

OUR VIEWS

Local factories buoy hopes this holiday season

No one needs reminding this holiday season that Janesville and Rock County have far to go to recover from this economic downturn.

While the latest news about employment in Wisconsin wasn't good, two area employers offer glimmers of hope.

The state Department of Workforce Development reported that Wisconsin lost 9,300 private-sector jobs last month and 9,700 overall—more than any other state. October was the fourth straight month of declines, and if that suggests a trend, it doesn't bode well.

Manufacturing, however, is one sector adding jobs. That's important in a state where manufacturing has traditionally provided many family-supporting jobs.

Factory work in Wisconsin reached a high point of almost 600,000 jobs in early 2000. Today, only 450,000 remain. That still puts Wisconsin among leaders in factory jobs per capita, but no one expects the 150,000 lost to return.

Still, two stories this month buoy the regional manufacturing picture.

First, Generac, which builds generators, plans to create more than 400 jobs over the next year at its four facilities, including those in Whitewater and Eagle. As the Gazette reported, the company's sales have jumped 49 percent this year.

Second, Janesville's United Alloy is growing, as well. It is relishing a 40 percent rise in sales, building a 21,000-square-foot expansion and hoping to add 32 workers. At an average wage of \$18 per hour, plus benefits, many people would leap at those jobs.

United Alloy produces diesel fuel tanks, generator frames and other heavy metal fabrications. Generac is among its customers.

Natural disasters around the country, including the early snowstorm in October that knocked out power for many on the East Coast for days on end, are fueling this demand. It's unfortunate that snowstorms and tornadoes, floods and earthquakes generate the need for such products, but someone must meet that demand, and these companies and their workers are able to do so.

United Alloy's expansion will cost about \$750,000. Helping pave the way is a \$100,000 loan from the city. That loan will be forgiven if the company hires 32 more workers in the next three years.

Some residents criticize such incentives as "corporate giveaways," particularly when municipalities face tight budgets amid steep cuts in state aid.

Such criticism gets credence in a recent Wausau Daily Herald analysis. It found that just nine Wisconsin businesses that have gotten tax credits for job creation since 2007 have completed their five-year programs and hired as many workers as promised. Only 8 percent of the 191 businesses still active in their programs have created enough jobs to claim all of the credits.

That's a disappointing track record. But what's the alternative? Without incentives, we'd have even fewer jobs. Incentives rarely will help a poor business succeed.

When businesses have viable plans and good management, however, the rewards are great. More workers can support families, and tax revenues flow back to governments that offer incentives.

That's why companies such as Generac and United Alloy deserve applause and the benefit of assistance when that help is warranted.

It can make the holidays, and our 2012, brighter for all of us.



EDITOR'S VIEWS

Sacrificing some rights comes with the territory

Journalists not only give up nights and weekends for their jobs.

They also give up rights that many people take for granted.

The issue arose again last week at The Gazette when the topic of the petition to recall Gov. Scott Walker came up.

Let me preface this by saying we have people of all political persuasions in our newsroom and in our building. I know the media have a reputation in many circles of being dominated by liberals. I've never asked, but I suspect we have more left-leaning than right-leaning folks in our news operation.

That doesn't mean, however, that our coverage is biased toward Democrats or liberal causes. For one thing, we have plenty of conservatives for balance, including our owner. More important, we're professionals who leave our politics at the door when we come to work.

That said, several newsroom employees asked me if our ethics policy prohibited them from signing the recall petition.

Without hesitation, I answered yes.

Here's what our policy says about political activities: "Staffers may not be involved in political campaigns or activities. Avoid outward demonstrations of support for candidates or causes, such as yard signs or buttons."

Pretty much everyone gets the "outward demonstration" part. It's something you learn when you study to become a journalist, and it's reinforced when you're on the job. We have enough trouble convincing readers that we're not biased on our news pages. We don't need to put reasons in their faces to question our impartiality.

Not everyone in our business these days agrees with this approach, which has been the industry standard for decades. Some modern thinkers argue that objectivity is a myth and that we're

better off declaring our leanings so people can judge for themselves whether our political views affect our coverage.

I don't agree. I'm an old-schooler, and I still believe we shouldn't fan the flames by publicly espousing our support for a candidate or cause. It's not that I don't think our journalists can set their politics aside. I know they can. It's more about perception among readers, and we all know perception is reality to many people.

I've always felt this way, but I feel even more strongly in what might be the most politically divisive period of my career.

The petition, however, presents a new twist when it comes to interpreting our ethics policy. Is signing a petition an "outward demonstration" of political support? It's not like a yard sign or a bumper sticker.

One staff member likened it more to voting, and we allow that. Some well-known editors in our business have refrained from voting in the interest of political purity. That's extreme, and I don't think any newsroom policies prohibit journalists from exercising that most basic right.

