

Mr. Walz Quit Quacking

August 20, 2009

I am getting just a little sick and tired of hearing all the rhetoric about healthcare town hall meetings and how "tuff" and "mean" the attendees are. Our Congressman Tim Walz finally succumbed to having just one public meeting in this great big "across the state" district. We are all supposed to jump in the car and drive to Mankato to say our piece and ask our questions about one of the most major changes to come up in a long time, our healthcare.

For the last 35 years I have spent a good share of my life in local government so let me wander back to my days in the village hall as a town mayor. Our state legislatures mandate that local governments have public hearings with mailed and published notices on everything, street projects, annual budgets, zoning changes, rate adjustments, conditional uses, TIF's and hundreds more. All this to the very lowest level of government where most people know just about everyone and they are seen everyday around town, in the churches, coffee shops, and even the bars. Legislators wanted to make sure that everyone had the right to have their opinion heard on these important local issues.

Congress followed suit and mandated multitudes of hearings whether it be revenue sharing budgets, project environment notices, grant applications, flood plains, just about every Federal nickel got a hearing in the council chambers. Some projects even had two or three required hearings. Of course, for most of these hearings nobody showed up because they already had their say when they saw their councilperson walking into the drug store or at the little league game.

Now we move up the chain and we find legislative committee meetings held with little if any notice in the dead of night, passing major bills to the floors for final votes where even the members don't have copies much less the time to even read the executive summary.

Seems strange that we now cannot have a number of public town hall meetings on one of the most fundamental reforms in recent times, our healthcare. I laugh when I hear Congressional members and leaders calling the albeit at times rude boisterous attendees, "un-American" or "Nazi-like." I have been yelled to, threatened, called names, sworn at, and even told to shut up at my own meeting. We not only had to take it and listen but we had to continue the hearing until everyone that wanted to speak had the opportunity to speak, maybe even two or three times. It wasn't just the law but it was the right thing to do. This is America where people have died for our rights to protest the government and, if we want, "tell off" our government representatives.

Mr. Walz, I think you and the other Congressional complainers and name callers need a lesson in the town hall before the ascent to such high office. If it is good for the local government "gooses," then it is good for the Congressional "ganders."

Quit "quacking" and start having convenient hearings throughout your district. That's what we pay you for.

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