

YOURS

First Amendment 'shattered' by censure

I call on Mayor Hanks to veto the resolution to censure Sam Kooiker. Sam's censure has no foundation in logic, law, or even good old common sense. Sam was presumed guilty, not allowed to face his accuser and promptly convicted simply because he was chasing down a report of wasted taxpayer money. Admittedly, the City Council never read the e-mails in question, and City Attorney Jason Green agreed that there was no fact checking to verify accuracy. Just before the vote, three parts of the censure were quickly stricken because there was no rationalization for them. How is that even possible? What are we to take away from this other than the First Amendment has been shattered, and the ability of any alderman to do their job is now severely hampered by the illegal precedents established by this kangaroo court. Although three aldermen voted against the censure, only one deserves credit for having the courage to speak up: Alderman Weifenbach. I applaud Sam for sticking this out and sincerely hope he runs for mayor. Rapid City is desperate for what we are lacking presently in government: leadership, accountability and integrity. Sam represents all three.

TOM EADS
Rapid City

Tea Party fed up with both political parties

It is anticipated that several states will have "tea party" political candidates on ballots this November. The "conventional wisdom" has always been that participation of third-party candidates result in Democrat wins. In the past, that has been the case. However, the rise of the national tea party events across the nation indicate that a large number of people have had enough of the two-party system and are ready for real changes. Holding your nose to vote for party-endorsed candidates has not worked.

The problem is the current Democratic Party is now controlled by the lunatic left-wing and labor unions, and the Republican party contains too many RINOs. Like our local city council and school board members, the President/Senate/Congress has forgotten that "we the people" are their boss. Democrat Stephanie Herseth Sandlin has had a part in the 10-percent-plus unemployment and a record \$14 trillion-plus debt. Do we need a \$94K per year mayor or a city council spending \$17K to investigate a council member doing his job? Do we need a school board forcing bad policy decisions and spending \$173K for a school superintendent? Do you wonder why your high property taxes have risen so dramatically? Are you ready to make the necessary changes?

RICHARD FOLSLAND
Rapid City

Why won't state fund playhouse updates?

I am glad to learn that the South Dakota Senate Committee has approved a bill that would force the state Game, Fish & Parks Department to lease the playhouse in Custer State Park for another 10 years. However, I don't understand why the state cannot pay for some of the capital improvements at the Playhouse. They are the owners of the property, aren't they? They have made substantial improvements to all the other facilities in the park; why can't they do the same for the Playhouse? How much money has the state spent on improvements at the Playhouse over the past 63 years? I don't think it is fair to place that financial burden on the artistic director and their board of directors. If it is important to have a facility in Custer State Park for theatrical enjoyment and entertainment, then the public owner or agency should help pay for its building needs.

HANK FRAWLEY
Spearfish

Poet has wrong ideas about the Bible

Responding to the article by Calvin Reed (2/08) "Poet Tackles War, bankers, etc." I think he has the wrong idea about Christianity. The Bible tells us that we are all sinners, there is not one who does good; no, not one. But God had pity on mankind and sent His son Jesus to die the cross for sinners. That is why we celebrate Christmas, Good Friday and Easter.

The Bible also states in Revelation Chapter 22: 1415, Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree

of life and may go through the gates to the city (Heaven.) Outside (Hell) are the dogs (unbelievers), those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

I suggest he sit down and read his Bible, especially the Books of John and Revelation.

ARDETH M. HAMMERQUIST
Rapid City

Nominating Sam Kooiker for president

I like the Rapid City Journal. I've been reading it for years. I'm a South Dakota native from the '50s.

I nominate Sam Kooiker for President of the United States of America.

This country needs people like him. Black is black, white is white, wrong is wrong, and right is right!

CAL HUBER
Osage, Wyo.

Sick and tired of wasting tax funds

The citizens of the USA are getting sick and tired of the way our elected officials spend tax dollars. So I was appalled to see what our council members are doing to Sam Kooiker for doing the job he was voted in to do: watch out for the taxpayer's dollars. What I first heard was it was \$3,000 dollars worth of fliers thrown away, but according to the Rapid City Journal, it was a lot more than that; \$5,007 for the original brochures and another \$1,661 for new brochures, plus \$3,649 for sign changes. That's \$10,317 plus the \$17,000 spent on the special investigation. That's \$27,317. What a waste of taxpayer dollars. That money could have been spent fixing potholes on streets like East North Street, Rush Road, and Jackson Boulevard. Then you could drive the speed limit without blowing a tire or breaking an axle. So I say to the six members who voted to censure Sam, I hope the people in your wards remember how you voted on this issue when they get a chance to vote for change. Sam, all of us "Wing Nuts" support you 100 percent. And there are a lot of us. We hope you'll run for mayor next election. Thanks again. We're all here for you.

