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EDITORIAL

The issue: Discussions of expanding the state's elk herd, possibly including Jackson County.

Our view: There are legitimate concerns, but it's an exciting project that deserves serious consideration.

Expanded elk herd could be a plus if done properly

There is a clear upside to a renewed push to expand the state's fledgling elk herd beyond the estimated 180 animals located in the Clam Lake area of Ashland County.

Tourism officials say the tiny community benefits some from curious folks who stop by inquiring about how and where they might be able to spot an elk in the nearby expansive forests. They might even stop by for a meal or beverage at the local "Elkhorn" restaurant and bar.

The idea of an added tourist attraction appeals to some folks in Jackson County as well; there has been talk off and on of starting a second elk herd in the large forest area of that county.

Some 10,000 wild elk roam the woods in the southeastern Kentucky and could serve as a source herd for Wisconsin, according to a recent Associated Press story. Original plans called for an elk herd of about 1,400 near Clam Lake and 390 animals in Jackson County.

Plans have been on hold for years because of fears of chronic wasting disease, which wildlife officials are highly concerned about given the potential negative impact on Wisconsin's deer population and the highly popular and lucrative autumn deer season. But an official in Kentucky said that state has tested about 22,000 elk since 2002 and hasn't found one CWD infection.

The cost of bringing more elk here reportedly wouldn't be prohibitive. Officials say it would cost about \$450,000 to capture, test and transport the elk as well as do expanded monitoring of the newcomers for three years after their arrival. However, the Ho-Chunk Nation, Jackson County Wildlife Fund and the Rock Mountain Elk Foundation have agreed to cover the start-up costs until there are enough animals to have a hunting season, according to the AP report.

But not everyone is excited about the prospect of elk in Jackson County, including some cranberry growers who fear the large animals would feast on their crop. The Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association also is concerned that the state will divert too much of its limited revenues to the elk project once the private partners stop paying.

The bear hunters group raises another point that needs a public airing. They are concerned the state may close certain roads to hunters to reduce elk-car collisions.

We all know the dangers in this state of deer-car crashes. In 2010, 14 people died in vehicle-deer crashes and another 369 were hurt, 65 seriously. A cow elk can weigh more than 500 pounds and a bull averages about 700 pounds. It's one thing for drivers to be aware in the sparsely populated Clam Lake area, but pity the unlucky soul who might drive into the path of a wayward elk on Interstate 94 in Jackson County at freeway speed.

Perhaps fears of crashes and crop damage are overblown. For many, the idea of having this majestic animal thriving in our state is exciting. Hopefully the dialogue will continue, and critics' concerns can be allayed so one day we can expand the state's elk herd in a way that doesn't unreasonably threaten anyone's livelihood or safety.

— Don Huebscher, editor

Question of the Week

If you could ask Barack Obama or Mitt Romney one question, what would it be??

Go to LeaderTelegram.com/opinions/ and click on "Question of the Week." Responses to the previous week's question will be published each Wednesday.

From Our Files

5 years ago — 2007

After years of declining membership — brought about in part by competition from upscale public courses and increasing family demands — both local country clubs pursue new strategies as they seek to remain viable.

15 years ago — 1997

From a nearby parking lot, women are exposing

themselves to men in the Eau Claire County Jail.

30 years ago — 1982

Eau Claire's city manager says state limits on property taxes are an intrusion into local affairs.

55 years ago — 1957

Labor Day weekend traffic deaths in the state far exceed the predicted numbers.



The issue: Educating our kids.

Daniel Akst's view: High poverty levels and low student achievement are synonymous.

Poverty, not bad teachers, is what plagues our schools

Are American schools the best in the world?

The answer is a resounding maybe — which is good news indeed for this back-to-school season.

Beating up on public education is practically our national sport. I often do it myself. But overlooked in the ongoing assault is strong evidence that U.S. schools actually are world-beaters — except for the problem of poverty.

When it comes to reading, in fact, our schools may well be the best in the world. As Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond points out, U.S. 15-year-olds in schools with fewer than 10 percent of kids eligible for free or cut-rate lunch "score first in the world in reading, outperforming even the famously excellent Finns."

This 10 percent threshold is significant because, in high-achieving countries such as Finland, few schools have more poor kids than that. In other words, if you look at American schools that compare socioeconomically, we're doing great.

But wait, it gets better. U.S. schools where fewer than 25 percent are impoverished (by the same lunch measure) beat all 34 of the relatively affluent countries studied except South Korea and Finland. U.S. schools where 25 to 50 percent of students were poor still beat most other countries.

These results are from the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment, a widely followed effort to compare educational outcomes. PISA scores inspire a good deal of hand-wringing in this country — overall, we were 14th in reading — but I suspect we've been taking away the wrong message by not adjusting for poverty.

That's odd, because most people know there's a connection between poor families and poor school perfor-

mance. The link is reflected in various sources, including the SAT, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the Trends in International Math and Science Study.

So the connection, which exists in most countries, is clear. But somehow the implications haven't been, and now that school is again upon us, it's worth thinking this through. If American kids who aren't poor are doing so well, maybe our problem isn't bad teachers or inadequate school spending or indifferent parents or screen-besotted children. Maybe the problem is simply poverty — and the shameful fact that we have so much more of it than any comparable country.

