

OUR VIEW

## When words fail

There are moments when words are simply not adequate tools with which to process events. The death of Lily Peters, a fourth grade student in Chippewa Falls, is such a moment.

There is no fairness here. Not to Lily, her family, or her friends. Not to a community that must now wonder who would commit such an inhuman act, and whether such a person is still lurking around a corner.

Words fail. But they're not all we can use to respond.

We have voices. If you saw anything that might be connected to Lily's death or her disappearance Sunday night, call the Chippewa Falls Police Department. Speak up. If you know something, you must be Lily's voice.

We have hearts. We can show Lily's friends and family we all care. We may not feel their unimaginable pain, but we can let them know they are not alone in this moment of grief.

We have arms. We can hold those we love tight, making sure they know how we feel. We can take a time of uncertainty and make sure those closest to us are certain of our love.

We have eyes and ears. Someone knows what happened. Someone has the missing pieces. We can watch and listen for those bits of information. That doesn't mean following every rumor, but if something looks or sounds off, the police are a phone call away.

It's easy to think things like the death of a young girl happen in other places, other towns, to other people. Chippewa Falls Police Chief Kelm said as much during a press conference Monday afternoon: "It's almost impossible to believe something this horrific can happen in our community."

It's easy to slip into that way of thinking because we want so very much to believe that it's true. But, of course, everyone is someone else. Every home is another place. We are no more immune than any of the innumerable communities that face similar tragedies.

On Tuesday morning we saw some of the effects of that renewed knowledge. There were fewer students walking to school. Parents waited with their children at bus stops. People are worried. In light of what happened, that's not unreasonable. Kelm urged vigilance and, with no one in custody and no clear suspects, that's a responsible move.

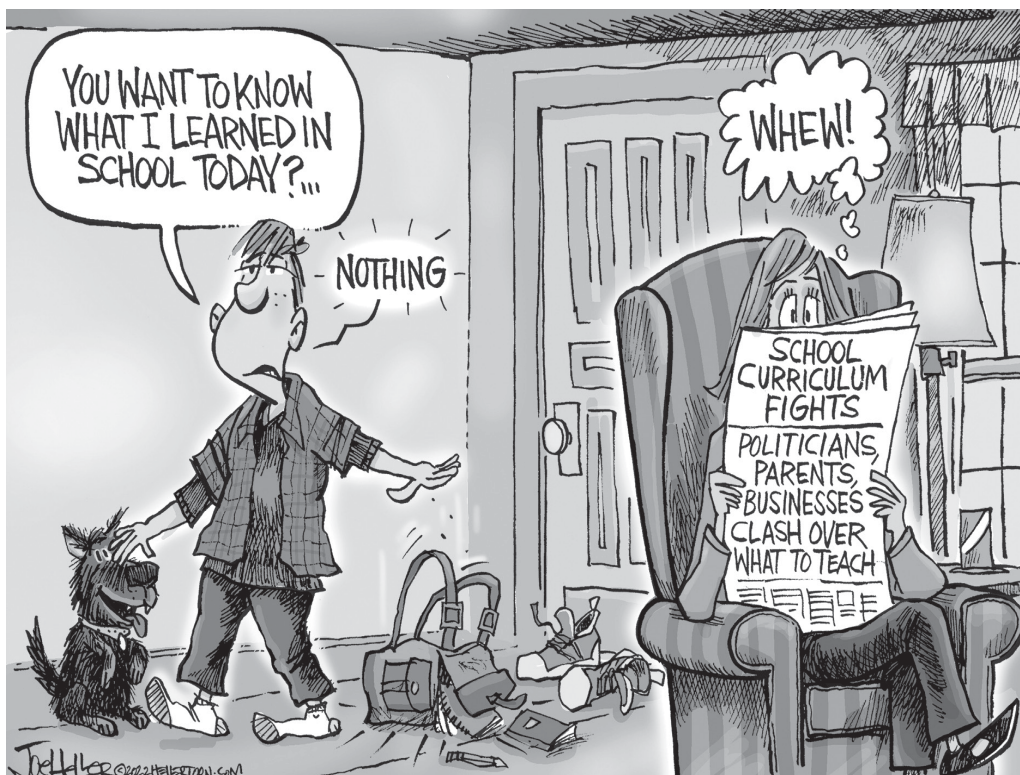
It may well take time before authorities file charges or make an arrest. We must be patient waiting for those developments. As much as we want to know more, and as much as investigators may want to speak on the progress they make, it is far more important that they be given the time to build an airtight case against Lily's killer. Such a person can have no place in society aside from a prison cell.

