

The battle between the two parties

Political gamesmanship at its best and worst is underway in Washington as both Republicans and Democrats try to wrestle with the country's mounting debt, but at the same time trying to paint the other side as the villain in the story.

Republican Speaker of the House, Rep. John Boehner said, "When we say we are going to cut spending, read my lips: We are going to cut spending." is reminiscent of the infamous phrase from President George W. Bush from 1988 "read my lips no new taxes" and he had to eat those when he raised taxes.

Boehner and the Republican majority in the House are making their first stab at cutting the budget for this year passing a bill on Saturday to cut \$61 billion - a bit below the announced \$100 billion back in November - but the cuts are made in such a way it is unlikely the Senate, which is narrowly controlled by Democrats, will approve the bill.

The major problem is the approaching deadline of Friday, March 4, when the continuing resolution approved in December runs out and the prospect looms of a federal government shut down.

Boehner and most of his party don't want to see the government shut down, but many of the new members who have ties to the Tea Party are pushing for more drastic cuts and are more willing to see the shut down happen feeling it is the kind of brinksmanship it will take to get their stop spending message a priority.

Another short-term extension to keep the government funding at the existing level for another 90 days is not in Boehner's plans, and he has said he would not allow such an extension to reach the House floor.

For their part the Democrats are suggesting other budget cuts, but as is usually said in many negotiations the two sides are far apart.

"It looks like Boehner has come close to freezing himself into a position in which a government shutdown is inevitable," said Thomas Mann, a congressional scholar at The Brookings Institution.

Mann pointed out the threat of a shutdown comes as Republicans fight to secure cuts to a relatively small part of the budget. The cuts aren't to the large programs - Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security - that make up two-thirds of the budget. They are to non-defense discretionary spending, which totals about 12.3 percent of the budget.

Both parties know the big issues of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security have to be dealt with to have any chance to reduce the budget deficits, but neither side wants to be the first to say what changes need to be done in these major programs. The first side who does more than say they have to do something will find themselves in the same corner as Boehner and President George W. Bush with the "read my lips" comments.

For the Democrats part the Health Care Reform passed last year had a cut of \$500 million to Medicare, that was pointed out and opposed by Republicans at the time.

Both sides in the political arena are playing with billions of dollars, but behind many of those are the people who live on Social Security, Medicaid or use Medicare for their medical needs.

Cutting spending is never easy, and neither side seems to be able to get beyond the grandstanding as the deadline nears. The Republicans tried the government shutdown avenue once before, and it did not do anyone any good. We hope for all Americans, the two sides can reach a compromise.

