

Job count still short

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By David Osterberg

The large headline in the Jan. 8 Gazette tells readers that 2.2 million jobs were added in 2004. The article claims it is the biggest gain since 1999. Well, yes, it was easily the best of President Bush's years, since the previous three had seen negative job growth using the same set of statistics that garnered the big headline.

However, the really good job creation years were those when Bill Clinton or Ronald Reagan were president. In 1994, 3.8 million new jobs were created. In 1997, 3.3 million were. Even with a much lower total population in 1984, 3.9 million new jobs were created as we came out of a recession. During the eight years of the Clinton administration, 23 million jobs were created. That is job growth to crow about.

Second point. The number of jobs at the end of 2004 are fewer than the number when President Bush took office in January 2001. Yes, we had a recession, but in the last 60 years, it has never taken this long to get back to a pre-recession job count. To see that this is true go to the vast source of such statistics kept by the Bureau of Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov>.

Third point. In Iowa, we are still 19,000 jobs behind where we were when the last recession began in March 2001. Yet in the nearly four years since then we have had four graduating classes, with many new potential workers. We needed jobs for them as well.

Finally, the quality of jobs created in the last four years is inferior to the ones in the past in wages and benefits. We've lost good jobs and replaced them with worse jobs.

So the big headline above the Associated Press story in the Jan. 8 Gazette is premature. We should wait to celebrate at least until we are back to where we were when the jobs started vanishing. Better yet, wait until we've created enough economic activity to provide jobs for the growing labor force as well.

News articles that tell only part of the story should not be given such attention.

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