

A thankful nation honors its Veterans

By: Congressman Tim Huelskamp

The service to our nation our veterans provided can never be fully repaid. But, Americans like me who are indebted to their service will never cease trying to show the respect and gratitude of a thankful nation.

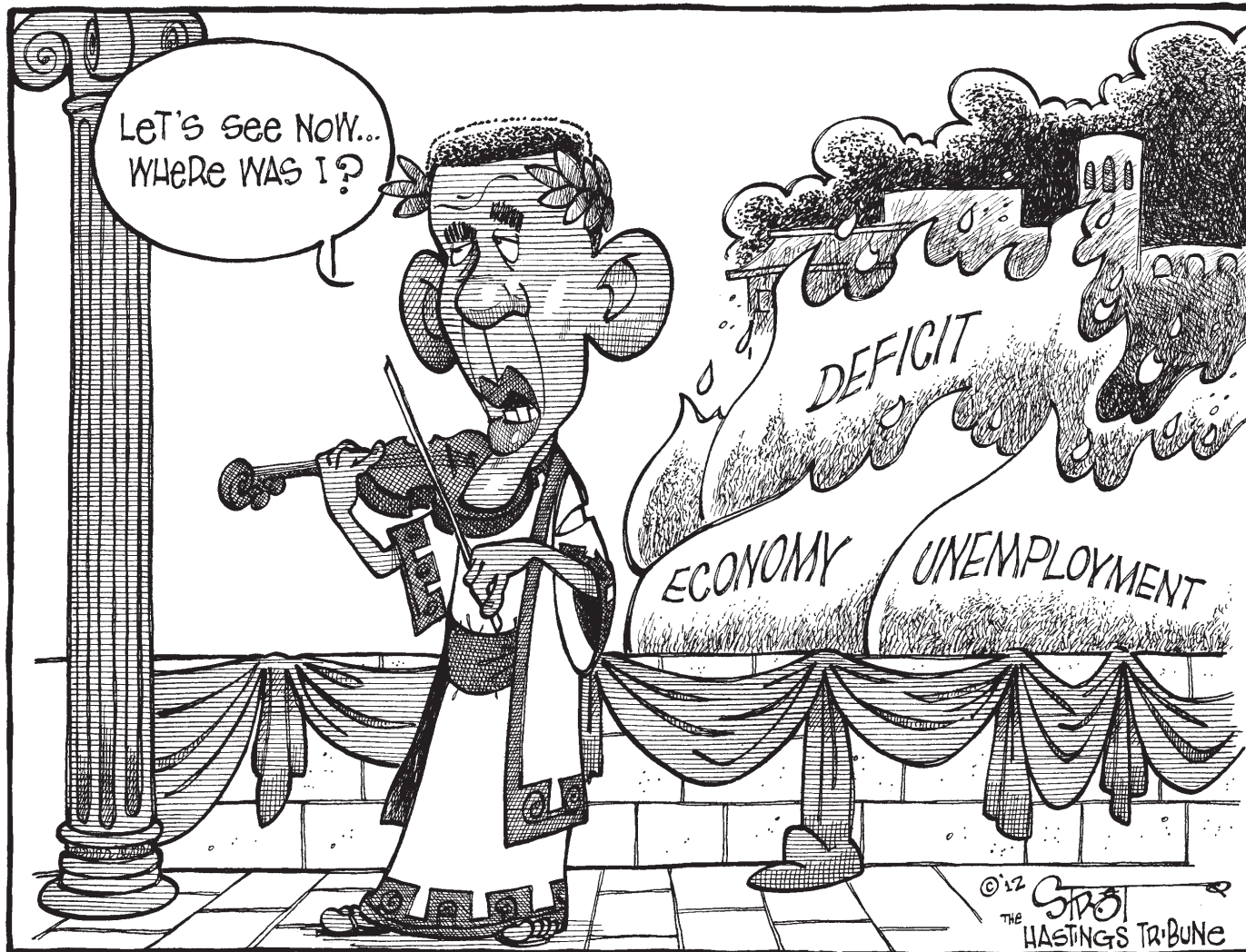
First and foremost, this includes fulfilling the promises made to men and women who have served our nation in uniform during wartime. To break our commitments is not only going against our word - and what are you without your word - but is also to set a bad precedent for the next generation. We rely on an all-volunteer force, which means we have to incentivize enlistment. If Washington breaks promises now, then what does that signal to the young men and women thinking about joining the military?

