

Dark stars: Light pollution fills metro sky

By JULIE WILBERT

A star is moving from west to east -- between Gemini and the Beehive Cluster -- and becoming increasingly intense.

"It's getting brighter...there it goes, there it goes...Here we go. Alright! Look at that!"

About a dozen die-hard amateur astronomers have gathered at Onan Observatory in Baylor Regional Park, 25 miles southwest of the Twin Cities, to observe an iridium flare, which occurs when the sun reflects off a passing satellite in the night sky.

"That's fireworks. Way better than the Fourth of July. Celestial fireworks!"

Then Steve Emert, vice president of the Minnesota Astronomical Society, sees a pinkish glow in the sky -- a dome of light going up about 20 degrees above the horizon.

"Only trouble is...that's east," Emert said. "That's definitely not the sunset."

It's light pollution, and a key reason why these celestial addicts have traveled well outside the Twin Cities for their star party. It's now almost impossible to clearly see stars in the night sky from within the Twin Cities and nearby suburbs.

Using satellite imagery and a digital density population map, scientists estimate that 99 percent of the U.S. population (and two-thirds of the world's population) live under light-polluted skies. About 70 percent of the U.S. population can no longer see the Milky Way because of light pollution.

Light-colored glow

Most light pollution comes from outdoor lighting. The scattered light creates a light-colored glow that illuminates the sky, making it difficult to see the stars.

Ron Schmit, who teaches astronomy education at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul and works at the Onan Observatory, said that if the night sky is clear outside the Twin



HUBBLE HERITAGE TEAM, NASA

The star forming region LH 95 in the nearby Large Magellanic Cloud galaxy.

Cities, about 2,000 stars can be seen from the observatory.

"If you go downtown [Minneapolis/St. Paul], you can only see about 20 stars...maybe a hundred if you're lucky," he said.

As a result, more astronomers like Elliot McKinley are now taking their telescopes out of town.

McKinley said that 20 years ago Onan would have been considered a dark sky site. Not anymore.

Onan, like other observatories around Minnesota, is threatened by the light of growing suburban development. "People keep moving out, subdivisions keep building up, municipalities keep throwing up wasted light" McKinley said.

Light pollution "keeps pushing us further

and further out," he said. "To do serious work and to really enjoy the sky ... you have to go maybe another hour out of town."

McKinley, like other serious astronomers, will make trips to remote, pristine dark sky areas around the country -- mainly out west. Tucson, Ariz., is considered a top destination, partly for its proximity to Kitt Peak National Observatory. Tucson is also headquarters of the International Dark Sky Association, one of the world's largest resource centers on light pollution.

Arizona has been a leader in fighting light pollution. Fifty years ago, the Flagstaff City Council banned advertising search lights to protect the night sky for astronomers.

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MINNPOST.WORLD

Back to Afghanistan

By STEVE BERG

Millions of Americans have puzzled over President Bush's foreign policy formula: A (Al Qaeda based in Afghanistan) attacks B (United States); therefore B retaliates against C (Iraq).

But now, after a five-year diversion costing thousands of lives and billions of dollars, the Bush administration seems poised to shift its military attention back to Afghanistan and the Taliban extremists who harbored the 9/11 attackers.

Instead of shipping the next rotation of troops to Iraq, the Los Angeles Times reports that the more likely destination is Afghanistan, where insurgents have recently strengthened their positions in the south and east, near the Pakistan border.

The shift's urgency was punctuated last weekend when the U.S. military in Afghanistan suffered its largest single-day loss of life in three years. Nine soldiers were killed trying to defend a remote outpost near Wanat, in the far northeast. U.S. and Afghan troops were greatly outnumbered by hundreds of attackers who nearly overran the outpost. U.S. and Afghan forces have since abandoned the base and Taliban fighters have occupied the area.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday that conditions in Iraq, while still volatile, have settled to the point that some troops can be shifted eastward. Field commanders in Afghanistan have asked for 10,000 additional troops, according to ABC News.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said the tilt toward deploying more troops in Afghanistan could come sooner than previously expected.

Aside from more strength on the ground, the biggest need is for overhead reconnaissance aircraft to detect fighters streaming into Afghanistan from their safe havens in the mountainous tribal areas of Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden is thought to be hiding.



REUTERS/Omar Sobhani

Aftermath of a suicide car bombing at the Indian embassy in Kabul.