And Kelm made that point, too. He revealed little about what investigators know now, and that's appropriate. He knows this is the beginning of what will likely be a long process, and seeing it through means paying attention to details now.

Lily should have been getting ready for school Monday morning, preparing to see friends and those who cared about her. The person who stole her life must face justice. But we're not going to spend more time talking now about that for the moment. There will be time later, once the person who did this is in custody.

Right now, we mourn. Our hearts ache for those who love Lily, whose lives have been so suddenly and cruelly changed. We can understand neither the act nor what her family is enduring. We can only say they have, and deserve, the community's support.

Words may fail in times like this. Love doesn't. And right now, that's what we should be offering those who love Lily.



## Curbing Big Tech's power supported

Thousands of local papers have shuttered their doors in recent years, and those surviving are facing unprecedented challenges in remaining both economically viable and as the lifeblood of their communities.

All the while, Big Tech monopolies like Alphabet and Meta — through sites like Google News and Facebook News — have come to dominate the news and publishing industries by expropriating the work of smaller and local operators via their news aggregator sites.

The Founding Fathers enshrined protections for a press free from government regulation in the First Amendment to the Constitution because a free and diverse press is the backbone of a healthy and vibrant republic. But the Founders could not have envisioned a future in which nearly all news and information would be controlled by just a handful of private entities.

This is not only blatantly unfair — it is a threat to the free press and, thus, to democracy itself.

The American people not only understand the severity of this threat, but moreover, are united on the need to curb Big Tech's undue power and unjust profiteering in the news and publishing industries.

New polling by Schoen-Cooperman Research — which was conducted among a representative sample of U.S. adults, and commissioned by News Media Alliance — reveals widespread public concern over Big Tech's outside influence with respect to news and publishing, as well as broad-based support for Congress taking action to rein in these monopolies.

Indeed, roughly 4 in 5 Americans are concerned that Big Tech companies have too much power over the news and publishing industries (79%), manipulate these industries for their own gain (78%), and are driving small and local news outlets out of business (76%).

Further, approximately three-quarters agree that "Big Tech's monopoly over the news and publishing industries is a threat to the free press and unfair to publishers, especially to small and local outlets" (76%).

In addition to being broadly concerned about this problem, Americans want change and are looking to their elected leaders in Washington to deliver.

Roughly 4 in 5 Americans agree with statements to this effect, including "I support Congress taking steps to give small and local publishers more power in negotiations with Big Tech companies" (81%), as well as "Congress needs to rein in Big Tech by passing reforms that would make the publishing industry fairer for smaller media entities and local operators" (77%).

In terms of specific reforms, our survey measured public support for a bill that was introduced this year known as the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, or JCPA. This is a bipartisan proposal that would allow news publishers to negotiate, under the authority of a federal interme-

diary, fair terms for use of their content by Big Tech companies.

Remarkably, after reading a brief description of the JCPA, strong majorities support Congress passing the JCPA (70%) and believe it is important for Congress to pass the JCPA (64%).

Respondents also indicated that a political candidate's support for the JCPA — or lack thereof — would affect their vote in an election. By a 4-to-1 margin, U.S. adults would be more likely, rather than less likely, to back a candidate for Congress who supported the JCPA.

