

# OPINIONS

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## THE LAKELAND TIMES OUR VIEW

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**GREGG WALKER, Publisher | RICHARD MOORE, Columnist**

### To solve the inflation crisis, solve the workforce crisis

We've reported multiple times recently about the labor shortage that is delivering staggering blows to our local economy, as well as about how pervasive the problem is, surging and damaging not only the infrastructure of the private sector but splashing and thrashing around in the labor pools of our hospitals and law enforcement.

Our local leaders are correctly calling it a crisis, so has our sheriff, so have many economists and officials, not just here and not just in Wisconsin but across the nation. And, except for the Biden administration and the Evers administration, everybody knows it's a crisis, and one without a foreseeable end to it.

We have written, too, about the causes of the labor shortage, but it's worth just a brief look again. For starters, it pre-dated the pandemic. The pandemic exacerbated it, but a declining number of workers has been coming down the pike for a long time, even if it was partially camouflaged.

Simple demographics are the ground floor upon which the rest of the shortage is built. The massive baby boom generation is retiring by the truckload now, and has been since at least 2010, and younger generations just don't have the numbers to replace them.

Writing in *Forbes*, Milton Ezrati explained it this way: "The huge baby-boom generation was born between the years 1945 and 1962. Those born at its beginning began retiring as they approached 65 in 2010, and since, an increasing number of boomers has retired, a trend that not only explains the decline in participation but also its beginning right after the 2008-09 recession. As more and more boomers aged, the proportion of the U.S. population of retirement age rose, from 13% in 2010 to 16.5% in 2020. More were dropping out of the workforce than entering it."

But that doesn't explain all of it, or maybe even most of it. There was also prior to the pandemic various social and political factors that drove many of what were already smaller populations of young people out of the workforce. Our increasingly federalized education bureaucracy taught that college was the only acceptable path in life. So larger and larger numbers of young people delayed entry into the workforce so they could become "experts" in something and qualify for a bureaucrat's

green card.

Then our federal government told everyone that graduate school was pretty necessary, too, if you really wanted to be an expert — the very pathway to bureaucratic citizenship — and so ever more of our younger generations went there, amassing large student loans and delaying their entry into the workforce even more, all the while devaluing the value of a masters degree.

Along the way, another trend developed: Large corporations, wanting to seem woke and cool but really just seeking free or cheap labor, invented the "intern" pipeline, robbing the economy of ever more seasonal workers.

And when our forever students had finished their internships and accumulated their degrees, most thought the skilled trades and manufacturing were beneath them. Then came the pandemic and what had been the steady drip of a shrinking workforce over time became a flood.

First and foremost, Democratic lockdowns destroyed vast numbers of businesses and jobs, many that never came back. The lockdowns also crippled the child-care industry, obliterating women's child-care jobs on the one hand and forcing other women to stay home to take care of their children when finally they could return to work.

And, of course, after getting used to staying home during the pandemic, even more — as many as 3 million more — older workers just decided to go ahead and retire.

Tons more just quit during the "Great Resignation" because they decided to re-imagine their lives. And how could they afford to do that?

Simply put, they could be because of the trillions of dollars the Biden administration up and printed and injected into the economy. As FedEx chairman and founder Fred Smith warned this week, when you just print money and scatter it out of the economic window to the streets below, letting it fall like so much confetti, bad things can happen.

Smith would know. His FedEx trucks and UPS trucks combine to carry about 12 percent of our GDP on any given day. He knows what's coming and going, and he doesn't like what he sees. And this is what he told Fox's Larry Kudlow about flooding money into the economy when there was a labor shortage, pointing out

that the federal government has on five separate occasions, from the American Recovery Act to student loan forgiveness, printed and pumped trillions into the economy.

"At the same time, you simply do not have the workers to meet the demand that's been juiced by the printing of this money," he said. "It's exactly like sitting in your car and putting your foot on the accelerator and the brake at the same time."

Pretty soon, something is going to burn out or explode.

All those supply-chain and shipping issues all track back to the labor shortage, Smith said — no truckers to truck, no cargo unloaders to unload ships, no workers to keep the mills and the manufacturers running, no jailers to jail.

And so demand-gone-wild slams into workers-just-gone and, well, Washington we have a problem. On the one end, the lack of workers causes businesses to teeter and many to fail, a starvation of the economy itself, while on the other end the feast of stimulus-driven demand rockets inflation into the stratosphere.

No wonder Fred Smith is worried.

So what is to be done? Well, first, what is not to be done? Most immediately, the Federal Reserve should not do what it intends to do and continue with big interest rate increases. That risks not only a severe recession but, as both Elon Musk and Ark Invest CEO Cathie Wood both warned, a problem bigger than inflation: Deflation.

