

# OPINION

"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...  
ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM  
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;"

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

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## Editorial

### State employment

Relocating government jobs could significantly boost rural Minnesota

Gov. Tim Walz has rightly made boosting the economic prospects of rural Minnesota a key part of his One Minnesota agenda.

Major investment in rural broadband, which is high on the governor's agenda, is certainly one way to provide new economic opportunity in non-metro parts of the state. His plan to boost local government aid and education funding will also yield benefits for rural Minnesota.

But here's one more thing that should be on the governor's agenda: Spreading more of the state workforce outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The state of Minnesota is an enormous employer, with a permanent workforce that averages about 35,000 people. Right now, about 21,000 of those employees, or about 61 percent, work in the seven-county metro area. That leaves just over 13,000 jobs spread out across the rest of Minnesota, about a quarter of those with the Department of Natural Resources.

These are good jobs, that pay a very livable wage and come with a strong benefits package. In other words, they are the kinds of jobs that are desperately needed in rural Minnesota. These are the kinds of jobs that would provide a significant and stable economic boost to communities all across the state, including here in northeastern Minnesota.

Clearly, many state jobs will always remain in the Twin Cities, since many state workers directly serve metro area residents. But there are many state jobs that are located in the Twin Cities today mostly because that's just the way things were done in the past. Yet there are thousands of state workers who don't necessarily work directly with the public. There are accountants, planners, IT workers, managers and supervisors, media specialists, attorneys, and dozens of other positions that could well be accomplished anywhere in the state with a decent Internet connection.

Relocating state jobs like this would provide many advantages for the state and its workforce.

► Home prices are often significantly lower outside the metro, meaning state workers would likely spend

less on housing.

► Many state workers would likely want to relocate to smaller, safer, and less-congested communities if given the opportunity.

► Renting or buying commercial office space to house state workers in small towns around Minnesota could well be significantly cheaper, saving state dollars.

► The rural workforce is typically extremely reliable and hard-working. The Revenue Center in Ely is an excellent example.

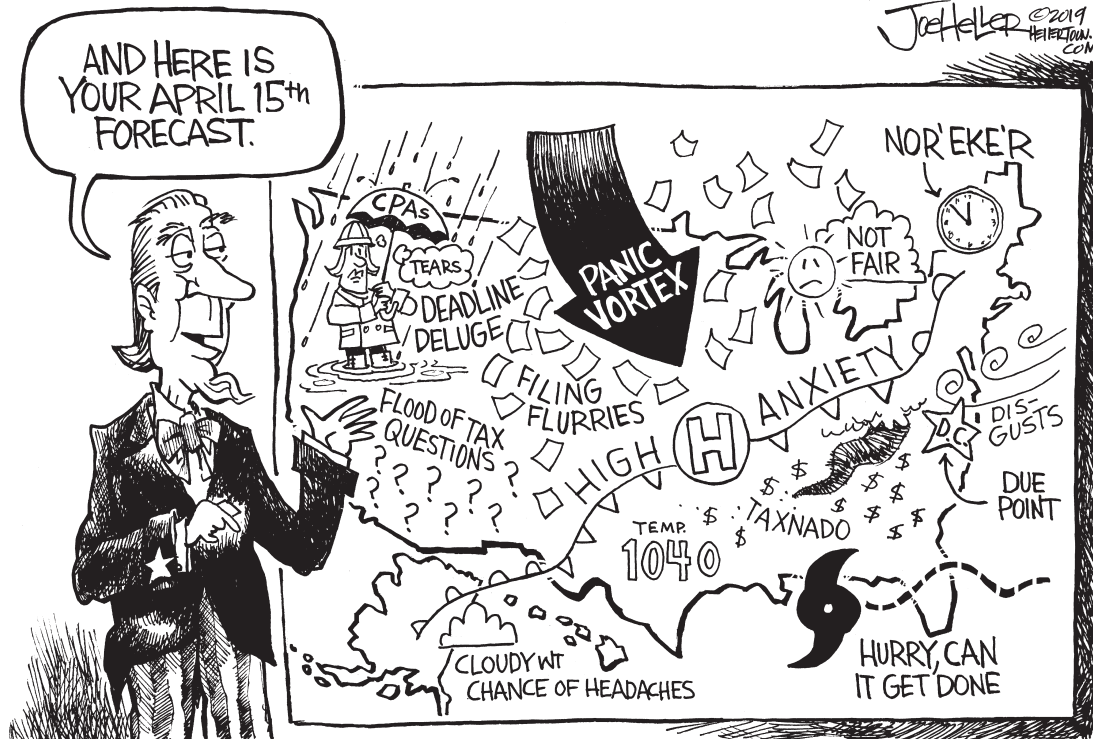
► The creation of several dozen state jobs in a small community would have an enormous impact on the local economy, improving local tax bases, boosting traffic to local businesses and creating demand for additional housing in some cases. Rural parts of the state need these jobs. The metro area has jobs in abundance. Its economy wouldn't even notice the change.

