

# OPINION

OUR VIEW

## If it were easy

If the Arrowhead 135 Ultramarathon was easy, anybody could do it. Clearly, that’s not the case, and it’s noted on the website, for an outdoor race intentionally scheduled for the historically coldest part of winter in the coldest city in the United States. Known as one of the toughest endurance races on Earth, the Arrowhead 135 website warns competitors “don’t expect mommy to rescue you.” Following on the heels of Borderland’s warmer, fuzzier winter festival is the truly serious Arrowhead 135 that begins Monday and requires competitors to run, bike or ski 135 miles, day and night, on the Arrowhead State Trail from International Falls to the Fortune Bay Casino. Racers have just 60 hours to complete the course. Kudos to organizers for seeing this ultimate race from its small beginnings 10 years ago with just 10 competitors to the more than 160 registered for the start of this year’s race. A race where half the competitors see the finish line

has given Borderland exposure across the world and helped put us on the map as the site of one of the “World’s Ultimate Running Races.” Clearly, this is truly a test for competitors who will come from six countries and 24 states. Many of these folks come to the area with family and friends prior to the race, providing an added economic boost to our community. The race is a chance to showcase our community to people who may never have the opportunity to experience Borderland otherwise. And, they may return to see the area in a different season. Most of us avoid at all costs what these folks hope to experience, but these are not average people. Racers must meet minimum qualifications to even qualify to start the race and that’s to protect the foolhardy who may not realize finishing could cost toes, fingers and possibly a life. Bravo to all the competitors and organizers. Even the most hardy of us bow down to your toughness.



## Election season heating up

It may be cold outside, but the election season is already heating up. Locally, Borderland residents have several city and county elections to consider, as well as state and federal offices that will be up for election. Precinct caucuses are scheduled for Feb. 2, Minnesota’s primary election is Aug. 12 and the general election is Nov. 4. Minnesota’s Secretary of State website lists the local, state and federal offices that will be on ballots this year.

As an editor, election years bring a number of reactions. Election years can be exciting as we watch people from all walks of life throw their hats in the ring for public office, while at the same time concerning to consider a future under the guidance of some candidates. Elections can pose challenges for newspaper staff, as we attempt to provide balanced coverage of the candidates. Part of that challenge involves some candidates who already hold public positions making the news because of those positions. Also among our struggles is to provide information prior to the election about our local candidates and their views of issues pertinent to the office they are seeking. As in other election years, The Journal has some rules and policies when it comes to providing information about candidates and campaigns. The Journal’s Opinion Page should be viewed as a place for lively discussion and debate at all times, but especially during election years. We expect it will be just that as the elections draw near.



Laurel  
**BEAGER**  
 EDITOR

This year, The Journal will implement a new policy on how we handle letters to the editor from and about candidates. All letters of endorsement of or in opposition to candidates, as well as letters from or about candidates, will be published as paid election letters and are subject to a fee. The letters will be published on the Opinion Page, but will be labeled as a “paid election letter.” We will maintain the 500 word or less limit on these letters, which will require a \$30 fee to be published. Graphs or photos may be submitted with paid election letters for an additional fee of \$20, but The Journal will decide, depending on available space, how large those graphs or photos will be published. Paid election letters are to be paid for by the letter writer. If paid by another entity, that information must be stated properly, according to election laws. Payment for the appropriate amount must be received before a paid election letter will be published. Paid election letters must include the writer’s complete mailing address, which will be published with the letter. The newspaper may determine it legitimate for

an elected official who is also a candidate to respond to an issue where that official has been specifically identified in the newspaper without their response being a paid election letter. The final judgment will be made by the newspaper editorial staff. Questions about this new policy should be directed to me, as editor of The Journal, or Rob Davenport, publisher. We are making this change because we believe it provides accountability for candidates and campaigns and limits campaigns from taking advantage of “free” advertising space on the Opinion Page. As always, we will not allow websites or emails of candidates or campaigns to be included in the paid letters. As in previous years, we will attempt to provide information about candidates prior to the mail ballots sent to many rural Koochiching County voters. We will send questionnaires to local candidates and publish their responses verbatim — as they were provided to The Journal. We will set a word limit for these responses and the only changes we will make will be to correct spelling errors. This offers a chance for our readers to see how these candidates view themselves and the issues involved in the office they are seeking. We won’t ask unchallenged candidates for that information. Instead, we will save space for the candidates who will face races in the general election. Elections play an important role in our society, and we urge everyone to participate in this democratic process as it rolls toward casting a ballot in the voters booth.

### How to contact your lawmakers

- FEDERAL OFFICES**

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**U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar**  
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### Share your point of view

Make a difference by writing a letter to the editor or contributing to our online discussions. The Journal’s Opinion page is where meaningful community discussions take place.

### The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published. Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifalls-journal.com.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

## New normal on school closings

There is a new normal when it comes to closing of schools for weather in Minnesota, the fourth coldest state on average in the country and the northern most state in the lower 48 states. The decision by Gov. Mark Dayton to close all K-12 schools last Monday was made the previous Friday, based in weather projections that proved true. It was very, very bitterly cold for a few days of the week. Low temperatures were in the 30 below zero to 40 below range and highs for about a 72-hour period did not rise above the mid-teens below zero. Meanwhile, wind chills reached 50 below zero to 60 below. But the governor’s decision was not met with unanimous approval. Let’s face it, many people 50

years old and up never had a day off school because of the cold. It’s Minnesota. It gets cold in the winter. You bundle up. You deal with it. The first two are plain and simple facts. The last two are frequently heard comments from the “I walked a mile uphill both ways in below zero weather to school” generation. But those were days when weather was, well, weather. Even extreme winter weather was, well, just extreme winter weather. But now weather has become a 24/7 made-for-television reality show. And public pressure is often formulated and fueled by the over-abundance of weather coverage. Meanwhile, we have become far more of a litigious society. Too many people are just wait-

ing to file lawsuits with dreams of riches in their heads. The irony, of course, is that even though school children are much safer today in weather events because of better and more immediate communication through new technology, cold weather is now viewed by officials as not just an annoyance or major inconvenience but as good reason to close schools for the safety of the kids. Is that a good thing or not? Have we become too soft and thus are sending the wrong message to the youngest generation? That’s a debate that will continue. But one thing is for sure — there is a new normal when it comes to cold weather and school closings.

Mesabi Daily News, Jan. 11