

## People lack faith in our leaders

On the news Monday morning was a CNN pole that says about 2/3 of Americans are predicting that negotiations over the so-called fiscal cliff will break down because politicians will act like spoiled children.

Has it come this this? Have we so little faith in our leaders' ability to get together and make some simple decisions?

All polls, no matter what the source, must be treated with a grain of salt, but this does seem to be the general attitude in America today. We have no faith and no confidence in our elected officials. The Congressional approval rating has ranged from a low of 10 percent during the summer to about 21 percent in October.

We need to turn this around. We need leaders we can have confidence in. For this to happen, two things must occur:

First, Congress and the president must solve the fiscal cliff issue. In essence, the fiscal cliff is \$7 trillion worth of tax increases and spending cuts spread over 10 years. It includes the expiration of the Bush tax cuts, reductions in spending across the board, the end of a payroll tax holiday and extended unemployment benefits and more. It doesn't sound bad on paper, but experts are saying it will be too abrupt and arbitrary and might throw the country back to a recession.

We've seen signs of positive movement, with many Republican lawmakers backing off a decades-old no-taxes pledge. If Democrats are smart, they'll look for a way to meet the Republicans half-way.

Our current leaders need to show us that they can be statesmen. Simply put, they need to show us they can do the things we sent them there to do.

The other thing is we need better candidates. How often during the last election did you hear someone say "I don't like Obama, but I'm voting for him because I like Romney even less," or something similar. Our elections have become an exercise in voting for the lesser of two evils. Instead of the best candidate, we get the one who isn't the worst.

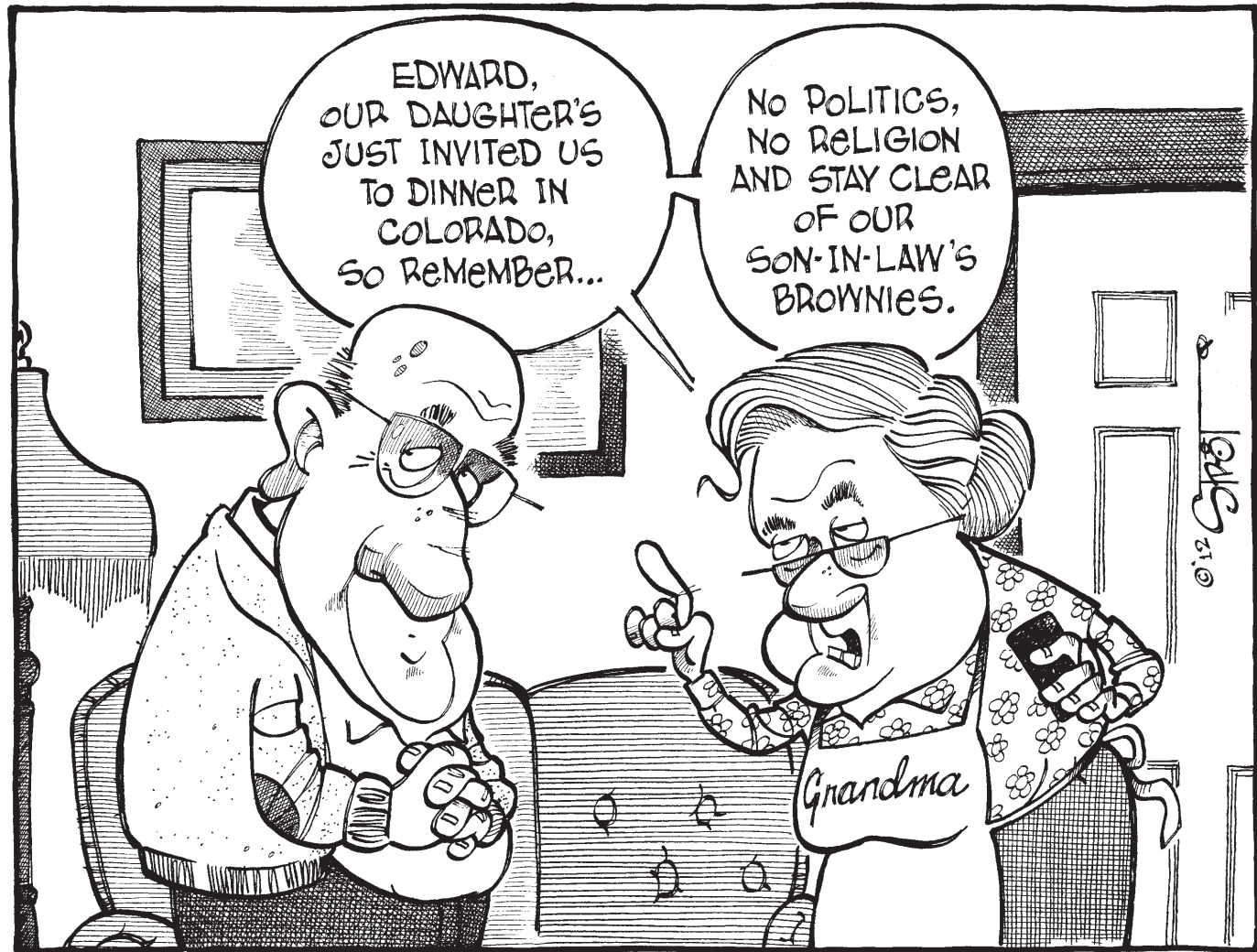
We need candidates that can inspire across all groups, not speak to a base of voters while alienating others. We need the best and the brightest, or what chance can we possibly have of overcoming the vast problems that out nation faces. Immigration, the economy, foreign policy, human rights; why are we leaving these things to the lesser of evils?

