

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Job fair an opportunity

A job fair planned for Friday is a great opportunity for a lot of people.

It's also a great use of some valuable resources — the International Falls WorkForce Center and Rainy River Community College.

Sure, we'd expect some of the folks that lost jobs at the local paper mill to show up, but we also encourage others in the community to get out to the fair and see what opportunities are out there.

The job fair at the RRCC gymnasium will showcase 24 employers which are seeking candidates for open positions.

Friday's job fair will be the culmination of series of learning opportunities. To help prepare for the job fair, workshops will be conducted at the International Falls WorkForce Center office on the RRCC campus.

People who plan to attend the Friday job fair, and anyone thinking about changing their job or career, should also attend some or all of the following free workshops: from 10-11 a.m. Tuesday, a resume writing workshop will be held; from 8:30 a.m.-

12:30 p.m. Wednesday, a creative job search workshop will be offered; and from 10-11 a.m. Thursday, an interview preparation workshop will be conducted.

There are few things worse than feeling stuck in a job. But it's often difficult to imagine making a job or career change. The job fair will highlight local opportunities some people may not otherwise consider. Leaving one local job for another can open up opportunities for other people to consider.

While we hate to think of anyone leaving our community, the job fair may also give hope to some people who believe they need to leave our community to advance their careers or lifestyles.

Kudos to the staff of the International Falls WorkForce Center for sharing their knowledge in the workshops, and highlighting for Borderland residents employment opportunities in one setting. We are truly fortunate to play host to such valuable resources as the center and Rainy River Community College.



GUEST COLUMN

Obama's final turning point

It's crunch time for President Barack Obama. President Lyndon Johnson once said: "Being President is like being a jackass in a hailstorm. There's nothing to do but stand there and take it."

That Obama & Co. would like us to be in a New Era is evident by comments from administration aides and Obama during the State of the Union address: we're in "A Year of Action." He'll use the pen and the phone so 2014 doesn't turn out to be as unproductive as 2013 was in terms of what Obama had laid out as his agenda and what Congress actually did (little). To underscore it, on the eve of his address he announced he'd bypass Congress and use an executive order to require that janitors, construction workers and other workers who work for federal contracts get a minimum \$10.10 an hour because Congressional GOPers can't resist resisting the raising of the minimum wage.

Obama is at his last turning point. In governance mode he hasn't lived up to his supporters' highest expectations or his opponents' worst fears — and it can't all be blamed on his GOP foes. With three years left in his term and Republicans determined to stymie him, he can keep making rousing speeches and appearances and run out the clock, or he can try a different approach. And so he'll turn to executive orders, which have been used by past presidents (so watch it be denounced by far-right GOPers as subverting the constitution).

Polls indicate this could be a pivotal crossroads for Obama and his party. The see-saw generic ballot on Congressional elections is now back at "saw": a new NBC/WSJ poll gives Democrats a two-point lead, after the Dems lost their big lead due to the Obamacare rollout fiasco.



Joe
GANDELMAN
INDEPENDENT'S EYE

Democrats got that lead due to the Republican-engineered government shut-down fiasco which further decimated the already sagging Republican brand.

That NBC/Wall Street Journal poll and others find Obama only ahead of George Bush in starting his sixth year at such a low point in job approval. Yet, the poll finds the public supports many Obama policy ideas. But it also finds 63 percent think the country is headed in the wrong direction, a mere 43 percent approve of the way he's doing his job, 71 percent are unhappy over the economy, and Congress has a Benny's Bargain Basement rating of 13 percent approval.

His enemies help him. The Republican National Committee's May 2013 "post-mortem" on the election was rejected by the grassroots, talk-show hosts and in large part by the party establishment. Rather than rebranding and expanding their tent, Republicans are reaffirming the 2012 brand and opting for a pup tent with bouncers keeping unwanted RINOS and other groups from entering. The Arizona Republican Party even censured Sen. John McCain. The result?

A Pew Research Center poll finds Americans believe Democrats more willing to work with the other party (52

percent to 27 percent). They have a 20 percent edge when people are asked which party seems more concerned about their needs. Democrats win by 10 points on which party is more ethical and honest in governing. Republicans win 54-47 percent on which party is more extreme and influenced by lobbyists (47 percent to 30 percent).

Clearly, Obama was naive in thinking he could change Washington's realities. His former Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said as much on TV: "Well, I think, you know, the ability to change Washington, I think, is something that long ago the White House sort of stopped trying to do and whether or not that's a good thing, we will look back on history."

Indeed, historians may not give Obama a pass in how he coped with Congress, even one peppered with Republicans out to destroy him politically and sandbag his agenda. Here's another quote, this time from Teddy Roosevelt: "I have a very strong feeling that it's a President's duty to get on with Congress, and that it is a reflection upon him if he and Congress come to a complete break."

Yet, there may be times when a partial or even complete break is necessary.

Unless you want to just stand out there in a hailstorm.

Gandelman is a veteran journalist who wrote for newspapers overseas and in the United States. He has appeared on cable news show political panels and is editor-in-chief of The Moderate Voice, an Internet hub for independents, centrists and moderates. Gandelman's columns are distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate.

Gov. Mark Dayton has urged both sides of the issue to work through their differences and craft legislation he can sign. That's a reasonable approach that both sides should embrace, remembering this about medical marijuana and nothing more.

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How to contact your lawmakers

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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

Legislature: legalize pot for medicine

Marijuana is in the news a lot lately, thanks largely to Colorado's recent legalization of its recreational use. Minnesotans, though, are about to face (again) a much different debate on the controversial-but-common drug.

Should it be legalized for medical use?

This board's answer is yes as long as the approach includes strict regulatory measures, tight controls on dispensaries, and follow-up studies to make sure medical marijuana is not fulfilling fears from law enforcement about it exacerbating illicit drug use.

The 2014 Legislature is likely to take up the matter after it convenes Feb. 25. Considering legislators have examined the issue for almost a decade and that medical marijuana is legal in at least 20 other states, Minnesota's debate should really just focus on those issues.

According to the Marijuana Policy Project, the basics of the

House and Senate bills left from 2013 are:

- Only seriously ill patients could use or obtain marijuana, although if they lived more than 15 miles from a dispensary, they could grow it.
- The state Department of Health would issue medical marijuana ID cards so law enforcement could easily verify that a patient is allowed to use medical marijuana.
- ID cards would be issued to a patient with a qualifying condition, who would have to submit a physician's written certification that the potential benefits likely outweigh the health risks for the patient.
- Qualifying conditions are: cancer, glaucoma, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, Lou Gehrig's disease, Tourette's, Crohn's disease, multiple sclerosis, PTSD, and conditions causing severe, debilitating pain, severe nausea, wasting syndrome, seizures, or severe and persistent muscle spasms.
- The health department would

set up strict regulations for non-profit medical marijuana dispensaries and labs. The number per county would be based on population.

Law enforcement has long objected medical marijuana, claiming that it will make marijuana an even bigger problem as well as increase use of other illegal drugs, especially among young people.

However, proponents have studied those issues in 18 states where medical marijuana is legal and they say their data contradicts those claims, noting that well-regulated medical dispensaries are critical and youth marijuana use has not increased.

Gov. Mark Dayton has urged both sides of the issue to work through their differences and craft legislation he can sign. That's a reasonable approach that both sides should embrace, remembering this about medical marijuana and nothing more.

St. Cloud Times, Jan. 18