

The House to adjourn for 2011

By: Congressman Tim Huelskamp

The House is close to adjourning for 2011, but getting here has not been without a fight.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to represent Kansas in Congress this year. I have learned a lot working for you in Washington, but the best instructions I have received on my trips home every weekend during Session and in more than 70 town halls across the Big First. Those who have gotten in touch with my office or attended a town hall fortunately have not been shy when it comes to giving their guidance!

When I entered Congress a little less than a year ago, I did so with a commitment to the good folks of the First District of Kansas that I would fight for our shared values and goals: to restrain the federal government in our day-to-day lives, to curb excessive and out-of-control spending, and to promote and protect life and families. Throughout the course of this year, I have written you each week about votes the House has taken and how such votes uphold or undercut our shared values.

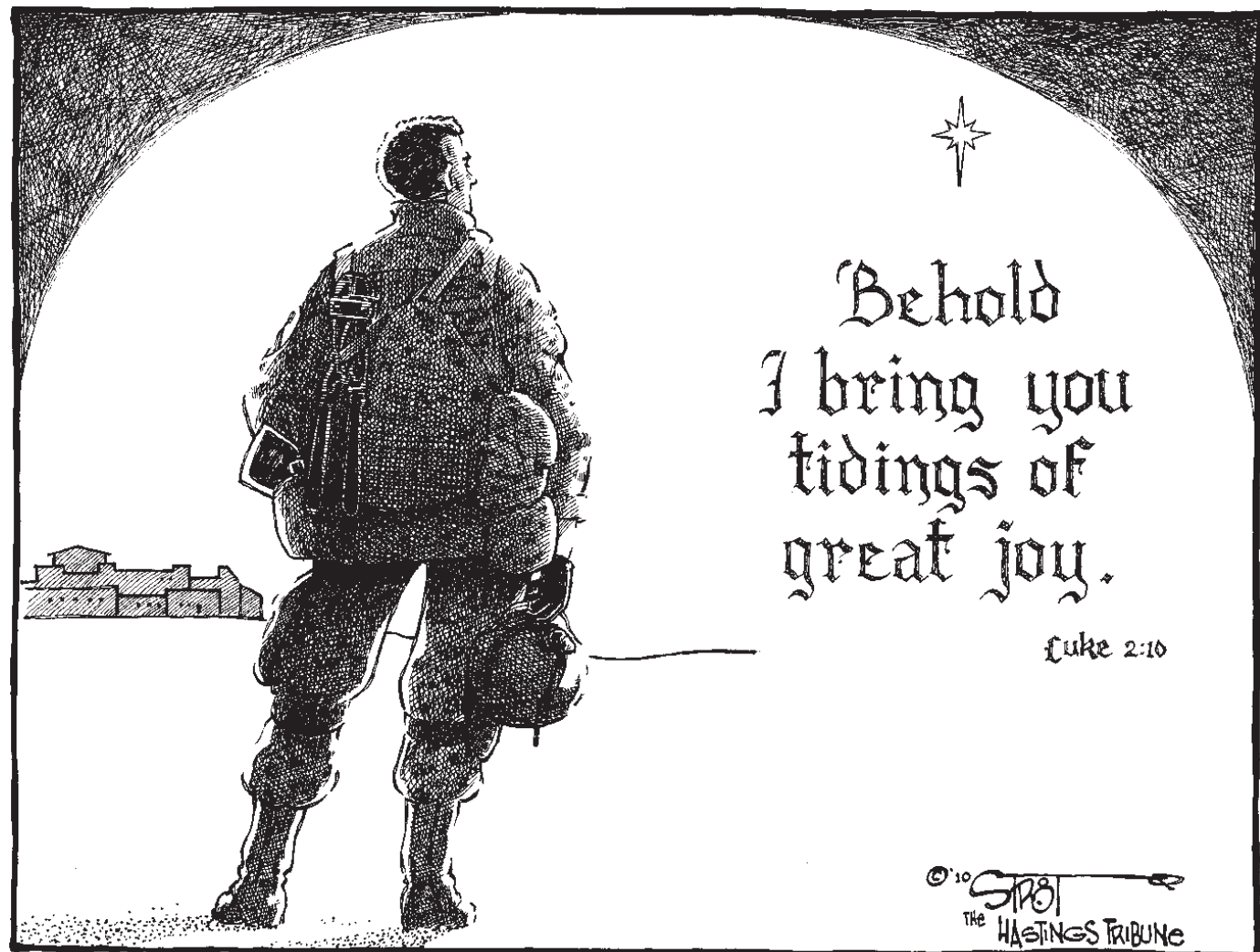
While sometimes it is preferable to throw in the towel for the sake of "just getting something done," you and I both know that is the easy way out. No one ever said this would be simple. Though the government teetered on the brink of "shutdown" a couple of times this year, there was significant reason: America has \$15 trillion in debt and has run trillion-dollar deficits for several years in a row, yet some think we can get by without making a single change to the reckless spending and borrowing that created this problem. Every time today's "leaders" punt on the opportunity to cut spending, they agree to further indebted our children and grandchildren. This is the real crux of the problem: current politicians gain at the expense of the future. It should not be about the next election; it should be about the next generation.

There are times to compromise, which is why I supported the year-long extension of the Social Security tax holiday this last week. Included with it were provisions to force the President to make a decision on the Keystone XL Pipeline (which will create about 20,000 new jobs), reform unemployment benefits in order to preserve them for those who most need them, and renew important elements of the tax code that help small business. With 25 million Americans out of work or looking for more work and many families just getting by, this legislation satisfies many immediate needs.