Policing Pakistan border remains critical

Gates bluntly criticized Pakistan's government for failing to pursue and root out the insurgents. "There's no question that the absence of pressure on the Pakistani side of the border is creating an opportunity for more people to cross the border and to launch attacks," he said.

Mullen added, "The border there is a really critical issue that we're going to have to solve – and it has to be solved sooner rather than later." Whether U.S. troops would pursue insurgents across the border or attempt to attack strongholds in the Pakistani tribal areas is an extremely delicate question that we'll explore momentarily.

Bush had already authorized a larger military presence in Afghanistan beginning next year, but the need seems suddenly more urgent. With the Iraq troop "surge" ending this month, the first unit scheduled for withdrawal is the 1st Brigade of the Army's 10th Mountain Division. Another unit, the 2nd Brigade of the Army's 4th Infantry Division, was scheduled to take its place. The Los Angeles Times suggested that that's the unit most likely headed for Afghanistan.

Gates said he did not intend to extend combat tours or cut short stateside leaves to accomplish the shift. But he and Mullen are in a

tough spot. They don't want to stretch U.S. forces too thinly. But they don't want to suffer the kinds of setbacks now in Afghanistan that rocked U.S. occupation forces in Iraq under the hubristic guidance of former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

History revisited

"Must the same catastrophic deterioration occur in Afghanistan before Mr. Bush changes course there, too?" the Dallas Morning News asked in a critical editorial on Wednesday. "Signs of serious trouble are growing. The worst indication isn't the rising allied casualty toll in Afghanistan but the administration's state of denial that something is wrong.

"Let's recall mid-2005, as insurgents rampaged through Iraq in a campaign of death and destruction. Mr. Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney insisted repeatedly that all was well. Violence, Mr. Cheney said, signified the 'last throes' of a dying insurgency."

The editorial continued, "Make no mistake; these two wars are significantly different, even though the enemy's tactics are similar. But the Afghan war effort suffered from neglect, caused by Mr. Bush's decision to divert resources and troops for the 2003 Iraq invasion. It left our NATO allies frustrated. American forces are overstretched

and debilitated.

"Mr. Bush faces hard choices as Iraq slowly stabilizes. He must decide whether to bring thousands of troops home for a well-earned rest or redeploy many of them to Afghanistan. The uncomfortable choice – redeployment – is regretfully the right one.

"To convince our NATO allies to boost their commitment in Afghanistan, Washington must first reverse its own pattern of neglect," the editorial concluded. "Better to start now than to waste crucial months denying shortcomings, minimizing enemy advances and avoiding the inevitable. It's time to give Afghanistan the priority it deserves."

The dilemma in Pakistan

The U.S. shift toward Afghanistan in general -- and the Pakistan border in particular -- was greeted with trepidation in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital. A dispatch in the Urdu-language newspaper Ausaf, monitored by the BBC, said that Adm. Mullen had told the Pakistani military during his recent visit that U.S. forces would take "direct action against Taliban in tribal areas" of Pakistan. The Pakistan government -- both civilian and military -- "have straight out rejected the U.S. decision and, like the past, reiterated the stance that strict action would be taken against any violation of Pakistani territories," the paper said. It went on to describe "a chaotic situation in tribal areas" as residents anticipate a foreign invasion.

If that assessment is correct, the U.S. may have called the question in regard to its erstwhile ally, Pakistan, a nuclear power. Either Pakistan gets serious and restores order in its wild and woolly frontier with Afghanistan, or it risks U.S. intervention. But can any Pakistani government survive that kind of "cooperation" with the U.S.? On the other hand, can it risk sending its army against U.S. forces? Can the country faced with such a dilemma hold together?

One likely impact of siding with the U.S. is that major Pakistani cit-

COMMUNITY VOICES

Reader Roundup: Ventura, transit fares among comment topics

Transit fares, local broadband options, the state of the economy and a new hat – not a boa – in the senatorial campaign ring were among the topics inspiring MinnPost readers' recent comments. Here's a selection:

Jesse Ventura's flirtation with the Senate race caught the attention of many MinnPost readers.

Gregory Stricherz was among those commenting on Doug Grow's Monday story, "Barkley to Jesse: Senate job is easier than being governor"

Well, here's one long-time Democrat who is no longer a Democrat who will vote for Jesse in a heartbeat. Didn't vote for him for Governor but certainly will vote for him for Senator. The Democrats had a perfect candidate for the Senate in Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, but they threw him aside. Enough!

