

1,200 days in the wilderness

By U.S. Representative Tim Huelskamp

Aug. 11 marked 1,200 days since the U.S. Senate last passed a budget. 1,200 days.

A family business or corporation could not operate even 30 days – let alone 1,200 – without a plan for how it would spend and borrow money. Even a household cannot function without some semblance of an idea about where money goes.

Yet, somehow, the U.S. Senate believes America can operate responsibly without a budget.

Without a budget, it is little wonder that the federal government borrows \$4 billion a day, resulting in trillion-dollar annual deficits and a \$16 trillion mountain of debt.

Without a budget, it is little wonder that the last time the federal government actually cut spending was before Elvis Presley released his debut album – that's 1955.

Without a budget, it is little wonder that the "solution" favored by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and President Obama is to just find a way to get more money – without having to cut spending. They would rather allow all the Bush-Obama tax relief to expire than produce a budget.

If only Washington could behave more like American businesses and families. When they face hard times, rarely is there the option to find new money; no, the only choice is to rein in spending. But, instead, Washington just continues to spend more than it takes in.

According to Congressional Budget Office data aggregated by the Heritage Foundation, spending as a share of the nation's economy averaged 20.2 percent between 1960 and 2008. Revenue averaged 18.1 percent. Yet, in 2012, spending is projected to account for 23.3 percent and revenue for 16.1 percent. So much for a balanced approach!

Certainly a poor-performing economy is the chief reason that Washington has less revenue. The formula is easy: the less economic activity, the lower the tax revenue. But, rather than address the reasons why our economy is in a shambles, too many in Washington – including Harry Reid and President Obama – would rather just spend more money we do not have and raise taxes.

Without a plan for spending, Washington will continue to spend more than it takes in. And, Washington will continue to send a message of uncertainty to businesses and consumers – the very entities and individuals we need to engage in commerce (and, thus, spur increased revenue as a result of more economic activity).

Not only would a budget fix Washington's spending woes, but so too would comprehensive tax reform. While the House has passed a one-year extension of all the major Bush-Obama tax cuts, we have also advanced a bill paving the path for full, comprehensive reform in 2013. Perhaps Sen. Reid and President Obama could take a little time off the campaign trail to tackle this issue, too.

America cannot afford to wait another 1,200 days for a budget or for an overhaul of our outdated, ineffective and punitive tax code.



Therapy, gratitude and remembrance

What do you get when you put three women together in a car for about seven hours on a weekend? You get the solution to world peace; you get advice on how to raise your kids; you get how to make good meatloaf; and you get how to deal with a picky eater. You also get a chance to just have "girl talk", which is the best therapy in the world.

Every year I go to a women's retreat held about 3 1/2 hours away. Women from our church carpool down and we schedule in an extra hour or two so we have enough time to lunch and shop. It's an event I look forward to and Jim knows I am going, no matter what.

This year he should have gone to retreat as an "honorary" woman because he did more to help me get ready than I did. I was asked to lead a workshop on a deep spiritual subject and I was struggling with the preparation. I knew what I wanted to say, but I didn't know how to say it. That's where Jim stepped in and saved the workshop. My material would have filled about five minutes; which would have left about 40 minutes of uncomfortable silence. He helped me organize and expound on my thoughts and knew the scriptural references I needed to support the statements. He even did some of the typing for me. When I came home I told him that I had given him credit for all his help.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



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There are teachers, and there are educators. Oran Milner was an educator and so much more.

Mr. Milner died a few days ago and those of us who were fortunate enough to have had him for a teacher will mourn his passing.

I was an eighth grader when our little country school could no longer keep the doors open and it was decided to consolidate Spring Branch into the Norcatour school district. What a change from country school to town school. Riding the bus, hot lunches, organized sports and boys in our class of formerly all girls.

Mr. Milner was the school principal and eighth grade teacher. He taught all subjects with authority and conviction. He, himself, was probably one of the most intelligent people I have ever met, but he had the talent of being able to transmit his knowledge to squirmy, hormonal 14-year olds.

More than book knowledge he also taught us integrity, compassion and character. He exemplified these

qualities. He was liberal with his praise, but when you got a compliment from Mr. Milner, it felt like you were the greatest. Like you were the first person in the world to figure out multiplication or you threw the ball faster and straighter than any other ballplayer ever had.

He was always Mr. Milner to me. It would have been impossible to call him "Oran." The year my daughters and I lived with Mom after Dad died, my daughter, Kara, had him for her fifth grade teacher. It made for interesting parent/teacher conferences; to once have been his pupil then to be the parent of one of his pupils. I hope my mother was as proud of me after one of those conferences as I was of Kara after hearing a glowing report on not only her academic progress but her personal growth. He was always able to make you feel special.

Mr. Milner and his wife were both teachers. They never had children of their own, but they had impact of the lives and future of thousands. First through shaping the lives of the students, themselves; then through the children of those students; and their children; and their children.

Mr. Milner might have said he was just doing his job. But it was so much more than that. And I pray that he will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Care for the animals and customers concerns

While farmers and ranchers have always adhered to sound principles of animal husbandry and livestock care, society's views on animal welfare continue to evolve.

Today, there is a heightened awareness of the animal's quality of life. While there are extreme fringe groups, "activists" if you will, many people have honest questions and concerns about the quality of life for animals while they are in the production environment.

Who are these people? These people are average individuals. They're you, they're me.

Today's informed consumer wants to know that while that sow is going through the production cycle she has a reasonable quality of life.

Consumers want to know that animals are not abused, subjected to inhumane conditions, are well cared for and that

the people who care for them honestly care for them.

Agriculture cannot afford to seek out a "culprit" or "scapegoat" for the animal welfare issue. Agriculture cannot afford to blame anyone. Those in the livestock industry must view this as our culture and society, continually evolving and coming to terms with new types of social issues. It just so happens that animals have become integrated into this process.

One reason for this interest in animal welfare may be that agriculture has become so highly regarded, so

Insight

John Schlageck



productive throughout the world. Today, Western European, Japanese and U.S. consumers do not have to worry about where their next meal comes from.

Whether we like it or not, farmers and ranchers are going to have to accept and ensure that sound animal husbandry practices are used.

If agricultural producers honestly show they are putting effort into meeting a certain standard of care that is conducive to a healthy animal, the public will accept and embrace those who raise and care for livestock.

Livestock producers must listen to societal and consumer concerns and be responsive. We must continue to enhance animal well-being throughout the life cycle of our food-producing animals. And we must be willing to listen to and have conversations with those than enjoy eating meat.

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