There are many other advantages, but perhaps one of the most significant is that it would substantially benefit rural parts of Minnesota at virtually no cost. This wouldn't involve creating new state jobs, simply relocating some of the existing ones, possibly to less costly accommodations. This could actually save the state money.

How many jobs are we talking about? That's a question that would require some research to accurately answer. Gov. Walz could propose a study of the state workforce which could offer recommendations on which government jobs could most effectively be relocated outside the metro area.

If, let's say, such a study found that 20 percent of state jobs currently located in the Twin Cities metro area could be effectively relocated to non-metro parts of the state. That's 4,200 stable, good-paying jobs with attractive benefits. Target those jobs to parts of the state, like the Iron Range, that have typically struggled economically, and you have the makings of an economic policy that would have a real and long-term impact.

We appreciate Gov. Walz's stated commitment to rural Minnesota. Bringing more state jobs to rural Minnesota is a great way to walk that talk.



## Letters from Readers

### You are not alone in your concern for our country's future

Dear Marshall,

I am writing to you this early Thursday morning as I sip my coffee and watch the dawn slip into the Minneapolis sky outside my kitchen window. I woke this morning reflecting on the editorial you wrote in the March 29 *Timberjay*— your editorial asking “Where are honor and integrity in America?”

I want to begin with, it is in you and the people who work with you to put out, each week, an amazing newspaper filled with thoughtful, well-researched articles that truly cover the news and details of the communities intermixed with the larger picture of the state and country that we also live in and cannot ethically ignore.

I am writing to thank you for your commitment to the endeavor of journalism, to the words you ponder and hone and share each week— be it a report of a local meeting, a cameo of a neighbor, the success of a student, the present and future of our water, our wildlife and our human life as we address the intensity and far reaching ramifications of the copper-nickel mining companies.

And you keep at it each week, and you share the stories of the birds, the flowers, the deer, and you write about and show the faces of kids on the front pages of both sections as they learn, and achieve, and experience joy and challenge in it all.

I am neither a Pollyanna nor a cynic, but I, too, can visit despair and I did as I read your editorial, and I was also lifted. So, I write to you today just because I want to let you know that you are not alone. There are others as I know you mentioned, others you know. But there are also the random others like myself who get up each morning and ponder what I can do today within my reach to live in and to support the American ideals I, too, was raised with, believed in and still do, and created within them a life in which I could

support true ideals and encourage others to do so as well.

So, I write to thank you. My partner, David, our dog, Bernie, and I have a place outside of Babbitt where we are moving permanently this year. I hope when that happens, I will have the opportunity to meet you, to shake your hand, to thank you in person. In the mean time I am sending you this letter.

**Ruth Katz  
Minneapolis**

### We can't abandon the fight to protect Lake Superior's watershed

I read with great interest Bob Tammen's letter to the editor in the recent *Timberjay*. Having met Bob a time or two in my decade or so involvement with the copper sulfide mine controversy, I was glad to hear that he thinks as I do about Tom Landwehr's new position with the Friends group. Personally, knowing and having interacted with many of Tom's new boosters, whom I think highly of, I was still perplexed and mostly angry about his new position.