Deflation will solve the not-enough-workers problem, alright, by causing massive layoffs.

Either way, inflation or deflation, the answer is not ever crazier interest rates. It's about not continuing to do the things the administration has done to exacerbate both the labor shortage and inflation, especially the printing of money. Biden should just take a curtsy from his Spending mistress and move on.

The second thing not to do is to follow the left's prescriptions for the lack of labor, which is, just open the borders to illegal immigration. That is their most consistent policy prescription. But, while that might be good to channeling some low-wage workers to Koch Industries, it isn't going to solve the depleted ranks of skilled and professional workers in myriad industries across the economy.

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### No apologies

Performers censor themselves — fearing they might offend. Those who offend Hollywood lose work. Some lose friends.

Adam Carolla doesn't care. That's why he's the subject of my video this week.

Carolla is one of the most successful performers in America.

His books are bestsellers. His comedy shows sell out. He hosts one of America's most-listened-to-podcasts.

Recently, Carolla dismissed Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's intellect, cracking that "If AOC was fat and in her 60s, would anyone listen to another thing she ever said?"

That enraged leftists. "Predatory!" said Majority Report's Emma Vigeland.

"Projects his sexism onto others," said Young Turks host Cenk Uygur.

But what Carolla said is simply true. Nobody pays much attention to House freshmen. Ocasio-Cortez is a political celebrity simply because she's pretty, and also, she speaks without constantly saying "uh."

"If she was in her 60s and husky," adds Carolla, "nobody would listen to a word she ever said!"

He won't apologize for saying that. Or anything else.

"No Apologies" is on the cover of his new book, "Everything Reminds Me of Something."

"They want you to apologize because they want dominion over you. And once you apologize, they just keep coming back."

I get upset when people criticize me. Carolla says, "I just happen to be wired not to care, as long as I'm right."

He says he was right for criticizing the government's COVID pronouncements. "They didn't give the ages of the people who died at the very beginning," Carolla tells me. "I immediately got suspicious because it was a bunch of 90-year-olds."

For saying that, Carolla was mocked and condemned by his celebrity friends.

Radio show host Howard Stern said Carolla was "making fun of people for taking COVID seriously."

"Adam doesn't believe in shampoo or soap," added Jimmy Kimmel. "It's disturbing."

Carolla is a "right-wing troll," said actor David Alan Grier.

Carolla laughs at those attacks.

He's unusual in Hollywood because he's still friends with leftists who

disagree with him.

He does stand-up comedy with Sarah Silverman. He joins Bill Maher's podcast. Such political mixing is rare today. Usually, the left and right just don't

talk to each other.

Carolla says that's not surprising. "If you're a Steelers fan in a bar, you want to sit next to a guy who's a Steelers fan." But "occasionally ... you have to invite somebody

over from the Patriots bar and have a robust debate."

All my career, I had robust debates. I learned from those arguments. Today Stossel TV still hosts debates, but that's rare in today's political media. Most just mock the other side or spend all their time with people who agree with their own positions.

On college campuses, it's worse. The left simply silences the other side.

I first encountered it years ago, covering a rape accusation at Brown University for "20/20." A student had sex with a woman who was drunk; weeks later, she accused him of rape. The school newspaper put the boy's photo on its front page but kept his accuser anonymous. University officials suspended the boy.

I asked Brown students holding up signs that said "Break the silence, stop sexual assault" to explain Brown's new definition of rape. The group screamed at me, chanting "Rape is not TV hype!" so loudly that I couldn't interview anyone else.

They don't want the other side to be heard.

"They would let the other side speak if they thought they could beat them in a debate," says Carolla. "They don't."

Carolla is eager to debate, partly because he's confident about his ideas. "I think if you're intellectually honest or I gave you two beers, you would agree with me."

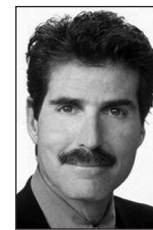
Agreeing isn't the point. If his ideas are bad, they'll go away. But it's important that people be free to speak.

"I don't really have a choice as to what I say," says Carolla. "It has to be the truth all the time. I'm a comedian. It's a sacred oath I took."

Good for him.

John Stossel posts a new video every Tuesday on [JohnStossel.com](http://JohnStossel.com). He is the author of "Give Me a Break: How I Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media."

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John Stossel  
COLUMNIST

# NORTHWOODS POLITICAL DIGEST

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## Evers joins fellow governors to promote clean hydrogen production

Gov. Tony Evers, together with six other Midwest governors, has announced the creation of the Midwestern Hydrogen Coalition, which he says will facilitate the development of a strong clean hydrogen economy in the Midwest.

The coalition includes Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana, and the states will work together to identify opportunities for advancing clean hydrogen production and use.