Chief among my responsibilities as a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee is oversight of the VA. In the 22 months I have been in Congress, I have heard horror story after horror story about the conditions our veterans face while pursuing the health care and resources they are due. Obviously poor conditions at our hospitals are an affront to our veterans, but also to the nation's taxpayers. We are working hard to fix that.

Second, showing gratitude and respect to our veterans and our currently active or reserve duty troops means not denying them the liberties and freedoms they have fought to defend.

When I learned this year that the Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains censored the reading of a letter from Timothy Broglio, Archbishop of Military Services, regarding the HHS mandate that religious employers pay for and provide abortion drugs and birth control in their health care plans, I was outraged. Catholics across the country heard a letter from their own bishop with the call-to-action: "We cannot - we will not - comply with this unjust law." But, Catholics in the military did not get to hear this because of this shocking censorship. Non-Catholics, those not in the military, and even those who support the use of abortion drugs and contraception should take offense at this very obvious abrogation and stifling of First Amendment rights.

Third, the respect and gratitude of a thankful nation can be shown by keeping the American Dream alive. The American Dream is defined as making sure the next generation is always better off than the current. With that in mind, we owe it to the next generation to not leave them \$16 trillion (and growing) in debt. We owe it to the next generation to keep America an attractive place to start a business. We owe it to the next generation to protect the right to pursue prosperity. And, ultimately, we owe it to the next generation to protect their freedoms and liberties.



Belonging to a family or class

Tomas, the new cat, is doing well. Notice, I did not say "our new cat." I am not ready to add his name to the family roster. His whereabouts have been advertised in our little town's newsletter and I truly hope his previous owners want him back. He is just too loveable not to have been someone's pet. He's got a little meat on his bones now and his wheezing and coughing are gone.

It's me. He's ready to move on. I just can't bring myself to put him outside with winter practically here. He would see the other cats coming into the nice, warm house and he would be banned to suffer the harsh elements.

Speaking of the other cats. They took a vote and Tomas didn't win the popular or the electoral. They don't want him. He's still segregated in the dining room, but they know he's there.

I must find Tomas a home. And fast!

-ob-

Almost 47 years ago, Jim graduated from a brand new preaching school in Lubbock, Texas. The school celebrated its 50th anniversary with a Homecoming Reunion last week and we attended. Even though I wasn't part of Jim's life during that time in his, I had a great time at the reunion, too. I sat and listened as former schoolmates remembered the time they _____ (fill in the blank).

Preachers are people, too. There were pranksters and cut-ups amongst

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



their numbers, just like any other group. You knew you were in a special group, though, when instead of talking about climbing the corporate ladder or regaling us with tales of their last vacation, these people shared about what mission field they were sent to or what congregation they helped plant.

The closest thing to an off-color joke was when an instructor told a story on one of his students who was nervous about preaching his first sermon. Seems the young man kept mispronouncing "fornication", instead substituting "fortification."

I have always marveled at Jim's ability to quote scripture and verse right off the top of his head. I can sort of paraphrase, but except for John 3:16 and a couple other verses I'm pretty inept. Now I know how he does it. At this school they were expected to memorize entire chapters in the Bible. It was only a two-year course, so to say it was fast-paced would be an understatement. One man said he was almost afraid to attend because he had heard you would

be two weeks behind if you dropped your pencil.

It was a lot of fun and I'm glad we went.

-ob-

On our way home from Texas I wanted some good Mexican food. Driving through Amarillo we spotted a Mexican grocery store. A young couple was preparing chicken and beef on a barrel grill out front and we determined to get a carry-out order before we left.

But first, we wanted to do a little shopping. Jim smelled hot, home-made tortillas and I spotted corn husks for the tamales I want to learn how to make. We bought a fresh mango, some prickly pears, bananas and several bottles of made-in-Mexico Coca-Cola.

I stowed our groceries in the van while Jim ordered our lunch. We sat in the parking lot building our tortillas with meat and sauces. Here's a word of caution. When a Mexican says, "Oh, eats no hot." don't believe them.

I bit into my tortilla and instantly was on fire. That green stuff I thought was guacamole was, actually, green chili sauce. I couldn't drink enough water to quench the burn. Finally, I was able to continue, but with tortillas wrapped around plain beef; none of the trimmings.

Moral of this story is, "Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it."

Estate taxes threaten the family farm

Smart hard work combined with good planning increases the likelihood of a bright and prosperous future. This is considered the American way - the American dream.

Part of this same American dream is the expectation that future generations will experience a better life than that of their parents. It's always been that way - parents want their children to have more opportunities than they did.

The fondest wish of Kansas farmers, ranchers and small business owners is to pass these family ventures on to their children and grandchildren. They work years to leave a legacy of land or a business.

