

Postal service could cut Saturday mail

The U.S. Postal Service, losing business at a rapid clip to e-mail, private delivery services and poor or slow service, and bleeding cash in the recession, now wants to drop Saturday mail delivery to shore up its budget.

The service lost \$3.8 billion last year and claims it can save \$3 billion or more by ending Saturday delivery effective Oct. 1. Post offices and sorting centers would remain open, and mail trucks would make regular runs; only door-to-door delivery would end.

Postmaster General Jack Potter has been pushing to cut Saturday since last year, but Congress must approve any change in delivery by the government-controlled service. That may not be likely.

But why is the operation in so much trouble? Hasn't it always delivered the mail six days a week?

The answer to the second question is yes, but now its losses are mounting, and the service has run out of places to borrow to cover its deficit. It needs to cut costs, and soon. Cutting a day out of the delivery schedule, allowing a major reduction in the carrier force nationwide, may seem the easiest way to do that.

Experts say the postal budget is 80 percent labor, so any cuts have to come out of people. But postal unions are strong, influential in Washington, and they've negotiated some of the best contracts in the nation. The average postal worker now reportedly makes \$75,000 a year, with the same pay rates in force in New York as in Oberlin. Average spending per employee is \$81,000 with generous benefits, reportedly about 30 percent more than private competitors.

It's unlikely that postal pay will be cut, and possibly unfair to current workers. However, the service could seek contracts similar to those in other industries which allow firms to hire new workers at more bearable rates.

The service would have lost \$7 billion last year had not Congress given it some breathing room on pensions. And pensions are a big issue. The service is the only government agency required to pay for its retirement benefits up front. Eliminating that rule would put the service in the black, at least for now. Ending Saturday mail would not.

Congress, faced with a potentially unpopular decision to eliminate a delivery day, might finally act on the pension issue. It has avoided doing anything for years, mostly because the money paid into this fund helps hold down the federal deficit — on paper. That is only an accounting issue, but in Washington, that means everything.

Another threat the service uses is to close more small-town post offices and lay off workers. Neither is popular.

Something has to give. Mr. Potter expects first-class mail volume to decline another 37 percent as more bills, letters, payments and documents shift to the Internet. Competitors are closing in on parcel business. The system could run out of cash.

Our view is that management and the unions need to get together, as has happened in autos and other industries, and rewrite their contracts. Congress should change the rules on pensions, because the mail is vital to our economy and our communities.

And we should keep Saturday delivery to maintain mail volume without scaring off even more business. Mailer groups, from newspapers to direct mail and catalog users, agree. They say the savings aren't enough, and the damage potential is great.

The Postal Service just cannot save itself by cutting. It must be free to compete, and that includes better union contracts and an end to unreasonable pension payments, not the end of Saturday mail.

—Steve Haynes



To...the students at Norton Community High School who stand up for high standards and teaching. (called in)

To...the work being done at the Dr. Lyon's House. (called in)

To...the Hansen Scholarship winners. (called in)

To...everyone who gave blood yesterday. (called in)

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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

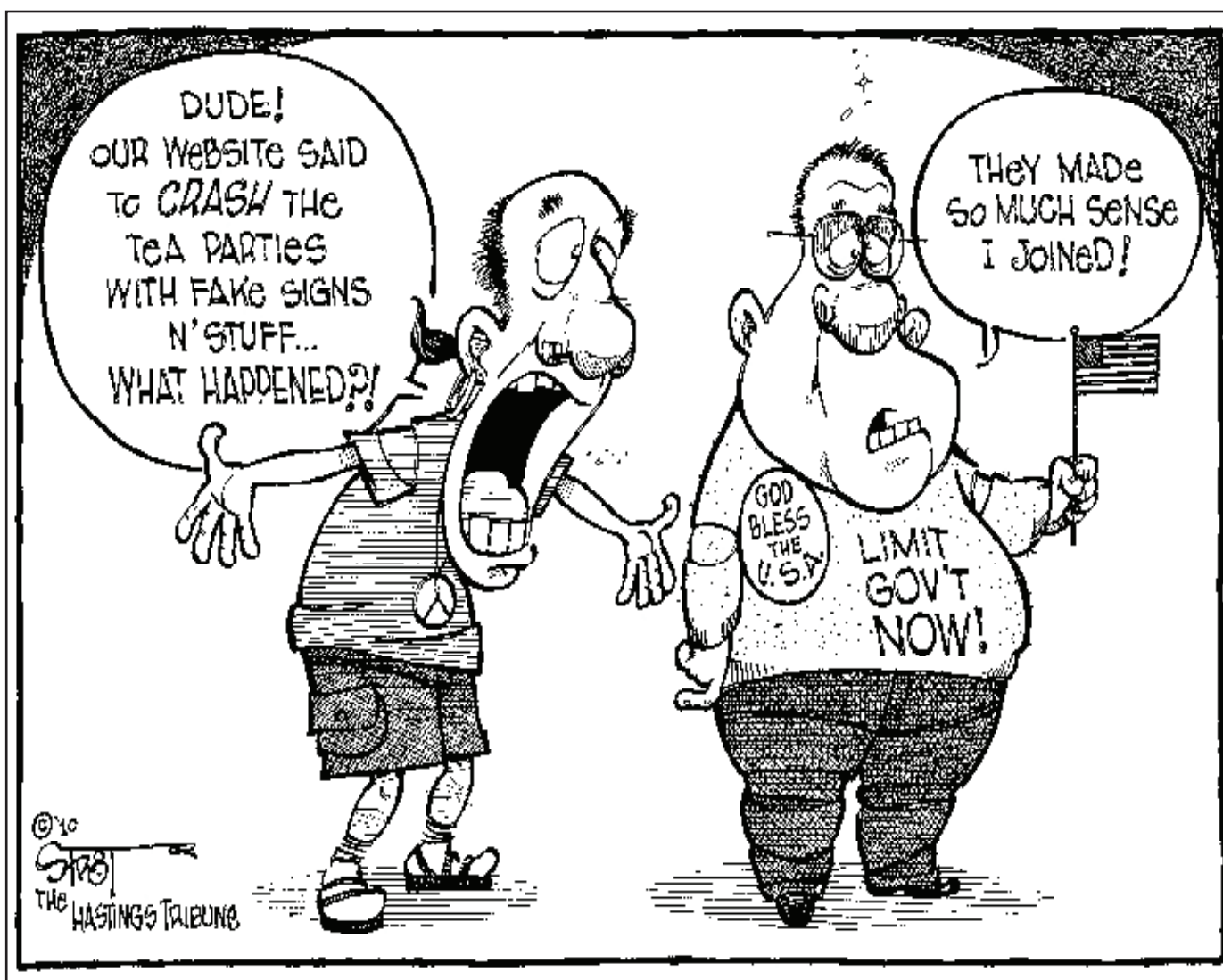
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Animal rights, welfare differences

