Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

As we celebrate Advent with lines from the Prophet Isaiah who foretold the coming of Christ and the miracle of God coming to us as a child born to poor parents, our pastor recounted the story of the Wise Men who first sought the "King of the Jews," in Herod's palace in Jerusalem. He was a King; he would have to be born in a palace, so that was the logical place to go.

This news was not welcomed by Herod who would seek to find and kill the child. Warned by an Angel, Joseph, Mary and the Baby Jesus fled to Egypt as refugees.

Reflecting on the story, I could not help but be glad that Trump, Noem and Homan were not in charge of the Egyptian border. Masked ICE Agents would have ripped the child from his parents [they are doing that to countless children in this country], put them in a detention facility, to be deported back to Herod's kingdom.

Fact Check: Data from late June through September 2025 indicates that a majority of people in ICE custody do not have criminal convictions, anywhere from 65% to 71.5% across databases. Those with convictions are a smaller cohort, and many convictions reported are for nonviolent or minor offenses such as immigration violations and traffic charges, a point which undercuts framing of detention as focused exclusively on dangerous criminals.

They are not rounding up and deporting dangerous criminals or street gang members. They are seizing agricultural workers, construction workers, school children or a college student planning on flying from Boston to Texas for Thanksgiving.

In his ministry, Christ taught that people should love their neighbors as themselves and welcome the stranger in their midst.