From **Eric Ferguson**:

Doug, you missed one question: is Ventura concerned that he would be splitting the anti-war vote and guaranteeing a Coleman win? As a follow-up, does Barkley know which champagne the Coleman campaign will be popping the corks on to celebrate Ventura getting into the race?

From **Alan Perlman**:

Jesse was the greatest embarrassment in Minnesota political history, bar NONE! When he did happen to say something with common sense and thought behind it or introduced a plan that made sense, he was only carrying out the script as produced by Barkley and/or Tim Penny, his very significant handlers while Governor. Vintage, negative Ventura, such as we will hear tonight, and heard throughout the second half of his term as Governor, were the only true thoughts and pronouncements that came strictly from the idiot. Fooled us once . . . shame on him. Fool us twice?? Not if he was the only one running!

From **Ed Day**:

Barkley's right: If Jesse's in it, he'll win it.

Eric, you forget that in addition

to a share of the anti-war vote, Jesse will also get a share of the "I hate taxes cuz government sucks" vote from Coleman. Combined with defectors like Gregory and 100 percent of the folks who wouldn't vote if Ventura weren't in the race, and The Body cruises to an easy 40 percent victory.

Jesse's a walking soundbite, a tough talker with a tough-guy persona who'll successfully deflect all criticism by whining about being victimized by the bullying Republicrats. No one else could get away with this. He's the perfect candidate.

From **Patrick Guernesey**:

Well, today Jesse proved without a doubt that professional wrestling is FAKE!

Jeremy Powers commented on Doug Grow's later Monday follow-up story, "Ventura out, but ally Barkley set to run for Senate"

Dean Barkley, who was misappointed to fill the term of the late Sen. Paul Wellstone, said he is going to run for the U.S. Senate to give people a choice between a Republican lawyer who served in the Attorney General's office and a Harvard-educated Democrat with five Emmys, saying people really ought to have the choice to vote for a guy who drives a bus for the elderly.

Matty Lang commented on Steve Berg's July 10 story, "A dizzying cycle: As drivers shift to transit, prospective fares rise"

It does not make sense to raise fares and discourage transit ridership. Ms. Thoman and TLC are on the right track in suggesting that subsidies to driving be eliminated in order to help fund transit.

Another helpful step to combat rising fuel costs and the resultant burden on the transit system is to push forward quickly with upgrading the Primary Transit Network routes to electric-powered streetcar lines like the city of Minneapolis has studied doing with its major local routes. Not only will streetcars provide more passenger capacity and attract more choice riders than buses, they consume no diesel fuel

whatsoever. Electricity costs are much more stable and predictable than hydrocarbon costs of any kind.

Don Berryman appreciated Pamela Espeland's July 11 post, "Orchestra Hall, Dakota find common ground in jazz"

Lilly is doing a heck of a job – keep 'em coming. It's good that she and Lowell have figured out that there is much to gain from cooperation and partnering.

Bernice Vetsch opined on Sharon Schmickle's Monday essay, "Mortgage giants in crisis -- yet the public seems locked in 'whatever' mode":

At least Obama is honest about the Bush deficit debacle. It may take a decade to pay them off and AT LAST the wealthy will be asked to pay something approaching their fair share.

For "McCain's large-scale reform of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security," read privatization, destruction, completion of transfer of country's wealth from the poor and middle classes to the rich, and too bad if you get sick, old, widowed or disabled. Pull up those bootstraps, doggonit. We are all in this alone, as Woody Allen says.

Moreover, McCain says we must stop crippling business with our onerous regulations. (I guess he didn't notice that the lack of same, due to legislation FORBIDDING regulation of lenders that his economic advisor, Phil Gramm, let Wall Street lawyers write in the year 2000 is the basic reason for both Enron and the current housing crisis.)

John Finn suggested additional reading:

James Kunstler's Monday morning blogs are always entertaining, if not conducive to serenity. Today's comments include ones on Fannie and Freddie.

Tom Poe had this to say about the July 8 post, "Key parallels: The railroad and Minnesota broadband," by

Steve Borsch of Minnov8, a team of Web designers and consultants that contributes weekly to MinnPost.