Simply put: If there is anybody who has carried more water for PolyMet in particular and to a lesser degree, Twin Metals, I'm not exactly sure who it might be. The USFS shirked its responsibility for many, many years as far as enforcing their own regulations, to the point that long time employees who knew better claimed to be neutral, at various infomercials where I ran across them. They were certainly unwilling or more likely afraid to state the truth as they knew it about copper sulfide mining. While their captain firmly turned their ship around there was one person who never wavered in his support of copper sulfide mining, the recent DNR commissioner Tom Landwehr. Even after Gov. Mark Dayton was finally persuaded to change his stance, Tom Landwehr was unwavering in his insistence that this was inevitable and practically ordained by the state constitution. He said as much

in an MPR interview shortly after being named to his post in the Dayton administration. Since then all the rules, requirements, guarantees and financial sureties have all been molded to fit PolyMet's ability to move forward with a financially unviable project that is doomed to failure of every kind.

While I know and respect both Becky Rom and Steve Piragis, to whom we owe a lot, I beg to differ with their endorsement of Tom Landwehr. Both Bob Tammen (who never has been proven wrong) and Paula Maccabee are dead on. Abandoning the fight to save the Lake Superior watershed to save the BWCAW is a betrayal of all we should collectively stand for. What little is left of the great North Woods of my youth (aged 67 now) should be preserved from heavy industrial development based on short-term extraction with all the proceeds going to Chile. Oh, and one more thing, with the increasing automation sweeping the mining industry, the jobs will be nowhere what's promised, much less union.

Both of these projects need to be stopped dead in their tracks and held to the highest and most stringent standards that are applicable. Ely's future lies elsewhere.

**Mark Wendt  
Stillwater**

Where the  
North Country  
Sounds Off!

We welcome  
your letters

The *Timberjay* encourages letters to the editor. You can submit letters by mail at PO Box 636, Tower, MN 55790, or email letters to marshall@timberjay.com.

We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

## An old flame recently came a'calling

On press day, nobody expects to receive a phone call from an estranged lover.

Last Wednesday, I walked into the *Timberjay* and our office manager told me I'd received a call the day before from a man with a



**SCARLET LYNN  
STONE**

pleasant voice who wondered if Lynn O'Hara from Ely worked there. She told him, “Yes she does and if you subscribed to our paper you'd be aware from her columns that she has changed her name to Scarlet Stone, and you could read about the new chapter of her life in Soudan.” She told him I would be in the office the

following day.

I wondered who was “troll-

ing” my way and after about five seconds made a silent guess. It had to be “D.T.” from the Hayward Lakes area...a hippie-carpenter-thing with interests in hydroponic gardening, cooking and smoking pot.

I figured the other exes are either dead or “in the know” on my whereabouts and what-ups! The phone call came in just before lunch, with five other sets of ears in the room (including Loki, the dog). I was hungry and ready to commune with my leftovers from Taco Tuesday;

Loki was too, but I took the call with a wry twist on my lips and an eyebrow raised.

He identified himself. I said, “I thought it may be you calling.”

I hadn't talked to D.T. for a few years and had no immediate reason to be rude. While my tacos beckoned from the other side of the mouse pad, he said, “The reason I had to call was to let you know about a couple things.” (Ya, what a line I thought.) He said, “First, is that our neighbor from down the road died.” (Well come on, I

thought, I barely knew the guy.) He rambled on about that for a time, we conversed, and then he added, “The next thing I had to tell you was this guy that used to live east of Winton moved down here and said he knew you. He called you BIG RED.”

He chuckled as if getting in a virgin-usage fat joke. I said, “Yup, BIG RED was a nickname from Ely.” I then made the mistake of offering the tidbit that my hair wasn't RED anymore,

See **OLD FLAME...** pg. 5



## Letters from Readers

### Thanks so much for the recognition

When I first met Jackpine Bob Cary in 1998 I was thoroughly enthralled with his buoyant spirit, and I was wonderfully welcomed to Ely. This past Tuesday evening, I was completely surprised, humbled, and pleased to be honored by the Chamber of Commerce at the 'Smile, You're in Ely' dinner by being presented with the Jackpine Bob Cary Community Spirit Award. Bob Cary set an example that will likely never be equaled but that we can all strive for - I join excellent company with past recipients Mike Hillman, Anne Swenson, Tom Coombe, and Sarah Guy-Levar.

