

OPINION

OUR VIEW

A Christmas wish list

Christmas is a time to reflect on the past and make changes for the future.

As we look back at the past year and forward to the next, we have a few Christmas wishes we'd like to see Santa fill. While these aren't the kind of wishes fulfilled by opening a box placed below the Christmas tree, we hope Santa has these on his list for delivery.

We wish success and financial prosperity for Packaging Corporation of America and its newly purchased facilities, including our local paper mill.

And we wish for well-paying jobs or more education and training for workers displaced in 2013 by job cuts at the mill and in other places in the community in reaction to the mill's job cuts.

For all our local leaders, we wish clear direction and cooperation as they work to find ways to diversify the local economy and set this community on the path of financial stability and eventual prosperity.

For members of the International Falls City Council we wish for the ability to articulate and move past underlying frustrations that appear to touch many issues and come to civil consensus that will lead to beneficial decisions for the city and larger community. For the Koochiching County Board we wish for a Legislature that understands the unique challenges we face here and for solutions that will lead toward development.

Clear direction and cooperation would also be a great gift for our federal representatives to Congress, as they work on the business of the nation, but

also on issues near and dear to Borderland.

For our state representatives Sen. Tom Bakk and Rep. David Dill we wish for a productive legislative session and special insight into the needs of Borderland and the entire state. In addition, we wish for them the strength of cooperation as they work to persuade their colleagues to vote with them on bills that will benefit us.

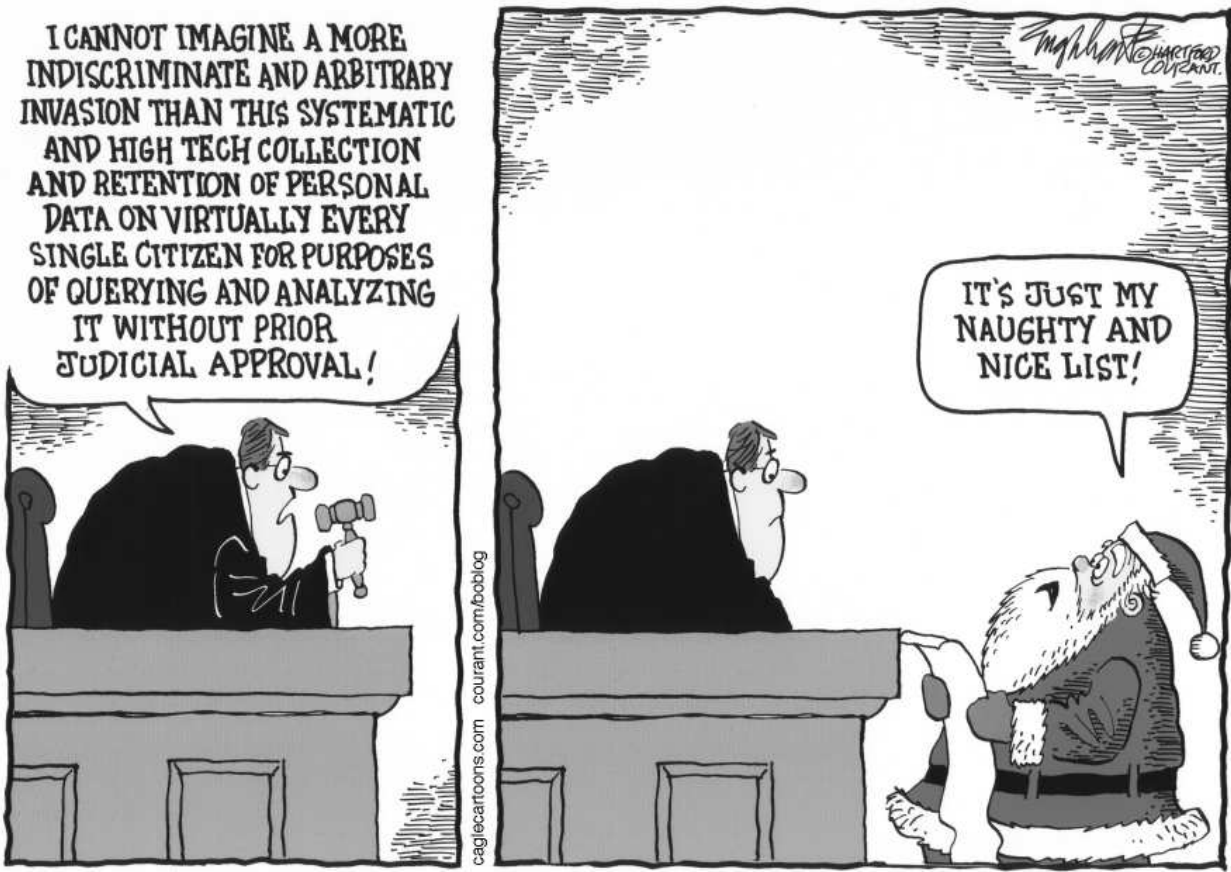
For people without permanent homes, we wish for warm temporary beds and the resources needed to move toward long-term housing. We wish for pets without forever homes the love of adoptive families and quick construction of a new holding facility this spring.