Mary K.Gepner —Benton, Iowa

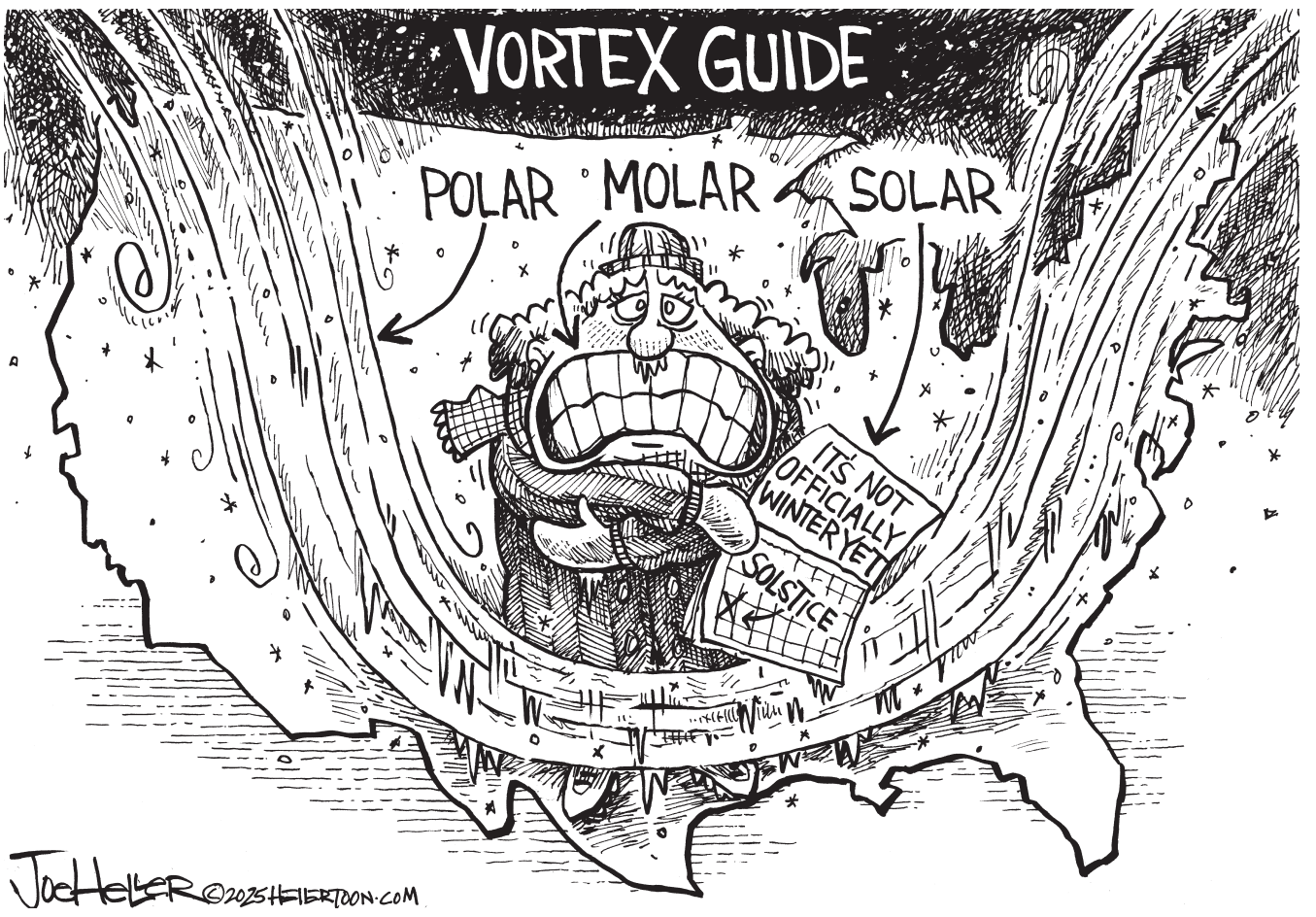
Dear Editor,

Bird flu has struck again — this time in Hamilton County, where a commercial flock of 18,000 turkeys tested positive for the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain. Iowa has now recorded nine detections, bringing the total to 184 million birds impacted nationally since 2022. Officials issued a disaster proclamation and prepared for yet another mass slaughter of animals who never had a chance. Please, let's go vegan.

Bird flu spreads through factory farms like wildfire because these facilities confine sensitive, intelligent animals in cramped sheds, surrounded by waste and stress. Those conditions supercharge viruses, helping them mutate, spread between farms and spill over into animals in nature and other species. Every new outbreak is just more proof that raising animals for food puts communities, animals, and human health at risk.

As long as humans breed, confine, and slaughter animals for food, these deadly viruses will continue to return and grow stronger each time. The solution is clear and compassionate: go vegan. Visit PETA.org for tips on getting started.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Libauskas
Climate Research Specialist
The PETA Foundation



It's Friday! RICK FRIDAY

I Swear

I never learned to swear from my parents and if I repeated a naughty word I learned at school my mother would drag me to the bathroom by the ear and scrape my teeth on a bar of soap. This made learning an enticing vocabulary very difficult. While growing up in my parent's house I had to constantly focus on what words to use and when to use them and there were dire consequences if I used the wrong word at the wrong time. Swearing is part of growing up and during the years of adolescence I learned to divide cuss words into three categories.

The first category, known as Sanctioned Swearing, was mildly offensive swear words that I used amongst close friends but never in front of Grandma. If used naively, certain cuss words could be excused when quoting an adult. The second category is Tuitional Swearing, which is school bus profanity introduced through a variety of resources. No one really knew what the words meant and although they could be offensive they were oftentimes excused with a warning. My parents didn't always explain why I shouldn't say these words, they just popped me upside the head. This further complicated the theory behind the meaning of some words and was confusing with the hodgepodge of silly explanations offered by my peers. These words were risky but fun to say and were often pronounced incorrectly when first learned. Caution needed to be taken when practicing how I said new swear words, because the more the words were used the more fluently they rolled off my tongue and getting too relaxed with my new vocabulary could cause flakes of soap to roll off my tongue.

The third and worst category is Barbaric Blasphemy which is a string of cuss words woven together in a vulgar sentence. Usually these words were only spoken after midnight behind closed doors and during a stay over with my buddies. If this type of profanity was overheard by any adult, punishment would be severe. This I learned between classes when the junior high principal caught me practicing Barbaric Blasphemy while being rowdy with a group of boys in the hallway at school. Before the words completely left my mouth he was leading me to his office by my ear. There was no denying my potty mouth and the principal slapped the palm of his hand with a wooden paddle and said, "You have only two choices. I can swat you on the bottom with this paddle or I can call your father!" Without hesitation I replied, "Hit me twice if you must; but please do not call my father. I will not use that type of language ever again, I swear!"

...Just Sayin JEFF SNYDER

I Don't Think So

Over the years I have had the good fortune of experiencing some wonder adventures.

I have walked the water soaked caverns that hide behind Niagra Falls (Cave of the Winds) and I have ridden a bicycle down the side of Mount Haleakala, the 10,000 foot tall dormant volcano on the island of Maui. I have even skied the slopes of Interlaken, Switzerland, as part of a once-in-a-lifetime school trip when I was in high school. My wife even gave me private flying lessons where I was allowed to take off but never afforded the opportunity to experience landing.

