

## The Great Minnesota Get-Together: Republicans, DFLers and Pawlenty can all claim victory this session

Analysis by G.R. ANDERSON JR.

They work hard. Really, they do. That's why lawmakers can speak truthfully of weekend negotiations that break at 3 a.m. and reconvene four hours later. But in recent years at the Capitol, all that hard worked hasn't necessarily meant that anyone's working together.

That was not the case in St. Paul during the last week, when DFL and GOP leadership hammered out a budget deal with a newly reengaged Gov. Tim Pawlenty and set about solving what looked to be a \$1 billion budget shortfall. In return, vetoed Democratic bills were suddenly back on the table, Republicans got their property tax caps and spending cuts, and a couple of Pawlenty pet projects won out.

With a session that began with no small amount of political posturing over the I-35W bridge collapse, dominant and strongly partisan DFL majorities in both the House and Senate, and a governor who appeared at times to care much more about stumping for John McCain than guiding the state of Minnesota, the sudden harmony caught even some legislators by surprise.

"If we went back a month or two, this for me was the most subtly contentious session I'd ever been involved in," David Senjem, a Republican from Rochester and Senate's minority leader, said Monday after the session had adjourned, on time, with no special session required to balance the books. "My feeling was vice-presidential politics was what was going

on there. [Democrats] were trying to take away the governor's stature as a Minnesota leader."

Certainly there were wide-ranging DFL efforts to paint Pawlenty as an absentee governor — a talking point parroted by many Democrats — but there was more than a little truth to some of the shots the governor was taking.

Early on in the session in February, the non-partisan and respected legislative auditor's office released a report on findings of the bridge collapse that cast a rather damning shadow on the way MnDOT has been financed and operated in recent years after some three decades of bureaucratic ineptitude that came home to roost on Pawlenty's watch. The report gave Democrats plenty of grist out of the gate.

But even in the face of that, Pawlenty never wavered in his support for Carol Molnau, lieutenant governor and the unconfirmed head of MnDOT. Democrats in the Senate moved swiftly to not confirm and effectively oust her from a post she was never qualified to have.

And the governor stood in his opposition to a \$6.6 billion transportation/transit bill that included the first hike of the state's gas tax in 20 years — even though funding roads and bridges was topic du jour well before lawmakers convened Feb. 12. Both tacks made him look either principled or smugly stubborn, depending on your view.

The Democrats did themselves no favors by entering the session either emboldened or arrogant — again, depending on your view.

With the help of a handful of Republicans — the so-called "override six" — who broke party ranks to overturn the governor's veto of

the transportation bill in the House, the DFL Party leadership took a risk that such a move would not be seen by constituents as a foolish tax-and-spend law. Not to mention petty power-playing. And when DFLers in the Senate in particular refused to come down to Pawlenty's preferred \$825 for a bonding bill — missing the mark by \$100 million — the governor pushed back by cutting it down to \$717 million, a lining out of 52 items.

Still, Pawlenty beamed at a press conference over the weekend announcing the budget agreement, remarking about the bipartisan efforts that went into shaping it. And House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, DFL-Minneapolis, boasted that the session had been one of the most successful in a long time.

"It's the most productive session we've had in at least a decade," Rep. Tony Sertich, the DFLer from Chisholm who is the House majority leader, said Monday.

### Win-win for Pawlenty and Republicans

Sertich, in fact, was calling from an airport in Mankato. The DFL leadership was flying around the state to tout the outcome to Minnesota voters.

Oh, right, voters. Who could forget? It's an election year, after all, not just for the presidency, but for House members as well. They can go to their constituents, especially on the DFL side, and point to a record of accomplishment and compromise. Voters hate gridlock, you know.

**continues on page 4**

### INSIDE

#### THE DAILY GLEAN

Is the TIZA tizzy over now? Strib columnist Katherine Kersten has crusaded against an Arabic charter school for promoting Islam; following Monday's state report, the Strib says the public school has no problems in classroom or after-school education.

