of rain, snow and bitter cold. The potholes are the jolting consequence of infrastructure neglect.

In some cases, the cracks have expanded to more than just potholes, into long stretches of broken roadway.

"You've got a fairly significant break-up that it is occurring in some areas already, and we would anticipate that would get worse," said Daniel Fedderly, executive director of the Wisconsin County Highway Association.

Local governments have stepped up pothole repairs. Milwaukee County is sending out three additional crews each day, bringing the total to about 10 instead of the seven in a milder year. And the City of Milwaukee is spending \$120,000 to bring 18 two-person repair crews onto the payroll weeks earlier than usual.

But patching potholes likely won't be enough to address the problem, said state Rep. Jeff Stone (R-Greendale).

"We have to understand that at times you need to reconstruct and do it properly because those patches fail and create bigger problems," Stone said. "Filling potholes with maintenance dollars is not going to solve the problem, long term."

But it could take many years and many millions of dollars to catch up on necessary infrastructure improvements, particularly given the tight budgets for the state, city and county. In Wisconsin and nationally, the reported gap between actual highway maintenance spending and what's needed is staggering.

State, federal funding shortfalls

A 2006 Legislative Fiscal Bureau report put the Wisconsin funding shortage at \$698 million, and a U.S. Department of Transportation report to Congress put the national maintenance spending shortfall at \$119 billion through 2025, given current budget projections.

State payments to counties, which handle maintenance on the state, county and interstate roadways, have increased more than 52% from 2000 to 2008, and will total \$130,238,400 for this year, according to the state Department of Transportation.

Still, the work hasn't kept pace with the demand created by aging roads and increased traffic.

More than 50% of the pavement in the Milwaukee area was found to be in poor or mediocre condition, according to a report released last week by TRIP, a national transportation research group. The poor condition of the roads costs motorists about \$447 a year in extra repairs, tire wear and shortened lifetime of automobiles, according to the TRIP findings.

In Milwaukee, years of cutting budgets and delaying road work left city streets particularly vulnerable to the attack of winter, Public Works Commissioner Jeff Mantes said.

The first big December snowstorm dumped rain, sleet and snow into cracks in the streets, and then temperatures plunged to freeze the moisture into ice, Mantes said. That happened several more times, as temperature fluctuations triggered the freeze-thaw cycle that sent pavement heaving up, he said.

Mantes said the problem dated back to 1993, when former Mayor John O. Norquist's administration cut the paving budget for neighborhood streets from about \$10 million a year to about \$5 million a year.

The paving budget stayed at that level until Mayor Tom Barrett took office in 2004, meaning the city fell \$55 million behind on street work, not counting inflation, Mantes said.

The result: By 2005, the city was taking an average of 163 years to repair or replace neighborhood streets that were designed to last only 45 to 60 years, city Comptroller W. Martin "Wally" Morics said in a report in August.

Paving budget increased

Barrett and his budget chief, Mark Nicolini, have boosted the paving budget for neighborhood streets each year, rising to \$6.5 million for 2008, Mantes said. By this year, the replacement cycle should be down to 92 years, with further improvements ahead, Barrett has said.

Street maintenance budgets also were cut during the Norquist administration, Mantes said.

"If you cut maintenance and you cut paving, you probably have no option but for the streets to deteriorate," Mantes said.

Although the Barrett administration has increased the maintenance budget, Mantes said, "what's going to fix this is for us to really enhance our paving budget" even more.

Barrett said, "I know that potholes are a real issue. It's my hope that we can start changing priorities at the state Department of Transportation, and instead of expanding highways, putting money in for maintaining local roads and improving mass transit."

In Waukesha, public works officials were unsure what the cost of filling the ample potholes on city streets would be, although the 2008 city budget has \$55,000 set aside for repair materials.

Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas said his county's highways remain in good shape, despite the brutal winter. Vrakas credits the county's "aggressive road replacement program."

In Washington County, "there were too many potholes to count" at the beginning of March, County Highway Commissioner Ken Pesch said. In addition to traditional deep holes in pavement throughout the county, Pesch said, his crews also repaired wider but shallower holes on U.S. Highway 41 where the top layer of asphalt peeled off.

----- Darryl Enriquez and Don Behm of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.

More than 50%

Percentage of pavement in the Milwaukee area found to be in poor or mediocre condition.

Source: TRIP

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ELECTION 2008 - Candidates differ on city services Geldon's aldermanic challenge is first for Murphy since 1996

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 21, 2008

Author: TOM HELD, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The first candidate to challenge Milwaukee Ald. Michael Murphy since 1996 disagrees with the Common Council veteran on his support for neighborhood improvement programs and his reluctance to sell city water to neighboring cities and villages.

