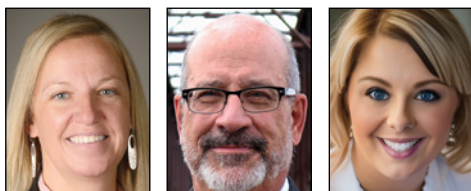


Local UW projects will have far reaching impact

The inclusion of two local UW System building projects in the recently enacted state budget — UW-Stout's Heritage Hall renovation and UW-Eau Claire's new Sciences and Health Sciences Building — is great news because both projects are set to deliver benefits to our region and Wisconsin that will far exceed their cost. The public investment in each of these projects will strengthen our regional economy, address workforce shortages, accelerate productive partnerships with businesses, and even help secure the very future of the universities themselves.

This good news comes thanks to the tenacity of our bipartisan Chippewa Valley legislative delegation, working in both of their party caucuses to secure inclusion of funding for the projects through the Joint Finance Committee, passage by the Assembly and Senate, and the signature of Gov. Tony Evers. The budget provides \$231.3 million in completion funding for the UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Sciences Building, following on first-phase funding of \$109 million provided in the 2019-21 budget, and \$138.9 million for the Heritage Hall renovation. What's more, they're being paid for with one-time funds from the state surplus, saving long term interest costs vs. bonding.

As representatives of our local business community and champions of a strong economy, our Chippewa Valley Chamber



Allyson Wisniewski

David Minor

Ashley DeMuth

Alliance — the chambers of commerce in Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Menomonie — has supported these projects and worked closely together to see them come to fruition. This past February, they represented our top issue priorities when we brought 100 local business and community leaders to Madison during the legislative session for the 29th Annual Chippewa Valley Rally.

The successful current budget cycle started last summer, when the UW System Board of Regents included both projects in their 2023-25 capital budget request. In a presentation to a Regents meeting in Eau Claire last fall, Rick Helmers, regional vice president for Mayo Clinic Health System, Northwest Wisconsin, asserted, "Our goal for UWEC is to be the top pre-medical school in the country," highlighting an ambitious vision for the partnership Mayo began with UWEC five years ago.

The Science and Health Sciences Building extends that effort, including 10,000 square feet of laboratory spaces funded by

Mayo to further their research partnership with the university. It provides for enhanced collaboration with UWEC faculty and students, as well as a permanent home for the high performance supercomputing array donated by Hewlett Packard Enterprise. These modern teaching and research spaces, in addition to new nursing simulation teaching laboratories, will help UW-Eau Claire continue to produce the STEM and health sciences graduates our regional industries and health care providers need. It will replace the outdated Phillips Hall, built in the early '60s when UWEC was less than a third of the size it is today.

At UW-Stout, the Heritage Hall Renovation Project supports its role as Wisconsin's Polytechnic University, driving workforce programs that represent some of the most critical needed in Wisconsin. Its programs in hospitality and tourism, health and wellness services, child care, and education will drive even more graduates to take advantage of Stout's unmatched post-graduation employment rates. The project will double the number of students served through the building with renewed applied learning spaces, expanded development of career-focused programs, market-driven professional development offerings and community services, and innovative collaboration with business and industry. Those partnerships are driven by the more than 70 program advisory committees that inform

its curriculum, programs, and infrastructure and equipment choices. It also supports local community services through the Clinical Services Center, Child and Family Study Center, and Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute.

Our Chambers recognize that these two universities are important economic engines for our region, providing vitality and unique opportunities for innovation and growth. But given the coming demographic challenges of declining numbers of high school graduates in the pool of future college students, universities must position themselves to be competitive in new ways to maintain and grow enrollment.

For Stout and UWEC, these initiatives do just that. Thanks to these projects, strategic industry and community partnerships, identification of critical needs, and the vision-oriented leadership of Chancellors Katherine Frank at Stout and James Schmidt at UWEC, our local institutions are well positioned to secure their academic futures and grow their positive influence in our communities.

DeMuth is CEO of the Menomonie Area Chamber & Visitor Center, Minor is president & CEO of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce and Wisniewski is president of the Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce; the three organizations are members of the Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance.