RAY KASIAH
Rapid City

Original transit problems remain

I have never written a letter to the editor before; however, I find myself having to say this. Just something to ponder! I hope all those who brought the censure against Sam Kooiker feel somehow justified in their actions and also feel they accomplished something good for the community.

My thoughts then turn to the original problem. Where will the workers in the transit turn or who will listen to them? What becomes of the original problem that brought this all about? Seems it got lost!

In all of this wrangling in the last six months, back and forth between everyone's rights, what becomes of the original problem? So much time, money and stress on the ones involved. Let's forget about who has the most power to control details. Just get the problem solved.

This is not the first time slander and injustice has been brought against Sam. Remember the mayor's race? Full page ads were taken out against him. These ads were a bunch of lies with fake documents. Letters were sent slandering him with pictures of right-wing nuts. Huge amounts of money were spent on these. What kind of threat does he pose? Could it be honesty and fairness?

BONNIE KING
Lead

Kudos on Kooiker censure editorial

I have been a subscriber to the Rapid City Journal for well over 50 years and have never moved from this ranch in over 50 years, so I keep track of what happens in the city.

I want to compliment you on the opinion you wrote (2/21) about the city council and Mr. Kooiker. That's the way I would have written it.

DONALD KONECHNE
Rapid City

Kooiker censure was painful to watch

As painful as it was, I watched the entire censure hearing of Sam Kooiker on television.

I can only conclude that those

council persons who voted to censure Sam Kooiker did so because they are jealous of his intelligence and courage. Certainly, no evidence presented at the hearing justified their action.

I was also overwhelmed by the performance of the city attorney of Rapid City.

If Sam decides to run for mayor again, he'll probably win in a landslide.

BILL KUNERTH
Belle Fourche

Fix Social Security and Medicare for kids' sake

I am concerned about the welfare of our children. When they grow up, Social Security will not be there. Our children will get what the little boy shot at and have to eat macaroni and beans. If Congress had any brains, they would fix Social Security and Medicare for our children. It seems like Congress is more concerned about special interests than the needs of our children. I would like health care for everyone. But you have to have the money to pay for it. It's pay as you go, not go as you pay. Global warming is a big joke. It's making me cold.

SWAN LOFTEN
Lead

A few observations on censure hearing

If a public hearing was required, it should have been a separate hearing.

Rich Sagen's attendance should have been mandatory! The grievance should have been handled internally! If our City Attorney is not able to resolve a grievance, how can we expect him to be in charge of city business involving millions of dollars?

A vote could have been taken at the beginning of the public hearing. It appeared that the "six" had prepared their "written decision" prior to hearing any testimony. Taxpayers have a right to contact their councilman for any questions or problems they have, and they certainly are entitled to a response. Can we ask our councilman a question that may get him in trouble because "they" don't want us to know what is really going on?

Many people spoke on Sam's behalf. They were totally ignored by the council.

TWYLAH LUEDTKE
Rapid City

Calling economic development in Rapid

"Hello, is this the office of Rapid City, South Dakota, Economic Development? My name is Warren Gates, CEO of a closely held developing, cutting-edge technology company employing some 60 research personnel. For some six months our executive board has been considering several Midwest locations for a satellite lab, with Rapid City a priority. However, since business news in recent months has reported conflict and confrontations among elected city government, personnel and appointed city employees of your city, we consider this an undesirable climate for or goals, as well as our employees, so we will move on. Sorry."

TONI MARTIN
Rapid City

States: Stand up to feds on constitutional rights

Some will not like what I'm going to say. If you think a minute and read this, I hope you agree. It is our fault for the fix the country is in. We have allowed the federal government too much power; they got the power because the states and, ultimately, the people did nothing. So what do we do? We can start pressuring the state government to stand up and tell the federal government to follow the Constitution. Under the Constitution the states have the power to nullify all unconstitutional laws, executive orders and anything that is unconstitutional. This power isn't and hasn't been used for a long time. It is something that the people must demand! When the states realize that we are in a "democracy dictatorship," then things will start to happen and we can then say we are now a republic. Now, let's get our state legislators and governor to stand up for us and put the federal government's feet to the fire.

We have to be the boss. The federal government must follow the Constitution, which limits its powers.

WILLIAM D. PARSONS
Sturgis

THE DRAWING BOARD



Tea Party groups defy easy labels by liberals

In response to Mr. Edison's opinion of the Tea Party group: Tea Party groups are grass-roots organizations. Lumping them all together is wrong. To say these meetings are gatherings that distort and exaggerate facts is inaccurate. The Tea Party people in this area are very educated politically. Voting records are researched, and they communicate with our elected officials. Specifics are sought out, as opposed to relying on the watered-down version depicted on the news each night.