Now in my advancing years, I look back on these adventures and it got me thinking. How many opportunities did I have to expand my adverture resume but turned down.

In no particular order, here it goes.

1) Skydiving. The thoughts of diving out of a perfectly good airplane with a glorified bed sheet strapped to my back held little appeal for me. Pass

2) Swim with Sharks at Discovery Cove in Orlando. Getting into a large tank of water with an animal that can re-grow teeth overnight dressed like an hors d'oeuvres just didn't make any sense to me. Besides, any animal with the name "Nurse" in their formal name seems just like you're just asking for it. Nope

3) Noodling. What is noodling you ask? This would be the practice of sticking your arm or leg into a hole underwater the color of a typical Starbucks coffee, hoping a giant fish will bite you. I would really like to meet the person who invented this fishing method, if for no other reason then to shake his hand, if he has any left. Hard No.

4) Bungee jumping. Had a chance to participate in a hiking/bungee outing while in California on business. I think it was in La Verne. Let's review. You climb up to the top of a very high gorge over a raging river passing below some 120 feet. They tie a giant rubber band around your ankles and hurl you off the bridge. This would be considered an unforced error in most sports. Nah!

For now I am happy with my past adventures and don't intend to risk my life unecessarily. I will say that hang gliding does intrigue me just a bit. Soaring like a bird on the warm summer thermals must be exciting. Just have to get over this little problem with heights I seem to have developed as the years have peeled by. Once I get up enough courage to traverse up and down the basement steps I might consider jumping off a cliff with fake wings firmly attached.

In the mean time, I'm happy with the contact I have with mother earth. Think I'll keep my feet on the ground.

Just sayin.

A penny for your thoughts - The final penny coin produced at Philadelphia

By Jeff Snyder

MOUNT AYR-Iowa — On November 12 the United States Mint produced the last penny coin. After 238 years, the penny's run is over.

The federal government has determined that the cost to produce the lowly penny represents approximately three times what the penny is actually worth. In the age of economizing, the government is "squeezing every penny," so to speak, in an attempt to save money.

The impact of this move won't be felt immediately, but area businesses are already seeing the effects of this reduction in penny circulation.

The penny will continue to be valid currency for exchange in the United States for the foreseeable future, as there are still $114 billion in pennies currently in circulation. As the circulation is reduced, cash transactions will start to present problems. Simply making change will be nearly impossible with the lack of rounding currency such as the penny.

The impact will also be felt in the accounting world as well. Computer and banking systems, which are programed to the penny, will need to be re-programed to take into consideration this bookkeeping fiasco.

Local retailers are preparing for the inevitable shortage that is coming for the penny and are implementing strategies to manage cash transaction that require pennies to fulfill.

Some organizations, such as U.S. Bank in Mount Ayr have already determined that in the event a transaction results in a need for a penny to complete the transaction that it would round up the transaction to the next five cent increment, always in favor of the customer.

Other area retailers are also preparing for the eventual shortage and correcting as the situation warrants.

The postal system presents another interesting challenge since a variety of their products are unevenly priced. The current cost of a first class stamp stands at 78 cents, a difficult transaction to perform without the use of a penny.

Other postal products are similarly affected. A post card is 61 cents and a pre-posted card is 69 cents. According to local post offices throughout Ringgold County, no formal notice has yet to be given to the local offices from the Post Master General, as to how to address these cash transaction challenges.

A common solution that is circulating is the rounding up or down to the nearest nickel. As this strat-

The first Lincoln penny 1909 stock image

egy begins to take hold, the nickel could be next on the endangered species list. The added pressure placed on the nickel will likely result in the same fate as the penny.

For the record, according to the United States Mint, the cost to produce a single nickel is 14 cents. Once again, roughly three times the face value of the coin itself.

If the logic to discontinue the penny is used, than the fate of the nickel is likely not far behind in its extinction as well.

The United States currency situation has remained relatively stable over the centuries. The currencies value which was once based on a "Gold Standard" is now reliant on global economics to seek out its value. The dollar is still by far and away the bench mark on global business transactions, but it is looking more and more like we as a country and more importantly a county seem to be moving toward a cashless system. Credit cards, debit cards, even public assistance transaction use electronic benefits transfers (EBT) to streamline the retail transaction process. As cost to produce currency closes in or exceed face value, change is inevitable.