I've always been a "glass half full, 'Field of Dreams' if-you-build-it they-will-come" kind of guy, and I find working with organizations within our town so rewarding.

My current efforts to promote Ely include serving on several boards and com-

mittees, and fundraising for worthy causes. They all serve the purpose of improving our already-great community. As I said in accepting the award, "We may have taken a couple of hits recently with the closing of some businesses, but I believe that this next decade will be one of the most exciting in Ely's history." We will see the new addition to the hospital, the expansion of the pharmacy, a potential new recreation center, and we will be presented with an opportunity to vote for a renovation project at our schools. With the advent of high(er) speed Internet I foresee three or four new call centers sprouting up in our industrial park with 40-50 new good-paying jobs in each for folks with families to grow in Ely. That is why I always ask every family I meet in my shop "When are you moving to Ely? We need more kids in our schools!" Bob Cary asked that same question of people for years, including myself.

It doesn't appear that Tanner Ott and crews are slowing down

in restoring and renovating a variety of buildings downtown. Having owned or been part of the Ely Family Shoe Store, TimberRidge Trading Company, Insula Restaurant, and opening POTLUCK Kitchenware last June, I have a couple more ideas ready to go. I cannot wait to build in the old Tanner Hospital building...what a gem in the heart of Ely!

But none of us work in a vacuum. None of the good things I have helped with such as being a founding member of the North American Bear Center, the Northern Lights 5K Glow Run, the Ely Winter Festival Kubb Tournament, new choir robes, a marimba for the band room, and additional funds for the Boundary Waters Choral Festival would have happened without the combined efforts of a great number of enthused volunteers. Please keep working, participating, and giving when you can. You are why we have the "best small town in America". We are so blessed to live in this

community. So again, I appreciate the recognition and the award, and I accept it on behalf of all who volunteer their time and effort in promoting Ely. Don't forget to "SMILE, you're in Ely"!

**David Wigdahl  
Ely**

### Thanks to all who shared their stories

The True Stories from the Edge season finale on March 21 turned out over 50 people, more great stories, delicious cookies, and coffee from Crapola. Thanks to everyone who attended this year!

The theme for March was "It's Mine: Tales of Ownership". People have really interesting stuff! One person managed to legally acquire a real wolf skull, but it had to be cleaned by cadaver beetles in a lab before he could give it as a gift to his wife. Another person bought a brand-new motor-home so she wouldn't have to worry about repairing a used model. Turns out

the new one was a real "lemon" with loose nuts and bolts. The bathroom plumbing and contents fell off in a parking lot! It's now for sale (in Phoenix).

Can you own a valley in northern Utah? When you live there in your car for six months, it does feel like home. One storyteller brought his treasured tuba to show us, and another told us fond memories of his first car. Another person talked about special fishing rods that were nearly lost on a portage but were later snapped in half in a slamming screen door. Several people talked about the most important thing we all own: our life experiences, how they change us, and how we can pass our lessons on to future generations.

We send out a heartfelt thank you to every courageous and entertaining person who got up in front of new friends and old, to tell us a story. We hope to be back next winter for more "True Stories from the Edge"!

**Julie Nester and  
Terry Cooper  
Ely**

### OLD FLAME...Continued from page 4

so of course he wanted to know what color my hair was. "Oh this is turning SO stupid and I feel like a sixteen year old," I thought!

It started feeling like a phone-sex foreplay session in the newsroom! It was creeping me out, so I asked him how his wife was. He said they were getting a divorce and commented it was the fourth time of filing. Hmmm, I thought.

He'd heard from mutual local friends in Wisconsin about Bill and told me what a nice man I'd married. I agreed and then put my "stiletto" down... "Well I gotta go...we're on DEADLINE."

All of us at the paper LOVE to say that on press day when we don't feel like talking to someone! They immediately get a vision of us chewing our fingernails with an alarm clock nearby...rattling down the minutes, and they easily go away.