**page 5**

#### MINNPOST.WORLD

Biggest threats to polar bear are exempt from remedies.  
**page 2**

#### DR. CRAIG BOWRON

Depression, disabling but treatable, comes into the light.  
**page 3**

#### COMMUNITY VOICES

Childhood sexual abuse: It's more prevalent than most people realize.  
**page 6**

## MINNPOST.WORLD

# Biggest threats to polar bear are exempt from remedies

By **RON WAY**

By its recent listing of the polar bear as legally “threatened with extinction,” the U.S. Interior Department has acknowledged that climate change has imperiled the popular mammal by causing arctic sea ice to shrink, interrupting the bear’s critical wintertime feeding.

But the listing itself came as a mixed blessing, with some even wondering if the Endangered Species Act (ESA) itself may be threatened. That’s because of the way Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne — who, since his appointment two years ago, has set a record for going the longest of any Interior secretary without adding any plant or animal to the endangered list — said he’ll go about protecting the polar bear.

First, Kempthorne said that the ESA should not be used to address global warming. This means that climate change — the reason the bear is in trouble — should be addressed in other ways, for other reasons. It appears the only effect of the listing, therefore, is to prohibit the importation of bear carcasses and parts by hunters or collectors. Kempthorne is part of an administration that has neglected climate protection — to the extent that Republican Sen. John McCain said in Oregon last week that President Bush has “wasted eight years” by initially denying the presence of climate change and, now, refusing to devise policies to address it.

Second, Kempthorne said that Arctic oil and gas operations — which affect bear reproduction — won’t be limited by the listing.

## Legal and scientific pressure

In announcing the listing, Kempthorne responded to two years of legal pressure to act. As well, scientists in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which is part of Kempthorne’s department, have insisted that most U.S. species of the bear are in trouble.

(Canada has not moved to elevate the bears’ status, maintaining the mammal’s listing as “of special concern.” Polar bear populations in Canada include 13 subspecies, only five of which are officially in danger. In the Alaska, there are far few subspecies, and all of them are in some level of decline.)

Once a plant or animal is listed as “endangered” or “threatened” under the ESA, there follows the development of a “recovery plan” that by law must include a description of site-specific management actions necessary to help the listed species to stabilize and recover. This is what happened with Minnesota’s gray wolf, which eventually was removed from the “endangered” list because recovery plans enabled wolf populations to successfully expand.

But with the polar bear, simple things like limiting hunting won’t help much. Among other leading advocates pushing global warming policies, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has long directly linked climate change to the polar bear’s decline. Indeed, Kempthorne admitted as much in listing the bear as threatened, and Interior’s announcement includes this language: “The listing is based on the best available science, which shows that loss of sea ice threatens and will likely continue to threaten polar bear habitat.”

## Key protections off the table

Given that the bear’s degraded situation is so tied to climate change, observers are finding it difficult to understand how any recovery plan cannot include ways to address climate change. On Bloomberg.com, Georgetown University law professor Lisa Heinzerling reacted to the administration’s actions this way: “The Department of Interior has, in short, worked very hard to make sure that its listing of the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act does not trigger the usual protections that act provides.”

Here’s what’s involved:

There are an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears throughout the Arctic, and their numbers are shrinking along with the documented shrinkages of sea ice as the climate warms.

NASA says that last September its satellite monitoring of pack ice showed ice levels at historic lows. Northern latitudes are warming twice as rapidly as the rest of the globe, according to a 2004 scientific assessment, and by the end of the century annual ocean temperatures in the Arctic may rise an additional 13 degrees Fahrenheit.

Unlike their grizzly and black bear cousins, polar bears don’t hibernate, because winter is when they roam pack ice and gouge-feed on walrus and seals, returning to land to reproduce.

## Open ocean forces long swim

With climate change the summer ice in the Beaufort Sea has declined to the extent that there’s now open ocean between the ice pack and land, forcing bears to swim to shore. Many don’t make it; scientists flying over the open seas have reported seeing floating bears, the result of drowning due to exhaustion from the long swim.

Of those who do make it more and more bears are malnourished, having been cut from their feeding and sapped of energy from the swim. Bear-cub numbers have fallen in U.S. bear populations, and many are undernourished at birth because their mothers have not been able to accumulate enough fat during the critical feeding season.

In addition to malnourished cubs, the problem of reproduction is a dimension that has oil and gas interests worried.