A key distinction, though, is that voting is private. No one can learn how you voted. Signatures on recall petitions are public, and it's not a stretch to think that some person or group might scour those documents for names. The odds are long, but I don't want anyone alleging bias at this paper by noting that one of our reporters or editors supported the recall.

Not all of our staffers are happy, but The Gazette isn't alone. I checked with other editors in the state, and their policies are the same. It might seem like a small thing, and some people's views might be evolving, but ethics are still a big deal to many of us.

Our credibility is our most cherished asset, and we need to protect it with every decision we make.

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YOUR VIEWS

Story about OWI arrest cast tavern in unfair light

Regarding the Nov. 14 website story of the Janesville man arrested on his fourth OWI charge (Page 8A, Nov. 15), I wish to submit an addition to the article, which refers to a "report of a physical disturbance at Lava Lounge."

I would like to clarify this report with the fact that the bartender contacted the Janesville police as a result of Jay H. Block entering Lava Lounge and being refused service.

Mr. Block was politely asked to leave. The bartender then walked outside to ensure that Mr. Block had left

the premises, whereupon she was physically assaulted by the defendant. She then contacted the police.

The defendant was *not* drinking in the bar, and the entire incident occurred because Block was refused service upon initial entry.

As the owner of Lava Lounge, I felt the article incompletely reported the story by mentioning a physical altercation and then naming the establishment.

This potentially casts the bar in a negative manner by not providing all of the circumstantial facts.

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SOUND OFF

On unions and Democrats: In response to a Sound Off last Sunday, the person believes unions and organizers are bought and paid for by the socialist agenda and that's what Democrats are. I'd say Republicans snowballed the middle class and poor and basically represent the elite and millionaires in the capitalist system.

On Parker play: Congratulations to "The Phantom of the Opera" cast and crew members. The performance was wonderful.

■ Congratulations to Jim Tropp, Jan Knutson and the cast and crew for the brilliant performance. We left in shock at how incredible it was. Janesville, you should be very proud of your topnotch schools, the education programs they offer and the intelligent and talented students they produce. Keep supporting the arts.

On Walker recall: This man misled us before he even got into office. Taxpayers' money is going to the corporations and rich. He's not doing anything for the little people. When are Republicans going to wake up and see this?

■ To the people who flip us off, yell obscenities out the window and stop to start a confrontation, do you realize your behavior reflects poorly on the Republican Party and those you support? You say shame on me for exercising my free speech. Well shame on you. Your behavior is far more belittling than what I'm doing.

■ This ridiculous effort is not only an attack on Walker but a direct assault on free elections based on majority rule. Unions long ago perfected the technique of silencing the majority through control, intimidation bullying and direct threats. What a shame my Democratic Party has sold out its historic ideals and bought into this disgusting union tactic.

■ This is to the 68-year-old letter writer Nov. 22 who was looking forward to Walker's recall. I'm 75 and still sharp enough to realize this is all about disenfranchising an honest election by the majority of Wisconsin voters. Recalls should be used only for obvious and proven dereliction of duty.

■ Some Wisconsinites have lost track of why people started protesting in the first place. It was not teachers paying more toward pensions and health care. It was collective bargaining. Before you start ranting and raving, please get your facts straight.

■ Do we really want the union running our state?

■ Recalling Walker will send us back to the Doyle years that got us in the financial trouble before Walker balanced our budget without raising taxes. Do we really want to go back to higher taxes every year and jobs leaving the state? It shouldn't be a political party decision; it should be a common sense decision.

On recall petitioner at library: I find it troubling that the library would restrict free speech (Page 1A, Wednesday). Some provision could be made, especially since the library allows lectures to children, etc. There ought to be some place where people could set up with different points of view because materials in the library hold different points of view.

■ The library did parents a favor. I was leery about taking my children there and having to deal with explaining what was going on, why people were trying to talk to their mommy.

On drug shortage: The article on the front page last Sunday was informative but did not go far enough. Can this reporter or someone do more investigative reporting on this and tell us just what the Obama administration and FDA are doing about it? Are pharmaceutical companies simply leading up to excuses to receive stimulus payments or bailouts?

On leaves: The city should implement the procedure used for sidewalks that are not shoveled for the leaves that are raked in the street after pick-up crews have passed.

On child molesters: Sen. Julie Lassa announced she has introduced a bill that would eliminate the statute of limitations on civil lawsuits against molesters (Page 7A Wednesday). Please support this bill. It is unfair that there are limitations as it takes years for the abused to finally deal with their trauma.

On turkeys: The article on Mr. Wilcox's turkey collection (Page 1A Wednesday) reminded me to watch the next Republican presidential debate.

On missing column: I've been missing John Rosemond's column. It hasn't been published lately, and I'm hoping it still is being carried by The Gazette because his philosophy was excellent when it comes to raising children.

On restaurant review: This is about the Villa Pizza and Family Restaurant of Orfordville that was on Page 7C Nov. 17. I have eaten there, and they have tremendous food.

SOUND OFF



Share your thoughts anonymously on this or any other topic of current interest

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