I'm not one to hold on to anger and resentment unless I think about something and stir up the ashes.. which is what happened

when that phone call came in. He now has become the launchpad for my column.

I'd met D.T. through an ad in the *Duluth News Tribune* Dateline section back in 2000 when I was living in near-poverty in Chisholm. He and I started this long distance relationship and after a year we moved me outta Chisholm with a U-Haul.

I enjoyed my experiences in the Hayward area for the next couple of years. I got a job as Director of Underwriting for WOJB radio, the nationally-known public radio station located on the Lac Courte Oreilles (pronounced La Coota Ray) Reservation.

I made friends, my son was in a nice daycare, and D.T. and I were officially engaged. Relationships go this way or that and you cannot always predict an outcome. Things soured, and Keaton and I moved into town and rented a furnished place. It was a time of flux. D.T. decided to join a friend in Alaska to work a construction job that summer and made the

trip north.

At that point I returned to his place out near Moose Lake to get out of paying rent and to caretake his place and the dog. Her name was Ohbe, as in "Oh be quiet"...and I loved her.

In late June, my younger brother from Marine-on-St.-Croix died from a pancreatic infection after years of taking HIV medications. I was devastated, and decided to move back to Ely to be near my mother, who had a summer home on Burntside Lake.

D.T. was still in Alaska and didn't want me to leave and made my life hell with threatening phone calls. Compassion fell very short. He said he'd have friends put chains across his driveway to keep me from taking my stuff out.

In my emotional state I felt like a caged wild animal. I feared he'd fly back from Alaska. I rushed to move all my stuff into a friend's garage as a temporary holding spot and injured my rotator cuff in doing so. Meanwhile my family and I were dealing

with my brother's death and emptying out his big two-story house in Marine during the long hot summer. D.T. continued to make my life incredibly stressful until I was able to finally move north to Ely in August.

I landed on my feet, as I always seem to do, and got a job at the International Wolf Center as Assistant Retail Director. I lived at the lake with mom for the fall until I found a house to rent. It was a comfort to be back in northeastern Minnesota, where my roots were, with my mom and son.

Over the course of that fall, D.T. returned from Alaska and tried to convince me to move back to Wisconsin. At one point he drove to Ely in a rage to get back the \$700 ring we had special-made by a jeweler in Hayward.

I liked the piece of jewelry from an artsy perspective, but not what it represented and gave it back...actually THREW it back! I was angry for a long time at his lack of compassion for me and the

fear he added to my life. I'd hear from him occasionally, generally when he was separated from his now...wife.

My intention was to go forward, not backward... but it's easier to say than to do when our emotions take over. Fear of the unknown can keep us from making needed changes. There's fear of not having money, not getting help with child care, taking children from a parent or loved one if you go, fear of religious damnation, and there is mind control and fear of bodily harm. You lose both yourself and a more positive path.

In my life, there have been a few strong women, "survivors" who said things that were simple and profound. Over the years I steep myself with the truths their words carried. "When your cup finally runneth over...you'll know it." "Your relationship with your child is separate from its other parent or guardian." "Don't borrow trouble fretting about things that may or may not happen." "Live for the

day." and "Follow your gut instincts." All so true. We creatures need safety net words like these that keep us from going over the edge!

I'm very interested in moving FORWARD. At age sixty I don't want to relearn the same lessons in life. At the same time, I recognize behaviors in myself that need addressing so that I am not causing anyone else grief (topics for other columns).

If D.T. should ever call me again I will tell him I've gone forward..not simply that I've moved on because forward is a strong direction, and I will ask him to please not call again.

Other forward updates include success with new projects, my walking program and a happy, quite-independent son! Until next time, don't set the shovels down because Mother Nature has brought us a walluping spring snowstorm to contend with.

### RESEARCH...Continued from page 3

this product since 2003 with the goal to make a material that is 100 percent compostable and can withstand temperatures from the oven to the freezer."

Singsaas admits that reformulating the sugar cane product to recycled paper pulp is challenging, but societal demand is generating research funding to

move this along.

A trial formulation was pressed into trays that are being sent to the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology

at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point. There, a Compostability Certification Lab will test the product against a variety of technical

standards. The goal is to develop the trays with the maximum possible percent of recycled content.