Unfortunately, that shared dream is threatened by the return of the estate tax. The estate tax is slated to return with a vengeance on Jan. 1, 2013 to a top rate of 55 percent and a \$1 million exemption. Estate taxes owed to the federal government by the farm or ranch owner's surviving family members can wallop them harder than other small business owners because 86 percent of farm and ranch assets are land based.

The projected higher rate and lower exemption could result in as many as 10 percent of farms and ranches owing estate taxes in 2013 and beyond, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Contrast this with three short years ago when approximately 1.6

Insight

John Schlageck



percent of agricultural operations were subject to estate taxes and the exemption totaled \$3.5 million.

When Uncle Sam comes to pay his respects, surviving family members without enough cash may be forced to sell land, buildings or equipment they need to keep their operations running, just to pay the tax bill.

Rural communities and businesses suffer when farms and ranches are dismantled and farmland is sold. When this occurs near urban centers farmland is often lost forever to development.

The money farmers pay to the government in capital gains taxes is money that could be reinvested in the farm or ranch and indirectly into the rural community where the farm is located. Local machinery, fuel, herbicide, fertilizer and parts dealers will suffer. Such businesses keep people employed and provide much-needed money to local governments in the form of county or city sales taxes.

Estate taxes also threaten the transfer of farmland between farmers and ranchers. The average age of a farmer

today is 57 years old.

As farmers consider retirement, they set the selling price of land or other assets high enough to recover the cost of capital gains taxes. This increases the likelihood farmland will be developed for other uses because few young farmers can afford to buy from these retiring producers.

A higher exemption and a lower rate will give farmers and ranchers a better opportunity to transfer their family-owned businesses to the next generation. Farmers and ranchers believe Congress should provide an estate tax provision that would increase the exemption level to \$5 million and adjust it for inflation while reducing the maximum rate to 35 percent.

Taking such action is the right thing to do. It will be one way Congress can show it still believes in the American dream and it truly values small business, including families who farm and ranch. Congress can send a message that hard work is still rewarded in the United States.

Estate tax relief will give future generations hope they can maintain the family legacy and keep the farm. Most importantly, estate tax relief will keep alive the American dream - if you work hard and plan ahead, you can pass the fruits of your labor to your children and grandchildren.

Why spay and neuter

One female dog and her offspring can produce as many as 67,000 puppies in six years! In seven years, one cat and her offspring can potentially produce 420,000 kittens! That is too many animals to find good homes for! When there is an overabundance, these animals must scavenge to survive, die of disease, or are euthanized. Spaying and neutering help to significantly reduce companion animal overpopulation.

Spaying/neutering your pet will increase their chance of a longer and healthier life. Life expectancy is increased 1 to 3 years for dogs and 3 to 5 years for cats. When dogs and cats are spayed/neutered before their first heat cycle (usually at 6 months of age), they have a much lower risk of mammary gland cancer, prostate cancer, and perianal tumors; and no risk of pyometra, uterine cancer, ovarian cancer, and testicular cancer.

By spaying/neutering your pet, behavioral problems are reduced. Dogs and cats tend to roam less due to no heat cycle. This decreases the risk of disease or trauma from fighting. Aggressive behavior is also decreased. In cats, feline immunodeficiency virus and feline leukemia virus is spread by bites, which is much more likely in intact male cats that are prone to fighting. Inappropriate urination, spraying, and marking is greatly reduced in cats that are spayed/neutered.

Spaying/neutering reduces unwanted stray animals in communities. Stray animals can easily become nuisances that are plagued by diseases and parasites. They become public health hazards as they are a potential source of rabies and zoonotic diseases.

Spaying/neutering will not make your pet fat! This is a myth! Pets become fat due to lack of exercise and overfeeding. Another myth is that purebreds don't need to be fixed because they do not end up in shelters. This is not true, purebreds are just as likely as any other animal to end up in a shelter. People also think that it will be easy to find good homes for a litter of puppies or kittens. It is much harder than most people realize. If each of these homes that is ready for a pet would instead adopt from a shelter, lives would be saved. Some people think that their pet is so special that if they breed their pet they will get another pet exactly like the original. There is no guarantee that puppies and kittens will inherit their parent's best qualities. In fact, they may just as easily inherit the worst qualities!

Spaying/neutering is good for your budget! The cost of spay/neuter surgery for your pet is a lot less than the cost of having, caring for, and feeding a litter. Also, some communities offer lower licensing fees and other benefits for spayed/neutered animals. Be kind to your pet, spay and neuter. Call your vet today!

Vet tips

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