If I plug in a \$50 wireless unit into my wall socket, it just does whatever it does, and I'm set to go with a wireless cloud in my home and surrounding yard. If my neighbor does the same thing, we can communicate with each other's computers at speeds tenfold faster than the [telephone and cable companies] offer. That's broadband forever, for a single \$50 purchase per house. It creates a local broadband infrastructure wherever there's a unit. No Internet access, but some wonder if that's necessary. A local broadband infrastructure sets the stage for those who want to connect.

The local hospital wants to gain access to a local broadband infrastructure to offer telemedicine programs to the community. Should they have to pay?

The telcos/cablecos would like to gain access to a local broadband infrastructure to offer Internet services at reasonable wholesale pricing for that access. Should we negotiate with them on what a reasonable wholesale price is for Internet access?

The task force might not be needed. Consider that the local broadband infrastructure makes it possible to create a virtual world, where every resident can sign in and literally carry on a conversation with any other resident with their computer and webcam. Heck, this application would enable town hall meetings to take place, videoconferences with city employees, their bosses, the mayor and the resident all discussing an issue that's important.

The ability to create digital live interactive tv and radio shows, with everyone that signs in participating as a member of the audience for live shows. Did I mention live shows?

All things being equal, it seems like the task force might want to start with a statewide \$50 per house broadband policy for local broadband infrastructure, and then plan how best to expand connectivity between communities. They might find it won't cost taxpayers a nickel,

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Late-night Dakota series is a bite of the Big Apple

By PAMELA ESPELAND

There's something slightly decadent about heading out for the evening at 11:15 p.m. This is Minnesota, where decent people are in bed by then, even on weekends. But depending on where in the metro area you live (and which roads and highways are under construction), that should give you enough time to get to the Dakota by 11:30 on a Friday or Saturday night, when the late-night shows begin.

Launched in 2005 by club owner Lowell Pickett as a way to broaden the Dakota's audience and musical reach, the late-night series brings a touch of Manhattan to flyover land. In New York City, shows that start around midnight are common. Here, where the bars must close at 2 a.m. (except during the upcoming Republican National Convention), most things are winding down by 11:30, not starting up.

The first series curator was Jeremy Walker, artistic director of Jazz is NOW! and former owner of the Brilliant Corners jazz club in St. Paul. Back then, the cover was \$3 and the club offered a limited menu at happy hour prices.

Dan Eikmeier has been curator since June 2007. The cover is still low -- just \$5 -- but the happy hour menu is gone. Tap beer and house wine are \$3.50 and there's an expanded club menu with drink specials. Food is served until 12:30 a.m.

The crowd is young and the music fresh and eclectic, ranging from jazz to pop, folk, funk, blues and beyond.

Eikmeier explains, "I want to try as many different types of music as I can get away with and still have it fall into that hip, improvised [category]. ... I'm working to bring people into the club who wouldn't necessarily think of the Dakota as a fun, hip place to be on a Friday or Saturday night."

He wants it to be a destination and also a place "where people walk in the door and say, 'This is cool, let's stick around.'" Don't expect the more formal, concert-like environment of some Dakota shows. People come to hear music, but also to hang out with friends and talk.

Along with booking eight shows



Photo by John Whiting

Kelly Rossum during a recent Jazz is NOW! performance.

each month, Eikmeier plays trumpet with Big Walter Smith & the Groove Merchants and occasionally with the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He also waits tables at the Dakota. He's the guy who'll give you a thumbs-up if you order Chef Jack's crab cakes.

Saturday, July 26, will feature the Rossum Electric Company. Kelly Rossum is a jazz musician and composer, jazz director at MacPhail Center for Music and artistic director of its jazz series. He fronts his own quartet and plays with Jazz is NOW!, the Ellen Lease/Pat Moriarty Quintet, the Out to Lunch Quintet and Pete Whitman's XTet.

He has a few more projects on the way he's not quite ready to talk about. "It's the Twin Cities music ethic," he says. "You have to be in six different bands." His fourth CD as leader, "Family," will be released in early August.

The Rossum Electric Company is Rossum on trumpet and electronics, Bryan Nichols on keyboards, Ryan Olcott on electronics and "circuit-bending" (more about that in a moment), and Tim Glenn on drums and percussion.

Anything can happen

"Bryan will be playing the role of bass player and keyboard player and maker of strange elec-

tronic sounds," Rossum says. "I'll be playing trumpet through guitar electronics --effects, pedals, loop stations." Loop stations let you record what you play, play it back, overdub it, listen to it backward, speed things up, slow things down -- all kinds of tricks. Hear Rossum play "electrumpet" with the group Electropolis here.