We need these better candidates at all levels of government, from township clerks to the president. The only way this will happen is if more people file. In Norton County during this election cycle we had only two contested elections on the ballot. One was the presidential race, one was for Kansas Senate. There were three more during the primary. The majority of positions on the ballot were uncontested.

It is difficult to find qualified candidates for many of these positions, given that they all require particular skill sets. However, we must always continue the search for the best elected officials, and how can we do that when either nobody runs for office, or the candidates we do get leave a lot to be desired? —Kevin Bottrell

### Simple tricks and nonsense

Kevin Bottrell



## Is it an issue of black or white

There's no denying northwest Kansas is in the heart of "Whitebread America." There is not a lot of racial diversity out here. When a friend of mine, who is a woman of color, said she had an ethnic question, I braced myself.

A mutual friend had just died and my friend called to ask, "Do people out here take food to the family when someone dies?"

"Yes, of course," I answered her. "Good," she said, "I didn't know if it was just a black thing."

I had to laugh. "No. It's not just a 'black thing.' You don't have a corner on that market."

The next week the same friend called with another question. "Do you serve black olives on your Thanksgiving table?"

"Well, yes I do. Why?" A non-profit she works with had just received two boxes of food to help with Thanksgiving dinner. She said, "Both boxes had black olives and I just wondered if that was a white thing."

Again, I had to laugh. But, you know,

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



she may be right. Maybe it is a "white thing."

-ob-

Little Tomas has been claimed. Sort of.

It was discovered that he had been the kitten of our little neighbor girl, Aubrey. Tomas, whose original name we learned is Barney, wandered away from home and was thought to be lost forever. Aubrey was thrilled when Barney was returned.

Barney/Tomas, however, is having an identity crisis. He doesn't know where "home" is. I know he loves Aubrey, but he also knows he was fed at our house. Since he lives just across the street, he still makes a bee-line for our house when he sees us outside. We try not to

give him any attention, but he's pretty demanding and did I mention, pretty cute. I've even taken food over to his front porch and fed him there, trying to persuade him to stay home. So far, it's not working and I find him at my front door as often as not.

-ob-

The youth minister of our church spoke Sunday on the subject of encouragement. He shared an idea that I like. Keeping a file of encouraging notes people have given him over the years. He said on bad days it helps him to look at an encouraging letter to remind him of good days.

I think I might do the same. People have been kind to me my entire life, and somewhere, in a box, I have the notes, cards and letters they have sent to me. My goal, now, is to put them in a permanent folder, in my file drawer, where I can get my hands on them.

One thing I need to remember, though. If I want to be encouraged, I need to be an encourager. That street runs both ways.



Dear Editor,  
Mr. Yeager did not get what he wanted. If he does not like the USA he can move out of the country.

August H. Muehe  
Norton, Kansas



Thumbs up to Ramona Pabien for the good job she did as director of the Sr. Center. Emailed in.

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Now that we've celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas is just around the corner, many folks will be selecting their annual tree to adorn their apartment or home.

It's been said many times before and will be repeated again and again, "A traditional Christmas begins with a real tree."

Most of us buy a particular kind of tree based on family tradition. If we grew up with a spruce, we buy a spruce tree. If our family had firs, we buy firs. If we cut a cedar out of the pasture, chances are we still cut a cedar out of the pasture and bring it into our house for Christmas.

When I was a youngster my family only considered one option when buying a Christmas tree – a real pine or fir tree. That all changed when a U.S.-based toilet bowl brush manufacturer, the Addis Brush Company, created an artificial tree from brush bristles. Hence, the prototype for modern artificial trees.

Today, some people feel guilty about cutting down a new tree each year. They feel better buying an artificial tree they can use over and over. Cost, convenience and environmental impact are other reasons consumers opt for an artificial tree.

Given the current economic climate, artificial trees may be especially appealing for their investment value when compared with the recurrent,

### Insight

John Schlageck



annual expense of a real Christmas tree. Their convenience is also appealing to consumers as they don't need watering, don't leave pine needles all over the floor and transportation from tree farm to home isn't an issue.

That said, real trees are a renewable, recyclable resource. While artificial trees contain nonbiodegradable plastics and metals, real Christmas trees provide the oxygen for millions of people.

A single farmed tree absorbs more than 1 ton of CO2 throughout its lifetime. With more than 350 million real Christmas trees growing in U.S. tree farms alone, you can imagine the yearly amount of carbon sequestering associated with the trees. Additionally, each acre of trees produces enough oxygen for the daily needs of 18 people.

This year, approximately 33 million American families will celebrate the holidays with the fragrance and beauty of a real Christmas tree. There are approximately 1 million acres in production for Christmas trees.

The top Christmas tree producing states are Oregon, North Carolina,

Pennsylvania, Michigan, Washington and Wisconsin. The top selling Christmas trees are the balsam fir, Douglas fir, Fraser fir, Noble fir, Scotch pine, Virginian pine and white pine.

More than 100,000 people are employed full or part time in this industry that pumps \$1 billion into the U.S. economy.

While it can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree of average height (six feet), the average growing time is seven to 10 years.

The secret to keeping a Christmas tree alive and healthy when you bring it into your home is to make a fresh cut on the bottom of your tree. When you place the tree in your stand make sure it has plenty of water.

While you can spend money on additives that claim to keep the tree fresh, forgo the expense and just add fresh water every day. Nothing works better.

As far as choosing a particular tree, pick a tree you like.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Everyone has an opinion on what tree is the best. I like them all – firs, spruce, pine – the important thing is that the trees are watered after you cut them. That will keep the color looking rich and the tree looking beautiful.

So whatever tree you choose, real or artificial, have fun finding the perfect one for your family.

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