We have all seen television commercials funded by the Humane Society of the United States. These commercials show neglected, abused, malnourished and maimed animals in desperate need of food, shelter and a loving family. These commercials are designed to tug at our hearts. Being the kind compassionate people that we are, we donate, thinking that our money will help at least one animal.

A new Web site, HumaneWatch.org, was recently launched by The Center for Consumer Freedom. (CCF) will constantly monitor activities of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). HumaneWatch.org includes a growing document library and a database capable of tracking the dozens of organizations that make up HSUS. HSUS is the most powerful force in the animal rights movement. Farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, and all involved in agriculture maintain animal welfare as a way of life.

What is the difference between animal rights and animal welfare? Animal Rights is a philosophical view that animals have rights similar or the same as humans. True animal rights proponents believe that humans do not have the right to use animals at all, banning the use of animals by humans. Animal rights proponents support laws and regulations that would prohibit rodeos, circuses, hunting, life-saving medical research using animals, raising livestock for food,

Vet tips Dr. Sara White



zoos and marine parks, and the breeding of purebred pets for any use. Animal rights proponents believe that violence, misinformation and publicity stunts are valid uses of the funding donated to their tax-exempt organizations for the purpose of helping animals.

Animal welfare, as defined by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), is a human responsibility that encompasses all aspects of animal well-being, including proper housing, management, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, humane handling, and when necessary, humane euthanasia. Animal welfare proponents seek to improve the treatment and well-being of animals. The AVMA, as a medical authority for the health and welfare of animals, has made a list of eight integrated principles for developing and evaluating animal welfare policies, resolutions and actions. For more information go to www.avma.org.

Americans who enjoy meat, cheese, eggs and milk should be concerned with the HSUS. This organization is not affil-

ated with our local animal shelters, despite the dog and cat commercials seen on television. They do not run spay-neuter programs or take in abused, neglected or stray pets, despite portraying the image of an animal protection agency dedicated to animal welfare.

While most local animal shelters are strapped for cash, this organization has accumulated \$113 million in assets. HSUS raises nearly \$100 million annually from Americans who largely believe their donations help support local pet shelters and improve the lives of dogs and cats. According to CCF, less than one-half of 1 percent of the 2008 HSUS budget was allocated to humane societies that house unwanted pets. CCF says that much of the money raised by HSUS is used to distribute animal rights propaganda and fund far-reaching anti-meat campaigns.

So, what should we do? We should turn off the television when we see a commercial sponsored by the HSUS. More importantly, we should use our money wisely, keeping it local, donating to our community animal shelter. Our Norton Animal Shelter is always in need of donated items, money, and most of all, willing families to adopt animals in need. Please call us at 785-877-2411 or the Norton Animal Shelter at 785-874-4294 to find out how you can help in our local community.

Arizona tightens immigration laws

A few years back, the Kansas State Board of Education chose to delete the teaching of evolution from the state's science curriculum. That action sent science based industries running the other direction. I wondered at the time if I would ever feel happy about my home state's decisions, but now compared to some other states, Kansas looks like, well, Oz.

Arizona's legislature passed a bill this week meant to tighten immigration in the busiest border state. In doing so, they have put the stamp of approval for law enforcement to stop someone because they might be illegal. Now as much as we all want to get control of the border situation, it is important to not throw out the baby with the bathwater so to speak. Arizona has an estimated 490,000 illegal immigrants versus 790,000 legal ones. It isn't as if law enforcement can

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



touch the back of the suspect and glean an answer. Not only is the implementing of this bill a difficult task, it is an expensive one. Arizona is listed as one of the ten most financially unstable states and this possible law will wreak havoc with the state's financial stability. Hopefully, Arizona's Governor, Jan Brewer, will determine this bill is not in anyone's best interest and refuse to sign it.

Last Friday Arizona's governor signed a law allowing citizens to carry a concealed weapon without a permit. This

means anyone over 21 may carry a concealed weapon with no background checks or classes. Two other states, Vermont and Alaska, have similar laws. Arizona's legislature certainly has been busy. Then there are the states, Colorado among them, considering allowing guns on college campuses...no further comments are necessary to the sane mind.

Georgia's, (USA), Senate recently passed a law making it illegal for anyone or any government to implant microchips into a human body, without one's permission. The law making body believed it was such a potential threat they introduced the legislation and it became law. This action gives new meaning to the Boy Scout motto, 'Be prepared.'

And to think they used to believe all strange things came out of California. Guess what? They were wrong.

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