How much child poverty are we living with? A study this year by UNICEF found a U.S. child poverty rate of 23.1 percent — way beyond any other economically advanced nation except Romania. In Spain, which is in a depression, the figure was 17.1 percent. In Canada it was 13.3. In Finland, 5.3.

If poverty is the problem, families in middle-class school districts needn't worry much about their kids' schools. But they should be worried about the society in which they live, for even if we have hearts of stone, we do not have heads made of the same material. Economic growth — to say nothing of a healthy democracy — depends on an educated citizenry, and we cannot afford to let a large segment of the populace embark on adulthood seriously underschooled.

If the problem with education in this country really is poverty, it will not be easy to fix. Yet that is no reason for kidding ourselves about what's actually wrong.

Akst is a columnist for Long Island, N.Y.-based Newsday.

McClatchy-Tribune

Voice of the People

Justice system unjust

This month is the 10th anniversary of my son's death. On Aug. 21, a female was released from her 10-year sentence for killing him.

If you are a juror, your verdict will obviously impact sentencing and the families' lives forever. Do you sitting on the jury ever really know if you are getting the whole story?

Might there be pending charges in another county, which precludes entering them into evidence?

Why couldn't the jury hear what happened the week after my son was killed? She was being charged with felonies such as burglary and misappropriating personal identification that occurred in Eau Claire County. The main case for second-degree intentional homicide and hiding a corpse was in Dunn County. Does that seem reason enough to disallow the jurors to hear the other events? That's the law.

Might knowing all the information make a difference in the verdict and sentencing?

Not only did the jury not hear about her actions after the crime, the other charges were "read in" to the sentencing in Dunn County. In other words, the attorneys "rolled" them into the main case — dismissed them.

It apparently wasn't important that she stole my son's car, his keys, wallet, burglarized his home, pawned items with a fake ID, and eventually left a stripped, clean car on a street in Eau Claire.

My opinion, and I would hope that of our legislators, would be: either have a trial and proper sentencing separate for these actions or at least let the jury hear about the other actions that could make an impact in their final verdict. In this case neither happened. Those crimes just plain didn't matter.

This is apparently just one of the practices that is so very unjust — in a system they call justice.

CHRISTINE PETERSON

Woodbury, Minn.

Contact Your Lawmaker

■ U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy, R-Weston, 1208 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; 202-225-3365 or 855-585-4251 (toll-free); duffy.house.gov/contact-me.

■ U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, 1406 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; 202-225-5506 or 888-442-8040; kind.house.gov.

■ U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., 2 Russell Courtyard, Washington, DC 20510; 202-224-5323; ronjohnson.senate.gov.

■ U.S. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., 330 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; 202-224-5653; kohl.senate.gov.

■ Gov. Scott Walker, R-Wauwatosa, State Capitol, 115 East, Madison, WI 53702; 608-266-1212; govgeneral@wisconsin.gov.

■ State Sen. Sheila Harsdorf, R-River Falls, State Capitol, Room 18 South, P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882; 608-266-7745 or 800-862-1092; Sen.Harsdorf@legis.wisconsin.gov.

■ State Sen. Terry Moulton, R-town of Seymour, State Capitol, Room 306 South, P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7822; 608-266-7511 or 888-437-9436.

IT SEEMS TO ME

Resources may help you find good job

On Labor Day 2012 and every day, one of my top priorities is to help those looking for work get the training they need for good-paying jobs.

By 2020, 17 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations will require a post-secondary certificate or degree.

In fact, employers are actively looking to fill nearly 4 million job openings in America right now. Getting the skills employers want and need are critical to a successful career.

Here are a few tips:

■ **Get started!** Your first step is to check out your local American Job Center. These nearly 3,000 "one-stop-shops" are part of a nationwide network where you can work with experts to update your resume, strengthen interview skills and explore current job openings. Eau Claire County Job Center, 221 W. Madison St., Eau Claire, WI 54703. The phone number is 715-836-3036, ext. 1515. For more information, visit CareerOneStop.org.

■ **Looking for a fresh start?** Check out MySkillsMyFuture.org to discover different careers that build off of your existing skills, connect you to free training programs and even find employers in your area looking to hire. The site also shows how much different jobs pay near you or across the country, as well as the additional skills you'll need to succeed.

■ **Not sure what career is right for you?** Visit MyNextMove.org to find the job that's the perfect fit. Fill out a questionnaire listing your interests and abilities, and get suggestions for different employment paths in more than 900 careers. This site will also identify local apprenticeship and certificate programs to help you train and get a job in high-growth industries.

■ **Are you a veteran?** "My Next Move for Vets" is designed just for you! Enter your military occupation code, and the site matches your military skills to civilian jobs. If you're a post-9/11 era veteran, you can also download a Veterans Gold Card at DOL.gov/VETS to get specialized services from your local American Job Center.

■ **Don't have Internet access at home?** We've partnered with local libraries all around the country to make sure that you always have a place to log on to our online resources. Most American Job Centers offer free access for those looking for a job, too.

■ **Have more questions?** Call us. You can reach our toll-free helpline at 866-4-USA-DOL for the most up-to-date resources. Nearly 160,000 people do it each month. And yes, we speak Spanish!

The U.S. Department of Labor has other resources to help you find a first job, new job or different career. And our services are free. Happy Labor Day!

Solis is the U.S. secretary of labor.



Hilda Solis