Bears den in land-based snow caves, and during birthing they are hypersensitive to disturbance. One scientist reported that his solitary and purposely limited presence in cave areas was enough to cause bears to leave dens and abort fetuses.

That’s why disturbances from all the activities associated with oil and gas drilling will be under renewed focus with the “threatened” listing for the bears. And that is perhaps why the conservative and pro-business Pacific Legal Foundation of Sacramento has indicated it may sue the Interior Department over the listing.

## Oil and gas drilling to continue

Kempthorne was careful not to link oil and gas drilling to effects on the bear, and he said those operations could continue. It was clearly a move to appease an industry that has been broadly influential with the president, Vice President Dick Cheney and others throughout the administration. Still, the oil and gas industry is on edge, as evidenced by the harsh criticism over the listing decision by Republican Rep. Don Young of Alaska. He said Interior’s decision “is an assault on sound science and common sense.”

Undoubtedly, the industry and Young realize there is little room to argue that pipelines, roads, seismic blasting, ice-breaking ships and other activities associated with drilling (including the ever-present danger of oil spills in the superfragile arctic environment) don’t affect polar-bear reproduction.

It normally takes at least a year to prepare a recovery plan, which means that action policies to protect the bear will be an issue for whoever succeeds Bush after he leaves office next January.

Those still standing in the race to succeed Bush — McCain of Arizona and Democratic Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York and Barack Obama of Illinois — have all roundly criticized Bush and have vowed to redirect the nation’s policy course on global warming.

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## Depression, disabling but treatable, comes into the light

### DR. CRAIG BOWRON

In our worst moments we often view those suffering from depression as being weak-minded. We think, "They could pull themselves up by their emotional bootstraps if they had the gumption. They just need to think happy thoughts and work their way through it."

That's the heart of the stigma of depression, seeing it as a personality flaw rather than the medical illness it truly is. And this stigma keeps depression in the shadows. It keeps the suffering from being diagnosed and treated — and people are dying to be treated. Every year, there are twice as many suicides as homicides in this country.

This Wednesday, Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) will air a two-hour special called "Depression: Out of the Shadows." Produced in conjunction with WGBH in Boston, the program hopes to bring the illness of depression into the light. It is common; it is disabling; it is treatable.

Dr. David Cline has been practicing child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry in Minneapolis since 1968. He previewed "Depression: Out of the Shadows" and thought it was outstanding. To Cline, the personal profiles presented in the film seemed very typical, very authentic, and he admired the honesty with which people spoke about their illness. "They talked about their difficulties without shame," Cline told me.

That's a word that comes up frequently in depression: "shame." Those suffering from depression have two problems:

the disease itself, and the guilt of having the disease. Cline thinks that part of the stigma of depression can be traced back to this country's Puritan roots, the Salem witch trials being an example, where abnormal thoughts or behavior were attributed to the work of the devil.

"In Puritan New England, it [mental illness] was seen as misbehaving," Cline explained. "It was weakness of willpower, it was weakness of character, and not being strong, or faithful to God, I suppose — so it was a disgrace to blaspheme God by one's behavior."

Another major facet of the stigma of depression has to do with how we humans perceive ourselves. "It's the mind/body split," Cline explained. "The body could do what it wished and it wasn't thought of as bad. For example, you get heart disease, a broken leg, vomit up blood, or whatever — the body was not a stigmatized entity." But the brain is another matter. We see it more as "us," and so when we admit that it's not working right, it's an affront to our personhood. We feel flawed.

Through public education like this TPT special, Cline thinks that the stigma of depression is lighter than when he first began practicing in 1968. Lighter, but not lifted.

"I still have patients who want to leave out of that door," Cline told me, pointing to a side door in his office, "rather than that door," pointing to the door back to the reception area, "because they worry they might run into someone in the office who might

know them."

For more than a decade, Tom Mischke has been painting the airwaves at KSTP AM 1500 with an enigmatic style that's drawn high praise from the likes of James Fallows and Garrison Keillor. Satirist, song writer, searing intellectual wit, giggly Cub Scout humorist, Tom Mischke has a brain that can take listeners anywhere; but it's also taken him into numerous bouts of depression. He, too, previewed "Depression: Out of the Shadows" and was impressed by the program's ability to demonstrate the science behind depression, to expose the illness as a true brain disorder rather than a personality flaw or a mood problem. Mischke is aware of the stigma of depression, and he bucks it.