Olcott is a member of Mystery Palace, whose MySpace page de-

scribes their music as "melodramatic popular song/ghettotech/healing & easy listening." According to Rossum, "Olcott works in the world of electronics. Circuit-bending is a technique where you physically alter an instrument. For example, you might take an old Casio keyboard, pop the top, and rewire the circuitry." What you get is a new musical instrument and new sounds.

Glenn is the drummer for the indie rock band Fog. Rossum hasn't worked with Glenn before but considers him an "improvisation monster."

It promises to be a night when anything can happen. "The trumpet won't sound like a trumpet, and the piano won't sound like a piano," Rossum says. Expect "electronic sounds, soundscapes, beats and swoops."

And pure improvisation. No set list, no charts, maybe not even a rehearsal; they haven't decided yet. "We all get to experiment with how we play with each other," Rossum says.

A classical string quartet probably couldn't take such a relaxed approach to a public performance, but this is jazz. "We all know the

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Picks

Late-Night All-Stars: Kelly Rossum (trumpet), Brandon Wozniak (saxophone), Tasha Baron (keyboards), Chris Bates (bass), Jay Epstein (drums). Wozniak was at last Saturday's late-night playing music by Thelonious Monk. Baron is a member of Black Blondie and Hips Don't Lie. Bates and Epstein are always intriguing. I saw this band in April and liked it a lot. The Dakota, Friday, July 18, 11:30 p.m. \$5. Also: The Rossum Electric Company plays at 11:30 p.m. Saturday, July 26, at the Dakota.

Chris Morrissey Quartet: Chris Morrissey (bass), Chris Thomson (saxes), Bryan Nichols (piano), Dave King (drums). King is another fine musician who lives in the Twin Cities and plays with a zillion bands. One of them is the Bad Plus. Café Maude,

Friday-Saturday, July 18-19, 9 p.m. to midnight. No cover but the best hamburgers in town, along with fancier fare. Make a reservation.

Anthony Cox, Phil Hey and Chris Lomheim: Cox plays bass, Hey drums, Lomheim piano. When I spoke with Kelly Rossum for this post, we talked briefly about the Twin Cities jazz scene. "The great musicians who live and work in Minneapolis are not here by accident," he said. "They're here on purpose. ... We can play here as much as we want with the finest musicians in the country." This trio is a perfect example of what he means. The Artists' Quarter, Friday-Saturday, July 18-19, 9 p.m. (\$10).

Find jazz calendars online at Jazz Police www.jazzpolice.com/. Click on Twin Cities, MN in the black menu bar at the top.

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sound canvas we're going to be painting on," Rossum says. "We can come up with a cohesive piece of art because we're all coming from the same mindset."

So what will the music be like, in the most general terms? "Down-tempo, chill. And we might just flat-out rock out at some point in time."

A bit of local jazz history: Rossum played in the first late-night show on Sept. 9, 2005, with Nichols and bassist Michael O'Brien. He has since returned with various configurations: the Late-Night All-Stars, his own quintet, the J.T. Bates Trio. (The All-Stars play again this Friday, July 18. See below.)

"The late-night series has been a lot of fun," Rossum says. "It's all experimental -- trying new ideas, new boundaries, no matter what the style. It's a great venue and I'm glad it's happening. We need it."

At this point, Tinklenberg is a lot more confident than national Dems about his chances against Bachmann

By DOUG GROW

A month ago, U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann said she's on board with a campaign plan to get gasoline prices back to \$2 a gallon.

This scheme, which Republicans have dubbed the "No More Excuses Energy Act," works like this: Just announce that the United States will start drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off U.S. coasts, throw in some new nuclear power plants, and prices will start falling toward \$2, which is what they were just two years ago.

"Send a signal to the market that the United States is serious about exploring its own resources," she said in talking about \$2 gasoline.

Do people in the 6th Congressional District buy this sort of campaign talk?

El Tinklenberg, who called himself Elwyn before he started running against Bachmann, nodded his head gravely.

"She's essentially saying oil companies would take a limited resource, flood the market with it and cut their profits in half," Tinklenberg said. "The thing is, people want to believe it. They want to believe there's a simple way out. She's exploiting the real pain that people are feeling. \$2 a gallon gasoline sounds so nice."