"I've been trying to work in this area for a

long time, but now people are making plastics into a high-profile issue," said Singaas. "I feel like the world is finally catching up to what I've been wanting

### COUNCIL...Continued from page 3

in late January. But the *Timberjay* has confirmed that Kringstad conducted the bulk of his examination as a private citizen, before he was sworn into office, and had no need for council authorization.

Kringstad's investigation primarily entailed the review of public records, including city minutes and an official roster of commission and committee terms, which revealed systematic alterations. Upon taking office, Kringstad consulted with City Attorney Andy Peterson on how to properly present his concerns to the council and contends that he followed the attorney's guidance precisely, presenting the concerns as part of a "performance review."

But Keith's union representative challenged that portrayal and claimed the closed session was really to consider allegations, ostensibly providing part of the justification for the grievance.

Kringstad had told the grievance committee that he was acting on the advice of the city attorney but said that Altenburg and Anderson chose to ignore that information in their decision on the grievance. He also noted that Altenburg had filed his own complaint against the him, suggesting he was not impartial in the matter.

Some in the audience also raised such concerns. "You are a city employee," said Richard Hanson, a former city council member, "You don't consider it a conflict of interest?" Steve Wilson noted that Keith is Altenburg's "boss".

The grievance committee had voted 2-1 on March 14, with Abrahamson voting against, to uphold the grievance in full, but had deferred writing a remedy until they could obtain legal advice from the city attorney or an outside counsel. After hearing that

the city attorney was refusing to advise on the matter, Altenburg and Anderson opted to proceed without legal counsel.

Abrahamson said he was disturbed that he wasn't aware of the second committee meeting.

"I wanted to have an attorney there to answer questions," he said. Abrahamson had raised concerns about whether or not the committee could actually require the council to halt an investigation into employee misconduct allegations.

"There is so much personality conflict in this," Abrahamson said. "It is hard to see this remedy as a fair one...I want to feel in the end it is fair to both parties."

Kringstad said he categorically rejects the proposed remedy, which the union has already accepted. "The findings are incorrect," said Kringstad.

Beldo expressed concerns with the process

the grievance committee followed and the members involved on the committee and questioned whether it could be binding on the council. Keith noted that the city, in past cases, had let the grievance committee remedy be binding.

Altenburg said the decision of the committee was based city policy. "It is not personal because it could not be," he said.

But at several points during the March 14 meeting, Abrahamson had questioned Altenburg's interpretation of the law and the facts of the case.

Kringstad again noted that his actions were based on advice given by the city attorney, but Peterson, who attended Monday's meeting, remained silent on the issue.

Details of what occurred during the closed meeting have not yet been made public, but Keith's union representative, Erik Skoog, claimed in a subsequent public session

that *Timberjay* reporting (which was independently conducted) on the clerk mirrored the information presented by Kringstad in the closed meeting. *Timberjay* reporting documented numerous instances where city records had been changed without council approval, in order to maintain Keith allies in key positions.

The issue of whether or not the grievance committee can bind the council to a decision such as this is still uncertain. Keith said her union attorney, along with advice from the League of Minnesota Cities, affirms this interpretation, but a query from the *Timberjay* to the League yielded a less conclusive response. League general counsel Patricia Beety, wrote:

"On Monday, March 26, Tower City Clerk Linda Keith sent us a copy of the current labor agreement between the city and MN Teamsters Public and Law Enforcement Employees' Union, Local No. 320. The question Ms. Keith posed was limited to how the contract applies when a grievance is resolved at the Grievance Committee level...no opinion or information was provided with respect to any question outside of this narrow inquiry into the plain language of the applicable labor contract."

Beety went on to recommend that anything beyond that question would best be addressed by the city attorney. Peterson, however, has refused to provide the city with legal advice on the question, citing relationships with the various parties involved.

A motion by Abrahamson, seconded by Beldo, to contact an outside attorney for advice on this issue passed 2-1 with Anderson voting against and Kringstad abstaining. The council then voted the same way to have Beldo contact an outside attorney.