"I am mentally weak. In other words, the weakness is in my brain," Mischke told me. "So you're mentally weak. So what? Did you suddenly drop a notch or two in value as a human being?" he asked me. "The diabetic has a weakness, but somehow the stigma seems to be associated with [the idea that] if the weakness is in your brain, then it's not legitimate as a weakness. Unless you flat-out were born mentally retarded or got stomped on with a sledgehammer later in life, unless you can show some real damage, [people think] 'Snap out of it.' The brain wounded is not legitimate. And I think the stigma comes because science has not done a decent job — probably out of ignorance — of teaching us that the brain is every bit a piece of the puzzle as anything else, as any other organ."

### "Depression: Out of the Shadows"

TPT TV, Channel 2  
Wednesday, May 21,  
8-10 pm.

Like Cline, Mischke sees the mind-body connection (or disconnection) as a big part of the problem.

"Why do people say 'the mind-body connection'? How did the mind just get out of the body?" Mischke asked. "If from the beginning they wouldn't have ever said, 'Is it a physical thing or a mental thing?' If they never would have said that — because it's all physical — we wouldn't have the stigma today," he continued. "But we separate from the neck up and say, 'That part is a part that each of us has control over and each of us should be able to run on our own.' It should be relatively simple: You take care of from-the-neck-down with eating well and exercising, and from-the-neck-up by being a strong-willed person with good thoughts, good thinking, and good character."

"But there's no sense whatsoever of, 'Can't it go wrong like anything else? Can't it go wrong like a heart, a kidney, a pancreas? Can't it just be some piece of flesh that has as much ability to go haywire as anything else?'"

Yes it is, and yes it does; and depression is just one example of the trouble that can follow.

## MinnPost inPrint

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Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

## Republicans, DFLers and Pawlenty can all claim victory this session

continued from page 1

And if Pawlenty is indeed VP material, this session is a score for him too. He can say he led Minnesota through a budget crunch (again) while working with DFL strongholds in both chambers. It's not so hard to imagine — hypothetically, mind you — lawmakers and the gov agreeing to come together to save face come November.

"There was the art of compromise around the Capitol," Sertich said.

But the nature of compromise, an old adage goes, is that all parties go away unsatisfied. That might not be true of Pawlenty.

"I'm trying to think of a thing the governor lost," Senjem said, "and I can't think of anything."

The Republican leader might want to recall the override of the transportation veto (the early bitterness from that apparently dissipated in the waning days of the session, according to most accounts) as a time when Pawlenty was rebuked, if not defeated.

Then again, Pawlenty showed this session why he is the best politician in the state, and that includes the Washington delegation as well.

For starters, he can say his hands are clean on the gas tax, keeping his "no-new taxes" pledge relatively in tact, if we look away from "fees," of course. But at the same time, the state will get money for roads and bridges he knows Minnesota desperately needs.

On the bonding bill line-item veto for the Central Corridor light rail funding of \$70 million, and a health-care reform bill that he vetoed, Pawlenty played a similar brand of politics. Going into the session, Pawlenty said he was theoretically in favor of both of those measures. (The health-care reform bill, in particular, came out of a task force that Pawlenty himself called for.)

But yet Pawlenty ditched out on both of them, only to revive them again after a budget deal came together. Many observers believe Pawlenty vetoed out of sincere misgivings, but it also didn't hurt that he suddenly had bargaining chips come budget time. To that end, the governor managed to get an annual property-tax limit of 3.9 percent and a palatable figure of \$60 million for

Local Government Aid. Then he revisited and approved health care and the Central Corridor.

"The Central Corridor didn't come up until 3 o'clock in the morning Saturday, when Margaret [Kelliher] asked, 'What about the bonding bill?'" Senjem recalled. "And the governor shot back, 'Well, what about it?'"

Pawlenty also secured funding for two things he wanted: Money for a veteran's home in Minneapolis and some \$20 million for the state's first park project in some 30 years, near Lake Vermillion.