So how do you compete against a candidate who comes just short of promising \$2 gas?

John Woedele, who is helping on the Tinklenberg campaign, jumped into the conversation.

"We're going to promise \$1.99 gasoline," Woedele said, jokingly.

Tinklenberg, the DFL-endorsed candidate in the race, turned very serious. He started talking about the sins of the past. "If we had moved forward even minimally with CAFÉ (fuel economy) standards years ago. . . if we had become serious about mass transportation years ago. . ."

He talked of the future. ("Conservation. . . new energy sources. . .") Then we can move toward long-talked-about energy independence.

So which grabs you? \$2 gas, along with no taxes. Or a long discussion about what it takes to get

to energy independence sometime with programs that would take government mandates, not to mention taxpayer investment?

In a nutshell, this is what makes Bachmann such a difficult foe.

At this point, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has NOT put the 6th District in its "red to blue" category. Instead, it calls the district an "emerging" race for Democrats. The difference in categories is substantial: Democrats in "red to blue" districts receive financial and other resource help. Those in "emerging" districts receive pats on the back and encouraging words from the DCCC: "Go get 'em, buddy!"

But even if the DCCC isn't convinced that Bachmann can be defeated after one term in Washington, Tinklenberg says he's optimistic.

Recall, Bachmann defeated Patty Wetterling by 8 percentage points, 50 to 42. BUT there was a third candidate in the race, John Binkowski, of the Independence Party, who picked up 7.8 percent of the vote. This time around, the IPs endorsed Tinklenberg.

When you add Wetterling's 127,144 votes and Binkowski's 23,557 votes, Bachmann won the district by just 548 votes.

"Surely there are 548 people who have gone beyond the notion that everything is free," said Tinklenberg.

There are other reasons Tinklenberg claims he is more optimistic than the DCCC about this race. (He's a former Methodist minister. A pastor would never fib, right?)

Though he has raised far less than Wetterling did and badly trails Bachmann in raising cash, Tinklenberg claims the money signs aren't bad. Bachmann reported raising \$382,000 in the just-completed quarter and has \$1.3 million on hand. Tinklenberg raised \$272,000 in the quarter and has \$225,000 on hand.

So where's the good news for the challenger?

"He's right where Tim Walz was two years ago," said Woedele. (Walz knocked out incumbent Republican Rep. Gil Gutknecht in the 1st District two years ago.)

Beyond that, the Tinklenberg supporters thought Bachmann, who does have a national constituency, would have raised even more money by now.

Tinklenberg says his campaign has enough cash to run a "strategic campaign." That means far fewer television spots than the Wetterling-Bachmann race. Buying TV spots in the sprawling 6th District is a waste of money, Tinklenberg says. To hit suburban areas of the district, pols who want to do TV advertising have to buy expensive time in the metro market.

"Four of every five dollars spent on television advertising ends up taking your message to the wrong district," said Tinklenberg, who said billboards and personal appearances are more effective in reaching voters in the 6th.

But his greatest strengths may be that he's not nearly so liberal as Wetterling (he's a mushy pro-lifer, for example). And he's not a Republican in 2008.

"It's such a different time than two years ago," said Tinklenberg. "Social issues -- abortion, guns, gay marriage -- that had such an important role in the last election aren't front and center now. Now, it's economic issues. They've become very personal. Even people who have good jobs are nervous. We are living the Bush-Bachmann agenda."

In fact, Bachmann isn't bragging up her party label in this race. Instead, she is billing herself as a tax-cutting, fiscal conservative who feels our anxiety. Her website shows pictures of her with Sen. Norm Coleman and Gov. Tim Pawlenty, and there's a photo of her standing with a lifesize cutout of Ronald Reagan.

But President Bush?

Nowhere to be seen.

"What people around the country know her for is embracing the president," said Tinklenberg. "It's a hard sell for her to come out as some sort of independent reformer."

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and might even generate revenues that would pay for the infrastructure.

By the way, Ypsilanti, Mich., is doing this, and their local broadband infrastructure is operated and maintained by two not-so-geeky volunteers. You see, a local broadband infrastructure doesn't need technical expertise to build, operate or maintain.

Oh, but, excuse me, we need to leave the decision-making to those who brought us the multimillion-dollar Twin Cities wireless network, and the telcos/cablecos lobbyists who are undoubtedly helping the task force become informed.