Richard Geldon describes himself as a mix between Sen. William Proxmire and Gov. Lee Sherman Dreyfus. Topping his list of campaign promises is a pledge to improve police service in the 10th Aldermanic District on the west side by filling the roughly 200 vacancies in the department.

He is making his first run for public office in his race against Murphy, who has represented the district since 1989, when he won a special election to replace Brian Burke.

Countering his opponent, Murphy said that he has made public safety a priority during his tenure. He noted he has advocated for several improvements, including recent changes in the boundaries for the Police Department's 7th District in the area, the rebuilt 3rd District police station and the establishment of bike patrols.

During his last term, Murphy worked to establish the Housing Trust Fund to provide low-income housing and the Healthy Neighborhood Initiative to combine city and foundation money for landscaping and home-improvement grants.

Geldon sees those initiatives as misguided social programs that waste tax dollars and reach beyond the scope of essential services.

"I only want my money spent on police, fire and sanitation," Geldon said. "I want my potholes fixed, and I want my streets plowed, and I want my streetlights to come on when it gets dark."

Murphy said that the spending on those types of services, particularly public safety, will only increase without some investment in quality-of-life improvements.

The housing trust, for example, will leverage private dollars to provide housing for the homeless and mentally ill, saving public safety dollars over time, he said.

Michael Murphy (inc.)

Age: 46

Address; time in district: 463 N. Story Parkway; lifelong resident

Occupation: Alderman

Elective offices: Alderman since 1989

Other government experience: Legislative aide to an alderman

Education: Bachelor's degree, geology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Family: Married; one daughter.

Richard Geldon

Age: 51

Address; time in district: 9316 Park Hill Ave.; lifelong resident

Occupation: Maintenance worker, Milwaukee Water Utility

Elective offices: None

Other government experience: None

Education: High school equivalency diploma

Family: Married; two children

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ELECTION 2008 - Police, potholes focus of 13th District race Incumbent faces off with former head of city's police union

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 25, 2008

Author: BILL GLAUBER, *Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

Cops, gardens and potholes are among the issues in the 13th District, where Milwaukee Ald. Terry Witkowski faces challenger Bradley DeBraska in the April 1 election.

Witkowski, who led the Milwaukee Safety Commission for 14 years, said he is running on a record of tying together the area through neighborhood and business associations, as well as adding a dash of beauty by creating a garden district.

"If an area is solid, well-maintained and looking good, it doesn't have the problems of a neighborhood that is run down," he said.

DeBraska, the former head of the Milwaukee police union, said law and order is the top issue, and he is eager to fill vacancies on the police force.

"What I hear from the people is they want more police protection," he said. "It's very clear, particularly with the elderly."

Witkowski said the district is "one of the safest areas of the city" and he wants to keep it that way, but he added filling vacancies in the Police Department would cost too much money and take away from other services.

"We have to think smarter and provide services in a different way," he said.

The candidates agree on one thing, though: Voters are interested in getting potholes repaired.

"Clearly, the maintenance of the streets is an overriding policy issue," DeBraska said. "They're not being fixed, and the potholes aren't being fixed."

In the February three-way primary, Witkowski won 62% of the vote to DeBraska's 22%.

Bradley DeBraska

Age: 52

Address; time in district: 2515 W. Whitaker Ave.; 27 years

Occupation: Judicial consultant

Elective offices: None

Other government experience: Civil Service Commission, board member; University of Wisconsin Board of Regents; Milwaukee Pension Board

Education: Criminal justice and psychology junior status, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; police science associate degree, Milwaukee Area Technical College

Family: Married; two children

Terry Witkowski (inc.)

Age: 63

Address; time in district: 3972 S. 1st St.; 53 years

Occupation: Alderman

Elective offices: Alderman since 2003

Other government experience: Milwaukee Safety Commission

Education: Master's degree in occupational and environmental safety and health, UW-Whitewater;
bachelor's degree in political science, Marquette University

Family: Three adult children

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4TH ALDERMANIC DISTRICT - Bauman is easy choice Outspoken? Yes. But Ald. Robert Bauman's passion for his work and his effectiveness have earned him a second term

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 25, 2008

Author: RESLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The decision for voters in Milwaukee's 4th Aldermanic District, which includes downtown, really isn't a tough choice. The incumbent, Robert Bauman, is heads above his opponent, Sharon Polk. He deserves a second term.

Yes, Bauman can be outspoken and can occasionally rub people the wrong way, but he takes his job seriously, works hard and gets things done.