But there are times when you can only stand firm, which is why I voted against a \$1 trillion-plus "megabus" of a spending bill. When the House passed its budget in April, it established a firm spending cap. But this spending cap was quickly ignored and enlarged just a few months later with the August debt limit increase. And last week, this even higher level was also breached - so much for spending caps! When a family is ear-deep in debt, one can't simply increase spending time and time again. But it's more than this lack of credible spending discipline that drew my opposition.

Because the Senate has failed to take up more than two dozen jobs bills or pass a budget in nearly 1,000 days, the only way for the House to make changes is with its power of the purse. While there were many things to like and support in this spending bill, I could not stand idly by while the House conceded legislation we have passed upon demand of the American people. In this bill, Planned Parenthood will continue to receive nearly \$300 million of your tax subsidies. Doctors, nurses, and pharmacists will still lack permanent protections from being forced to perform or provide medical procedures that conflict with their religious, ethical, or moral beliefs. The privacy-threatening federal database envisioned under Obamacare will go forward. And massive new job-killing EPA regulations were not thwarted.

"Principles over politics" is the guiding philosophy for our office and I believe it is one most Kansans try to practice, too. Unfortunately, politics is all too often the game of here and now in Washington. The challenges America faces are the result of years of putting the present ahead of the future. It is my hope that when my colleagues return home for the holidays and hear from their constituents, they will hear the same things I am likely to hear from you: do not give up the fight for our shared values.



Childhood memories of Christmas gifts

It was Christmas Eve, 1963; ending a year of unbelievable tragedy. The Kennedy assassination was still fresh in our minds. Never did we believe our country would fall victim to a fate seemingly reserved for dictatorships, but this night was different. This night would be a memory framed in my 17 year old mind forever.

My mother had always loved the Ice Capades and whenever possible we would go to Denver to marvel at those dancers on ice, three time Olympic Gold medalist, Sonia Henie, among them. For those who are too young to know, she was a Norwegian figure skater who is credited with transforming ice skating by introducing ballet moves. As a child I dreamt of gliding alongside her in the Denver Coliseum, but practicing my routine was difficult as Norton didn't have an ice rink until....

In that year community leaders didn't agonize over chipping marble or sidewalks cracked as Christmas

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



lights took to the skies, but rather about dreams of children and providing experiences. An ice rink was set up down in the swimming pool parking lot, it was frozen over and as the saying goes, voile, we had an ice rink.

It would have been my dad's 57th birthday, that December 24th, as well as my parents' wedding anniversary. On Christmas Eve I was allowed to choose one present to open and the big heavy one, I was sure, held ice skates. I was right.

I asked my dad if we could go to the rink and in that cold night air he gave me pointers on ice skating, a favorite

childhood pastime of his. In fact, my mother used to tell how her brothers would skate Sunday afternoons from Edmond to Lenora. I learned that night what an important role one's ankles played in staying upright on the ice, let alone gliding. My memory imagines me sailing with ease over the ice; the reality was, as I'm sure my dad knew, it was extremely cold and tiring, something not portrayed by the professional skaters at the Ice Follies.

This memory brings back fond memories of my father and reminds me it isn't the big things which are endearing to our children. It is, above all, a gift more precious than any... time and attention. Gifts no one else can wrap up and deliver. It also reminds me of a community dedicated to its youth, to provide experiences with priorities on people. P.S. Do you remember the Courthouse Christmas Lights? Vote carefully. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Making the family Christmas work for everyone

A lot of families struggle trying to make Christmas perfect. How do we extend our traditions, yet make allowances for natural changes.

The oldest senior citizens have perhaps the most difficulty. They are accustomed to hosting family parties. However their homes become too small for the ever increasing crowd. They may not be physically able to decorate, set up, clean and cook for a large numbers of people. Limited financial resources may not allow them to buy the gifts or extra food they desire for family and friends.

Rationally I can think of all sorts of alternatives. Does the celebration have to be on Christmas Day? Why not choose another day or even time of year?

Just this month I decided my siblings should start celebrating Christmas the weekend of my December birthday. This year I was 60. My sister in St Francis thought we should meet in Norton for lunch. We included brother David in our plans. He's at Lenora so

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



that was easy!

The big surprise was when Sue walked in. She lives in Wichita. Rachel called her, just to let her know we were getting together and she said, "I guess I'll come!"

We ate at the Mexican restaurant. I have to give them a plug because we held a table hostage for about three hours and they let Rachel bring a decadent chocolate cake in! Besides the birthday stuff, we did some exchanging of Christmas goodies!

So why not have an annual Pre-Christmas party hence forward? We could invite all the kids and grandkids. It is always enjoyable spending time with them. However if they can't come so be it! I cannot think when the last

time was just my siblings and spouses had an opportunity to sit and visit as we did that day! I enjoyed myself so much I just told everyone how old I am.

Stressing out over who is going to host and how to coordinate everyone's schedule ruins many a Christmas.

Forcing a multi-generational Christmas event on family members who are reluctant to participate will not bring a family close. A more relaxed party (no one had to cook for) on another day at a neutral site (no one had to clean) may be just the thing.

I've been assimilating my very rational thoughts on Christmas celebrations for a while now.

We can attempt to take control of Christmas like Clark Griswold and make everything the biggest and the best. I've done that!

Or we can savor every little gift that comes our way!

Like a baby in a stable!
My wish for all this Christmas and always: PEACE

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