- Tom Betz

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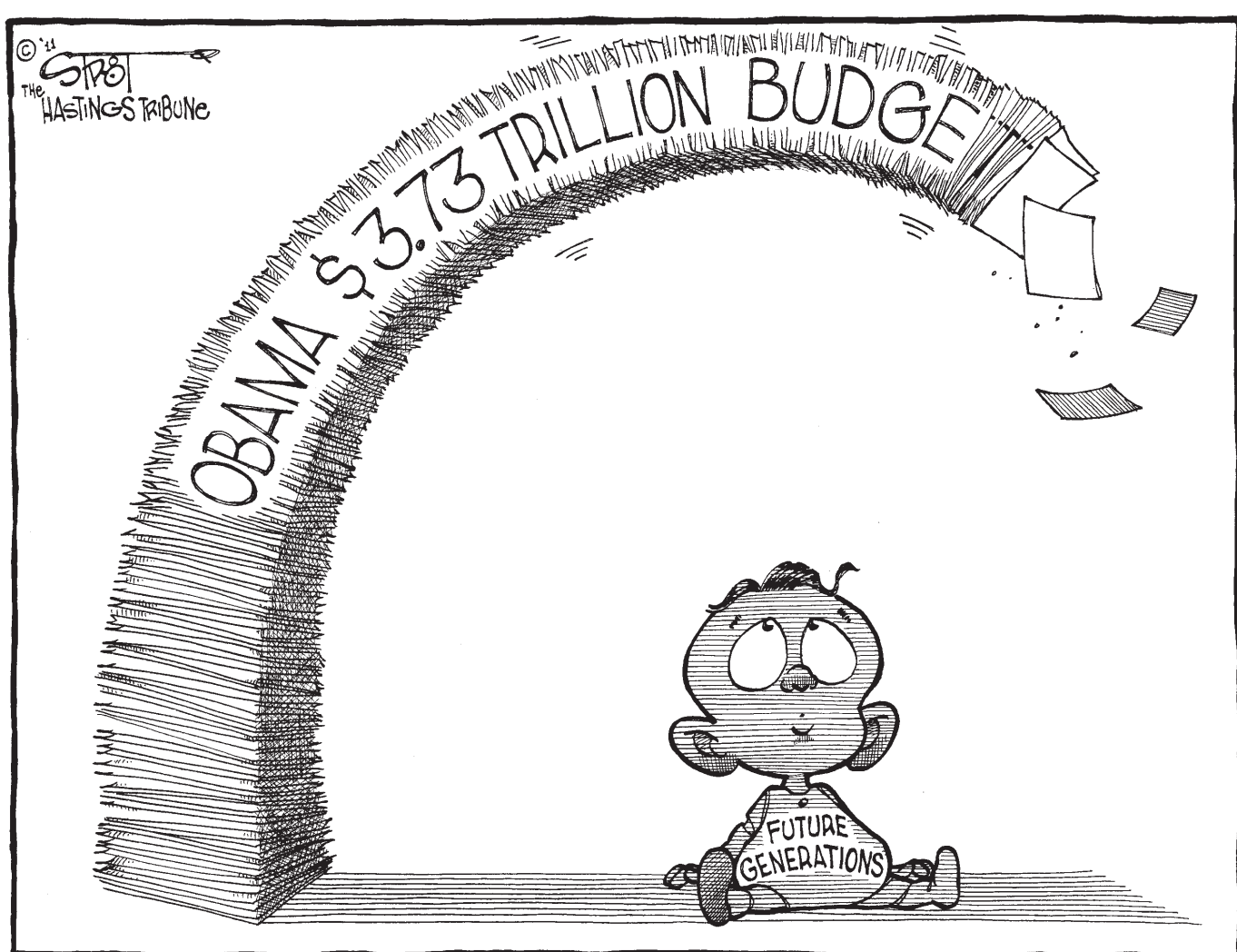
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Things from the past seem new today

Roadtrip! The kitchen remodel at my brother, Dick, and his wife, Donna's, house is progressing. However, it's time to install the kitchen sink and the kind she wants is not to be found locally.

That means one thing: Donna and I get to go shopping. And, wouldn't you know it - the men want to go along. The weather forecast is for more wind and cold so neither one of them wanted anything to do with the outside. Can't say as I blame them. Besides, if there is anyone I would even consider being cooped up in a car with for more than two hours it would be Dick and Donna. You know how good conversation makes time pass quickly? When you're with them time flies and you're almost sad when the trip is over.

-ob-

Kids now-a-days think they invented texting shorthand. You know bff (best friends forever) and c u (see you).

We were using this kind of abbreviated messaging 50 years ago. Granted, it was

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



hand-written but, it was like a secret language our parents didn't understand. Which, of course, was the point.

Back in "the day" we actually wrote letters (with stationery, a stamp and everything) to each other. You wouldn't think of mailing it without emblazoning S.W.A.K. on the outside of the envelope. Everybody knew that meant "Sealed With A Kiss".

This shorthand even infiltrated the spoken word. Pajamas became Pjs; a parent would tell a child to "straighten up PDQ"... that meant Pretty Darn Quick:

and if something was a rush job, you would say, "I need this ASAP."