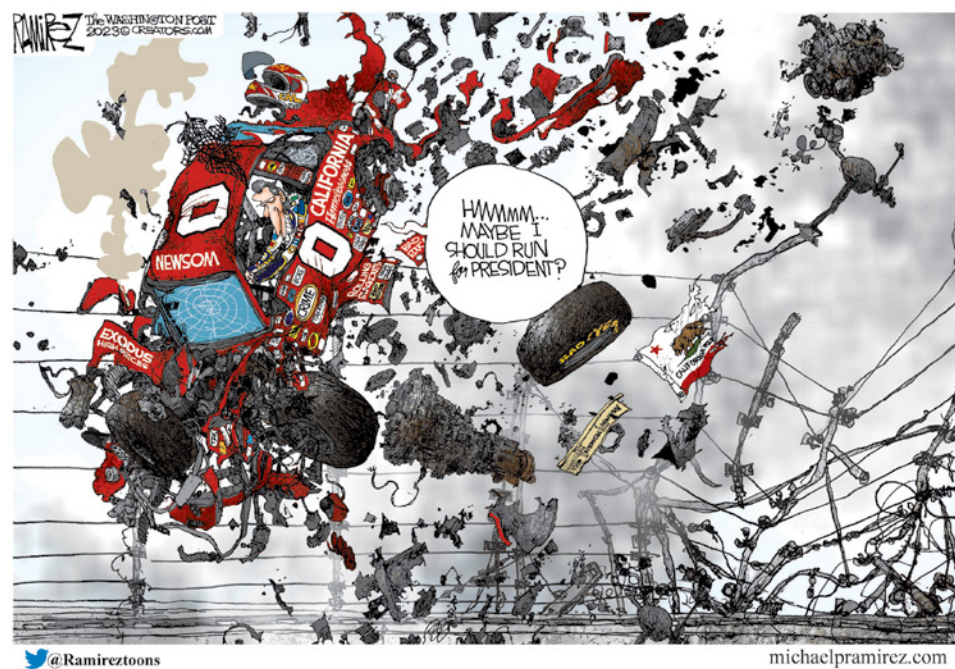
NATIONAL VIEWS

West should resist confiscating assets

With the costs of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine already exceeding \$500 billion, some Western governments are pushing to use frozen Russian assets to pay for an eventual reconstruction. The moral case for holding Putin accountable is clear. Unilaterally diverting Russian assets to Ukraine at this stage, however, would create more problems than it would solve.

About \$300 billion in Russian central bank assets have been frozen by Western governments since the start of the war, in addition to tens of billions in yachts, mansions and other property belonging to oligarchs and officials linked to the Kremlin. Advocates say that repurposing those assets is justified under the principle of "aggressor pays" — which is meant to punish states that try to redraw borders by force — and that funds should be released to Ukraine immediately, even with the war raging. Rebuilding the country's bombed-out infrastructure would help stabilize Ukraine's economy, encourage refugees to return, and boost public morale.

Yet an outright seizure of Russia's assets would be politically fraught. It would be contested by countries such as Brazil, China and India, none of which supported a United Nations resolution last November calling for Russia to pay reparations. It would also set a worrying legal precedent. There are few established rules for confiscating frozen state assets, for good reason: Respect for state and private property is essential to modern economies and a functioning global trading system. By confiscating Russian assets, the US and Europe would risk undermining that hard-won norm, while giving other governments an incentive to take punitive action against Western interests.



In the past, the US has acted to seize some state assets belonging to Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. But Russia's frozen reserves are far larger and more dispersed. Confiscating them would require a degree of international consensus and coordination that doesn't yet exist. The idea is supported by EU members such as Poland and the Baltic states, but few governments have implemented laws permitting significant forfeitures.

The West has other options in the meantime. Clearing houses reinvest income from frozen assets, generating interest worth several billion euros a year. The EU is right to investigate ways to deny Russia access to those gains and apply them toward rebuilding Ukraine. Similarly, firms with Russian holdings could be made to transfer the profits made from investing them for the purposes of compensation.

Western countries should also make explicit (as the UK is seeking to do) that Russian assets will remain frozen until Moscow agrees to pay reparations. That linkage reinforces the principle of state responsibility and holds the assets as a bargaining chip in any future negotiations to end the war.

Meanwhile, the West should work with Ukraine to set up an international claims commission, similar to those used in hundreds of past conflicts. This should include a process for adjudicating requests for compensation, including private claims. Western governments should conduct a transparent accounting of all Russian assets currently in abeyance. Ukraine needs to do its part by pressing ahead with judicial reforms, which are crucial to reducing corruption and bolstering confidence that reconstruction funds will be properly spent.

The desire to make Russia pay for its aggression is understandable, but Western leaders must be mindful of political realities and the rule of law. The best way to hold Putin accountable is to adhere to the principles of due process and respect for property that Russia has sought to destroy.

— Bloomberg Opinion

Border Patrol story warrants scrutiny

In April, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported that the Border Patrol had turned the space between two border walls along the San Diego-Tijuana border into a de facto open-air holding cell, keeping migrants there for days without blankets, food or adequate water supplies.

This contradicted rules meant to ensure humane treatment set by Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol's parent agency. The report was not disputed after it was published — that there were many dozens of migrants between the walls was plain to anyone who could view the area. It led to three House Democrats, including San Diego's Juan Vargas, writing to the Border Patrol to express sharp concern.

Now, Customs and Border Protection essentially says this was a collective hallucination. In a July 5 letter responding to the House members, the agency said the migrants "were not constrained from further movement" by border agents. Confusingly, the same letter also acknowledged that at the time, Border Patrol facilities "were experiencing capacity issues" and operational challenges.

Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Long Beach, hopes the department isn't "lying to us in Congress" and said he'll pursue an external investigation. Good.

— San Diego Union-Tribune