From **Jim Hughes**:

Pardon my cynicism, but to some extent I agree with the previous poster – there has to be a better way. What will the legislature do, other than offer big money to Qwest and Comcast to help them lock the whole state into overpriced, outmoded systems for years to come?

Amy Goetzman's Monday post, "Lin Enger's frozen hamlet hits home," prompted this comment from **Patrick Coleman**

Amy, this reminds me of what the great critic of Minnesota literature, James Grey, wrote in 1937.

"No doubt the conviction is strong in the true believer's heart that when 'the Heavenly Muse' finds herself in Minnesota, she wearily gets out her make-up kit and prepares for a lugubrious session celebrating the sorrows of the soil and of the soul. The costume assigned to the Minnesota Muse, in the regionalist handbook, is a decent, though shabby, Mother Hubbard. She sings exclusively of ruined wheat harvests and she sings of them with a strong Swedish accent."

Ric Schafer commented on Monday's Community Voices essay, "Housing assets should help finance long-term care," by Peter Nelson,

a policy fellow with Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis

HERE'S WHAT THE BILL SAYS: Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) reauthorizes "LTC Insurance Partnerships," strengthens "undue hardship" protections for Medicaid recipients, extends Medicaid's transfer of assets look-back period from three to five years, starts any applicable eligibility penalty later to prevent "half-a-loaf" give-aways, drops the home equity exemption to \$500,000 from unlimited, and closes abusive Medicaid eligibility "loopholes" such as "transfer assets before income," "Medicaid-friendly annuities," "life estates," "partial-month transfers," and "self-canceling installment notes."

HERE'S WHY THAT'S A GOOD IDEA: These minor modifications to Medicaid's hemorrhaging eligibility system are long overdue and critically needed to begin a long process to restore and preserve the welfare program as the long-term care safety net for the poor and to incentivize prosperous citizens to save, invest and insure for long-term care so they will be able to pay privately for quality care when they need it.

Phyllis Stenerson added this to Tuesday's From Our Partners post by James Sanna of the Twin Cities Daily Planet: "Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder turns 75"

Congratulations, Spokesman-Recorder, for your essential contribution to our community and nation. You tell stories and report information that people need to hear. Thank you for quoting Nellie Stone Johnson, one of the finest women I've ever known. And the most fun! She deserves to be remembered and honored.

Gail O'Hare commented on Steve Berg's July 11 MinnPost.World essay, "Is something wrong with the economy, or is it just our imagination at work?"

Even David Stockman, the boy

wonder who sold supply-side economics to Reagan, ultimately admitted it was smoke and mirrors. I can't understand how anyone was duped by this myth when GWB revived it, nor why McCain continues to push it. The "strong economy" of the past few years has benefited a very small percentage of Americans. We're worried because we have reason to be.

John Olson added:

Graham need only look at his own company's stock price to know that the recession is not mental (Ticker: UBS, 52-week range: \$18.52-\$62.34, closed July 11 at \$19.49/share).

To those who have lost their homes through foreclosure, it is not mental. To those who have lost their jobs, it is not mental.

This is very real and it is going to be a lot more painful for all of us before any healing can begin.

Regardless of who gets elected in November, the victor will inherit a wrecked economy, Iraq and everything that goes along with both issues. Whoever loses the election may actually (by that time) walk away and say to himself, "whew, glad I don't have to deal with THAT."

On a related topic, **Jason Walker** commented on Eric Black's Tuesday post, "Senate race: Two polls, different results, many cautions"

For a couple of reasons, I think these polls are completely skewed. For one, if pollsters call land lines, that's shutting out a huge segment of the population – young people, who likely only have cell phones. I am 28 and haven't had a land line since 1999. If they're only talking to older-leaning voters, then there's a good chance the poll will lean Republican. And if the pollsters do call cell phones as well, does anyone pick up? If I get an incoming call of a strange number, I don't answer.

Second, who listens to a robotic voice? I'm guessing the people here are even older. If I hear a robotic voice on an incoming call, I'm hanging up. Won't only the old and lonely listen

long enough to vote? I know that's an extremely broad generalization, but I just put little stock in phone polls in the cell-phone era.

Bruce Johnson added:

There is a wonderful bit of video from Norm's last campaign that is included in the documentary "Wellstone," by Hard Working Pictures. In it Norm stands with his arm around George Bush and says, "When we sing 'God Bless America' that's a prayer and this man is the answer to our prayers."