The partnership was solidified by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the governors from each state.

“We don’t have to choose between clean energy and clean air and creating good-paying jobs and a strong economy — we can do both,” Evers said. “As we work to implement our state’s first-ever Clean Energy Plan, I’m proud to join this coalition of fellow Midwestern governors working together to accelerate clean hydrogen production, foster economic development, and lower costs, while reducing emissions across Wisconsin and our entire region.”

Hydrogen is a colorless and odorless gas that can be used as a clean fuel source, releasing only water as byproduct when used in a fuel cell. When produced in a way that emits little to no greenhouse gases, the fuel is referred to as “clean hydrogen,” and the coalition says it has the potential to be a key component of decarbonizing multiple sectors of Wisconsin’s economy, including transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, and other industries.

To help jump-start the production and use of clean hydrogen, the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) appropriated \$8 billion for the U.S. Department of Energy to fund a set of Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs, which are networks of clean hydrogen producers, potential clean hydrogen consumers, and connective infrastructure located in same region.

The Midwestern Hydrogen Coalition will evaluate the possibility of pursuing a Hydrogen Hub application through the BIL. The Hydrogen Hub application period is expected to open in Fall 2022.

The federal Inflation Reduction Act, which President Biden recently signed into law, also creates a tax credit for hydrogen production, and those new credits will make clean hydrogen production more competitive with other methods of hydrogen production, the coalition says, providing another pathway toward a strong, clean energy economy in Wisconsin.

## State Bar of Wisconsin supports justice system budget requests

This week the Wisconsin State Pub-



lic Defender and District Attorneys released their 2023-2025 fiscal requests, which include increases from previous year’s funding levels.

“Wisconsin’s Judicial System is at a critical point, one exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic on caseloads and the challenges of recruiting and keeping experienced staff in today’s tight labor market,” said State Bar of Wisconsin president Margaret Hickey. “The State Bar of Wisconsin supports funding for prosecutors and public defenders that is adequate to ensure the ethical, effective representation of both the public and defendants in criminal cases.”

Hickey also said the State Bar supported the State Public Defender’s Office and Wisconsin District Attorneys’ requests for increased funding to attract and retain experienced and talented public defenders and prosecutors and the staff needed to support this work.

“Of particular note is an increase in the rate paid to private attorneys who take cases assigned by the Public Defenders’ office,” she stated. “The Legislature took a step in the right direction by recognizing the importance of adequate reimbursement by increasing the rate to \$70 in the 2019-20 budget. Unfortunately, it simply wasn’t enough.”

The bar urged that the private bar rate should be increased to an acceptable and adequate level to increase the pool of qualified attorneys willing to take private bar cases and make appointments more effective, Hickey said.

“Delays in our court system would decrease, costly appeals might be avoided and fewer victims would be re-victimized by drawn out legal proceedings,” she said. “The State Bar of Wisconsin firmly believes that our court system needs these fiscal investments and our attorney members look forward to working with the

governor and legislature to incorporate these needs into the upcoming budget.”

## Carpenter: A promise is a promise

This week state Sen. Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) honored National POW/MIA Recognition Day, but said the legislature had missed opportunities to give back to the service personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the country and their families.

“Today is National POW/MIA Recognition Day, when we honor and remember our service members who never made it home,” Carpenter said. “We must think of the thousands of families who still don’t know where their loved ones are after decades. More than 80,000 American service personnel are still missing, and approximately 1,500 of them are our fellow Wisconsinites. My deepest sympathies go to their families and friends, who still wait to learn about the fate of these heroes.”

Carpenter said the University of Wisconsin-Madison started the MIA Recovery and Identification Project to identify and return service members’ remains and to bring closure to their families, and that they also highlight the contributions of veterans and bring attention to the tens of thousands who never came home.

“We have had several opportunities to provide support to this program,” he said. “A proposal, which was originally introduced in a 2019 bill, would have provided \$360,000 to the project over two years. Despite receiving unanimous support in both chambers of the legislature, the legislature has failed to get the bill across the finish line after two sessions.”

In 2021, Carpenter said, Gov. Tony Evers added the funding to his biennial budget proposal, but Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee took it out and passed the budget without it.

“I made my objection to removing this funding clear when I proposed an amendment to restore the funds,” he said. “My Republican colleagues gave me assurances that the Legislature would pass it as a standalone bill at a later date. Unfortunately, this promise was broken. While the bill gained unanimous support in the State Senate, the Assembly never took it up before Republican leaders adjourned the session only three months into 2022.”

Families of POW and MIA service members want to know what happened to their loved ones, Carpenter said, and the Recovery and Identification Project provides an invaluable service through their work to achieve that goal.

“These men and women didn’t give up on our country, and we must not give up on them either,” he said.