Additionally, 7 in 10 agree that "elected officials who oppose the JCPA are allowing Big Tech companies to continue manipulating the news and publishing industries for their own gain, leaving small and local publishers powerless" (69%).

In addition to being supportive of the JCPA, the public broadly favors general reforms to this effect. Strong majorities support Congress passing laws that would allow news publishers to band together to collectively negotiate fairer terms for use of content by Big Tech (71%) and increase regulations on Big Tech to curb their power over the news and publishing industries (57%).

And by roughly a 3-to-1 margin, Americans would be more likely, rather than less likely, to back political candidates who support both reforms.

Over the last two decades, though the world of news and information has changed dramatically with the expansion of Big Tech, the United States' antitrust and anti-monopoly laws have not changed with it.

Congress now has a mandate from the American public to rein in Big Tech and pursue long-overdue reforms that will safeguard local journalism's survival — and ultimately will make the news industry fairer, freer and more democratic.

On a personal note, in my experience as a professional pollster who has worked in the industry for more than 40 years, it is rare for an issue or piece of legislation to garner this level of broad-based and enthusiastic public support.

Elected officials from both parties have a unique opportunity to deliver on reforms that are both substantively important and politically viable — by advancing the JCPA or a similar version of the bill — which our data indicates would have a demonstrably positive electoral impact for these members.

If America is to have a news industry that is truly free and fair, we must stop allowing Big Tech companies to expropriate the work of smaller and local publishers without consequence. Congress can start by passing legislation like the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act into law.

Schoen, a Democratic campaign consultant whose books include "The Power of the Vote: Electing Presidents," wrote this for the Chicago Tribune.



DOUGLAS E. SCHOEN

## VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

### Thanks go out to EC teachers

Remember how just two years ago as our children learned from home that many of us realized just how much we count on our teachers and district to educate our children and support them in their growth and development?

Many talked about teachers being heroes and doing a job that we could never do. While many of us may have gotten back to "normal," I think the education profession will never go back to the way it was before the pandemic. Learning gaps. Student mental health. Equity. Inclusion. We now ask more from our teachers more than ever before, and once again we have started to expect our teachers to thrive in an almost impossible climate.

Sunday through Saturday is Teacher Appreciation Week. And while a week of recognition doesn't even begin to do justice to what our educators are facing, please let your past teachers, the teachers in your children's lives and the teachers in your grandchildren's lives know how much you appreciate them. Say thank you. Write an email to your child's teacher. Post on social media about a teacher who made a difference in your life. Have your child make a card. It is these simple acts of appreciation that keep teachers going during the challenging times. And there are a lot of challenging times. Especially now.

**CHRISTINE BROWN**  
Eau Claire

### Wisconsin sports fan concerns

The accepted boundary line for Wisconsin on the western side of the state is the St. Croix River.

It's politically accepted by both parties. But I live in Menomonie, about 50 miles from the border, which is not acceptable to the communications industry. They think I am part of Minnesota because when I turn on the TV to watch the Brewers or Packers, all I can get is Twins or Vikings.

Wow, maybe I have to move to Eau Claire to be considered a Wisconsinite so then I can watch my favorite teams play. Maybe I will have to re-register to vote and pay my taxes and my cable fees in Minnesota so I feel like I belong.

**RONALD SANDFORD**  
Menomonie

## FROM OUR FILES

**5 years ago — 2017**  
**Mark Renderman**, 43, is sworn in as the first full-time fire chief for the city of Altoona.

**10 years ago — 2012**  
UW-Stout Provost **Julie Furst-Bowe** is introduced as the new chancellor of Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville.

**20 years ago — 2002**  
Meningococcal disease is suspected in the death of a second local youth, a 17-year-old Chippewa Falls High School student.

**35 years ago — 1987**  
Four people are arrested as about 450 anti-racism protesters confront Chippewa Indian spearfishers at a Butter Lake boat landing.

## MALLARD FILLMORE