I haven't been impressed with Franken's ads or speeches but his campaign organization is turning out a lot of people to canvass at summer events. It shouldn't be hard to exceed the Norm if people pay attention to his lack of principles and opportunism.

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.

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Lighting up space

Michael Kauper, a Minneapolis advocate for light pollution policy who has taught astronomy to children for more than 30 years, said the United States annually sends what amounts to \$4 billion to \$5 billion of light into space by way of street lighting. "Nobody sees it except the astronauts."

Robert Gehrz, professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Minnesota, said any kind of bulb left uncovered will emit in all directions — "up as well as down." But street lights — especially high-powered security lights — create the most waste of light and energy because they light so much of the air above.

Gehrz and others concerned about light pollution want city planners to adopt policies that would require directing the wasted light away from the sky and pinpointing it where it would do the most good.

The switchover to full cutoff lighting (fixtures that prevent upward light and minimize glare) is gaining attention at the Minnesota Legislature. House Rep. Phyllis

Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, has been working on a bill that would introduce a model lighting ordinance.

Kahn said smaller Minnesota cities have developed new lighting ordinances, but metros areas are lagging behind. New lights around the Metrodome and Guthrie theater are especially bad, she said, as are the lights at the University of Minnesota's Science Education building.

"One of the problems we have with this issue is that very few people understand it," Kahn said.

Kahn and other advocates try to frame light pollution as an energy conservation issue, but many conservationists just nod their heads. That's because light pollution comes across as abstract.

"They don't think it's like a river being polluted," Kahn said.

Still, several metro area cities are adopting new lighting standards. Maplewood, Plymouth and Golden Valley now require developers to submit lighting plans.

But there's little uniformity in the regulations.

Maplewood, for example, focuses on curbing light glare, which

primarily addresses aesthetic and nuisance problems. Plymouth, meanwhile, focuses on light wattage, which addresses the amount of energy used.

But if there's a Minnesota city that's lighting the way, it's Mankato.

Mankato's ordinance was amended in 1997, and addresses brightness, photometrics (where the light is being cast), the illuimaire design (the area where the light shines), and the enclosure where the light is being cast.

"Lighting really takes up the lion's code," said city planning assistant Jon Noerenberg.

Public safety issue

In Minneapolis, lighting and public safety are closely connected. "Our priority is safety for people walking on the sidewalks and using the street," said John Wertjes, director of traffic control and safety for the city.

But more lighting doesn't always necessarily translate to safety, said Robert Otterstatter, president and CEO of the Community Development Crime Prevention Institute

in Washington, D.C.

"We tend to think that lighting at night equals safety," Otterstatter said. "There are no conclusive studies to how that crime goes down in lighting. Criminals want to be able to see what they're doing."

While cities debate the pros and cons of new lighting rules, stargazers worry that fewer and fewer stars can be seen the metro-area skies. The Minnesota Astronomical Society is looking to for a new stargazing site even further out than Onan.

On the night of my visit, not long after seeing the iridium flare, I drove away from the observatory in near total darkness.

Within a few minutes I was on the edge of a small neighboring, where a local convenience store shined like a flare. It could be seen for miles, light shining in all four directions.

Suddenly, I could no longer see the stars.

Julie Wilbert is a freelance writer in St. Paul and just bought her first telescope.

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ies would come under terrorist attack from Taliban cells already embedded, the Ausaf story said.

Tensions over anticipated U.S. actions are already running high following the deaths of 11 Pakistani soldiers in a U.S. bombing attack on the border region last month. Despite a joint investigation of the incident, the sides reached opposite conclusions.

NATO commanders, meanwhile, denied reports that its troops are massing near the Pakistani border, although they confirmed that they've launched helicopters and artillery shells into Pakistan after coming under rocket attacks from Taliban units.

"U.S. poised to bomb Pakistan," was a provocative headline posted on the India-based Eco-

nomics Times website Thursday. Leaning on British and Pakistani dispatches, the paper quoted a local resident saying, "They started setting up bunkers very close to the border while gunship helicopters are continuously hovering over the border." The man added that he had never seen such a large deployment of foreign troops near the border. "For us," he said, "it's unusual as

they are on the zero point."

Steve Berg, a former Washington, D.C. bureau reporter, national correspondent and editorial writer for the Star Tribune, reports on urban design, transportation and national politics. He can be reached at sberg[at]minnpost[dot]com.

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