"Did we get things we wanted? Yes," said Tom Emmer, R-Delano. "Did we get everything? No. But [Pawlenty] got Democrats in both houses to agree to property tax caps. That's incredible."

It sure makes him look good on both sides of the aisle, and doesn't hurt his bona fides should McCain choose him as a running mate. Pawlenty didn't have to call a special session to balance the budget, nor did he have to "unallot" — unilaterally cutting funds already approved — by driving the state's reserves from \$655 million down to zero before he could start slashing.

"He probably had some interest in making sure he got some sort of agreement," Senjem said.

And one other thing: The governor was Teflon Tim with regards to the bridge collapse. The notion that he and Molnau were somehow culpable to a degree vanished as soon as she was out of the picture.

Everybody knew going in that the budget forecast was grim. A pre-session prediction put everyone on warning that carried over into Pawlenty's State of the State address in St. Cloud Feb. 13, a day after the session began.

There, Pawlenty brought a stage prop: a plain old red pen. He called it the "taxpayer protection pen, otherwise known as the veto pen" and vowed to use it. But few expected him to use with the precision and force the governor actually wielded. When he trimmed \$200 million out of a bonding bill, striking out \$70 million for the Central Corridor line, it shook the Capitol.

No one took it harder than Rep. Alice Hausman, a DFLer from St. Paul, who had been carrying the

bill in the House. Aside from the LRT line, St. Paul lost pretty much everything in the bill to Pawlenty's "taxpayer protection pen."

"Oh, it was so pointed," Hausman said Monday, saying she thought the veto would effectively end the quest for \$450 million in federal funds that were contingent on the state money. "I was discouraged in that I thought he'll never do this. I was not called in to negotiate."

Why did the gov stick it to St. Paul so badly? "I don't know," Hausman sighed. "Nobody really knows."

But Central Corridor was to rise from the dead in the final hours, giving the Democrats something to savor.

In fact, despite Pawlenty's mastery this session, the DFL has plenty to claim as victories as well, Central Corridor being just part of it.

"We were able to prioritize spending in a budget deficit," Sertich said, ticking off education funding, property tax relief and health care reform as milestones. Is the DFL happy? "Absolutely. We did it by sticking to the basics."

And let's not forget that Dems got their transportation bill, with a little help from some moderate Republicans.

"The turning point for us for the session was the veto override," Sertich continued. "It relieved that gridlock we had on that for some time, so we could focus on other things like health care reform."

But the health care reform bill was vetoed, and sat dormant until the end of the session, when it became clear that the governor had essentially forced Democrats to play nice. The turning point for Republicans was the line-items in the bonding bill.

"The Senate was obnoxiously sticking to their figure," Emmer said of the bonding bill. "The line-item vetoes on the capital investments bill set the tone. Then it was like, 'Oh my goodness, we thought he'd take down the whole bill or sign it.' From his perspective, it was, 'You guys aren't listening to me.' From then on, he was involved in those processes."

Engaging the governor was the best thing the DFL leadership could have done down the home stretch,

as Sertich put it, "help make for a smooth landing of the session and create success." Besides, Democrats to a certain degree had a bully pulpit, and used it wisely: Sertich, Kelliher and Tarryl Clark, assistant majority leader in the Senate, all emerged as new wave of leaders at a time when the party really needed it in St. Paul.

Whether that plays out well in House elections in the fall remains to be seen. The fate of the override six come November has been talked about quite a bit, but no one seems to talk much about whether this session — and the gas tax in particular — will help the DFL in the campaign season or ensure some of the 90 DFL seats in the 134-member house will be lost.

"The voters will always remember the gas tax of 2008," Senjem said. "Not sure how that will play out in the election."

Regardless, DFLers can point to other triumphs, even if they don't resonate with voters quite like the gas tax. "Overall the session was positive for me," Hausman said. "For all the negative publicity around the bonding bill, we can claim victories for education and the environment and health care."

For all the harmony — even Emmer, who is a conservative attack dog, singles out Kelliher and Sertich for their work in the negotiations — there's still an unease creeping into future sessions.