I've sat in on three different groups; I regularly participate in one. Yes, everyone is given free rein to speak their mind. That is one of the freedoms given to us in the Bill of Rights. It is very important to all of these groups to deal with truths rather than alleged distortions and exaggerations. One of the issues we are unhappy about with this government are the distortions and exaggerations emanating from it.

Our Founding Fathers condemned the totalitarian government that initially ruled them. The Tea Party groups proudly follow in the footsteps of those great patriots.

JOHN PERRY
Newell

Mayor Hanks must veto Kooiker censure vote

Mayor Hanks needs to veto the resolution to censure Alderman Sam Kooiker. I sat at home during the hearing reading the RCJ blog until I couldn't stand it any longer. I found myself venturing out at 12:30 a.m. to voice my opinion against an injustice being done. It wasn't a "hearing" because most of our council members were deaf to the facts. Malcom Chapman, Deb Hadcock, Ron Kroeger, Karen Gundersen Olson, Lloyd Lacroix, and Bill Waugh all had their minds made up regardless of the evidence presented and showed the Rapid City citizens that they want business as usual in Rapid City and will not stop at any length to silence anyone who questions their way of politics. In that moment, I felt ashamed for our great city.

By contrast, Ron Weifenbach, Patti Martinson and Aaron Costello deserve praise for voting for what was right. Ron Weifenbach was extremely vocal in asking questions that no one else dared ask and that Sam Kooiker was unable to ask.

I strongly urge Mayor Hanks to veto the censure resolution. This power is granted to him by Statutory Provision 9-8-3. He has an opportunity to provide a voice of reason for Rapid City.

RON SASSO
Rapid City

U.S. can't borrow its way to economic health

It's difficult to drain the swamp when you're up to your hips in alligators. Purging Congress of those who believe we can borrow ourselves wealthy is the swamp I refer to.

Consider the \$787 billion stimulus bill. Except for the cost of shoring up unemployment insurance, this \$787 billion of new debt was simply massive political pork. Of course, some temporary jobs will be created, but jobs paid for by borrowing do not qualify as job creation; they are debt creation plus interest. Real jobs are created by productivity responding to demand for goods or services. This kind of wealth creation is lost when you outsource jobs to someone else's economy. American wealth is created by employing

your own workers who will then have money to spend. While retailers buying cheaper imports will temporarily receive larger markups, demand will eventually decline as lack of job creation reduces customers.

The \$787 billion stimulus bill can be compared to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Our ship will still sink unless we change course to avoid the icebergs.

BILL STONE
Rapid City

Aren't there any law firms in Rapid City?

Three items concern me regarding the much publicized City Council vs. Alderman Kooiker. I met Mr. Kooiker recently because my alderman would not pursue a concern of residents about semi-trucks using their Jake brakes. Sam did.

Folks have forgotten Sam's investigation that saved the city over \$500,000 on the Rushmore Plaza addition. His investigation into the no-bid contract the city had with the HVAC contractor exposed enormous overcharges to the city. His further tenacity opened the bidding process, which saw this same company rebid at a half-million less.

Secondly, why is the City of Rapid City spending \$17,000 of local tax dollars with a Belle Fourche law firm? We have many local qualified firms here paying taxes.

Lastly, why did Alderwoman Hadcock hire a Sioux Falls computer forensics firm to "investigate" Mr. Kooiker's email addresses? This could be a constitutional rights violation. Furthermore, this same company cannot even afford to purchase bona fide professional antivirus software. In their email to Hadcock, they used a free version of AVG. Kind of says much about that firm.

This entire censure matter simply stinks. My only hope is that it flies back into the faces of those with political motivation(s).

JAMES WHITE
Rapid City

Hadcock and others showed true colors

Thank you to the Journal for your opinion on 2/21. Sam Kooiker's censure hearing was definitely a farce.

Thank you also to Ron Weifenbach for standing up for what is right and being a voice of the people, and to the other two council members who voted against censure. Most of all, thank you to Sam for graciously enduring this "witch hunt."

Several years ago, when I had a drainage problem in my yard, I wrote to Mayor Hanks, the two councilmen from Ward 5 and also to Sam Kooiker. I heard from Sam immediately, telling me he was informing Robert Ellis of the problem. It was fixed in a couple weeks. Even though Mayor Hanks has a secretary, I did not receive even a note responding to my letter nor any response from either Ward 5 councilmen. (This was before Aaron Costello was elected).

Shame on the other six council members. They, especially Deb Hadcock, have shown their true colors. I have long felt frustrated at the city council. Except for Sam and Ron, the others seem to think their job is to give themselves raises, take trips and waste our money. I hope the residents remember this when re-election comes. I will if Malcom Chapman runs again.

HARRIET K. YOUNG
Rapid City