

OPINION

FIRST AMENDMENT “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

OUR VIEW

Time for winter fun

Mother Nature’s already reminded us of her power with the frigid cold temperatures experienced in Borderland, so now it’s time to have fun with Old Man Winter.

Icebox Days XXXIV and the Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard Run offer plenty of opportunities for a frozen frolic among family, friends and visitors to our community.

This wacky winter carnival truly offers something for everyone: From the bold who run in the cold, to those who’d prefer something a little warmer inside — there’s lots to do.

Coordinated by the International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the city of International Falls, local sponsors and dozens of volunteers, this festival not only helps beat the winter blues, but provides an economic boost to area businesses.

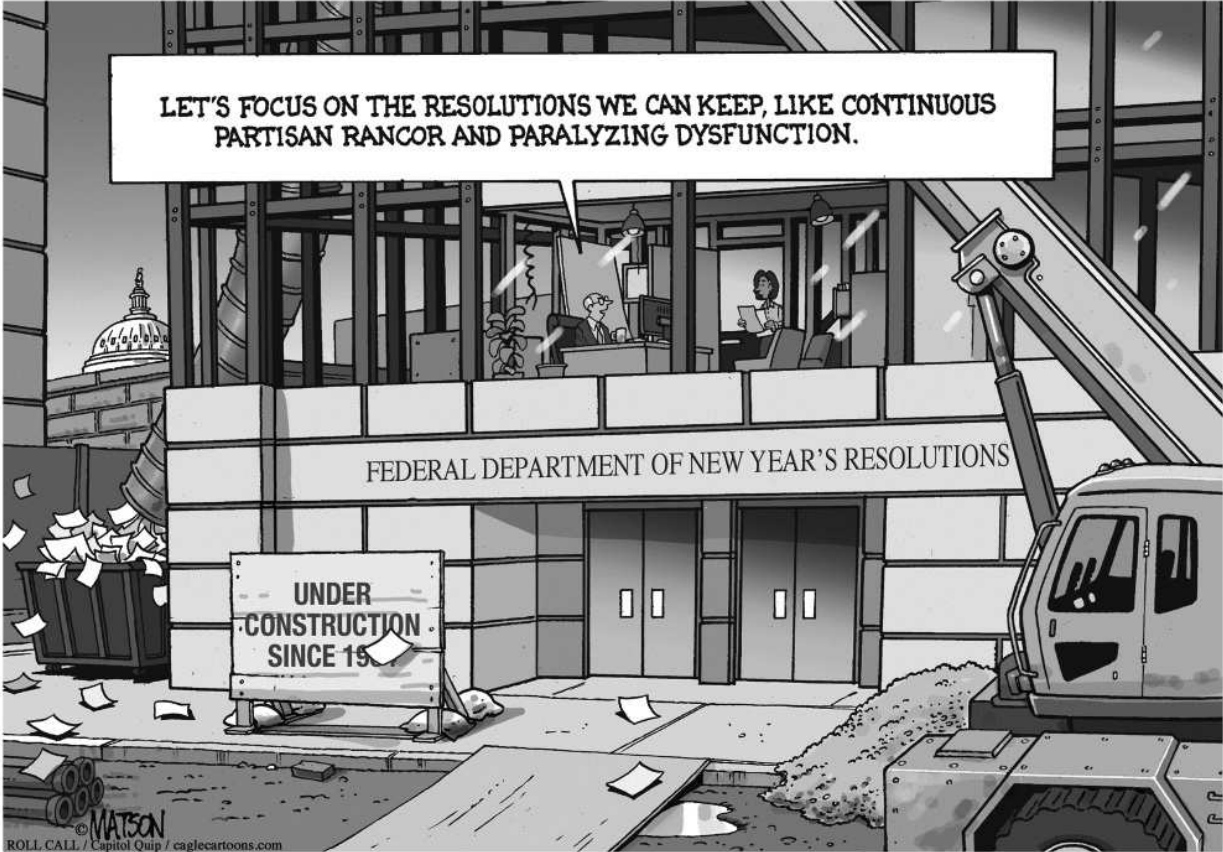
Clearly, the recent cold temperatures experienced in the Icebox of the Nation have got people thinking about us. We will likely see some TV, newspaper and radio folks

coming to the community to witness our zany activities. So now’s the chance to show we’re not afraid of the old man who brings blowing snow and cold. The festival offers us a chance to show off and showcase this community.

Find the pamphlet inserted in today’s edition of The Journal, pick the activities that suit you and get out of the house and enjoy the offerings. Some events may require you to don choppers, snow pants and boots — those shouldn’t be hard to find now. Others will ask you to sharpen your thinking skills — a good exercise at any time. The grand finale of the festival, the FYGBR and the associated runs will draw visitors and locals alike for runs down the streets of the community.

A couple events had a soft beginning earlier this week and there are several new events to take the community through to Saturday’s big event day.

Take your pick of events to support, participate and spectate. For the serious competitors among us, good luck. To the rest of us, good fun.



GUEST COLUMN

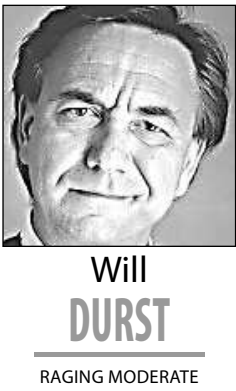
Ye Olde predictions piece: Circa 2014

The dawn of the new year signals civilization’s return to several grand traditions, including the ancient hoary one requiring we professional columnists to trot out the tried but true “Ye Olde Predictions Piece.” Either that or the even triter but true “Ye Olde Resolutions Piece.” But we wandered down that trail last year. And most likely will again in 2015.