## U.S. Rep. Gallagher demands answers about Pentagon official’s statements

Reps. Mike Gallagher (R-Wisconsin) and Scott Franklin (R-Florida) recently led their colleagues in demanding answers from the Pentagon regarding troubling statements made by Kelisa Wing, the Department of Defense Education Activity’s chief of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A recent Fox News article uncovered a June 2020 tweet by Wing in which she stated: “I’m exhausted with these white folx in these [professional development] sessions this lady had the CAUdacity [Caucasian audacity] to say black people can be racist too.”

Wing, who oversees curriculum at DoDEA, helped write children’s books on defunding the police, Black Lives Matter, and white privilege, the lawmakers say, and point out that in “What is White Privilege?” she included lines such as: “If you are White you might feel bad about hurting others or you might feel afraid to lose this privilege.”

“These racially divisive comments are directly counterproductive to the goal of a professional and diverse military,” Gallagher and the representatives wrote. “We must oppose racism wherever it occurs, but an approach that singles out one group or race is at odds with the military’s proud history of racial integration. For these reasons, we are concerned that Ms. Wing’s rhetoric is not in line with the values and standards of the DoD.”

What’s more, the letter stated, the lawmakers had reservations about the judgement of DoDEA director Thomas Brady.

“Director Brady once stated, ‘Kelisa Wing is exactly the right person to lead our efforts in building on the foundational work done to support meaningful change in our organization,’ which shows either poor judgement or willful ignorance,” the letter stated.

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) provides K-12 education for the military community in the U.S. and across the globe. In her role as chief of diversity, equity, and inclusion, Wing has significant influence over what is taught to children in the DoD community, making her comments particularly concerning, the lawmakers asserted.

Co-signers of the letter include: Tom McClintock (R-CA), Michael Waltz (R-FL), Chip Roy (R-TX), Dan Crenshaw (R-TX), Austin Scott (R-GA), Scott DesJarlais (R-TN), Ronny L. Jackson (R-TX), Doug Lamborn (R-CO), Pat Fallon (R-TX), Mary E. Miller (R-IL), Bob Gibbs (R-OH), Gus M. Bilirakis (R-FL), Kat Cammack (R-FL), Ralph Norman (R-SC), Debbie Lesko (R-AZ), Vicky Hartzler (R-MO), Matt Gaetz (R-FL), Neal P. Dunn, M.D. (R-FL), and Louie Gohmert (R-TX).

## Crisis

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But there are some things that can be done, both short-term and long-term. First, boot the Democrats and the Biden administration out of office and stop the spending. That’s a better way to cure inflation than higher interest rates, and it will nudge reluctant workers back into the workforce when they exhaust their stimulus reserves.

We need to retool the education system so that education becomes aligned with the economy — it will likely take universal school choice to accomplish this — and so trade schools and occupa-

tions will become valued again. We need intellectuals and college-educated professionals, but we also need the literal back-bone of the nation’s supply chain and industrial production system, the skilled and trained blue-collar worker. A government school monopoly system dulls the former and dispatches the latter into thin air.

There is also still a huge backlog of immigrant work visa applications. During the pandemic that backlog prevented some 2 million foreign workers from legally coming here temporarily to work and there is still a sizable backlog in a sluggish system. That needs to be fixed.

And then there are gov-

ernment regulations that actively obstruct many professionals by making it hard through occupational licensing for workers to work. Connor Boyack of Deseret News calls such licenses “government permission slips,” and they are a deterrent to work, not an incentive.

And, to the extent they depress wages, onerous business regulations are another obstacle to a healthy labor force participation rate. Indeed, one of the more overlooked contributors over the years to a declining labor participation rate is the inversely proportional rise of the regulatory state.

More obstacles are the on-

going Covid work restrictions that compel workers to vaccinate or wear masks to work. All of those should be ended immediately.

Lawmakers, too, have a role to play, and some of them have already stepped up to the plate. Last year, state Rep Amy Loudenbeck (R-Clinton) and Northwoods state Sen. Mary Felzkowski (R-Irma) authored a bill to safely expand the times of day that 14- and 15-year-olds could work. The bill passed the Legislature, but, of course, being a Democrat, Evers vetoed it.

Currently U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson is proposing to incentivize seniors back into the workforce by waiving

the payroll tax.

No one of those possibilities will by themselves resolve the labor deficit overnight. Demographics dictate that we are on a long haul when it comes to the workforce shortage. But they could all help, and cumulatively over time make a big difference.

Of course, the biggest thing we can do right now is to stop throwing fuel on the policy fire, and that means defeating the Democrats in November and in 2024.

With the right electoral outcomes, we could replace our labor shortage with a Democratic shortage, and, for a change, that would be a rather nice shortage to have.