The reason the new downtown Amtrak station looks as sleek and striking as it does is because Bauman and other city officials, including Mayor Tom Barrett, vigorously complained to state transportation officials about the original stripped-down renovation plans for the facility, now called the Milwaukee Intermodal Station.

That Bauman took such an interest in the issue was not surprising. Although he is an attorney, he's also a former community activist and has long been a strong proponent of mass transit and the economic benefits it can yield by connecting people and jobs.

We're also struck by Bauman's pragmatic side. As both an alderman and chairman of the Common Council's Public Works Committee, Bauman has had to deal with a huge volume of complaints about plowing and salting operations as well as those ubiquitous potholes. At the same time, Bauman concedes that this unusually harsh winter may "be a blessing in disguise" because it has forced motorists and taxpayers to come to terms with the deteriorating public infrastructure and the need to bring it up to snuff.

Although Polk responded to the Editorial Board's candidate questionnaire, she did not respond to requests for an interview.

What they said

Excerpts from candidate questionnaires (read them at www.jsonline.com/editorials):

Bauman: "I have sponsored, co-sponsored or supported many public safety initiatives, including the establishment of the community prosecution program, the installation of pole cameras, additional police recruit classes, the implementation of a traffic calming program, neighborhood walks and block watch initiatives and many legislative actions such as the chronic nuisance ordinance and the vacant building ordinance."

Polk: What she would do about violent crime: "Start neighborhood lookout groups, get the people involved in doing neighborhood walks and (be) open-minded with police officials."

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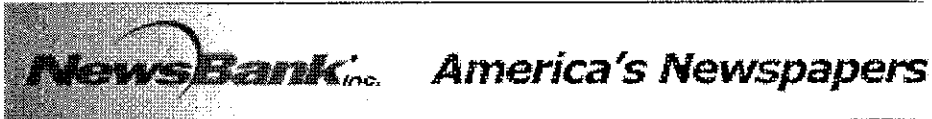
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YOUR OPINIONS

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 27, 2008

Author: *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

TRANSIT TV

Just get rid of it

Ernst-Ulrich Franzen wrote in a March 17 Quick Hit that officials of the Milwaukee County Transit System may want to make changes to the TransitTV "service." How about eliminating it except to announce stops? In addition to the old news and useless weather reports Franzen cited, TransitTV subjects passengers to a steady diet of loud commercials and non-entertaining programming.

The TransitTV Web site tries to enlist prospective advertisers by boasting that they will reach a "captive audience." This reflects the level of regard the county and bus system show for their customers. Most ironically, there is a rule for passengers — "no loud audio" — that is reflected in a county ordinance. How can they enforce this with a straight face when they violate it every hour of every day?

Steven Glick Milwaukee

FLUORESCENT BULBS

Use common sense

The op-ed by Dani Doane of the Heritage Foundation, "An illuminating mishap," described dangers of compact fluorescent lamps, or CFLs (March 22). We should keep things in proper perspective. In this world, nothing is perfect. But the energy-saving and pollution-reducing benefits of replacing conventional light bulbs with CFLs, plus longer life, far outweigh the drawbacks.

Yes, there is a small amount of mercury — 5 milligrams (less than 1/5000 of an ounce) in each CFL — which is why failed CFLs should be disposed of properly rather than simply thrown away. They are more rugged than regular light bulbs, so they are less likely to break. If one breaks, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends opening the windows for 15 minutes to air out the room, then carefully picking up the glass fragments with a piece of stiff paper or sticky tape and putting them in a sealed plastic bag, then wiping up the area with a damp paper towel and placing it in the sealed plastic bag. If you vacuum, put the bag in the sealed plastic bag, or empty and wipe the canister and put the debris into the sealed plastic bag.

The EPA Web site, www.epa.gov, gives detailed instructions. No, you don't have to replace your \$400 vacuum cleaner or cut up your carpet. Use common sense and this basic rule: Don't let perfect be the enemy of good.

Gerald K. Flakas Delafield

INFRASTRUCTURE

Fund the basics

It's hard to believe funding and manpower are so hard to come by ("Potholes are deeper than pockets," March 20). Our roads — and autos — suffer, yet there is money for the Great Circus Parade to return. Perhaps Mayor Tom Barrett, Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker and Gov. Jim Doyle should reconsider their priorities.

I don't care where the money is coming from. If it can pay for parades, it can pay for road repairs. Let's find a way to get it done.

Horses and circus wagons can be injured or damaged by our bad roads, too. Milwaukee wants to reclaim its one serious bit of national fame, and there is nothing wrong with that. But being world class takes more than just window dressing. It's also about quality of life and how citizens are treated.