Therefore, being the traditionalist ink-stained wretches that we here at Durstco are, it is with great pride and a certain amount of feigned dignity that we honor this revered journalistic practice. Hence, here they are: predictions of what to expect from various folks during the fifth year of the second decade of the 21st century.

IN THE YEAR 2014:

- Barack Obama will finally purge himself of the heavy burden of high expectations.
- Lindsay Lohan will engage in activities that will trigger a slow, sad shake of the head from Charlie Sheen.
- Locavore chicken wings will become all the rage at 60 bucks an order.
- Hillary Clinton will change her hairdo so that it looks eerily like Elizabeth Warren’s.
- A Silicon Valley start-up will trump Twitter by limiting users to punctuation marks. “!!!!!!”
- The NRA will respond to another senseless school shooting by calling for the closing of all schools.
- The NSA will ratchet up their online game-room



Will DURST
RAGING MODERATE

monitoring to include Words With Friends.

- The TSA will expedite passenger security by perfecting the implementation of the two-handed wedgie.
- Starbucks will be revealed to be in league with Amazon, charged with the goal of keeping consumers up longer so we can shop more.
- The Justice Department will break laws, then conduct investigations into who told the press about the breaking of those laws instead of investigating the crimes stemming from those laws being broken.
- John Boehner will encourage the nation’s unemployed to move to Mexico for one of the thousands of good U.S. jobs now there.
- The Tea Party will still steer America so that it teeters on the brink of a fiscal speed bump.
- Justin Bieber will visit the grave of Mother Jones and declare her a Belieber.
- Congress’s Approval Rating will sink below the poll’s margin of error.

- Washington and Colorado will experience a huge uptick in tax receipts from the sale of Funyuns and Ho Hos.
- Scientists will conclude global warming is protecting Earth from another Ice Age, causing Rush Limbaugh to call for a return to diesel-powered toasters.
- Chris Christie will talk his way out of a rabbit snare into a bear trap.
- Joe Biden will change his hairdo so it looks eerily like Chris Christie’s.
- Kim Jong Un will play point guard for the North Korean National Basketball Team, then execute Dennis Rodman for stepping on his foot.
- Anthony Weiner will attempt another high profile comeback and people will just laugh.
- All four Duck Dynasty Boys will enter the 2014 Louisiana U.S. Senate GOP Primary but will knock each other out. Literally.
- New Jersey will conduct traffic studies where traffic is actually studied.
- Vladimir Putin will win a gold medal in the Sochi Olympics Biathlon Event. And will do it shirtless.
- The Airline Industry will make every effort to rid the skies of the most dangerous security threat known to man: passengers.

Durst is a nationally acclaimed and award-winning political comic. His columns are distributed by the Cagle Cartoons Inc., newspaper syndicate.

How to contact your lawmakers

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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

Pain from sequester hits most-vulnerable citizens

Senior citizens, many of whom who are already on fixed incomes and tight budgets, see a bulk of their expenses devoured by housing, utilities, transportation and medication.

Unfortunately, that forces some of them to make daunting choices when it comes to basic nutrition.

That’s why the closure of senior dining programs run by Semcac in Lewiston, Houston, Wanamingo and Morristown is so disturbing. Semcac, which lost \$97,000 in federal funding because of sequestration, was forced to make the largest cuts in its 40-year history, said Deb Betthausen, director of the agency’s senior services.

Before the four closures on Dec. 31, Semcac had provided reduced-price meals at 58 cities across southeast Minnesota. Semcac’s decision to shutter four locations was made after analyzing which closures would affect the fewest seniors.

Senior dining programs administered by Semcac and other

agencies dedicated to serving low-income people provide the only substantial meal many of our elderly eat each day. Feeding America, a national network of food shelves, says 8.4 percent of seniors are food insecure, and 9 percent live below the poverty line.

The dining programs offer more than just a healthy meal. Many seniors would lead isolated lives if not for the opportunity to meet their peers over lunch. The value of this social contact can’t be measured in dollars and cents.

Leaders in the Houston community realized this and found a way to continue the senior dining program that’s been dropped by Semcac. We commend officials with the city of Houston and Valley View Healthcare & Rehab for teaming up to offer meals to seniors at a suggested donation of \$3.50 at Heritage Court Independent Living Facility, even though the meals cost \$7 to prepare.

However, senior citizens in the

other three towns aren’t so fortunate. Seniors still will be able to receive home delivery through the Meals on Wheels program in Lewiston, Wanamingo and Morristown, but there no longer will be a place for them to gather as a group.

This unintended consequence is a sad outcome of the sequester. Our most financially stressed and often socially isolated citizens shouldn’t be paying the price because Congress couldn’t come to an agreement on a budget. Nothing like the sequester should ever happen again.

Meanwhile, we urge civic leaders and groups in the affected communities to follow the lead of Valley View Healthcare & Rehab and provide these meals as a community service. We owe it to our most senior and venerable citizens who worked hard all their lives and deserve this assistance in their retirement years.

Post-Bulletin of Rochester, Jan. 9