Senjem in particular frets over the looming budget shortfall for fiscal year 2010-11. "Huge, huge, huge," is how he put it Monday, though a Senate cheat sheet on the budget finagling concludes: "Leaves fiscal challenges for the next biennium: \$946 million shortfall before inflation; \$2 billion including inflation."

"That will probably be our hardest session of all," Senjem concluded, worrying in partisanship about a lack of job creation and an increase in social programs. "The Democrats will have an insatiable need for taxes and that's not gonna happen in our view. It could be a train wreck."

The House public information services sent out a notice Monday that the House is in session again on Jan. 6, 2009.

*G.R. Anderson Jr. covers politics, public safety and the state Capitol.*

## The Daily Glean: Is the TIZA tizzy over now?

### DAVID BRAUER

Oy: TIZA. Strib columnist Katherine Kersten has crusaded against an Arabic charter school for promoting Islam; following Monday's state report, the Strib says the public school has no problems in classroom or after-school education. The PiPress's take: "State dispels suspicions." Both papers note two state "concerns": a too-long communal Friday prayer shouldn't be adult-led and on-site; and a busing schedule favors after-school Muslim programming. Did Kersten's allegations hold up? I review the checkered record here.

More TIZA: KSTP — which helped fan Kersten's flames — says TIZA officials "attacked" a station cameraman yesterday. The video seems to confirm that, and it's never, ever cool. However: The video shows that just before the attack, KSTP was taping school kids. A reporter calls it an "innocent start," but most journalists get releases when photographing school kids — and that's at typical schools; this one's been battered by repeated threats. To me, KSTP was within its rights but acting stupid; TIZA wildly overreacted. No heroes here.

What more did we learn in Day Two after the state budget deal? The Strib's "If You Are ..." story too cutely quips that school administrators "may not need another bake sale to meet your budget" — a second Strib piece notes that the new funds will only plug \$20 million of \$75 million

in projected cuts at 36 districts next school year. KSTP has a good look at impacts in Osseo and Minneapolis.

MPR's Art Hughes reports that University of Minnesota and state-college officials say they'll be no extra tuition hikes to cover cuts from the budget deal. Tuition will inevitably rise, but the U has scrapped plans for a whopping 9.5 percent increase, for example. It seems likely to stick with a still-gulpy 7.5 percent hike. The U is relying on faculty buyouts to cut costs. The school is awash in construction cash, thanks to the bonding bill.

How will local governments cope with the new property tax cap? MPR's Chris Gilbert observes that there are two dozen exemptions; Minneapolis will take advantage of some to balance its budget. Higher local government aid from the state will also help. St. Paul will get fully a tenth of the total local-government aid increase, but the \$6 million is less than half the city's \$13 million deficit. Counties are screaming louder.

KSTP reports that Hennepin County may close a suburban courthouse to cope with criminal-justice-system cuts. The state court system will have to lop off \$2.8 million on top of a \$13 million deficit it already faced. Even before the cuts, 7 percent of court positions were unfilled.

Interesting budget details: The Gov. Pawlenty-mocked Chatfield Brass Band and Music Lending

Library got bonding money. The PiPress says the defunct Gopher State Ethanol plant will stop receiving state subsidies. The gov vetoed a moved to let workers use sick time to care for ill or injured relatives. His loudly touted get-tough-on-illegal-immigrant proposals died quietly.

A Star Tribune Minnesota Poll gives Pawlenty a 54 percent approval rating — pretty good, though the 37 percent disapproval is the highest ever. The poll terms the public "indifferent" about voting for McCain if he names Pawlenty VP; it doesn't provide a breakout for independents. A majority say it's OK for Pawlenty to go for the nation's No. 2 spot.

The Strib's Pat Lopez burnishes DFL House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher's leadership rep with tales of her barking at flinty DFL Senate leader Larry Pogemiller and outfoxing Republican leaders on vetoes. Junkies will revel in Tom Rukavina being brought to heel while gubernatorial spokesman Brian McClung gets a plum recommendation. Money quote from Pawlenty on the two DFL leaders: "It's not always me against them. Sometimes, it's them against them."

