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**Editor's Note: If you're reading this in your Chevy Volt, get out! The Watchdog's acerbic wit and incendiary commentary has been proven to cause arcing and fires in the Volt's battery housing.**

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**MORE PURPLE NINCOMPOOPERY**

No, we're not talking about the stadium hearing this week that featured the rudderless Viking Longboat that may go to Arden Hills or any one of three different locations in Minneapolis, despite Lester Bagley's obvious disappointment that legislators on the panel are forcing him to speak with R.T. Rybak about the Minneapolis sites. It looked like Bagley was back in 5th grade and just got word from his teacher that he had to partner up on that science project with the kid who never took a bath and always picked his nose.

What we are referring to is the following quote from one Corey Merrifield, the president of a front group called "[Save the Vikes](#)."

Merrifield demonstrated to the world this week that he has the requisite lack of judgment and immaturity so common throughout the ranks of Vikings leadership.

Of the stadium hearing held this past week, Merrifield wrote:

As with any public hearing we do expect to hear from opposition on a Vikings stadium and given the time slot, the advantage goes to opponents. **We typically see those who are unemployed or on a fixed income advocating against a new stadium because the government isn't giving them enough.** All while the majority of the Vikings 2.5 million fans are working.

Now that's rich. A man who brays on and on for taxpayer subsidies for a billionaire criticizes others for wanting more out of government.

Now it may be true that many unemployed and fixed income folks oppose stadium subsidies. But it's also true that many folks who are gainfully employed and contributing much to the economy are opposed as well.

People like, oh say, Harold Hamilton. Let the Watchdog go out on a limb and guess that Hamilton has created a few more jobs than Merrifield.

Harold Hamilton is neither unemployed nor on a fixed income yet opposes taxpayer subsidies for a stadium.

Merrifield's ignorant statement shows the mentality of these spoiled brats who demand a subsidy from the rest of us for their leisure activity of watching football.

And speaking of who had time to attend a Vikings hearing, what does Merrifield say of fellow fans like [Larry Spooner](#), who had ample time to show up, yet again, and whine that he needs a stadium in Arden Hills because he can't tailgate in style in Minneapolis. Oh the humanity! What a crisis. Maybe there's some FEMA money available to aid Mr. Spooner.

We can only wonder if Merrifield ripped his [purple Zubas](#) shoving his foot in his yap.

## **HAIL, OAK GROVE**

The Watchdog gives big props this week to the city council in Oak Grove.

It looks like Ham Lake has competition when it comes to common sense in government.

The council has approved a budget that will cut some \$600,000 from the budget and reduce the city's portion of property taxes by whopping 18%.

Among other things, the city eliminated the city manager position, renegotiated the law enforcement contract with the county, and made changes to city employee health insurance.

The Watchdog salutes these courageous city leaders for doing what many politicians only say they will do: cut government. Not slow growth, not "put the brakes on." These folks CUT government and thereby expanded the liberty of the good citizens they represent.

We have too many politicians, especially some Republicans, who talk a good game about limited government and then turn around in a panic looking for "revenue streams" and other ways to avoid the admittedly tough job of slashing the Leviathan.

With the state looking at another budget shortfall, Republicans in Saint Paul would do well to look at Oak Grove's example. The answer doesn't lie in some new scheme to get money into Saint Paul to dump more money into public schools, prop up failing market sectors, or subsidize a profitable \$9 billion industry called the NFL. The answer is to cut spending and pay fidelity to the principle that government is too large and needs to be pared back.

The Watchdog is especially proud of Mayor Mark Korin and councilman Dan Denno. These two Watchdogs have led the way and deserve the thanks and praise of Oak Grove taxpayers. These two have a bright future. Their leadership and conviction would be welcome at any level of government.

Oak Grove's budget is nothing short of a profile in political courage.

Whether you live in Oak Grove or not, let the [council](#) know you're behind them. Heck, one of these guys may be representing you down the road.

## **IT'S NEVER ENOUGH**

Ugh, here they go again. Our always efficient and results-oriented public schools have begun to complain that the shift in school aid will cause them to borrow some \$382 million, at a cost of \$3 million in interest.

To be honest, the Watchdog didn't favor the school shift. We favored cutting the education budget and forcing schools to prioritize, just like the rest of us.

Of course, the media and the liberals will be all over this, decrying the sorry state of education funding and the immoral tragedy of "borrowing" from our schools. Existential question: Is it possible to borrow from your own debtor? The money in question is state money, not school district money. Extending the aid payment period isn't "borrowing." But again, this is the same logic that calls an increase a cut if the increase isn't what was projected or promised.

And what of the increase in the general formula of \$50 per student? What of the additional \$650 million in aid? That would more than offset the borrowing costs.

Moreover, \$3 million in interest costs in a small fraction of the \$12 BILLION annual state education budget, not including federal aid and local tax revenues.

Talk about a non-event. But we all know the media will portray the situation as a dire one in which we all need to think about the children.

## **AND WE WONDER WHY THE GOVERNMENT IS BROKE**

As many legislators look around for more revenue streams for government, here's a place to find some money: the payout of unused sick and vacation time.

Unlike the private sector, state employees who retire are paid for unused vacation and sick time, sometimes resulting in obscene and absurd payouts.

The Pioneer Press recently revealed that some high-ranking college administrators in the state colleges and universities system received monster payouts.

For example, the former chancellor of the State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU), raked in nearly \$93,000 for unused sick time and nearly \$47,000 for unused vacation time.

Another MnSCU bigwig, Jon Quistgaard, walked off with a \$126,000 check when he retired from Bemidji State University.

Two other administrators from MnSCU got six-figure payouts as well.

This practice is defended as one that prevents the "abuse" of sick leave and vacation time.

Funny, we thought the prevention of abuse came from state employment policies that prevent - guess what? - the abuse of sick leave and vacation leave.

Moreover, the problem first stems from the fact that public employees get obscene amounts of sick and vacation leave in the first place.

Let's take a look at a janitor at a local public community college. The janitor, the kind of downtrodden Workin' Man lionized by the Left, is represented by the AFSCME public employee union.

Here's what the contract says about holidays, vacation, and sick leave for a janitor with seniority:

Holidays:

- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day

Vacation: 234 hours (29.25 days) of vacation each year.

Sick leave: 104 hours (13 days) of sick leave each year.

That's 418 hours (52.25 days) of paid time off each year. **That's about 20% of a normal work year!**

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The Watchdog is unaware of any private sector company that offers this kind of paid time off.

The Watchdog is also unaware of any private sector company that offers unused sick and vacation payouts.

No wonder these big payouts are happening. It's next to impossible to take 20% of the work year off.

Since many legislators read the Watchdog, here's the solution: legislation that caps the amount of vacation and sick leave an employee gets. Second, ban the practice of payouts for unused sick and vacation leave.

Take these issues away from the bargaining table and fix them by legislation.

After all, Governor Dayton is now negotiating a new deal with the very unions that backed his candidacy. Who is representing the taxpayer?