Charles R. Fonaas West Allis

ENERGY

Closing plant early would increase costs

We were disappointed with the recent Journal Sentinel article calling into question the value to Wisconsin's electric customers of the existing Oak Creek power plant ("Power plant faces day of reckoning," March 20). The plant is the most efficient coal-fueled plant in Wisconsin and nationally is in the top quarter for efficiency. It emits significantly less carbon dioxide than similar plants.

But most important, it is just plain wrong to imply that shutting down the plant would result in greater savings to consumers, despite the claims of those who would rather shut down the plant because they oppose the type of fuel being used.

The Public Service Commission performed numerous economic analyses. The analyses confirm the findings of earlier studies that the least-cost approach to meet future environmental requirements was adding emission controls and continuing to operate the Oak Creek units. Additional studies would not change the facts; rather, the delay would likely result in higher costs for the project.

Under no scenario does retiring Oak Creek prematurely save customers money. In fact, retiring Oak Creek prematurely would result in our customers' power costs rising more than 10% over current rates.

That, in our view, would be the opposite of good stewardship. It would be irresponsible.

Rick White Vice President, We Energies Shorewood

It's time to invest in renewable energy

I hope the Public Service Commission will carefully consider the potentially negative environmental and health effects of the proposed 300-megawatt coal-fired power plant slated for Cassville.

Wisconsin needs energy, and it needs jobs. Why not take the opportunities that wind farms would bring in the form of construction jobs and clean renewable energy? Wisconsin is falling behind by not investing now in clean energy projects. It is time to stop polluting and to begin protecting the health of our citizens and environment. With evidence of melting ice caps, disappearing glaciers and rising coastal waters, we cannot continue with business as usual. Whatever happened to progressive Wisconsin?

Erika Voss Wauwatosa

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**America's Newspapers****YOUR OPINIONS****Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - April 4, 2008****Author: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel****FARM SUBSIDIES**

Let the market work

Once again, columnist Patrick McIlheran nailed it ("How farms keep their subsidies," March 30). The farm subsidy program in this country is a travesty against market-based solutions. Of course, one could argue the same of the recent Bear Stearns fiasco wherein the stock price was pushed from \$2 to \$10 a share, with the taxpayers on the hook.

Bill Culver Waukesha

POLICE

Officer was right, used proper restraint

Police Officer Kelly Parker did everything right ("Chief says officer was justified," March 28). Rather than put a bullet in Koua Moua, Parker restrained him and then arrested him. Moua should be thankful that nothing more drastic happened to him; after all, he allegedly did try to assault Parker with a deadly weapon: his own drunken self behind the wheel of an automobile.

I believe Moua should be charged with assault with a deadly weapon and attempted murder. As a citizen of Milwaukee, I am thankful that Parker was on duty the night of Feb. 17. Had he not been, any one of us could have been a victim of Moua's alleged drunken driving.

Shame on Moua and the Hmong community for blowing this incident out of proportion and for trying to get a free pass for an alleged drunken driver. Kudos goes out to Police Chief Edward Flynn, who recognizes that Milwaukee needs to encourage good, honest police officers like Parker, rather than condemn them for doing their jobs. Milwaukee needs more caring, alert, well-trained officers like Parker.

Mae O. Bolden Milwaukee

Police must earn community's trust

I would like Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn to understand that before he speaks out, he first should make sure not to hurt the community. He must earn the trust of all the community. For the Hmong people, we have to know that there is a law to control and protect all citizens.

Flynn's comment that the rally already had been called off was not true. It was not canceled but needed to be rescheduled. We, the Hmong, needed to file to reopen the case before we could rally. I hope this will clarify what Flynn said.

As a Hmong man, I do not trust police officers because of the problems I see reported in the news between police and communities. Flynn needs to work very hard to earn the trust of Hmong people in Milwaukee.

Shong Xiong Milwaukee

POTHoles

City budgeting not to blame for roads

A quick Internet search shows that cities and states across the Snow Belt experienced a much higher than average number of potholes this year.

Newspaper and TV stories from Pittsburgh, Columbus, Chicago and smaller cities such as South Bend and

Lansing are nearly interchangeable. They mention phrases such as "unprecedented number of potholes," "complaints triple what they were last year," "way worse this year than any year I can remember" and so on.

But only in Milwaukee, in the March 20 article, "Potholes deeper than pockets," did the newspaper try to pin the problem on alleged 15-year-old budget decisions. (Full disclosure: I was the city's budget director then.)