In the wake of the Todd County family barred from church, the Strib's Pam Louwagie and Curt Brown look deeper at "accommodating autism." It's an issue in more than one church, they report. An untested state law says people with disabilities can't be barred without a direct

health/safety threat to others. The Todd church says the son "struck a child during mass ... pulled an adolescent girl to his lap and revved the engine of someone else's car."

The Strib's Steve Brandt says the Legislature made it easier for Minneapolis to pay off Target Center while effectively creating a successor to the 20-year, \$300 million Neighborhood Revitalization Program. An unspecified amount will come from extending taxing districts that funded NRP, but now the city, not a joint-powers group, controls the cash. Council members will determine how much goes to the basketball palace and how much to neighborhood priorities.

Today's talker: Man hides gun in crib where his 3-month-old twins were sleeping, Fox9 reports. Good parenting apparently goes out the window when the SWAT team is bursting through your door.

Nort spews: it was all-you-can-eat night at last night's Twins game, and apparently all-you-can-watch, too. Bobby Korecky got the win in a 7-6, 12-inning marathon versus Texas. Korecky also became the first Minnesota pitcher since 1973 to get a hit in an American League game. There's another pig-out night tonight.

### Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at [salbright@minnpost.com](mailto:salbright@minnpost.com).

## COMMUNITY VOICES

## Childhood sexual abuse: It's more prevalent than people realize

By **TED THOMPSON** and  
**MARY GAIL FRAWLEY-  
O'DEA**

The last couple of months have provided frightening evidence that too many children and adolescents live in dangerous situations.

In Washington, D.C., and New York, Pope Benedict XVI did the right thing by speaking out and apologizing for years of sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests in the United States. It is estimated that at the height of the problem Catholic priests accounted for 4 percent to 5 percent of all childhood sexual abuse in the United States. But while clergy abuse is a significant problem – and made even more serious by the church hierarchy's handling of the cases – it pales in comparison to the larger societal problem of childhood sexual abuse.

Based on academic research, surveys, and studies such as a 2002 World Health Organization Report on Violence and Health, the Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that there are more than 39 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in

America. Another study, based on a 1995 Gallop poll, put the figure at 60 million.

Law enforcement and social scientists believe that family members are responsible for more than 40 percent of the abuse suffered by the millions of survivors of childhood sexual abuse estimated to be living in the United States today.

### Hundreds removed from Texas sect

This leads us to the report out of Texas where last month over 400 children and adolescents were removed from the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Initial findings suggest that boys and girls were sexually abused, with a large number of adolescent females having been impregnated by adult members of the FLDS community.

Now removed from their parents, these young people and their own children face complicated legal and psychological journeys, the loss of family and friends, and possible long-term detrimental effects of the abuse.

In yet another horrifying case, it was alleged recently in Austria that a 73-year-old man

had imprisoned his daughter for 24 years in a basement space where she bore him seven children, three of whom lived with her in the cellar, never seeing the light of day. These individuals are confronted with enormous challenges in adjusting to life outside the cellar and may well be plagued with serious psychological problems for a very long time.

And finally, 15-year-old Disney star Miley Cyrus/Hannah Montana was photographed in sexually suggestive poses, including one with her father, for Vanity Fair Magazine. While some may argue that this is not child abuse, the 2007 report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls advises that the sexualization of girls is associated with eating disorders, depression, and low self-esteem.

### Much abuse stays secret for years

With the exception of the Miley Cyrus photos, which were immediately placed in plain view for all of society to “enjoy,” the other examples we cite were all hidden from

society for many years before they were exposed. This is a pattern that is all too common and a reason why we need to have a national discussion about a problem that has been hidden too long.

For those of us who work with survivors of child abuse, these events point to an urgent need to educate children, teachers, lawyers, judges and the psychotherapeutic community about the incidence and potentially damaging effects of abuse, neglect and sexualization of young people.

Without a doubt, this is a societal tragedy, more prevalent and more damaging to children than most people understand.

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**Law enforcement and social scientists believe that family members are responsible**

**for more than 40 percent of the abuse suffered by the millions of survivors of childhood**

**sexual abuse estimated to be living in the United States today.**

### Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at [salbright@minnpost.com](mailto:salbright@minnpost.com).