The military should probably be credited with inventing the acronym. Everyone knew what their MOS (Military Occupational Speciality) was. A power unit was a P/U. Perhaps you had to know the context before you knew the meaning of PA. It could have meant "pad abort", "pending availability", "pilotless aircraft", "point of aim", "power amplifier", "protected area", "precision attack", "per annum", or "performance analysis".

If someone yelled, "Take cover! There's a PA coming in for a landing!" You knew they weren't warning you of "pending availability".

-ob-

I had several comments on my Facebook entry about Jim and my giant Valentine on the side of our barn. All were positive, however, one friend said if her husband ever did something like that she would think he was having an affair.

Cattle seem to be weathering the storms

Insight

John Schlageck

Nestled in the hills of the Saline River Valley, the Berndt family cowherd has weathered the below-zero temperatures and the bitter-cold northerly winds during the first half of February. Their 115-head cowherd came off summer pastures in great shape and headed into the winter months fat and sassy. Grazing time spent on milo stocks throughout the fall also contributed to this healthy condition.

Weather conditions cooperated during January. Two minor snows, little wind and seasonal temps helped the cowherd remain in tip-top shape. Another bonus was last year's fall rains that provided lush growth of the Berndt pastureland and abundant grazing for the family cowherd until the first flurries in January.

Two "mini-blizzards" during the first half of February dumped a total of nearly a foot and a half of new snow. Terrible winds and temperatures that fell to nearly 20 degrees below zero accompanied it.

Throughout this recent cold snap, the Berndt cattle did remarkably well.

"We fed them a little extra silage and big round bales to keep their heat generation up," Leslie Berndt says. "Those gals are looking for more food when it gets

bitter cold like that. Grain in the silage provides much-needed protein."

Fortunately the cows did not begin calving until the second week of February. When the first cow delivered twins, the Berndts rounded up the new-born calves, along with their mamma, and took them to a shed to keep warm.

During the calving season, the Berndts spend long hours day and night checking their cowherd. While the cows are acclimated to the cold temperatures, below zero wind chills will impact their stock in a negative way.

Not only were the Berndt cattle nestled in the hills, this pasture is heavily wooded and provides complete protection from such winds. The cowherd has another invaluable asset - a natural spring stays open and provides water year 'round. This spring flows out of the hillside and runs into a pool in the ground.

And while they haven't had to doctor any livestock yet this winter should

such an occasion arise, the Berndts are prepared. Cattle needing medical attention are loaded up and taken to their local veterinarian.

"The cattle are doing really well," Berndt reports. "They're healthy, cattle prices are unheard of and we're happy."

Still, below freezing temperatures remain cause for a vigilant watch over the cowherd. There's still plenty of winter left and another snow accompanied by strong winds and sub-freezing temperatures could be just around the corner.

Berndt looks forward to continuation of the recent warm up. He looks forward to more 60-degree days and knows that one more day of no snow and rising temperatures means one more day closer to spring.

With most of the snow melted, grass is beginning to perk up and his cattle are looking to eat it as they rummage around the pasture. With all of the snowfall and moisture this region of the rural Kansas landscape has turned into a sloppy, muddy mess.

"That's part of it," Berndt smiles. "We can live with that."

Put your two cents worth in on my poll

Well, this is the final week for my GOP Presidential Straw Poll. Yes, it is early, and it is painting a rather unexpected picture. I have been doing this for a lot of years and this one is telling me a real story. When you see the results, you'll be surprised. There are a few shockers in the bunch. So.....if you haven't as yet e-mailed your choice, I'm counting on you to do that in short order. And as always, THANKSTO to those of you who have participated and THANKS in advance to those of you who might have forgotten, but will get'er done!

--Tom e-mail <mailto:milehitom@hotmail.com>milehitom@hotmail.com

Stop
Look
Listen

Tom Dreiling



Thumbs Up
Thanks to all the volunteers who donate their time, energy and money towards beautifying the flower beds around the city in the spring. Brought in.

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