The fact is, winters like the one we just had, with continuous cycles of freezing and thawing, produce bad potholes, whatever was or was not budgeted in 1993.

Government officials and managers in Milwaukee, especially in the Public Works Department, consistently have done a great job battling Milwaukee's unpredictable winter weather.

But they perpetually struggle not only with the weather but with two strong nationwide political forces: First, the idea fostered by cynical politicians since the Reagan era that taxes can be continuously cut while at the same time governments can continue to provide high levels of service (the ultimate "free lunch"); and second, the propensity to build new infrastructure rather than to fix what we already have, abetted by powerful groups such as the highway lobby.

What the public needs is straightforward information that shows the connection between dollars and services and courageous leaders to do the right thing and make difficult choices. Let's hope City Comptroller Wally Morics' study moves Milwaukee in the right direction.

Anne Kinney Glen Ellyn, Ill.

ELECTION

Dearth of candidates bad for democracy

I was distressed when casting my vote at the polling place Tuesday morning. Why were so many incumbents running unopposed?

A free election is the basis of a democratic society. Without the diversity of two or more candidates, we no longer have the wonderful opportunity of choice.

What is the reason no one stepped up to oppose these incumbents? Is it complacency of the constituency? Are residents that trusting and confident in the incumbents' performance? Or are people fed up with politics? Are they tired of watching a two-year presidential race?

Perhaps people are ill from what appears to be a troubled presidential tenure. Maybe they've voted for a candidate recently who promised one thing but delivered something altogether different.

Why does it seem the only ones who are interested in politics are politicians?

Ron Zimmerman Town of Vernon

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A heartfelt goodbye for D'Amato, silence on McGee

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - April 10, 2008

Author: LARRY SANDLER, Staff: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

The parting of the Mikes could not have been more different.

Wednesday's Milwaukee Common Council meeting was the last one for Aldermen Mike D'Amato and Michael McGee, the only two council members who weren't re-elected last week.

D'Amato, who chose not to seek a fourth term, was ushered out in style. The east side alderman was presented with commendations from both the council and the state Assembly. His colleagues gave him accolades and repeated standing ovations. He delivered a tearful farewell speech. Council President Willie Hines Jr. even handed him the gavel, so that he could have the honor of presiding as the body adjourned.

By contrast, McGee's name was never mentioned — except during the roll call, where he was marked "excused," as he has been for every council meeting since he was arrested last Memorial Day. He remains in the Waukesha County Jail, awaiting trial on charges of shaking down business owners for bribes, buying votes and conspiring to have a man beaten.

North side voters rejected McGee's bid for a second term. Political consultant Milele Coggs will be sworn in Tuesday to replace him. He is to stand trial on state charges in May and on federal charges in June.

Hines — who yanked all of McGee's committee assignments after his arrest — said McGee wasn't mentioned Wednesday because he wasn't there. He said any departing alderman's "commitment . . . is appreciated," adding, "If he was present, we would have acknowledged him. . . . His absence made it difficult to acknowledge him."

The last departing alderman who received a similar silent treatment at the end of a term was Rosa Cameron, who was forced to resign in 2002 when she pleaded guilty to misusing federal funds. On the last day of the 2000-'04 term, no one mentioned Cameron, although outgoing Ald. Fred Gordon paid tribute to former Aldermen Paul Henningsen and Jeff Pawlinski, both of whom had been forced out of office in 2003 as they went to prison for campaign finance violations.

McGee's final legislation, to purchase two small parcels of county land near N. 7th St. and W. North Ave. for the Bronzeville entertainment district, was unanimously approved by the council. It was one of several measures that were drafted by the Department of City Development staff for McGee to introduce from jail, working by telephone with council staffers.

In other action, the council:

- Approved a reorganization of the Police Department's top ranks. New Police Chief Edward Flynn's plan will promote three deputy police chiefs to assistant chiefs, the department's second-highest rank. It will also create two high-ranking civilian jobs, a chief of staff and a computer director, by eliminating vacant inspector and deputy inspector posts.
- Called on the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to build its planned engineering campus downtown, rather than on the County Grounds in Wauwatosa. UWM has announced plans for a downtown site for its planned School of Public Health.
- Authorized three new video surveillance cameras to deter crime near major Milwaukee County Transit System bus stops, funded by a federal grant.
- Appropriated \$120,000 to cover the cost of speeding up pothole repairs after a harsh winter pummeled city streets.
- Cut the speed limit to 5 mph for boaters in the outer harbor during special events, such as fireworks displays and air shows.

- Urged the School Board to hold neighborhood public hearings whenever schools are restructured or closed.

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