We wish for more snow for those of us who enjoy it, warmer temperatures for those of us suffering from the cold, and enough of both to allow snowmobilers and ice anglers the fun they are seeking.

For the organizations and groups who care for those in need, we wish for the warmth that comes from giving and the donations that making helping people easier. For those in need of spiritual nourishment with wish for healthy churches and organizations that provide care and assistance.

We wish the spirit of the holidays and the joy of community felt at the Community Christmas Dinner at the Roadhouse Wednesday is contagious and lasts in each of us throughout the year.

And for all of us, we hope for good health, the warmth of family and friends, and the cheer of Christmas wishes that come true.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Don't worry about matters elsewhere

To the editor,
Before we worry about what is happening with the press in Russia, we should be concerned about what is happening right here. There may be pressure on the Russian press to favor the

Kremlin, but it's no secret the liberal Democrats own the media in this country. We have the First Amendment, but what we see and hear is what the current administration wants us to. Not everyone in this

country, this state, or this city, is a left-leaning Liberal. It's time we take care of matters at home, and not worry about matters elsewhere.
**John Kaviuk
International Falls, MN**

GUEST COLUMN

The best and worst of 2013

The year 2013 was a roller coaster of contrasts with some surprises. Here's a best and worst list:

The Worst Non Scandal, Self-Inflicted Political Damage: President Barack Obama. A new ABC News-Washington Post poll finds record numbers of Americans now disapprove of his job performance. The Post notes that these numbers are "all the more striking when compared with his standing a year ago, as he was preparing for his second inauguration after a solid reelection victory. That high note proved fleeting as the president faced a series of setbacks, culminating in the botched rollout of his Affordable Care Act two months ago."

The Worse Use of Money by a Political Party: The money the Republican National Committee spent on a political "autopsy" after former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and the GOP were soundly defeated in the 2012 elections. Advice that the party should tip-toe towards the center and reach out to women, gays, and Latinos and harp less on social issues than far-right ideological dogma was totally ignored and the party seemingly moved further right.

Best Political Comeback: Rep. Paul Ryan. When he ran as Mitt Romney's Veep, fact-checkers almost had to put in for workmen's compensation documenting Ryan inaccuracies, which he'd nonetheless repeat in speeches. His presence on the ticket did little to help Romney. His role in a bipartisan budget compromise led analysts to paint him as an adult in the room not focused exclusively on ideology. He now seems inching back to a harder stand.

Worst Self-Inflicted Damage to a Political Party: No, it wasn't the Republican government shutdown, a Ted Cruz Production. Democrats



Joe
GANDELMAN
INDEPENDENT'S EYE

potentially suffered major long-term damage due to the disastrous Obamacare website rollout, coupled with Americans learning Obama wasn't correct in saying they could keep their insurance, which battered the party's argument that if Americans trusted government it could effectively improve their lives. Obama and the Democrats came out looking like they'd say anything to get health care reform and couldn't administer it when they got it.

Best TV Series and Best Series Ending: "Breaking Bad," Vince Gilligan's award-winning cable series about high school chemistry teacher Walter White's steady descent into evil was perfectly written and cast, with stars Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul putting in performances that will be studied by actors for years. It contained no "filler," and its ending was perhaps the best dramatic series ending in TV history.

Worst TV Series Ending: The Dexter finale. In its early seasons Dexter had been a great show based on a superb series of books by Jeff Lindsay about a Miami Police blood spatter pattern analyst who is secretly a serial killer. The series deviated from the books and plotting became more strained. By its finale, Dexter was a series whose cut-up body parts should have been buried a season or two earlier.

Best Talk Show Host for Independents, Centrists, and Moderates: Michael Smerconish on XM radio. Some talk the talk. Smerconish walks the walk.

Best Pizza: Still Pepe's in New Haven, Conn., with New Haven's URBN, which now has restaurants in San Diego and San Francisco, a close second.

Best Book on John F. Kennedy, Jr. and his assassination: "The Kennedy Half Century: The Presidency, Assassination, and Lasting Legacy of John F. Kennedy" by Larry Sabato. Sabato examined every utterance by Presidents after JFK to gauge his influence and conducted new tests on assassination evidence.

Best Political Sound Bite: House Speaker John Boehner on conservatives who forced the government shutdown saying they didn't expect to win. "Are you kidding me?"

Worst Politician Sex Scandals: Serial sex harasser Bob Filner resigned as San Diego mayor and was sentenced to 90 days in home confinement, probation, and fines totaling about \$1,500. Former Rep. Anthony Weiner seemed a masochist pleading for defeat, humiliation and ridicule when he ran for New York mayor and got all three.

Best Political Fallout for a Politician Facing Scandal: Chris Farley look alike Toronto Mayor Rob Ford was caught on video smoking crack and in a drunken rant, but his poll numbers went up. Faced with a lawsuit, Ford apologized to Toronto Star reporter Daniel Dale for insinuating Dale was a pedophile. Ford=Survivor.

Gandelman is a veteran journalist who wrote for newspapers overseas and in the United States. His column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate.

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